BSFS Poetry Contest 2020 Winners

Wake

Even water babies grow old.  
With slime-slicked hair  
and slug-white skin,  
wrinkled and puckered,  
they nap on bottom muck.

Shrieks and splash startle them,  
stirring silt and sludge.  
They peer through murky water  
toward the light  
at thrashing color and firm flesh.

Sometimes they reach.

“It’s just a fish,” swimmers say  
at that unexpected touch.  
Most kick away.

But want and grasp perish last.

Shoreliners shake their heavy heads.  
“He was such a strong swimmer.”

Liz Hufford  
1st Place – © 2020  
Phoenix, AZ

Deeps of Time and Innumerable Stars

My father discovers the universe  
of my books, and grows small again.  
He is seventy, and nothing in his life  
has prepared him for these paperback  
beasts, armed with serifs lean  
as paring knives, squalor of other worlds,  
vast armadas crossing the void  
to land in these volumes of Heinlein,  
Butler, Tolkien, Le Guin.  
He picks up The Silmarillion,  
heavy as a debt, spine soft  
as an old pair of boots, and begins  
to read. Lamps are lit in the forests  
of Arda, and my father, watching  
from a distant shore, a child among  
monsters, a mouse among owls,  
looks wildly about.

Preston Stone  
2nd Place – © 2020  
Baltimore, MD

Light Voyager

Across the universe, I travel in the form of light, visiting your planet,  
pausing to touch the leaves and grasses, splashing to settle there  
a moment, tangling my particles and waves with those of the full  
moon, lighting this lover’s glade, that poet’s tea party, and the  
midnight TV screen of a lonely librarian petting her cats.

Roaming her night-yard  
seeking foxes, she finds heart:  
her own moon and star

Adele Gardner  
3rd Place – © 2020  
Newport News, VA
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Lilith
She strides through fires with bare feet
And silent eyes
Her taloned fingers slice through the darkness
And claim it for her own
She finds what makes you human
And whispers it to you
With a voice like your favourite song
With a voice like a chilling battle cry
Until you climb the walls
Her smiles are sadistic
They send shivers up your spine
She treats pain like
A precious artefact
She has the secrets of the universe
Wrapped around her body like tinsel
She has steel-capped teeth
That drip with prayer
Her serpent tongue tastes the air
And her eyes flare wide
You have never seen anything more terrifying
Or more beautiful
Than this girl

Quinn Brown
Special Young Writers Award – © 2020
Adelaide, Australia

Valkyrie Before Rain
She was a plain Jane bird
Silvery-blue billed crow
Who croak sang like a damp
Wind through a snapped pond reed
Her faithful audience
Was a half-dead, contorted tree
Internally deaf to all her ponderings
The day she took to wing
A gray rain soaked the tree
Ousting her to freedom
And she learned that the sky
Was better company

Megan M. Yu
Honorable Mention – © 2020
Lawrenceville, GA

Good Night
The moon’s bones
protrude through pale skin.
Wind plies its bow
across the tree-branch violins.
A wolf howls from everywhere but near.

Pale light never seemed more itinerant.
And stars appear like sinking river stones.
A shape moves through a wilderness
more dreamlike than memory.
It melts into your retina
a moment before sleeping.

John Grey
Honorable Mention – © 2020
Johnston, RI

Library Lion © 2020 Lee Moyer
BSFS Poetry Contest 2020 Winners

About the Winning Poets

**Liz Hufford (First Place)**—As a creative writing teacher, Liz Hufford felt compelled to explore multiple genres to better serve diverse student aspirations. As a result, she has published poetry, flash fiction, articles, creative nonfiction, essays, and short stories. Her work has appeared in venues from trade magazines to SF anthologies to literary journals.

Speculative fiction/poetry intrigues her. In 2017 she was a finalist for the Roswell Award for Short Science Fiction. In 2019 she published a SF poem in *Palu Texni* and was nominated for a Pushcart prize for her flash fiction.

Curiosity is her prime directive.

**Preston Stone (Second Place)**—Preston Stone holds an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College, and was a 2005 Winter Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown. In 2013, he was shortlisted for the Montreal International Poetry Prize. He lives in Baltimore.

**Adele Gardner (Third Place)**—Adele Gardner (www.gardnercastle.com) is the award-winning creator of over 400 published poems, stories, illustrations, songs, and essays. She’s a professional member of writing and art organizations that include SCBWI, SFWA, HWA, SFPA, Sisters in Crime, and the Hampton Arts League. With master’s degrees in English literature and library science, she’s a professional editor and librarian, as well as literary executor for her father, Dr. Delbert R. Gardner.

**Quinn Brown (Special Young Writers Award)**—Quinn Brown is a 17-year-old author based in Adelaide, Australia. When he is not fretting about the state of the world or bingeing Netflix, he writes for young adults. His work is based in the genres of fantasy, horror, and romance. He has previously been published by Write4Fun, Stormy Island Publishing, North Eastern Writer’s Inc, and F*EMS zine. His poetry has also been featured at Draw Your (S)words, the Feast Festival, the Fringe Festival, and local protests defending the rights of marginalised groups.

**Megan M. Yu (Honorable Mention)**—Megan M. Yu currently resides in Georgia with her husband, their child and cat. She earned a BA in English Writing and continues to ponder the meaning of the universe. Sometimes she even manages a poem.

**John Grey (Honorable Mention)**—John Grey is an Australian poet and US resident. He was recently published in *Hawaii Pacific Review, Dalhousie Review* and Qwerty with work upcoming in *Blueline, Willard and Maple* and *Clade Song*. 