

Balticon 46 Poetry Contest Winners

Night Flight to Venus

A matter of days, the doctors said –
we packed up your riddled limbs
and fled:
two table seats on the Venus Express,
our one-way ticket to the stars.

Eyes shut tight
as the Earth spewed us into space,
sick bags at the ready,
travel guide clenched between my palms
like a book of prayer,

each whispered name a talisman
against the judder of our hurtled flight,
Artemis Corona, Hecate's Chasma,
tectonic charms strung around my tongue
like foreign pearls,
Fortuna Tessera, Guinevere Planitia,
100 Venusian Sights to See
Before You Die.

Not long now.

Through the dense sulphuric clouds,
the Cleopatra Crater, yawning beneath us -
rings like a fly-trapped mouth
stretched hunger-wide for passing prey.
I watched you, failing heart a-flutter,
felt the breathless buzz of your excitement,
gaunt face pressed to the misted glass.

Touchdown.
Ephemeral feet on Ishtar Terra firma,
Maxwell Montes rearing up to meet us
as our Earth eyes burned,
98 more Sights to See,
and counting.

Though our singed flesh was singing in our thermal
shells
you kept your cool head for numbers,
totting up each orange clouded hour,
sunrise to sunrise,
like sweets in a jar,
three days, you said, for one earth year,
waving back my vapour tears,
as if we had a lifetime.

Jennifer Moore
1st Place
Devon, England

Futurity's Shoelaces

I stare out the window
of my cottage, a refuse
from a marriage lost.
Even the trees are dying.
I hear the click of my pen,
knowing it must have its way.

On a sand-scaped shore
where life squirmed out
from its beginnings,
a mother is suspended
just above her shadow
which grows longer
as the sun recedes.

The children rise
from her shadow.

I make a fresh pot of tea
It is the last of the package.
The last of all packages.

Richard worked for NASA.
He expected sons, or even girls
to carry on his dream; I failed.

Esher's multiples on a plane,
pleasing, confounding, petrifying,
Stravinsky's complex compositions,
Hegel's theories, Einstein's gifts
merge into a helix of variables,
where past and present play tricks;
the child called Futurity ties his
shoelaces, draws the bow taut.

The children know forever.
The children never tell,
they owe no explanations.
Listen, say the children,
there's music everywhere.

I lay down my pen.
Before me is a blank screen.
It is past time for the broadcast,
the one that will tell us
what we need to do.

Marge Simon
2nd Place
Ocala, FL

Longing

We can never outrun the taint of our first home.
The taste of war will haunt us through
the generations we must breed aboard ship.

The carrier Anzio ships us to our new haven,
a planet we half embrace and half resent.
We can never go back – to friends, family

and lovers, now dead as we sleep and wake
and sleep again. Captain Fernandez's words,
"We carry Earth with us, we carry it in our blood,"*

haunt our dreams of space and dark and stars.
Her descendents will pilot ours to their new lives
on a strange world seen with eyes longing for
Earth.

*From "Message to Earth" by *Beatriz Fernandez*.
Used with permission.

AC Leming
3rd Place
Tappahannock, VA



Sagittarius

Art by Jim Odbert

About the Winning Poets

Jennifer Moore (*First Place*)—Jennifer's poetry and short fiction have appeared in numerous publications on both sides of the Atlantic, including *The Guardian*, *Mslxia*, *The First Line* and *Short Fiction*. She lives in Devon, England.

Marge Simon (*Second Place*)—Marge Simon's works appear in publications such as *Strange Horizons*, *Niteblade*, *DailySF Magazine*, *Pedestal*, *Dreams & Nightmares*. She edits a column for the *HWA Newsletter*, "Blood & Spades: Poets of the Dark Side," and serves on the board of trustees. She won the Strange Horizons Readers Choice Award, 2010. In addition to her poetry, she has published two prose collections: *Christina's World*, Sam's Dot Publications, 2008 and *Like Birds in the Rain*, Sam's Dot, 2007. She won the Bram Stoker for Best Poetry Collection with Charlee Jacob, *Vectors: A Week in the Death of a Planet*, Dark Regions Press, 2008. New poetry collections 2011: *Unearthly Delights* (self illustrated in color), Sam's Dot Publications, *The Mad Hattery* (art by Sandy DeLuca), Elektrikmilkbath Press. Member HWA, SFWA, SFPA. Website: www.margesimon.com

AC Leming (*Third Place*)—A life-long sci-fi fan, A.C. Leming participates in Poem-a-Day Challenges (through the *Poetic Asides* blog) and is a member of the Science Fiction Poetry Association. A.C. grew up in the Alaskan Bush, has earned a black belt in karate and works toward one in jiu-jitsu. When not writing, A.C. can be found on the couch, being held hostage by a book – usually a science fiction or fantasy novel.

Honorable Mention

Astral Arithmetic
Christa A. Bergerson
Elwood, IL

Second Chances
Darrell Lindsay
Nacogdoches, TX

Complete Poetry Contest rules and previous winners can be found at:
www.bsfs.org/bsfspoetry.htm.