

# BSFS Poetry Contest 2018 Winners

## First Message

I was like everyone else when it came—  
 stunned, undone, in fascination thrilled

beyond anything I'd thought myself capable  
 of feeling, in love with the universe

that it would cough up such a marvel!  
 A new Them descending out of infinite space  
 to our little Here!

And like everyone else I gobbled up the reports,  
 sat hungry through the evening news and prime-time specials,

devoured brand-new books on radio astronomy,  
 pored over the eerie photographs they'd sent

across those countless parsecs!—memorized  
 the details of their strange anatomies,

structures of their unique internal  
 biochemical landscapes, listened to all of it

as if to the first music I'd ever heard,  
 trembling to every note!

Then, after long victualing, grew replete.  
 It happened about six or seven months later,

when things began to settle down a bit. I found I'd  
 gotten used to their odd spines and curiously familiar

faces. How many headlines can you read, after all?  
 But sitting out back on my porch one night,

the young moon simple and white in blue darkness  
 above the city, I suddenly understood

their actual uniqueness, felt through all my being  
 their true Newness, the wonder of their existence:

held up in the moonlight my own two human hands,  
 watched them open and close.

Tim J. Myers  
 1st Place – © 2018  
 Santa Clara, CA

## The Sand Witch

From coast to coast  
 she is found combing her hair  
 beaches for bones, bottle caps  
 glass buffed to a matte veneer

She rides driftwood out among the shoals  
 returns with tangled seaweed tresses  
 salty spume upon her lips  
 Her sojourns are a mystery  
 part of her constant drive  
 to conjure mist and sirens  
 calm the sea that pounds the coast

The sand witch likewise settles  
 on Victoria's shore or Sandy Cove's  
 She favors worn blues, tempest greens  
 stormy gray, the surf tickling her toes  
 Her tools are net, paddle, knife and awl  
 a bowl of smoked salmon, mayo and bread  
 as pebbled with grains as the sand beneath

Summer is her season as she makes a feast  
 strings sand dollars, shells and hollowed crabs  
 to ward against trawling dogs and ants  
 a clattering lure to becalmed cats  
 that hope to lap tuna tidepools  
 and other ebbing jetsam  
 Castoffs are her specialty, lost souls  
 and wandering strays gathered in  
 her incandescent net

As the sun sinks towards its watery bed  
 she drags in lonely sailors from the bay  
 hears their plaintive calls  
 the cries of gulls  
 feeds them hearty sandwiches always kept on hand

Set free to drift, they will return  
 when she pries apart Davy's locker  
 uses coastal margarine and some briny delight  
 to fill their bellies and weigh them down  
 pluck the pearl of their desires  
 upon the sand, anchoring them  
 to her cause, and lunches in the bay

Colleen Anderson  
 2nd Place – © 2018  
 Vancouver, BC

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### Laika, Muttnik

There was a command:

Khrushchev demanded another flight  
before they'd ironed out the bugs,  
a dog would suffice to appease him.

There was perspective:

They chose a mutt off the streets  
because strays survive in extremes  
of temperatures and conditions.

There was empathy:

"I wanted to do something nice for her:  
so I took her home to play with my kids.  
She had so little time left to live,"  
said the leading scientist.

There were the facts:

For political reason, it was a lie—  
she didn't live for six days  
she died within hours,  
her death was not kind.

There was the reverence:

Over two decades later,  
the truth was made known,  
so not without guilt, Moscow  
paid her homage in stone.

Marge Simon  
3rd Place – © 2018  
*Ocala, FL*

### The Legend of the Bubaki 1938—Czechoslovakia

Quick! Clap your hands over your ears. Do not listen.  
Black cats drag the faceless man's cart  
down the path leading to the river.

He hides under the bridge and sobs like a baby  
who has lost her mother. You want to find  
this abandoned child; take her in your arms

and dab away her tears, but she does not exist.  
The cries you hear come from the Bubaki,  
who will coil tentacles around you in an unbreakable

grip. He will drag you into dark, rushing water  
and hold you beneath the surface until your soul  
separates from your body. As it drifts up,

he will snatch it and stuff it into his sack  
for transport to the forest. He will loop it like a strand  
of yarn over a low branch. On the next full-moon night,

he will pluck slivers of nocturnal sounds from prowling  
animals. He will braid their shrieks into thick  
garments used to cloak your stolen soul.

Pamela R. Anderson  
Honorable Mention – © 2018  
*Munroe Falls, OH*

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## The Elegy I Should I Have Written

She lives over there, deep in the wood.  
Those are her purple orchids you know.  
That bark you hear comes from the trees  
where ancient waters flow.

The river's edge laps soft and still,  
its heart a rush of waves.  
Lavender lotus blossoms rest on lily pads  
as perfumed floating graves.

She gave the ferryman two pence  
for safe travel past her dreams;  
Her smile he carried across waves of mauve  
in his boat and coat of aubergine.

There is no pain, deep in the wood.  
There is no slow decay.  
Seraphims climb milky skies,  
on sextet wings of violet shades.

Clouds of periwinkle in the morn,  
diamond stars at night,  
white and lavender ribbons adorned,  
when she took her ferry ride.

It was with consequence she left  
to go where we could not abide.  
Despite her own heart's desire,  
the wood has no room for those outside.

These bowed, unbroken souls she left  
still speak fruits of love on her name.  
Her scent, much like sweet amaranth,  
still lingers throughout our days.

The wavy vines and curly limbs,  
she once wove with violaceous hands?  
Have they been tended with such loving care,  
since she met her ferryman?

The laughter she suckled at her side,  
has it e'er been heard again?  
Or did it follow her, deep in those lilac woods  
to linger with its true friend?

Pray tell, where is she now deep in the wood?  
That her loved ones may yet find  
a pomegranate seed to chew  
and not be left behind.

They reach the outer bank at last.  
She finds the carafe of mulberry wine.  
She waits for us beyond the wood  
atop a bed of thyme.

MéShelle Fae  
Honorable Mention – © 2018  
*Ladson, SC*

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### About the Winning Poets

**Tim J. Myers** (*First Place*)—Tim J. Myers is a writer, storyteller, songwriter, and senior lecturer at Santa Clara University. Find him at [www.TimMyersStorySong.com](http://www.TimMyersStorySong.com) or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/TimJMyers1](http://www.facebook.com/TimJMyers1).

**Colleen Anderson** (*Second Place*)—Colleen Anderson's poetry has been twice nominated for the Aurora Award, and won second place in the Crucible and Rannu competitions. Some new and forthcoming poems are in *Transition Magazine*, *Grievous Angel*, *The Future Fire*, *Eye to the Telescope* and the *HWA Poetry Showcase*.

**Marge Simon** (*Third Place*)—Marge Simon has won the Rhysling Award, Dwarf Stars and Elgin Awards from the SFPA, plus the Bram Stoker Award for Best Poetry Collection.

**Pamela R. Anderson** (*Honorable Mention*)—The Czech boogeyman—Bubaki—haunts my dreams and informs my writing about the Holocaust. Several poems from my Holocaust collection (*Grabbing the Beast by the Throat*) have been published; the entire collection still yearns for a publishing home.

**MéShelle Fae** (*Honorable Mention*)—MéShelle Fae is an educator and mentor. She loves great storytelling and sharing the experiences of those who've never known the value of their own voice. Visit her at [meshellefae.com](http://meshellefae.com) and come join her for seafood and sunshine in the South Carolina Lowcountry!

### Enter the Annual BSFS Poetry Contest!

1. Entries should address the themes of science fiction/fantasy/horror/science.
2. 1st prize: \$100; 2nd prize: \$75; 3rd prize: \$50. Additional awards may be authorized at the judges' discretion.
3. Limit: 3 poems/person, maximum 60 lines each. No entry fee.
4. Winners will receive a cash prize, convention membership and be invited to read their winning entries at Balticon. Attendance at Balticon is not required to win.
5. Please no previously published submissions.
6. Winning poems will be published one time in the *BSFAN*, the Balticon convention souvenir book. In addition, a pdf version of the winning poems as they appear in the *BSFAN* will be available on the Balticon Poetry Contest website. Writers retain all rights to their work. By submitting to the contest, entrants agree to these terms.
7. Deadline: Mailed entries must be postmarked, and e-mail entries received, by March 1. Entries that do not meet this deadline will be considered for the following year. Please include your name, address, phone number, e-mail address & a brief bio with your entry.
8. Entries may be submitted via the BSFS Poetry Contest Submission Form at: [www.bsfs.org/bsfspoetry](http://www.bsfs.org/bsfspoetry).
9. Entries may also be e-mailed to [poetry@bsfs.org](mailto:poetry@bsfs.org) or mailed to "BSFS Poetry Contest," c/o BSFS, PO Box 686, Baltimore, MD 21203-0686. Info: [poetry@bsfs.org](mailto:poetry@bsfs.org).
10. While we would like to respond to each entrant personally, it is not always possible due to the large number of submissions we receive. Please check the Poetry Contest website periodically for updates and announcement of the winners.
11. Good luck & keep writing!