Balticon 44 Poetry Contest Winners

The Veracity of Imagination

Impossible...they once said! Nothing moves faster than light. It's beyond the constraints of the space/time continuum. Yet now we do it everyday! Blood and sweat and calculation

sends these behemoths flickering through the interstellar dark to emerge beside a farther star. Human desperation/aspiration to transcend the static moment, to deliver any given reality

our FTL-minds can comprehend: this is the force that drives our being through the night and folds the fabric of space. And as the planes of the plenum open to us, one way or a dozen,

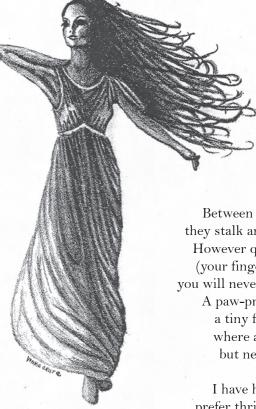
open like the palm of a hand, like a wound, like the wings of the gigantic lepidopteron of Fretas IV as it first senses the rays of its blue-white sun, the unconstrained universe

will be splayed and revealed. Impossible...they always say, as they have learned to say. Meet me in shades of tomorrow, and remember we are forever touching the body of space.

1st Place Bruce Boston Ocala, Florida

Dreamer

Art by Vonnie Winslow Crist



Page-cats

Between the pages of every book, they stalk and purr and flex their claws. However quietly you turn paper over (your fingertips cat-like themselves) you will never see them, stroke their pelts. A paw-print perhaps, may remain, a tiny fleck of black on white, where a page-cat once walked, but never the creature itself.

I have heard that ginger Toms prefer thrillers, and skeletal Siamese the slighter homes of verse. (Although some say black mogs haunt the now tumbled mansions, and slapped together shacks of poetry.) At night, after reading in bed, you may hear them settle down, pumping the wordy sheets.

Page-cats eschew magazines. They can't grip the gloss, and slip and roam, until a new tome beckons, and in they stroll, furry bookmarks, content to live on words and mites, to smooth out all errant dog-ears with meticulous sand-paper tongues. Perhaps a lucky, unknown few, who die with a favourite book open may glimpse

a page-cat's tail, quivering at sight's edge; sweet hyphen joining now to somewhere. They follow the beckoning flag and go on to read invisible books punctuated by ten billion stars.

2rd Place P.S. Cottier Canberra, Australia

A Dragon in Winter

My fire gone out, I lurch and coil up barren hills and down, my scales the color of the pewter sky.

In this bleak winter there's no work for dragons --no armored knights ride out from Camelot in search of glory and the grail.

What combat when my passion flamed, igniting theirs! what groans and prayers and clang of steel, what hisses!

All gone: no magic in great forests, no leafy bowers, no dwarfs, no saints or virgins waiting love.

Snows fall, winds blow, sleet scours earth of dragon tracks. In a deep cave I'll rest these ancient bones,

find sleep where none will hear the rattles of my death or find my dust.

3rd Place Judith Behar Greensboro, NC



Horned Dragon Art by Vonnie Winslow Crist

About the Winning Poets

Bruce Boston (*First Place*)—Bruce Boston's poems and stories have appeared in hundreds of publications, including Asimov's SF, Realms of Fantasy, Weird Tales, and Year's Best Fantasy and Horror, and received a number of awards, most notably the Bram Stoker Award, a Pushcart Prize, and the Asimov's Readers Award. For more info, visit his web site (www.bruceboston.com/).

P.S. Cottier (Second Place)—P.S. Cottier lives in Canberra, Australia and has two books to her name; a book of poems called *The Glass Violin* and a short story collection called *A Quiet Day*, both published by Ginninderra Press (www.ginninderrapress.com.au/). She likes to combine a strong tang of the fantastic with mainstream fiction and poetry, a bit like the salt ring orbiting a Margarita.

Judith Behar (*Third Place*)—Having grown up in Brooklyn, NY, Judith Behar taught English at Guilford College in Greensboro, NC, before going to law school and practicing law. She has served as co-editor of an anthology, *Lines from a Near Country*, has had poems published in *Tar River Poetry*, *Crucible*, *Main Street Rag*, and *Broad River Review*, among others, and has led poetry workshops at HopeWell Cancer Support in Baltimore, MD. She resides in Greensboro.

Honorable Mention

Geoffrey Hoffman Shenley, Radlett, Hertfordshire, UK *Magic*

> Elizabeth McSoley Raleigh, NC *Microscope*

> > Jennifer Wang Southlake, TX Wolf Man

Marge Simon Ocala, FL Painting the Sea

<u>Most Humorous</u>: Casey Smith Safety Harbor, FL The Seagull

Complete Poetry Contest rules can be found at: <u>www.bsfs.org/bsfspoetry.htm</u>