

BALTICON 55



May 28-31, 2021

The BSFAN





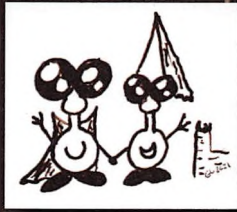
BALTI CON 55



May 28-31, 2021

Free Virtual Convention!

Guest of Honor
SEANAN MCGUIRE



Fan Guests of Honor
Bruce & Cheryl Evry

Artist Guest of Honor
Alyssa Winans

Music Guest of Honor
Margaret & Kristoph



2021 Compton Crook Award Winner
Micaiah Johnson

2021 Heinlein Award Winner
C.J. Cherryh

2019 Compton Crook Award Winner
R.F. Kuang

2020 Compton Crook Award Winner
Arkady Martine

balticon.org



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 Balticon 56102

Credits

BSFAN Cover Artwork by Alyssa Winans:
Front: "Reflection"
Back: "Heart of Gold"
Inside Front: "Gaia"
Inside Back: "Fight and Flight"

Balticon 55 Artwork by Alyssa Winans:
Sale T-Shirt: "Sunshower"
Volunteer ("Berzerker") T-Shirt: "Bookin' It"
Website Banner: "Serenade"
Badge: "When the Tiger Came Down the Mountain"
Balticon Postcard: "Voice"
Zoom Background Images: Featuring assorted work by Alyssa Winans

Other Images: *Assorted space images used for virtual backgrounds and publications, courtesy of NASA.*

A Letter From the Chair



This time last year, I was in Texas. At the end of February 2020, I moved halfway across the country with my youngest daughter, Rachel, a dog, a cat, and all our worldly possessions. Little did I know, by the end of April I would lose my job because of Covid-19. I am aware my story is not unique. I know I'm not alone in finding myself stuck in some kind of anxiety-ridden vortex with no idea of what new hell the future would bring. And I know I'm not alone in missing my amazing, brilliant, sometimes irritating-as-hell, found family that is fandom.

Rachel and I sat at the kitchen table in late April while I cancelled our flight to Baltimore for Balticon, as Mike Rafferty and the whole crew in Baltimore were gearing up to pull off a miracle of castle-storming proportions. Unbeknownst to them at the time, they set the bar for virtual cons over the rest of the year. And at the end of May, I sat at my computer and watched panels, sang filk, chatted with friends, and had a drink served to me by Bartender Bot.

I admit I cried a little.

I'm back in Maryland now and it's been quite a year. Yet here we are. I remember how optimistic everyone was last summer. Surely by this spring we would be able to gather, see our friends face to face, give and receive hugs. And have cons in person.

Making the decision to come full circle and hold another virtual con was an easy one. Heartbreaking, but easy, because when you care about someone, you want to keep them safe. So, my dear found family, you amazing, brilliant, and sometimes irritating-as-hell, fellow Fen, stay safe. I want to see each and every one of you next year for Balticon 56.

Putting a con together, virtual or in-person, is a task of Herculean proportions. While we didn't need to reinvent the entirety like last year, there was still a huge amount of work done to bring you, dear Fen, this amazing weekend.

I live in eternal gratitude to: The entire tech team—I do not have enough words to say how grateful I am; Lisa and Rodger and their team for the amazing work in putting together a kick-ass program; Marilyn—without whom the website would not exist and who has put up with my last minute changes with grace; the BSFS Board for their complete support during a few tough times; Mike, Lisa, Kristin and Morgan—I don't know how you put up with my crazy-ass rants, endless questions, and general insanity, thank you. I also have to thank Eric and all his hard work, without whom we would not have the amazing Guests of Honor that we have.

I am also humble in my gratitude to the entire concom and every single volunteer. Each of you has contributed to something special.

And, of course, I'm grateful for those of you who are attending. Because without you, we'd merely be sitting at home alone, talking to ourselves—I mean, our cats and dogs—instead of sharing the virtual space of Balticon 55. We might be virtual, but that doesn't mean we can't enjoy the Art Show, the film festival, the panels, filking, gaming, and, of course, the fannish chatter that happens whenever you bring fans together.

I am honored to have been entrusted with bringing this convention to life. Together, let's have a great weekend. Remember to be excellent to each other.

Yours,

Yakira Heistand

Chair, Balticon 55

Committee & Staff List

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Chair Emeritus
Treasurer
Secretary
Hotel Liaison

Yakira Heistand
Eric Gasior
Steven Joel Zeve
Patti Kinlock
Dale Arnold

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Loop Slideshow

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Ann Marie Rudolph, Marv Zelkowitz

Morgan Hazelwood

Megan Allen-Kingsland, Miguel Mitchell

Patti Kinlock, Nora Echeverria

Patti Kinlock

Melissa Cox, Karen Grant, Paul Lappen, Linda L. Redmond
Dale Arnold

Nora Echeverria

Nora Echeverria, Patti Kinlock

Eric "Dr Gandalf" Fleischer

Nora Echeverria

Gaelin "Bugsy" Bryant

Kristin Seibert

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Registration Coordinator

Registration Data Entry (Pre-Con)

Computer Services

Volunteer Desk Coordinator

Accessibility Desk Coordinator

Accessibility Desk Assistant Coordinator

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Ops & Security Head

Ops & Security Assistant Heads

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Patti Kinlock

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Bruce Kaplan

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Jamie Peddicord

Dale Arnold, Patti Kinlock

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Mike Czaplinski, Frank Huminski

Eric Gasior, Evan Haag

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Assistant Technical Directors

Zoom Master

Zoom Wrangler / Video Editor

Zoom Logistics

Virtual Balticon Tech Training

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Sarah Sexton, Emrhys Benson

Leilani Macomber

Eric "Dr Gandalf" Fleischer

Syd Weinstein

Leilani Macomber



Godfather of Tech
Second Life
Gather.Town
Zoom Hosts

Marty Gear
 Nora Echeverria, Jamie Marlin, Taylor Schroeder
 Martin Siemen, Nora Echeverria, Robert Markowitz
 Amy Kaplan, Art "Boots" Coleman, Betsy Marks, Carolyn
 Frank, Christiane Knight, Courtney Burleson, Elora Kay Malat,
 Eric "Dr Gandalf" Fleischer, Erin Boehme, Hobbit, Jeff
 Poretzky, John DiDonato, Karin Haberlin, Kathryn Smith, Kathi
 Overton, Kielan Donahue, Laurie Mann, Liana Olear, Mar
 "Gaudior" Hammitt-McDonald, Marcin "Alqua" Klak, Marv
 Zelkowitz, Misha Field, Morgan Hazelwood, Pam "Erisque"
 Gutman, Sam "Zenlizard" Hogan, Sam Kopel

***BIG THANK YOU TO THE TECH CREW!**

EVENTS

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BSFS Books for Kids Charity Auction
Coordinator
Masquerade Director
Film Festival
Concerts (Filk & Other Musical Mayhem)
Writers' Workshop Coordinator
Poetry Workshops Coordinator

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 Kelly Shannon Pierce
 "Dr Karen" Purcell
 Marv Zelkowitz
 Gary Ehrlich, Emily Lewis
 Steve Lubs
 Brian Groover

FIXED FUNCTIONS

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Con-Suite Assistants

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Art Show Co-Director
Dealers' Room Coordinator
Artist Alley Coordinators
Artist Alley Staff
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Sales Table Head
Sales Table Assistant

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 Mark Roth
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 Nora Echeverria
 Anna Scott
 Kelly Shannon Pierce
 Nora Echeverria, Anna Scott
 Allison Brown
 Jasen Stengel
 Patti Kinlock
 Carol Reynolds

PROGRAMMING*

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Programming Assistant
Brainstorming

Lisa Adler-Golden
 Rodger Burns
 Lisa Adler-Golden, Gaelin "Bugsy" Bryant, Rodger Burns,
 Jennifer Povey, and John Robison (with apologies to anyone
 we missed who contributed ideas 2019-2021)

Program Area Leads:

Anime Room
Gaming Room

Leona Thompson
 Michelle Hymowitz and Eric "hymie!" Hymowitz, with
 assistance from Jennifer Hancock

LARP
Literary
Music/Filk
New Media
Science Scheduling

Karen Miden
 Gaelin "Bugsy" Bryant, John Edward Lawson
 Gary Ehrlich, Emily Lewis
 John Walker
 Miriam Winder Kelly, with assistance from Paul Loeschke
 & Laoretta Nagel

At-Con Wranglers

James Boggie, Jennifer Hancock, Muriel Hykes, Marcin Klak, Miguel Mitchell, Alex Tischer

**All other tracks led by Lisa Adler-Golden with input from other programming staff.*

AWARDS ADMINISTRATION**Compton Crook Award Committee**

Nora Echeverria, Bruce Kaplan, Sam Lubell

Compton Crook Award Judges

The Members of the Baltimore Science Fiction Society

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Vonnie Winslow Crist, Katie Hartlove

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Amateur Writing Contest Judges

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Dale Arnold

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The Heinlein Award Committee

Robert Heinlein Award Judges**ADMINISTRATION****IT Director**

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KonOpas

Gwyn Fireman

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Director-at-Large

Nora Echeverria

Director-at-Large

Eric "Dr Gandalf" Fleischer

Director-at-Large

Michael Rafferty

Balticon Chair

Yakira Heistand

BSFS is a 501(c)(3), non-profit, charitable, literary and educational organization, dedicated to the promotion of, and an appreciation for, science fiction in all of its many forms. BSFS and Balticon are run entirely by volunteers.

For a complete history of Balticon, please visit:
bsfs.org/bconhist.htm or
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balticon

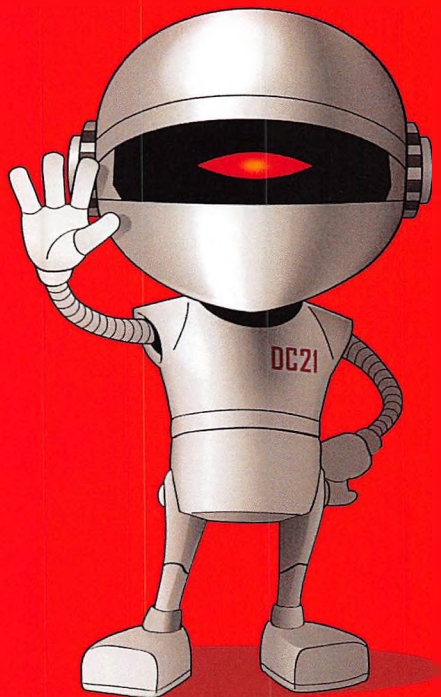


Burning Bright



DisCon III

The 79th Worldcon



John Harris

Artist Guest of Honor

Nancy Kress

Author Guest of Honor

Malka Older

Special Guest

Sheree Renée Thomas

Special Guest

Ben Yalow

Fan Guest of Honor

15 - 19 December 2021

Omni Shoreham Hotel

Washington, DC



Worldcon2021

#DisConIII

discon3.org

Guest of Honor

Seanan McGuire

Seanan McGuire writes books. Like, all the time. We have tried to make her stop writing books, usually by dangling something else she likes to do in front of her, but all the haunted cornfields, rickety carnivals, and swamps the world has to offer have not been enough to do more than slow her down. At her current rate, we estimate the universe will be half her books by volume by the end of the twenty-first century.

And still, she does not stop.

Seanan lives in the Pacific Northwest, in an idiosyncratically designed old farm house filled with generation one My Little Ponies, books (only some of which she wrote), and abnormally large, fluffy cats. She likes it that way. When not at home or writing, she enjoys travel, and can often be found at Disney theme parks around the world, enjoying the efficient ways they have been designed to part fools from their money (that's her, she's fools, at least in this scenario).

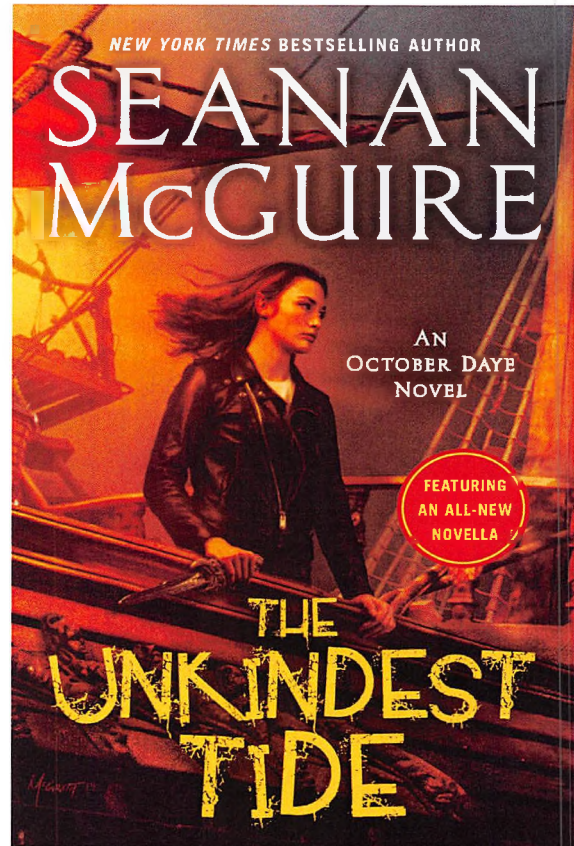
A lifelong science fiction and fantasy fan, Seanan is very pleased with the fact that she's managed to turn her passions into a career, and doesn't understand why people keep saying that she needs to get some sleep. She gets plenty of sleep. Why, she slept just last week! Keep up with her on *Twitter* at @seananmcguire, or online at seananmcguire.com.



Seanan McGuire Bibliography

NOVELS

- *The Unkindest Tide*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on September 3rd, 2019. October Daye, book thirteen; urban fantasy.
- *Middlegame*, originally published in North America by Tor.com on May 7th, 2019. Dark modern fantasy with alchemical undertones.
- *That Ain't Witchcraft*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on March 5th, 2019. InCryptid, book eight; urban fantasy.
- *In an Absent Dream*, originally published in North America by Tor.com on January 8th, 2019. Urban/portal fantasy; book four of the Wayward Children.
- *Night and Silence*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on September 4th, 2018. October Daye, book twelve; urban fantasy.
- *The Girl in the Green Silk Gown*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on July 17th, 2018. Urban fantasy; book two of the Ghost Roads.
- *Tricks for Free*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on March 6th, 2018. InCryptid, book seven; urban fantasy.
- *Beneath the Sugar Sky*, originally published in North America by Tor.com on January 9th, 2018. Urban/portal fantasy; book three of the Wayward Children.
- *Deadlands: Boneyard*, originally published in North America by Tor Books on October 17th, 2017. A tie-in adventure for the weird wild west *Deadlands* setting.
- *The Brightest Fell*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on September 5th, 2017. October Daye, book eleven; urban fantasy.
- *Indigo*, originally published in North America by St. Martin's Press on June 20th, 2017. Superhero mosaic novel, co-written with Charlaune Harris, Cherie Priest, Christopher Golden, James A. Moore, Jonathan Maberry, Kat Richardson, Kelley Armstrong, Mark Morris, and Tim Lebbon.
- *Down Among the Sticks and Bones*, originally published in North America by Tor.com on June 13th, 2017. Urban/portal fantasy; book two of the Wayward Children.
- *Magic For Nothing*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on March 7th, 2017. InCryptid, book six; urban fantasy.
- *Dusk or Dark or Dawn or Day*, originally published in North America by Tor.com on January 10th, 2017. American coming-of-age ghost story.
- *Once Broken Faith*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on September 6th, 2016. October Daye, book ten; urban fantasy.
- *Velveteen vs. The Seasons*, originally published in North America by ISFIC Press on May 5th, 2016. Velveteen vs., book three; superhero fiction.
- *Every Heart a Doorway*, originally published in North America by Tor.com on April 5th, 2016. Urban/portal fantasy; book one of the Wayward Children.
- *Chaos Choreography*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on March 1st, 2016. InCryptid, book five; urban fantasy.
- *Indexing: Reflections*, originally published in North America by 47 North on January 12th, 2016. Indexing, book two; urban fantasy.
- *A Red-Rose Chain*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on September 1st, 2015. October Daye, book nine; urban fantasy.
- *Pocket Apocalypse*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on March 3rd, 2015. InCryptid, book four; urban fantasy.
- *The Winter Long*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on September 2nd, 2014. October Daye, book eight; urban fantasy.
- *Sparrow Hill Road*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on May 6th, 2014. Urban fantasy; book one of the Ghost Roads.
- *Half-Off Ragnarok*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on March 4th, 2014. InCryptid, book three; urban fantasy.
- *Indexing*, originally published in North America by 47 North on January 21st, 2014. Indexing, book one; urban fantasy.
- *Chimes at Midnight*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on September 3rd, 2013. October Daye, book seven; urban fantasy.
- *Velveteen vs. The Multiverse*, originally published in North America by ISFIC Press on August 31st, 2013. Velveteen vs., book two; superhero fiction.
- *Midnight Blue-Light Special*, originally published in



North America by DAW Books on March 5th, 2013. InCryptid, book two; urban fantasy.

- *Velveteen vs. The Junior Super Patriots*, originally published in North America by ISFIC Press on November 9th, 2012. Velveteen vs., book one; superhero fiction.
- *Ashes of Honor*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on September 4th, 2012. October Daye, book six; urban fantasy.
- *Discount Armageddon*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on March 6th, 2012. InCryptid, book one; urban fantasy.
- *One Salt Sea*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on September 6th, 2011. October Daye, book five; urban fantasy.
- *Late Eclipses*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on March 1st, 2011. October Daye, book four; urban fantasy.
- *An Artificial Night*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on September 7th, 2010. October Daye, book three; urban fantasy.
- *A Local Habitation*, originally published in North America by DAW Books on March 2nd, 2010. October Daye, book two; urban fantasy.
- *Rosemary and Rue*, originally published by North America by DAW Books on September 1st, 2009. October Daye, book one; urban fantasy.

SHORT FICTION

- *Laughter at the Academy*, originally published by Subterranean Press, October 2019. Short fiction collection spanning stories from 2009 through 2019, illustrations by Carla Speed McNeil.
- "Strangers in Court," available as part of the print edition of *Rosemary and Rue: The Tenth Anniversary Edition* as of October 2019. A Toby-universe short story focusing on October Daye herself, prior to the events of the series.
- "Winter Sunshine," originally published through the Toaster Project, October 1, 2019. Alice Healy enjoys her winter vacation. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
- "Phantoms of the Midway," originally published in *Mythic Dream* September 3rd, 2019. Hades and Persephone by the bright midway lights.
- "Hope is Swift," available as part of the print edition of *The Unkindest Tide* as of September 2019. A Toby-universe short story focusing on Raj as he tries to adjust to his growing responsibility.
- "Take the Shot," originally published through the Toaster Project, September 1, 2019. Thomas Price tries to become accustomed to life in Buckley. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
- "Must Be This Tall to Ride," originally published in *Echoes: The Saga Anthology of Ghost Stories*, August 20th, 2019. Crashes, choices, and carnivals.
- "Come Marching In," originally published through the Toaster Project, August 1, 2019. In an age of mental health registries, one teacher tries to do the best she can. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
- "In the Shadow of Spindrift House," (as Mira Grant), originally published by Subterranean Press, July 2019. When a group of teen detectives decides to take on one

last case, they have no idea what's in store for them... and they won't all make it out alive.

- "Dreams and Sighs," originally published through the Toaster Project, July 1, 2019. Tybalt must adjust to the changes in his station and situation. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
- "So Sharp, So Bright, So Final," originally published in *Wastelands: The New Apocalypse* June 5, 2019. Rabies is not a good party to be invited to.
- "Face Your Furs," originally published through the Toaster Project, June 1, 2019. Corporate greed is as limitless as it is short-sighted. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
- "Vegetables and Vaccines," originally published through the Toaster Project, May 1, 2019. The end of everything may be a new beginning. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
- "Away Game," originally published in *A Secret Guide to Fighting Elder Gods*, April 22, 2019. The Fighting Pumpkins face their greatest enemy yet: an away game.
- "Of Strange Oaths," originally published through the Toaster Project, April 1, 2019. Tybalt's time in Londinium comes at long last to a close. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
- "Stripes in the Sunset," originally published in *Unfettered III*, March 1, 2019. Flying can be awful. Sometimes what's outside is worse. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
- "Emergency Landing," originally published through the Toaster Project, March 19, 2019. Life always finds a way.
- "But We Were Heroes Once, in Empty Places, After Dark," originally published in *The Gamer Chronicles*, February 15, 2019. There is more to life than gaming, and more to gaming than life.
- "On The Side," originally published through the Toaster Project, February 1, 2019. Food carries culture; food matters. Take it away and you take everything. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
- "Harmony," originally published in *A People's Future of the United States*, February 5th, 2019. There's no such thing as a perfect future, but we can still try.
- "Sweet as Sugar Candy," originally published through the Toaster Project, January 1, 2019. Marshmallows can be trickier than they seem. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
- "Kingdom of Needle and Bone," (as Mira Grant), originally published by Subterranean Press, December 2018. The consequences of the anti-vaccination movement become brutally clear in this science fiction thriller.
- "Under the Sea of Stars," originally published in *Lightspeed Magazine*, December 27, 2018. An expedition into the unknown meets the unbelievable.
- "And Thrice Again," originally published through the Toaster Project, December 1, 2018. Simon Torquill intercedes on Patrick's behalf, with dire consequences. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
- "Love in the Last Days of a Doomed World," originally published through the Toaster Project, November 1, 2018. Climate change, time travel, and choices. This is not a story about Krypton. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.



MSAC
maryland state arts council

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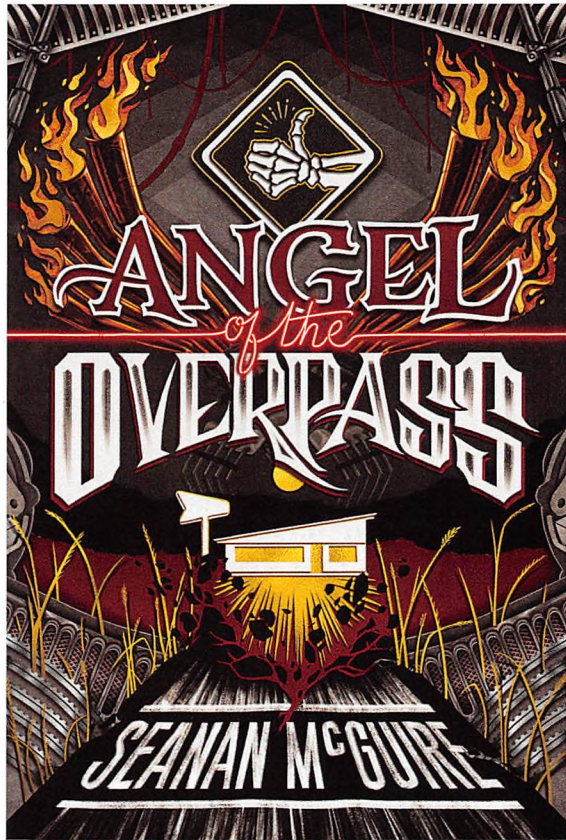
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PROUD TO SUPPORT BALTICON 55 2021!



- “Fresh as the New-Fallen Snow,” originally published in *Hark! the Herald Angels Scream*, October 23, 2018. A babysitter; a night at home; a second chance.
- “Home and Hope Both Sound a Little Bit Like ‘Hunger’,” with Jennifer Brozek, originally published in *Chiral Mad 4*, October 23, 2018. Not all alien encounters are pleasant ones.
- “The Ambitious Ocean,” originally published through the Toaster Project, October 1, 2018. Patrick Twycross attempts to bargain with the Countess Winterrose. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Suffer a Sea-Change,” available as part of the print edition of *Night and Silence* as of September 2018. A Toby-universe short story focusing on Gillian Daye-Marks as she adjusts to the events of the latest book.
- “Falling’s Free, Gravity Costs,” originally published in *Unidentified Funny Objects 7*, September 25, 2018. Family is a complicated thing. Also complicated? The laws of physics.
- “Remember the Green,” originally published in *Shades Within Us: Tales of Migration and Fractured Borders*, September 8, 2018. When the green is gone, those who loved it may well remain.
- “Mother, Mother, Will You Play With Me,” originally published in *Mother of Invention*, September 1, 2018. Growing up is hard, especially when you’re afraid you’re not really real at all.
- “File and Forget,” originally published through the Toaster Project, September 1, 2018. Industrial espionage doesn’t end with the Soda Wars. It just changes forms. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Riding Ever Southward, In the Company of Bees,” originally published in *Hath No Fury*, August 23, 2018. After the bees are gone, what will remain, and what will take their place?
- “Quick in Quarrel,” originally published through the Toaster Project, August 1, 2018. With the Princess of Londinium back in her parents’ Kingdom, Tybalt must decide how to protect his family. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Swear Not by the Moon,” originally published in *Infinity’s End*, July 1, 2018. When a child goes missing, her parents will move the galaxy to find her.
- “Harvest,” originally published through the Toaster Project, July 1, 2018. How do you save the Unseele Court when everyone expects more of you than you’re capable of giving? Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Rise Up, Rise Up, You Children of the Moon,” originally published in *The Razor’s Edge*, June 15, 2018. Counting feathers, counting crows, and counting consequences.
- “Jealous in Honor,” originally published through the Toaster Project, June 1, 2018. Tybalt adjusts to life as a true King of Cats. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Goodnight, Sleep Tight,” originally published through the Toaster Project, May 1, 2018. Sometimes sacrifices must be made. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “These Antique Fables,” originally published through the Toaster Project, April 1, 2018. January O’Leary adjusts to life in the Mists, and starts to see her future. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Sister, Dearest Sister, Let Me Show to You the Sea,” originally published in *The Devil and the Deep*, March 20, 2018. Some stories play out again and again. Some people never learn.
- “Now Rest, My Dear,” originally published through the Toaster Project, March 1, 2018. A girl, a library...a lifetime. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Live in Brass,” originally published through the Toaster Project, February 1, 2018. Dianda Lorden encounters Patrick Twycross at a ball in honor of her engagement. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Build Me a Wonderland,” originally published in *Robots vs. Fairies*, January 9, 2018. There are secrets everywhere, even in the happiest places on Earth.
- “Write in Water,” originally published through the Toaster Project, January 1, 2018. Patrick Twycross attends a ball in honor of the engagement of Duchess Dianda Lorden. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “By Promise Preordained,” originally published in *The Demons of King Solomon*, December 15, 2017. Be careful when making deals with devils. The house always wins.
- “Sentence Like a Saturday,” originally published in *Mad Hatters and March Hares*, December 12, 2017. Doors swing both ways. For an Alice to travel to Wonderland, someone else must visit her world.

- “The Wine in Dreams” (as Mira Grant), originally published in *Star Wars: Canto Bight*, December 5, 2017. The greatest sommelier in the galaxy pursues a bottle of wine the likes of which she has never seen.
- “In Deepest Consequence,” originally published through the Toaster Project, December 1, 2017. Tybalt grapples with his past for the sake of his sister, and his beloved niece. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “An Emptied Vessel,” originally published in *Hardboiled Horror*, November 23, 2017. Detective Rory Silva is reminded that sometimes, the sharpest knives are the ones that don’t exist.
- “What We Knew Then, Before the Sky Fell Down,” originally published in *Catalysts, Explorers & Secret Keepers: Women of Science Fiction*, November 14, 2017. Time changes, the world moves on, but the business of life continues, tangled and troubled as it may become.
- “Last Call at the Last Chance,” originally published through the Toaster Project, November 1, 2017. Bobby Cross pays a visit to the Last Dance Diner, where Emma is waiting. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Red Dirt” (as Mira Grant), originally published in *Joe Ledger: Unstoppable*, October 31, 2017. A medical crisis in a small Alabama town summons Rudy and Circe to face an enemy both had thought defeated.
- “Blood and Sand” (as Mira Grant), originally published in *Predator: If It Bleeds*, October 17, 2017. When a shooting star lands in the wrong field, a deeper danger than anyone could have guessed follows.
- “With Graveyard Weeds and Wolfsbane Seeds,” originally published in *Haunted Nights*, October 3, 2017. A lonely little girl, a group of mischievous teens, and Halloween night. What could possibly go wrong?
- “Heart of Straw,” originally published through the Toaster Project, October 1, 2017. Halloween night brings its share of treats...and tricks. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Of Things Unknown,” available as part of the print edition of *The Brightest Fell* as of September 2017. A Toby-universe short story focusing on April O’Leary and her last chance to save her family.
- “Heroes Never Die,” originally published in *Hail Our Robot Conquerors*, September 1, 2017. A young engineer tries to destroy the vicious overlord who has subjugated her people.
- “Rust in Peace,” originally published in *Submerged*, September 1, 2017. When a salvage vessel finds the big score, they also find the answer to a mystery better left unsolved.
- “With Honest Trifles,” originally published through the Toaster Project, September 1, 2017. Tybalt travels to France to seek aid for his niece. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Balance,” originally published in *Urban Enemies*, August 1, 2017. Learn what the world looks like through the eyes of a cuckoo. Part of the InCryptid universe.
- “Instruments of Darkness,” originally published through the Toaster Project, August 1, 2017. Tybalt and his sister work to stabilize their Court. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Pixie Season,” originally published in *Lawless Lands*, July 20, 2017. Welcome to the Lazy Daisy Ranch, where anything is possible, and everything is probable.
- “You Can Stay All Day” (as Mira Grant), originally published in *Nights of the Living Dead*, July 11, 2017. The zombie apocalypse begins, and one zookeeper must choose how she will react.
- “From A to Z in the Book of Changes,” originally published through the Toaster Project, July 1, 2017. Now we know our ABCs. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “How the Maine Coon Cat Learned to Love the Sea,” originally published in *Uncanny Magazine*, July 2017. A Just-So Story, of sorts, about cats and clouds and changes.
- “Cabbages and Kings,” originally published through the Toaster Project, June 1, 2017. A uniquely apocalyptic correspondence. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Pedestal,” originally published in *Behind the Mask*, May 16, 2017. Time changes, the world moves on, but the business of life continues, tangled and troubled as it may become.
- “Graffiti of the Lost and Dying Places,” originally published in *Dark Cities*, May 16, 2017. A city, sickened by its own people, may find a way to lash out.
- “Shore to Shore,” originally published through the Toaster Project, May 1, 2017. Patrick and Dianda attempt to have a date. Best read after “Heaps of Pearl.” Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Bring the Kids and Revisit the Past at the Traveling Retro Funfair,” originally published in *Cosmic Powers*, April 18, 2017. One of the last retro funfairs in the galaxy struggles to survive.
- “The Recitation of the Most Holy and Harrowing Pilgrimage of Mindy and Also Mork,” originally published through the Toaster Project, April 1, 2017. Set after *Magic For Nothing*. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Final Girls,” (as Mira Grant), originally published by Subterranean Press, April 2017. An innovative therapeutic approach to trauma has unexpected consequences in this science fiction thriller.
- “Persephone,” originally published on Tor.com, March 8th, 2017. A flash fiction piece for International Women’s Day, about the future we may be moving toward.
- “School Colors,” originally published in *Little Green Men...Attack!*, March 7, 2017. The Fighting Pumpkins face a challenge that is literally out of this world.
- “Carry On,” originally published through the Toaster Project, March 1, 2017. Air travel in the modern age. Available at this time to all Seanan’s Patreon subscribers.
- “Lay of the Land,” available for free download as of February 2017. Alice shows Thomas around Buckley for the first time. It’s an experience. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
- “The Mathematical Inevitability of Corvids,” originally published in *Black Feathers*, February 7, 2017. Counting feathers, counting crows, and counting consequences.
- “Her Heart Never Came Down Again,” originally published through the Toaster Project, February 1,




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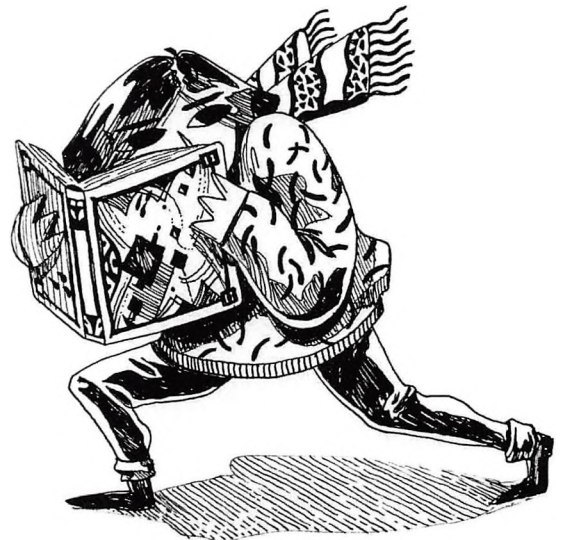


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2017. When a routine spaceflight goes wrong, the consequences impact everyone. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
- "Please Accept My Most Profound Apologies For What Is About To Happen (But You Started It)," originally published in *Jurassic Chronicles*, January 27, 2017. It is never a good idea to torment a mad scientist in training.
 - "My Last Name," available for free download as of January 2017. Verity and Dominic reach Oregon at last. Now they get to face her parents. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
 - "The Act of Hares," originally published through the Toaster Project, January 1, 2017. Tybalt begins to remember what it is to rule. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
 - "Falls Like Snow," originally published through the Toaster Project, December 1, 2016. A seasonal story, about wanting and wind, and the colors of snow. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
 - "And Men Will Mine the Mountains For Our Souls," originally published in *Unfettered II*, November 21, 2016. A dragon princess fights against the death of his own kind.
 - "Be Still, and Listen," originally published in *The Grimm Future*, November 1, 2016. Sleeping Beauty sleeps, and the story spins around her.
 - "Forbidden Texts," originally published in *What the #@&% Is That?*, November 1, 2016. Sometimes it's better to put down Twitter and run.
 - "Sleepover," originally published in *Shadowed Souls*, November 1, 2016. Elsie Harrington attempts to navigate the ins and outs of human/cryptid interaction.
 - "In the Before, When Legends Were True," originally published through the Toaster Project, November 1, 2016. What remains, after we are gone? Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
 - "In the Desert Like a Bone," originally published in *The Starlit Wood*, October 18, 2016. An American west retelling of "Little Red Riding Hood."
 - "The Voice of Lions," originally published through the Toaster Project, October 1, 2016. Tybalt and his sister adjust to their new London. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
 - "Sincerity (Gatsby)," originally published in *Loose Lips*, September 27, 2016. This is extremely filthy fanfic pornography. Just so you know.
 - "Best in Show," originally published in *Were-*, September 16, 2016. The tangled world of professional cat and dog shows becomes a little more complicated.
 - "Round and Round We Ride the Carousel of Time," originally published in *Alien Artifacts*, September 15, 2016. Nothing happens only once in a limitless universe.
 - "Dreams and Slumbers," available as part of *Once Broken Faith* as of September 2016. A Toby-universe short story focusing on Arden Windermere and her relationship with her brother.
 - "The Levee Was Dry," originally published through the Toaster Project, September 1, 2016. When the music stops, the rest is silence. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
 - "Full of Briars," originally published August 3, 2016 as a DAW Books e-original. Quentin and his parents reunite, as he tries to keep Toby from ruining everything.
 - "In Little Stars," originally published through the Toaster Project, August 1, 2016. Prince Gilad tries to come to terms with his future at the founding of the Kingdom in the Mists. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
 - "Inch by Inch and Row by Row," originally published in *Limbus Inc, Volume III*, July 29, 2016. What we would reap, we first must sow. This applies to gardens...and to children.
 - "Tailed," originally published in *Urban Allies*, July 26, 2016. Verity Price meets Elena Michaels in this non-canonical urban fantasy adventure.
 - "Threnody for Little Girl, With Tuna, At the End of the World," originally published through the Toaster Project, July 1, 2016. The climate changes, the world moves on, and little girls grow up. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
 - "Long Way Down," originally published in *Genius Loci*, June 7, 2016. The cost of growing up and getting out... when it's even possible.
 - "Regulation," originally published in *Galactic Games*, June 7, 2016. Roller derby for the interstellar age.
 - "Stage of Fools," originally published through the Toaster Project, June 1, 2016. Tybalt deals with the ramifications of his new position. Available at this time to all Seanan's Patreon subscribers.
 - "Something in the Rain," originally published in *Defying Doomsday*, May 30, 2016. Even after the end of the world, some things stay true.
 - "Waking Up In Vegas," available for free download as of May 2016. Verity and Dominic reach Las Vegas, and things proceed from there. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
 - "Ye Highlands and Ye Lowlands," originally published in *Uncanny Magazine*, May 2016. The dangers of first contact and the misunderstood word.
 - "The Jaws That Bite, the Claws That Catch," originally published in *Lightspeed Magazine*, May 2016. One woman's journey across Wonderland, to save her sister.
 - "Dragonflies," originally published in *The Doomsday Chronicles*, March 2016. After the world has changed, some things endure.
 - "Swamp Bromeliad," available for free download as of February 2016. Verity and Dominic stop off in Buckley Township, Michigan on their way home. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
 - "We are the Shadows Cast by the Memory of Giants," originally published in *Truth Beyond Paradox*, February 2016. The Order of Hermes is sometimes complicated.
 - "Heaps of Pearl," available for free download as of January 2016. Patrick and Dianda's first meeting; best read after *The Winter Long*. Download from the Toby Daye short fiction page.
 - "Snake in the Glass," available for free download as of December 2015. Verity and Dominic stop off in Chicago on their way home. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
 - "Fiber," originally published in *Unbound*, December 2015. The Fighting Pumpkins ride again! Assuming they can find a public restroom, anyway.
 - "Down, Deep Down, Below the Waves," originally published in *The Gods of HP Lovecraft*, December 2015.

- Deep Ones, graduate school, and the many uses of Parmesan cheese.
- “Hello, Hello,” originally published in *Future Visions: Original Science Fiction Inspired by Microsoft*, November 2015. Language, who has it, and what it means.
 - “Into the Green,” originally published in *Bloodlines*, October 2015. The importance of good farming techniques and using local produce.
 - “The Way Home,” available for free download as of October 2015. Thomas Price arrives in Buckley Township, and a new era begins. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
 - “Something Lost, Something Gained,” originally published in *Seize the Night*, October 2015. Vampires, fireflies, and storms in Indiana.
 - “Reading Lists,” originally published in *Temporarily Out of Order*, August 2015. The importance of library cards and paying attention to signs.
 - “Survival Horror,” originally published in *Press Start to Play*, August 2015. Artie and Antimony must survive an encounter with a rather hostile PC game. Part of the InCryptid universe.
 - “The Moon Inside,” originally published in *Midian Unmade: Tales of Clive Barker’s Nightbreed*, July 2015. A return to the world of “Cabal” and *Nightbreed*, featuring Babette.
 - “Please Do Not Taunt the Octopus,” (as Mira Grant), originally published by the Orbit Short Fiction Program, July 2015. Running an underground genetics lab in a post-zombie America is neither easy nor convenient.
 - “The Star of New Mexico,” available for free download as of June 2015. The Healys say goodbye to Fran. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
 - “The Myth of Rain,” originally published in *Lightspeed Magazine*, May 2015. Reprinted in *Loosed Upon the World*, August 2015. There will come a time when there is nothing left to save.
 - “Resistance,” originally published in *The End Has Come*, May 2015. The fungal apocalypse has won in part three of three.
 - “The Happiest Place...” (as Mira Grant) originally published in *The End Has Come*, May 2015. At the end of everything, even the lights of Disneyland must go dim.
 - “Rolling in the Deep,” (as Mira Grant), originally published by Subterranean Press, April 2015. Set sail for scientific immortality with the *Atargatis* as they go looking for mermaids.
 - “In Skeleton Leaves,” originally published in *Operation Arcana*, March 2015. What it means when Neverland goes to war.
 - “There is No Room For Sorrow in the Kingdom of the Cold,” originally published in *The Doll Collection*, March 2015. Dolls, the creative urge, and what it means to endure.
 - “Broken Paper Hearts,” available for free download as of February 2015. Frances Healy goes into the woods, and does not come out again. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
 - “No Sooner Met,” available for free download as of January 2015. Toby and Tybalt go out to dinner after the events of *Ashes of Honor*. Download from the Toby Daye short fiction page.
 - “White as a Raven’s Wing,” available for free download as of December 2014. Ista and Ryan travel to Canada to settle the question of where she belongs once and for all. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
 - “Driving Jenny Home,” originally published in *Out of Tune*, November 2014. A story about homecomings and Homecoming, and the thin line between the two.
 - “Turn the Year Around,” originally published in *Harvest Season*, November 2014. The Fighting Pumpkins return for a story of seasonal monarchs, football games, and harvests.
 - “The Fixed Stars,” originally published in *Shattered Shields*, November 2014. A Toby-universe short story focusing on the Luidaeg years before October’s story began.
 - “Snakes and Ladders,” available for free download as of October 2014. An early InCryptid adventure, featuring Frances Brown, Alice Healy, and Mary Dunlavy. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
 - “Midway Relics and Dying Breeds,” originally published at *Tor.com*, September 2014 (first print appearance). The last of the traveling carnivals faces a future that may have no place left for such frivolities.
 - “Best Served Cold,” originally published in *Streets of Shadows*, September 2014. Detective Rory Silva attempts to navigate the Seasonal Courts with her skin, and her humanity, intact.
 - “Lady Antheia’s Guide to Horticultural Warfare,” originally published in *Clockwork Universe: Steampunk vs. Aliens*, September 2014. Lady Antheia explains the course of the vegetable war.
 - “Fruiting Bodies,” originally published in *The End is Now*, September 2014. The fungal apocalypse reaches its apex in part two of three.
 - “In Roses,” (as Mira Grant) originally published in *Popular Science* magazine, August 2014. Future warfare and the consequences of same.
 - “Bury Me In Satin,” available for free download as of August 2014. An early InCryptid adventure, featuring Jonathan Healy and Frances Brown. Download from the



- InCryptid short fiction page.
- “Office Memos,” originally published in the Shamrokon souvenir program book, August 2014. Inter-office communication, Gremlin-style.
 - “Oh Pretty Bird,” available for free download as of July 2014. An early InCryptid adventure, featuring Jonathan Healy and Frances Brown. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
 - “The Day the Dead Came to Show and Tell,” (as Mira Grant), originally published by the Orbit Short Fiction Program, July 2014. Set in the Newsflesh universe during a major outbreak at a Seattle elementary school.
 - “BRING ABOUT THE HALLOWEEN ETERNAL!!!”, originally published in *HELP FUND MY ROBOT ARMY!!! and Other Improbable Crowdfunding Projects*. Available from John Joseph Adams, July 2014. Pretty much what it says on the tin.
 - “Each to Each,” originally published in *Lightspeed Magazine’s* «Women Destroy Science Fiction» issue. Available from Lightspeed, June 2014. Reprinted in *The Best American Science Fiction and Fantasy 2015*, October 2015. Military mermaids in a science fiction sea.
 - “IM,” available for free download as of June 2014. Artie is worried about Sarah, but still so very far away. Part of the InCryptid universe.
 - “Stingers and Strangers,” originally published in *Dead Man’s Hand*. Available from Titan Books, May 2014. Jonathan and Fran travel to Colorado to investigate a mystery. Part of the InCryptid universe.
 - “Knit A Sweater Out of Sky,” originally published in *Dead But Not Forgotten*. Available from Audible, May 2014; available from Ace Books, November 2014. A story in the world of Sookie Stackhouse, created by Charlaine Harris.
 - “The Lambs,” originally published in *Bless Your Mechanical Heart*. Available from Evil Girlfriend Media, April 2014. A novel solution to the bullying problem has costs of its own.
 - “We Are All Misfit Toys in the Aftermath of the Velveteen War,” originally published in *Robot Uprisings*. Available from Vintage, April 2014. What happens when artificial intelligence and children’s toys collide?
 - “Jammed,” originally published in *Games Creatures Play*. Available from Ace Books, April 2014. Antimony Price and her roller derby team face a new enemy. Part of the InCryptid universe.
 - “The Ghosts of Bourbon Street,” available for free download as of March 2014. Verity and Dominic are crossing America. Their travels take them to New Orleans. Part of the InCryptid universe.
 - “Spores,” originally published in *The End is Nigh*, February 2014. The fungal apocalypse begins in part one of three.
 - “Blocked,” available for free download as of February 2014. How Antimony Price came to join her roller derby team. Part of the InCryptid universe.
 - “Black as Blood,” available for free download as of January 2014. Istas and Ryan have survived her family. Now they have to deal with his. Part of the InCryptid universe.
 - “Red as Snow,” originally published in *Hex in the City*, December 2013. Istas and Ryan must deal with the most dangerous opponents of all: Istas’s family. Reprinted in *New York Fantastic*, November 2017. Part of the InCryptid universe.
 - “Frontier ABCs: The Life and Times of Charity Smith, Schoolteacher,” originally published in *Raygun Chronicles*, November 2013. Miss Cherry tries to bring a little enlightenment to the human race.
 - “We Both Go Down Together,” available for free download as of November 2013. An early InCryptid adventure, featuring Jonathan Healy and Frances Brown. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
 - “Midway Relics and Dying Breeds,” originally published in *METAtropolis 3: Green Spaces*, October 2013 (audio only). The last of the traveling carnivals faces a future that may have no place left for such frivolities.
 - “Train Yard Blues,” originally published in *Coins of Chaos*, October 2013. Rose Marshall is having a very bad day, thanks to a cursed nickel and the dead man who gave it to her. Part of the Sparrow Hill Road universe.
 - “Never Shines the Sun,” available as part of the print edition of *Chimes at Midnight* as of September 2013. A Toby-universe short story focusing on the Luidaeg years before October’s story began.
 - “Forbid the Sea,” available for free download as of September 2013. A Toby-universe short story focusing on Tybalt ten years after he became a King of Cats. Download from the Toby Daye short fiction page.
 - “Homecoming,” originally published in *Lightspeed Magazine*, September 2013. A homecoming football game beneath an endless October moon may mean more than it seems. It may mean everything.
 - “Hook Agonistes,” co-written with Jay Lake, originally published in *Subterranean Magazine*, September 2013. The enslaved survivors of the human race travel across the stars, under the watchful eye of an animatronic Captain Hook.
 - “Bad Dream Girl,” originally published in *Glitter and Mayhem* from Apex Books, August 2013. Antimony Price and her roller derby team, the Slasher Chicks, must deal with a threat from within. Part of the InCryptid universe, and the first appearance of Antimony Price.
 - “Loch and Key,” available for free download as of August 2013. An early InCryptid adventure, featuring Jonathan Healy and Frances Brown. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
 - “Daughter of the Midway, the Mermaid, and the Open, Lonely Sea,” originally published in *Carniepunk* from Gallery Books, July 2013. A young girl must come to terms with her heritage, her mother, and what this means for the carnival that she loves.
 - “How Green This Land, How Blue This Sea,” (as Mira Grant), originally published by the Orbit Short Fiction Program, July 2013. Set in the Newsflesh universe post-*Blackout*, chronicling a trip to Australia.
 - “The First Fall,” available for free download as of June 2013. An early InCryptid adventure, featuring Jonathan Healy and Frances Brown. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
 - “Sweet Poison Wine,” available for free download as of April 2013. An early InCryptid adventure, featuring Jonathan Healy and Frances Brown. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.

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- “Married in Green,” available for free download as of March 2013. An early InCryptid adventure, featuring Jonathan Healy and Frances Brown. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
- “Emeralds to Emeralds, Dust to Dust,” originally published in *Oz Reimagined* from 47North, February 2013. Return to Oz in this urban fantasy murder mystery.
- “Laughter at the Academy: A Study in the Development of Schizotypal Creative Genius Personality Disorder (SCGPD),” originally published in *The Mad Scientist’s Guide to World Domination* from Tor Books, February 2013. In which mad science will show you. It will show you all.
- “Rat-Catcher,” originally published in *A Fantasy Medley 2* from Subterranean Press, December 2012. A Toby-universe novella focusing on Tybalt’s life in the late 1700s, and how he became King of Cats. Reprinted in *Lightspeed Magazine*, March 2016.
- “In Sea-Salt Tears,” available for free download as of August 2012. A Toby-universe short story focusing on the Luidaeg years before October’s story began. Download from the Toby Daye short fiction page.
- “San Diego 2014: The Last Stand of the California Browncoats,” (as Mira Grant), originally published by the Orbit Short Fiction Program, July 2012. Set in the Newsflesh universe during the first major San Diego, California outbreak.
- “No Place Like Home,” available for free download as of April 2012. An early InCryptid adventure, featuring Jonathan Healy and Frances Brown. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
- “We Will Not Be Undersold!” originally published in *The Modern Fae’s Guide to Surviving Humanity*. Available from DAW Books, March 2012. Silly urban fantasy with lots of chocolate candy.
- “One Hell of a Ride,” available for free download as of February 2012. An early InCryptid adventure, featuring Jonathan Healy and Frances Brown. Download from the InCryptid short fiction page.
- “The Flower of Arizona,” originally published in *Westward Weird*. Available from DAW Books, February 2012. An early InCryptid adventure, featuring Jonathan Healy and Frances Brown.
- “Lady of the Waters,” originally published in *River*. Available from Dark Quest Books, December 2011. Danger, deceit, pirates, and mermaids, all struggling to find the right way through the lochs.
- “Crystal Halloway and the Forgotten Passage,” originally published in the December 2011 issue of *Fantasy Magazine*, reprinted in the anthology *Other Worlds Than These*, from Nightshade Books. Broken hearts and modern fantasy of the world-saving kind.
- “Cinderella City,” originally published in *Human For A Day*. Available from DAW Books, December 2011. Steampunk urban fantasy with a seasonal twist; the second Mina Norton story.
- “Uncle Sam,” originally published in the October 2011 issue of *The Edge of Propinquity*, and available online through the end of October 2012. Modern horror.
- “Through This House,” originally published in *Home Improvement: Undead Edition*. Available from Ace Books, August 2011. An October Daye adventure, set between books four and five.
- “Countdown: A Newsflesh Novella” (as Mira Grant), originally published by the Orbit Short Fiction Program, August 2011. Set in the Newsflesh universe during the days immediately leading up to the Rising. Collected in *When Will You Rise*.
- “Riddles,” originally published in *Human Tales*. Available from Dark Quest Books, April 2011. Straight fantasy told from the monstrous perspective.
- “Apocalypse Scenario #683: The Box” (as Mira Grant), originally published by the Orbit Short Fiction Program, April 2011. Modern horror with mad science. Collected in *When Will You Rise*.
- “The Alchemy of Alcohol,” originally published in *Tales From the Ur-Bar*. Available from DAW Books, March 1st, 2011. Steampunk urban fantasy with a seasonal twist; the first Mina Norton story.
- “Gimme a ‘Z!’” originally published in *Zombiesque*. Available from DAW Books, February 1st, 2011. Darkly comic urban fantasy/horror.
- “The Tolling of Pavlov’s Bells,” originally published in *Apex Magazine* (January 2011). Available to read free online. Science fiction/horror.
- “Everglades” (as Mira Grant), originally published in *The Living Dead 2* (September 2010). Set in the Newsflesh universe during the Rising.
- “Dying With Her Cheer Pants On,” originally published in the April 2010 issue of *Apex Magazine*, reprinted in *Descended from Darkness, Volume II* in February 2011. Darkly comic urban fantasy/horror.
- “Inspirations,” originally published in the October 2009 issue of *The Edge of Propinquity*. Modern horror.
- “Julie Broise and the Devil,” originally published in the October 2009 edition of *Wily Writers*. Available in both audio and text formats. Rush’s Bend rural fantasy.
- “A Citizen in Childhood’s Country,” originally published on Book View Cafe, October 2009. Fantasy.
- “Indexing,” originally published on Book View Cafe, September 2009. Really odd fairy tale twist urban fantasy. Later expanded and incorporated into *Indexing*, January 2014.
- “Lady of Tides,” originally published on Book View Cafe, August 2009. Alternate world steampunk fantasy.
- “Changing Meanings,” originally published on Book View Cafe, August 2009. Quirky linguistics-geek urban fantasy.
- “Knives,” originally published on Book View Cafe, August 2009. Modern fairy tale retelling.
- “Anthony’s Vampire,” originally published on Book View Cafe, August 2009. Modern fairy tale/horror fable.
- “Animal Husbandry,” originally published in *Grants Pass*, August 2009. Reprinted in *Wastelands 2*, February 2015. Post-apocalypse survival horror.
- “Lost,” originally published in *Ravens in the Library* (March 2009, out of print), reprinted in *Lightspeed Magazine*, June 2012. An audio version appears on *Wily Writers*. Fantasy.
- “Let’s Pretend,” originally published in *The Edge of Propinquity*, November 2008. Modern horror.

ESSAYS AND NON-FICTION

- “Thoughts On Writing,” an ongoing essay series published online at *Aphelion Webzine*. All past essays are available to read on the site, and are archived here after a suitable delay.
- “The Secret Language of Fanfic” in *Loose Lips*, an erotic fanfic compilation from Grand Central Publishing. So many butts, September 2016.
- “Neat Things” in *Letters to Tiptree*, an essay collection from Twelfth Planet Press. Letters to James P. Tiptree from people influenced by her work, August 2015.
- “That Nitro-9 That You’re Not Carrying: Violence and the Companion” in *Companion Piece*, an essay collection from Mad Norwegian Press. Essays and reflections on each of the Doctor’s Companions, April 2015.
- “How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Numbers: A Girl, a Rulebook, and Arithmetic” in *Chicks Dig Gaming*, an essay collection from Mad Norwegian Press. Essays and reflections on women in gaming, November 2014.
- Introduction, *Indistinguishable From Magic*, by Catherynne M. Valente (May 2014, Mad Norwegian Press). A collection of essays and non-fiction pieces by Cat Valente.
- *Letters to the Pumpkin King*, originally published in North America by NESFA Press on February 14th, 2014. A collection of essays, non-fiction, and poetry. Contains the full text of *Paths Through the Babylon Wood* and *Leaves From the Babylon Wood*.
- “Waiting for the Doctor: The Women of Series Five” in *Chicks Unravel Time*, an essay collection from Mad Norwegian Press. Essays and reflections on the role of women in each season of *Doctor Who*, November 2012.
- “Summers and Winters, Frost and Fire” in *Chicks Dig Comics: A Celebration of Comic Books by the Women Who Love Them*, an essay collection from Mad Norwegian Press. Essays and reflections on women in comics, April 2012.
- Introduction, *Showtime*, by Narrelle M. Harris (March 2012, Twelfth Planet Press). Four novellas about classic horror concepts given a modern Australian twist.
- “The Girls Next Door: Learning to Live with the Living Dead and Never Even Break a Nail” in *Whedonistas: A Celebration of the Worlds of Joss Whedon by the Women Who Love Them*, an essay collection from Mad Norwegian Press. Essays and reflections on women in the works of Joss Whedon, March 2011.
- “Mathematical Excellence: A Documentary,” in *Chicks Dig Time Lords: A Celebration of Doctor Who by the Women Who Love It*, an essay collection from Mad Norwegian Press. Essays and reflections on women in *Doctor Who* fandom, March 2010.
- Introduction, *In a Gilded Light: 105 Tales of the Macabre*, by Jennifer Brozek (Spring 2010, Dark Quest Books). One hundred and five little slices of Twilight Zone-esque goodness.

POETRY

- “The Right of It,” in the Winter 2014 issue of *Goblin Fruit*.
- “Wounds,” in the June 2012 issue of *Apex Magazine*.
- “Post-Modern Cinderella,” in the Fall 2011 edition of *Goblin Fruit*.
- “Clockwork Chickens,” in the June 2011 issue of *Apex Magazine*.
- “Ever After Variations,” in the Spring 2010 edition of *Goblin Fruit*.
- *Paths Through the Babylon Wood*. Limited-issue chapbook produced for Conflkt 2009. Hand-stitched, cover by Beckett Gladney, introduction by Michelle Dockrey. Out of print.
- *Leaves from the Babylon Wood*. Limited-issue chapbook produced for OVFF 2005. Hand-stitched, cover by Beckett Gladney, introduction by Allison Durno. Out of print.
- “Persephone’s Daughter,” in the January 2004 issue of *Branches Quarterly*.
- “Mystery,” in the June 2002 issue of *Speculon*.

WRITING AS MIRA GRANT

- *Alien: Echo*. For Olivia Shipp, surviving life with her parents has always been an adventure. Now, in this licensed tie-in to the *Alien* universe, she has a bigger adventure to face..., published by Imprint, April 2019. Science fiction/biological thriller.
- *Into the Drowning Deep*. Accompany the *Melusine* on a scientific expedition to prove the existence of mermaids, published by Orbit US and UK, November 2017. Science fiction/biological thriller.
- *Feedback*. A return to the world of the Newsflesh trilogy, published by Orbit US and UK, October 2016. Science fiction/conspiracy thriller.
- *RISE*. The collected Newsflesh-universe short fiction, published by Orbit US and Orbit UK, June 2016. Science fiction/medical thriller.
- *Chimera*. Book three of the Parasitology trilogy, published by Orbit US and Orbit UK, November 2015. Science fiction/medical thriller.
- *Symbiont*. Book two of the Parasitology trilogy, published by Orbit US and Orbit UK, November 2014. Science fiction/medical thriller.
- *Parasite*. Book one of the Parasitology trilogy, published by Orbit US, October 2013, and Orbit UK, November 2013. Science fiction/medical thriller.
- *When Will You Rise*. Collected short fiction, including «Countdown» and «Apocalypse Scenario #683,» published by Subterranean Press, October 2012. Science fiction/horror.
- *Blackout*. Book three of the Newsflesh trilogy, published by Orbit US, May 2012, and Orbit UK, June 2012. Science fiction/conspiracy thriller.
- *Deadline*. Book two of the Newsflesh trilogy, published by Orbit US, May 2011, and Orbit UK, June 2011. Science fiction/medical thriller.
- *Feed*. Book one of the Newsflesh trilogy, published by Orbit US, April 2010, and Orbit UK, June 2010. Science fiction/political thriller.

Artist Guest of Honor

Alyssa Winans

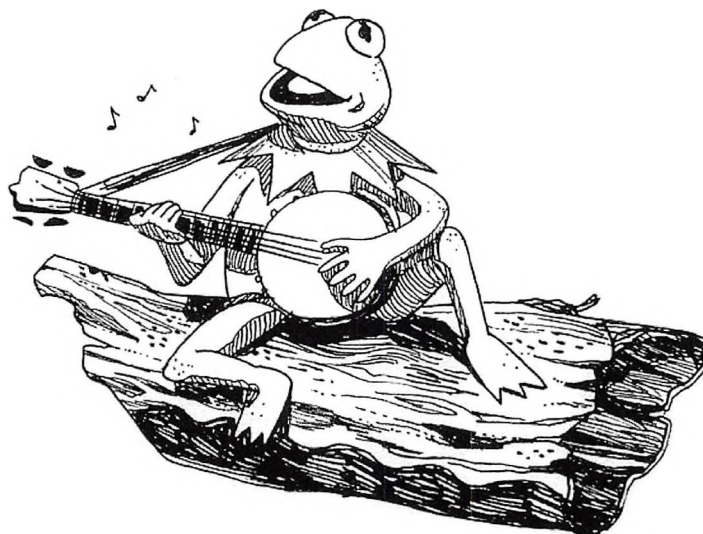
Alyssa is an illustrator, animator, and game artist based in the San Francisco bay area. She currently works for the Google Doodle team and enjoys making pastries and unusual ice cream flavors on the weekends.

Website: www.alyssawinans.com.

Select Clients: Harmonix, FableVision, Tor Books, Tor.com Publishing, Hodder & Stoughton, Cricket Magazine, Google, Warner Animation Group.

Honors:

- 3x3 Professional Show No. 12 Honorable Mention 2015
- Spectrum Fantastic Art 22 2015
- Society of Illustrators of LA Illustration West 53 2015
- 3x3 Professional Show No. 11 2014
- 3x3 Picture Book Show No. 11 Honorable Mention 2014
- Society of Illustrators West Student Show (Silver Award) 2012
- Society of Illustrators Student Show 2012
- 3x3 Student Show 2011
- Society of Illustrators Zankel Scholar Finalist 2011





Man's Road

Music Guests of Honor

Margaret & Kristoph



Sugo Music recording artists Margaret Davis and Kristoph Klover perform original arrangements of Celtic music from the British Isles and the Medieval and Renaissance melodies of the European courts and countrysides, featuring soaring vocals and Celtic harp, guitar, octave mandolin, flute, recorders, and whistle. They have delighted audiences since 1993—sharing the magic of other times and places with fans of traditional music the world over. Through their travels and studies, Margaret & Kristoph have put

together an engaging collection of traditional Celtic, Medieval, and Renaissance music ranging from haunting harp-based ballads and troubadour love songs to danceable jigs and reels. Their lyrics, including some in Gaelic, Medieval French, and Provençal, speak of love and longing, quests and revels, magic and transformation in a language that transports and enchants the listener.

They have recorded 15 CDs on the Flowinglass Music label, as the duo and with their bands Avalon Rising and Broceliande, and in 2008 they performed in the Disney movie *Bedtime Stories*. In 2018 they won the Lost Chord Award, presented by the Society for Ritual Arts for their many years of creating and supporting mythopoetic music, folk music, Early music, Pagan music, harpers of the Bay Area, and the Celtic Rock communities, through community engagement, recording, and the establishment of Flowinglass Music.





Ignis Anguis



Desdemona and the Deep

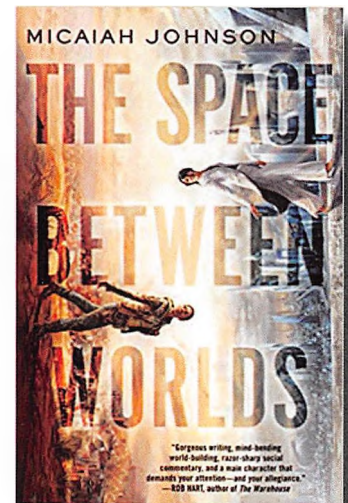
2021 Compton Crook Award Winner

Micaiah Johnson



Micaiah Johnson's novel *The Space Between Worlds* is the winner of the 2021 Compton Crook Award. Micaiah was raised in California's Mojave Desert surrounded by trees named Joshua and women who told stories. She received her Bachelor of Arts in creative writing from the University of California, Riverside, and her Master of Fine Arts in fiction from Rutgers University–Camden. She now studies American literature at Vanderbilt University, where she focuses on critical race theory and automatons. Her

debut novel, *The Space Between Worlds*, from Hodder in the UK and Crown in the US, is a science-fiction novel that uses the concept of the multiverse to examine privilege.



BSFS 2021 Compton Crook Award Finalists

- Karen Osbourne – *Architects of Mamory* (Tor)
- Lindsay Ellis – *Axiom's End* (St Martin's Press)
- Andrea Stewart – *Bone Shard Daughter* (Orbit)
- K.M. (Kellan) Szpara – *Docile* (Tor)
- Rebecca McLaughlin – *Nameless Queen* (Crown Books)
- Micaiah Johnson – *The Space Between Worlds* (Del Rey)

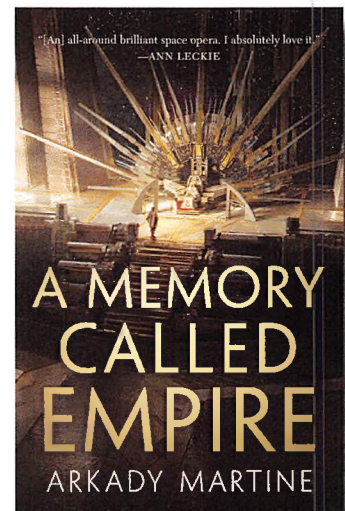
2020 Compton Crook Award Winner

Arkady Martine



Arkady Martine's novel *A Memory Called Empire* is the winner of the 2020 Compton Crook Award. Arkady Martine is a speculative fiction writer and, as Dr. AnnaLinden Weller, a historian of the Byzantine Empire and a city planner. She is currently a policy advisor for the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, where she works on climate change mitigation, energy grid modernization, and resiliency planning. Under both her names she writes about border politics, rhetoric, propaganda,

and the edges of the world. Arkady grew up in New York City and, after some time in Turkey, Canada, Sweden, and Baltimore, lives in Santa Fe with her wife, the author Vivian Shaw. Find her online at arkadymartine.net or on *Twitter* as @ArkadyMartine.



Balticon 55 Videos on YouTube

Balticon 55 panels and presentations are available to view on the Balticon YouTube channel (youtube.com/c/BaltimoreSciFi/videos). The recordings will contain automatically generated captions. You can also view videos from Balticon 54.

YouTube can be used in a web browser or you may download the YouTube app for your device.

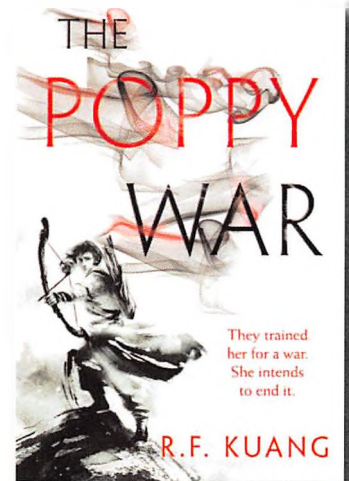
2019 Compton Crook Award Winner

Rebecca F. Kuang



R.F. Kuang's novel *The Poppy War* is the winner of the 2019 Compton Crook Award. Ms. Kuang is the Nebula, *Locus*, and World Fantasy Award nominated author of *The Poppy War* and *The Dragon Republic* (Harper Voyager). She has an MPhil in Chinese Studies from the University of Cambridge and is currently pursuing an MSc in Contemporary Chinese Studies at Oxford University on a Marshall Scholarship. She also translates Chinese science fiction to English. Her debut novel *The Poppy War*

was listed by *Time*, Amazon, Goodreads, and the *Guardian* as one of the best books of 2018 and has won the Crawford Award and Compton Crook Award for Best First Novel. She starts her PhD in East Asian Languages and Literatures at Yale in the fall.



BSFS Library Holdings

- Index of Science Fiction & Fantasy Authors and BSFS Lending Library Holdings
- Constantly Updated Inventory of BSFS Books

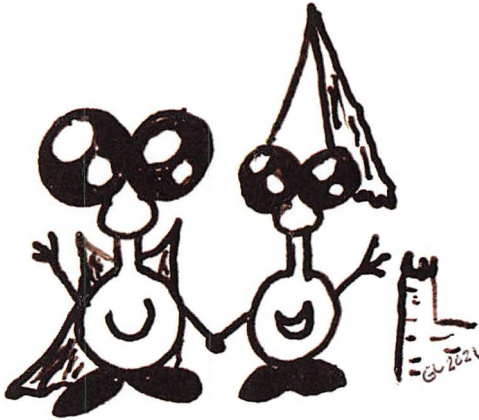
We have over 13,000 titles in our building including novels, anthologies, SF magazines such as *Analog*, *Asimov's*, *S&FS*, *Locus* and others. Drop by at any of our building events to borrow and return books!

Visit: bsfs.libib.com



Fan Guests of Honor

Bruce & Cheryl Evry



In the lore of local fandom, one cannot pass the DC area without hearing about the convention-running duo of Bruce and Cheryl Evry. Bruce started a small gaming supply group called Fantasy Teknicks, or FanTek for short, around 1981 out of Aberdeen, MD. A birthday party he planned “for his closest friends” in 1982 quickly grew out of hand, and he had to move it to a hotel over New Year’s Eve. Thus, Evecon was born. Around Evecon 3, he met a young woman from Philadelphia, Cheryl. Together, they became a formidable team running the conventions, which expanded to include

CastleCon in 1987. These quickly grew, and FanTek joined the ranks of DC fandom. Later, they went on to try out other experiments, like HalloweenCon and CthulhuCon, usually as one-off ideas, out of Frederick, MD.

But FanTek cons, which were affectionately called “BruceCons” by some, were more than just fan-run events. For starters, after EveCon 4, they no longer had headline guests. Oh, they had famous people, including Isaac Asimov, but Bruce said “all my friends are my guests,” meaning the convention attendees as well. This radical plan became one of the first “relaxacons” in the area, where the convention was focused more on social aspects of fandom, rather than the fuss of guests. Local writers and celebrities hung out in the relaxed environment. Programming took chances: they had “ordinary people” talk about things they liked rather than depending on star power. This gave an enormous boost to the local fandom community before the Internet. Some critics called FanTek cons “aloof,” and “not serious conventions,” but Bruce would reply, “well, yeah. That’s the point.” Many, many people started out entire careers from cosplay to literary pursuits, from technology to research jobs, all too numerous to mention, from these conventions. Membership to FanTek never went beyond 2500 people, but lasted an amazing 21 years until their last CastleCon in 2003 when they announced their retirement.

Those who didn’t know DC fandom before the huge media conventions don’t know how important these smaller cons were to local DC fandom. It gave us a chance to be ourselves, whether were nerds, geeks, transgendered, furry, weeaboos, goth, gay, or somewhere on the autism spectrum. FanTek cons were our home and family, always guests to Bruce and Cheryl.

—Bio and Drawing of Bruce & Cheryl as Martians by Grig Larson

Special Announcement From Balticon 55: Unfortunately, Bruce and Cheryl Evry will not be able to appear this weekend as our Fan Guests of Honor. We send our best wishes to the Evrys; their presence will be missed.



Arrow Fields

2021 Robert Heinlein Award Winner

C.J. Cherryh

C. J. Cherryh is a speculative fiction writer, editor, and translator. She is best known for the Alliance-Union Universe, the Foreigner Universe, and the *Fortress* series. She won the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer in 1977 and several Hugo Awards, including Best Novel for *Downbelow Station* (1981) and *Cyteen* (1988). She has a Master of Arts in classics from Johns Hopkins University. Ms. Cherryh taught high school Latin, Ancient Greek, the classics, and ancient history. She enjoys figure skating and has an interest in genealogy, history, and archaeology. She lives in Spokane, Washington, USA. Her current project, with Jane S. Fancher, is working on a sequel to their 2019 novel *Alliance Rising* set in the Alliance–Union universe.



BSFS Congratulates the Winners of the Jack L. Chalker 2021 Young Writers' Contest

First Place

"The Development Office Archives: The Flat Logs"

Caden Heiser-Cerrato
Loyola Blakefield—Towson, MD

Second Place

"Migration"

Lila Bacas
Dulaney High School—Timonium, MD

Honorable Mention

"The Path"

Alison Xu
Walter Johnson High School—Bethesda, MD

Third Place (Tie)

"An Ice Storm in the Making"

Amanda Bair
Cambridge-South Dorchester High
School—Cambridge, MD

Third Place (Tie)

"The Planetkiller's Song"

Anastasia Kelly
Bryn Mawr School—Baltimore, MD

Honorable Mention

"One Moment"

Jordan Brown
Friends School of Baltimore—Baltimore, MD

The Robert A. Heinlein Award

C.J. Cherryh is the winner of the 2021 Robert A. Heinlein Award, given for “outstanding published works in science fiction and technical writings that inspire the human exploration of space,” recognizing her body of work, “with emphasis on her detailed social science and commercial relationship based stories set in the space station rich Alliance-Union universe.” The award is administered by the Baltimore Science Fiction Society (BSFS).



The winner will receive a plaque, a sterling silver medallion, and two lapel pins, all featuring the likeness of Robert A. Heinlein. The award will be presented May 28, 2021 during the virtual opening ceremonies of Balticon 55.

Balticon and the Robert A. Heinlein Award are both managed and sponsored by The Baltimore Science Fiction Society. A grant from the Heinlein Society funds half of the costs associated with the award and the family of the late author Dr. Yoji Kondo provides additional funding for the award.

The Robert A. Heinlein Award is a sterling silver medallion bearing the image of Robert A. Heinlein, as depicted by artist Arlin Robbins. The medallion is matched with a red-white-blue lanyard. In addition, the winner receives two lapel pins for use when a large medallion is impractical, and a plaque describing the award, suitable for home or office wall display.

The Robert A. Heinlein Award selection committee consists of science fiction writers and was founded by Dr. Yoji Kondo, a long-time friend of Robert and Virginia Heinlein. Members of the original committee were approved by Virginia Heinlein. The current Chairman of the Selection Committee is Michael F. Flynn.

Virginia Heinlein authorized multiple awards in memory of her husband, including the Heinlein Prize, which is fully funded by Virginia Heinlein’s estate, and a National Space Society award for volunteer projects.

Previous Robert A. Heinlein Award Recipients

- 2020 Vernor S. Vinge
- 2019 Gregory Benford
- 2018 Neal Stephenson
- 2017 Robert J. Sawyer
- 2016 Kim Stanley Robinson
- 2015 Jack McDevitt
- 2014 Geoffrey A. Landis
- 2013 Allen Steele and Yoji Kondo
- 2012 Stanley Schmidt
- 2011 Connie Willis
- 2009 Joe Haldeman and John Varley
- 2008 Ben Bova and Spider Robinson
- 2007 Elizabeth Moon and Anne McCaffrey
- 2006 Greg Bear and Jack Williamson
- 2005 Jerry Pournelle and Larry Niven
- 2004 Arthur C. Clarke
- 2003 Michael Flynn and Virginia Heinlein

About the BSFS Compton Crook Award

Every new novelist starts somewhere. Some writers are exceptionally skilled (and/or lucky) and produce a big hit with their first book. Other writers' first novels show signs of future greatness as they gain experience. But too often, readers who see an unfamiliar name on the shelf will skip it, assuming that the book cannot be good or they already would have heard about the author. And many publishers cannot devote the same resources into a new writer's first book that they can put into a proven bestseller.

This is even more true in the modern age as new writers compete with more titles than ever. While the Internet makes it easy to find titles the reader knows about, the absence of real bookshelves on web bookstores makes it harder for a new book to catch the reader's eye serendipitously.

But new writers provide new voices that are so vitally important to the field. New writers mean new ideas and new approaches that keep the field fresh. And someday, when all of today's writers have left us, someone needs to be writing for our children and our children's children.

That is why the members of the Baltimore Science Fiction Society, Inc. (BSFS) created the Compton Crook Award in 1982 to honor the best first novel of the year written by an individual author (collaborations are not eligible) in the Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror genre. Since its inception, the award has been presented at Balticon—the four-day annual Maryland regional science fiction convention produced by BSFS, currently held on Memorial Day weekend in the Baltimore, MD area.

The award includes a framed award document and, for the novel's author, a check for \$1,000 and an invitation to be the Compton Crook Guest at Balticon for two years. (This includes transportation and lodging at the Balticon host hotel for the author and her/his spouse/significant other/companion.) The first year the Compton Crook Guest is presented the award and the second year they are asked to present the new

winner's award. For both Guest years, the author is offered opportunities to participate in Balticon events and program panels, present readings, and take part in autograph sessions alongside the Balticon Guest of Honor.

The award was named in memory of Towson State College Professor of Natural Sciences Compton Crook, who wrote under the name Stephen Tall, and died in 1981. Professor Crook was active for many years in the Baltimore Science Fiction Society and was a staunch champion of new works in the fields eligible for the award. The first Compton Crook Award was presented in 1983 for Donald Kingsbury's debut novel *Courtship Right*, a work published in 1982.

The committee puts a lot of time and energy into finding novels which are eligible Compton Crook Award candidates. However, we cannot find everything and, as some writers use multiple pen names, we cannot always tell who is a new author. And keeping tabs on the small press and self-published books is even harder. So agents and publishers are encouraged to send us notice of any debut science fiction, fantasy or horror novels you are releasing or have released which you would like considered for the current award year. New authors, please contact us with information about your book. This helps us to bring into consideration any novels our research might have missed.

Novels are read and rated by members of the club. We depend on publishers, authors, or their agents to send us four to six copies (and ebooks) of genre debut novels published between November of last year through October of the present year. See "Candidate Eligibility Requirements" on our website [www.bsfs.org/CCA/bsfscnu2014.htm] for eligibility and mailing information. The earlier we receive books (which can be Advance Reader copies), the more time club members will have to read and rate them. We start accepting books in the summer. The committee at its discretion may exclude novels that do not meet its quality standards.

Preliminary voting is closed on midnight the Friday before the second Saturday in February. Finalists will be notified within 72 hours and offered an opportunity to provide additional copies of their candidate novel for the BSFS readers. PLEASE NOTE: While we will make every effort to notify the finalists, we may not be able to reach all them before the media learns the results. Due to demands on our time as our convention approaches, we may not be able to contact all the other writers. If your novel is a candidate and you have not, by the end of February, been contacted about being a finalist, you should check

the finalist list on the website [www.bsfs.org/CCA/bsfscnu2014.htm] to make sure you have not missed our communication.

Final voting for the award is closed at midnight the Friday before the second Saturday in April and within 48 hours, the winner will be notified and extended a formal invitation to be our Guest at Balticon. One copy of each donated book is retained in the BSFS library; additional copies will be offered at the BSFS Books for Kids fund-raising auction at Balticon, to Baltimore City School libraries, or sold and/or distributed at other Fan Events as appropriate.

Compton Crook Award Eligibility Requirements

1. This must be the author's first commercially available solo (collaborations are not eligible) science fiction, fantasy or horror novel under her/his legal name or any pseudonym. (By "commercially available" we mean available for purchase from one or more internet or brick-and-mortar sellers. This includes direct author-to-reader sales.)
 - a. Please note that a first solo novel is eligible even if the author has already had collaborative novels published, as long as those publications listed both authors on the cover.
 - b. Novels considered must be adult or young adult novels intended for readers ages 13 and up.
 - c. Ebook-only and self-published books count as a first-novel when published, even if the book is later published in print or by a publishing house.
2. PLEASE NOTE: For purposes of this award, the year of eligibility starts November 1 through October 31st of the following year. So Compton Crook 37 books must have been released between November 1, 2017 and October 31st, 2018 to be eligible. (If the release date is a later year than the copyright, we will consider candidacy based on the author's explanation of the date difference.)
3. We accept digital-only novels and self-published novels. However, these must meet the same standards for writing and copy editing as print and traditionally published novels.
 - a. The digital novel must be provided to us in unprotected epub, mobi, and/or pdf format file via email or on CDs or flash drives.
 - b. We will only accept download links for submissions if the link is provided through email to the committee or made available on Google Drive. Otherwise, files must be provided on a CD or flash drive. *Please note: we cannot accept links that will not remain live until the end of the candidacy period.*
4. No title is eligible if the author has previously won any award from any Australian, Canadian, UK, British Commonwealth, former British Commonwealth or US organization for any English language novel in any genre.
5. The Compton Crook committee can, at its discretion, exclude from consideration books that do not meet the award's quality standards. The members of BSFS as a committee of the whole rate the novels to determine the 5-10 finalists and then club members have an additional two months to review the finalists.
6. There is no rule #6.

For more info, including how to submit, please visit: bsfs.org/CCA/bsfscrules.htm.

Baltimore Science Fiction Society



The Baltimore Science Fiction Society is a 501(c)(3) literary organization for science fiction, fantasy, horror and speculative fiction literature. We exist to promote the creation and appreciation of science fiction and fantasy cultural arts—primarily through literary art forms, but also embracing the many related graphical, musical, and theatrical creations inspired by SF. If you love science fiction and fantasy then BSFS and our projects and programs are a new home for your mind, heart, and soul.

Visit the BSFS Building for:

- **The BSFS Book Club** Meets every 4th Saturday of each month at 6:30 pm.
- **Spec Fic Critique Circle** Writers critique participants' writing every 2nd and 4th Thursday at 6:30 pm.
- **Author Events** Throughout the year.
- **Our Free Public Lending Library** With over 13,000 titles.
- **Film Nights** Indie shorts & feature films on the 3rd Saturday of each month at 7:00 pm.
- **Anime Social** Anime, manga, gaming every 4th Saturday of each month at 2:00 pm.
- **Business Meeting** Help us dream up new projects! Held the 2nd Saturday of each month at 8:30 pm.
- **Alphabet Soup** Family board gaming afternoon every 2nd and 4th Sunday, 12:00 noon-5:00 pm.
- **Table Top RPG** The last Sunday of every month, 1:00-5:00 pm.
- **Digital Gaming** Computer & console gaming on the 3rd Sunday of each month, 2:00-5:30 pm.

All of the events and meetings at our building are free and open to the public. Our headquarters is served by the CityLink Orange and 22 MTA buses and free parking is available on the street. Visit us at:

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Meetup: meetup.com/Baltimore-Science-Fiction-Society

Tumblr: baltimorescifi.tumblr.com

Instagram: instagram.com/baltimorescifi

Discord: discord.gg/VGHpxwu

YouTube: youtube.com/channel/UCfh75XSMBZ-JXPuzXnKsisA

GoodReads: goodreads.com/user/show/135786020-baltimore-science-fiction-society

Mail: PO Box 686, Baltimore, MD 21203-0686

BSFS proudly sponsors Balticon, the Maryland Regional Science Fiction Convention, on Memorial Day Weekend in Baltimore each year. Check it out at balticon.org. BSFS also sponsors writing contests: one for Maryland students, one for Maryland adults, and one just for poetry. We also sponsor two literary awards, the Compton Crook Award and the Robert A. Heinlein Award.

The Dragon Who Refused to Fly

Mary Harrigan

First Place, BSFS 2020 Amateur Writing Contest

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I clenched my claws around the cliff's edge. The rock crumbled against the leathery pads of my feet like the over-sized lingonberry biscuits my mama fired fresh every morning before school. A bottomless expanse of blue sky with clouds far below yawned beneath me. My hind legs made furrows in the soft earth: I would rather fall than fly, if you could call that a choice. Wings tucked tight, I tasted charcoal rumbling in my throat as smoke curled from my nostrils. Strong downdrafts assaulted me from the wings of my classmates above as I struggled to hold onto the earth. They leapt into the sky all around, their jewel-toned scales glittering in the sun.

All dragons must fly, my mother had repeated to me this morning. The Sky is our right. But how could the entire sky be our right? We walked on the earth but didn't claim it as our sovereign ground. Whenever I suggested this in class all I got in return were growls and threats of tail biting.

At last, I wrestled my bulky body away from the ledge and reclined on my haunches, panting. The summertime air was warm; my dragon scales couldn't sweat so I let my tongue loll out, cooling off as best I could. They said the sky was cooler; the wind rushing against my scales would be a relief. And a betrayal. I snorted and another wisp of smoke curled from my nostrils. I had been the last in my class to breathe fire, as well.

Why must we breathe fire? I had asked my teacher, a gargantuan gold scaled dragon three-hundred years my elder. He snorted at me.

Because we can, Lelciel. Another non-answer. The elders weren't fans of answering non-traditional questions. Neither was my mother. I remembered returning home after class that day. Mother was waiting for me in our familial cavern. She blocked the entrance when she heard me shambling through the underbrush of the forest.

Your teacher told me you still refuse to breath fire, she said, narrowing her golden eyes at me. This nonsense has to stop.

I ducked my neck and curled my tail around my body. It doesn't feel right to me Mama. Mother's sapphire hide rippled as she growled, extending her long neck towards me. We were nose to nose when she blew a plume of smoke in my face.

It is natural. I don't care how it feels. She pivoted faster than a creature of her mass should have been able to and retreated into our home. If you want to eat, you will breathe fire.

I had spent a week resisting. I tried to subsist on the berries and plants of the forest, but they upset my stomach and made me so sick I could barely move. One fateful night mother dropped the corpse of a rabbit in front of me. It was still warm and I could see where my mother's fangs had ended its life. She towered over me, waiting. When I finally coughed a gout of flame and burned the rabbit to a crisp, she wrapped her wings around me and nuzzled my neck.

I just want what's best for you, Lelciel, she said.

My flightmates still circled in the air, wings stretched wide as they coasted on thermals. I could hear their mental chatter as they ribbed each other and practiced their swoops and dives. Their wing membranes were almost translucent in the direct sunlight and the colors of their hides—gold and silver to purple and blue—filtered the light. They were beautiful. I tucked my own violet-colored wings closer to my body. If I squeezed them tight enough maybe they'd become one with my hide and disappear.

Why must I fly? I often asked.

Because you are a dragon. The elders answered. If I pressed more the tail-biting wasn't a threat, it was reality. My tail still stung from the last time I'd inquired too far. The elders detested curiosity.

Just be natural, they often reprimanded, my tail in their teeth.

I had a feeling we disagreed on the definition of natural.

After school, I trudged to my familial cave nestled at the bottom of a craggy mountain surrounded by forest. Around me fleet-footed deer scampered past, springing with agility through the brush. Why couldn't I leap and bound as they did? They were lithe and graceful, I was a monster trapped inside this scaly body, incapable of anything but lumbering destruction.

Mother was waiting when I returned home. She raised her long neck to look at me, her reptilian eyes glowing in the murky dark. Did you fly today, little one?

I ducked my head. No Mama.

Her growl shook the cave and loose rock tumbled from the walls. Her body uncoiled and she skulked towards me. Not again.

I should have done this long ago.

Before I could resist she pounced and pushed me into the bright sun. She grabbed me with her claws and took flight. I did not roar; no one would save me, the species-traitor. I did not squirm; falling from this height would surely be my end. We landed on the highest peak in my flight's territory.

Fly back to me, or never return, she said. And she was gone.

The mountaintop mother left me on was barren and craggy with only a few patches of tall grass and brown shrubs breaking up the jutting bluffs of dark rock. All the sides were steep and glassy. Impossible for a creature of my size to climb down. I nestled next to one of the bluffs and scratched the stone smooth with my claws, tucking my traitorous wings in for added warmth. This high, the wind tore at me, and the air was thin. I gulped deep through my nostrils and closed my eyes.

I remembered the ancient stories. They told of a time before the mountains and the forest, before time itself. It was said that the first beings had no form. They were full of Power and changed their shape as often as they changed their minds. All creatures were descendants of them and the forms they eventually settled into. These stories were my kindling. They'd kept the spark of me alight when my classmates mocked me and the Elders bit my tail.

Those stories are myths, Mother would scoff as I grew older.

I refused to believe that. I refused to believe the wrongness I felt in every scale wasn't also a gift from nature.

I drifted to sleep shivering against the rocky bluff. In my dreams, I could be anything. I erased my wings; the sky held nothing for me. I saw a bear once, standing straight on its hind legs. What would it be like to stand upright? To have paws that gripped instead of claws that shredded? I thought of the deer springing through the forest. What if I had a body that was slender and agile? I dreamed of myself with flowing hair like the mane of a horse and soft pink skin like I'd once seen on a piglet. I rolled in my sleep. My scales itched terribly; the rocky bluff must've been poking in all the wrong places as my bones ached and throbbed all over, from my snout to my tail.

It was the cold that woke me as the ruddy orb of the sun peeked over the horizon line. I unstuck my gummy eyes and noticed a shadow covering me. The top of the bluff I'd hunkered by was far above me now. I reached out with my front leg and gasped at the skinny pink appendage silhouetted against the still-gray sky. I pressed the pink paw with five not-claws to my face: I had no snout! I looked down at myself, craning my shorter neck to stare at my strange pink body. My tail and wings were gone, too. Dark hair tickled my shoulders. My skin was firm but soft, not callous or scaly.

I stood up on my wobbly hind legs and for the first time, smiled as I surveyed the sky beyond the mountain. I was cold. Hunger gnawed inside me and my new body was stiff from the transformation. My transformation. No more tail to be bitten. No more taste of charcoal scouring my throat. What had I become? Where would I go from here? I decided in that moment it didn't matter. I defied definition. The spark of me I'd kept hidden and protected had caught flame at last and now I knew without doubt: a dragon I'd never been, and a dragon I was no more.

What else could I become?

Whatever I willed.

BSFS 2020 Amateur Writing Contest Winners

Second Place

"Starling"

Alexander Dzwonchyk

Third Place

"A Tale From the Harmonium"

Miguel O. Mitchell

About the First Place Winner

Mary Harrigan is an emerging Baltimore-based writer who harbors a not-so-secret love of dragons. When not solving the mystery of what is the puppy chewing now, she chronicles her writing journey on her blog, *Inciting Event*. You can also find her on *Twitter* as @WhiteSheWolf and on *Instagram* as @mwritesdragons.

The BSFS Amateur Writing Contest accepts stories annually from **April 1-June 1**. Winners are announced at Capclave. For entry rules, see: bsfs.org/bsfsssc.htm.

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The BSFS Jack L. Chalker Young Writers' Contest

1. CONTESTANT REQUIREMENTS:

- a. Contestants shall be no younger than 14 and no older than 18 years of age as of May 29 in the contest year and shall reside in, or attend school in Maryland.
- b. Winners will be required to provide their proof of age.



2. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

- a. Submissions must be in the field of science fiction or fantasy.
- b. Submissions shall be no more than 2,500 words in length.
- c. All submissions should include a title page with the title of the story, the entrant's name, school, note if home-schooled, home address, evening phone number, and e-mail address, if possible. Also, please include your English teacher's name.
- d. Paper submissions must have numbered pages—all submissions *must have a footer with the title and page number*. They should not have the entrant's name or other identifying information on the individual pages. Paper submissions should be typed or printed, double-spaced, on 8.5" x 11" paper.
- e. Electronic submissions must be sent as an attachment to email in either Microsoft Word or Wordperfect format. Otherwise, they must be printed out and submitted on paper.
- f. One contestant may submit multiple entries, but only one prize may be won by any one entrant.

3. OTHER RULES:

- a. Judges shall be drawn from the membership of BSFS, Inc.
- b. The winners will be contacted before the convention and their names will be announced to the public at the next Balticon on Memorial Day weekend just before the Masquerade at 8:30 PM. Winners need not be present to receive their prizes.
- c. The submissions ranked first, second and third shall receive cash prizes of \$150, \$100 and \$75, respectively. The three winners shall also receive complimentary registrations for Balticon for themselves and their parents or one guest each. They will also receive a free Balticon T-Shirt.
- d. The deadline for all submissions is March 31, in any given contest year.
- e. Paper submissions should be addressed to: **Jack L. Chalker Young Writers' Contest, BSFS, Inc., PO Box 686, Baltimore, MD 21203-0686.**
- f. Electronic submissions should be addressed to: **ywc@balticon.org**.
- g. All submissions become the property of Baltimore Science Fiction Society, Inc. (BSFS, Inc.), and may be published in society publications.

For additional information, send e-mail to: **ywc@balticon.org**. Web: **bsfs.org/bsfsywc.htm**.

The Development Office Archives: The Flat Logs

Caden Heiser-Cerrato

First Place, BSFS Jack L. Chalker 2021 Young Writers' Contest

Loyola Blakefield—Towson, MD

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December 20th, 2340

Mother and father are arguing again about FLAT. Their voices are bouncing off the walls and around my head. Mother wants to take FLAT and father thinks that it's not worth the pay increase. 400 to 800 cez a month is an increase that would better our lives, especially mine. Mother works in the factory, as does father, as does everyone. They make the same robots that feed us and do the upkeep and run everything.

Everyone in our block works in the closest factory called Frolic. I looked that word up in the dictionary and it means "to move with playful fervor." Mother and father aren't happy when they return from Frolic at nighttime. They seem tired. Their eyelids droop and their eyes are red, and they say things like "we aren't in the mood to talk." They don't "frolic."

There isn't much around here. Apart from the factories there is the Development Office (it's usually called Development). Those that work there run the factories and create everything that's new. They made FLAT and they're pushing the product through the factories relentlessly, bumping up pay to the willing.

I don't really get to talk to mother or father during the day because they're always working. I also have school. In school, they teach us basic skills in language and math, but the majority of our lessons are on how to properly work the factory machines and not cut off our hands. It's my last year learning. Next year I move to the junior division of the factories.

I can make small bots up there. Bots that clean the dirt off of floors. The senior division makes the type of bots to keep us all safe and in-line. It is good to be in-line. In-line is acting like everyone else and adhering to Development. I would hate to not be in-line. Mother likes in-line. Father thinks in-line is too much of a burden.

Father's brother used to head up a senior division of the factory before he stepped out of in-line. The bots he himself built ended up taking him somewhere else. Father used to spend some of his cez on alco when his brother was taken away.

Father had an eval on him last year because he had too much alco. He was reviewed by other senior division people and they banned him from alco for a little bit, on account of productivity. Father forced himself to stop thinking about his brother.

Mother doesn't drink alco. She is more focused than father. She is more in-line. She is a better senior than father is. Their talk has died down now. They discuss productivity and individual output. Mother says father needs to focus. He should focus.

Mother told me once, before her shifts lengthened, that father was known as a daydreamer in the junior division. That's where they met. They developed a strong bond. Back then it was called love, now it is called passion. They were in passion then. They certified their passion and then got permission for me. Here I am. They named me Elation. The word elation was used a lot before now. Now it is archaic. I am both archaic and current, I guess.

Mother calls me into their room now. It is a small room, very sterilized. There is one artificial light. They are sitting on their bed. Father tells me that mother has decided to take FLAT next week. He says he is not going to take it. I say okay. I say I am going out. They say okay.

I leave our cell. I travel down our block, down the endless grey staircase. Down the fifteen levels. I run, skipping steps, so that I won't miss the sunset. I am panting when I hop down the last step and open the door to the outside. Someone else walks into the staircase from the apartments.

The sun is fading and pink and purple spill across the sky like paint. Nobody is allowed to sell paint like that. Development can regulate paint, but they can't regulate the sky. I watch the sun trail off under the horizon.

Someone yells Elation. I turn. It is Southward. My friend Southward walks over to me. He lives on our block. He is also districted to Frolic. I say hello to him, how are you Southward. He says he is positive.

Southward is a refraction of me. He has black hair, too but he uses a middle part, and I push mine to the right. He is neutral color, like me, but he is shorter and a little chubbier. We both don't have freckles. No one really has freckles.

I tell Southward the sunset was positive. He nods in affirmation. He walks away. I like Southward. It's too negative that his mother left the block. After FLAT came out, she ran away. Development can't find her anywhere. They think she may have ended.

It is getting dark, so I head inside up the stairs to my cell. I climb onto my mattress and the lights go off.

December 27th, 2340

It is next week. Mother took FLAT. Development said she would be out for about a week, resting. I still don't know much about it. It just increases productivity. The door to father

and mother's room is often closed. Father doesn't let me go in there. He has been drinking more alco lately. I don't think it's about his brother. Father threw out all of the photos and statements about his brother a few days ago.

Tomorrow, I graduate from school, and next week, when the new year begins, I will start working in the junior division. I desire to be very in-line as a worker. I think I will go see Southward. Southward's father has also been having a lot of alco lately, and Southward is covered in welts.

Southward told me not to report the welts because he doesn't want to be a Ward. Without both of his parents, everything would be seized, and he would have to work and live in the factory. We meet up in the stairwell. Southward has more welts today, and his plain white shirt has a small spot of blood. He tells me that his mother left for a reason. He found the note taped to the bottom of his bed frame. The cleaning bot couldn't get it off.

His mother worked in a different level of the factory, near where Development sometimes had meetings. She apparently overheard a discussion. It was about the forced implementation of FLAT. She wrote in the note that Development was going to start forcing workers to take FLAT. She said she wanted to keep herself. He didn't know what that meant. Neither did I. There was a sort of mystery to those words.

Southward told me not to tell anyone. I decided not to tell anyone. FLAT didn't seem like a bad thing. According to Development, it increases productivity by 100%, leading to an increase in wages of 100%. I'm surprised father did not volunteer to take it. Southward's father has refused it also. Southward didn't show him the note.

December 28th, 2340

I graduated this day. The "ceremony" was short. In two weeks, I move to the junior division. I welcome this change. In six days,

mother will be ready to engage in work and engage with me once again.

January 3rd, 2341

Mother has finished resting. She did not speak to me or father after leaving her room. She ate breakfast silently, staring intently at the wall. There is nothing on our wall. She left for the factory immediately.

I spent the day reading more about FLAT. The manual given by Development says that it has no negative side effects and is safe for adult consumption. Another manual came today. This manual said it was safe for consumption at the junior division level.

Father told me that something felt different with her. I asked if she was more in-line than before. He said it wasn't that. I asked why he thought that. He said that she threw away all the alco he bought with his cez.

She returned for dinner and said nothing. We ate in silence. I asked her how she felt after FLAT. She didn't look up from her food. I yelled for her to respond. Father took me out of the room, and he said I shouldn't yell at her. I said why. I said she has something wrong. Father said it might be FLAT. I told him it couldn't be FLAT. FLAT increases productivity. It makes workers better.

January 10th, 2341

This is my second week of break before the junior division. Mother said a word yesterday after father asked her about the factory. He asked how work had been. She said positive. I've been looking at her eyes for the past couple of meals and there is just complete blankness.

We received about three manuals about FLAT today. For some reason, mother hasn't received a pay increase, and when we asked her about getting the money she deserves, she didn't say anything. Every time father has alco in front of her, she leaves the room. When father leaves

a bottle of alco on the table, and goes to his room, she throws the alco away.

Southward became a Ward yesterday, after someone saw his welts and reported it. He lost anything he could have gotten from his father. His father was taken to the reform bots and given FLAT. This was told to me by my father. He seems very against FLAT.

I went down the stairwells today to see the sunset. I passed many people returning from work. Many of them had blank eyes that bore into the greyish stairs and walls of the stairwell. They didn't even look at me.

Development also sent us a name change form. They ruled that archaic names like Elation and Wrath were no longer permissible. Father and I decided to change my name to Carl. Carl was his brother's name. Even though father threw away all the pictures and reports, I could tell he still missed his brother.

January 16th, 2341

This is my last day of break. Mother got mail from Development saying her mother ended. She had no reaction. She read it and threw it away. She also threw away pictures of her and dad from earlier years. Father said that her productivity had increased by 100% as claimed by Development.

Development sent us 10 manuals about FLAT today. Some had father's name and suggested that he do it soon before he wouldn't receive any benefits. One had my name, telling me that I needed FLAT to keep up with the demands of the junior division.

We went to throw them away, but mother stopped us and said her second word, no. She lives within our cell but walks around like a ghost. Her pay increase never came and she has taken down every picture, to the dismay of father. In their steads, she has put up posters, distributed for free by Development, suggesting we stay in-line.

In-line seems less honorable than it used to. Father isn't as in-line as mother, but she seems to be missing. I think FLAT may have done this to her. It may have taken her.

January 17th, 2341

I started junior division today and half of the kids there gazed absently at me. Whenever their eyes turned to the machines, they widened and focused intently. I found this behavior strange, and the productivity managers told me they were in-line, they were proper. They recommended I get FLAT. I said my mother got FLAT and she doesn't talk anymore. They told me she was like that before FLAT. I told them no she wasn't. They asked if I needed to be reformed. I said no and got back to work.

Father took FLAT tonight. He was required to by Frolic. I begged him not to take it. It was required so he took it despite my pleas. I went down the stairway to the sunset, and everyone was going up the stairs, not down them. They all looked at me like I was part of the steps.

I was the only one outside watching the sunset. I saw the form of a boy appear in the distance. He walked towards me. The violet hues of the dying sun were behind him, and as he got closer, I realized that it was Southward. I said hello to him. He walked past me without even looking at my face. There was a small faraway smile tugging at the edges of his lips. His form faded as he walked away, until he blended in with the grey buildings he was moving towards.

January 20th, 2341

A few days have passed. Father finished resting yesterday. Now father and mother look at each other with empty eyes and pile up all of the manuals I receive about FLAT. More manuals pour in every day, and they tell me, Carl, that I must take FLAT to keep up.

Work at Frolic has been difficult. I am one of the only kids without the glazed eyes. My output is one of the lowest as well. The production manager, who has full, incisive eyes, has started to demand that I take FLAT. He told me that I better take it by tomorrow, or else he will have it done for me.

I no longer want to be in-line. I want to be out of in-line. I think I will leave tonight, after mother and father have gone to sleep.

The contents of this journal have been banned by the Development Team. If you are authorized, read analytically, take in the total and utter unproductivity by the author. If you are unauthorized, take the FLAT pill. It is required by law. Stay in-line. In-line is positive. Productivity is positive. FLAT is positive.

Migration

Lila Bacas

Second Place, BSFS Jack L. Chalker 2021 Young Writers' Contest

Dulaney High School—Timonium, MD

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A full moon. Large—close to the planet—and radiant, too. A portent of a safe migration, I've been told. The gargantuan tower blocks out most of its white light. We walk away, in a tight group of ten, along its protective shadow. I cling to that shadow.

Since I was about three years old, that tower has made my life; I've spent twelve years watching its shadow run from the sun from rise to set. I've seen families of birds raise their young in its age-forged grooves and holes. My two sisters have chased me in more circles around it than I can count. Now, I'm too far from the tower to see the footpath we wore in its surrounding dirt.

This migration is routine—my mother says so. The far tower across the plains is calling to us, sending its words to us intermittently. The tower we must leave will soon be occupied by another small group of people who are, right now, beginning the same routine migration as us. They, however, will have to cross hills.

My mother, behind me in the procession, pulls along a horse on a lead, heavy bags hanging from its saddle. Flanking me, my sisters each carry a patchwork sack of their little things. The younger one stumbles as her comb falls through a hole in her bag.

"Mom—dropped!"

My young sister's sudden loss of words alarms her. Her face twists in panic.

"Oh my, is it happening already?" My mother stops and turns to the tower. "I didn't think we'd covered that much ground."

"You seem fine," I tell her. "I can't even tell what words you've lost."

"We'll see about that once we reach the end of the shadow."

A sudden anxiety wells up in me. "How did the last migration go? I was too young to remember."

"It went well. It was scary, as always, but what can you do? We'll be okay," she reassures me, patting my shoulder. "Just focus on our destination, the tower ahead."

In a nervous daze, my eyes drift back to the old tower.

"Focus!"

We've covered half the shadow. We're beginning to interfere. Other tower—can see like speck of dust. We lose our tower's words. Not yet gain theirs. Gain noise, gain nothing.

"Mom! Weird!" my young sister cries.

"Get used to it," says my mother, failing not to sound harsh with few remaining words.

“How long without words?” I say.

“I think, another five hours.”

“Five hours?” I whine. I don’t mean to sound so childish.

“Focus, focus, focus.” She gives my back little shove.

Shadow gone. New tower close. Three or less, in time.

Can’t communicate—all we have is trust.

I sigh. Sister weeps. Never lost words before. Mother only looks tower. Pulls horse along. Never breaks her stare.

Focus.

moon

above

bright

path

dark noon

no shadow

stop

wet

head brimming nothing

loss

loss

empty

full

focus

Earlier, hour ago, stopped for drink. Silence, silence, silence. All open mouth for water, then close. Few hugs. Tight and long. Helped less empty. Moon watched us, too. Does she know I need her?

Shadow of new tower cast in our direction. Moon setting few hours. Feel less strained. Sisters tired, mother carry one. Other on horse.

“Keep on focusing,” mother says. She nudges me.

“I haven’t stopped.”

Feel bad for getting scared, upset, ‘but what can you do?’ I’m just kid. Many more migrations to come. Be like her one day, maybe.

The sky is beginning to lighten. The stars are fading; the moon is almost beyond view. The sun is coming up in the direction we came from, painting the far tower’s horizon a blazing red. Conversation has started up again. When we realized most of our words were coming back, my uncle told us a story from a migration they had as children. He said the first word my mother lost was “focus.” Funny. Instead of telling her brother to “focus,” grappling for a word that could fill its place, she told him to “shut up.” I wish I had been there.

I focus on the tower ahead. It looks massive—I can’t see its tip. I don’t need to see all of it to feel it; I don’t need to understand it to gain its words. I rejoice in talking when I don’t need to. I say what I think. I look down at my youngest sister’s face.

“Think you can handle another migration in, say, ten years?” I ask, grinning.

“No!” she screams. “No, no, no! Not even if Mom’s here.”

“Hey—who knows what you’ll grow into with this tower’s words? Wait and see!”

She pouts to put away a smile.

An Ice Storm in the Making

Amanda Bair

Third Place (Tie), BSFS Jack L. Chalker 2021 Young Writers' Contest
Cambridge-South Dorchester High School—Cambridge, MD

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I always wanted to be the hero.

Like many kids, I grew up fascinated with superheroes. My weekends were spent watching marathons of Marvel and DC movies: everything from Ironman to Superman to Spiderman to Batman to the Hulk to Captain America. After every movie, my heart raced, adrenaline coursing through my veins as I celebrated my triumphs as if I had accomplished all the spectacular things I had just witnessed.

Superheroes did not stay within the pages of comic books or the frames of movies, though. They followed me throughout the day, my own personal imaginary friends to encourage me when the other kids bullied me for being such a superhero geek.

I didn't know how quickly things would change.

One winter morning, I was shoveling snow off of the deck surrounding the in-ground swimming pool my family had. It was a pain-staking, tedious job, and as it dragged on, I felt my body going numb even though I wore several layers of warm clothing.

My limbs became stiffer and stiffer as hypothermia began to set in, making it harder to walk around the slippery deck. After I finally launched the last bit of snow into the grassy yard, I turned to head inside, but my brain fired faster than my body could respond in the freezing temperatures. My legs locked and I tripped over their stiffness, falling backwards and crashing through the flimsy pool cover below. It ripped upon impact, and before I knew what was happening, I was submerged in arctic waters.

I couldn't move. My body was as frozen as the icicles I had seen hanging from my roof earlier that morning. No matter how much my brain demanded that my limbs move or my lungs screamed for oxygen, I could do nothing: I was paralyzed. Before I knew what was happening, water forced its way into my nose and mouth and the world slowly went dark.

I don't know how long I stayed like that, caught in a limbo between the living and the dead. The next thing I knew, I was gasping for air with burning lungs as a group of people circled me, coaxing me through the uncomfortable situation. Somebody nearly tackled me to the ground as I continued to choke and splutter, and it took me a few seconds to realize that it was my hyperventilating mother. The world was still hazy as the men—paramedics, I was told later—began to run tests on me, ensuring that there were no lasting complications. When they deemed that I was well, they packed up their things and left.

After waking up, I felt different. I couldn't focus on the relief of having survived such a catastrophic event because it felt like live electricity ran through my veins and arteries, energizing me from the inside out. I asked my parents about it constantly, but they always said the same thing: it was just a side effect of the shock my body experienced during the accident. It would go away soon.

But it didn't. At first, I noticed that I was extremely cold. My skin felt like ice to the touch, causing many people to jerk away from me whenever they touched me. It got so bad that people

would shiver even when they walked past me, causing them to avoid me more than usual. It was during one lonely walk home that I finally realized what everything meant.

It had been almost a month since the accident and spring was around the corner. I had decided to lean against my neighbor's tree to admire the new blooms blossoming from their large Magnolia tree. My peace was quickly interrupted, though, when I felt something cold and wet form beneath my hand, causing me to slip and stumble.

When I looked back at the trunk, I noticed that there was an icy handprint residing where my own hand had been only moments before. I stared at it quizzically, wondering where the ice could have come from. The sun was shining, the birds were chirping. There was no way that winter could be the culprit this time.

I leaned tentatively against the tree again, holding my breath as I awaited answers. I nearly screamed as ice began to form under my palm yet again, ripping my hand away as quickly as I had placed it there.

I formed the ice.

I collapsed to the ground as my thoughts overwhelmed me, celebrations and worries fighting for dominance in my head. This was simultaneously the best and worst news I could have received. My heart fluttered at the thought of this being my superhero backstory, but deep down, I was afraid of what other people would say. People already thought I was a loser and an outcast, so what would they think now?

I tried all night, but I couldn't figure out how to control my icy touch on my own. It was only when I wrapped them up with thick leather gloves that I could find any respite from my newfound powers.

This superhero thing was going to be a lot harder than I thought.

The next morning, I trudged to school, but not without a fight to stay home. My complaints fell on deaf ears as I was pushed towards the front door, signaling the end of the argument.

When I got to school, I couldn't stop shaking. The idea of letting my classmates discover my secret petrified me more than anything else ever had. However, as time ticked on, I relaxed, believing that the gloves would save me.

I was wrong.

As time wore on, the ice did too. It fought slowly but surely, freezing the fibers within the gloves as it struggled to reach the surface. I didn't notice, though, until it was too late, my gloves gradually covered in a thin layer of ice.

The girl sitting next to me noticed before I could hide the offending evidence. She announced her findings to the entire class before directing her questions at me. Before I could even answer, she was ripping the gloves off of my hand, creating a burst of ice as she did so.

It didn't take the class long to figure out the rest. The entire room was deathly silent for five seconds as the students considered the evidence in front of them. However, after everyone exchanged a quick glance, they rushed to my desk, barraging me with questions about my ice powers.

From that day on, everyone at school became my friend. I put on ice shows for them, celebrating whenever I learned a new trick. Over time, I learned to control my powers, and I finally had friends to cheer me on.

All good things must come to an end, though, and so they did on that fateful day.

I couldn't sit still: my nerves seemed to come to life as they tingled and buzzed underneath my skin. Sitting in the classroom became a pain as I switched between bouncing my knees and stretching, hoping to rid myself of this extra energy before it began to interfere with my studies.

My fidgeting didn't go unnoticed, though. Several of the girls sitting near me stared at me with concern, checking on me as class dragged on. At first, their questions embarrassed me, causing my cheeks to heat up as I considered how weird I truly looked. However, as time

slowly ticked by and my energy spiked, my embarrassment quickly converted to anger.

“Seriously, are you okay?” Veronica, a popular girl with long, straight black hair and perfectly winged eyeliner, asked, concern and slight irritation seeping into her voice.

“I’m fine,” I gritted between clenched teeth, my body tense with the effort it took to sit in my uncomfortable plastic seat and listen to the teacher’s dreadfully boring lesson on the exposition of stories.

“Do you have something to say to the class, Eira?” my teacher, Mr. Blaze, snapped as he glared at me. I could feel the blood rushing to my cheeks as the eyes of every student fell on me, waiting for my verdict.

“No, I’m sorry for interrupting,” I sighed, trying my best to hide my indignation and frustration.

I hoped that the altercation would dissuade others from acknowledging me, but it did the opposite as my classmates grew even more curious.

“What’s up with you today?” Alya, a bouncing brunette with an outstanding jump shot on the court, whispered as she leaned closer to me, “You’ve been acting strange since you got here.”

I huffed, refusing to validate her nosiness with a response. I just wanted to be left alone until I could sort out my problem on my own.

They couldn’t take a hint, though. Soon, Trevor, the class clown, decided to have his own fun as he started throwing paper balls at me.

When they didn’t get the reaction he wanted, he groaned to himself, opting to reach over the tiny space separating our desks as he began to poke me quickly and repeatedly. “Why won’t you answer our questions? Have your powers finally made you crazy or something?”

That did it. Before I knew what I was doing, I was on my feet, my electrified nerves prepared to finally do something.

“I SAID I’M FINE!” I screamed as I smacked his hands away from me.

He screamed in pain as he flew back into his seat, and it took me a second to realize I had frozen him. A sash of ice wrapped around him, securing him to his seat. He was gasping, tears welling in his eyes as he tried to assess his body for any lasting damage. Suddenly, the electricity that had tormented me all morning had dissipated, regret taking its place immediately.

“Oh my gosh, I’m so sorry!” I gaped as I ran over to him, breaking the ice and releasing him from my manmade trap. However, the ice ripped his clothes, displaying bright red marks on his skin underneath.

Ice burns.

I began to cry myself as realization took over. I had just hurt one of my classmates. What kind of hero would ever do such a thing?

In my panic, my eyes scanned the classroom, only to meet the horrified stares of my classmates and teacher. At one point, they had been amused and delighted by my frozen creations, but those feelings didn’t remain. They glared at me like I was a repulsive monster, and I could sense their fight or flight response kicking in.

Before anyone could say or do anything, I bolted from the classroom, searching for the exit. When I found one, I burst outside, sprinting until I reached the temporary safety of my home.

My parents arrived not long after me, having been called by the school and informed of my disastrous encounter with Trevor. They must not have realized that I was there, though, because they began discussing their plans.

“We can’t do this! She’s still our daughter, Daniel!” my mother shouted as the front door slammed shut.

“You heard what the cops said! She’s dangerous! She could’ve killed that boy in her class. This dart is the only way to stop her,” my father growled. His voice had a slight slur to

it: he must have been drinking before he got home.

“I refuse to hand my daughter over to those sickos so they can experiment on her! I held her in my womb for nine months, and I refuse to part with her now!” my mother screamed.

Experiments? How had the news spread to the authorities so quickly? Were they planning this all along, just waiting for me to mess up so they could carry out their sick, twisted fantasies?

“Well, you heard what they said. If anyone gets in their way, they’re going to remove them permanently,” my father snapped. I heard him open the refrigerator, followed by the clink of a glass bottle. “Take a drink, it’ll make you feel better.”

I couldn’t listen to their conversation anymore, the fear of my predicament coupling with the contempt I felt for my father in this moment. How dare he give me up to those lunatics before he even heard my side of the story?

My heart raced, pumping so quickly that I could hear the blood rushing in my ears as footsteps approached my bedroom door. My mom continued to yell at my dad, but her words became incomprehensible as I searched for an exit. My eyes landed on the open window, and I knew I had to leave.

I scrambled outside just in time to hear my bedroom door burst open, my dad’s indignant shouts fading as I sprinted towards the wooded area located behind my house. I didn’t stop, ignoring my screaming muscles as they burned, begging for rest and oxygen.

I kept my hands hidden in my sleeves, preventing myself from touching anything for fear that I would leave an icy trail behind. I didn’t know where I was going: all I knew was that I needed to leave. Over time, the silence of

the woods became almost peaceful despite my unthinkable situation.

The peace wouldn’t last, though, as soon, I heard the shouts of tired, angry men as they gained on me.

“She’s over here!” one stranger screamed, his red face smirking as a newfound confidence overtook him at the sight of me.

“Don’t let her get away!” another man yelled as he pushed on. I could only barely make out the outline of a pitchfork in his hand.

Had this been any other situation, I would’ve laughed at the sight.

The men continued to get closer and closer as my tired muscles begged for a break. I could sense them behind me, feeling the ground shake beneath my feet as they closed the gap between us.

I didn’t want to do it, but I had to.

Without a second thought, I flung my arm behind myself, freezing the men at the front of the pack in their spots. I heard the horrified gasps of the other men as they examined their friends, crying for help that may or may not come. I didn’t have time to care about them, though. I just had to get out of there.

When I had put a comfortable distance between me and the mob, I stopped, opting to create a large wall of ice that would be impossible for them to climb. I tried to make it as wide as possible, hoping that it would at least slow them down.

With my obstacle in place, I turned around and began running again. I didn’t know where I was going, but I knew that I had to move forward. They made it clear that they wouldn’t stop until they caught me.

I always wanted to be the hero, but now, I would have to be the villain.

The Planetkiller's Song

Anastasia Kelly

Third Place (Tie), BSFS Jack L. Chalker 2021 Young Writers' Contest

Bryn Mawr School—Baltimore, MD

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These days, Nero mused, no one appreciates how difficult it is to kill a planet.

He patted his pockets and produced a sleek tin, designed to fit snugly against the curve of his leg. It was an expensive case, the ore mined from a skeleton planet, that material forged in the carbon fires of the terran colonies, designed and assembled by the blind titans of Nero's home planet. It was expensive and exquisite, and worth every drop of blood that paid for it.

But then again, it wasn't his blood spent.

Nero ran a gloved finger over the engraving on the lid. It was invisible to the eye and he couldn't feel the indents of the lettering through his glove, but Nero knew the words blind. He would not soon forget them.

He took a breath to savor the moment. Stale oxygen, filtered through his helmet, stung his nostrils. What the hell. This was the end of something. Might as well enjoy it. Nero removed his helmet and inhaled the atmosphere of the planet. He'd forgotten its name, which struck him as sad and fitting. It smelled like flowers. Pity.

His ship groaned and shifted. It was starting in earnest now. Normally, Nero stood for this part, out of respect and so he could leave quickly, but this was the end of something. He would sit and take his time.

Nero played with the latch of the tin. He would open it in a moment. Not yet. The engines of his ship hissed with effort. This planet of steam and mist was so lovely, its surface roiling and flaring like the heads of clouds.

There it was.

Off to his left, barely perceptible at this distance, the cloud surface bulged then burst, freed droplets flashing red through the light of nearby star.

And there it was.

In English, they were called the Santiam. English, in Nero's rarely humble opinion, was an aggressive, convoluted language. He avoided speaking it whenever possible. He didn't like terrans either, or at least the ones who spoke English, because they were aggressive and convoluted too. He did not like English words. And for the Santiam, there were other names in other languages, but in Nero's rarely humble opinion, the others simply did not compare. Not this time.

Santiam. Sunray. The most beautiful thing Nero had ever killed.

A Santiam escaped from the cloud surface in a graceful arc. It was a silver bullet, exposing a lilac underbelly to the planet's sun. The starlight hit the Santiam, and there it was.

Its skin turned clear, and then blue and pink and purple and green and white and yellow and black and blue again. The colors rippled and pulled, pearlescent waves crashing against each other in inky swells. The Santiam opened its wings, pink then gray tails whipping behind it. Electric lines of blue forked across its outstretched wings.

Nero tapped his cigarette case against his chin. There was a poem he knew once, terran, probably.

The star caught the creature up/ and the creature in turn shone divinity down—

He didn't remember how it ended. Something about physics, Nero thought, or religion. He never could tell the difference.

The Santiam reached the peak of its arc. Nero nearly looked away. He had never looked away before. Well, that was a sign, if he'd ever seen one. Retirement loomed.

Nero removed a cigarette from the case and put it between his lips. The lighter (antique and ridiculous) was already in his hands. He opened it. Coaxed forth a flame.

He looked up.

The Santiam was frozen. Sprawled open, baring its insides to the sun, suspended above the surface.

And then it began.

The kaleidoscope skin turned opaque white, and a smudgy grayness emerged at its center. The Santiam began to sink, headfirst, back towards the surface. The shadow grew like the virus it was, creeping from the Santiam's brain to its wings as its flight became a fall.

Nero knew what happened next. He'd designed it, after all. He just hadn't expected to recognize it. He lit the cigarette. The Santiam died.

The darkness under its skin bloomed and blackened, blackened like carbon fire coals, and when it came in contact with the damp surface—

It shattered. It exploded. It died in a release of flesh that went out like... like a firework, that was the word.

Nero wrinkled his nose. There was limited oxygen available to his brain; the last thing he needed was terran poetry eating away at it. He exhaled smoke through cracked lips. It shielded his view for a moment before dissipating into the thin atmosphere.

When he could see again, another Santiam had slipped through the surface. Another. Another, another, another. Again, again, again.

A silver bullet, a cacophony of light, the wings, the still. The deadened collapse. The shattering like glass on concrete.

Glass on concrete. That was another line from a poem. Nero was a being of limited similes. He tended to borrow, rather than build. Tended to kill, rather than live.

Tended to watch death through a mask.

It affected him differently, this time. He didn't usually watch. He didn't usually smoke. He didn't usually care.

But this was the end of something.

There was an explosion to his left, near enough to shake the ship. Nero inhaled smoke. He couldn't remember when he'd first held a cigarette. It seemed important. He coughed.

Another Santiam died; a charred piece of what might have once been an organ landed by Nero's feet. It smelled like flowers.

He had to go.

Nero took another drag. He wondered if he had missed anything. Not in the job, the job would be fine. The planet of the Santiam would be empty of its native lifeform soon, stripped of claws or teeth for the vultures to safely swallow its bones.

He had to go.

The energy released as the Santiam died was devouring oxygen rapidly. The smoke from his cigarette was beginning to misbehave, lingering and curling in on itself in thread-like spirals. It was getting warmer, too, gusts of smoldering flesh getting stronger all the time.

He had to go.

Nero was a planetkiller.

He was an exterminator; he was bringer of chaos and fire and cold. *I am become death*, he thought, *no, I am become the dying*. He was a hand against entropy, or perhaps that hand that caused it. He was a wrong thing. He was the jackboot and the scalpel and the slow poison and he wanted desperately to care that this was his end of all things.

Nero wanted to stand. Lock the doors and leave this planet, leave the Santiam to their fate. But it wasn't fate, it was Nero, and he had never cared before.

Nero looked up.

And then it began.

A sound, a humming, a voice. He thought it was speaking at first, maybe crying for help, but he kept listening and the voice went on, singing. As the planet writhed and screamed. Something was *singing*.

Planetkilling was not an easy job, Nero thought, but at least he could stop doing it. He could be the last planetkiller. He finished his cigarette. He closed his eyes. The singing went on, high and reedy, a flurry of notes, up and up, breaking at their height, tumbling back down to low, skipping tones.

Nero knew, without knowing how or why, that it wasn't a sad song. It was not sad. He was not sad.

Nero lit another cigarette. He counted how many were left in the case. Too many. Ah, well. This was the end of something. It didn't matter.

He smoked fast. He savored it. The breathing was getting painful, his body rejecting his vile habit and viler soul. It would end soon. The song went on and Nero thought about a woman he hadn't thought about in a long time.

A fit of coughs like the fire in his hands trickled down his throat and found kindling in his lungs. Nero took a break from the cigarette. There was a woman beside him.

She sat with her knees tucked against her chest, maskless like him, but apparently unbothered by the decaying air and the smoke. She plucked the cigarette case from his hand and removed one for herself.

"It's the last one," she said and offered it to Nero. He shook his head. He wasn't finished with the one he had.

"Right."

The woman put the cigarette to her lips. She raised her eyebrows at him, making some kind of meaningful expression. He presented the lighter to her. She put her hands over his to steady the flame, which seemed to flash green and then white for a moment.

Nero did not understand anything.

There was a word he knew, or a phrase, in a terran language. It meant stumbling blindly in time, he thought. It meant I had done this before, I haven't done this yet.

It meant the woman's name was Julia.

Julia leaned back on her elbows and smoked while she watched the Santiam die. She did not shake while the planet beneath them shook. She did not scream while the air screamed its last, a savage cry of vengeance and sorrow and pleading and grief and the anger to break the ground and the love to pull down the sky.

She did not watch Nero while he watched her.

So, Nero finished his cigarette. Probably she was an oxygen-deprivation induced hallucination. To his knowledge, that only happened to terrans, but Julia was terran so maybe—

It was soon now. Nero was shutting down. He killed the planet; he let the planet kill him. But not Julia. She did not deserve the weight of Nero's wrongs. Yet even as the thought came to him, it was an intruder in his mind. It was—wrong. He looked at her.

There was a truth there, in the way that one cigarette never burnt out. In the way she was clear when the rest turned to haze.

He knew her. He liked her. She liked him, she looked like him, she was like him.

Nero asked, "Do you hear it too?"

Julia glanced at him. She smiled with only one side of her mouth. "The song?"

Nero nodded. Julia exhaled smoke through thin lips, watching with wide eyes as it filled her vision. She blinked.

"It's an old one," she said.

"Sounded new to me."

"Could be."

Julie shook herself and stood. She held out a hand. Nero nudged his cigarette butts into a neat pile. He took her hand.

"Who are you?" Julia said. Nero frowned. He thought she knew.

"I am no one."

"Hmm. Who destroyed you?" Nero's cigarette case was in her hand. He couldn't remember when she'd picked it up.

“Julius,” she said and touched his face. “Nero. Nemo. Odysseus. Oppenheimer. Julius. Planetkiller.” -

“Julia,” he breathed, “I don’t understand.” Julia nodded and her brows furrowed more at herself than at him.

“Why would you? You’re dying.”

“Julia.”

“You,” she said, soft and low, “will be called many things. History—we—will get it wrong. We already have. We’ll get it so wrong it turns back to something resembling right. It turns back to you.”

Nero’s heart heaved. It was trying to jump ship.

“What does that mean? Who are you?”

“Everyone,” Julia said, turning to watch the firework show of gore, her hand still resting lightly on his cheek. “What was that phrase you liked?”

“What?”

Julia flipped the cigarette case over in her palm, running her bare fingers over the microscopic engraving. “They say the first time you heard it was from an orphan. The second was from a god.”

“I don’t understand. Julia, please.”

He held his hand out for the case, but she stepped out of his reach. As he watched, a fleck of still smoldering bone skated across her cheek, opening a wound like a seam. A curtain of blood clung to her cheek.

“How did it go?” She was speaking more to herself than to him. “‘I am no one’. That’s how it starts, right?”

I am no one.

The voice in Nero’s mind was not his own.

I am no one. To destroy me is to destroy all.

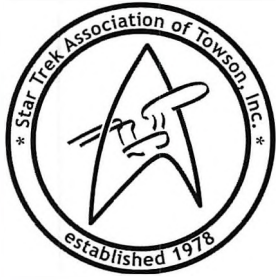
“I have a theory,” Julia said, holding the case close to her face. A perfectly spherical blooddrop fell from her cheek to the metal in slow motion. “But like me, your time’s up. Are you listening? Can’t you hear it?”

Nero thought that maybe he knew something very important.

“Do you hear music?”

And Julia was gone. A Santiam died an arm’s length away. The wave of heat forced Nero back a step. He collapsed more than sat. The ship, his ship, his trusted, reliable ship, dipped and shuddered. A lonely cigarette lay smoldering apart from Nero’s pile. The planet sang. The planet died.

Nero died.



Shore Leave 41.6 The Director's Cut

10-11 July 2021

A Fan-run Media Science Fiction Convention in Cyberspace



Presented by the Star Trek Association of Towson, Inc. (STAT)

Participating Actors:



Adam Baldwin

Firefly – Jayne Cobb
Chuck – John Casey
The Last Ship – XO Mike Slattery

More to be announced.

We will have two full days of online programming with panels, workshops, and Q&A.

Participating Authors, Performers, and Scientists:

Chris Abbott, Danielle Ackley-McPhail, Rigel Ailur, Lorraine Anderson, Derek Tyler Attico, Diane Lee Baron, Wayne Bird, Charles Blue, The Boogie Knights, Alan Chafin, Ken Carpenter, John Coffren, Russ Colchamiro, Greg Cox, Kathleen David, Peter David, Keith DeCandido, Kevin Dilmore, Mary Fan, Jerry Feldman, Kelli Fitzpatrick, Michael Jan Friedman, Phil Giunta, Robert Greenberger, Glenn Hauman, Andrew Hiller, Heather Hutsell, Amy Imhoff, Jim Johnson, Paul Kupperberg, Steve Lesnik, Erin Macdonald, David Mack, John Jackson Miller, Timothy Miller, Chris Ochs, Susan Olesen, Joshua Palmatier, Scott Pearson, Roberta Rogow, Aaron Rosenberg, Jenifer Rosenberg, Hildy Silverman, Stephanie Slater, Timothy Slater, Ian Randal Strock, Dayton Ward, Laura Ware, Brent Warner, Howard Weinstein, Richard White, Steve Wilson.

We will return to an in-person convention format in July 2022!

Shore Leave 42

15-17 July 2022

All guests (actors, authors, performers, scientists) originally announced for 2020 and 2021 have indicated that they are interested in returning in person in 2022.



Brandon Routh

Superman Returns – Clark Kent
Arrow – Ray Palmer/The Atom
Chuck – Daniel Shaw



Alex Kingston

Dr. Who – River Song
Arrow – Dinah Lance
Discovery of Witches – Sarah Bishop



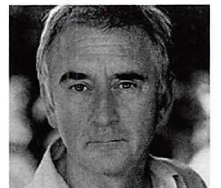
Brent Spiner

Star Trek TNG – Lt. Cmdr. Data
Warehouse 13 – Brother Adrian
Threshold – Dr. Nigel Fenway



Gates McFadden

Star Trek TNG – Dr. Beverly Crusher
Marker – Kimba
Hunt for Red October – Caroline Ryan



Denis Lawson

Star Wars – Wedge Antilles
Bleak House – John Jarndyce
New Tricks – DI Steve McAndrew



Adam Baldwin

Firefly – Jayne Cobb
Chuck – John Casey
The Last Ship – XO Mike Slattery



Jewel Staite

Firefly – Kaylee Frye
Stargate Atlantis – Dr. J. Keller
The L.A. Complex – R. Westbrook



Robbie McNeill

Star Trek VOY – Lt. Tom Paris
Chuck – Operative
24 – FBI Agent



BarBara Luna

Star Trek – Marlena
Buck Rogers – Koori
Zorro (1938) – Theresa Modesto



Eddie McClintock

Warehouse 13 – Pete Latimer
Supergirl – Col. James Harper
Agents of SHIELD – Vin-Tak

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The Path

Alison Xu

Honorable Mention, BSFS Jack L. Chalker 2021 Young Writers' Contest

Walter Johnson High School—Bethesda, MD

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Zing! Zing! Acelin was sharpening his sword in short, bitter strokes. Each slash made a strident, high-pitched sound, grinding against my ears. I knew the day was coming. The day he would kill me, the king of the Qrovian kingdom.

In the centuries of being a king, I'd seen it all: the good days and the bad days, the days of glory and the days of stringency, the days of triumph and the days of loss. But no other day had made my heart ache, almost bleed, like now.

I stepped in front of the massive copper-framed mirror and my aged reflection stared at me. My once bright red-golden scales were dull and faded. My wings, which used to be a symbol of vigor and eminence, were weather-beaten and covered with scars and wounds, already losing the ability to fly.

I had to admit I was an old dragon now.

Then, Acelin's youthful face surfaced in my mind. As the kingdom's most distinguished knight, he was also the strongest human I had ever seen, broad and hefty. Acelin was a master of swordsmanship, his blade never missing any opponent he targeted. His bravery and victories won him the highest honors and numerous cheers and applause. But slowly, the humility in his eyes morphed into conceit, then greed for power.

One evening, I overheard him speaking to one of his warriors, "Soon, the crown of Qrovian will belong to me! Those old dragon limbs don't stand a chance against the wrath of my sword." His harsh cackle sliced through the air.

A chill raced down my back and brought a wrenching sorrow. I couldn't believe those words were from my dear Acelin.

The following days, I thought about taking action before he made any move. I could've thrown him into the dungeon for life or banished him to a distant desert, but I didn't. I still had a flicker of hope that Acelin didn't mean it.

But now, the shrill of his sword scraping against the rock warned me that I could be wrong.

It was a sleepless night for me. Probably for him too. The sky outside was pitch-dark, clumps of clouds obscuring the moon. The wind swished through the pine branches as if whispering a long-lost story.

The next morning, I heard a knock at the door. I was greeted by Acelin's steel-gray eyes with a savage look in them that registered a readiness to kill, his right hand on the grip of the sword at his waist.

Before Acelin said anything, I suggested in a gentle voice, "Acelin, it's a beautiful morning. Why don't we go on a walk like we used to?"

A mix of confusion and hesitation fled across his face before he replied, "...certainly."

We wound our way along a dirt path heading into the forest. An earthy smell, a blend of mud and wet leaves, hung in the mist around us. We passed a cluster of cottonwoods whose tops were almost tangled with each other. Under their outstretched branches were scattered rocks, jagged and bulky, except for a dove gray rock which was flat and smooth.

We stopped in front of that rock. I hunched over to run my talon along its damp, cool surface.

"Years ago, I found a crying human baby wrapped in a blanket here. I didn't know what to do; I'd never come across anything like that. But I couldn't leave him out here in the forest, so I brought him to the castle. I'm glad I made that decision..." I peered at Acelin, whose eyes were fixed on the rock, and added, "...because that baby was you, Acelin."

His breaths sounded heavier. "Thank you for your kindness." His voice was tight and low, and his hand still clenched around the sword grip.

We strolled forward on the path now lined with wildflowers and shrubs, our steps pounding on the leaf-strewn ground like drumbeats. The path led us out into a clearing, where canopies of willow trees encircled an expanse of tall grass.

"It was right here, where I trained you to become a swordsman. You were skinny and short, unlike me, a giant dragon. But you had talent. I always believed in you, even when you doubted yourself." I chuckled. "But look at you now! All of the training paid off."

Acelin stepped forward, scanning the clearing. For a long moment, he stood rooted as a balmy breeze stirred his russet-colored hair. A spurt of uncertainty flashed in his eyes despite his effort to settle back to a calm demeanor.

We continued on the path sloping toward a rocky mountaintop. Trees and bushes became scattered, allowing sunlight to spill in and sending us a pleasant feeling of warmth.

We reached a meadow dotted with purple snowbell flowers. I slowed my pace and asked, "Do you remember here? This is where you had your accolade when I declared you a knight and bestowed you the kingdom's sacred sword."

Acelin was about to say something but stopped, as if there was a lump lodged in his throat.

"That was the happiest I'd ever seen you. It feels like yesterday. Time flies." My eyes gazed over him while he was lost in thought.

For the rest of the path, we walked in silence until we reached the end, a mossy cliff.

I turned to Acelin and broke the silence. "Acelin, you need to know that I'm willing to give you everything I have. I know you've wanted my crown for a long time and I'm the only obstacle in your way." My voice slightly trembled but I kept it steady. "Don't stain your sword. I can jump off here myself." I managed a weak smile. "You have my blessings."

I stepped to the edge and closed my eyes, saying my last goodbye, when I felt Acelin's arms wrap around me.

"No, don't go! Your Majesty, I don't want you to die." He let the words sink in. "I wouldn't be who I'm today if it weren't for you." He choked between words, tears glinting in his eyes. "Forgive me."

I embraced him in my veined wings. A moment felt like centuries. Then, I said, "Let's go home."

One Moment

Jordan Brown

Honorable Mention, BSFS Jack L. Chalker 2021 Young Writers' Contest

Friends School of Baltimore—Baltimore, MD

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"I know you took my acrylics, idiot. Now just give them back before I tell Dad!" she yelled at her brother. He continued stuffing his books in his bag, pretending like he hadn't heard her.

"Come on, Shawn, please. I really gotta finish my painting, so can you just—" Her brother spun around to look at her, his anger almost palpable. "I didn't take your damn paint! Now get out of my room so I can get ready for school." As he started pushing her to the door, she dug her feet into his carpet and closed her eyes.

"Oh no you don't, you freak!" He threw his phone, nailing her on the side of her head. She screamed, collapsing to the floor while clutching her temples. Their father ran in, giving her brother a nasty look.

"What happened!" he yelled as he knelt to comfort her. "She tried to read my mind AGAIN, Dad," her brother groaned. "It's just not fair that she can come into my room and try to listen in on my thoughts to find her stupid little paint when I didn't even do nothing wrong!"

Her father paused for a brief moment, as if weighing the cons and pros of lecturing her brother, then looked at Shawn and asked, "Well, were you wearing that tag your mother gave you?"

Her brother rolled his eyes and yelled, "Oh so it's my fault that I forgot to put on a stupid necklace before I even had time to get dressed so that she"—he pointed at her—"wouldn't read my mind, but it's not her fault for using her freak abilities on me? Yeah don't even pretend that that... that thing didn't deserve more than just a iron phone case to the face. This is why I can't wait to get outta here."

He grabbed his balled-up clothes and pushed past them as he ran out of his bedroom. Her father looked at her and brushed the hair out of her face.

"Hon, you know you aren't supposed to be poking around in people's heads like that. It's just not fair." She sat up, crawled over to his bed and said, "But he doesn't have to be all violent with me and stuff. And besides—" She opened his bedside drawer and stuck her hand in. She felt around the drawer until she pulled out a plastic box. "He stole my paints anyways and God knows what he did with them."

Her father sighed as he got up and extended his hand to her. "You know what you did was wrong, Cal." He scanned her face for a second, unsuccessful in his search for any sign of remorse.

"I just—I just wish you could understand. No one... Cal, its just—" Her father looked down at his shoes and back up at her, softly saying, "You can't just go into people's heads like that. And you know it." He looked down at his watch and let out an uncomfortable sigh. "Better hurry up so you and Shawn aren't late," he exclaimed and kissed her cheek then rushed down the stairs and yelled "Have a good day!" as he ran out the door.

As she pulled up to school, she was greeted with a feeling of dread. She had a pop quiz later that day, which she had found out while “accidentally” listening to her history teacher’s thoughts in class two days earlier. She hated the walk of shame to the holding cell they called the “Special Room.” Normally it was used for specials with strength or other “dangerous abilities,” but the school used it as a testing room for their resident telepath. The worst thing about it was that this was some of the best accommodation any school had given her, seeing as not many superintendents account for the only telepath in the country going to their high school. She found a parking spot close to the main building and backed into it. Her brother looked scared as she tried to parallel park, and he looked at her and said, “Woah, easy now.”

She turned to him and said, “Oh, you think you could do better? Last time I checked I’m the only one with a license. Unlike someone who got a DUI.”

He huffed and shoved out the door the second she stopped the car.

“Well I sure get a lot of thanks for being your fucking chauffeur,” she yelled as she grabbed her stuff and walked to first period as the five minute warning bell rang.

“Sweetheart, are you sure you are finished?” Principal Hearst asked in her sickly-sweet tone. “Yes, yes I am. Thank you!” she said, handing her her quiz. The principal looked down at her answers, rubbing her iron bracelet. “Well, I’m sure you did great. I don’t need to escort you to class, do I?” “No, ma’am, I know the way,” she said, grabbing her locket and phone from the basket. She made her way back to her history classroom. As she opened the door, she could feel everyone’s eyes on her, and for the brief second she had forgotten to put her locket back on, she heard all the whispering thoughts. Most weren’t full sentences, just snippets of thoughts. It was just like a thousand voices were filling up her head, and it was impossible to cipher through them all. She squeezed her necklace in her palm and put it back on as she sat down. “Everyone try to wrap it up in the next five minutes, please,” Mr. James said.

She stared at her desk and studied all the markings and drawings. In moments like this when she was bored out of her mind, she desperately tried not to listen in on people’s thoughts, but it became so hard sometimes. “Just one person, okay,” she said to herself. She took off her necklace and tried focusing really hard on a random thought. “Where is your necklace, Callie?” he asked. “Oh, I—I’m sorry. Its just—my... iron, it gives me a bad headache and the testing room just makes it worse so...” she stumbled out. She winced as she heard 30 “LALALALALALALALA”s flood her brain. “Do you need to go to the nurse?” her teacher asked, a sympathetic look on his face. “No,” she said, sinking down in her seat. “You know my sister is special too. Can run the mile in about 30 seconds. I remember back in about ‘89 or was it ‘87...”

Her favorite thing to do was draw in silence. When you constantly can hear everyone else’s thoughts, silence becomes a necessary pass time. When she painted, she wasn’t a special or anyone at all. She was a tree moving freely in the wind, or the ocean brushing gently on the shore. She felt at peace.

“Cal, are you okay?” Zane said as he walked in. She put her locket on and turned to him. He kissed her forehead and pulled a chair up next to her.

“I didn’t see him in the cafeteria, did you? Is he ditching again? Is that a welt on the side of your head? Calypso, what’s going on?” He searched her eyes for any clarity.

She took a deep breath. "I don't know what's wrong with my brother, Zane. Everyone seems to blame me." Her voice fell to a whisper. "He hit me with his iron phone case. He knows what it does. He knows what he does—" she broke out into an all out sob as she shoved her face into his shirt.

"I don't know what I'm gonna do. How can I... what have I... I'm just the worst. I read his mind... I—I listened to his—without his permission. I'm so terrible to him," she cried." He had no right to hurt you, Cal," he said, wiping her tears. "No right at all."

"It's fine," she said, trying to form a smile. "I'm just happy I have you here to cheer me up," she said, nuzzling her nose into his neck.

"Do you want to go to the cemetery and listen to some last thoughts? My pop just buried Bud Clarrington, God rest his soul, and I know for a fact that he didn't die with iron and wasn't buried with any either."

"Zane, don't you think this is wrong?" she asked as she knelt by Bud Clarrington's freshly dug grave. "What? No! Besides, who does it harm if we get to listen to the last thoughts of the town wino anyhow?" he said. "Now what's he thinkin'. Or I mean what was he thinkin'?" She put her hand on the ground and listened in hard. Most people she listened in on had been dead for a while, so it was just a muffled string of words or a blurry image. She typically tried to stay away from the young ones like Bud because their last thoughts were a lot more clear and a hell of a lot more jarring. She imagined herself digging through the dirt and into Bud's brain. "I see something!" she gasped. It was dark and Bud was alone.

"Stop it... you... you thieves," he said in a slurred voice. She heard the laughs of what sounded like a group of teenage boys that she recognized. "Gimme back my, my bottle. Shane—Shawn, whatever the hell your name is," he said.

"Shut up you old drunk. Before my pop comes and locks you up for the third time this month," Shawn said as his friends laughed.

"I don't think your daddy and mama would be too keen on knowin' that their boy is out here bein' all sorts a' wild—" Bud stumbled. "And I'll be sure to tell your ALL your parents next time I see em' about all y'all's... Adventures. And you know they'll be fixin' to be tied over all this bullshit, 'specially you Terrence," he said, pointing to her brother. The boys ran off and Bud went to pick up what was left of his stuff.

A few moments later, a hooded figure came back. It was no doubt one of the boys that had taunted him earlier, so Bud started to try to run off, but he was too slow. All that came next was a hard thwack as Bud fell to the floor.

"What did you see, Cal?" Zane asked in a serious voice. "Shawn—he—he, he was there when Bud—" She sat down and stared blankly at the tombstone. That night at the party. Did he leave with anyone?" she desperately asked. "Well yeah, he left with some of the stoners from Tunhill. I asked him to stay but he said they went to get more booze and never came back. I just assumed—"

"Zane—" she said, taking a deep breath. "I think my brother killed Bud."

The drive to her house was only about twenty minutes. But as she drove home felt like a million years as she grappled with her circumstances. She was the only one who could prove that Bud was murdered. There were no murders in Arcadia. *Bud Clarrington hit his head on a dumpster in an alley and bled to death before anyone could call the authorities. There was no foul play. I mean, who would want him dead? He didn't hurt nobody.* But if she didn't tell anyone, she couldn't live with the guilt. It would be impossible. And she'd seen all those crime shows. The truth always gets out.

She pulled her keys out of her pocket and unlocked the door. "Dad!" she yelled as she hung up her bag and walked into the living room. She yelled for her father one last time and there was no response. She checked her phone and saw a text. It was her dad saying that there was just too much work at the station and to expect him home at 10. Typical. She looked at the TV as the officers launched an iron net on some random criminal. She remembered biology when someone asked why we hate iron so much. Her teacher had said something about our lack of red blood cells or something. Touching iron for some reason triggered a crazy reaction that varied from person to person. As she watched the cops yelling at the man that he had the right to remain silent, she thought about his blood cells. They must've been really confused.

Just as the commercial break started she heard a knock on the door. "Come in Zane! The door is unlocked," she yelled. "How'd you know it was me?" he asked as he jumped on the couch beside her. "Shawn's friends never knock," she said, cuddling up next to him. "You know it ain't safe or smart to leave the door unlocked, 'specially when you are home alone," he said, concerned.

"I only leave the door unlocked when Shawn's out late." She paused as she looked up at him. "And who would be dumb enough to break into an officer's house?" she laughed incredulously

"I know your heart's in the right place but sometimes you act like you ain't got as much sense as a bucket of rocks," he said. "But you're so pretty that you just about make up for it," he said as he kissed her forehead. His face slowly dropped as he remembered the gravitas of the situation.

"I couldn't stop thinking about it. I can't sell out my brother." She took a deep breath. "But I can't do that to Bud. He didn't deserve to die. His only crime was bein' in the wrong place at the wrong time. And I guess public intoxication." She grabbed his hand. "I don't know what to do."

He hugged her. "You'll get through this. I swear. Sometimes the right thing isn't easy. And truth be told, I don't know what the right thing is."

The door suddenly opened as her brother walked in and threw his bag on the floor. "Hey dumbass, you left the door open," he said as he jumped on the couch next to them. "Oh, did I interrupt somethin' here." He chuckled as he put his feet up on the ottoman. The room settled as they sat in an uncomfortable silence. She took in the moment with her brother, as it may have been their last for a long time. She watched him, chuckling with Zane and mocking the guys on the TV. She couldn't imagine how someone could be like him. Ruin their life like that. But now wasn't the time to dwell on the future. She just wanted one last good memory of him.

"What's up, weirdo?" he asked, lightly punching her arm.

"Oh, nothing," she said, looking up at him, "I'm just tryin' to enjoy the moment is all."

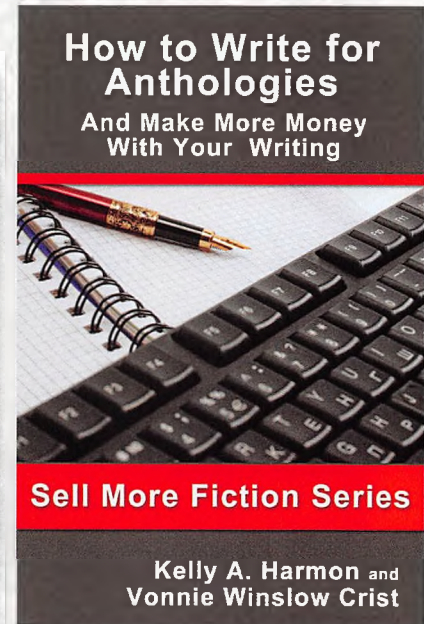
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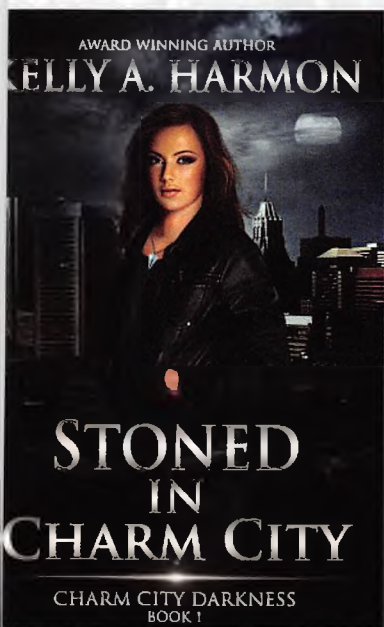


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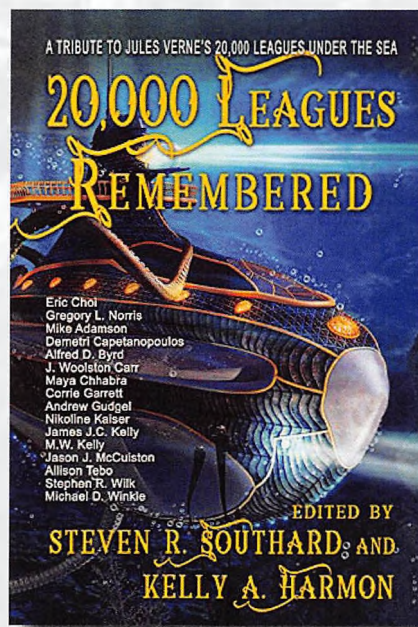


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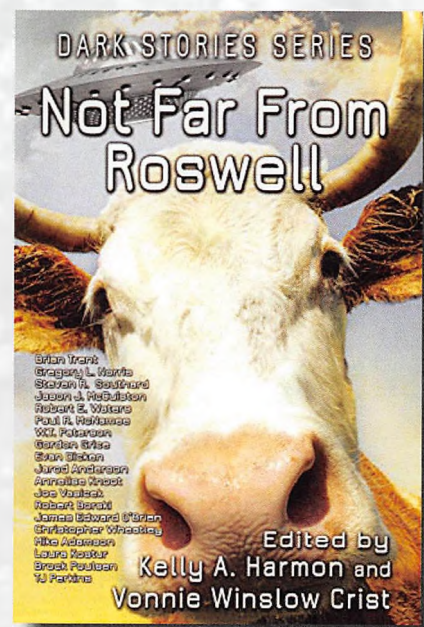
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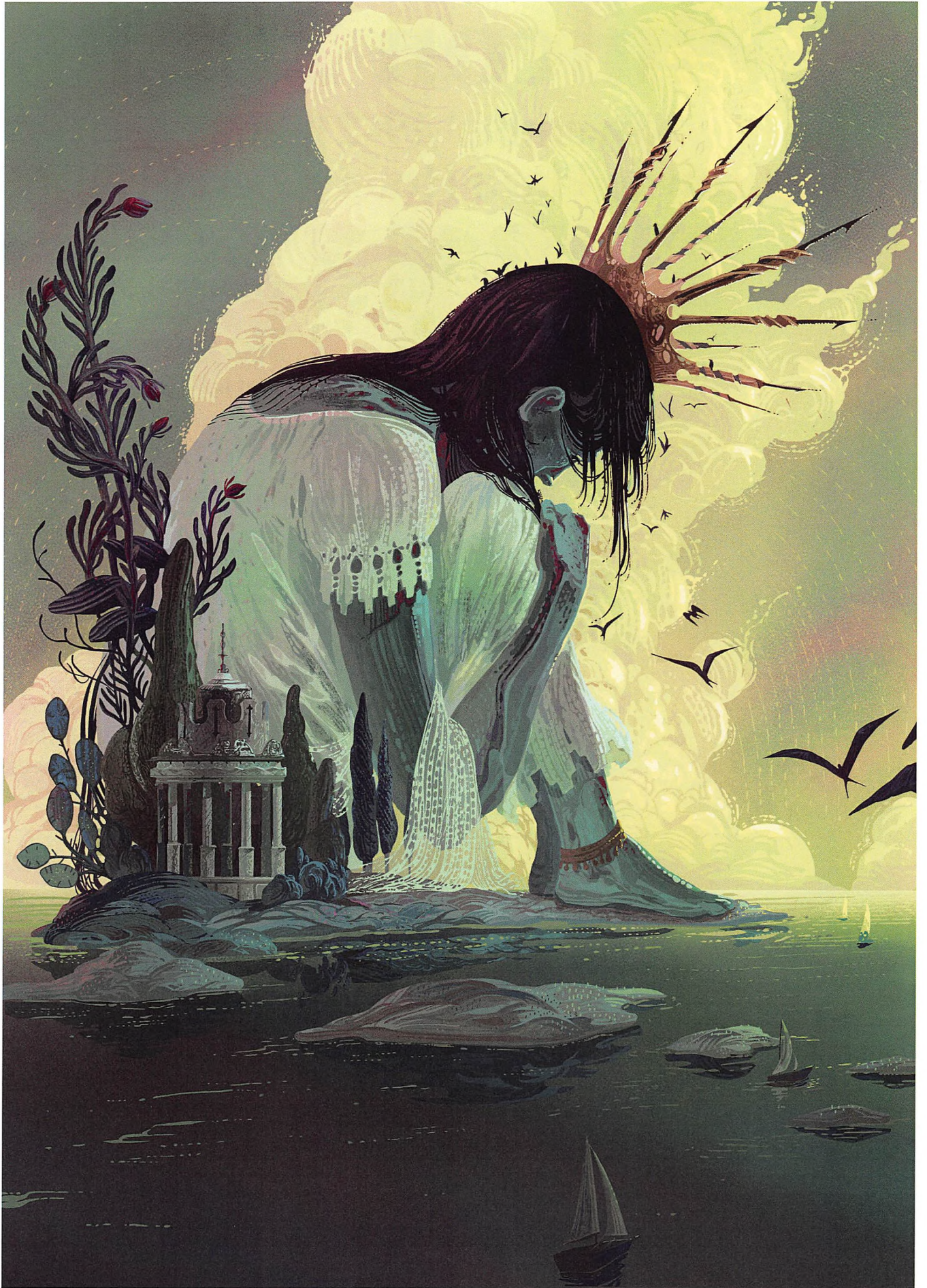


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Backwater God

Philcon 2021

November 19-21, 2021

The Crowne Plaza Hotel, Cherry Hill, NJ



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Max Gladstone
Principal Speaker

Romas Kukalis
Artist Guest of Honor

Fran Wilde
Special Guest

Sara Henya
Musical Guest

- Free parking & public transit access
- Panels, art show, masquerade, concerts, gaming, anime, writers' workshop, meet the pros, filming, vendors & more!

Rates through 5/31/21*:

Adult: \$45

Student/Military: \$30

Teen: \$25

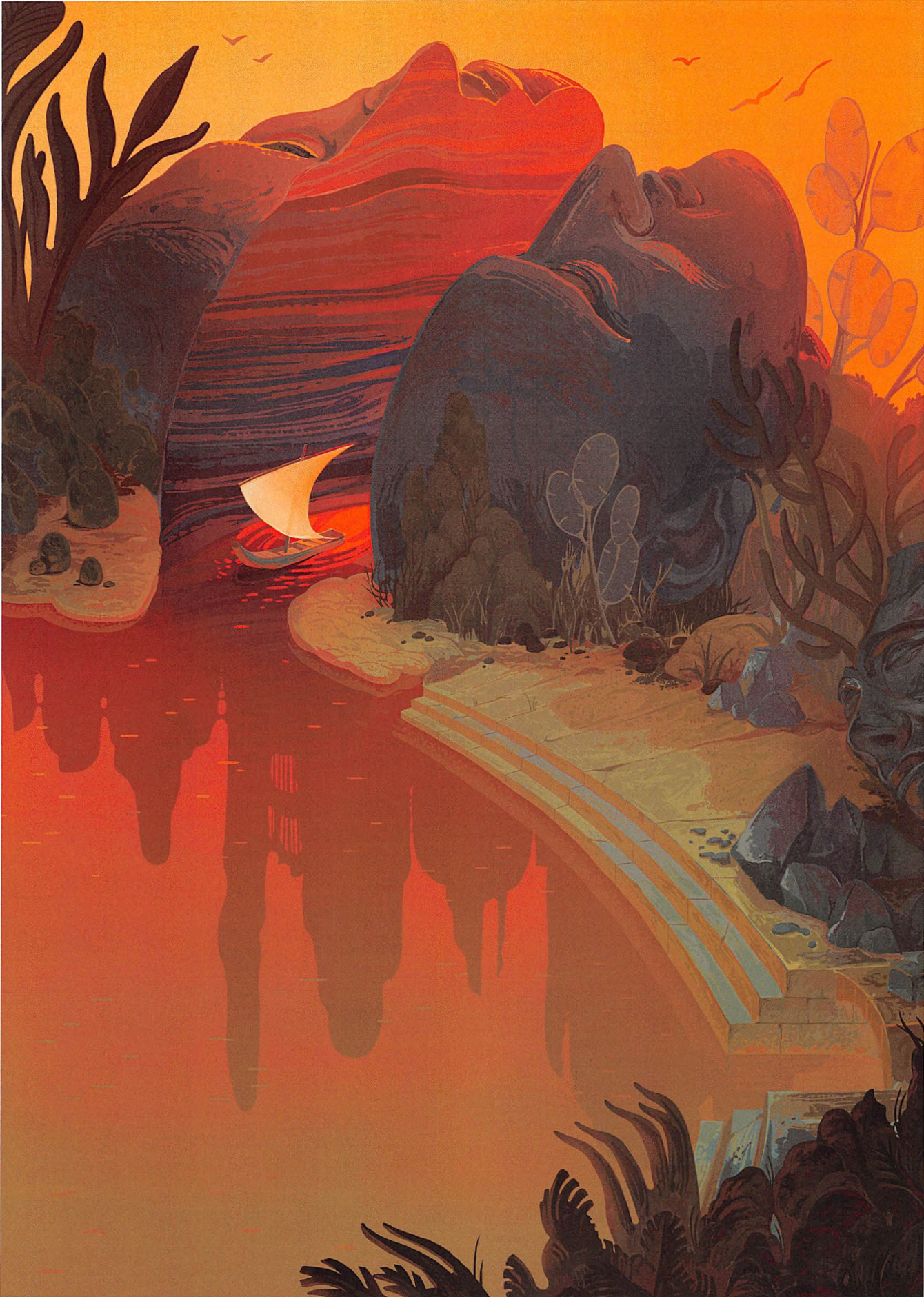
Child (7-12): \$20

*Note: Philcon remains subject to decisions of the NJ Governor regarding restrictions on indoor gatherings. We are optimistic that the convention will be live.

Paid Philcon 2020 preregistrations will be honored at Philcon 2021.

Questions? Email info2021@philcon.org

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IN MEMORIAM



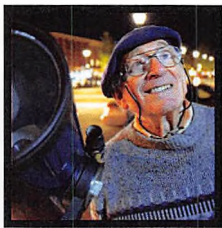
Nina Boal
10/31/2020



Ben Bova
11/8/1932 – 11/29/2020



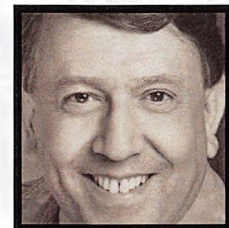
Donna Dearborn
4/6/1947 – 1/25/2021



Herman Heyn
1930 – 2/17/2021



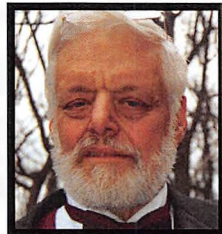
Rikk Jacobs
10/31/1950 – 1/25/2021



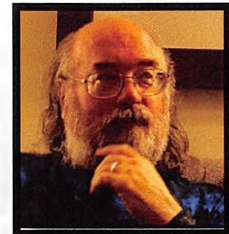
Marvin Kaye
3/10/1938 – 5/13/2021



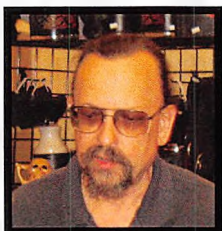
Phyllis Kramer
10/23/1952 – 6/3/2020



Ted Rosenberg
12/27/1941 – 6/18/2020



Don Sakers
1958 – 5/17/2021



Larry Sands
3/16/2021



Bonnie Schupp
3/11/2021



Lindy Sears
7/10/1956 – 9/25/2020



Robin Wood
11/1953 – 4/19/2021

As long as we remember, their fire remains in the Universe.



BSFS Poetry Contest 2021 Winners

It is a Father's Tale

Time out of time I carried you in your dressing gown
downstairs into the moonless night.
We gazed at a thousand suns studding the sky.
Meandering along back lanes; I lifted your arm
to point at Orion, drifting above rooftops.
We drew a 'w' and a triangle in the dark bowl,
traced a hunter's belt and coloured in a lion,
a charioteer and a little bear.
I didn't know then that you'd drift out of reach
when I reached for the thousand and one stories
to keep you listening – to keep you where
trolls, giants and goats sleep under bridges.

Eric Nicholson
1st Place – © 2021
Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, UK



Milicent Patrick Speaks of Monsters

The studio wanted
a sad, beautiful monster
for their black lagoon.
Imagine the lone, lonely survivor
of an ancient race—
half-man, half-fish, they said.
I sensed his presence. His
rough skin, deep gator green.
His dank, amphibious scent.
Special effects made the underwater suit,
but the creature's face
belonged to me. It had to be hideous,
yet human enough a girl
could almost fall in love.
I sculpted muttonchop gills,
voluptuous lips, sorrowful, sloping eyes.
My boss told anyone who'd listen
that he alone designed the Gill Man,
a boys' club lie that hung on me
thick as Spanish moss.
I gave them what they wanted—
a lovesick monster, gentle fiction—
and never saw the creature
lurking in the shadows.

Laura Shovan
Honorable Mention – © 2021
Clarksville, MD, US

BSFS Poetry Contest 2021 Winners

Memories of a Mermaid

A glittering sliver of something was glimpsed on the horizon today
 Bobbing slowly nearer,
 Like a cork on a rough sea
 Every now and then the beauty of it
 Caught the eye of a turning sunbather
 A child even pointed once,
 Declaring it a mermaid
 But as the day drew on
 Interest waned
 And the beach began to clear.
 The glimpse of glitter swelling
 With the drawing in of the tide
 Grazed the sand of the shore
 For the first time
 Shifting back
 And forth
 Back
 And forth
 With the slow rhythmic pulse of the sea
 Before finally coming to a halt.
 Moments passed.
 The snout of a spaniel sniffed indifferently
 A dog walker stopped
 Hesitantly, poking with the toe of her shoe
 A naked body flopped back
 A picture of sullied perfection
 Luminous skin a wonderful shade of pale
 Blue eyes wide, an expression of mild surprise
 Colourless hair encrusted with sparkling sand
 Only the curl of a piece of paper held tight within a hand
 I told you not to drown
 It said.

Natascha Graham
 2nd Place – © 2021
 Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK

Cygnus

She developed her muscles
 and her instincts
 on the farm
 and by protecting her flock.
 She's not some dewy maiden
 or disguised princess
 dancing lightly in satin slippers.
 As a girl
 she was too big
 and too loud
 and too awkward.
 Now they see her coming
 and flee.
 Enough.
 If she is to be cast out
 for being who she is
 she will be who she is
 unapologetically.
 She sways with purpose
 and her voice is low
 as she walks out into the night.
 She dons and fills
 her skin
 of feathers and down,
 flexes her powerful wings
 and flies up
 up
 up
 and away
 to her flock
 of stars.

Ryan E. Holman
 3rd Place – © 2021
 Kensington, MD, US

BSFS Poetry Contest 2021 Winners

The Catty Hours

Midnight with my little black cat
 Waiting for Halloween
 Pricking me with his fine needle claws–
 Signs of love as he purrs, purrs–
 Sharp as his green eyes
 Staring deep into my soul,
 His pointed ears, pointed tail
 Little black magic cat
 Riding on my chest like the flat of a broom
 As I soar through dreamland,
 Guarding me,
 Hissing my demons away
 As anxieties dig deep
 In the wee small hours
 The witching hours
 The canny, green-eyed hours
 The catty hours
 Calm dark waters, dipping cool hands
 Smooth as the black velvet of midnight
 (With my little black cat)
 Fingers stir through purring black fur
 As I smooth angled cheeks and triangle chin
 That slant like his wise, glowing cat-eyes.

Max purrs me to sleep, rumbles regular as waves
 Pushing me off the shore
 With Wynken, Blynken, and Nod,
 Sailing through star-land, dreamland,
 Little black cat perched on the helm.
 My long, lean, sleek and sinuous cat-man,
 His tail waving like a cavalier's plume,
 Honor bright as Maximilien Morrel
 And his cat-like Count,
 Rumbling away this tightness in my chest
 That catches me, quickening my breath
 To nightmares echoing this fulcrum life–
 With almost as many loved ones now my beloved dead
 As are still living with me on this side–
 When my dead outnumber my living,
 Will I dip down into that darkness?
 Dip down
 (into Death)
 I wake to find my cheek pressed sleek
 Into purring black cat fur,
 And Max gazes at me
 With smiling black cat eyes

Adele Gardner
 Honorable Mention – © 2021
 Newport News, VA, US

How to 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: bsfs.org/bsfspoetry.
9. Entries may also be e-mailed to poetry@bsfs.org or mailed to "BSFS Poetry Contest," c/o BSFS, PO Box 686, Baltimore, MD 21203-0686. Info: 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 (bsfs.org/bsfspoetry.htm) periodically for updates and announcement of the winners.
11. Good luck & keep writing!

About the Winning Poets

Eric Nicholson (*First Place*)—Eric Nicholson is a retired art teacher who lives in NE England. He received First Prize in the *Opossum Magazine* poetry competition 2020.

Natascha Graham (*Second Place*)—Natascha Graham is a lesbian writer of stage and screen as well as poetry and fiction.

Ryan E. Holman (*Third Place*)—Ryan E. Holman has previously had work appearing in the *Silver Spring/Takoma Park Voice*, *Split This Rock's* blog in their Call for Poems of Resistance, Power, & Resilience, and *2Elizabeths' 6 Word Story Contest*. She has been featured in the Third Thursday Takoma Park Reading Series three times and earned 3rd prize in the Baltimore Science Fiction Society's 2016 annual poetry contest. Ryan has reclaimed her creative voice following grad school and enjoys writing about everyday and fantastic life, often through the lens of the elements.

Laura Shovan (*Honorable Mention*)—Laura Shovan is an editor, educator, Pushcart Prize-nominated poet, and award-winning children's book author. Some of her books include the chapbook *Mountain, Log, Salt and Stone*, winner of the inaugural Harriss Poetry Prize; the anthology *Life in Me Like Grass on Fire: Love Poems*; and the middle grade verse novel, *The Last Fifth Grade of Emerson Elementary*.

Adele Gardner (*Honorable Mention*)—Cat-loving cataloging librarian Adele Gardner (gardnercastle.com) has over 335 poems published in *Strange Horizons*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *Polu Texni*, *American Arts Quarterly*, *Dreams & Nightmares*, *Liminality*, and more. Ten poems won or placed in the Poetry Society of Virginia Awards, Balticon Poetry Contest, and Rhysling Award. A fond aunt and fine arts b&w film photographer, Gardner loves watching samurai films and reading comics with cats.

Chessiecon 2021

Guest of Honor



Danielle Ackley-McPhail has worked both sides of the publishing industry for longer than she cares to admit. In 2014 she joined forces with husband Mike McPhail and friend Greg Schauer to form her own publishing house, eSpec Books (www.especbooks.com).

Join us at the Lord Baltimore Hotel, just a few minutes' walk from Baltimore's Inner Harbor; 26-28 November 2021. The Lord Baltimore is located at:
20 West Baltimore Street,
Baltimore MD.
Phone 410-539-8400 to book your room, call 855-539-1928

Membership rates are:

Adults, until 31 October 2021: \$35; \$60 at door
Young Adults (12-18), \$45 until 31 October, \$50 at door

Dealers' tables are \$100 until 20 June 2021; after that, the rates are \$120/table, and include one adult membership each.

To register as member go here: <https://johogan.org/chessieconlogin.cfm>
or, to apply as a vendor, the link is: <https://johogan.org/chessieconvendorapplication.cfm>
or, send a note to:

TSFS, Inc.

PO Box 83032

Gaithersburg, MD 20883-3032

with a note listing the names of all registrants, and a check for the proper registration amount.

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or visit our homepage: <https://www.chessiecon.org/2021/>



Serenade

Balticon 55 Program Participants

Danielle Ackley-McPhail	Dr. J. Gary Eden	Joshua Kronengold	Dr. Jim Prego
Jeanne Adams	Gary Ehrlich	R.F. Kuang	Dr. Karen
Lisa Adler-Golden	Christiana Ellis	Grig Larson	Devin Randall
Dr. Caitlin Ahrens	Ruthanna Emrys	Mary Soon Lee	Nobilis Reed
D.H. Aire	Dr. Anne Estes	Emily Lewis	Dave Ring
Bob R.R. Angell	Gabriella Etoniru	Monica Louzon	Julia Rios
Laurence Arcadias	Bruce Evry	Mike Luoma	Madison "Metricula" Roberts
John Ashmead	Cheryl Evry	Perrienne Lurie	Dave Robison
Lisa Ashton	Mary Fan	Nick Mamatas	Kelly Robson
Brick Barrientos	Paul Fischer	Gideon Marcus	Kevin Roche
Phoebe Barton	Geneve Flynn	Lorelei Marcus	Dr. Diana Roman
Jim Beall	Daniel M Ford	Janice Marcus	Christopher Mark Rose
Rob Bean	Valerie Frankel	Nick Martell	Aaron M. Roth
Adam Beaton	John L. French	Gail Z. Martin	Lauren Schiller
Joshua Bilmes	Anita Gale	Arkady Martine	H. Paul Shuch
Liz Bosarge	Pam Garrettson	Rena Mason	Alex Shvartsman
C.D. Brown	Henry S. Gibbons	Maugorn	Angela Yuriko Smith
Bugsy Bryant	Veronica Giguere	Bill Mayhew	Jay Smith
Rodger Burns	Nicole Givens Kurtz	Seanan McGuire	Bud Sparhawk
Mildred Cady	Vince Gotera	James Mendez Hodes	D.A. Xiaolin Spires
Piers Cawley	Anne Gray	Beth Mizuno	Ian Randal Strock
C.J. Cherryh	Prof. Brian M. Gray	Tee Morris	John Tilden
Nino Cipri	J.T. Greathouse	Beth Morris Tanner	Michael R. Underwood
Neil Clarke	J.L. Gribble	Lee Murray	Dr. Julie Urban
Zig Zag Claybourne	Dr. Eric Haag	Norbert Myslinski, PhD	Marilisa Valtazanou
Brenda Clough	Morgan Hazelwood	Mari Ness	Wendy Van Camp
Doc Coleman	Yakira Heistand	Ben Newman	Ryan Van Loan
Sherri Cook Woosley	Merav Hoffman	Chidumebi Njoku-Browne	Mark L. Van Name
Robin Corbet	Thomas R. Holtz, Jr., PhD	Nuchtchas	Marie Vibbert
Dr. Adrienne Cox	Akua Lezli Hope	Anne E.G. Nydam	Sabrina Vourvoulias
Dr. Mary Crowell	Starla Huchton	Sean O'Connell	John Walker
Denise Cutair	Keith Hughes	Hugh J. O'Donnell	Jean Marie Ward
Margaret Davis	Julayne Hughes	Dr. Robert Orth	Ted Weber
Lawrence Dean	hymie!	Karen Osborne	Syd Weinstein
Dr. Mary Sajini Devadas	Micaiah Johnson	Lisa Padol	Troy Wiipongwii
Doug Dluzen	Anna Kashina	Joshua Palmatier	Collin Wilkinson
Tom Doyle	Kim the Comic Book	Ada Palmer	Alyssa Winans
Dave Dressler	Goddess	L. Penelope	John Wiswell
Sarah Beth Durst	Daniel M. Kimmel	Sarah Pinsker	Batya "The Toon" Wittenberg
Scott Edelman	Kristoph Klover	C.L. Polk	L. Marie Wood
Meg Eden	Beatrice Kondo	Jennifer R. Povey	

Balticon 55 Program Participant Bios

Danielle Ackley-McPhail

Award-winning author, editor, and publisher Danielle Ackley-McPhail has worked both sides of the publishing industry for longer than she cares to admit. In 2014, she joined forces with husband and fellow writer Mike McPhail and friend Greg Schauer to form her own publishing house, eSpec Books (especbooks.com). Her published works include seven novels: *Yesterday's Dreams*, *Tomorrow's Memories*, *Today's Promise*, *The Halfling's Court*, *The Redcaps' Queen*, *Daire's Devils*, and *Baba Ali and the Clockwork Djinn*, (written with Day Al-Mohamed). She has authored several solo collections: *Eternal Wanderings*, *A Legacy of Stars*, *Consigned to the Sea*, *Flash in the Can*, *Transcendence*, *Between Darkness and Light*, *The Fox's Fire*, and *The Kindly One*. In addition, she wrote three non-fiction writers' guides: *The Literary Handyman*, *More Tips from the Handyman*, and *LH: Build-A-Book Workshop*.

Danielle has served as senior editor of several publications: the *Bad-Ass Faeries* anthology series, *Gaslight & Grimm*, *Side of Good/Side of Evil*, *After Punk*, and *Footprints in the Stars*. Her numerous short stories can be found in various anthologies and collections. In addition to her literary acclaim, she crafts and sells original costume horns under the moniker The Hornie Lady Custom Costume Horns. AND Danielle sells her homemade flavor-infused candied ginger under the brand of Ginger KICK! at literary conventions, on commission, and wholesale. Danielle lives in New Jersey with her husband and fellow writer Mike McPhail and two extremely spoiled cats.

Jeanne Adams

Jeanne Adams writes award-winning romantic suspense, paranormal and urban fantasies, as well as space opera that's been compared to the works of Robert Heinlein and Jack McDevitt. A sought-after speaker, Jeanne teaches writing classes on multiple topics: criminal body disposal for writers, world-building, collaboration, plotting for pantsers, and realistic fight scene descriptions.

Jeanne lives in Washington, DC with her husband, two growing sons, and three dogs (two Labs and an Irish Water Spaniel). Don't tell, but she's prone to adopting more dogs when her husband isn't looking. Featured in *Cosmopolitan Magazine* and other publications, her books have been consistently hailed as "One of the best Suspense Books of the Year!" (*Romantic Times*) and "Stunningly realistic space adventure" (*Amazon reviewers*). You can find her books on all major platforms. Connect with her on the web at JeanneAdams.com, on *Twitter* at twitter.com/JeanneAdams, or at [Facebook.com/JeanneAdamsAuthor](https://www.facebook.com/JeanneAdamsAuthor).

Lisa Adler-Golden

Lisa Adler-Golden (she/her) has been the Programming Head of Balticon since 2018 and is the Program Division Head of DisCon III, the 79th Worldcon.

Dr. Caitlin Ahrens

Dr. Caitlin Ahrens is a researcher studying the geophysical and thermodynamic aspects of ice phases across the Solar System, including cryovolcanism. Dr. Ahrens received her BS in Physics/Astrophysics and Geology from West Virginia University in 2015 and her PhD in Space and Planetary Science from the University of Arkansas in 2020. Currently, she is a NASA Postdoctoral Program Fellow at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center working on lunar ices and impact craters. Dr. Ahrens is a NASA Solar System Ambassador for astronomy outreach nationally, earning the 2018 Ten Outstanding Young Americans award. She also produces a radio show called *Scratching the Surface* (soon to be a podcast).

D.H. Aire

D.H. Aire has published 20 books and is releasing *Bigfoot is Not Your Friend* in May 2021. His love of history and archaeology found expression in his epic fantasy/sci-fi *Highbage's Plight* and *Hands of the Highbage* series, as well as *Knight of the Broken Table* and *Nowhere to Go But*

BALCON 55 LARP

Forget everything you know about the world. People are not who--or what--you think they are. Magic is real. The supernatural walk among us. Like us, they are here to live and survive. Yet they too have their share of enemies, both unnatural and ordinary. who will stop at nothing to destroy them and their way of life. Enter a world of urban fantasy inspired by Harry Dresden where the likes of mages, vampires, fairies and dwarves hide in plain sight. Living. Surviving. Keeping magic alive. Check the online program schedule for details.

Mars (a novella). He is a member of SFWA (Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America) and an Indie author. Follow him at: *Twitter* @DHaire15, *Facebook* (Dare 2 Believe), and *dhaire.net*.

Bob R.R. Angell

Robert R Angell (he/him) is a graduate of the Clarion West Writers' Workshop. Bob's work has appeared in: *Asimov's*, *Interzone*, *Compelling Science Fiction*, *Gargoyle*, *Chelsea Station*, and *The Baltimore Review* among others; and in many anthologies, including *Compelling Science Fiction: The First Collection*, *Sex & Chocolate*, *Best Date Ever: True Stories That Celebrate Gay Relationships*, and *Stress City*. His work has been translated into French and Chinese. His LGBTQ YA VR AI science fiction romantic thriller, *Best Game Ever*, published in May 2019, was launched at Balticon 53! Check out *rrangell.com* for links to free stories and interviews.

Laurence Arcadias

Laurence Arcadias is a French/American animator working in the United States. She has directed and written several short films, including *Tempest in a Bedroom*, which was short-listed for a César Award, the French equivalent of an Academy Award. Her previous work includes being an illustrator and animator for French television programs. She directed an animation show, *Alex*, which was awarded Best Short Animation TV show at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival. Laurence subsequently was awarded a scholarship from the French government to become Animator in Residence at Apple's Advanced Technology Group. She currently is a faculty member in the Animation Department at the Maryland Institute College of Art and is the co-lead of an art/science collaboration where students produce animations based on NASA astrophysics research.

John Ashmead

John Ashmead earned a BA in physics (*summa cum laude*) from Harvard, and a master's degree in physics from Princeton. For several years, he was an assistant editor for *Asimov's SF Magazine* (but has lived an otherwise blameless existence). Since then he has worked as a software and database developer for the medical, legal, advertising, financial, and scientific areas, among others. His clients have ranged from a perinatal laboratory to a cemetery (his company slogan is "cradle to grave programming"). John currently supports a leading optical switch manufacturer (your web pages & email travel over switches he helped build).

John has stayed part of the science fiction community. Recently he co-edited (with Darrell Schweitzer) *Tales from the Miskatonic University: What Evils Lurk in the Dark Reaches of the Dewey Decimal System?* He has given talks at NASA, Philcon, Capclave, Balticon, and several Worldcons on subjects such as Time Travel, Invisibility, Practical Telepathy, and most recently Mars or Bust! In summer

2020, he gave a talk at a physics conference on "Time Dispersion and Quantum Mechanics." This lecture explored: does quantum mechanics apply along the time dimension? and if so, how could we look for this experimentally? and with current technology? The accompanying paper was just accepted by the peer-reviewed journal *IOP Science: Journal of Physics Conference Series* for the proceedings of the conference. Details (and his paper) are on his website: *timeandquantummechanics.com*.

Lisa Ashton

Lisa Ashton is a master division costumer for whom Balticon is home. Her Balticon masquerade costumes/presentations have been numerous and varied, such as: Isis in "Magic of the Ancients," Rainbows & Unicorns, alien brides, Bad Harem Day, Urban Legends, a Tequila Sunrise, Kali and various pirates, the "Sweet Sixteens," and 2019's BIS "Mystic Legacy" (with Alanna Whitestar). Her Balticon masquerade costumes have been many and varied. She is also a quilter and beader, and teaches beadwork, costuming, and sewing techniques at Balticon. Lisa additionally is the founder of Miss Lizzy's Traveling Historical Fashion Show, a 501(c)(3) organization. In 2016, she was awarded the ICG Lifetime Achievement Award at CostumeCon. She loves coffee and is generally considered friendly at cons.

Brick Barrientos

Brick Barrientos hosts the movie trivia game show *Silver Screen Test*. He won a national championship in *College Bowl* and was a one-day champion on *Jeopardy!*. Brick has been the ongoing host of the Balticon trivia contest and can be found all over Maryland winning pub quiz trivia cash. He is the proud father of a daughter who is also a science fiction fan and may also have a cat.

Phoebe Barton

Phoebe Barton is a queer trans science fiction writer. Her short fiction has appeared in venues such as *Analog*, *Lightspeed*, and *Kaleidotrope* and in anthologies from Neon Hemlock and World Weaver Press. She wrote the interactive fiction game *The Luminous Underground*, a 2020 Nebula Award finalist for Choice of Games. She is a 2019 graduate of the Clarion West Writers Workshop and lives with a robot in the sky above Toronto. Find her online at *phoebebartonsf.com* or on *Twitter* @aphoebebarton.

Jim Beall

Jim Beall (BS-Math, MBA, PE) has been a nuclear engineer for over 40 years, a wargamer for over 50, and an avid science fiction reader for even longer. His experience began as a naval officer aboard USS *Long Beach* (CGN-9). He then moved into design, construction, inspection, and assessment with a nuclear utility, an architectural engineering firm, and the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (USNRC). USNRC assignments included senior resident inspector and policy assistant for reactors to three different USNRC

Commissioners, earning the agency's Meritorious and Distinguished Service awards. Duties included research into alternative and speculative energy sources, including coal, oil, hydro, geothermal, tidal, solar, wind, fracking, space-based, heavy water reactors, breeder reactors, fusion, and even anti-matter. These studies were necessary for reviewing energy proposals, assessing technical reports, and drafting speeches. JBIS and Baen Books have published several of his non-fiction articles.

Adam Beaton

Adam Beaton has been staffing conventions for over 20 years at different levels from volunteer to convention chair. He is an avid gamer, from board games to video games. Currently, he is serving as a division head of DisCon III, the 79th Worldcon in Washington, DC, and he is vice-chair of Zenkaikon in Lancaster, PA. He runs multiple Dungeons & Dragons campaigns and streams D&D on his *Twitch* channel, twitch.tv/highlanderwins. In his spare time, he enjoys Chinese food.

Joshua Bilmes

Joshua Bilmes is the president of JABberwocky Literary Agency, which he founded in 1994. His clients include *NY Times* bestselling authors Brandon Sanderson, Charlaine Harris, Peter V. Brett, Jack Campbell, Elizabeth Moon and Simon R. Green, multiple Compton Crook Award winners, Hugo Award winner Suzanne Palmer, and dozens of other top names in the sf and fantasy genres. His first convention as a pro was the 1989 Balticon. Joshua thinks his best Balticon might be in 2017, where he first started reading *The Kingdom of Liars* by Nick Martell. Reviewers have gone on to call Nick "the future of epic fantasy." Joshua believes his success might not have happened without Balticon. Upcoming debuts to look for from Joshua's roster include J.T. Greathouse's *The Hand of the Sun King*, Clay Harmon's *Flames of Mira*, R.R. Virdi's *First Binding* and Zac Topping's *Wake of War*. Joshua watches lots of movies and lots of tennis when he isn't reading manuscripts. He strongly encourages all of you to check out the Vault Comics line-up.

Liz Bosarge

Liz is a STEM librarian who is passionate about eco-criticism, Indigenous justice in the library, and comic books. In her free time, she writes book reviews and articles for *School Library Journal*.

C.D. Brown

C.D. Brown is a writer and filmmaker from New Orleans. He is the author of the fantasy novels *Fate's Stiletto* and *Vamp City*, along with the literary novel *Looking Back On Sodom* and one short story collection (both as Charles D. Brown). He has made two feature films (as Charlie Brown): *Angels Die Slowly* and *Never A Dull Moment: 20 Years of the Rebirth Brass Band*. His most recent short subject *Tick Tock* won Best Rom Com at the Kapow Film Festival. His

short fiction has appeared in *Conium Review*, *Oddville Press*, *Writing Disorder*, *Jersey Devil Press*, *The Menacing Hedge*, *Aethlon*, and in the anthologies *Dimensional Abscesses* and *Nocturnal Natures*. Over the past year and a half, he has directed *Escape From the Secret Lab*, a live streaming musical game show featuring local New Orleans bands. He teaches English and screenwriting at Dillard and Tulane Universities.

Mildred Cady

Gaming, writing, costuming, crafting, and cooking. All these drive Mildred Cady. She is also the librarian for the *Metamor City* podcast and one of the hosts for the new *Lightbulb Rangers* podcast.

Neil Clarke

Neil Clarke (neil-clark.com) is the editor of the Hugo and World Fantasy Award-winning *Clarkesworld Magazine* and several anthologies, including the *Best Science Fiction of the Year* series. His achievements include: being a finalist for the Hugo Award for Best Editor (Short Form) nine times; winning the Chesley Award for Best Art Director three times; and receiving the 2019 Solstice Award from SFWA (Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America) He currently lives in New Jersey with his wife and two sons.

Zig Zag Claybourne

Zig Zag Claybourne is the author of *The Brothers Jetstream: Leviathan* and its sequel, *Afro Puffs Are the Antennae of the Universe*. Other novels include *By All Our Violent Guides* and *Neon Lights*. His stories and essays on sci-fi, fandom, and life have appeared in *Apex*, *Galaxy's Edge*, *GigaNotosaurus*, *Strange Horizons*, and other genre venues, as well as the *42 blog* at writeonrighton.com. He grew up watching *The Twilight Zone* and considers himself a better person for it. His short story collection *Historical Inaccuracies* once topped a collection from Neil Himself on *Amazon* for about three seconds, likely due to its barbarian Smurf story, but this is inconclusive.

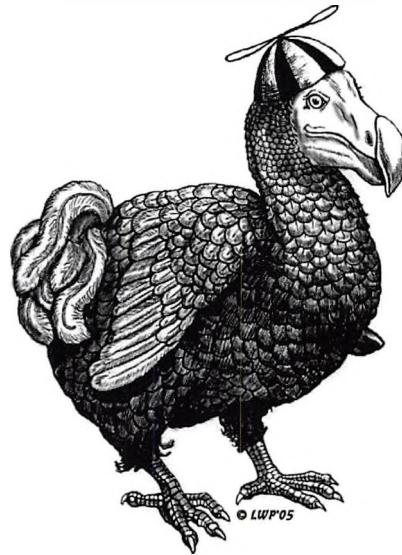
Brenda Clough

Brenda W. Clough has been a writer for a long time. Her first fantasy novel, *The Crystal Crown*, was published by DAW in 1984. She has also written *The Dragon of Mishbil* (1985), *The Realm Beneath* (1986), and *The Name of the Sun* (1988). Her novel *How Like a God*, now available from Book View Café, was published by Tor Books in 1997. Its sequel, *Doors of Death and Life*, was published in May 2000. Her latest novels are a time travel trilogy, *Edge to Center*, which came out in 2019. In 2021 she is releasing 11 (not a typo!) volumes in a series of Victorian thrillers starring the redoubtable Miss Marian Halcombe, all available at Book View Café (bookviewcafe.com/bookstore/bvc-author/brenda-w-clough/). The first volume is free!

CAPCLAVE 2021

ERIC FLINT

Guest of Honor



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October 1-3, 2021

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1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland 20852

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Jun 1st - August 31st 2021: \$60

Sept 1st - Sep 17th 2021: \$65

At the Door : \$70

\$30 in advance, \$35 at the door for students and active military

capclave@gmail.com; <https://www.capclave.org>; <https://www.wsfa.org>

Capclave is produced by the Washington Science Fiction Association (WSFA)

Doc Coleman

Doc Coleman never dreamed of being a writer. He dreamed of being an actor, of making movies. He didn't dream hard enough, and ended up working in IT. But he had a way with words, and still wanted to tell stories. Figuring you don't get better at things you don't do, he set about getting better at writing. Doc's stories appear in: *The Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences' Tales From the Archives* podcast; the Bushido Western Anthology *Way of the Gun*; and the anthology *Paradise Found: Tales From the Library*. *The Perils of Prague* is the first novel in the steampunk comedy/adventure series *The Adventures of Crackle and Bang*. The second book, *The Kindred of Kali*, is in progress. He also published *The Shining Cog and Other Steampunk Tales*, a collection of steampunk short stories. Doc is also a podcaster, narrator, and voice actor as well as an avid reader, home brewer and beer lover, fan of Renaissance festivals, and frequently a smart-ass. He lives with his lovely wife and two cats in Germantown, MD.

Sherri Cook Woosley

Sherri Cook Woosley has a master's degree in English with a focus on comparative mythology from the University of Maryland. Her short fiction is published in *Dreamforge Magazine*, *Abyss & Apex*, and *Flash Fiction Magazine*. Her debut novel, *Walking Through Fire*, features a mother and her son in the middle of a war between reawakening Mesopotamian gods...in Baltimore. It was long-listed for the Booknest Debut Novel award and Baltimore's Best 2019 in the novel category. She's a member of SFWA (Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America) and the BSFS Critique Circle. Visit her @SherriWoosley tasteofsherri.com.

Robin Corbet, PhD

Robin Corbet is an astronomer conducting research on binary star systems containing black holes or neutron stars, where the incredibly strong gravitational and magnetic fields result in the production of X-rays and gamma rays. Dr. Corbet obtained a PhD in high-energy astrophysics from University College in London, and continued his astronomical research in Britain and Japan before moving to the United States. He is now a Senior Research Scientist at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, based at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center. He works with the Fermi Gamma-ray Space Telescope, and has explored new approaches for undertaking the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence (SETI). At the Maryland Institute College of Art he co-teaches the astro-animation class, and he seeks ways to build bridges between science and art.

Doug Dluzen, PhD

Douglas Dluzen, PhD, is a senior science writer and editor with the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), and is a Visiting Professor of Biology at Morgan State University in Baltimore. A human geneticist, he has studied the genetic contributors to human aging, cancer, and hypertension. Currently, he writes and edits

scientific content for NIMHD. His current research focuses on the biology of health disparities in Baltimore City, including how socioeconomic factors influence disease predisposition. Dr. Dluzen has taught evolutionary biology, genetics, and scientific thinking; and he occasionally blogs about his work and his science fiction writing on his website. His fiction is found in *Analog* and non-fiction in *Clarkesworld*, *Analog*, and other venues. You can find him on Twitter @ripplesintime24.

Tom Doyle

Tom Doyle's latest novel, *Border Crosser*, tells the far-future adventures of Eris, a psychologically extreme secret agent whose shifting loyalties cause chaos wherever she goes in the galaxy. Tom is also the author of the contemporary fantasy trilogy *American Craft* from Tor Books. In the first novel, *American Craftsmen*, two modern magician-soldiers fight their way through the legacies of Poe and Hawthorne as they attempt to destroy an undying evil—and not kill each other first. In the sequel, *The Left-Hand Way*, the craftsmen are hunters and are hunted in a global race to save humanity from a new occult threat from America's past. In the third book, *War and Craft*, it's Armageddon in Shangri-La, and the end of the world as we know it. Some of Tom's award-winning short fiction is collected in *The Wizard of Macatawa and Other Stories*. His story "Collaborator" is part of Charles Gannon's *Lost Signals* anthology.

Tom has survived Harvard, Stanford, and cancer. He writes in a spooky turret in Washington, DC. You can find the text and audio of many of his stories on his website: tomdoyleauthor.com.

Sarah Beth Durst

Sarah Beth Durst is the author of over 20 fantasy books for adults, teens, and kids, including *The Queens of Renthia* series, *Drink Slay Love*, and *Spark*. She has won an American Library Association Alex Award and a Mythopoeic Fantasy Award. Sarah has been a finalist for the Andre Norton Nebula Award three times. She lives in Stony Brook, NY with her husband, her children, and her ill-mannered cat. For more information, visit her at sarahbethdurst.com.

Scott Edelman

Scott Edelman has published more than 100 short stories in magazines such as *Analog*, *Postscripts*, *The Twilight Zone*, and *Dark Discoveries*, as well as in anthologies such as *Why New Yorkers Smoke*, *Crossroads: Southern Tales of the Fantastic*, and *MetaHorror*. Many of these have been collected in books: *These Words Are Haunted*, *What Will Come After* (a finalist for the Shirley Jackson Memorial Award), *What We Still Talk About*, and *Tell Me Like You Done Before (and Other Stories Written on the Shoulders of Giants)*. His most recent collection is *Things That Never Happened*. Scott has been a Stoker Award finalist eight times.

Scott worked for the Syfy Channel for 13+ years as editor of *Science Fiction Weekly*, *SCI FI Wire*, and *Blastr*. He was the founding editor of *Science Fiction Age*, which he edited during its entire eight-year run. He has been a four-time Hugo Award finalist for Best Editor. He's also the host of the *Eating the Fantastic* podcast, which since February 2016 has allowed listeners to eavesdrop on his meals with creators of science fiction, fantasy, horror, comics, and more.

Meg Eden

A 2020 Pitch Wars mentee, Meg Eden's work is published or is forthcoming in various magazines, including *Prairie Schooner*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *RHINO* and *CV2*. She teaches creative writing at Anne Arundel Community College. She is the author of five poetry chapbooks, the novel *Post-High School Reality Quest* (2017), and the poetry collection *Drowning in the Floating World* (2020). She runs the *Magfest MAGES Library* blog, which posts accessible academic articles about video games (super.magfest.org/mages-blog). Find her online at megedenbooks.com or on *Twitter* at @ConfusedNarwhal.

Gary Ehrlich

Gary Ehrlich stalks the hallways of Northeast conventions and assorted filk conventions. In mundania, he is a mild-mannered structural engineer for a major trade association, representing them on material design standards committees and at building code hearings. At cons, Gary can be found on a stage or in the filk room, offering songs of space flight, lunar colonies and hyperspace hotels. Gary is a three-time chair of Conterpoint, the DC area's incarnation of NEFilk, the Floating Northeast Filk Con. He has filled other roles for Conterpoint and for 1997's Second Concerto. Gary is currently Balticon's Director of Filk and Other Musical Mayhem. In April 2012 Gary was inducted into the Filk Hall of Fame for his contributions to the filk community.

Christiana Ellis

Christiana is an engineer, podcaster, writer, and streamer from the Boston area. She is the author of the fantasy novel *Nina Kimberly the Merciless*. In addition, she is the creator and star of award-winning audio drama *Space Casey*, the Dungeon Master of the *So Many Levels* D&D stream, and the podcaster behind more projects you can shake a stick at. Most recently, she is the author of the slipstream noir novel *Phyllis Esposito: Interdimensional Private Eye*.

Ruthanna Emrys

Ruthanna Emrys is the author of the *Innsmouth Legacy* series, including *Winter Tide* and *Deep Roots*, and the *Imperfect Commentaries* collection. She writes radically hopeful short stories about religion and aliens and psycholinguistics. She lives in a mysterious manor house on the outskirts of Washington, DC with her wife and their large, strange family. She creates real versions of imaginary foods in her crowded kitchen, gives unsolicited advice, and

occasionally attempts to save the world. You can find her at ruthannaemrys.com, as @r_emrys on *Twitter* and at patreon.com/ruthannaemrys.

Gabriella Etoniru

Gabriella Etoniru (they/them) is a writer based in Boston, MA and New York, NY. Currently, they are the Associate Editor for *Baffling Magazine*, a speculative fiction online magazine with a focus on Queer narratives. Gabriella is a Creative Nonfiction MFA candidate at Columbia University. They enjoy exploring themes of intergenerational trauma in the Black community alongside narratives of immigration within their family. You can find a compilation of their published work—including writing in *The New York Times*, *Columbia Journal of Literary Criticism*, and *The Indy*—alongside some of their other words at getoniru.com.

Mary Fan

Mary Fan is a sci-fi/fantasy writer hailing from Jersey City, NJ. She is the author of the *Jane Colt* sci-fi series (Red Adept Publishing), the *Starswept* YA sci-fi series (Snowy Wings Publishing), the *Flynn Nightsider* YA dark fantasy series (Crazy 8 Press), and *Stronger Than a Bronze Dragon*, a YA steampunk fantasy (Page Street Publishing). In addition, Mary is the co-editor (along with fellow sci-fi author Paige Daniels) of the *Brave New Girls* young adult sci-fi anthologies, which feature tales about girls in STEM. Revenues from sales of this book are donated to the Society of Women Engineers scholarship fund. Mary has been an avid reader for as long as she can remember and especially enjoys the infinite possibilities and out-of-this-world experiences of science fiction and fantasy. In her spare time (when she has any), she enjoys kickboxing, opera singing, attempting circus arts, and exploring new things—she'll try almost anything once.

Geneve Flynn

Geneve Flynn is a speculative fiction editor from Australia. She has two psychology degrees and only uses them for nefarious purposes. Her horror short stories have been published in various markets, including Flame Tree Publishing, *Things in the Well*, and the *Tales to Terrify* podcast. Along with award-winning author and editor Lee Murray, Geneve co-edited *Black Cranes: Tales of Unquiet Women*, an anthology of Southeast Asian horror. The anthology is nominated for both the Bram Stoker Award® and the Aurealis Award; and it has been listed both on *Tor Nightfire's* Works of Feminist Horror and *Locus* magazine's 2020 Recommended Reading List.

Geneve was assistant editor for *Relics, Wrecks, and Ruins*, a speculative fiction anthology which features authors such as Neil Gaiman, Ken Liu, Robert Silverberg, James (SA) Corey, Lee Murray, Mark Lawrence, Mary Robinette Kowal, and Angela Slatter. This anthology is the legacy of Australian fantasy author Aiki Flinthart, and supports the Flinthart Writing Residency with the Queensland Writers Centre.

Geneve loves tales that unsettle, all things writerly, and B-grade action movies. If that sounds like you, check out her website at geneveflynn.com.au.

Daniel M. Ford

Daniel M. Ford was born and raised near Baltimore. He is the author of the epic fantasy series *The Paladin Trilogy* (SFWP/Podium) and the Jack Dixon novels (*Body Broker* and *Cheap Heat*). His next novel, *The Warden*, is expected in 2022 from Tor Books.

Valerie Frankel

Valerie Estelle Frankel has won a Dream Realm Award, an Indie Excellence Award, and a USA Book News National Best Book Award for her Henry Potty parodies. She's the author of over 80 books on pop culture, including: *Hunting for Meaning in The Mandalorian*; *Inside the Captain Marvel Film*; *Star Wars Meets the Eras of Feminism*; and *Who Tells Your Story? History, Pop Culture, and Hidden Meanings in the Musical Phenomenon Hamilton*. Many of her books focus on women's roles in fiction, from her heroine's journey guides *From Girl to Goddess* and *Buffy and the Heroine's Journey* to books like *Superheroines and the Epic Journey* and *The Many Faces of Katniss Everdeen*. Once a lecturer at San Jose State University, she now teaches at Mission College and San Jose City College, and speaks often at conferences. Come explore her research at vefrankel.com

John L. French

John L. French is a retired crime scene supervisor with 40 years experience. He has seen more than his share of murders, shootings, and serious assaults. As a break from the realities of his job, he started writing science fiction, pulp, horror, fantasy, and, of course, crime fiction. John's first story, "Past Sins," was published in *Hardboiled Magazine* and was cited as one of the best *Hardboiled* stories of 1993. More crime fiction followed, appearing in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, the *Fading Shadows* magazines, and in collections by Barnes and Noble.

Association with writers like James Chambers and the late, great C.J. Henderson led him to try horror fiction and to a still growing fascination with zombies and other undead things. His first horror story, "The Right Solution," appeared in Marietta Publishing's *Lin Carter's Anton Zarnak*. Other horror stories followed in anthologies such as *The Dead Walk* and *Dark Furies*, both published by Die Monster Die books. In *Dark Furies*, his character Bianca Jones made her literary debut in "21 Doors," a story based on an old Baltimore legend and on a creepy game his daughter used to play with her friends. John's first book was *The Devil of Harbor City*, a novel done in the old pulp style. *Past Sins* and *Here There Be Monsters* followed. His other books include *The Assassins' Ball* and *The Santa Heist* (both written with Patrick Thomas), *Souls on Fire*, *The Nightmare Strikes*, *Monsters Among Us*, *The Last Redhead*, *The Magic of Simon Tombs*, and *When the Moon Shines*.

John has been a consulting editor for Chelsea House's *Criminal Investigation* series. He is the editor of *To Hell in a Fast Car*, *Mermaids 13*, C. J. Henderson's *Challenge of the Unknown*, *Camelot 13* (with Patrick Thomas), and (with Greg Schauer) *With Great Power...* You can find John on *Facebook* or you can email him at him at jfrenchfam@aol.com.

Pam Garrettson

Pam Garrettson grew up in Maryland, and received her undergraduate degree in biochemistry at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. She did her graduate research on breeding waterfowl through Louisiana State University. Since 2000, she has worked as a wildlife biologist for the Division of Migratory Bird Management, and is a runner and avid social dancer in her spare time.

Henry S. Gibbons, PhD

Since 2008, Henry S. Gibbons, PhD has been a Research Microbiologist at the US Army Combat Capabilities Development Command-Chemical Biological Center, the Army laboratory charged with developing and testing non-medical protections against chemical and biological weapons. His group has employed a combination of genomics, bioinformatics, synthetic biology, and classical microbiological techniques to develop new techniques for characterizing biological and chemical threats. Using microbial genetics and synthetic biology, his group recently created new genetically tagged or "barcoded" strains of *Bacillus thuringiensis* for use as anthrax simulants, and paired those strains with specific PCR-based detection assays to enable their tracking in the environment. Beginning in 2015, Dr. Gibbons co-chaired the Department of Defense (DoD) technical working group that developed a standardized, validated method of inactivating *B. anthracis* spores by gamma-irradiation. He currently serves as vice-chair of the Biological Select Agents and Toxins Biorisk and Safety Review Panel for the DoD. He is a member of the Chemical Corps Regimental Association's Honorable Order of the Dragon. In 2019 he was awarded a Service Chiefs' Fellowship from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. In addition, he has authored or co-authored 27 primary scientific publications.

Veronica Giguere

Veronica Giguere (V.) is a storyteller of the spoken and written word who became an audiobook narrator through the strange intersection of higher education, fan fiction, and MMORPGs. She narrates across genres, but her favorites are science fiction and fantasy. With her superpower of snark and appreciation of the author's craft, Veronica lends empathy, intelligence, and wit to every project. Her passion for science and innovation shines in her roles as audiobook narrator, science fiction author, podcast producer, and forever-geeky mom. According to her fellow *Secret World Chronicle* coauthors, she writes about metahumans battling

alien fascists in modern-day Atlanta and delights in finding new ways to torment their darlings. According to her kids, she sings loudly to embarrassing 90s songs in the car during her endless mom and taxi drives between home, school, and the bowling alley. According to her husband, she is addicted to coffee and crochet. According to her three cats, she is probably late to feed them dinner.

Nicole Givens Kurtz

Nicole Givens Kurtz is an author, editor, and educator. She's the recipient of the 2020 Horror Writers Association's Diversity Grant. She's been named as one of Book Riot's Best Black Indie SFF Writers. She currently edits the groundbreaking anthology *SLAY: Stories of the Vampire Noire*. Her novels have been finalists in the Dream Realm Awards, Fresh Voices Awards, and EPIE Awards for science fiction. She's written for *White Wolf*, *Bram Stoker Finalist in Horror Anthology*, *Sycorax's Daughters*, and Serial Box's *The Vela: Salvation* series. Nicole has over 40 short stories published as well as 11 novels and three active speculative mystery series. She's a member of Horror Writers Association, Sisters in Crime, and Science Fiction Writers of America.

Vince Gotera

Vince Gotera teaches at the University of Northern Iowa, where he served as editor of the *North American Review* (2000-2016). He is also former editor of *Star*Line*, the print journal of the international Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry Association (2017-2020). His poetry collections include *Dragonfly*, *Ghost Wars*, *Fighting Kite*, *The Coolest Month*, and the upcoming *Pacific Crossing*. Recent poems appeared in *Altered Reality Magazine*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Dreams & Nightmares*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Philippines Graphic* (Philippines), *Rosebud*, *The Wild Word* (Germany) and the anthologies *Multiverse* (UK), *Dear America*, and *Hay(na)ku 15*. He blogs at *The Man with the Blue Guitar*.

Anne Gray

Anne Gray is a futurist, a smof, a teacher, a diversity and inclusion activist, an historian, and a systems design engineer. An editor on *Wikipedia* and *Fancyclopedia*, she is constantly learning things (and then forgetting half of them). You can find out more about her at netmouse.com.

Prof. Brian M. Gray, PhD

Rumored to come from an orbital hab just this side of Regulus, the Reverend Professor Doctor Gray does his good works globally these days, even if he does suffer from terrible Zoom fatigue. Regionally, he teaches in York, PA, where he ministers to his students by teaching them the (current scientific consensus) gospel truths about bacterial and viral infections, immune responses, and the need for both good handwashing hygiene and adherence to vaccination schedules. On the personal side, Professor Gray runs far

too many role-playing games (and plays in not enough), is learning how to craft scale dungeon terrain out of materials found in his recycle bin, and is proud father to a rockin' daughter who is just coming into her own (admittedly alien) heritage.

J.T. Greathouse

J.T. Greathouse has been writing fantasy and science fiction since he was 11 years old. He holds a BA in history and philosophy with a minor in Asian studies as well as a master's in teaching from Whitworth University. He spent four months of intensive study in Chinese language and culture at Minzu University in Beijing (中山民族大学, Zhongshan Minzu Daxue). His short fiction has appeared, often as Jeremy A. TeGrotenhuis, in *Beneath Ceaseless Skies*, *Writers of the Future 34*, *Deep Magic*, *Orson Scott Card's Intergalactic Medicine Show*, and elsewhere.

In addition to writing, he has worked as an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher in Taipei, as a bookseller at Auntie's Bookstore in Spokane, and as a high school teacher. J.T. was co-chair of the programming committee for the Flights of Foundry conventions in 2020 and 2021. He currently lives in Spokane, WA with his wife Hannah and several overflowing bookshelves. He is the author of *The Hand of the Sun King*, forthcoming from Gollancz in August 2021.

J.L. Gribble

J.L. Gribble writes the urban fantasy/alternate history *Steel Empires* series, which starts with *Steel Victory* and includes six titles so far. Her other jobs include medical editing, Netflix watching, cat snuggling, and book reviewing. Find more info about her and her books at jlgribble.com.

Dr. Eric Haag, PhD

Eric Haag, PhD, is Professor of Biology and Director of the Biological Sciences Graduate program at the University of Maryland, College Park. For nearly 30 years, he has conducted research on the evolution of animal reproduction and the genes that regulate it. After growing up in the Mojave Desert of southern Nevada, he sought a flatter, colder habitat. This led him to Ohio's Oberlin College, where he studied music composition and biology, and then to Indiana University, where he earned a PhD in molecular, cell, and developmental biology in 1997. During postdoctoral research at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, he began a long-standing project on the evolution of self-fertile hermaphroditism in nematodes. This work was supported by decades of effort by biologists around the world to develop one particular worm, *Caenorhabditis elegans*, as a focal "model species."

In 2002, Dr. Haag launched his lab at UMD to systematically compare the genetic control of sexual development in multiple *Caenorhabditis* species (both self-fertile and "traditional" female-male). An early discovery was that the superficially similar self-fertility that evolved independently

in closely related species is generated by quite distinct genetic circuits. That is, there is more than one way to become a hermaphrodite. Recently, the lab reported an unexpected rapid loss of thousands of genes from the genome as a consequence of this shift. In 2015, Dr. Haag's group began to study the only self-fertile vertebrate, the mangrove killifish. This fascinating little fish is also capable of changing sex in adulthood, and is unusually well-suited to lab life. Overall, this research highlights the fluidity of sexuality in animals. The implications of this for our own species remain unclear, but are fascinating to ponder. The Haag Lab's research has been supported by the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation. You can read more about its recent work here: science.umd.edu/biology/haag.

Morgan Hazelwood

Morgan Hazelwood (she/her) is a querying fantasy author, as well as a blogger, vlogger, and podcaster of writing tips and writerly musings. Raised by a librarian and an SFF fan, she devoured the entire fairy-tale and folklore section in her elementary school library, then moved on to the public library and her parents' well-stocked shelves. When not writing, you can find her devouring book series on her kindle, learning to scroll saw, dressing up at local conventions, or feeding her webcomic addiction. She also lends her voice to *Anansi Storytelling*, a radio-style podcast of folktales from around the world.

Thomas R. Holtz, Jr., PhD

Thomas R. Holtz, Jr. is Principal Lecturer in Vertebrate Paleontology at the Department of Geology, University of Maryland, College Park. His research focuses on the origin, evolution, adaptations, and behavior of carnivorous dinosaurs, and especially of tyrannosauroids (Tyrannosaurus rex and its kin). He received his bachelor's at Johns Hopkins in 1987 and his PhD from Yale in 1992. He is also a Research

Associate of the Department of Paleobiology of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History and serves on the Scientific Council of Maryland Academy of Science (which operates the Maryland Science Center (Baltimore, MD)). In addition to his dinosaur research, Dr. Holtz has been active in scientific outreach. He has been a consultant on museum exhibits documentaries. He is the author of the award-winning *Dinosaurs: The Most Complete, Up-To-Date Encyclopedia for Dinosaur Lovers of All Ages* (Random House).

Akua Lezli Hope

Akua Lezli Hope is a creator and wisdom seeker who uses sound, words, fiber, glass, metal, and wire to create poems, patterns, stories, music, sculpture, adornments, and peace. Published in numerous literary magazines and national anthologies, she's been in print every year since 1974. A third generation New Yorker, her honors include the NEA, two NYFAs, a SFPA award, three Rhysling and two Pushcart Prize nominations, among others. She has twice won Rattle's Poets Respond. Akua's first collection, *Embouchure: Poems on Jazz and Other Musics*, won the *Writer's Digest* book award. A Cave Canem fellow, her collection, *Them Gone*, was published in 2018. She created the *Speculative Sundays Poetry Reading Series*. Her speculative poetry chapbook, *Otherwheres*, is nominated for a 2021 Elgin Award. She sings songs from her favorite anime in Japanese, practices her soprano saxophone, cajoles her black cat, and prays for the cessation of suffering for all sentient.

Starla Huchton

A geek of all trades, Starla Huchton has been crafting stories in various genres since 2007. She is a three-time finalist for Parsec Awards for her podcast fiction work, and she was the first place winner for Science Fiction & Fantasy in the 2012 Sandy competition. Her work spans science fiction, fantasy, new adult romance, Young Adult



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titles, steampunk, contemporary, and other varieties of stories. Additionally, she is a freelance graphic designer. After earning an Associate's degree in Graphic Arts from Monterey Peninsula college in 2011, she opened up shop to create book covers for independent authors and publishers at DesignedByStarla.com. Starla has also provided audiobook narration for authors such as Kevin J. Anderson, Gail Carriger, Lindsay Buroker, and many more.

Julayne Hughes

Julayne Hughes is a freelance writer and editor with over 25 years experience. Her short stories have been published in anthologies (*Paradise City*, *Dimensional Abscesses*), magazines (*FlagShip*), and podcasts (*The Melting Potcast* and others). She has edited in a wide variety of genres for both small publishers and independent authors such as Scott Roche, Scott Sigler, and Keith Hughes. Julayne is also a professional pianist and crunches numbers in a provost's office at a private college. She lives with her husband and two cats in their southeast Michigan dream home, where their adult daughter occasionally deigns to visit.

Keith Hughes

An author and podcaster, Keith Hughes has participated in and won the National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) award at least six times. He hosts a quasi-daily podcast where he talks about a variety of topics on his commute. You can find more information about him and his works at penslinger.com, and he can be reached on *Facebook* (Keith Hughes, Penslinger), *Twitter* (@edgizmo), and *Google+*. His time travel adventure *Timehunt: Borrowed Time* is available as an ebook and paperback on *Amazon*, with the sequel due out later this year.

hymie!

hymie! is here because his wife is making him. She has involved him in the boardgaming community for over 15 years. She has also forced him to work on the Balticon website and run the Hal Haag Memorial Game Room. Yes, he does indeed spell his name with an exclamation point, and prefers the lowercase 'h'.

Anna Kashina

Anna Kashina writes historical adventure fantasy which features exotic settings, martial arts, assassins, and elements of romance. Her *Majat Code* series, published by Angry Robot Books UK, received two Prism Awards in 2015. She is a Russian by origin, and a scientist in her day job; and she freely draws on these backgrounds in her writing. She lives near Philadelphia, PA.

Kim the Comic Book Goddess

Kim is an ambulance driving serial balladier, multi-instrumentalist, and lapsed podcaster from northeastern Pennsylvania. Through Comic Book Goddess Productions, she records music and essays that are sometimes hard to

classify and, frankly, that rarely mention comic books any more. She produced a 2009 Parsec Finalist for Comedy/Parody Podcast, *Geek Pantheon and Your Moment of Kim*, and has contributed to finalists in other categories. Rumors of intense ethereal whooshing and her connection to the SSDWC, the Secret Society for Delayed World Conquest, cannot be substantiated, as the SSDWC does not exist.

Daniel M. Kimmel

Veteran film critic Daniel M. Kimmel is the 2018 recipient of the Skylark Award, given by the New England Science Fiction Association. He was a finalist for a Hugo Award for *Jar Jar Binks Must Die... and Other Observations About Science Fiction Movies*. His current reviews are at NorthShoreMovies.net, and his column on classic SF movies appears in *Space and Time* magazine. He was a finalist for the Compton Crook Award for best first novel for *Shh! It's a Secret: a Novel about Aliens, Hollywood, and the Bartender's Guide*. In addition to some two dozen published short stories, he is also the author of the novels *Time on My Hands: My Misadventures in Time Travel* and *Father of the Bride of Frankenstein*.

Beatrice Kondo, PhD

Dr. Beatrice Kondo is an evolutionary biologist, specializing in the evolution of complex behaviors such as migration, and is a member of the Center for Biotechnology Education faculty at the Johns Hopkins University. She teaches master's and post-master's classes in molecular and cellular biology, including molecular phylogenetics and comparative animal physiology. Two of her publications focus on Maryland's state bird, the Baltimore Oriole.

Joshua Kronengold

Joshua Kronengold is a filker, gamer, larper, dancer, and occasional conrunner. He's been doing this stuff for around 25 years; you'd think he'd have learned better by now.

Grig Larson

Grig "Punkie" Larson was born in Cyprus on British soil, and grew up in Northern Virginia, where he found fandom through D&D, FanTek, and *Rocky Horror*. He works as a Linux systems administrator by day, and by night he's an open source advocate and works for the DC Rollergirls. A staple in VA/DC/MD science fiction and anime fandom since the 1980s, he's been a panelist, moderator, emcee, actor, sketch writer, narrator, convention runner, and podcaster. In 1993, his first book, *The Saga of Punk Walrus*, became a cult classic. Since then he's been published in *Gateways*; and he has written several short story anthologies as well as several sketches and spoofs for various acting venues. *Trolley* (2011) was his first published steampunk/horror novel. *Space Bltch*, published in 2015, is his first dark comedy sci-fi. Currently, he is the writer for the hit comedy drama podcast, *This Kaiju Life*.

Mary Soon Lee

Mary Soon Lee was born and raised in London, but has lived in Pittsburgh for over 20 years. Her two latest books are from opposite ends of the poetry spectrum: *Elemental Haiku*, containing haiku for the periodic table (Ten Speed Press, 2019), and *The Sign of the Dragon*, an epic fantasy with Chinese elements (JABberwocky Literary Agency, 2020). After 25 years, her website has finally been updated: marysoonlee.com.

Emily Lewis

Emily is a high school Latin teacher in Northern Virginia and frequent performer as a member of Sassafrass. Since she recently moved to Virginia, you may know her from the Boston branch of Sassafrass, but she sings with whatever branch she happens to be near at the time! In addition to singing, Emily is an avid sci-fi/fantasy fan, an active Swing and Salsa dancer, and an ice hockey player. She is also an energetic sponsor in Junior Classical League at both the Virginia and National levels.

Monica Louzon

Monica Louzon (she/her) is *The Dread Machine's* Acquiring Editor. In January 2021, *Constelación Magazine* published her translation of Vania T. Curtidor's South American fantasy story "Imilla." Monica's short fiction has been published in the anthology *The Internet Is Where The Robots Live Now* and *The Dread Machine*, while her poetry has been published by *NewMyths.com*, *Octavos*, *Quatrain.Fish*, and others. Her nonfiction paper "Mara Jade, Frontier Woman: Agency in Star Wars and Influencing the Transmedia Franchise" appeared in *Women's Space: Essays on Female Characters in the 21st Century Science Fiction Western*. Monica was the lead editor for the anthology *Catalysts, Explorers & Secret Keepers: Women of Science Fiction* and was the founding editor for the Museum of Science Fiction's open access, peer-reviewed *MOSF Journal of Science Fiction*. Follow her on Twitter @molo_writes.

Mike Luoma

Mike Luoma writes and publishes science fiction and comics, narrates audiobooks, creates the long-running *Glow-in-the-Dark Radio* podcast, and curates the Adult Alternative music mix on WBKM.org radio out of Burlington, VT. His *Vatican Assassin* introduced BC, a killer for the New catholic Church, whose story unfolds in *Vatican Ambassador* and *Vatican Abdicator*. He recently released a 15th Anniversary Edition of the novel, with an audiobook featuring voice cameos from podcasting luminaries. His latest novel, *The Star Seeds of Earth*, launched at Balticon in 2020. Info at MikeLuoma.com / glowinthedarkradio.com.

Perrienne Lurie, MD

Perrienne Lurie is a long-time fan who ran the Green Room for Balticon for many years. She was the Hugo Ceremony director for Torcon 3 and was the Email Liaison

and Deputy Program Division Director for BucCONeer. She is active in strategy (Euro) board gaming and has GMed at Euroquest and other gaming conventions. She watches way too much television and (mostly art house) movies (or at least she did, pre-COVID; now she streams them when she can). She recently retired from the Pennsylvania Department of Health, where she was a public health physician and infectious disease epidemiologist. She now lives in suburban Maryland.

Gail Z. Martin

Gail Z. Martin writes epic fantasy, urban fantasy & more for Solaris Books, Orbit Books, and Falstaff Books. Her series include: *Darkhurst*, *Assassins of Landria*; the *Chronicles of the Necromancer*; the *Fallen Kings Cycle*; the *Ascendant Kingdoms*; *Deadly Curiosities*; and the *Night Vigil*. She co-authored *The Spells Salt and Steel*, *Joe Mack Adventures*, *Wasteland Marshals* series, and *Iron & Blood* with Larry N. Martin. She also writes urban fantasy MM paranormal romance as Morgan Brice, including the *Witchbane*, *Badlands*, *Treasure Trail*, *Fox Hollow* and *Kings of the Mountains* series.

Rena Mason

Rena Mason is a three-time Bram Stoker Award® winning author of *The Evolutionist* and *East End Girls*, as well as a 2014 Stage 32/The Blood List Search for New Blood Screenwriting Contest Quarter-Finalist. She's had two dozen short stories, novelettes, and novellas published and reprinted, some of them in award-winning anthologies and magazines. She is currently co-editing an anthology for the *HWA Presents* series. She is a member of the Horror Writers Association, the Mystery Writers of America, the International Thriller Writers, the International Screenwriters' Association, and the Public Safety Writers Association. An avid scuba diver, she enjoys traveling the world and incorporating the experiences into her stories. She currently resides in Olympia, WA. For more information visit her website: RenaMason.Ink or follow her at: *Facebook*: rena.mason; *Twitter*: @RenaMason88; *Stage 32*: Rena Mason; *Instagram*: rena.mason

James Mendez Hodes

Mendez (he/him) is an ENnie Award-winning analog game writer, developer, editor, professional GM, and cultural consultant. You might know him from *7th Sea*, *Scion*, *Thousand Arrows*, or various articles on the internet complaining about racism. His content specialties include hip hop, West African and Afro-Atlantic religion, comparative martial arts, and gaming with kids. He studied religion, dance, and English literature at Swarthmore College; and has a master's degree in Eastern classics from St. John's Graduate Institute. He lives in the greater New York metropolitan area on traditional Lenape land. Hear him complain about racism at jamesmendezhodes.com, or on *Twitter* at @LulaVampiro.

Tee Morris

Although Tee Morris has been writing for over a decade, his first novel—*Morevi: The Chronicles of Rafe & Askana*—became his first to be podcast in its entirety. He went on to write *Podcasting for Dummies*; its Third Edition, written with Chuck Tomasi, was released in 2017. Tee returned to fiction in 2011 with the *Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences* series, penned with his wife, Pip Ballantine. In 2018, they released the *Books & Braun Dossier*, a collection of short stories written in the Ministry universe spanning nearly a decade of steampunk. Tee kicked off 2019 with *Twitch for Dummies*, the first how-to guide for streaming content released in the mainstream market. Tee co-hosts with Pip *The Shared Desk*, a podcast covering the writer's lifestyle; and co-hosts *Happy Hour from the Tower* with Nick Kelly, Brandon Kelly, and Ron Dauphin. He enjoys a writer's life in Virginia alongside Pip, his daughter, and three cats. Explore the works of Tee Morris, and his occasional geek rants, at TeeMorris.com.

Beth Morris Tanner

Beth is a long-time fan and occasional writer living between DC and Baltimore. She works in higher education IT and has a random selection of hobbies including genealogy, photography, cooking, and brewing.

Lee Murray

Lee Murray is a multi-award-winning author-editor from Aotearoa-New Zealand (*Sir Julius Vogel, Australian Shadows*), and is a five-time Bram Stoker Award® nominee. Her work includes: military thrillers, the *Taine McKenna Adventures*; a supernatural crime-noir series, *The Path of Ra* (with Dan Rabarts); and a debut collection, *Grotesque: Monster Stories*. She is co-founder of Young NZ Writers and of the Wright-Murray Residency for Speculative Fiction Writers. Lee won the 2019 HWA Mentor of the Year. He is a NZSA Honorary Literary Fellow and Grimshaw Sargeson Fellow for 2021. Read more at leemurray.info.

Norbert Myslinski, PhD

Norbert Myslinski is a neuroscientist in the Dept. of Pain and Neuroscience at the University of Maryland. As both a lecturer and writer, his focus is neuroscience education at all levels including K–12, undergraduate, graduate, professional, and special education. As founder of the International Youth Neuroscience Association and International Brain Bee, he inspires students in 50 countries. Dr. Myslinski's awards include Alumni of the Year, International Science Educator of the Year, and Board of Regents Public Servant of the Year.

Mari Ness

Mari Ness is the author of *Resistance and Transformation: On Fairy Tales*, from Aqueduct Press, and *Through Immortal Shadows Singing*, from Papaveria Press. Her fiction and poetry have appeared in *Tor.com*, *Clarkesworld*, *Lightspeed*,

Nightmare, *Uncanny*, *Apex*, *Baffling*, *Fireside*, *Diabolical Plots*, and *Daily Science Fiction*. She lives in central Florida, near a large lake haunted by alligators. For more, follow her on Twitter @mari_ness, or visit her website at marikness.wordpress.com.

Ben Newman

Benjamin Newman has been filking since his college friends dragged him to his first convention his freshman year at Swarthmore. Since then, he has written over 200 songs on a wide range of topics, including SF and fantasy, science, computers, and religion, both singly and in various whimsical juxtapositions. Ben has also organized filk programming for Philcon, ConCertino, and Pi-con.

Chidumebi Njoku-Browne

Chidumebi Njoku-Browne has been a researcher of African History since 2011. He has a bachelor's degree in Political Science and History along with a master's degree in Public Administration and Public Policy. He has worked on several paleontological digs and has volunteered as an educator for the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC. He has been a lobbyist, teacher, amateur paleontologist, city policy planner, IRS agent, tax agent and now, panel speaker. Chidumebo has presented at two previous Balticons and runs a podcast going in-depth about West African history and mythology.

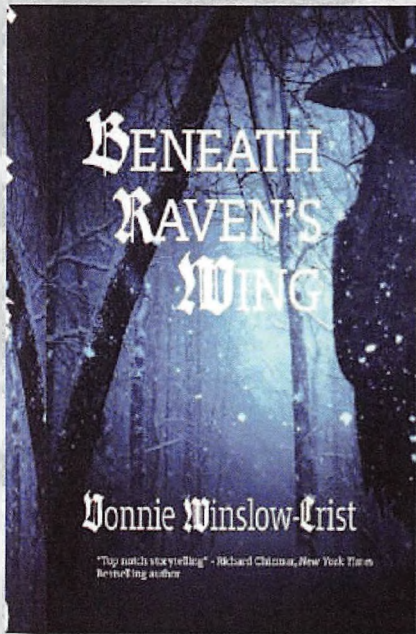
Nuchtchas

Artist by day, blogger and podcaster by night, Nuchtchas (nicknamed Nutty) produces the *Nutty Bites* podcast and the *Intro to Ghibli* podcast. She is also a regular host on *SpecFicMedia.com Presents Beyond the Wall: A Game of Thrones* podcast. She is also a gamer, roleplayer, and self-professed "Geek Queen." She is currently based in Ontario, Canada with her partner in crime (co-host) Tek, and Dragon pal Rory. You can find her artwork and podcasts at nimlas.org.

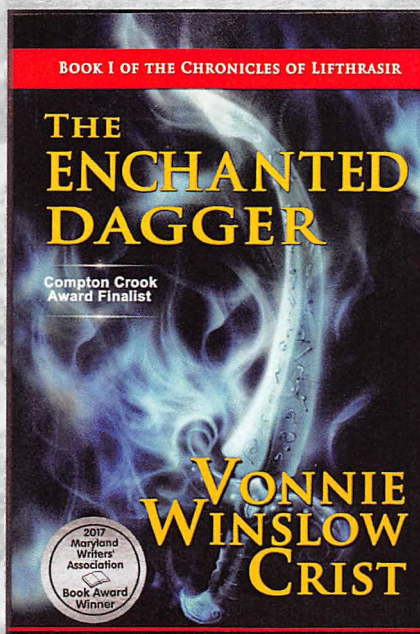
Anne E.G. Nydam

Anne E.G. Nydam has been creating imaginary worlds since she could hold a crayon, bringing them to life in both art and writing. She makes relief block prints celebrating the wonders of worlds both real and imaginary, and she writes and illustrates books for all ages about adventure, creativity, and looking for the best in others. With an undergraduate degree in linguistics, a background teaching middle school art, and an abiding interest in history, natural history, and art history, she can't go far without encountering something fascinating. When not living through a pandemic, she enjoys teaching and lecturing on a variety of topics related to printmaking, writing, fantasy, and linguistics. Her most recent book is *On the Virtues of Beasts of the Realms of Imagination*, a medieval-inspired bestiary of fantastical creatures from around the world, illustrated with original relief block prints and moral musings. Learn more about her art and books at NydamPrints.com.

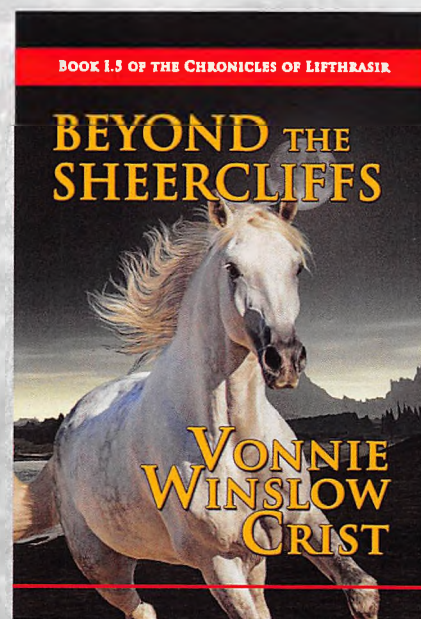
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"top-notch storytelling"
– Richard Chizmar

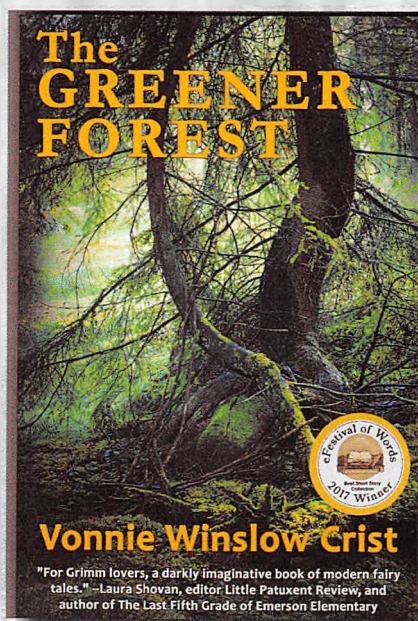


"delightful coming of age
adventure set in a world intricately
woven through with magic"
– Jody Lynn Nye

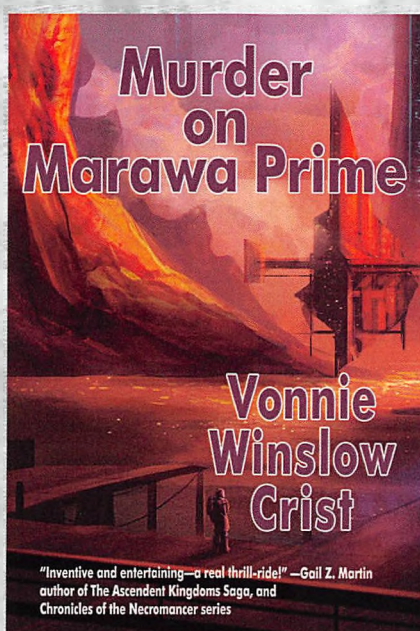


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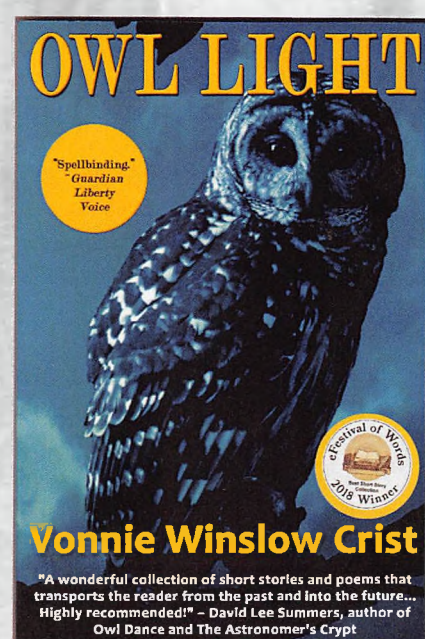
The world is full of mystery, miracles, and magic. We need to just look, listen, and believe that wondrous things are still possible." –*Vonnie Winslow Crist*



"Read this collection. You won't be disappointed." – Robert E. Waters



"a fast-moving nail-biter on a
planet at once iconic and alien"
– Charles E. Gannon



"a wonderful collection of short
stories...Highly recommended."
– David Lee Summers

Website: www.vonniewinslowcrist.com

Sean O'Connell

Sean O'Connell is the managing director of *CinemaBlend*, a globally recognized and industry-respected entertainment news website. He has been covering the film industry since 1999, and his byline has appeared in *USA Today*, the *Washington Post*, and *Fandango*, to name a few. O'Connell regularly appears on television and radio, and also hosts a popular weekly podcast, *ReelBlend*, that covers every aspect of the film industry. He has covered this turbulent Hollywood story of the Justice League since day one.

Hugh J. O'Donnell

Hugh J. O'Donnell is a writer and podcast producer living in Western New York. You can find his work online at HughJODonnell.com.

Dr. Robert Orth, PhD

Robert Orth is a Professor Emeritus at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), College of William and Mary. Dr. Orth received a BS degree from Rutgers University, a MS degree from the University of Virginia, and a PhD from the University of Maryland. Dr. Orth has been conducting research on seagrass in the Chesapeake Bay since 1969, and was the team leader of the VIMS (Virginia Institute of Marine Science) Seagrass Monitoring and Restoration Program until 2020.

Karen Osborne

Karen Osborne is a Nebula-nominated writer, visual storyteller and violinist. Her short fiction appears in *Uncanny*, *Fireside*, *Escape Pod*, *Robot Dinosaurs*, and *Beneath Ceaseless Skies*. She is a member of the DC/MD-based Homespun Ceilidh Band, and she emcees the *Charm City Spec* reading series. Karen once won a major event filmmaking award for taping a Klingon wedding. Her debut novel, *Architects of Memory*, is forthcoming on August 25, 2021 from Tor Books. Karen lives in Baltimore, MD, with two violins, an autoharp, five cameras, a husband and a bonkers orange cat. You can find her on *Twitter* at [@karenthology](https://twitter.com/@karenthology).

Lisa Padol

Lisa Padol has been attending science fiction conventions since she first got pulled in by the filking of the 1980s. She has been a gamer for even longer, slowly being seduced into running tabletop RPGs and LARPs; and then into writing LARPs, then into editing RPGs and even, very occasionally, writing material for them. She has also written reviews and academic papers on science fiction, fantasy, and gaming. Her dissertation on Modern Arthurian Fiction forced her to go to several conventions and comb through countless used books. She has served on the Mythopoeic Fantasy Awards committee for over 10 years, which forces her to keep at least vaguely current in the field and to make sure she reads some books outside her comfort zone.

Joshua Palmatier, PhD

Joshua Palmatier is a fantasy author with a PhD in mathematics. He currently teaches at SUNY (State University of New York) Oneonta in upstate New York. In his "spare time," he is writing, editing anthologies, and running the anthology-producing small press *Zombies Need Brains* LLC. His most recent fantasy novel, *Reaping the Aurora*, concludes the fantasy series begun in *Shattering the Ley* and *Threading the Needle*, although you can also find his *Throne of Amenkor* series and the *Well of Sorrows* series still on the shelves. He is currently hard at work writing his next novel and designing the Kickstarter for the next *Zombies Need Brains* anthology project. You can find out more at joshuapalmatier.com or at the small press' site zombiesneedbrains.com. Or follow him on *Twitter* as [@bentateauthor](https://twitter.com/@bentateauthor) or [@ZNBLLC](https://twitter.com/@ZNBLLC).

Ada Palmer

Perhaps the Stars, the fourth and final volume of Ada Palmer's *Terra Ignota* series (*Too Like the Lightning*, *Seven Surrenders*, *The Will to Battle*) comes out in September 2021, completing her exploration of how Earth culture might evolve in a future of borderless nations and globally commixing populations. *Too Like the Lightning* won the 2017 Compton Crook Award and was a 2017 Best Novel Hugo finalist, while Ada won the 2017 John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer. She teaches history at the University of Chicago, studying the history of radical ideas such as atheism, materialism, radical science, deism, atomism, and magic—mainly in the Italian Renaissance and the Enlightenment. She composes fantasy, SF and mythology-themed music, and performs at conventions with the filk group *Sassafrass*. She also researches anime/manga, especially Osamu Tezuka, and consults for many anime and manga publishers. She blogs for *Tor.com*, and writes the philosophy & travel blog *ExUrbe.com*. Her *Patreon* supports these projects and the hope to soon launch a podcast with author friend, Jo Walton.

L. Penelope

L. Penelope has been writing since she could hold a pen and loves getting lost in the worlds in her head. She is an award-winning fantasy and paranormal romance author. Her novel *Song of Blood & Stone* was chosen as one of *Time Magazine's* 100 Best Fantasy Books of All Time. Equally left and right-brained, she studied filmmaking and computer science in college and sometimes dreams in HTML. She hosts the *My Imaginary Friends* podcast, and lives in Maryland with her husband and furry dependents. Visit her at: lpenelope.com.

Sarah Pinsker

Sarah Pinsker's first novel, *A Song For a New Day*, won the 2020 Nebula Award, and her Small Beer Press collection *Sooner or Later Everything Falls Into the Sea* won the Philip K Dick Award. Her short stories have won the

Nebula and Sturgeon awards, and have been finalists for the Hugo, *Locus*, and World Fantasy awards. Her second novel, *We Are Satellites*, will be published in spring 2021. She is also a singer/songwriter with three albums on various independent labels, and a fourth album will be released this year. She was born in New York and has lived all over the US and Canada, but currently lives with her wife and terrier in Baltimore in a hundred-year-old house surrounded by sentient vines.

C.L. Polk

C.L. Polk (they/them) is the author of the World Fantasy Award winning novel *Witchmark*, the first novel of the *Kingston Cycle*. Their newest novel, *The Midnight Bargain*, is a finalist in the CBC Canada Reads Competition. After leaving high school early, they have worked as a film extra, have sold vegetables on the street, and have identified exotic insect species for a vast collection of lepidoptera before settling down to write fantasy novels. Mx. Polk lives near the Bow River in Calgary, Alberta, in a tiny apartment with too many books and a yarn stash that could last a decade. They ride a green bicycle with a basket on the front. They drink good coffee because life is too short. They spend too much time on *Twitter* and daydreaming about having a pair of cats. Mx. Polk is represented by Caitlin McDonald of the Donald Maass Literary Agency.

Jennifer R. Povey

Jennifer R. Povey lives in Northern Virginia with her husband. She writes a variety of speculative fiction, whilst following current affairs and occasionally indulging in horse riding and role playing games. She has sold fiction to a number of markets including *Analog*, and has written RPG supplements for several companies. Her most recent novel is *Araña*, a space opera romp that echoes *Star Trek* and golden age science fiction.

Jim Prego, MD

Dr. Jim Prego is a naturopathic doctor from Long Island, NY. He is currently an adjunct professor of Biology at LIU Post, Molloy College, and Nassau Community College. Dr. Prego had a private medical practice for nine years and is a past recipient of the Physician of the Year award from the NY Association of Naturopathic Physicians (NYANP). A long-time fan of science fiction, Dr. Prego enjoys discussing xenobiology, health in space, life extension, fusions of biology and technology, how natural ways of healing fit in a sci-fi/high-tech world, and many other topics both science-related and non-science related. He spent 10 years as the New York Delegate to the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (AANP), and spent six years as a board member of the New York Association of Naturopathic Physicians (NYANP). Dr. Prego has given talks, written articles, and been a guest on radio and television shows. He is also interested in acting/shadowcasting, EMT volunteering, alternative lifestyles, LARPing, gaming, and more.

Dr. Karen

Dr. Karen Purcell was born and educated in Troy, NY. She obtained her bachelor's in biology from Pace University, Pleasantville Campus. She then spent a year at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) working on a master's degree in molecular biology while also working as librarian at WRPI (the campus radio station), and in the box office at RPI Players. She graduated with the Class of '92 from the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell, the only veterinary school in the United States with a theatre troupe. Dr. Purcell has worked as an associate veterinarian in New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and North Carolina. Recently, she signed a contract for a permanent position with Woodsdale Animal Hospital in Roxboro, NC.

In her spare time (hah!), Dr. Karen spent many years wearing various hats at Arisia, the large regional SF convention in the northeast. She belongs to the Northern Lights Costumers and the Greater Columbia Fantasy Costumers Guild. She has been running the Balticon Masquerade for the past few years and is Masquerade Director for the upcoming Worldcon in DC. Dr. Purcell currently lives with her husband Denis, two dogs, and three cats.

Devin Randall

Devin Jackson Randall is a writer living in the Philly area. His childhood obsession with LGBTQ media has transitioned into a career of writing and sharing his efforts. He does so through his freelance work with *Instinct Magazine*, *Hornet*, *Men's Variety*, and more. Outside of his freelance work, Devin writes creatively as a playwright, and his plays have appeared in the Philadelphia Fringe Festival, the Philadelphia SoLow Fest, the Untold Playfest, and in productions with Messy Confidence Productions and the It Gets Worse But Then... Theatre Company. In addition, he is a 2020/2021 Resident with the Studios of Key West.

Nobilis Reed

Nobilis Reed is the creator and host of the *Nobilis Erotica* podcast, the best speculative fiction erotica podcast in the known universe. He is the author of several novels, numerous short stories, and the occasional audio drama. He is also the producer of the *This Kaiju Life* podcast, which is written by Grig Larson and is inexplicably cleaner than his other podcast. His most recent release is *Monster Whisperer*, *Second Class*, the sequel to *Monster Whisperer*.

Dave Ring

Dave Ring is a queer editor and writer of speculative fiction living in Washington, DC. He is the publisher and managing editor of Neon Hemlock Press, the editor of three anthologies, and is co-editor of *Baffling Magazine*. His short fiction has been featured in numerous publications, including *Fireside Fiction*, *Podcastle*, and *A Punk Rock Future*. Find him at dave-ring.com or @slickhop on *Twitter*.

Julia Rios

Julia Rios (they/them) is a queer, Latinx writer, editor, podcaster, and narrator whose fiction, non-fiction, and poetry have appeared in *Latin American Literature Today*, *Lightspeed*, and *Goblin Fruit*, among other places. Their editing work has won multiple awards including the Hugo Award. Julia is a co-host of *This is Why We're Like This*, a podcast about the movies we watch in childhood that shape our lives, for better or for worse. They've narrated stories for *Escape Pod*, *Podcastle*, *Pseudopod*, and *Cast of Wonders*. They're @omgjlulia on Twitter.

Madison "Metricula" Roberts

Madison "Metricula" Roberts (she/her) is a singer-songwriter, clown, guitarist, and entertainer from Raleigh, NC, with sets of material tailored to both all-ages or 18+ audiences. Her music ranges from pop-folk and Americana to Peter, Paul & Mary style campfire classics; and it has been featured on *The FuMP*, *Marc Gunn's Geek Pub Songs*, and more. Metricula is a regular fixture as a guest and performer at sci-fi and fantasy conventions like DragonCon, RavenCon, illogiCon, and ConGregarate! You can cozy up with her at the Nerd Music Campfire and relive the summer camp nights of your youth with sing-a-longs and smores, but nerdier! Stream tunes from her debut EP, *Songs for Gamers*, for free online or pick them up via Bandcamp.

Metricula is also a founder of the Social Justice Bards, a group of live-streaming musicians and artists on *Twitch*. You can catch her live (for free!) online doing music or hosting Nasty Woman Knitting Circle, where she knits... adult novelty items.

In her muggle life, Metricula is a scientist, DIY enthusiast, and avid coffee drinker. She's totally not mad that the cat loves her spouse, Richard, more than her. Follow her online basically everywhere as @metricula or find her hub at metricula.com.

Dave Robison

Dave Robison is an avid Literary and Vocal Alchemist who pursues a wide range of creative explorations. A Brainstormer, Keeper of the Buttery Man-Voice, and Eternal Optimist, Dave's efforts to boost the awesomeness of the world can be found through his work at Wonderthing Studios (wonderthingstudios.com). His current projects include: *Archivos* (archivos.digital, facebook.com/ArchivosStories), a story mapping and presentation tool; *Corpse Coffee* (corpsecoffee.com), combining delicious coffees and teas with webcomics from beyond the grave!; *Manifest* (Facebook.com/ManifestGame), a board game combining the positional strategy of chess with the fantastical diversity of *Magic: The Gathering*; and *The Shattered Worlds* story and game universe (theshatteredworlds.com). He also continues to pursue opportunities for vocal fabulousity at ButteryManVoice.com.

Kelly Robson

Kelly Robson is a Canadian short fiction writer. Her novelette "A Human Stain" won the 2018 Nebula Award, and she has won both the 2019 and 2016 Aurora Awards for Best Short Story. She has also been a finalist for the Hugo, Nebula, World Fantasy, Theodore Sturgeon, Locus, Astounding, Aurora, and Sunburst Awards. Kelly consults as a creative futurist for organizations such as UNICEF and the Suncor Energy Foundation. After 22 years in Vancouver, she and her wife, writer A.M. Dellamonica, now live in downtown Toronto.

Diana Roman, PhD

Dr. Roman is a geophysicist in the Earth and Planets Laboratory at the Carnegie Institution for Science. Her research straddles the boundary between volcanology and seismology, focusing on understanding source processes of volcanic earthquakes, volcano-fault interaction, the structure and dynamics of magma transport and storage systems, and the nature of geophysical precursors to eruptions. Dr. Roman's primary research tool is the analysis of volcano-seismic data and its integration with corresponding geodetic, degassing, and petrologic observations, which involves routine collaboration with volcano observatories worldwide. Her geographical foci are in North, Central, and South America, the Pacific, the Caribbean, Italy, and Africa. She has led field campaigns in Alaska, Oregon, Nicaragua, Mexico, Guatemala, Chile, Vanuatu, and Iceland.

Aaron M. Roth

Aaron M. Roth is a science fiction author and PhD student at the University of Maryland, where he conducts research in robotics and artificial intelligence, focusing on reinforcement learning and explainable AI. He has published science fiction and academic papers and given talks on science and science fiction around the world. You can sign up for his mailing list at aaronmroth.com.

H. Paul Shuch, PhD

Prof. H. Paul Shuch (known throughout fandom as Dr. SETI) is a retired researcher and academic specializing in radio astronomy and the scientific Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI). At past Balticons, he has presented updates on his Interstellar Beacon project. This year, he reports on the demise of that experiment, and the lessons learned that will significantly impact all SETI science.

Alex Shvartsman

Alex Shvartsman is a writer, translator, and anthologist from Brooklyn, NY. He has sold over 120 short stories to venues like *Nature*, *Analog*, *Strange Horizons*, *Fireside*, and many others. He's the winner of the 2014 WSFA award and a two-time Canopus award finalist. His debut novel, *Eridani's Crown*, was published in 2019. He has edited over a dozen anthologies, including *Unidentified Funny Objects*, the annual series of humorous SF/F. Currently he's editing

Future Science Fiction Digest, a quarterly publication that focuses on international fiction and is free to read at future-sf.com. His translations from Russian have appeared in *F&SF*, *Asimov's*, *Strange Horizons*, *Apex*, and many other venues. His website is alexshvartsman.com.

Angela Yuriko Smith

Angela Yuriko Smith is an American poet, Stoker-nominated author, and co-publisher of *Space and Time Magazine*, a publication that has been printing speculative fiction, art and poetry since 1966. Join their Flash Battle leagues, compete as an Iron Writer, and help raise an Exquisite Corpse at spaceandtime.net.

Jay Smith

Jay Smith is a six-foot-tall ape descendant who suffers from the delusion that he is a fiction writer. Though he possesses a Master of Fine Arts in Fiction Writing and has produced award-winning and acclaimed audio drama and some weird tales in the growing “geek noir” genre, Jay has yet to break through into the mainstream publishing world. He clings to the hope that, one day, all that time, energy, and student loan money will be worth it. Until then, he works in the sexy, high-stakes world of human resource management while gobbling the crumbs of creative praise thrown his way such as when Harlan Ellison called him “a great scam-man liar or a born writer.” Jay lives in Harrisburg, PA—a city best known for its proximity to the Hershey Chocolate Factory and Three Mile Island. Website: jaysmithaudio.com.

Bud Sparhawk

Bud Sparhawk's short works have regularly appeared in *Analog SFF* and anthologies published by eSpec Books. A collection of 20 of his self-proclaimed “best” short stories published in the last decade was launched at Balticon 17. His latest novel was released in early 2019. He has previously published three print novels: *Shattered Dreams*, *Distant Seas*, and *Vixen*; as well as three print collections: *Non-Parallel Universes*, *Sam Boone: Front to Back*, and *Dancing With Dragons*. These and other of his e-Books are available on Amazon. He has been a three-time novella finalist for SFWA's Nebula award. A complete bibliography can be found at: budsparhawk.com. Bud also writes an occasional blog on the pain of writing at budsparhawk.blogspot.com.

D.A. Xiaolin Spires

D.A. Xiaolin Spires steps into portals and reappears, with her keyboard appendage attached, in sites such as Hawai'i, NY, various parts of Asia and elsewhere. Her work appears or is forthcoming in publications such as: *Clarkesworld*, *Analog*, *Strange Horizons*, *Nature*, *Terraform*, *Uncanny*, *Fireside*, *Galaxy's Edge*, *StarShipSofa*, *Andromeda Spaceways* (Year's Best Issue), *Diabolical Plots*, *Factor Four*, *Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet*, *Grievous Angel*, *Toasted Cake*, *Pantheon*, *Outlook Springs*, *Robot Dinosaurs*, *Shoreline of Infinity*, *Lontar*, *Mithila Review*, *Reckoning*, *Issues in Earth*

Science, *Liminality*, *Star*Line*, *Polu Texni*, *Argot*, *Eye to the Telescope*, *Liquid Imagination*, *Gathering Storm Magazine*, *Little Blue Marble*, *Story Seed Vault*, and anthologies of the strange and beautiful: *Deep Signal*, *Ride the Star Wind*, *Sharp and Sugar Tooth*, *Broad Knowledge*, *Future Visions*, and *Battling in All Her Finery*. Select stories can be read in German, Spanish, Vietnamese, Estonian, French and Japanese (forthcoming) translation. She can be found on Twitter: @spireswriter and on her website: daxiaolinspires.wordpress.com.

Ian Randal Strock

Ian Randal Strock (IanRandalStrock.com) is a writer, editor, and publisher. He is the owner and editor-in-chief of Gray Rabbit Publications/Fantastic Books (FantasticBooks.biz). Previously, he edited and published *Artemis Magazine* and *SFScope*. He also worked on the editorial staffs of *Analog*, *Asimov's*, *Science Fiction Chronicle*, and many others. He considers himself a science fiction author, even though 98% of his published words have been non-fiction. He is the author of three books of presidential history and trivia. His fiction is highlighted by a dozen appearances in *Analog* (from which he won two AnLab awards), two stories in *Nature*, and several stories in recent anthologies. He has also worked on Wall Street and as a tour guide at Niagara Falls. He is currently the Northeast Regional Vice Chairman of American Mensa.

John Tilden

You usually see John Tilden (or JT as he gladly goes by) as the coordinator for the Heinlein Blood drive, but he is sometimes moderator or panelist on Heinlein or related panels. John is the current President for the Heinlein Society and recognized as a Charter and Lifetime Member. He has enjoyed attending and participating with BSFS at Balticon since the mid-90s and became a Lifetime Member of BSFS in 2020... possibly the only good thing to come out of that year! John has published several poems in small press and had a poem used in the PBS show *Earthscape*. He works for the federal government to pay the bills. Please stop by the Heinlein Society fan table during the con however it is set up and donate blood in your community if you can!

Michael R. Underwood

Michael R. Underwood is an author, podcaster, and publishing professional. His books include *Annihilation Aria*, the Ree Reyes *Geekomancy* series, the Stabby Award finalist *Genreonauts* series, and *Born to the Blade*. He's been a bookseller, sales representative, and the North American Sales & Marketing Manager for Angry Robot Books. He is also a co-host on *Speculate*, an actual play podcast starring science fiction/fantasy professionals, and a guest host on the Hugo Award Finalist *The Skiffy and Fanty Show*. Mike lives in Baltimore with his wife, their dog, and an ever-growing library. He also loves geeking out with games and making pizzas from scratch.

Julie Urban, PhD

Dr. Julie Urban is a Research Associate Professor in the Entomology Department at Pennsylvania State University. She earned her PhD in Evolutionary Biology from the State University of New York at Albany. She studies planthopper evolution and their co-evolution with multiple bacterial and fungal symbionts. Her recent work involves aspects of basic and applied research on the invasive planthopper, the Spotted Lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*). She has been a member of USDA's Technical Working Group of scientists, advising management and research on the Spotted Lanternfly since it was first detected in the US in September, 2014. Dr. Urban is the Primary Investigator (PI) on a regional USDA NIFA (National Institute of Food and Agriculture) Specialty Crops Research Initiative grant that studies the biology, management, and reduction of the impact of Spotted Lanternfly in specialty crops in the eastern USA.

Wendy Van Camp

Wendy Van Camp is an author, poet, and illustrator. Her writing blog *No Wasted Ink* features essays about the craft of writing, poetry, and author interviews. Wendy's short stories and poems have appeared in science fiction magazines such as *Quantum Visions*, *Scifaikuest*, and *Far Horizons*, and in publications on *Medium*. She is the poet and illustrator of *The Planets: a Scifaiku Poetry Collection* which is nominated for a 2020 Elgin Award. Her books can

be found on *Amazon* and her illustrated poetry prints on *Etsy*. You can also hear her as a semi-regular panelist on *Sci-Fi Roundtable* podcast.

Ryan Van Loan

Ryan Van Loan is a fantasy author who served six years as a Sergeant in the United States Army Infantry (PA National Guard) where he served on the front lines of Afghanistan. His debut novel, *The Sin in the Steel Book One* (Tor Books) in the *Fall of the Gods* series, came out on July 21, 2020 and the sequel, *The Justice in Revenge*, drops July 13, 2021.

Mark L. Van Name

Mark L. Van Name is a writer, technologist, and spoken word performer. He has published five novels (*One Jump Ahead*, *Slanted Jack*, *Overthrowing Heaven*, *Children No More*, & *No Going Back*), as well as an omnibus collection of his first two books (*Jump Gate Twist*). He edited or co-edited four anthologies (*Intersections: The Sycamore Hill Anthology*, *Transhuman*, *The Wild Side*, and *Onward, Drake!*). Mark has written many short stories, which have appeared in a wide variety of books and magazines. As a technologist, he is the CEO of a fact-based marketing and learning services firm, Principled Technologies, Inc. He has published over a thousand articles and a broad assortment of essays and reviews in the computer trade press. As a spoken word artist, he has created and performed five

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Marie Vibbert

Marie Vibbert has sold over 60 science fiction short stories, including multiple appearances in *Analog, F&SF, and Lightspeed*. Her work has been translated into Vietnamese and Chinese, and has been called “everything science fiction should be” by the *Oxford Culture Review*. Her debut novel, *Galactic Hellcats*, is about a female biker gang in outer space rescuing a gay prince. *Publisher's Weekly* called it “a rip-roaring space heist.”

Sabrina Vourvoulis

Sabrina Vourvoulis is an award-winning Latina journalist whose work has appeared at PRI's *The World*, *The Guardian US*, *Philly.com* and *Philadelphia Magazine*, among others. After years of adhering to AP style and juggling the conventions of English- and Spanish-language journalism, she turned to speculative fiction. Her short fiction has appeared at *Uncanny Magazine*, *Tor.com*, *Strange Horizons*, *PodCastle*, *Apex Magazine* and *Apparition Lit*, among others, as well as in numerous anthologies. Sabrina is the author of *Ink*, a near-future, immigration-centered dystopia which draws on her memories of Guatemala's armed internal conflict, and on the Latinx experience in the United States. It was named to Latinidad's Best Books of 2012, and was reissued by Rosarium Publishing in September, 2018. She lives in Pennsylvania with her husband, daughter, and a dog who believes she is the one ring to rule them all. Follow her on *Twitter* @followthelede and on *Facebook* @officialsabrinavourvoulis.

John Walker

Author, philosopher, IT dude, and inspiration for *Walker, Texas Ranger*. Is also the New Media department head.

Jean Marie Ward

Jean Marie Ward writes fiction, nonfiction, and everything in-between. Her credits include a multi-award nominated novel and two popular art books as well as editing *CrescentBlues.com*. Her short stories have appeared everywhere from *Asimov's* to the anthologies of *Zombies Need Brains*. The former editor of *CrescentBlues.com*, she is a frequent contributor to ConTInual, the convention that never ends. Find her on the web at JeanMarieWard.com, [Facebook.com/JeanMarieWardWriter](https://www.facebook.com/JeanMarieWardWriter), [Twitter.com/Jean_Marie_Ward](https://twitter.com/Jean_Marie_Ward) and ConTInualConvention.com.

Troy Wiipongwii

Troy Wiipongwii is the Director of the W&M Blockchain Lab, and he is a data science PhD candidate. Troy has an eclectic background. His bio-dad is Native American, his bio-mom is Black and Sephardic Jewish, his step-dad was Pakistani, and his adopted parents are White. This diverse

upbringing equipped him with curiosity and skepticism towards neat boxes, status quos, and black/white thinking. Not only do we live in grey, we may also live in a higher dimension. But that's for another day. When Troy isn't thinking about how technology can improve our care for self, community, and planet, he is cooking and hiking.

Collin Wilkinson

Collin Wilkinson is a director of research at a new start-up company. His research focuses on the intersection of fundamental chemistry, physics, and machine learning for the purpose of designing next-generation materials to improve the human condition. He is particularly interested in glass-based hybrid materials. His recent work relies on combining artificial intelligence with energy landscapes to build deep insights into the nature of the glass transition and non-equilibrium thermodynamics.

John Wiswell

John (@Wiswell) is a disabled writer who lives where New York keeps all its trees. Growing up, he visited Baltimore multiple times a year to visit his grandmother, and it is still one of his most beloved places. He is a finalist for the 2021 Nebula Award, Locus Award, and Hugo Award for Best Short Story, for “Open House on Haunted Hill.” His short fiction has appeared in *Uncanny Magazine*, *Fireside Magazine*, *Nature Futures*, *Podcastle*, and *Cast of Wonders*, as well as other fine venues. He is a member of the SFWA (Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America) Committee on Disability.

Batya “The Toon” Wittenberg

Batya “the Toon” Wittenberg is, in no particular order: a successfully transplanted New Yorker, a practicing Orthodox Jew, a happily married woman since 1999, a certified master of Pun Fu, an enthusiastic cook and foodie, a founding member of filk group Lady Mondegreen, a fanfic writer, a habitual online and tabletop roleplayer.

L. Marie Wood

L. Marie Wood is an award-winning psychological horror author and screenwriter. She won the Golden Stake Award for her novel *The Promise Keeper*. Her screenplays have won Best Horror, Best Afrofuturism/Horror/Sci-Fi, and Best Short Screenplay awards at several film festivals. Wood's short fiction has been published widely, most recently in *Slay: Stories of the Vampire Noire* and Bram Stoker Award Finalist anthology, *Sycorax's Daughters*. Learn more about her at Imariewood.com.



When the Tiger Came Down the Mountain



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