

THE 2017 DELL MAGAZINES AWARD

This winner of the 2017 Dell Magazines Award for Undergraduate Excellence in Science Fiction and Fantasy Writing should be a familiar name to anyone who's been following my columns for the past few years. Taimur Ahmad's previous stories were honorable mentions in 2014, 2015, and 2016. The Princeton graduate received an honorable mention again this year for his tale "Everyone Is Split," but he picked up his plaque and five-hundred-dollar first-place prize for his magical tale about "Noor" at the Thirty-Eighth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts. The conference was held in Orlando, Florida, in March.

Taimur majored in sociology at school and is now a policy fellow at the Wilderness Society in Washington, D.C. This past summer he attended the Clarion West Writers Workshop in Seattle, Washington. The author's winning story should be available on our website next year. In the meantime, you can now read last year's award winner, "Lullabies in Arabic" by Rani Banjarian, at www.asimovs.com.

The various awards were determined via a blind read. My co-judge Rick Wilber and I were once again delighted that the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts and Dell Magazines co-sponsored the event. We were also delighted that we had the chance to meet all of the finalists in person at this year's conference.

Our first-runner up, Claire Spaulding, is a sophomore studying sociology at Columbia University. Claire is interested in environmental justice and publishing. She received her award and a two-year subscription to *Asimov's* for her lyrical tale about "The Food of Love."

Our second and third runners up are both students at the University of Alberta. Alexandra Barr is majoring in English with a minor in creative writing. She enjoys the fantasies of Ursula K. Le Guin and J.R.R. Tolkien, but received the first-runner up certificate for her SF tale about twin worlds, "Questions for Oretta." Pearl Lorentzen is in her last year at the university studying linguistics and creative writing. Her eerie Norse fantasy, "Braidwood Rings," was named third-runner up. Each woman received a one-year subscription to *Asimov's*. They both thanked author and UA professor Greg Bechtal who told them about the contest.

Our honorable mention category was chock full of talented authors. Sarah Goldman is a senior studying sociology at Bryn Mawr College. She is interested in social and polling research. Zen Cho, Neil Gaiman, and Holly Black are among her favorite authors. Sarah entered our contest with a perceptive vampire tale called "Ravenous Things." Alina Sichevaya is a freshman at the University of North Carolina at chapel Hill. Alina has a double major in economics and strategic communication. She grew up reading lots of Russian authors like Isaac Asimov and Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, but now reads writers like Kameron Hurley and many others. Alina received her award for a story about pain and what it means to have "Everything in Both Hands." Sarah, Alina, and Claire had previously met each other as students at the Alpha Writers Workshop for teenagers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Gian-Paul Bergeron was our fourth honorable mention. Gian-Paul is a senior at Yale University. He's majoring in American studies with a focus on visual, literary, and performance culture. He enjoys Afro futurism and the works of Charles Yu, George Saunders, and Kurt Vonnegut. Gian-Paul's interest in film was apparent in his story about the "Protagonist." Our final honorable mention, Marcella Haddad, is a senior at Arca-



Left to right: Alexandra Barr, Sarah Goldman, Claire Spaulding, Alina Sichevaya, Rick Wilber, Sheila Williams, Pearl Lorentzen, Marcella Haddad, Taimur Ahmad, and Gian-Paul Bergeron

dia University. Marcella is studying language, learning and teaching with a minor in creative writing. She speaks French, Italian, German, and Croatian, and loves the work of Lev Grossman, N.K. Jemisin, and Neddi Okafor. Marcella received her award for a dark tale of “Storm and Splinter.”

The finalists dined with Kathleen Ann Goonan, Robert J. Sawyer, Lezli Robyn, James Patrick Kelly, Kelly Robson, Neil Clarke, Rich Larson, A.M. Delamonica, Joe Haldeman, Eileen Gunn, Usman Malik, E. Lily Yu, James Morrow, Lara Elena Donnelly, Nick DiChario, and John Chu. Other attendees at the conference included Charley Jane Anders, Sandra McDonald, Ted Chiang, Eugene Fischer, Nisi Shawl, Mary Anne Mohanraj, Geoffrey A. Landis, Maurice Broaddus, Ellen Klages, Mary Turzillo, David D. Levine, Fran Wilde, Carolyn M. Yoachim, Bruce Boston, Sam J. Miller, Andy Duncan, Peter Straub, Stephanie Feldman, Will Ludwigsen, Alyssa Wong, and Max Gladstone. Many of these authors spent time visiting with our award winners as well.

You can visit with previous finalists and current writers at our Facebook site. Find out more about the award at www.dellaward.com or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Dell-Magazines-Award-177319923776/>.

We are actively looking for next year's winner. The deadline for submissions is Monday, January 9, 2018. Stories must be unpublished and unsold and should be between a thousand and ten thousand words. All full-time undergraduate students at any accredited university or college are eligible.

Before entering the contest, contact Rick Wilber for more information, rules, and manuscript guidelines. Reach him by email at rickwilber@tampabay.rr.com. Next year's winner will be announced at the 2018 Conference on the Fantastic, in the pages of *Asimov's Science Fiction magazine*, and on our website.