

THIRTY-FIRST ANNUAL READERS' AWARDS' RESULTS

We held the 31st Annual Readers' Award breakfast celebration on May 20, 2017, at the Steelhead Brasserie and Wine Bar in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Although he couldn't attend in person, our best novelette winner, Dale Bailey, sent along the bones of an acceptance speech: "1) Thank yourself for giving the story a chance (weird thanking yourself, but it's really me!) and 2.) acknowledge the other finalists, among whom it is an honor to stand and 3.) thank the readers most of all, first for reading the story and second for finding it worthy of their notice. That's the most important thing, because bringing readers some pleasure is really what it's all about." Dale's thoughts about our readers were evident in the words of subscriber Dick Harding who wrote: "There were really wonderful stories everywhere, which made selecting the best difficult. The novelette category was the hardest. It had a boatload of phenomenal stories. I had a very hard time choosing between first and second place. Dale Bailey's story ('I Married a Monster from Outer Space') was not only funny and poignant, but it also did that which is so difficult—encourage the reader to be a better person. Mr. Künsken's tale ('Flight from the Ages') was a sweeping epic that I found riveting. Thank you for all the wonderful stories and work that you have done this past year."

Other missing winners included two Canadian authors who tied for best short story, Rich Larson and James Alan Garner. Although Rich won the award with "All that Robot . . .," reader Thomas R. Jones commented on another of his tales: "What a great year for short stories! I'm really impressed by Rich Larson. He is turning out to be one of the best new voices SF has seen in the last ten years. His story "Water Scorpion" was by far the best (and most emotionally wrenching) piece of fiction I've read all year." Of James Alan Gardner's story, "The Mutants Men Don't See," Kyle Rathbone wrote: "I saw the end coming a mile away, but was still very happy when it came."

Fortunately, our best novella winner, Suzanne Palmer, was able to attend the celebration. This multitalented author brought me a pint glass from Hellwater, the bar that features in her winning tale, "Lazy Dog Out." Either Suzanne has a time machine or she expertly etched the bar's logo into the glass herself. In any case, it's a stunning keepsake. Suzanne was wearing two hats at the breakfast because she was also the winner of *Analog's* AnLab award for best novelette. The AnLab Award celebration is always held in conjunction with *Asimov's* Readers' Award.

Neither our poet, Herb Kauderer, or our artist, Donato Ginacola, could join us. Fortunately other guests included AnLab winner Frank Wu and his wife Brianna, *Analog* editor Trevor Quachri, and editor emeritus Stanley Schmidt and his wife Joyce. Also on hand were Liza Groen Trombi and Arley Sorg of *Locus Magazine*. Our guest list was rounded out by authors Daryl Gregory and Connie Willis.

The best part of collating the Readers' Awards has always been reading the voters comments. This year didn't disappoint. Alan K. Lipton wrote to say "2016's toughest choices? Novelette and poem. You published a wealth of ideas both explored in long-form and telegraphed with graceful economy. It's getting harder to pick my favorites each year." Alan was seconded by Piet Nel, who said, "My main difficulty in voting for the year's buffet of outstanding stories was that too many favorites were in the same category. Perhaps there could be an additional award for the overall favorite." Jeffrey L. Powell seemed to be in agreement when he commented, "Way too many choices. Why do you torture me every year? Sigh. Couldn't you publish rubbish, and



Left to Right: Sheila Williams and Suzanne Palmer

make my selection so much easier? Thanks!”

Jeffrey D. Powell thought that, “*Asimov’s* needs more optimism, sense of wonder, heroes to fortify my spirit.” Still, we received great words of encouragement from Karen Anderson, Andrew Fink, Doug Lee, and especially Susan Blackley who wished “the best of luck to all nominees!”

Kyle Rathbun’s comments about other stories included: “I liked ‘Wretched the Romantic,’ which had a potentially positive ending; I thought ‘They All Have One Breath’ was perhaps the SFnal tale of the year; ‘The People in the Building’ was perhaps the best story of the year regardless of categories—maybe that’s because I’m a Lovecraft fan in addition to much else. His idea that the ‘ancient gods’ were actually aliens from across the galaxy and not really gods at all— though they appeared to be—is interesting. I thought Sandra captured that concept quite well.”

Kyle also said that he was very interested in where Dominica Phetteplace’s “Project” novel was going. He was not alone in his praise for these tales. Michael Mayotte wrote that he particularly enjoyed the series, and Phil Baringer said the author’s “story sequence is terrific, and I just decided to vote for the first in the series. If there were an award for best story series, this would earn it.” He added, “It’s unusual for me to have a favorite issue in a given year, but this year the March issue suited my taste in science fiction perfectly. My friend Adrian Melott said of the March issue, ‘the best of *Asimov’s* I have seen, including the great cover.’”

Perhaps because she had so many stories competing against each other, none of Dominica’s tales finished in the top five novelettes. A couple of days before the Readers’ Award celebration, we learned that her story, “Project Empathy,” along with Ian R. MacLeod’s, “The Visitor From Taured,” are both finalists for the Theodore Sturgeon Award. We were proud to see our stories on the short list and, like Susan Blackley, wish all the finalists the best of luck!

READERS' AWARD WINNERS

BEST NOVELLA

1. **LAZY DOG OUT;**
SUZANNE PALMER
2. Einstein's Shadow; Allen M. Steele
3. Where There Is Nothing, There Is God; David Erik Nelson
4. What We Hold Onto; Jay O'Connell
5. Choose Poison, Choose Life; Michael Blumlein

BEST NOVELETTE

1. **I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE;**
DALE BAILEY
2. Ten Poems for the Mosses, One for the Man; Suzanne Palmer
3. Matilda; Kristine Kathryn Rusch (tie)
3. They All Have One Breath; Karl Bunker (tie)
4. President John F. Kennedy, Astronaut; Sandra McDonald

BEST SHORT STORY

1. **THE MUTANTS MEN DON'T SEE;**
JAMES ALAN GARDNER (TIE)
1. **ALL THAT ROBOT . . . ;**
RICH LARSON (TIE)
2. Dome on the Prairie; Robert Reed (tie)
2. White Dust; Nathan Hillstrom (tie)
3. Exceptional Forces; Sean McMullen

BEST POEM

1. **AFTER;**
HERB KAUDERER
2. The Robot Grows Old; Geoffrey A. Landis
3. Nice Touch; Jane Yolen
4. Long Argument, the Longest; Jane Yolen
5. Attack of the Fifty-Foot Woman; Ron Koertge (tie)
5. Old Women of the Wood; Jane Yolen (tie)
5. The Ambassador's Daughter; Megan Arkenberg (tie)
5. Your Clone Excels at You; Robert Frazier (tie)

BEST COVER

1. **JANUARY;**
DONATO GIANCOLA
2. September; Michael Whelan
3. March; Fred Gambino
4. February; Alejandro Colucci (tie)
4. August; Kinuko Craft (tie)