

THIRTY-FOURTH ANNUAL READERS' AWARDS' RESULTS

Congratulations to the winners and finalists for the 34th Annual Readers' Awards. We had planned to announce the names of the winners at our annual Award breakfast, which is traditionally held the morning of SFWA's Nebula Award ceremony in May. Instead we held a virtual ceremony online. If you haven't watched it already, it is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILhXRROEq1Q&feature=youtu.be>

As always, one aspect of this award that I especially love are the comments that accompany the ballots. I'm pulling this editorial together in early June. The Covid-19 crisis was bearing down on us when I left my Wall Street office on March 11. It did not occur to me that I would not be able to return to the building by now. Although I grabbed a lot of material and had a lot of other items mailed to me, I didn't get the envelope that held the tabulated ballots. This means that I'm missing the comments that accompanied the mailed-in ballots. Fortunately, our editorial assistant, Rae Purdom, was able to retrieve and pass along all the electronic ballots that contained remarks from our readers.

We got a real boost from SF writer James Van Pelt, who told us, "This was a great year for the magazine." Reader Guillermo A. Plazas agreed, saying, "Another year of amazing, well written, and interesting stories. Very hard to select the best because I read them all. I look forward to receiving each issue! Congratulations!" Long-time fan, Piet Nel, wrote: "I love encountering stories by veteran authors. They're like postcards from old friends. And yet, my favorite story from 2019 was by an author I'd never heard of. Keep up the heady mixture!"

As always, our readers enjoyed a wide range of stories. Judy Melanson said, "Limiting the votes to three was a struggle. Two very deserving stories that lost the coin flip were Suzanne Palmer's 'Waterlines' and Nick Wolven's 'The Terminal Zone.' On the other hand, spending so much time with the ballot showed me that two favorites came from the same author, Suzanne Palmer. Would love to see more from her, please!" Erica Harris emphatically told us: "Love everything from Kristine Kathryn Rusch!"

Richard K. Lohmeyer wrote, "I love novellas, and I'm grateful that you publish one or two each issue. Unfortunately, that sometimes causes me to undervalue the shorter pieces. After this year, I won't make that mistake again. 'Charlie Tells Another One' by Andy Duncan was my favorite story in *Asimov's* this year, but the award for creepiest story goes to 'All in Green Went My Love Riding,' by Megan Arkenberg. Thank you for so many fine stories!"

Phillip Crawford told us, "2019 was a great year for *Asimov's*. The best issue was July/August with the great cover by Maurizio Manzieri and the two wonderful novellas, 'Waterlines' and Tegan Moore's 'The Work of Wolves.' I loved that intelligent dog story with the ironic twist at the end. Thank you for a great year, and I look forward to all of the wonderful stories and poetry in 2020!"

Philip and Jill Baringer remarked jointly that, "As usual, it is hard to narrow things down to three choices in each category. We're also enjoying Allen Steele's series of novellas, and a shout-out to Peter Wood's 'Never the Twain Shall Meet,' our number four in short story. Since we live close to Kansas City, the barbecue competition really struck a chord with us."

Long time reader Jeffrey David Powell wrote to say that, "*Asimov's* had another great year of stories. Shocking, I know. My favorite story of the year was Jay O'Connell's 'The Gorgon.' I made the mistake of reading it right before bed and couldn't sleep that night. The mere title still sends shivers down my spine. I enjoyed the

chance to read 'The Peacemaker' by Gardner Dozois. His work as an editor nourished my love of SF, and I still deeply miss him. Robert Silverberg is a treasure and I always look forward to his column." His dad, Jeffrey L. Powell wrote in to say, "My son and I separately read every story in *Asimov's* and rate them on a 1 to 10 scale. He then collates every 8, 9, or 10 that either of us has picked. From this list we make our final selection. It is always a struggle. And this year was no different. Thanks for another great year of *Asimov's*." Then, like his son, he added, "Oh, and be aware that reading Jay O'Connell's, 'The Gorgon,' right before bed is a very, very bad idea."

Phyllis Schmutz offered up a good piece of advice: "Could you include small pictures of the covers on the ballot to refresh memory? Thank you." We will try to remember to post the covers along with the online ballot in the future.

Our final reader's comment is from Alan K. Lipton: "I read fiction to escape the world's deep, impossible sadness, yet some of my 2019 favorites were exquisite masterpieces of sadness. Congrats to Ian McHugh's 'Story With Two Names,' Kofi Nyameye's 'The Lights Go Out, One by One,' Lavie Tidhar's 'Neom,' and David Barber's 'The Other SETI' for breaking my heart so elegantly. Meanwhile, on a happier note, thanks also to Allen M. Steele, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, and Suzanne Palmer for matching their usual standard of high-quality storytelling."

Alan wrote to us before we had experienced the terrible economic disruption and sad and relentless loss of life caused by Covid-19, as well as the tragic and horrifying deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. So far, 2020 has been sadder than many of the most darkly prophetic tales. Yet, fiction can also shine a light on a positive path to the future. Like 2019, our 2020 tales are sad and hopeful, fun and disturbing, adventurous and quietly reflective. *Asimov's* gives readers some time away from the world. Yet, when we return to real world issues like systemic racism, I hope our stories can help us imagine, and perhaps lay the groundwork toward, a better tomorrow.

READERS' AWARD WINNERS

BEST NOVELLA

1. **WATERLINES;**
SUZANNE PALMER
2. Gremlin; Carrie Vaughn
3. The Work of Wolves; Tegan Moore
4. Winter Wheat; Gord Sellar
5. Surfers at the End of Time; Rudy Rucker & Marc Laidlaw

BEST NOVELETTE

1. **IN THE STILLNESS BETWEEN THE STARS;**
MERCURIO D. RIVERA
2. How I Found Harry's All-Night Hamburgers; Lawrence Watt-Evans
3. SeeApp; James Van Pelt
4. Taking Icarus Home; Suzanne Palmer
5. Charlie Tells Another One; Andy Duncan

BEST SHORT STORY

1. **SACRIFICIAL IRON;**
TED KOSMATKA
2. (tie) Ardy's Choice; Maggie Shen King
2. (tie) Personal Space; Lawrence Watt-Evans
3. Can You Watch My Stuff?; Rich Larson
4. The Lights Go Out, One by One; Kofi Nyameye

BEST POEM

1. **A STREET AWAY;**
JANE YOLEN
2. The Other SETI; David Barber
3. (tie) The Ruined Library; Bruce Boston
3. (tie) Nine Hypotheses Concerning a Mysterious Lump
Under the Rug on the Foyer Floor; Jenny Blackford
4. The Dogs of the Soviet Space Program; Christopher Cokinos

BEST COVER

1. **JULY/AUGUST;**
MAURIZIO MANZIERI
2. May/June; NASA
3. January/February; Michael Whelan
4. March/April; Eldar Zakirov
5. November/December; Donato Giancola