

THE 2011 DELL MAGAZINES AWARD

My co-judge Rick Wilber and I were exceptionally fortunate this year in that we had to choose the Dell Magazines Award for Undergraduate Excellence in Science Fiction and Fantasy Writing from an unusually large pool of talented authors. Due to all this talent, we ended up with the largest group of finalists in the award's history. We were even more fortunate that every one of our finalists chose to attend this year's International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts in Orlando, Florida. The award, which includes a five hundred dollar first prize, is co-sponsored by Dell Magazines and the International Association for the Fantastic and is supported by the School of Mass Communications, University of South Florida. It is given out each year at the conference.

Although the award's outcome is determined via a blind read, we were pleased to discover that most of our finalists were familiar faces. Our winner, Seth Dickinson, who graduated from the University of Chicago last spring, had placed in the contest on two previous occasions. Seth has always been able to spin a hard science fiction tale and this year's excellent story about "The Immaculate Conception of Private Ritter" was exciting and engrossing. We're sure Seth has a strong career as a fiction writer ahead of him.

Our first-runner up, Amanda Olson of S. Olaf College, flew in from Scotland, where she is spending a year at the University of Aberdeen. Her bittersweet tale of "Aunt Victoria" made her a first-time finalist and she got to attend the conference with her close friend from first grade, and fellow finalist, Kendra Leigh Spalding. Kendra, a junior at the University of Minnesota and another first-timer, received an honorable mention for "Caveat."

The second runner-up certificate went to Eugenia Lily Yu of Princeton University. Although Lily received an honorable mention in last year's contest, this was her first chance to attend in person. It was a delight to meet her and to have a chance to read her story, "The Cartographer's Wasp and the Anarchist Bees." A revised version of the story sold to *Clarkesworld* soon after the conference. It was posted on their site in April.

Last year's winner, Rachel Sobel—a senior at the University of Washington (Seattle), was this year's third runner up with an intriguing tale that takes place "In the Time of the Drought."

Rick and I had had a previous chance to get to know many of this year's honorable mentions. Miah Saunders, a junior at High Point University in North Carolina, was last year's first runner-up. She received her award this year for a scary story about "Death's Lady." Lara Donnelly who, like Seth, had been a finalist on more than one occasion, received her award for the darkly amusing tale of "The Case of the Wayward Sister." Unlike last year, when she flew in from Ireland, Lara, a senior at Wright State University flew to the conference directly from Dayton, Ohio.

Last year's second runner-up, Rebecca McNulty, a junior at The College of New Jersey, returned to accept her award for a disturbing story about "The Little Man's Call." I was pleased that this time I didn't confuse her name even once with her good friend, Rachel Halpern's. Rachel is a junior at Grinnell College. She was on hand to receive her second honorable mention award, this time for a sharp look at "A Clarity of Mind."

In addition to the aforementioned Kendra, other honorable mentions who were new to the award and to the confer-



Photo credit: Bill Clemente/Locus Publications

Left to right: Amanda Olson, Rick Wilber, Miah Saunders, Kendra Leigh Speedling, Lara Donnelly, Sarah Brand, Rachel Halpern, Rachel Sobel, Seth Dickinson, Eugenia Lily Yu, Rebecca McNulty, Tina Tseng, and Sheila Williams.

ence were Sara Brand of Vanderbilt University, who received her award for the thoughtful tale, “Perchance to Dream,” and Tina Tseng of UCLA who received her award for a heart-breaking tale of “A Treatise on the Duality of Peace and Accomplishing a Rewarding Parent-Child Relationship Based Upon Mutual Respect and Love.” We hope to see many of the new and returning contestants at next year’s conference.

As usual, the students were warmly welcomed by a number of leading authors. On Friday night, they had dinner with conference guests of honor Connie Willis and Terry Bisson. We were joined at this meal by the always amazing Kit Reed and her husband Joe. The students also had a chance to spend time with Marie Brennan, Suzy McKee Charnas, Ted Chiang, Stephen R. Donaldson, Andy Duncan, Kathleen Ann Goonan, Nisi Shawl, Joe Haldeman, James Patrick Kelly, John Kessel, Patricia McKillip, Sandra McDonald, Rachel Swisky, Peter Straub, and many other writers.

You can visit with previous finalists and current writers at our Facebook site. Search for the **Dell Magazines Award** or go directly to <http://www.facebook.com/pages/manage/#!/pages/Dell-Magazines-Award/177319923776>

We are actively looking for next year’s winner. The deadline for submissions is Monday, January 2, 2012. 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. He can be reached care of:

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Next year’s winner will be announced at the 2012 Conference on the Fantastic, in the pages of *Asimov’s Science Fiction* magazine, and on our website. ○