

Winner

POETRY



2006 Creative Arts Competition



Joni Wallace graduated magna cum laude from the University of New Mexico School of Law and has an MFA in Poetry from the University of Montana. She works in Tucson as a criminal defense lawyer and teaches creative writing workshops through the University of Arizona Poetry Center and the Arizona Commission on the Arts. Her poems most recently appear in *Barrow Street*, *Forklift*, *Ohio*, *Spork Magazine* and *Legal Studies Forum*.

Four Poems

BY JONI WALLACE

Reel-to-reel

It could be this or any city.
A man emerges from a taxi
in a sharkskin jacket,
snow breaking against the blue-green
sheen of his shoulders.
It's a minor scene, almost missed
as the shadow from an airplane overhead
bleeds the image into blankness,
my exquisite wound.

You would ask how I am.
Mostly I am saved by greed and desire.
Greed for the season's voltage in fur,
desire for the wax-shine of red stiletto heels,
movie prize of some long-ago actress, not me,
and she shall witness our breaths fly out,
never missed, impossibly measured,
this pox on the living,
like ghosts.

Tilt (July 16, 1945, 5:28 a.m.)

In a photograph snapped just before,
their eyes, different in color, show
the nervousness of a herd entered the clearing,
one catching the unfamiliar scent meaning
some will be sacrificed, some will be saved.
But today is their 15 minutes: the staged smash
of the most infinitesimal piece of U 235,
a chain reaction that shines from here to heaven,
drops its veil on every cactus lizard rabbit coyote
within a 250 mile wake. Still, it's only a makeshift
for other crimes. Those trickle out the canopy
of malignant dust like a virus, in three weeks time
a city incinerated, then two cities.
The sky winks and the general turns to the
scientist and says *bingo*.

This is the part where the credits roll.
*Please remove your protective glasses and place them
in the seat back in front of you.*
Please exit through the signs marked EXIT.

Fifth Lucky Dragon

*There was a dazzling light,
and the sea became
brighter than day.*
— Yoshio Misaki

Filament of memory:
smooth azure of sea,
nets filled with starry bodies
and more stars above
as he sinks further into
a dream of a woman
below uncontained skies,
a certain turbulence in the air
around her and then her voice
so real it startles him awake
to slap of saltwater, salt mist,
work to be done.

He has no name
for what flowers westward,
asea turned light box
for the terrible boat, dawn
scratched out of the sky.
In the blue/gray light
he moves to contend with
the harvest,
heavy and luminous, and it
is not yet
that one-millionth of a second
called critical mass,
and the ashen snow
has not yet fallen
on the eyelashes and faces
of the men who will rejoice
like children numbered
for their graves.

BY CHRISTOPHER DUPONT

Bohr's Dream

In the beginning there is an idea
as if a dead thing stepped out of a man.
Lawyers prepare their witnesses and briefs.
Invitations issue. The judge arrives
with his gavel and his furs.
God, a hangman on the piazza, sends his archangel.
In the great white courtroom lunch is served,
a feast of pheasants and pearls.
Applause, flourish of trumpets.
O nearness of night. Windless starless night.

These four poems will appear in *Legal Studies Forum*, Spring 2006, a special issue that is an Anthology of writing by lawyers.

Allegory (Time)

Maybe if we were four
hundred times closer to the
sun, the moon would be
its normal size. Collecting

flowers in my cap, I think
of those I have sinned
against – some without
ever touching. This one

is for you. As innocent
as a seed sprouting in light-
ly dampened earth, our water
turned to wine. It became

unconditionally hot. The sky
promised not to tell if we would
kiss it one more
time.