

FIRST PLACE - Xona the Redeemer by Jeanne Jusaitis

SECOND PLACE - Broken Toys by Natalie Moon-Wainwright

THERD PLACE Barefoot in the Sky by Mara Johnstone

HONORABLE MENTEUNS (In no specific order)

Galveston by Meta Strauss

Hnarchy's Shadow by Doug Fortier

City in the Sky by Lars Sigurdssen



First Place - Jeanne Jusaitis, Xona the Redeemer



Jeanne Jusaitis is the author of Journey to Anderswelt, and award winning Lilah Dill and the Magic Kit. Jeanne draws from her memories of growing up in Northern California, and her many years of teaching and traveling with students. Her poems and short stories can be found in the Vintage Voice Anthologies. A memoir, Liebestraum: a daughter's reflection, is published in



Wisdom Has a Voice: Every Daughter's Memories of Mother.



Second Place - Natalie Moon-Wainwright, Broken Toys

Natalie Moon-Wainwright is a clergy person by training, but is currently between positions, which gives greater opportunity to write for fun. Having enjoyed reading steampunk, she was eager to try writing a new genre and is thrilled with the result. She's also passionate about the work of Brené Brown and facilitates her *Daring Way and Rising Strong* programs. She and her husband David have two young-adult children, one dog, two cats, several fish and

six chickens. In the last year she's become an avid cyclist and tries to get out every day, making it a daily habit in addition to writing.



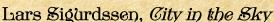
Third Place - Mara Johnstone, Barefoot in the Sky

Mara Lynn Johnstone grew up in a house on a hill, of which the top floor was built first. She split her time between climbing trees, drawing fantastical things, reading books, and writing her own. Always interested in fiction, she went on to get a Master's Degree in creative writing, and to acquire a husband, son, and two cats. She still writes, draws, reads, and enjoys climbing

things. She also has been known to make and wear costumes given any excuse, and to thoroughly enjoy life.

Honorable Mentions





Lars retired from his engineering career last year and nowspends most of his time with writing and music. He is interested primarily in writing science fiction and historical novels. The steampunk gendre is particularly interesting to him because he has been an avid collector and reader of Jules Verne, H.G. Wells,

Sir Arthur Canon Doyle and Edger Rice Burroughs ever since he was a youngster in the 1950's. Currently he is writing an anthology of science fiction short stories and a science fiction novel.



Meta Strauss, Galveston

Meta Strauss, a native Houstonian, began writing after retiring to Sonoma in 2005. Her first novel, *Saving El Chico*, was released in 2016. The entertaining character-driven book is a laugh-out-loud funny yet revealing story of a small present-day Texas town struggling to survive a drought.

Strauss's work is featured in *Cry of the Nightbird*, *Stories for Emma*, and The Sonoma Sun, It also appears on various sites including Sonoma Writers Alliance and the Write Spot. Many of her stories are set in Texas, as is her first steampunk story, *Galveston*.



Doug Fortier, Hnarchy's Shadow

Doug Fortier retired from a career with computers to paint and write. He is a past four-year president of the Mendocino Coast branch of the California Writers Club and an award winning author of quirky short stories available on his website, <u>DougFortier.com</u>.



Xona the Redeemer by Jeanne Jusaitis

Xona threw her gloved hands over her ears to shield them from the overhead screech of the brakes and the rumble of the cables. Once the cable car passed, she felt safe enough to emerge from the crumbling tunnel and slip into the gloomy shadows of O'Farrell Street.

Hugging the walls of the stores and music halls, she pulled the sealskin collar of her gentleman's frock coat up around her face. Heavy fog drifted between the buildings, but it still wasn't as cold as below, in the icy waters of the old subway tunnels. A hot frothy bubble bath called to her.

Through the fog, Xona caught glimpses of the fading amber sky. She hurried along, jumping to the side to avoid a burst of steam as it exploded through the grates in the sidewalk. She had to get to her father before he left for the opera.

Keeping her gaze down, her mind reeled, thinking of the underground whispers. Rumors had the new corporate government's RoboGuard invading the Angelos Territories and surging north to New Frisco. Harrison Nyugen, the mayor of New Frisco and the younger of her two fathers, needed to know.

She turned onto Market Street and the gaslights began to flicker, stirring Xona to quicken her pace. At New Montgomery, the close sound of creaky wheels and hooves pounded the broken asphalt, warning her of the approach of a horse drawn hansom. Like a shadow, she slipped in through a side door of the Palace Hotel without being recognized.

In the dim hall, Xona moved directly to the door of a closet. Once inside, she locked the door and pulled the lever that opened the entry to an elevator.

Like a bird in a gilded cage, she thought, admiring her brass elevator with its shiny weights and pulleys. Her Papa Rolland had created it just for her, allowing her to come and go without being photographed by the nosy rotographeurs.

The gears of the lift turned and clinked as they delivered Xona to the family's penthouse. Entering her bedroom, she threw her coat onto the divan.

"Dolores?" she called, pulling the velvet bell cord at the same time. "Are you home?"

A voice could be heard from down the hall. "Yes Xona. I hear you. I'm coming."

Dolores rushed into Xona's room and picked up the jacket. "Again you're wearing men's clothes? You're eighteen now... too old for this." She held her nose. "They smell like the sewer!"

"Yes, I know," said Xona, unbuttoning her boots. "Would you please take care of the cleaning, Dolores?"

"Like always . . . just because I know you're helping those poor little tunnel orphans. Now go take a bath and wash that stink off."

"Is Harrison around?"

"Mayor Nyugen's downstairs at the Palm Court. Are you going to the opera with him?"

Xona stepped into the marble bath chamber and turned three brass wheels that were mounted on a vertical copper pipe. After a few bangs, the copper pistons of the atmospheric engine pumped up and down, sending steam hissing out from somewhere behind the boiler, and blasting hot water into the cast iron tub.

"I wasn't planning to," she yelled, raising her voice to compete with the clamor. "I need to help Papa Rolland in the lab." She dumped a bottle of bubbling salts into the steaming bath.

Dolores narrowed her eyes in disapproval as Xona dropped a pair of striped trousers on the floor.

Xona plopped into the bath, sinking into the hot lavender suds with a sigh.

Meanwhile, two levels below the Palm Court, Rolland Roupier bustled back and forth between his desk and the giant contraption that dominated the center of the basement laboratory. He glanced at his pocket watch. Xona was uncharacteristically late. He needed her to retrieve information from his files. She knew them better than he did.

Crossing to his desk, he re-examined a tintype of a RoboGuard. The colossal cog-powered humanoid, covered in sprockets and wheels, looked terrifying in its steely power.

Suddenly, a brick crashed into a glass cabinet, showering shards of glass throughout the laboratory. As Rolland ducked behind the large roll top desk, someone threw a hood over his head and knocked him out, cold.

Minutes later, fresh from the splendor of the Palm Court, Xona, in her plum velvet corset and double bustle, rushed down the stairs to Rolland's laboratory. Her thoughts were still on her conversation with Harrison. Keeping his usual cool, he'd responded calmly to her news, buttoned his cape, and whispered to his confidant, Pinky Hyde, the city's Director of Security. Harrison left for the opera house alone, top hat on his head.

Xona entered the laboratory, finding it unusually quiet.

"Rolland?" She peeked around the bulky WebTect prototype.

His files lay strewn across the floor amongst broken glass and brick shards. Her heart stopped when she spotted his beloved pocket watch on the floor, a sure sign that there'd been a struggle.

She rushed to the prototype, but saw no damage. Rolland had always hoped that people would mistake it for a large boiler heater. To the casual eye, the mammoth cast iron contraption resembled the engine of a steam locomotive including the riveted seams, valves and handholds, but that was a deception.

At the front of the "boiler", a large iron plate boasted elaborate scrollwork of an apple with a bite out of it. Xona slid the plate to the left, revealing a celluloid screen surrounded by dials, switches, and a keyboard. She flicked the top switch, and the screen revealed a map of New Frisco. So, the WebTect is still in working order. I just hope that Rolland will not die to protect its secrets.

Crossing to the mess on the floor, she began to pick up the files, looking for the WebTect directions. Triumphantly, she pulled out a file labeled "Engine Parts" from under shards of glass. All in code, it looked like a shopping list. Only she and Rolland could decipher it.

Studying the file, she crossed back to the WebTect and typed out a code on the keyboard, then flipped the fourth switch down. Had he set up the grid of protection?

The screen revealed a collage of New Frisco, covered by fragments of lines. Something was wrong.

Xona referred back to her notes, and turned two dials. Red letters flashed across the screen: CAMERA OBSCURA FAILED. That's where they've taken Rolland! Without the mirrors of the Camera Obscura, the WebTect was useless.

All thoughts of the opera disappeared. Grabbing Rolland's fur coat from the closet, she headed for the roof of the Palace, hoping that her friend, Fineas, was still on watch at the balloon station.

Meanwhile, Rolland longed for his fur coat. Shivering and blindfolded, he could hear the crashing waves of the Pacific and the barks of the seals. No doubt, he had been dumped onto the crumbling concrete floor of the Camera Obscura. The angry voices of two men were near, but the roar of the ocean kept him from hearing their conversation. One of them shuffled over to him and kicked him in his thigh.

"You're gonna have to tell us how you operate this thing, or else my partner here is gonna blast the hell out of it." His gruff voice sounded familiar to Rolland.

"Operate what?" bluffed Rolland. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

"You wanna play games?" He kicked Rolland in his other leg and chuckled. "Now I'm ahead, two points."

The paralyzing pain in Rolland's legs made him nauseous. He had to think of something to dissuade them from the Camera.

Back on the roof of the Palace, the handsome Fineas Dragonfly looked dashing in his leather aviator helmet and coat as he welcomed Xona with a wolf whistle. "Don't you look turned out tonight," he said, faking an Irish accent. "If I didn't know better, I'd think you were a real lady."

Self-consciously, Xona adjusted the brass goggles on her top hat. "No time for your foolishness tonight, Fin. I need your help." "At your service. There's no moonlight, if you're thinkin' of a balloon ride," he said, looking up at the foggy sky. "But I've got some hot grog in the balloon house, if you want to get cozy."

"I don't have time for your brass right now. Rolland is in danger, as is the whole city. I think the Corporates have abducted him. You've got to fly me to the Camera Obscura."

"Tonight, in this soup? You've got to be kidding."

"Use that fancy compass that Rolland made for you. It doesn't care if there's fog. And we better take the Invisoshield . . . and some armor, and . . ."

"Whoa, Xo, you're movin' too fast. What are you getting us into?"

"Just trust me. Let's go."

She followed him through the forest of aerostats until they reached a balloon with a painted gondola. Steel propellers trembled in the wind, while helium cylinders pulled at their ties.

As Xona tugged on the hatch handle, Fineas grabbed her arm. "Xona," he said, "I've got to be honest. I've only flown this one once, and that was with Rolland."

She turned, her fierce green eyes on him. "Look Fin, I'm doing this. Are you coming with me or not?"

The faint sounds of the city rumbled far below Xona and Fineas as they sailed towards the Cliff House. Rolland's advanced compass guided them around the towers and over the hills of New Frisco. Finally they could smell the ocean and hear the boom of the Pacific waves. Xona dropped water ballast and the airship descended, while Fineas engaged the Invisoshield.

"There it is," said Xona, pointing down. "There's the dome of the Camera Obscura, just behind the Cliff House."

Deftly, Fineas landed the airship on the Cliff House terrace. Xona leaped from the gondola's hatch, and hit the ground running, thankful for the fog cover. Moving behind the dome of the Camera, she could hear voices coming from within. Fineas crept up behind her, carrying a black powder revolver. He handed her a piston-powered cleaver. "I thought you'd prefer this," he whispered.

"Don't worry," she whispered, taking the cleaver. "I've got more tricks up my sleeve."

Quietly, Xona moved to the side of the door of the Camera and peeked in. Two men stood at the screen, their backs to her, arguing. Rolland lie tied up on the floor. Her eyes met his, and he subtly shook his head no.

"Turn around and put your hands up," screamed Xona.

Startled, the men turned. One pulled a pistol and shot. The other hit the ground and scrambled.

Xona felt the bullet rip through her curls. She reacted by pulling the cleaver's trigger, which spun through the air, chopping the gun and the hand off of the shooter. He screamed as his arm pumped blood across the room.

The other man attempted to get past her, but she spun and kicked him in his ribs.

"Pinky Hyde!" she gasped. "You ungrateful traitor!"

Stinging leather lines whipped out from her sleeves, and Pinky was as helpless as a fly in a web. Fineas knocked the other man unconscious with a haymaker, tore the sleeve off the villain's shirt, and applied a tourniquet to his arm.

Drawing a dagger from her boot, Xona rushed to Rolland, cut his ties, and removed his blindfold.

"Did they damage the WebTect?" asked Rolland, rubbing his legs.

"No, they just got as far as impairing the Camera-WebTect connection. But it's fixable, easy peasy."

"We'll fix the RoboGuards next," said Fineas with a wink to Xona. "Meanwhile, what do you want me to do with these two turncoats?"

"We'll take Pinky to the city jail, but we need a doc for that one. Harrison can take it from there. I'll make sure that he shows no mercy."

"And once again," said Rolland. "Our Xona has saved the day."



Redwood Writer Contests 2016-2017

Prompt Contest

- Launches Aug. 14, 2016
- Deadline to submit October 16, 2016
- Awards at Membership Meeting: December 11, 2016
- Chair: Jeanne Jusaitis





Fan Fiction Contest

- Launches Jan. 8, 2017
- Deadline to submit Feb. 19, 2017
- Awards at Membership Meeting April 9, 2017
- Chair: TBA

Screenwriting Contest

- Launches May 21, 2017
- Deadline to submit June 27, 2017
- Awards at Membership Meeting Aug. 13, 2017
- Chair: Teresa LeYung-Ryan





Historical Fiction Contest

- Launches Sept. 10, 2017
- Deadline to submit Oct. 24, 2017
- Awards at Membership Meeting Dec. 10, 2017
- Chair: Dmitri Morningstar

Go to website for details and dates: www.redwoodwriters.org
Contests Coordinator – Natasha Yim

