

2021

Royal Palm Literary Award Winners



Grand Awards

PUBLISHED BOOK OF THE YEAR

Tales from the Eerie Canal. General Catch-All. Murder by toilet plunger. Revenge by pie. A birthday gift of a trip to hell. Twenty-two stories infused with a gaggle of goosebumps. Don't turn out the lights.

Barbara Rein. Barbara writes horror short stories with delightfully creepy twists, and quirky personal essays inspired by the oddities that bounce her way. She admits to being addicted to dachshunds.

UNPUBLISHED BOOK OF THE YEAR

From Hell's Heart. Thriller or Suspense. While attempting to solve a fifteen-year-old double homicide, small town cop Jake Long contends with an unfaithful wife, killer twins, and a woman who uses snakes to murder her enemies.

Dana J. Summers is an editorial cartoonist and comic strip artist turned author. He has written five novels and lives with his wife in Orlando.

BEST CHILDREN'S BOOK

Pling's Party. Published Children's Picture Book. Pling is an exclamation point who can only be in a book twice, but hilarity ensues when he continues to jump into the story and make things too exciting.

Arielle Haughee, owner of Orange Blossom Publishing, is a five-time RPLA-winning author, editor, speaker, and executive vice president of the Florida Writers Association.

THE CANDICE COGHILL MEMORIAL AWARD FOR YOUTH

Ode to Rain. Unpublished Poetry, ages 12 to 15. The rhythm of rain.

N.M. Collett. Nicole is an overachieving 12-year-old girl who loves to dance.

Genre Awards

Published Book-Length Fiction

Published Blended Genre

- Gold. **Hot Magic** by Catherine Kean. When his nemesis possesses his girlfriend through an old necklace, what's a reincarnated knight turned antique dealer to do? Use his magic to rescue his damsel and save the world.
- Silver. **A Million Little Lies** by Bette Lee Crosby. After a lifetime of lies, she must now decide to run or stay and tell the truth which will break the hearts of those she loves most.

Published Fantasy

- Gold. **Journey to Jumbalot** by Ryan Wakefield. An unassuming housecat, Alby, watches Professor Wizoom build an unusual triangular doorway. The professor vanishes and to Alby's astonishment, the door opens. Alby's compassion for his missing friend gives him the strength to jump through and he is transported to the magical world of Jumbalot.

Published Historical Fiction

- Gold. **A Shadowed Fate** by Marty Ambrose. Florence. July 1873. Claire Clairmont, the last survivor of the Byron/Shelley circle, tries to learn the fate of Allegra, her daughter by Lord Byron, and finds herself in increasing danger.
- Silver. **West of the Alleghenies** by Craig Pennington. In a world engulfed in the flames of Revolution, pioneer Fergus Moorhead is captured by Indians and embarks on an epic journey to return to the woman he loves.
- Bronze. **War Clouds Over West Florida** by Lee Gramling. A British plot to seize the Floridas, a threatened Indian uprising, and a vicious one-time pirate lead to a desperate chase that ends at swordpoint.

Published LGBTQ+

- Gold. **Threadbare** by Elle E. Ire. All cybernetic soldier Vick Corren wanted was to be human again. Now all she wants is Kelly. But machines can't love. Can they?

Published Mainstream or Literary

- Gold. **Keyhole Mysteries, Witness-5** by Nancy Buscher. Five characters struggle with control. Their choices take them to the brink of death, changing their lives forever. They must find the key to their future or die.

Published Mystery or Crime

- Gold. **Strange Currents** by J.C. Bruce. Alexander Strange agrees to help a novelist investigate her brother's death in Key West. But when the sharks start circling, he knows he's in over his head.
- Silver. **Shakespeare's Secrets** by Bonnie Hoover Braendlin. The disruption of a small North Florida college town by two murders throws professors Ariadne Caulfield and Judith Sheridan into danger and Ariadne into love.
- Bronze. **Before She Left** by Alison R. Solomon. A strong-willed woman must partner with a detective who can't stand her to find a missing fiancé.

Published Novelette

- Gold. **Among the Blue Horses** by Elle Andrews Patt. Muriel has a secret she doesn't dare tell anyone for fear of being locked away forever. When a total stranger discovers her reality, will he help her or condemn her?
- Silver. **The Medusa Jump** by Ken Pelham. A father and son journey from the year 2367 to 1816, and find themselves among the subjects of Thodore Gricault's searing masterpiece, *The Raft of the Medusa*.

Published Novella

- Gold. **An Outlaw's Desire** by Catherine Kean. Pitt Rutherford is blackmailed into besieging a castle, but the only woman he's ever loved is inside. What's worth more: his son's life or a second chance at true love?
- Silver. **The Last Chapter** by Barbara Bond. Maggie Garman confronts her estranged daughter and her past when they roll down the I-95 in a tumbledown RV to join her on Amelia Island.
- Bronze. **The Wall: Chronicle of a Scuba Trial** by Lawrence Martin. A young woman disappears during a recreational scuba dive off Grand Cayman Island. Was the cause corporate negligence? Or suicide? You, the reader, will decide during the trial.

Published Romance

- Gold. **Hot Magic** by Catherine Kean. When his nemesis possesses his girlfriend through an old necklace, what's a reincarnated knight turned antique dealer to do? Use his magic to rescue his damsel and save the world.
- Silver. **Kisses, Family, and Hope** by Sophie Bartow. Finley Reade and Ava King want a relationship. But with the past coming back to haunt them, they'll have to fight for the future they both want.

Published Science Fiction

- Gold. **Threadbare** by Elle E. Ire. All cybernetic soldier Vick Corren wanted was to be human again. Now all she wants is Kelly. But machines can't love. Can they?

Published Thriller or Suspense

- Gold. **Buddies** by Kip Cassino. There they are, Pauley and the Captain—two war-damaged veterans, walking down a lonely western road. One is a vicious serial killer, but which one? Can they be stopped?
- Silver. **Blowback** by Al Pessin. After global attacks that dwarf 9-11, Lieutenant Faraz Abdallah of Task Force Epsilon leaves the PTSD ward and goes undercover in Operation Blowback to shut down the terrorists for good.

Published Women's Fiction

- Gold. **Rain** by Lisa Buie-Collard. The past is not an easy force to be reckoned with.
- Silver. **A Million Little Lies** by Bette Lee Crosby. After a lifetime of lies, she must now decide to run or stay and tell the truth, which will break the hearts of those she loves most.

Published Book-Length Nonfiction

Published Autobiography or Memoir

- Gold. **The Life She Once Knew** by Vanna Nguyen. After a brutal attack on her teenage daughter, a Vietnamese woman struggles with memories of her own escape from Communism and a crisis of faith.
- Silver. **Fifty Years of Christmas Letters** by Jack Pendray. Here's a book with absolutely no "central conflict," or off-center conflict, for that matter. It's just a happy book by a happy man.

Published Biography

- Gold. **American Ripper** by Patrick Kendrick. American Ripper is the true story of the case of Gerard John Schaefer, a Florida Law Enforcement Officer who was a prolific serial killer in the late 1960s/early 1970s.

Published Educational or Informational

- Gold. **America's Alligator** by Doug Alderson. America's Alligator examines the colorful and sometimes conflicted relationship our species has had with Alligator mississippiensis.

- Silver. **Getting It, Then Getting Along** by L. Reynolds Andiric. This book explains objectively the five religious belief systems the majority of the world's populations follow. It is written in laymen's terms without dogma to promote understanding and tolerance.
- Bronze. **RV Life** by Raymond Hall. Is it your dream to buy an RV and travel? Be informed by getting answers to your questions about RVing. Beginners and experienced RVers will benefit from this book.

Published History

- Gold. **Gumshoes, Fangs, Rockets, and Spies** by Ken Pelham. An entertaining and provocative look at genre fiction, from *Beowulf* to *The Time Machine* to *Harry Potter*, and how it changes human societies, often in profound and unexpected ways.

Unpublished Book-Length Fiction

Unpublished Blended Genre

- Gold. **For Thee** by Claire M. Johnson. The story of the marriage of Pauline Pfeiffer and Ernest Hemingway. Historically factual, it includes character sketches of the well-known players of the 1920s Paris ex-pat set.
- Silver. **Hell's Rainbow** by Edward Burke. A depressed teenage boy on the run from a psychiatric facility witnesses a violent robbery. When an opportunity for retribution arises, he must overcome his fragility to ensure justice.

Unpublished Historical Fiction

- Gold. **From the Drop of Heaven** by Juliette Godot. Defying the odds, Catherine learns to read, but during the Renaissance, getting caught with the wrong book means death. Her only defense is to refer to the illicit texts.

Unpublished Mainstream or Literary

- Gold. **Boy Comes Home** by Veronica H. Hart. A family is destroyed when Brandon disappears into North Korea. Twenty years later, when he is returned to America, all their lives are once again changed forever.

Unpublished Mystery or Crime

- Gold. **A Lamentation of Swans** by Kerry Blaisdell. When in 1904 a serial killer threatens the women of Portland, Oregon, an educated woman yearning for a more meaningful life must prove her eccentric older husband's innocence.

- Silver. **Mister Manners** by J.C. Bruce. Weird news reporter Alexander Strange is on the trail of Mister Manners, a self-appointed vigilante punishing the rude and the insane in Florida. He's a busy guy.
- Bronze. **Murder on Banyan Isle** by Sharon L. Menear. A series of baffling murders, an ancient secret, and a romance denied lead Jett and her best friend, Gwen, on a journey of discovery, shocking revelations, and life-changing decisions.

Unpublished Novelette

- Gold. **The Requisite Desolation** by Kelly Sanford. Oscar is a dick. Driving a stolen car while drunk and distracted, he collides with an owl and wrecks the car. Thus, Oscar's bizarre demise is set in motion.
- Silver. **Seats for Three at the Bar** by Lynn Schiffhorst. After a full-service bar mystically appears in a Catholic church one Christmas Eve, a homeless man finds dignity and friendship.

Unpublished Thriller or Suspense

- Gold. **From Hell's Heart** by Dana J. Summers. While attempting to solve a fifteen-year-old double homicide, small town cop Jake Long contends with an unfaithful wife, killer twins, and a woman who uses snakes to murder her enemies.

Unpublished Book-Length Nonfiction

Unpublished Autobiography or Memoir

- Gold. **Heart Thieves** by Coby Lee. I lost five loved ones within seven months. Unable to cope, I made disastrous decisions propelling me on an odyssey through a commune, my life devolving into depression and alcoholism.
- Silver. **The First Wrinkle** by Wendy L. Samford, PhD. *The First Wrinkle* is a memoir of four adults that grew up in foster care and its effect on their lives. Also interviewed are foster parents, first responders, and volunteers

Published & Unpublished Literature for Youth

Published Children's Picture Book

- Gold. **Pling's Party** by Arielle Haughee. Pling is an exclamation point who can only be in a book twice, but hilarity ensues when he continues to jump into the story and make things too exciting.
- Silver. **Big Hearted Charlie's Coloring Book** by Krista Keating-Joseph. How did a dog named Turtle and a turtle named Dog happen? Learn how this true story happens for Big Hearted Charlie and his little sister Adele. It's a coloring book too!
- Bronze. **Margot's Missing Scrunchie** by Diana V. Braddom. Margot, a teenager, can't find her favorite scrunchie to wear to a special party. Her search ends at the preschool program of her younger brother, Thomas.

Unpublished Children's Picture Book

- Gold. **Afiya the Striped Cheetah** by Jessie Erwin. Afiya hates being the only cheetah at the zoo with stripes instead of spots. But when a furry stranger sees past Afiya's appearance, she learns how to love her stripes.
- Silver. **NOT Another Lovey Bunny Story** by Shutta Crum. The squirrel of distraction swashbuckles in as an author writes a bunny book. Squirrel and pirate friends have a better idea.

Published Early Reader or Chapter Book

- Gold. **The Spelling Test** by Nancy Beale. When Candybar tries cheating on his spelling test, two mischievous dogs interrupt his plans until Chompy comes to the rescue with a clever solution.
- Silver. **Time Tale** by D.G. Stern. A beautiful sailboat appears at a shipyard. Upton, his human father, and Watson are asked to find its owner. The boat appears to be brand new, but it's almost 100 years old.

Unpublished Early Reader or Chapter Book

- Gold. **We Don't Have Time, Gusty** by Lynn Schiffhorst. Gusty wants more time to play, so he tries to grab extra time, until a lady mouse teaches him nobody can do that, because time is a gift.
- Silver. **Flo Flo Keeps the Legend Alive** by Dakota Orlando. Two animals from different habitats meet. Whose habitat is better—the desert or the jungle?

Unpublished Middle-Grade Fiction

- Gold. **Turnabout** by Susan Lloyd-Davies. Facing her failings with a boy who torments her, a girl fights to adopt a snarky stray cat, hoping he can save her unpredictable Great Gran from losing her memory.
- Silver. **Renli's Guide to Photography** by Jessie Erwin. When a lonely twelve-year-old girl discovers her dad's last scavenger hunt, she races across Beijing to unearth secrets of his past while staying one step ahead of a mysterious thief.
- Bronze. **Ghost Girl** by Patti M. Walsh. When sent to live with relatives, 12-year-old biracial Bonnie takes inventory of herself. She must embrace herself for who she is or return to her life as a loser.

Published Young Adult or New Adult

- Gold. **Mass** by Kristin Durfee. 16-year-old Stevie is convinced the tumor in her brain is opening a direct line between her and God. Her parents are pretty sure it's just killing her. Not ready to part with the Divine, she enlists the help of a cult and embarks on a battle between her faith and her future.
- Silver. **My Family Secret: The Holocaust** by Mark H. Newhouse. When his grandfather struggles to reclaim their family home in Poland, David faces his fears to discover how his family was murdered during the Holocaust.
- Bronze. **Moon Crusher** by Susan Kite. In 1829 Spanish California, fourteen-year-old Diego is captured by reptilian aliens, becoming a slave on their spaceship. Can he unite his fellow slaves to fight a more deadly enemy?

Unpublished Young Adult or New Adult

- Gold. **Strandlock** by K. L. Small. Unaware of her magic power, Tima undertakes a journey with a brooding shapeshifter to find the descendants of the legendary Guardian and discovers her future may not be her own.
- Silver. **The Claddagh** by M.R. Street. Two Leprechauns and a Kerry Bog pony team up to rescue a captured family of Leprechauns and save their clan from Leprechaun hunters. They must avoid being captured and turned to gold themselves!
- Bronze. **Children of Veteris** by Steven Charles. Veteris, the place where children find out if their greatest strength can overcome their greatest weakness.

Published & Unpublished General Catch-All

Published General Catch-All

- Gold. **Maggie the Bag Lady** by Virginia Nygard. Mary Margaret Owl Byrd, one of the invisibles, brings us a banquet of glimpses into her life and leaves us with food for thought.
- Silver. **Tales from the Eerie Canal** by Barbara Rein. Murder by toilet plunger. Revenge by pie. A birthday gift of a trip to hell. Twenty-two stories infused with a gaggle of goosebumps. Don't turn out the lights.
- Bronze. **Cayo Hueso Literary Writings and Artwork from Key West** by Vicki Riley. Despite living in paradise, Islanders struggle with boundaries, betrayal, breaking points, love, loss, guilt, grief, redemption, and hope.

Unpublished General Catch-All

- Gold. **African Experiences** by L. Reynolds Andiric. This is an essay describing the author's experiences while teaching and traveling throughout Africa. It describes the hardships and exciting, sometimes frightening, occurrences while traveling from place to place.

Published & Unpublished Short Entries

Unpublished Creative Nonfiction

- Gold. **Cataclysm** by Catherine U. Fitzpatrick. A Midwest fashion writer in Manhattan for runway shows pivots on a dime to cover the World Trade Center attacks—and runs for her life when the towers fall.
- Silver. **Go Ask Alice** by Loren Leith. With the help of a blue and yellow pill, a medical situation that could have been serious turns into a morning of spirited delight...and an encounter with a white rabbit.
- Bronze. **A Promise Kept** by Joan Levy. A seven-year-old girl and her father share a memorable afternoon. A week later, his secret wrecks the family. What does he ask of his daughter? Will she promise?

Published Blog or Article

- Gold. **Mental Health Matters** by K E Garland. "Mental Health Matters" explores the author's mental health issues as a way to normalize and destigmatize such conversations. Topics include acceptance, suppression, codependence, escapism, anxiety, intimacy, and perfectionism.

- Silver. **The Werewolf's Queen** by Mary T. Wagner. Whether guarding a windswept realm of fifteen wooded acres or a tiny duplex on a city lot, the author's wolfish companion still regards her as a Queen worth protecting.

Published Flash Fiction or Short-Short Fiction

- Gold. **Moon Flying** by Jessie Erwin. In this Chinese mythology-inspired tale, Chang E's identity is not what it seems as she fights against the forces holding her captive on the path to deciding her purpose.

Unpublished Flash Fiction or Short-Short Fiction

- Gold. **The Art of Sitting Still** by Betsy K. Stoutmorrill. Sister's family has been in the moonshine-making business since forever. What will happen to the family tradition and livelihood with no brother to take a turn at sitting still?
- Silver. **Barsoom** by Arthur M Doweyko. Not everyone needs a spaceship.
- Bronze. **Dream Machine** by Cliff Sharke. Suspension of time for reasons not yet divulged and of unknown significance or lasting impact. Fantasy versus reality.

Published Short Story

- Gold. **Aunt Winifred Goes to Court** by Elizabeth Weiss Vollstadt. Aunt Winifred never saw an injustice she didn't want to right, even if it meant challenging a wealthy developer.
- Silver. **Christmas Renewal** by Donald Jay. A railroader, forced to retire for health reasons, struggles to reinvent himself with the help of an eclectic cast of characters in a charming Victorian Christmas village.
- Bronze. **The Black Ticket** by Chris Hamilton. A man falls hard for a fellow gambler. When his life is on the line, is she really his or just building the experience?

Unpublished Short Story

- Gold. **Pointing Fingers** by Robert Hart. An English schoolboy faces the consequences of blurting out the truth during sentencing in an African murder trial.
- Silver. **Have You Seen Me?** by M.R. Gallows. On a routine run to the store for milk, Alice disappears on a lonely country road. In the end, she finds there are fates worse than death.
- Bronze. **A Christmas Tale** by Amarilys Gacio Rassler. Elderly Elizabeth finds herself in heaven, where she meets three kings, a drummer boy, and a comical shepherd while she waits for a much-wanted answer.

Published Poetry

- Gold. **How to Properly Read a Paper Map** by Shutta Crum. A contemplative look at reading a paper map with advice for the journey.
- Silver. **Twilight Love** by Linda Kraus. An elderly couple bonds together in a time of medical peril; their love will sustain them.

Unpublished Poetry

- Gold. **Wildflowers** by Linda Feist. Adolescence blossoms on the road to danger.
- Silver. **My Father Tells a Story** by Claire Matturo. A shell-shocked WWI veteran is cared for by his wife in a tender tale told by their grandson.
- Bronze. **My Dhow** by Michael R. Howard. (No logline provided)

Youth Awards

Unpublished Poetry, ages 12 to 15

- Gold. **Ode to Rain** by N.M. Collett. The rhythm of rain.

Unpublished Poetry, ages 16 to 17

- Gold. **Eternal Flame** by Andrea Mottau. A young girl examines her grandmother's weathered hands, which unveil the stories of the past, learning the beauty of age, experience, and the power that lies within these little scars.
- Silver. **Streetside conversations amongst the crowd** by Samantha Leslie. A casual conversation that turns into a friendship...and a surprising connection to the past.
- Bronze. **Normal** by Isabel Mestey-Colon. A reflection of the pandemic.

Unpublished Short Nonfiction, ages 12 to 15

- Gold. **Glioblastoma** by Marley Mejia. Marley's mother's death two years ago has left her with grief and guilt. Now aged twelve, she writes about the experience from her eight- to ten-year-old perspective.

Published Short Fiction, ages 16 to 17

- Gold. **Timothy's Magic Wheelchair: The Martian Overlord** by Gabriela Hernandez. Timothy has a brand-new wheelchair—with a serious twist: a magic button! Three kids, two Martians, and a magic wheelchair. What could possibly go wrong?

Unpublished Short Fiction, ages 16 to 17

- Gold. **The Wrath of Nemesis** by Isabel Mestey-Colon. A goddess describes the demise of Atlantis.
- Silver. **The Pattern Repeats** by Ana Guardado. Four documents, all detailing the same young man, unravel his conflict through different periods and points of view.