

2nd Place, Poetry

Poem for Carrie, a Flying Lesbian
By Barbara Ruth

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Sometimes Carrie leaves her body
flies around
visiting her friends
talking to dead people
checking cakes she's set to bake
in astral ovens.

She goes flying in her wheelchair as well.
streaking out past the joggers
wind whipping her hair.
The Authorities issue citations; such antics are dangerous
for Someone Like Her.
Carrie chortles as she shreds them.

Carrie died and came back,
comatose for months.
The machines recorded massive brain damage.
As they consulted, charts in hand, over her bed,
the doctors said she was a vegetable.
Carrie heard, but she was busy, out
catching thermals off the cliffs of Eire.
The docs never said she couldn't fly.

When Carrie dipped her wings in death
in the world, just then,
something called "gay cancer" came creeping from the coasts.
In her world, just then,
Carrie was managing an accounting office,
writing her first novel,
moving with her lover to a new apartment.
Then, just then,
the coordinates shifted
and nothing was ever the same.

Carrie came back to her new disabled brain and body
to hear doctors say she would never talk,
never move her arms or legs.
She didn't believe them, still, she knew
her body and brain didn't work like they used to.
She did algebra in her head
to find out if she could.

– It has never occurred to me
to do algebra to see if my brain's working right.
Carrie changes the equation
knows formulae and recipes only found in runes
courts me in our dreams; she turns up the heat,
watches as I figure out
how to spread my wings,
how to rise.