

THE
SPOON
RIVER **Poetry Review**

VOLUME XXIII NUMBER 2

SUMMER/FALL 1998

The 1998 Editors' Prize Contest Winners

Jeff Halbert
Runner-up

The Silver Surfer

He begins at midnight. He paddles
his way through the dark channels,
and straddles his silver surfboard
like a horse he once knew.
He waits patiently
for the next swell of stars
to ripple across space.

A big one surges toward him.
He digs his arms. All at once,
a huge gush of light thrusts
him forward.

*The rest of the house is sleeping.
Two boys with flashlights
camped on the floor of the room
peel through issues of Silver Surfer:
The Silver Surfer & The Fantastic Four,
The Green Lantern Meets the Silver
Surfer, The End of the Silver Surfer,
Meet The New Silver Surfer.
One boy asks, "What happens
to the woman in the blue mini-skirt
on the last page?" The other
makes sure there are no torn
pages, or hidden inescapable
plots to be found. "What do you think
stupid? He has sex with her."*

**Quick to his feet,
bent knees, steadying himself
by the leverage of his arms, he opens
his silver wings.**

The Silver Surfer eats three times a day:
nickels, dimes, and aluminum foil.
He slips out of his suit in the afternoons.
You're wrong. Get the facts straight.

He has no suit. He is all skin,
flexible titanium-alloy, which is indestructible.
His face is featureless.
He has no hair, eyes, or ears.
But his senses are incredible, animal-like.
He loves nobody.
He paints the leaves silver.
Whatever he touches turns silver.
Silver dust follows him across the sky.

When you meet him, shake his hand.
His grip will seize you.
By closing your eyes for a moment,
you'll leave the earth.

He'll wax his board with your best shirt.
He'll take long naps on your couch,
if that's what he wishes,
because during his down-times,
he needs to regenerate his silver muscles,
and turn off his silver mind,
before catching the next comet tail out of there.

If he isn't looking,
take the board in your own hands.
It is weightless, nothing you have held.
Its dings will burn your fingers
as the scars on your body begin pulsing.
You can't stop thinking about it
in the middle of the night.

When I was young,
I collapsed the ironing-board
surfing the imaginary waters
of the kitchen. I shot beams of light
from my fingertips at my stepfather,
paralyzing him. My mother's
screaming bounced off me. My brothers
ran into other rooms hiding.
I had the superhuman strength
to punch holes through the brick walls,
and never cry. When I transformed,
no one fucked with me.

*What happens to the Silver Surfer
when he dies? Does he dissolve
into dust, and float like a cloud
of radioactive particles
charged with rain and thunder?*

No stupid. He can't die.

To hurt the Silver Surfer, forget him.
Ignore him until he's bothered, confused.
Treat him like an ordinary man
who dresses foolishly before going to work.
Treat him like the man in front of you
stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic,
and let him have it with your horn.
Tell him to wait in line at the bank
like everybody else who lives in the pain
and suffering of a human world.
Make him break a twenty at the store
when purchasing small items.
This gets under his skin every time.
When he talks to you, don't look at him.
Soon you won't hear him anymore.
Then he will not be there.