

he variety of entries submitted to the *Texas Bar Journal* Short Story Fiction Writing Contest is always surprising. From funny, to heartbreaking, to bizarre, Texas attorney-authors have a flair for writing stories that are never boring. We thank the 60 authors who submitted stories this year.

Two panels of judges faced the challenging task of selecting the winners. Both rounds of judging were blind; the authors' names were removed from the stories before the judges received their copies. We thank our judges for enthusiastically, graciously, and attentively reviewing the entries.

In the preliminary round, three pairs of judges received 20 entries to review. Each judge selected three stories from his or her group to advance to the final round of judging.

Seventeen entries advanced to the final round. A panel of three judges read those stories: John G. Browning of Rockwall, David L. Red of Beaumont, and Liz Sullivan of Houston. Each judge completed an evaluation form for each finalist, awarding 10 points for quality of story, 10 points for quality of writing, and a discretionary 10 points. Our winner, *Self Help* by **Bradley M. Elbein**, earned the highest number of points in the final round of judging.

On the following pages, you will find the top four winners plus two honorable mentions in the *Texas Bar Journal*'s fifth Short Story Fiction Writing Contest (there was a tie for second place and a tie for honorable mention). We hope you enjoy reading these creative short stories as much as we did.

Finalists

Making it through a competitive initial round of judging, these Texas lawyer-authors should be congratulated for earning a spot in the finals of the *Texas Bar Journal*'s fifth Short Story Fiction Writing Contest. Their stories can be found online at **texasbar.com/tbj**.

Digging in Her Heels by Caryn L. Carson

The Mail Species Begins by Delana Cline

The Punks by **Drew Crownover** (TIE — SECOND PLACE)

A Girl's Best Friend by Blair Dancy

Self Help by Bradley M. Elbein (FIRST PLACE)

The Karmic Cabbie by Regan Runnels Gillett (TIE — HONORABLE MENTION)

Verdict by Twilight by Emily Hafner

Kindness and Other Inalienable Rights by E. Stephanie Hebert (THIRD PLACE)

Hard Hearts by Harriet Jo Hill

The Secrets of a Client are Inviolate by Janice Law (TIE — HONORABLE MENTION)

The Decision by Marjorie K. Nanian

Client Issues by Susan I. Paquet

He Loved the Fall by Jim M. Perdue, Sr.

The Bixby Letter by Michael D. Stevens

Grounding the Tutu Girl by Gretchen Sween (TIE — SECOND PLACE)

Rita by Lawrence Waldron

No Quarter by Scott Weber