

Literary figures come to life at haunting poetry slam

By Jennifer Eddy

MEYERS – Party-goers watched in terror as pill popping alcoholic confessional poet Anne Sexton scanned the crowd for Valium, and Bertha Rochester contemplated which part of the venue was the most flammable.

That's what happens when the ghosts of literature come out to play Halloween weekend.



Slam winner Janet Smith as Anne Sexton. Photos/Suzanne Roberts

The 2nd annual Scary Slam emceed by Reno slam poet Benjamin Arnold at Bona Fide Books in Meyers on Oct 29 was an opportunity for local writers and literary aficionados to play dress up as creepy literary greats as they battled each other for a cash prize for scariest poem and costume.

Jan Smith came dressed as the deceased, mentally ill, mid-century Sexton. Suzanne Roberts was Charlotte Brontë's "madwoman in the attic" of Jane Eyre.

It was safe to assume Smith won the slam, not from the

screams, but from the gasps, followed by a moment of uncomfortable silence in the room as she read Sexton's lines from the poem addict: "My supply of tablets has got to last for years and years. I like them more than I like me. It's a kind of marriage. It's a kind of war where I plant bombs inside of myself."

The costume winner of the slam was Rita Geil as the sparkling, voluptuous citrus colored Little Mermaid.



Costume
contest winner
Rita Geil as
the Little
Mermaid.

After winning the slam Smith stayed in character while summing up the event. "It was a nice little provincial crowd and the casinos here are like the third circle of hell."

The competition was \$5 to enter, winner take all.

"The Scary Slam is like a poetry slam where people come to read, but instead of slamming a poem, they're here to scare us with a scary story," said Kim Wyatt, owner and editor of Bona Fide Books. "It's a Halloween party for literary geeks."

This scary slam differs from the inaugural Scary Slam by replacing the use of a psychic with a Tarot card reader. The original Scary Slam hosted by Wyatt has also been revved up by the addition of Arnold, a professional poetry slam host who encourages guests to read everything scary whether it meant,

“your mortgage contract, the Department of Defense budget analysis or anything you want.”

Each of the eight competitors had five minutes to read, with the winner chosen based on the audience’s highest decibel level in screams by iPhone. The slam was followed by guests sashaying across the room while yelling out the literary figures and characters they were portraying as the Gothic musical stylings of Morrissey and New Order blared in the background.

The festive crowd enjoyed black licorice flavored absinthe, three dimensional decapitated werewolf cupcakes with black and white scary pops, frosted into day of the dead skulls. Guests also had the opportunity to have a Tarot card reading so they might gain insight into the future.

“This has really become a community event here in Meyers and Bona Fide Books is here to build that community in addition to publishing books,” Wyatt said. “That’s why we have these parties.”