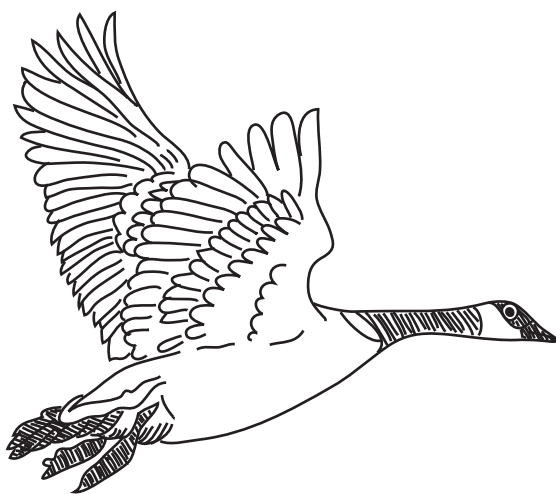


THE POEMS



FIRST-PRIZE WINNER

Nurse

My limbs are too heavy to move,
not like lead,
which I think I could pick up
if I used my whole body,
straining,
but some other element of the deep earth
that only moves through space, never atmosphere,
the substance of mountains,
and other things one doesn't think of moving
without god.

My limbs have become a thing to climb
or excavate;
they are heavy enough to sink to the mantle,
to the core.

This is why, Nurse,
your easy postures seem miraculous,
armed in scrubs the colours of angels;
you hold me like a child,
like an artifact,
the way god holds mountains.

Each time I'm set down,
the floor is about to crumble
beneath the unruly weight
of body, I know
it is only your will
that keeps time from folding
like a deck chair.

The eventual return of footsteps,
step after step,
on the balance beam of floor,
fat or thin,
you never take off
or sink to the shins in linoleum.

A parade of nurses,
each one the perfect weight,
lifting my legs
as though they were nothing
but bone under skin.

by Nicole Journal
Guelph, Ontario

SECOND-PRIZE WINNER

The Integrity of Evening Scented Stock in a Rock Garden in the Northwest Territories

They grow tougher in the winds
that serrate the lake on all sides.
Their frost-puckered petals fragrant
like the blossoms romanticized by the dozen
in distant shopping malls or climbing cedar siding into princess's hands
on pages of old fairy-tale books,
with thorns that rip stockings,
draw blood.

But the stock, encompassed
by wind-driven battle,
grows strong and straight
so that by autumn
my mother has to slice the smooth stems
with a knife, like celery.

She gathers the flowers into a copper pot:
ivory, fuchsia, and royal purple in the window
against the steel sky and slate-coloured water.
We drain the pot before closing the cabin for winter,
scatter the bright husks over the snow
when we come at Christmas.
And they still smell like roses.

by Alicia Tumchewics

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories



THIRD-PRIZE WINNER

Finale of Wings

No, this is not
how I'll remember you:
crusted mouth ajar,
eyes staring sightlessly at the door,
veins like blue crayon rivers
embossed on your white hands.
Your skin, an icy sheath
pulled across thin limbs,
you lie under a hospital sheet,
cowled shadows.

Rather, I would recall the oak in our backyard,
sparrows and chickadees behind layers of leaves
with the sun dangling in elbowed branches,
as starlings, blue jays, and pigeons spar
for the bread and seeds you toss
from your webbed chair.
Binoculars against your glasses, you sight
a gold finch, a ruby-throated hummingbird,
your laughter spirals.
Until clouds turn mauve and grey and westward
you watch the birds,
feeding them as they feed you.

This will be my memory of you:
with the spirit of wings in your veins,
your sparrow bones taking flight
in a corona of feathers,
your mouth, a yellow beak gasping with song,
and your eyes finding a place to land.

Jayelle Bond

Steinbach, Manitoba



HONOURABLE MENTION

My Lover Willing Will . . .

My lover willing will
float like a friendly phantom
gliding solitary and effortless,
an auspicious albatross
of unspoiled whiteness
(imagine a garland-eden of essence)
against ice-grey sky, a-cross
(and beacon on) expansive ocean
murky and brackish black-green—
there is nothing in between
us, none but one reference point,
the piston-like action, our pivot joint
of inimitable slow motion-s
and quick-paced palpitations
directing, *sotto voce*
synchronous reciprocity;
and then we are one.

by Gabriel Hart
Toronto, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

Easter

On a golden wall,
the sun shone.
On a fire escape,
he tested the rail across
in the afternoon.

In the warmth
of that path
from his tenement
on the fourth floor
to the winding trail
to the bottom,

he stood there watching,
cup in hand,
somewhere between winter
and the Rapture.
But alas the sun was setting
and he disappeared
and the yellow daffodils were dead.

I am sure
he returned
to his fourth floor
in the midst of a fog,
not forgetting a cup
from a previous day.

by Steven Clark
Dauphin, Manitoba



HONOURABLE MENTION

Scar

A white cross
in the muscle below his thumb.

It was nearly dusk.
When the muskie saw the boat,
turned in a white rush and began to run,
the line thrummed like the string on a bow,
the bent rod whipped up straight
and the big spoon shot back, slapped
with a dull clink and stuck
as the hand came up to shield his face.

Lake Sasaginigak. No phone,
no radio and the plane
that dropped them wouldn't be back
for a week. Even in shadowy kerosene
light they could see the hook, clearly
buried way past the barb, the skin
already swollen tight, hot
to the touch and bruised blue.

They knew what to do but there wasn't a lot
to work with—a nearly empty first-aid kit
with a roll of tape and a bandage,
a safety razor's double-edged blade,
a bottle of Spanish brandy.

They never talk about this
when they describe their wilderness
adventure, the lost fish,
the slickered afternoons in grey rain,
but the one they chose for the stillness
they saw in his eyes remembers
how the first flush of adrenaline drained
from the clenched face and left it pale
as he clipped the steel-eye end
with pliers, cut quick
twice and pushed it through, but also
his friend's muscled silence,
how it saved them both
from a wound that might not heal.

by George Amabile
Winnipeg, Manitoba

HONOURABLE MENTION

Remnants

Old wharves
stripped of their ribs
now stand only
as icy pillars in winter.
The days of their usefulness,
the weight they once supported,
are all but forgotten
memories now.
Tidal flows and icy sprays
imprison and smoothly mould
these pinnacles
of carved and unmatched lengths.
Snowcaps on the tops
are a temporary rest for seagulls.

Ice packs tear,
grind, and slash,
slowly weakening the aged timber
in the frozen columns.
Heavenly and glass-like
prisms of colour
by daylight;
dark and sentinel by night.

The wounds from the ebony cutters
are continuously polished
by the tide's salty spray.
They've stood long,
and
they stand
still.

by Crystal Melanson
Parrsboro, Nova Scotia



HONOURABLE MENTION

Some Pretty Lines

Rain-daubed and level with the dew,
the world glittered with indecisive figures,
palpitating like the vegetable blood
of the green yearning and taking,
though not earning, my stubbornness.

But sun the sky
leapt and blew the angel clouds a-throat: dry.
Burdens huddled and schemed in the black bushes,
glazed with red berries yawning their music to
the windows of the east where breath has welcome in moments
and no guns fought. The seizure of the senses took me on the aerial gold
of her shield where I saw the earth but half-asleep.
And, scented of the honey-sun and delirious with the warm sweetness,
I felt the moon's weeping for delivering night over her crystal cities.
And forest margins gulfed with the stars on seas and lakes
and pitied the waking day for half the solitude I enjoyed,
because I wished for the company of my friends.

By powdery light and a vision of thought by the non-eclipsing sun
is myself in better days united, the old school still erect,
and we children playing at the reeded pond: fish and frogs.

by Darren Hynes

Glace Bay, Nova Scotia



HONOURABLE MENTION

Ice Cave

It would have been so easy
to die there.

We entered as if compelled,
nothing to consider but the blue,
blue ice.

The ceiling streaming; the creek
a white rush. Ice flowed over rock,
laid its frozen cheek against the ancient Earth,
a line of light, shining. The walls were smooth,
sculpted. Our hands slid over the surface,
slipping into every crevice,
every crease and fold.

We had been seduced by caves before,
under the earth and black,
sat in darkness solid as stone,
and listened to the centuries:

drip

drip

drip

drip

drip

drip

by Valerie Laub

Smithers, British Columbia

I would have listened for hours.
I would have stayed until I didn't know
if I were sitting, standing,
or dissolved.

This cave was blue.
Did I say? Blue
as bones.

I came from a cold, cold place:
Edmonton in winter;
my mother's womb.

I want to tell you.

Buried in ice,
there was a woman—
her thigh, her perfect breast,
her round belly, shining.

Perhaps there are stories
I don't know.

We went as far as we could go.

The cave ended in a pool of water,
ice floating across its depths
like so many dragon-headed ships.
We stood on the ice-bound shore,
surrounded by light,
shining.



HONOURABLE MENTION

Suburban Families Living

Gel-tipped-manicured wives
reading labels on yogurt.

Six-figure-income husbands
coaching soccer, while on their cell phones.

Cookie-cutter daughters
straightening hair with a flat iron.

Hoodie- and ball-cap-wearing sons
listening to tunes on an iPod.

Hypoallergenic Shih Tzu cross puppies
peeing on pads, so they don't wreck the lawn.

Perfect.

by Shelley Martell
St. Albert, Alberta



HONOURABLE MENTION

Spaces of Cars

i seeped my fingers in the puddle lingering aside
the sidewalk,
aside the speeding cars,
the deep exposures of light,
the speeding cars with their wheels clenching
so tight-
ly onto the pavement.
i dipped my fingers in the filthy water and I clockwise,
so wisely
rotated my hand;
the dirt and disease swirled into a circle.
a brown cancerous vortex that would not stop dancing and would
just spin and spin and my head joined in
and was captivated with the sight and the thought of an eternity
that never ended.
the days grew longer
and today was yesterday was tuesday, monday, sun-shining day now only nostalgic day
in my memory and never to return
as concrete.
foundations broken and cracks on faces,
spoken,
mouths jittering and bloated with pleas,
please! they say
and the flees of colonial angst scattered into the oblivious streets
demanding and sacrificing themselves to the cars—to the light.
a sanctuary of saturday friday and thursday,
one day two days no days your days those days . . .
those days when i pirouetted my hands
and the skies were spotless
and our minds were thoughtless
and weeks pieced together like the stitches on the carpet
with every thread
lost and found,
apart and bound
and the gaps of sprockets matched the gaps of our teeth
match the empty spaces of my fingers
and defy the armies in the streets.
and i keep spinning my hands and hold firm onto my head and the cars still don't stop
and swerve
onto the side
crash into the water . . .
the tiny . . . speck . . . of water,
and they don't come back they plea to come back please come back!
and i have conquered them and i have won the battle and my soldiers freeze feet.
but the water, still, refuses to settle.

by Melina Mehr

Toronto, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

This Photograph

kind man on the sleeper
from some forgotten hill town in India
in the wrong compartment I struggled
so you lifted my backpack for me with a wink
and arms strong from a lifetime of labour

through the window I snapped
this picture of the train turning back on itself
while you opened your only luggage, a cotton bag
and offered me a small round fruit
nothing like a greengage but nothing
like anything I'd tasted before

when I bit through the gritty, bitter skin
into luscious softness, sweetness
and licked the juice from my lips
you smiled and offered me another
and the narrow gauge switched down
through the night into a dawn-kissed valley

at the station you were met
by an older woman—your mother perhaps
and gave her a hug in place of the gift we'd eaten
I shyly waved goodbye but the crowd had swallowed you whole

sometimes when I eat fresh from a tree a plum
still warm with that moment's sun
I remember that night of nothing in common
but a cotton bag
and the language of fruit

by Amy Ells
Deep River, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

I Shan't Forget

I shan't forget, nor in dreams, that first stare,
like a crash of waves upon shattered rock;
my mind, body, and soul screaming "beware!"
Whilst my heart dove in the sea, drowned, and locked,
but who could foretell that a dove's pintail
would flash in the rays of my sweet desire
and soar for ever-long and without fail
to burn bitter black the coals of this fire?
So deep resounds my languishing despair
and, yet, no bird or sea may hear this sound.
Even with my foes, I wish to ne'er share
the love of which, in shade, has sorrow found.
 Until this torch consumes my sodden soul
 does my tortured love, unrequited, grow.

by Michael Clarke
Cochrane, Ontario

