

FIRST PRIZE

Teslin

The mountains seem to be moving backwards
even though we're full-tilt ahead,
Sittin' pretty in a big red truck
while the clouds spell out what was left unsaid.

Their stoic faces barely register
as we wind our way through their feet,
Our presence leaves little mark,
though theirs could not be more complete.

Our collective heads drift in and out,
the clouds are threatening rain.
But sunshine peeked its nose out
through the mountainous terrain.

A perfectly formed rainbow
frames the undulating peaks.
The reverence of natural colour
should goad silence and not speech.

by Jessica Pumphrey
Whitehorse, Yukon



SECOND PRIZE

Jack in the Box

Never mind how your oversized
crimson nose sits squarely
in the centre of your pasty face
like obese, obstinate royalty.
Perhaps it is the mischievous
glint behind your glassy eyes,
or the lopsided slant of your
toothy grin that gets most
people cackling with glee.
Some, the more banal ones,
may hoot and chortle at the
frilly gag that is your gaudy garb,
while there are those who need only
look at your fool's visage and see
the silent desperation
behind your bobbling head
to split at the seams or go over
the edge. In cheery spirits,
they all walk away in a stolen
pocket of momentary bliss,
and nobody remembers you sit,
wound and tense in the darkness
of your box, because you are cursed
to oblige, to rise to the occasion
of warming with open arms,
and your travesty of a smile,
those whose cold, callous
hands coax you from your cage,
not because you love them,
but just because you must.

by Christian Ylagan
Edmonton, Alberta



THIRD PRIZE

Old Year Moon

Molten silver streaking
through the liquid darkness,
each wave sequentially infused
with light as from a thousand
fireflies, and as suddenly
extinguished . . .

only to reappear slipping and slithering
down the crest of the next,
exploding into a luminous dancing frenzy,
the magic only for a moment
mesmerizing,
drawing us forward
as with involuntary shivers our senses sought
to absorb the scene.

Reflecting the soft rushing whisper of the sea,
the dark sands rose above us,
stern and unyielding to the
dreamlike caress of silvery foam,
which waxed and waned
ethereally
with the incoming tide.

by Katherine Nicholl
Prince William, New Brunswick



HONOURABLE MENTION

Gone

I am almost invisible.
It was a gradual thing,
like the fading of an old
black and white photograph.
In groups of family members,
conversation whirls
to the left and right
of where I sit,
but seldom in my direction.
Nobody hears my replies,
nobody answers my questions.
When I stand in line, people behind me
are waited on first.
Doctors discuss my health with my children,
as if I am unable to understand a word.
Just as unwanted text is deleted from a page
I believe I, too, am being erased.

by Kathleen Rockey (78 years)
Windsor, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

Resurrections of Mirage

Halfway
beneath the moon
two withered limbs
stop
in the dark,
in a mustard slum of light,
as if holding some tethered flesh
marooned
among ancient concave heights
where the lush pastel of haloed scars
cocoon
the quicksand breath
slung deadweight

like some limp and shifting whim
caught
among resurrections of mirage

and the odd ridiculous peacock call

a demon in a hanging tree
white as leper's rot
to the pale suggestion
of nothing there at all

in a lean silence
an orphan solitude

when the grim and envious dark
creeps
faceless
out of the last word

by Richard Grace

Toronto, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

Kathleen Lake

The first swim in Kathleen Lake is a test
Of mettle, of foolishness, of pride.
The hardy souls stand at the edge of the lake,
Which so recently was filled with shattered shards of ice
Formed like crystalline fingers
Reaching up from below in a desperate attempt
To grasp the sunlight and hold it fast.
The people, tough as the first crocuses that poke up from the ground,
Laugh and joke and jostle each other
Until the first one takes the plunge,
Enters the water in a glitter-edged wave of black
With a gasping shriek of cold—
Cold that owns you and grips you to the core of yourself.
Throws a casual taunt back to their fellows,
Swims as fast as possible towards the dock.
This is not a lake for tarrying.
The others, with no further excuse
Follow, with no fuss.
No more will the lake be swum in after the first plunge.
It is not a kind lake of beaches and bikinis,
But a Yukon lake:
Cold, unforgiving,
Beautiful and unforgettable,
Uncaring of the foolhardiness of its residents—
Offering only the chance to discover
Something about yourself.

by Adrienne Nassiopoulos

Haines Junction, Yukon



HONOURABLE MENTION

Tsunami

When wrath dims below the waves
Ire is deep within

Ebbing and flowing beneath lapping grey waters
Aware of the strength of the pull
It sucks me in sinister
Ice-cold silence
Drags me down below the surface

In a brief moment of stillness
I wonder at the temptations of our hearts
The lure of the expansive waters
Rather than being safe on high ground
Far from the edge of change

Then the tide turns from ebb to flow

The power of the push launches me
Anger rages burning beneath my skin
Destructive and deadly
Permeating hairline fractures
Forcing holes where it once was whole

When the tide can push no farther

The destruction of the draw
Renders raw emotion
Creates desperation
Eroding land
Tearing us apart

The capacity for survival
Brings me up fighting
Clawing for air
Desperate for something I do not have

And once again I know . . .
When wrath dims below the waves
Ire is deep within

My fight begins anew

by Brigitte Furlonger
Cobble Hill, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

Dune Choreography

Abandoned, bent and broken-spoked
amidst ghosted shells and husks of fish—
a Sufi dancer's last frantic twirl
as a beach umbrella loses the race
against its shadow
under a gull-grey sky.

Winds whip the dune grasses,
showing the silver nether sides—
an armada of shy ladies forced
to display their petticoats.
They bend their heads to scratch
sickle shapes in the wet sand.

by Jessie Lee Jennings
Windsor, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

Dawn Breaks over Indian Village

Morning air breathes spring,
first sparks of sunlight
fan out across the cloudless sky,
to reach out to thatched roofs of houses,
every brick and stone standing out in detail.
Soft thud of hoofs and the creak of bullock carts
rattles down the narrow, semi-dark cobbled lane,
tells me the men-folk are leaving for their farms
that lie swaddled in early morning mist.

“Tatta! Tatta!” shouts one swarthy young man,
his whip cracking like a pistol shot on the bullocks,
the air heavy with the dewy smell of fresh hay and fodder.
Bells faintly tinkle around the corner—
a herd of bleary-eyed goats bleats softly by.
Distant chimes of temple bells float down the sun-flecked hill,
cause wing-flutter of a covey of pigeons on the cobbled straw-tossed courtyard.
An old lady stoops forward,
her head covered in a blue veil.
She bends low, sweeps the muddy floor with a long-handled broom,
sun’s rays catch swirls of dusty clouds rising in the air.
A toddler runs to the courtyard,
chases house sparrows
flying in to peck at any leftover grain on the ground.
The child giggles, almost loses his balance,
runs inside to his mother.

In the distance,
the shrill cry of a peacock slices cool morning air.

by Kamal Parmar

Nanaimo, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

Etymology of Swabian Spätzle

Today's front page mentions Stuttgart.
I thought of you. Remember when we tried
to visit; a protest march forced

us away from the city centre to a hillside
village and its half-timbered tavern. We drank
too much to drive on, so booked a room,

ordered more steins and dinner. Cheese spätzle
served in a chipped white bowl. We devoured
it; the fresh nutmeg clung to your kiss

over the malty beer, melted Gruyère
and caramelized onions. We ordered
more to share. Your translation, Little Sparrow,

became my summer nickname. When you left
I learned spätzle also means to slice,
to split, to break apart.

by Louise Ells
Deep River, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

Shadows

A young boy
dressed all in red
with dark hair and eyes
is calling to me,
stumbling across the rough meadow
with his arms outstretched,
intent on his offering of tall grasses.

Some are almost as tall as him,
pulled up vigorously,
their roots dangling and confused.
Others are soft and fuzzy,
a few wilted broad leaves
accented by
buttercups and purple clover.

At dusk
I glanced up to see
his treasures proudly on display
in a fine green vase.

They were crumpled and bent
from being clutched so closely
to his earnest heart.

Yet exquisite,
stretching and reaching like
the long necks of hungry swans
or
the lithe arms of dancers
pirouetting
towards the sky.

Delightful
how awkward strands
of broken grass
were transformed
into beauty and grace
one summer evening,
by candlelight and shadows,
music and wine,
and the warm sensation
of knowing
a child's love.

by Cindy Kugel
Langley, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

White Picket Fence

You be the guy on the couch
and I'll be the love of your life
we can take turns at the kitchen sink
contemplate Kierkegaard
contemplate soap scum
contemplate why this house is haunted

You can pay the electric bill
you can pay the pied piper
you can pay for the mistakes I make
we can build a better life

We can build a rocket ship
we can build a bomb
if you want
but you won't push the button
and I can say, "You saved the world"
you can be my hero

We'll keep the devil under the kitchen table
we'll set our plates on that same one
we'll pile our mail in the left-hand corner
we'll pile our fuck-yous and slam-fists on there too
and when the going gets rough
so will we

I'll stop cleaning my rooms
when my life becomes a mess
there will be dirty laundry
a soiled red dress

We can listen to P.J. Harvey
watch soft porn
we can eat popped corn
we can eat potato chips
we can eat cigarettes
like a right arm
like a best friend
like a slow noose
we can
from here
to just this much too far
and then and then
and then I can walk away.

by Tammy Lepp
St. Catharines, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

The Burning of the City of Paris

Based on true events.

While strange tales of deeds done in arctic lands are bountiful as snow and sleet,
'til you've heard the saga of the City of Paris your education's far from complete.
I was only eighteen when I took world depression as a sign
to join the Klondike gold rush in Eighteen-Ninety-Nine.

I trundled two tons from Dyea's mud beach to the icy Chilkoot face
and going over that pass I forgot if my quest was an escape or a race.
At Whitehorse I lashed a perilous raft for a river not known for its pity.
Then, like a foul omen, I saw as it passed—namesake of the French capital city.

It bore upon me, on a cruel wave of grief, nearly swamping my bundle of sticks.
If I had known then of my fate on that beast I might've taken better note of its tricks.
I finally arrived, far from the first, discouraged to learn all I lacked,
for the very best claims—and most of the worst—were already syndicate tract.

Many haggard stampeders, too far gone to go home and in need of a subsequent cause,
bound for the wilds of somewhere called Nome—wherever (or whatever) that was.
Broke beyond all hope of return, I stumbled aboard the sternwheeler City of Paris
and started work under an angry first mate, whose booming voice sounded always irate.

The ship was owned by one Captain McCaan, and he'd soon alter all the lives he'd touch
with his quest to derive liquor from grain and the illegal shipment of such.
So we took all cargo, no matter how risky,
next to caskets of shoe-leather whiskey.

Through needle channels, dodging half-submerged rocks, we faced dangers to rivers innate.
Using wench and towline, tackle and blocks, from Five Finger Rapids to Rink and Hell's Gate.
Boiling high water sometimes left little to spare and, often enough, sandbars ran us amok.
While of common misfortunes we'd had our share, we'd somehow slipped vilest luck.

We seemed exempted from terrors too great, but doom still held over our heads
that through the ever-watchful slit eye of Fate the gods allow only so many threads.
Thus it was one night when some mischievous lads crept aboard and stealthily searched
for old Captain McCaan's hold full of hooch, though they knew not where it was perched.

So, they lit a torch and (alcoholics all know) that was a fool thing indeed,
for they set fire to their desired cargo, which in turn burnt with great speed.
In the mass conflagration which followed, I'm amazed we escaped with our lives,
as the ship quickly gutted and hollowed, and the inferno stabbed with its knives.

Against the ferocious attack, our fire brigades were just spoilers.
As she crumbled and cracked, the blaze consumed all but the boilers.
The devouring element did not falter, even at the mighty paddlewheel,
which glowed in a pyre down to the water, consuming both the hull and the keel.

Northern Commercial Company declared the City of Paris a total loss;
nothing for salvage, or to be repaired—reduced to ashes for a bit of sauce.
So, when preachers list the Book of Fate's tariffs, when they speak of brimstone and hail,
I now think of the City of Paris, and of its final flaming cocktail.

by Nathan Bragg
Dawson City, Yukon