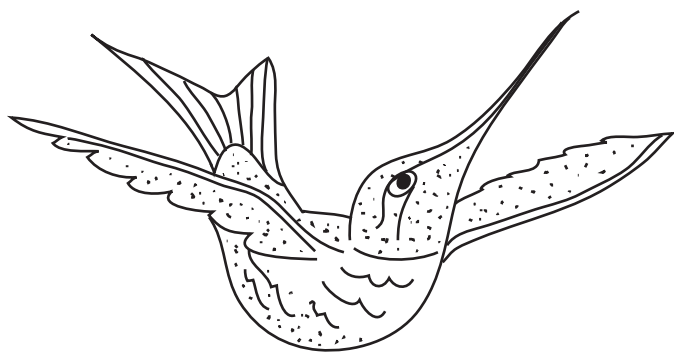


THE POEMS



FIRST-PRIZE WINNER

Quest

He won't go back there for a while; back
to the canyon. Stunned, mute,
he thinks *Deliverance*.

Deliver *me*, he hoots,
knowing no one will hear
over the roar of the flume.

Doofus, Uncle's old mongrel
washes in a fold of froth
at his feet. The log
that pommelled the dog missed
him as they washer-sloshed
downward like so much
flotsam to plane out
at the mouth of the gorge
and wait for his vanished black
pack; a deliverance
of sorts as the mushy satchel
flops into view.

The unmistakable smell of snake
hums through sagebrush
like a bad omen; a reminder
of his ridiculous quest
for the hibernaculum slotted
somewhere overhead in the
stony patches of granite.

Return to town now? A poncy
bushwhacker *and* empty handed
(for all his early morning
bravado and clout) with nothing
but a sodden pair of socks, an
illegible load of identification,
a dead dog.

He aches for redemption; for
Uncle's toothy grin of forgiveness,
his wife's campy pout.

Scant chance of that.

He stoops to shoulder the mutt,
then turns his back on the canyon.
Thinks maybe he should just
go home and plant tomatoes.

by Roz Burnell
Kamloops, British Columbia

SECOND-PRIZE WINNER

Mountain View Cemetery

Here a field of memories
lie edge-ragged on
monolithic grey
pocked by the pulse of time.

Words gone but not
forgotten lichens exude
mildewy dust clogging
carved curls ees and els
grass blade-sharp severs
lov from ing.
Lest we forget.

Headstones some like
black sheep others uniformed
in rows soldiers reporting
for duty chiselled résumés,
bare bones edition an end
a beginning missing
the still air between the storms.

Litters of offerings
laid by memoried hands
become an aftertaste
of remembrance heavy-headed
trees shush the breezes
crows claw at the silence.
Here in this now
the past gives way.

by Joan Tyldesley
Vancouver, British Columbia



THIRD-PRIZE WINNER

Three Types of Deception

The morning light is raw when you press against me. Our lovemaking feels like unsuccessful suicide and your hands go nowhere at all. Our Yorkie is still asleep on the corner of the bed and I cradle my toes in his belly (this is the best thing). You look like a prayer when you linger a moment in the doorway and cross your fingers tight. I roll onto my stomach and the dog creeps up the bed to lick the sheets where our bodies dripped. The air is sticky so I open the window and see the neighbour boy burning ants with a magnifying glass. Sometimes I think children are the most terrible people alive. I keep the month's packet of pills hidden between the unread pages of *The Brothers Karamazov* (the books get thicker every cycle). The dog walks onto my pillow and licks my eyelids and I fall so crazy in love with him that I can't breathe. My heart's too full for more.

by Maria Matuscak
Windsor, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

Do You Remember?

Do you remember?
In the shade of the latest slices of summer.
inhaling the taste of soon-coming September.
Here, caught in stillness and willful eternity.

Staring up, stretched flat across crisp grass,
drifting in mind, reminiscent of cloud.
Remember when this became past?
Blink—breath—heartbeat—I missed it.

Overtop the houses, the sun remains gold.
Do you remember it being like that?
Evenings spent wondering whose soul was sold
for this, the hill beyond our neighbourhood.

You and I, we wondered if this were evidence
that God did exist, if he were there watching.
There was explanation, divine or providence.
We were left responsible for something sacred.

A sleepy willow atop a hill and a cracked fence
tied us fast and absolutely to each other,
defining our essence, the definition of a cadence,
catching the end of an age, the beginning of transition.

You and I, we left this whole town, this place.
In doing so, we left behind a piece of us.
And standing here, I can't fathom the space
that once defined everything about that age.

I wonder, as I remember, what if we had stayed
forever? Would we have been the guardians
caught in stillness and willful eternity we said
existed at the top of that hill in the golden hour?

It's years after you and I moved on, up, and out.
From where I stand— here, now—it's still beautiful.
The only thing that bothers me, I have no doubts,
that if this place hasn't changed, it must be us.

by Keri-Lyn Halfacre
Rainbow Lake, Alberta



HONOURABLE MENTION

Kootenay Cloud

For my grandfather.

Sky-putty sculpted by an artisan's touch, pushed
up the West Arm of the lake towards
the dock he built with calloused hands. Where osprey nests
punctuate the horizon, waves lapping, whapping boat
against dock; here, where the sand is rough, pebbled, hard
underfoot. This is where he taught us

how to tie the fly in place, bait a worm
without mercy, where we swam the lake's jade mysteries,
listened to stories of how he built this house
with his bare hands, knew every log, every detail.
His memory, wit, humour, sharp

as a hook, yet soft, when he sang her nickname:
Hello, Gorgeous! Called up the beach in a cloud of boat gas,
where sand met grass, the name would find her
in the garden, hands stained huckleberry pink, waving—

and she is gone. And he has happily gone to find her,
hands smooth as skipping stones. Here, where osprey nests
punctuate the horizon, waves lapping, whapping boat
against dock; a perfect cumulonimbus eclipses the sand
that carried our weight when we were young.

by Alison McNamar

Kelowna, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Beaches at Ipperwash

Cold wind blowing down
from Whitefish Bay
washes clean
the air and beaches
at Ipperwash.

The skies of Lake Huron
are a colossal laundry basket
filled with clouds.

Dark, dirty ragged clothing.
White caps of summer
dressed in rust.

Black, broken driftwood,
burned matches of summer.

And riding
on the harsh October wind
sleep is not far from here.

by Jessie Lee Jennings
Windsor, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

Seasons

The stone-cold weight of everything closed and unreleased leaves the heart dry and dense with no air holes for breathing. Nothing finds its pulse in such a dead land and even the petals of flowers droop in withered curls of wizened, pale, soft parchment almost shredding in the wind. There are deserts and tombs in every chapter, times when the voice itself swallows its own syllables, times when the song gets stifled before any tone is loosed on a momentary flat and airless breeze, times when the ache of being simply lands in a solid formless lump and chapped hands have no idea how to mould it into shape or bend it into pliable expression.

What we do with such seasons is murkier than the sludge of a stagnant pond, no creek bed running through it. What we do is mark its moments and its endless days with Xs on the calendar—black marks etched grimly to say that this, too, has passed, has passed, has passed. The page turns over, a faint hope that something less weighty wanders across the track, even the nearly invisible bug trailing a path perhaps not as aimless as it appears.

Eventually, but never by design or plotted by precise intention, the stiff density begins to open up, small puncture holes weather and wind their way into the stone, the faint pulse of the heartbeat begins a tentative, erratic rhythm and out of nowhere a clear, blue sound crinkles the edges of the silence. The throat begins to vibrate in a new or ancient key and every unyielding thing begins to unfurl without splintering. The Xs on the calendar dribble right off the page and even the insect spreads a pair of sudden wings, soaring free from sight.

There is no way of knowing how to pattern this sequence. All there is in the patter of rain that augers this shift is the holy mystery that a drop of water comes from somewhere else and pools begin to form where scorched, hot sand had forgotten anything but the brutal beating of the sun until a fresh petal pierces the landscape with a vibrant promise of colour ready to bloom once again because it remembers how.

by Faith Nostbakken
Edmonton, Alberta



HONOURABLE MENTION

Burial

In poured rain the day I buried Bubble.
“We shouldn’t have named him Bubble because bubbles burst too soon,”
said my daughter, then three.
The earth yielded and the rain softened
and blended with my private storm,
another death long gone.

“When I die,” he told me,
“you will have nowhere to bury me.”
Cemetery sections where the dead are put away
in religious, partitioned, earth—
Roman Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, Jewish sections—
and torrents from the sky like this
blessed his impatient dying.

“I am waiting for death,” he used to say,
and it surely came.
With the swiftness of dust on the breeze,
the death of drifting dreams,
rock death bottom,
Bubble lies soft brown warmth
wrapped in her flannel blanket,
sharp tree root points and pebbles around.

Soggy rain earth and rubble
could not have touched him
as we burnt him and scattered his ashes.
The gushing river
grasped and grabbed,
all scattered silt and spray
and ash.

by Yichelle Devendra
Kitchener, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

I Am My Own Big Dog VI

Leashed, muzzled, chained,
out on the line,
confined,
curled in a ball against the cold.
I am my own Big Dog,
silenced and ignored,
overridden,
hidden
in the backyard netherworld
of my mind's
endless tyranny.
Ego-driven drivel,
too tired, too busy,
too resistant, too important
to break hardened
self-indulgent patterns
of denial and distraction.

My own Big Dog
sighs and hopes for
some miracle of feeling
to catch my eye, my heart,
as I pass by the window and
gaze without seeing
at love's soft breathing,
waiting for me
to remember
who I am.

by Susan Churchill
Jacksons Point, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

My Mom

I bring my mom my writing.
I type and type.
I print and print.
I bring her pages of Times New Roman,
Helvetica,
and Arial.

It is always the punctuation that gets to her—commas, colons, splices, slashes, dashes, but never periods.

The hysterectomy took care of those.

She sees the words, reads the words, feels the words, but can't understand the words and usually it's not because of the punctuation.

It's because my head operates on a different level.

My head is filled with likes and pokes and inside jokes;
with info and boxes and photos and videos and that undying unassailable question:
“What's On Your Mind?”

What's on my mind?

Fuck, my mind is on that girl, what she said to him . . . to them . . . to those . . . to me?

Do I text, do I skype, do I post, do I resend, resend, resend, resend?

How could my mother possibly understand such an existence?

The glaring lights, the Facebook fights, the twitting and tweeting, the singing and ringing. . .

How I hate them. How I love them.

Resend, resend, resend.

So I keep writing and I keep showing my mom, not really knowing why,
until one day it dawns on me.

With her it is not LOL, it is laughter.

With her it is not ILU, it is I love you.

You see, with my parents, a semi-colon followed by a parenthesis ;) does not mean
“I want to sleep with you.”

It means we've shared something humorous,
or I could just have something in my eye.

I think I'll get my mom some magnetic poetry.

Maybe she'll start writing on the fridge,

and I'll see it when I open the door.

Maybe it will make me think twice before berating her for forgetting the milk.

Maybe, she'll tell me about her world, as I tell her about mine.

And maybe, just maybe, I'll leave mine for good.

by Mo Lawrence

Squamish, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Autumn Heartbreak in D Minor

Dawn has cast its shadows upon my very soul.
Where once it drowned me in its sweltering heat,
now it fills my heart with shards of ice; draped windows
can't keep the sharp edges from ripping at my pulse.

Eventually sunlight eases some of the pain,
but absolute certainty of frostbite remains,
foreshadowing my future of hurt, sorrow, loss;
scattered leaves and no rake, cold and no firewood.

Frost wraps its frozen fingers around blades of grass.
A whisper of a kiss on sweet, soft, supple lips
was the morning dew, but cold grasps like a tight fist,
strangling the green out of the blade, hardening the shaft.

Gloves and mittens: neither can bring me back the sun,
nor can love alone be enough to keep warm.
Instead, it shudders at the thought of what's to come,
its fire not strong enough to last the winter.

Autumn's leaves, all ablaze, descend from the tree tops,
no longer wrapped in that thick, bright coat of envy,
but the blanket of burnt hope spread across beauty
that has had little time, only to leave once more.

Betrayal: flat, empty, like a garden in fall.
Sprouting violets, bursting hibiscus . . . no more.
Proud white lilies, singing trees, birds and bees . . . adieu.
Laughing gnome, ice-cream cone, love-drunk fools . . . farewell.

Dawn: too flat, now for the shadows to reach my soul.
Drapes still hung, not in defence but complete hopelessness.
I'll hide in fear, in defeat, and wait patiently.
I'll be holding out for the first flower of spring.

by Angelia Mercier
Pierrefonds, Québec



HONOURABLE MENTION

To Make a Man a Boy

To make a boy again
of a man,
teach him ESL.
Make obstacles now
to stumble over
so he tiptoes haltingly.
He who can run
into words,
whip his tongue
till it complies
like a schoolboy.
Teach vowels and consonants,
marry diphthongs,
and, on a whim,
make grammatical exceptions
and invent idioms
till childlike questions
perplex the man
to become a boy again.

by Alvin Ens
Abbotsford, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

World State

Like artificial light
you filled the room without asking,
a visual noise
impossible to ignore.

Like artificial light
you were brightest at the heart,
no competition
in windowless rooms.

Like artificial light
you made the limits
of could
and could not.

Like artificial light
you showered the chosen tall,
casting shadow taints
over those below.

Like artificial light
you held mechanics of wonder
for reborn minds,
goadung untrained thought.

Like artificial light
you gave flickering threats,
lonely glimpses of that yet to come
for those who dare to question.

Like artificial light
you were gone in a flash,
spots dancing before eyes
in stunning new darkness.

by Janice Moat
Richmond, British Columbia

