

FIRST PRIZE

Pacta Sunt Servanda

I want to slide into that space between your skull and your cerebral cortex,
wrapping myself around your brain.
I want to press my ear against your frontal lobe
and listen for the trickle of dopamine
the way children press their ears against their mother's pregnant belly
to hear the little brother inside.

I want to make crisscrossed paths over the surface of your neural tissue,
leaving size-nine footprints that never quite fade.
If you'll just hold back the tides of your memory, I promise I will search
from your cerebellum to your pituitary gland
for the sentence that slipped away when the warmth of sleep left your sheets
and your bare feet hit the cold hardwood floor.
I will take your chin in my hand and squeeze your cheeks
and shape your lips
and teach you how to say the words.

I will trace a highlighter through the pages of your life
and mark a fluorescent halo around everything that's beautiful:
the little rainbows you can see between your eyelashes when you squint in bright light,
the moment you noticed how the strip of windshield that blocks the sun
also turns the streetlights blue at night,
and how someone at the doctor's office made a typo and told your grandfather
he had two to fourteen months left to love.

I will write,
if you will read
and maybe then the speed bumps I've built will make our knees knock together
when we sit like two strangers on a bus.
Maybe then we can hold our hands up to the mirror and feel skin
instead of glass.

by Micaela Wiegand
Gatineau, Québec



SECOND PRIZE

Other Fish in the (Yukon) River

My love for you is like fish scales,
Reflecting back your light from within.
It reaches and covers me,
Coats me in fragile armour
That gives ease to the uphill swim.

Delicate and beautiful in essence,
Rough handling does cause cracks.
Doubt casts a wide circle;
Fish-eyed dismay bubbles up,
Broken backed and gasping in your presence.

by Jessica Pumphrey
Whitehorse, Yukon



THIRD PRIZE

Sneak Attack

I laughed

when you
somehow penetrated
my defensive perimeter
with sexual passions
blazing like the noon-day
desert sun with tender
notes in your voice

I laughed

when your
blue glitter eyes
lasered into mine
bathed me in warm soft
light rode rough-shod
over what's right or wrong

I laughed

when you
invaded further destroyed
trees and shrubs in my garden
replaced them with tropical
greenery lush glossy leaves
swollen bursting with life
in archetypal grandeur

I cried

when you
wrapped your desire in
cold mist retreated
to a snow-covered field
behind barbed wire

a hundred shadowed
years later I knelt
by the tombstone
of your desire amid
brambles and briars in my
cemetery garden and

I died

by Jessie Lee Jennings

Windsor, Ontario

HONOURABLE MENTION

My Haven

Silence echoes through the valley
broken only by the call
of a lonely whippoorwill
searching for its mate.

A heavy mist lays a blanket
of protection over the quiet water.

I am alone
sheltered from a busy world
that calls me away.

Here, nestled in the hills,
I lose myself in thoughts
so seldom allowed back there
in the busy world.

The haunting symphony of the loons,
rustling leaves whispering a lullaby
all bring me peace.

Here in the rolling hills
I am wrapped in the womb of nature
and here I dig my roots—
solid, strong,
downward to the centre of the earth.

by Bonnie Fenton
Essex, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

It Could Have Been Different

The sun's rays burst through the window
And light my room with rebellious light.
With pain, I ease ancient bones out of bed
And find strength to face the day.

I eat hot oatmeal with maple syrup,
Drink juice and take a cup of steaming coffee
Onto the patio to watch the rising orb
Ignite the Earth.

It could have been different.

My granddaughter visits me.
We bake cookies, work on crafts,
And watch a lot of movies. She gives
Me a hug and kiss before she leaves.

It could have been different.

I drive to my doctor and sit reading ancient
Magazines in a crowded waiting room.
Waiting, waiting, waiting
For my turn to be told "You're still alive."

It could have been different.

I shower and lay out clean pyjamas.
I lie in bed for a while and think of
The day that has gone past
And realize with relief,

It could have been different.

by John Corvese
Burlington, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

Be Wary of Old Folks

For eighty years or more
I've been a solid soul,
Steady on my feet.
Joyous on skis, diving boards, forest trails.
Now? Not so. I teeter, I lurch,
I could be thought a toss-pot
Having imbibed too much strong drink
On my morning rounds.
Even with my trusty cane,
I'm not to be counted upon.
It serves to warn others—
Mercurial children, careless youngsters—
That here processes an individual
Who might just crack them across the ankles, the shins
Should they come too close.
Be wary of old folks with canes.

by Cynthia Steers (84 years)
Ottawa, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

Writer's Block

Words tumble from my brain
like boulders down sides of mountains
where they rest for millennia,
only to be carried away by ancient tribes
building their ancient temples.

The perfect stanza has struck me
like an arrow deftly navigating an ancient forest,
only to be completely obliterated
as I awaken from my Mayan dream.

The trees of the forest cut down,
now feed their ancient pyres
upon which they burn my poems
as offerings to their ancient gods.

Archaeologists will find the ashes and line them up,
and when they are unable to decipher them,
they will toss them aside.

Rains will wash them away
into the streams that travel to the oceans,
to be snatched up by the krill
who are devoured by behemoths.

Expelled through blowholes,
carried away by winds,
joined by other words,
they become the air I breathe.

Words inside molecules, molecules inside oxygen,
enter the bloodstream, travel to the brain
and wait patiently to tumble out, again.

by Erica Lewis
Halifax, Nova Scotia



HONOURABLE MENTION

Sunglasses

I see you every day
standing on the corner,
sunshine or pouring rain,
holding in your hand
coffee, or its cup,
fingers holding on
a burning cigarette,
standing motionless
and emotionless
behind sunglasses.

Are you watching me
with my blues and reds,
as I waddle in
snow, slush, pebbled muck?
Or the garbage trucks
squeezing down the street
trying not to hit
the dismantled cars
strewn on the sidewalk
ready for pickup?

I will never know,
but I will see you
standing on your corner,
holding in your hand
coffee, or its cup,
fingers holding on
a burning cigarette,
maybe wondering
if I have noticed
your left shoe's untied.

by Danielle Wong
Pierrefonds, Québec



HONOURABLE MENTION

Gingham Parker Watched the News

“I don’t hear bombs,” said Gingham Parker, her hands splayed out over her Rice Krispies, popping in her bowl; her right ear pointed towards the window.

“And besides,” she said, “Isis is such a pretty name.”

It was an unusual morning.

The remote was lost before hubby went to work.

CNN was stuck on the entire day; percolating through Gingham’s broadcloth brain.

The kids and grandkids, old enough now not to need a built-in babysitter, were out of state, enjoying a Gingham-less vacation.

The church ladies had pointedly said her dry carrot cake would not sell in today’s raffle.

Gingham used the Scrub Daddy on the porridge pot.

She liked that happy piece of foam; it could be two different things.

Air strikes to get people off the mountain?

Why didn’t they just lower one of them rope ladders from the plane and lift them off the mountain?

Broken buildings with pink quilts being hauled out.

“I would sue the contractor!” Gingham stoutly declared to the empty chairs rearranged for vacuuming.

Hubby not coming home for lunch; too busy for soup and sandwich.

Fifty-percent civilians killed.

Of course she knew she had to add the carrot juice back in!

Did they think she was stupid?

“I tell you who’s stupid,” she told the chairs,

“That woman with the dead child in the hot car!

How could that woman be the victim?

The child is dead, now there’s your victim!”

Gingham Parker liked the gooseneck toilet-bowl cleaner.

“Now there’s an invention!” she said.

I should invent something and make a lot of money, she thought as she marvelled at the now white ceramic.

I would make a lot of money and go to Hawaii, when there were no hurricanes, of course . . . and sleep in a big, big bed by myself.

She stopped and looked at the television.

Aren’t they all dead by now?

She got in her car and drove to the church where the ladies were displaying their very moist cakes, on little card tables in the parking lot.

As she stepped on the gas,

Gingham Parker thought, *It will sound just like Vacuuming ants: snick snick snick.*

It was more like *crunch* scream *crunch*.

All civilian casualties.

Mr. Parker finally had the remote all to himself.

by Shelley Siddall

West Kelowna, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Varley and Vera

Who would judge you now,
in the alabaster cool of galleries,
Lady Green-Eyes, Blue-Eyed Gent

On Robson Street
you scorned the pinstriped peddlers.
You climbed the star-topped pines ever higher
till the liquid moon poured haloes 'round
your chalice heads.

You glimpsed the grail,
drank deep on dharma days,
soaked skies in vermilion wine
and chartreuse resurrections.

Lovers, immortal, you embraced,
then tumbled through the open window
to leave your footprints, sun-warmed clay,
on pearl-stained canvas.

by Maria Robson
Verdun, Québec



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Trains Don't Come Here Anymore

The bones of the mighty lay vanquished
Rusting away to become naught but old lore
A "No Trespassing" sign the only reminder
Of the tracks not rumbling anymore.

The rails were laid down quick as could be;
Eventually white plumes rose into the blue.
Townships were founded, and thousands arrived,
And the once lonely prairie became something new.

Those great steel beasts arrived almost daily;
They would take thousands of loads far away.
A future wrought in metal the whole country wide;
A future all believed was here to stay.

Wheat and soldiers, oil and supplies,
The cargo was shipped and brought back.
An era of piercing whistles and the hissing of steam
Signalled the importance and might of the track.

But giants can be brought down by the tiny,
And for the rails, it was exactly the same.
Smaller engines grew in dominance, and the people submitted,
Until the original beasts lost their power and fame.

The tracks survived as freight haulers,
But even that venture began to decline.
Cargo cars were abandoned to rust,
Where once, on the prairies, they did shine.

Eventually, companies saw the lost causes,
And the inevitable began to take hold.
The cars were all scrapped, and the timbers removed,
Recouping any profits from what all could be sold.

Those who still believed in the might of those rails
Fought valiantly, but were inevitably felled.
Left only with the memory of the future once brought
In the cargo cars those tracks once held.

The prairie grass serves for a tombstone
Of the tracks, which once delivered progress to the door.
A haunting whistle is lost in the stillness of the land,
A reminder how the trains don't come here anymore.

by Meghan Brennan
Lethbridge, Alberta

HONOURABLE MENTION

porous

she sits, my sweet
bosomed and round
and brown, she sprouts
shoots the streamers.

a bud spurts there
'round my head hangs her hair,
unwoven and unwound—her sullen care
thaws my toes; they decompose.
so supple, a sound
for a quiet heap of soil
but she gnaws me in,
and we garble underground.

by Sarah Katz
Toronto, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

Made of Broken Pieces

A portrait of beauty is the mosaic
hanging lopsidedly on the wall,
each section a sample of imperfection
with the other selections united to
create something worth more mention
than is each piece alone.
The quasi-person passes it
every morning, studies it more
than her own reflection, and calls
9-1-1 in a fit of panic to report the
annexation of her reverie,
before walking past once more and
asking the mosaic how anyone could find
beauty in something made of broken pieces,
while not really talking about the mosaic at all.

by Gabriel Byrne
Dundas, Ontario

