

# FIRST-PRIZE WINNER

## Clayoquot Sound

Crashing statues of another sound  
claim  
a stretch of waste,  
with only silence to abbreviate  
the onslaught, aqueous rage ...  
A desolation of insane shapes,  
scarred rapture  
delineates,  
carving azure as if in Rorschach haste ...

The cedars,  
bearded and deranged,  
stand warrior-lost—  
ancient claims before the fall.

Atop an outcrop rock  
impossible,  
a raven flies  
remembering only  
rogue solitudes of an imperial demise.

*by Richard Grace*  
Toronto, Ontario



# SECOND-PRIZE WINNER

## Our Lives in Time

This seasonal ritual:

We set and et of the river's oolichans.

High water, high spring; Granddad, Dad, and I  
at home, above the freshet.

Sixty candles—Graddad died, to savour the grease fish no more.

We buried him in deep red cedar soil to have and to hold him  
tight above the river's might.

Time leaned, fledgling dove eyes—oolichan eyes—once a light, flickered, they  
grieved their loved one's lives, then died their own dear deaths.

The schools let out. The oolichans wiped their slates, and kissed the kiss of  
death.

In time, Dad turned to bones, to dust, to flour—as the flour in which he rolled our  
vernal feasts.

The churchyard 'bove the river, poured our tears for him, through Earth to  
her, a salting sepia, and Father's infinite gratitude expressed and comprised of  
candlefish bone.

To restore the Lady Grey, the muddy font, this current event, our numinous  
gatherer of life's origins:

The river.

Oolichan?

Na more; no more schooling!

Dribbled professor chins, their drooling science, their yes boss mewling.

Justice now, for those too dignified to howl loudly, "Why?"

Speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Reclaim your songbird spirit—  
your spirit river,  
your spirit fen,  
lest ...  
we ...  
be ...  
sold  
down  
the river  
again!

*by John Gifford*

Vancouver, British Columbia

# THIRD-PRIZE WINNER

## Come Away, Come Away

I walked from one side of the town to the other  
and I counted my steps the whole way.  
Maybe I just wanted it to take forever  
but the numbers didn't get so high  
that I didn't know the next,  
and strange comfort in the strangest things  
you find.

I never knew this town had so many walls  
and when this water freezes  
we can skate the canals  
and pretend the walls can keep us here.  
Mittened hands and cold noses  
test the outside to see if we can make it  
back, no one ever comes back.

I never believed them when they spoke  
but one thought they spoke was truth.  
This town is not a place.  
It's the way you see the streets: yours,  
and you stay here  
for the macaroni at the deli down the street  
and not because you don't hate yourself.

The bigger things you almost were  
flaunt themselves on billboards in your head,  
neon letters setting  
adjoining failures on fire.  
You'll give in and shield your eyes  
from your own when you walk past the lake  
in the afternoons when we find summer.

With so many ways out  
who'd have thought I'd choose the slowest.  
The only time I need is inside my head—  
numbers not unknown to me  
across a hundred thousand steps  
and I didn't lose my place.  
Not in numbers. Not in numbers.

*by Sarah Poirier*

Victoria, British Columbia



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **kerouac sunset**

dance the paranoids, dance  
in sticky hazardsignyellow, do not  
enter,  
redbrick backalley braille.

effervescent endoftheworld orange in cats'  
eyes streetlightglow, skeptic  
sleeping reflections,  
black glass giants, the  
cemetery city—dunsmuir shellshock under smoky  
skies, a silent,  
prickling wetness.  
august is over  
and the moon has moved into the sky.

between the lenses, a  
panicked burning world—fell  
off the end of itself, chaotic  
and naïve stripped billboards, an  
empty airborne pandemonium  
in vacant lots,  
it ends—  
it ends tonight.

kerouac sunset, in  
24-hour noodle hut neon  
royal city, raving  
creeping  
in graffiti shadows, my chainlink  
silhouettesarcophagus.  
august is over  
and the moon has moved onto the water.

broken orison blacktarred city pavement  
my gasmasquerade,  
embers in the distance  
red like after snowfall, footsteps  
soft—a desperate echo,  
my 4:16AM, you and i  
reincarnated in 7-11 sliding doors

angel eyes, inky calm in dunsmuir light,  
twice reflected  
in the cracked busstop glass.  
august is over—  
the moon has moved behind the trees.

**by Adrien Gendron**

Port Coquitlam, British Columbia

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Will

When you lift your hammer  
to crack the pale marble above me,  
hold ...  
let it fall unused  
and leave my stone untouched.  
No words that you may carve  
could give meaning  
to an age spent in wandering.  
Nothing to nothing  
I completed only a smile  
as I cut across sacred silences.  
So  
let silence return for one brief glance  
to those who read the unbled marble  
that never knew my name.

*by Denise Grieve*

Port Moody, British Columbia



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## No Elbow Room

I want to dwell in the open country  
where no tall old city houses block my view in every direction.  
I feel cramps here; I need elbow room.  
I am a prisoner hemmed in by rows of buildings.  
My range of vision is nil.  
In the spring I shall return to the old farm  
where I can let my eyes wander freely  
over the poplar-dotted prairie.  
There I shall watch the rising sun peep over the horizon  
and catch its first red beams.  
In the evening I shall see the glorious colours  
of the sunset reflected in the quiet waters.  
I will watch the twilight steal softly over the  
tilled fields, and the croaking of the frogs  
will be heard from every pond.  
I shall see Canada geese in their flight to the north,  
silhouetted against the evening sky.  
And here in the country the shy new moon will not be scared  
to come right out in the open, for its tiny beams  
will have no bright city lights to compete with.  
The wonder of God's creation will be all around me  
and this is where I belong.

*by Spencer "Duff" Checkley* (96 years young)  
Haileybury, Ontario



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Lost

She sits there ... strapped around the waist to a mobile chair  
and watching from a window what is always unfamiliar.  
Searching for a road to lead her home  
where wait the daily duties still perceived as hers alone—  
this aged mother who has lost her wits.

Betrayed by and betrayer of her children,  
who thought the good sense they relied upon  
would last through all the young years, and beyond.

Weeping, she calls up nonexistent stairs  
to bid those long gone children hurry down.  
And they are here, her grey-haired sons and daughters,  
perched awkwardly around her, coats still on.

Appalled, they lie to she who taught them truth.  
Willing to say anything to soothe, to make acceptable  
the treachery of time.

Fragments of fickle memory appear in faded eyes,  
piercing the feeble armour of excuses.  
For why they aren't here more.  
For why they can't stay long.

(Assured by those in charge that when they've gone  
they are forgotten almost instantly).

That may be, but still she won't forget what's real to her ...  
responsibilities that never end  
if only she could find her way back to them.

Worry without substance.  
All that's left to her. All that's left of her.

Time's rationed out in plans not of her making.  
Carefully crafted hours, one like another,  
structured to meet the stricture of her days.

Care and compassion are companions here.  
She shrieks when they approach. She sees  
cunning, conspiracy.

Jesus nailed to His cruel cross may have suffered less.

*by Bernice Byers*  
Parrsboro, Nova Scotia

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Head Injury

*Upturned  
as often in your lap  
my head cut air  
cut air  
over roadside boulder*

*Spurned  
by quick-sprung hairpin turn  
my head met dust  
met dust  
on sun-warmed shoulder*

Once I thought I'd be one to fly  
off the spokes of the spinning wheel—  
find a new patch to colour in the sky.

But the expansion of my mind has slowed  
as if years rushed by that day,  
not summer mountain road.

Your forced tires clung, but what about me—  
today, confined in a stranger's head  
do I somehow cling to who I used to be?

*Re-turned  
through low hung cloud to heaven  
my head at rest  
at rest  
duller on these shoulders.*

**by Sharlene Tennant**  
Surrey, British Columbia



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **Pacific Love Affair**

wind through my dress  
sun above singing with us  
a captain sailing his ship

homemade cider and wine  
rock cod and kelp  
beach forever and small driftwood fire

meteors beyond the midnight mango  
glowing fishes swimming through stardust  
dancing with mermaids on our feet

waking at the ocean  
cup of coffee and sand in my jeans  
a board that fits perfectly under my arm

passing through fluid glass mirrors  
watching the beyond roll in  
listening to drips of quietness on the outside

and it rains down fresh  
more loving on this coast  
than salt in the pacific

*by Leah Walberg*  
Ucluelet, British Columbia



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Let Us Go to Our Secret Place

Let us go to our secret place  
where the sea becomes sand,  
where the seagulls dip and dive and screech,  
where the winding trails lead through lush and leafy forests,  
where boats, far out upon the sea, make their way to sheltering harbours, and  
where mother nature's welcoming embrace evaporates the daily cares of life.

Let us go to our secret place  
where we can be together once more,  
where we will lovingly hold each other's hand,  
where we will dance to the music of rolling waves, breaking upon the shore,  
where we will look into each other's eyes with fondness grown deeper with time, and  
where young love first came to us and brings us back again.

Let us go to our secret place  
where we will walk together for a time,  
where we shall sit in silent amazement of the beauty that surrounds us,  
where we will talk and say the things our hearts have known forever,  
where we shall but once more become as one within the arms of nature's beauty, and  
where we will share silence yet know the strength of our love, no longer needing words.

Let us go to our secret place  
where the water will whisper your name and mine,  
where the lighthouse summons lost ships and souls to shore,  
where waves wash and roll endlessly upon the beach,  
where I may, but one more time, put in place again the lock of hair that falls across your face, and  
where we may laugh and weep together, lost in time.

I am here now in our secret place  
where some may think I am alone,  
where I wonder why you were called away so suddenly, so soon,  
where I am no longer steeled in grief because I feel so near to you,  
where sweet memories now embrace me, and  
where my voice can speak your name and my heart can feel you answering back.

Here in our secret place, I will never be alone.

*by Sheran Barker*  
Belleville, Ontario



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## The Old Man

With crooked back and hoary hair,  
his gait a snail-like crawl,  
with senses dulled he cannot hear,  
and stumbles into all.

The young pass by with snobbish look,  
the rich look down with scorn,  
the pupil hides behind a book,  
from tattered clothes and torn.

Who knows the past of this old man?  
What brought him to this state?  
Perchance someone had spoiled his plan  
and prematured his fate.

We laugh and say it couldn't be,  
that we will one day too  
be reduced to such as he,  
like us, "He never knew."

*by Clive Belnavis (75 years young)*  
Toronto, Ontario



# HONOURABLE MENTION

## **Freshly Laundered**

Night after night  
on the evening news  
I see the young boys  
throwing rocks and dodging bullets,  
in bombings and in street fights.  
This time it's Lebanon.

For as long as I can remember  
I have watched this scenario  
unfolding somewhere in the world.  
Tonight I see something  
I've not noticed before.  
The boys are wearing clean shirts and clean pants.  
And it dawns on me  
that faraway-moms are in their homes  
performing the daily domestic tasks  
of family life,  
just as I do.

To those moms,  
and to me,  
a good chunk of family life  
comes down to laundry;  
having it,  
doing it,  
keeping up with it.  
Each freshly washed T-shirt  
and eradicated stain  
infused with love.  
Needing to believe  
that in keeping them clean,  
we can somehow  
protect and keep  
our children safe  
in  
freshly laundered shields.

Heartbreaking ...  
and hope-filled.

*by Lynn Parker*

Sherwood Park, Alberta

# HONOURABLE MENTION

## Shoreline

A human being, I might not contain much;  
a bit of smell, some sight, some touch.  
Nerve endings fabricate, jubilate a momentary blur;  
thrills me, imprisons me, chills me straight to the core.

I once travelled far, felt the sand on my palms;  
a brilliant blue sky, savoured, a hope for the alms.  
Not the thought, no, but a clotted glimpse to cajole  
away, away, a bomb-battered crop of one ragged thought.

Snivelling proudly, somewhere I've never known  
you wish, like me, an anticlimactic win, a moan;  
the gangrenous sympathy of the keeper of the Styx;  
debasement gaze of despondent black eyes that weigh and rank.

Stretched taut, unbound, the soul flocks anew  
to where once was safe as you've realized, too,  
as you bury the shore beneath the Berlin Wall;  
coaxing the frostbitten foot on your peninsula pier.

Fireworks celebrate, lovers capitulate, while I ... I segregate  
a cardboard cutout of space and time into shards of slate  
to be wrote and rewrote in blind handwritten scrawl  
as I wander among sketches, drowning in chaos. Rewind. Remove.

And we meet face to face, ambulance weary, bleeding taupe.  
A mix and match pair of excess, a busker without strings, a harlot without hope.  
Your sick, slackened smile stretched tight over crescents and fens  
and I ... I turn and scream, "I'm not your martyr, I die for *my* sins!  
I'll beg, I'll rest when gone are my wings!"

*by Gary Dobko*  
Calgary, Alberta

