Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

2014 Jack Grapes Poetry Prize Winners

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We are proud to announce the winners of the 2nd annual Cultural Weekly poetry contest, now officially called the Jack Grapes Poetry Prize. Our Poetry Editor, Alexis Rhone Fancher, explains the process of choosing the winning poems.

And now, on to the winners:

First Place Winner ($250 and publication in Cultural Weekly): Beate Sigriddaughter, “Archer”

Second Place Winner ($100 and publication in Cultural Weekly): Judy Brackett Crowe, “As If There Were No Steel”

Third Place Winner ($50 and publication in Cultural Weekly): Mike Masen, “Mistaken”

Our seven finalists (in alphabetical order), to be published in the next issue of Cultural Weekly are:

Megan Dobkin, “Anthem For The Open-Hearted”
Peter Gordon, “Pantheon”
Shira Hereld, “Photographs of Me and My Mother”
Holly Hunt, “Alfalfa”
Cece Peri, “Why Dish Ran Away with Her Spoon”
Scott Silsbe, “Pinball, 1983”
John Smith, “Bullfights (for Valerie)”

Our thanks to everyone that entered, or even thought about entering. Next year’s contest (July 1, 2015 – August 31, 2015) promises to be extraordinary, so stay tuned. And thanks to everyone who reads the poetry we publish at Cultural Weekly. A poet without an appreciative audience would be lonely, indeed.

Enjoy the top three poems in order.

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Archer by Beate Sigriddaughter

She has always wanted to belong. Now
it looks like she does. Dad offers
a sip of his beer. She giggles, shakes

her head. Heartthrob Rogelio nods,
his dark eyes gleam with admiration. First
time he looks at her like that. Nobody
says the dread words, “for a girl.”
The men offer to skin and gut
the deer. She ponders this, accepts.
She still feels the sinew of the bow,
her strong and steady arms, the whistle
and velocity of death. The wounded eyes
film over, lifeless, without accusation.
“Well done,” someone says. She wants
to ask back: “Have you ever looked
into the eyes of a deer?” Their calm
and dark acceptance, shy round
innocence with just a hint of question.
And the bold nose. But no words come.
She is in a different league now.
Tomorrow she will be sixteen.
They promise her first taste
of the meat. She feels empty, silenced,
betrayed. No one explained triumph
would feel like this. She remembers
wide surprise in eyes so black that
they could make you weep. The finches
in the juniper have lost their charm.

Beate Sigriddaughter lives and writes in Silver City, New Mexico, Land of Enchantment. Her work has received three Pushcart Prize nominations. She has also established the Glass Woman Prize to honor passionate women’s voices.

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As If There Were No Steel by Judy Brackett Crowe

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Deep inside this height
this warren of steel
concrete
glass
fluorescent lights
false air
no windows
perpetual electrical
   hum
pathetic prayer     plant
   in the corner
high above Earth
street
dirt
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far from water
years beyond water
she waits.

Hopper could home in on that woman
in that sparse room, could give her
a clean rumpled nightshirt, could paint
a sad glow, could paint a window for her,
could paint the sea beyond that window,
with a smudge of red on a far-off wave,
as if there were no steel, no concrete
in this world,
no glass.

She would still be lonely, though,
and there would still be stale air
and cold light,
fading.
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Judy Brackett Crowe was born in the midwest, moved to California as a child, and has lived in a small town in California's northern Sierra Nevada foothills for many years. She is a member of the Squaw Valley Community of Writers and has taught creative writing and English literature and composition at Sierra College.

Her stories and poems have appeared or are forthcoming in egg, China Grove, The Lake, Dos Passos Review, Canary, West Marin Review, Miramar, Subtropics, The Waterhouse Review, The Untidy Season: An Anthology of Nebraska Women Poets (Backwaters Press), and elsewhere.

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Mistaken by Mike Masen

I loved her like
I read my bible
Wide-eyed and under the
Impression that miracles could
Just manifest themselves like
Fish before the needy throng.
And I was many.
but was I mistaken?
I thought that her shadows
Were as beautiful as she was
Simply because they bore her likeness.
I thought loving her shadows
Would help me bludgeon my own.
But they were many.
Or was I mistaken?
I loved her like
I took my first step

In the house I grew up in
Where everything I knew
Saw me and proudly stood up
Their applause locked my heart in amber and
Sent friendly tremors across the floor
So much so that I lost my balance
And every innocent inch of my small world
Was filled past its brim
But the world grew
And the inches were too many
And I still live in the house I grew up in

I sense that I am mistaken
Because a ballet dancer moves gracefully on fractured toes
Because a man is served his favorite meal before graduating death row
Because all that we are is all that we spend our time getting to know
And I need your eyes to see me
so please tell me I am mistaken
Tell me there is another way
That we are tightrope walkers and
when we can trust our balance
We will be made brave
Tell me that if we both stepped into a river
It would yield to my ankle
In much the same manner as yours
Tell me I am mistaken
Tell me you've been mistaken too

Mike Masen is a 25 year old Copywriter from suburban Detroit, MI. He attended Wayne State University where he studied History and English. Hailing from a family of ten, he bears the namesake of a happy guild of artists, musicians and amateur theologians. As he sees it, his association with poetry is closely connected with his attempts to make sense of his humanity and to affirm the various kinds of positive lifework we engage on a day-to-day basis. This makes him a student of the everyday and a guerrilla fighter in the battle against hopelessness and misunderstanding. He has been writing poetry since high school and has shared his work at various poetry slams and artisan gatherings in the Ann Arbor and Detroit areas.

Featured image by Alexis Rhone Fancher

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