

DJILLONG SHORT STORY COMPETITION 2022

FIRST PRIZE: 'Daddy' by Zachary Pryor

A first-person account of a young man's life and his decision to take ultimate control of it for himself; a sustained narrative which followed a clear timeline. This story used raw language, powerful imagery, and featured a satisfying conclusion to a tale which could've gone badly wrong for the protagonist. What hooked me into this story was its candidness, and its casual brutality, and the final decision made by our brutalised narrator, which ultimately set him free.

JOINT SECOND PRIZE: 'Truth or Dare' by Tanya Scott

A third-person present tense narrative written as a continuous episode, which is the kind of structure, as a reader, I do enjoy. Often short story writers use a pastiche technique which doesn't rely on sustained narrative; it can be refreshing to read a traditionally structured story, which doesn't move around in time or focus. A seemingly simple trip to the beach, which became a potential life-or-death turning-point for the narrator.

JOINT SECOND PRIZE: 'Dragon at the Door' by Gayle Beveridge

In third person, a tale of the repercussions of past violence told over more than one lifetime, with a terrific and unexpected twist in the final sentence. The prose was workman-like and uncluttered, and the unexpected twist made the story all the more poignant.

THIRD PRIZE: 'Milson's Point' by Paulette Gittins

For its flashbacks of two lifetimes unravelled side-by-side. The theme of the sea, the pathos of family life, its strong and evocative prose, and its inventive form in fragmenting and snapshotting life into miniatures.

HIGHLY COMMENDED: 'Cadences' by Yvonne Fein

A story too powerful to be ignored. Written in fragments and snapshots, in first person - for its lyrical language, and powerful theme of historic injustice which transcended time and location. The narrator is eloquent and philosophical; the themes of death and historical wrongs are grimly powerful.

Dr Liz Monument, 10 March 2022