

scientific evidence whatsoever that can substantiate the monumentally ridiculous and yet grandiosely simplistic conclusion, "Smoking is bad for your health!" Suck. Puff. It was obvious that he enjoyed crushing non-smoker arguments more than he enjoyed smoking.

"That's so true. Golly, you're just so brilliant, Doctor Fostes. I should have thought of that for myself."

"You're a perceptive lad, William." It appeared that the slimy old monster was falling for it. "You just tell all of those whining, pathetic non-smoker advocates, who belong more in Russia than they do here: Smoking is not bad for you. No one has any proof that smoking is bad for you. *Quod erat demonstratum*, no one may abrogate my rights to smoke, wherever I should please." He looked triumphant.

"Gosh, professor, you make logic so simple, I really feel that I could get a handle on it, if I could just get a break. But, well, it would sure help if, well..."

"You will get your re-test, Mister Cameron."

Alright! I was going to pass! I thought I'd better go home right then, so I could study! Maybe I'd stop for a beer first, though. And visit Brad and Beaker. Well, just a six-pack, and then hit those books...

"Why don't you sit down?"

"Uh, thanks." Uh-oh. The BS-Bomb had been too effective.

I sat. From this angle, I saw some stuff I hadn't seen before. There was a picture of Fostes and some guy, maybe about my age. Fostes had his arm around the guy's shoulders. Fostes noticed me looking at the picture.

"Ah, yes. That's my son and me. Wonderful young man. Efficient, respectful, logical."

"Is he a student?"

"Oh, he graduated a few years back. Business administration. Now he's a manager at a facility where cigarettes and other tobacco products are packed and shipped." Puff.

"Hey, that's great." I enthused. "Uh, professor," I scrambled for small talk, "what are those jars for? The ones filled with coins?"

"Ah!" he said, delighted. Looks like I hit the right key. Mousey gets the cheese. "Those are my thought-enhancitive probability affectors." He blinked.

"Oh. Of course." Huh? "So I guess those aren't coins inside?"

"Coins? Heavens, no. Those are lead slugs. You see, the principle is that, as around a black hole, great mass condenses space and time. We know that probability

is increased with greater range and domain — namely space and time. Therefore, the likelihood of brilliant thoughts being inspired inside my consciousness." He spoke of it as though it were a mouse-trap.

"Oh, right. Didn't I read something about that in *Scientific American*?" I was gripped by the desire to check for an empty battery port at the back of his head.

"You may very well have. It's not a new concept."

"Mmm." What next? "Oh, golly professor, I really appreciate your time, but I just realised that I'm going to be late for my next class. It's, uh, on the other side of campus."

"No need to explain, Mr. Cameron. I actually have to leave myself. I'm meeting my son for lunch. He's at the plant today."

"Oh, that's real nice. Well, uh, have a nice time. And thanks again!"

"Yes, of course. Just make sure you're ready for your test, Mr. Cameron — next Thursday."

## Judges comments — Long poems

by Fred Wah

The "long poem" tends to invite narrative. But the successful poetic narrative still highlights an intensity of language structure more than it does story. Each of the four winning entries stands out as intensifying one or more compositional features.

"Trifoliate" rates third because the poem proposes an economy of diction that makes the descriptions quickly readable. The spare syntax and visual stanza breaks slow the reading and the perceptions so that each word has force and weight. As well, the attention in this poem to sound helps the reader focus on the concreteness of the images.

Second spot goes to "The Last Knish-Man." This short sequence of poems centering on Brooklyn in the fifties is interesting in how it unravels images of personal biography and place history. The language in these poems plays off of a prose syntax expectation in a subtle use of repetition and disjunctive phrasing. The anecdotal movement of the images is sectioned off so the structure has a nice rolling feeling to it.

I chose "The Diver" as the most successful of the poems primarily because of the poem's cadence. This is an anecdotal poem about a brother's daring shallow-

"Right!" I flew out of the door. "Bye!" Six-pack, here I come. I got my re-test. I would study. *Quod erat demonstratum*, I would pass the course.

Later on, with Brad and Beaker and two-and-a-half six-packs later, the tube was switched to the news. I was about to turn the channel when there was a story about a local accident.

"Sixty-three year-old Doctor John Fostes, professor of Philosophy at the University of Alberta, was killed today in a freak accident at a cigarette-packing plant in Leduc. Apparently there to visit his son, a manager at the plant, he was crushed when a crate of cigarettes was accidentally tipped on him during an unscheduled tour..."

Oh... jeez. And his last meal was with me. And I fed him bullshit. I felt guilty, sort of.

What a way to die... but it's logical, I guess. I was right about smoking, after all. *Quod erat demonstratum*.

out and out (if only you could fly and my brother loved to fly).

Earlier in the summer my brother climbed the arch of heavy timbers that hold the dam in place, and golden in the falling sun, high above our heads, he flew through the air and sliced the water, and was gone, and Frazer moaned, He's dead, but my brother emerged slowly like a submarine, and though he was silent, I saw the quick smile.

In the still air my brother hung, blonde and brown and blue, his head tucked between his arms, hands clenched, body a missile, toes pointed back like jet engines, and Cec shouted, He's doin' it: holy smoke, and my brother needed to dive far out like shooting off a rocket launch pad, out and out, and since he knew he couldn't move fast enough to reach orbit, knew he would come down, he had to skip over the water like a racing boat or run aground on the rocky bottom.

Earlier in the summer my brother chased his shadow across the grass and leaped off the rock, flying, shooting just under the surface like a torpedo, and Macky grinned, He dives so shallow, he hardly breaks the water, but my brother just looked at us with no smile though I saw the purple sky reflected in his eyes.

The gray-blue sky and still air broke and my brother dropped, but he didn't skip once, twice, three times in quick smooth skips, and plunged into the black water, and my eyes closed but wouldn't stay closed, and my brother stood in the water up to his knees.

I can't recall the dive as a series of movements; I remember only the still moment when my brother hung in the gray-blue sky and that other moment when he stood in the water stained with his blood, raw and bloody like a skinned rabbit, his eyes darting, searching, as if he'd awoken in a brightly lit room he didn't know.

water diving. The story sets up scenes and images in a prose-poem language that moves with facility; the stanzas are nicely broken on the page visually and that helps focus on the particularities of the event. The writer avoids the "so what" pitfall of a lot of contemporary anecdotal writing by ending the gruesome tale with stark perceptions and sensory description. The language is even and at work at every point.

I'm a little surprised at the strength of the narrative in these poems and in many others in this competition since that is an aspect of recent verse that has not been very successful. I'm impressed by the attention to the balance between description and play in language in the winners.

### First prize — Long poems

## The Diver

by Carl Leggo

In the gray-blue sky my brother hung, long and lean, his body a line lined with taut muscles, and Macky's mouth was a gaping hole in a scream or laugh because my brother was making the death-defying dive never dared from the concrete abutment at the end of the dam where the water was no more than a foot deep though it got deeper,

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