

# Open Poetry

## Judge's Report – Alicia Sometimes

2020 has been a time of uncertainty. This was reflected in the narratives within the submissions. Poems about isolation, fragility and Covid-19 were large in numbers but also many more were about hope, spirituality, faith, overcoming societal restraints and the love of family and home. Reading through these submissions I am comforted by the many stirring lines, the vivid analogies, the twists of phrases and the originality of the pieces. It is always difficult to choose a winner and even more heart-breaking when beloved poems only miss out by the slenderest of margins. It was a pleasure to read all the entries and marinate in all the pages of poetry. Emily Dickinson wrote, 'If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.' Congratulations to all the poets who entered the My Brother Jack Awards this year and high praise (and virtual confetti) to those incredible writers who won.

### Open Poetry

**Winner:** Ribbons

**Second:** Fish and Chips in Port Vila

**Third:** Flowers

**Highly Commended:** Double Take and I Hear Laughter

This was the most difficult section to judge as so many poems were within a breath of each other. *Ribbons* is a nostalgic look back at youth and the symbolism of what it means to wear a ribbon in your hair. It is about those moments that quickly pass us by and how fear can set in when we get older as our health becomes paramount. The poem is both playful and poignant and the narrative held me until the end. Congratulations to all those who placed or were highly commended!

# Open Poetry– *First Prize*

## Ribbons

by Gayelene Carbis

How nervously now a cold comes. I fear chaos. I know the wind carries more than pollen. I know how felled a body can be by something that once seemed

so small. And yet we forget too, forget sweating in our beds, our heads heavy, our legs shooting with pain. We have been here before. But twenty thirty forty

are nowhere near fifty. We stand on the other side looking back, saying -

Oh my God - I never knew I had such a tiny waist! Once I ran round an oval

in a picture-hat and my ribbons ran after me. They could never catch me, nobody could. Now I have caught up with myself and I never wear ribbons.

There is a writer friend about my age who wears a red hibiscus in her hair, on one side, as if she's in Hawaii. Another woman, from choir, wears red

ribbons and a red dress after Kate and Kathy calling out to Heathcliff. Ribbons are still possible. And so is red. I am not dead after all, just half-alive after

asthma, the flu. Meanwhile I see those other women in my mind with their flowers and their ribbons and remember. Oh, I remember. And I ask myself:

Where have you been and are you ever coming back?

## Open Poetry– *Second Prize*

### **Fish and Chips in Port Vila**

by Andrew Harris

At night

by the light

of the fry-up joint

by the harbour

people throw chips to

the fish

and watch them

school and swarm

in scaly cyclones

until in bubbling pools

bigger fish torpedo

the smaller fish

who are already

full of fries.

## Open Poetry– *Third Prize*

### Flowers

by Gabriella Munoz

Outside, in my garden,

there are flowers that close their petals at night

*su centro es azul*

like a blueberry or, perhaps,

a tiny blue moon

My daughter cuts them on Sundays

she gives me one, two, *cinco*

she skips numbers

mixes languages

yet everything makes sense

I wonder what these flowers do in the mornings

when no one's home

perhaps they play with the ghost of my daughter's laughter

or scare the neighbour's nosey cat

These flowers hold memories

but I forget

one becomes four

y el *cuatro es silencio*

eight becomes twelve

and then my daughter's childhood years will become a memory too,

una *florecita* watching, learning, making friends

I see her grow

When I close my eyes at night

I hold on to my memories of her

pray I don't forget her babyhood, her childhood smile ...

and that squeal

My little flower thief asked me last night

'Mamma, why do we sleep?'

'To make memories,' I said

'But how?'

'We draw them in our inner eye, *el que nunca se cierra, aquí, en medio de tu frente*'

and then she curled up next to me and fell asleep.

*Florecita*, what do you see when you sleep?

## Open Poetry– *Highly Commended*

### Double Take

by Sandy Lanteri

My home is hollow  
Your heart is fractured  
A perfect duo  
in a modern world

I'm piano played  
putty malleable  
limp ragged  
tin taut  
my mouth a cavern  
vocal yet dumb,  
as dishonest as you  
pulling the strings

I am you  
You are me  
but when the curtain drops  
the performance over  
I'm doubled up, cased inward  
and you go  
free

## Open Poetry– *Highly Commended*

### I Hear Laughter

by Michael Rickards

I hear laughter spilling out  
across the dusk  
coming from somewhere  
caught upon a swirling intermittent breeze  
desiccated, fragmented, anonymous

Words, indiscernible, convivial  
broken conversation, then more laughter,  
tossed to the air,  
like confetti fall, scattering  
on a chapel step.

The breeze seeks things  
to rattle, it plays, playful,  
a door, a window,  
click, bang, click, click, bang,  
weak spots, vulnerable things  
that can't stay still  
shaken by the teasing unseen force.

Moment by moment, darkening  
rolls out, over me,

the laughter more, the  
unfathomable words run across the  
fading sky.

As light slips away  
other senses heighten,  
the fridge grumbles, whirrs, shudders, then thuds still again, as  
olive trees now silhouettes, sway  
swish and sweep across the fence like a broom at work.

Cicadas emboldened by the night, the warmth,  
the fragrance of season,  
build in unison to a deafening nocturnal crescendo.

Night takes much away  
but gives in return  
a slithered moon at first born feint, then radiant.

Nascent stars emerge to vivid contrast  
like shimmering tungsten, bright on black.

The scented warmth of day remains, wafting  
and dances on.

A moth circles over darkening flowers,  
a commuting bug thuds into a window,  
then heads another way, quiet, undeterred.



I think of our kiss today  
as we watched the dogs in the park, and the father  
showing his young girl how to throw a javelin.  
Such love in that I can't forget.

I desire to press my lips to yours  
as the staccato laughter rolls on by, and  
the darkness, ever deeper comes.

I wish to bury my nose  
in your hair, like a posy, inhale you  
but you are not here,  
you are not here, and where  
I do not know.

The deep black sky, now an infinite domed heaven  
unfolding over me, envelopes everything, everything  
but my longing not.