

Bridgend Writers' Circle - 2017 Open Short Story Competition

Results:

1st Place – Acting Abby (72)
2nd Place – Beneath the Table (74)
3rd Place – Market Day (22)

Runners-up/commended:

Rosie's Return (49)
Rising Tide (26)
Only a Doll (64)
Bring us Home (17)

What a joy to read the shortlisted and very diverse stories. All had much to recommend them, and it is heart-warming, in this ever-changing, high-tech age, to see that creative writing has lost none of its passion and allure.

Acting Abby: This multi-layered story stayed with me long after each reading, which is always a sign of a job well done. The author conveyed his/her understanding of the vagaries of the human condition in a profound but unsentimental way. The wistful first-person narration drew me immediately into the story and the “voice” was strong. I particularly liked the device of using a stage play as a metaphor for the judgements people/audiences make, and the eventual unfolding of the “choice” the narrator made. The author invites us to judge at our peril. This is a very accomplished and thought provoking piece of work.

Beneath the Table: This unsettling tale of growing psychosis was expertly set in a prosaic domestic setting. Amid the horror of a seriously disturbed child, the author conveyed flashes of the absurd and comedic dynamics between family members – something that lightened the piece and made it credible. Its power came from its unsentimental tone. It also did a brilliant job of highlighting the conflict between familial love and the situation as seen from an outsider's/authoritarian viewpoint.

Market Day: This deceptively simple tale of Middle England made me smile. The author demonstrated keen observational skills and wove these with naturalistic dialogue. Underneath the comedy, however, there was a cleverly executed sense that the characters felt loneliness, longing, and a desire to break free of parochial restraints. An author who understands that the words you omit are as important as the words you choose.

Rosie's Return: This heartfelt story about an estranged mother and daughter conveyed poignancy and hope in equal measure. Both characters were believable and drawn well.

Rising Tide: This author successfully managed the difficulty of conveying a sense of menace and tension throughout the story, with a satisfying twist at the end.

Only a Doll: This author did a great job of writing from a child's perspective – a child who somehow has to make sense of death and destruction.

Bring us Home: An intriguing idea lay behind this haunting and thought provoking tale. Can we “inherit” ancestral memories?

Also shortlisted:

In a River of Clouds: An accomplished piece that explored life, loss, and finding pleasure in the small things.

Janey Lynch: This credible story about a spinster finding love had a “Titanic” twist in its tail.

The Tenderness of Stone: A unique take of the building of Hadrian’s Wall as seen through the eyes of one loyal Roman. The graphic, grinding toil was portrayed to good effect.

Tory Lord: Politics, class warfare, and the news media made this story a heady mix of comedy and outrage.

Welsh Gold: A story full of wonderful imagery, and the narrow choices that poverty gives – two donkeys being a fair exchange for a wedding ring.

The Joy of Fishing: A beautiful, subtle story about the growing rapprochement between a father and guilt-ridden son.

The Boy in the Wheelchair: The psychology of charitable donations! An original story with a great twist.