

Short Story Judge's Report

I am delighted to announce the winner of the Vernal Equinox Competition 2021. The standard of entries was extremely high. As there was no set theme, the short stories covered a variety of topics. The entries were written in Standard English, Scots. Some included dialects in the dialogues. It was a fascinating task for me as a judge. I enjoyed the range of topics the stories touched on. I was encouraged by how the writers' imagination had been sparked by this competition.

The winner is Richard Hooton for 'The play'. This short story had shades of the latest Epstein saga doing the rounds in the media. The author has handled this theme with sensitivity and has given it an excellent twist at the end. It had all the hallmarks of a great short story that readers would enjoy.

Second Prize goes to Brenda Crane for 'Lily Thistle and Rose.' The story of Mary Queen of Scots is written from her viewpoint. I liked the use of the language that dated back to the times she inhabited. The strength of Mary, her steely determination and her eventual beheading is told in a way that feels like reading this tale anew. Short stories need to push the envelope and try new styles. This certainly did just that.

The Joint Third Prize goes to:

Alan Kennedy for 'The Pagoda in His Mind.' To write a short story that is infused with humour and laugh aloud sentences is difficult to achieve. This writer has managed this with aplomb. The Westerner 'seeking refuge' in Eastern mysticism has evoked this short story. It was a great read.

and

Kate Blackadder for 'My Sister's Eyes.' A short story with a blend of Biblical, Greek and Scottish mythology, this story had a style that was appealing to me. This was a well-written story with well-researched facts lending the theme of this fictionalised story.

The winners have been chosen. I congratulate the winners and all the writers for making this an interesting competition to adjudicate. Keep the pens moving, let the words flow. Good luck with your writing.

Leela Soma

Scriever of the Federation of Writers (Scotland)