

## First Prize Poetry Adult

### Selkie's Lament by Carolynne Wilcox

(spoken word poetry)

My Dearest Babes,  
It is with joy and sorrow I speak these words...  
You always knew your mother carried within her  
A mysterious secret  
Something which caused her to be a little distant at times,  
Something she longed for, but her love for all of you  
Kept her from:

The thing of it is, it used to be part of me  
And I part of it.

The sea. THE SEA.  
Endless, inviting, enveloping  
It was my home, my name, my family  
It sang to me, and I sang back  
Beautiful wordless melodies  
Of sand, of surf  
Of depth and mystery

And one day, I pulled him out – your father –  
I heard him, from miles away, struggling to keep afloat  
He was drowning, you see  
And I couldn't let death claim him in my home.

Once on land, he sang to me, charmed me, took me home  
And slowly, languidly  
That sunkissed afternoon  
The haunting musk of sweat and seaweed lingering heavy in the air  
I let him strip my skins and hide them away...  
And I stayed. Stayed!  
I made his home, bore his little ones, and you know,  
We had a good life in our little green cottage by the bay.

But...secretly...  
I longed for it. Pined for it.  
My home beneath the waves  
Communion with sand, salt and skin  
It would call to me and I strained to hear its wordless music  
But my heart held you all dearly –  
We had such a happy home by my beloved waters –  
Duty and love pulled me back...  
And anyway, I couldn't find my skins,  
And the years wore on.

One stormy day, awaiting his return,

Awaiting clothes to dry by the fire,  
I gazed out the window and –

The seas turned black for a moment...  
I knew he was drowned,  
Taken in forever by the febrile ocean  
And life was suddenly sucked of color,  
Rendered dull and meaningless,  
All the little ones gone away...  
And I looked out at my  
Once-home waters with fear and dread,  
And the years wore on,  
And I began to grow old and bent.

One day, cleaning dusty, forgotten cabinets of his  
I found them. Almost mistook them for  
Old celluloid negatives  
ALMOST –  
threw them away!

-but-

My skins.  
MY SKINS!!!

I drew them out, soaked them in my laundry bucket,  
They began to revive.  
Spotted and thick, almost glistening by the firelight,  
I wondered if  
They'd even fit me anymore!  
But they are part of me and re-adheared like new.

And now, my dear ones, I look out to the swirling waters before me  
With a strange mixture of fear, yearning and some long-buried sense of freedom  
and love  
I'd forgotten I ever knew!

It pains me to say goodbye to you, my sweet babies!  
But you've grown so strong, and mother couldn't be prouder.  
I raised you to be yielding but fierce,  
Like the tides from whence I came.  
I must go!  
But you're half me as much as you're half him,  
And if you need me,  
You need only go to the water's edge and call.  
Wait for me, and I will come.

And slowly...  
Surely...  
I walk towards the salty waves  
Prepared to sink or swim underneath them forever.