



The Journey Prize Stories 25

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“This year, eighty-one different stories battled for our affections, ranging in content from a post-apocalyptic suburb coping with rumours of cannibalism, to a movie theatre in Mauritius where dreams of a better future flicker onscreen, to a mattress store where a long-lasting friendship threatens to come undone. For each of us, it was a chance to partake in a process that now stretches back twenty-five years, a sneak peak at authors who – in the future – will likely become favourites.”

--Miranda Hill, Mark Medley, and Russell Wangersky (from their Introduction)

Among the stories this year: Brimming with restless energy, Doretta Lau’s “How Does a Single Blade of Grass Thank the Sun?” is a sometimes provocative portrait of adolescent angst and rebellion set among a gang of “dragoons” growing up in Vancouver. It vividly brings to life a twenty-first-century culture clash and illuminates the struggles, and alienation, of Chinese youth – whether from Hong Kong or the Mainland – now living in “Lotus Land.” Doretta Lau’s story positively hums, the language a well-shaken cocktail of influences ranging from hip-hop and Asian cinema to Chinese history and “the slang of the West.” As vibrant and colourful as graffiti.

Well-timed and yet still carefully fractured enough to be jarring, Eliza Robertson’s “My Sister Sang” is a marvel of unexpected directions and sharp edges. A deftly-told story of two eavesdroppers, one a linguist, the other, professionally tuned to acoustics, who listen – over and over – to every scrap of a tragedy. Even with the distance and detachment of its characters from the centre of its disaster, there is no easy peace, no mere scientific examination of cause and effect: this is writing as carefully crafted and fine as pastry, with thin, perfect layers where every line serves to strengthen the rest.

Naben Ruthnum’s “Cinema Rex” is as rich and visual as the films at its centre, which play on the new movie screen in one neighbourhood of Mauritius in the 1950s. The author beautifully draws the connections between the changing community, inundated by Hollywood and after-school English lessons, and a season of vital shifts for three friends transitioning out of boyhood. Full of heady sensory details, Ruthnum’s deft observations of family and class interactions create an entire world of established histories and hierarchies, even though the reader is only privy to a sliver of these stories.

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