

EDITORIAL

“Once there was a family with a highland name who lived beside the sea. And the man had a dog of which he was very fond. She was large and grey, a sort of staghound from another time.”

So begins “As Birds Bring Forth the Sun,” one of my favourite stories. Many of its pleasures and much of its wisdom can be sensed in these three introductory sentences. With his “once” that is almost but not quite a “once upon a time,” Alistair MacLeod conjures a thoroughly mystical atmosphere. And similarly, with the huge hound who is both undeniably present but also of “another time,” he lets us know that this will be a story about how we remember the past in and as story, how we allow stories to seduce us, and how we rely on them to sustain us.

When Alistair MacLeod died last month, we lost one of our greatest storytellers.

This issue of *The Dalhousie Review*—which contains the winning entries in our first annual short story contest—is dedicated to his memory. It is a small gesture, but it feels especially fitting because Alistair’s son, Alexander MacLeod, who is also a superb storyteller, graciously agreed to judge the contest during a very sad time for him and his family. We are grateful to you, Alex, and so sorry for your loss.

Alistair MacLeod’s novel *No Great Mischief* received a number of awards, including the prestigious IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. And yet, I’ve always thought that *Island*—his collection of exquisitely rendered and wise Cape Breton stories—is his most resounding literary achievement. So I was delighted to see that Gavin Tomson’s “Sometimes Their Parts Fall Off,” the story that won first prize in our contest, is, in part, about a story called “Island”: the daughter in Tomson’s narrative creates a picture book about a man and woman who live alone on an island and who try to avoid the sad thoughts that inexplicably cause parts of the man’s body to fall off. With wry humour and an impressively light touch, Tomson uses his island story to explore the ways in which the girl’s father negotiates his own grown-up fears.

Second place went to Scott Randall's darkly funny story, "On the April Morning of his Second Ex-Wife's Passing." With his customary control and skillful balancing of irony and compassion, Randall—who has had a number of stories published in *The Dalhousie Review*—gets inside the head of Kelly, an unsatisfied academic held hostage at an interminable end-of-term faculty meeting. As Kelly engages in a comically limited sort of reckoning, the story explores ideas of personal fulfillment and mortality. And so, for example, he contemplates a neighbourhood consignment store and wonders, "which, if any, of his own unexceptional belongings and sundry possessions might secure a place of distinction in the shop's front window after his death?"

Unlike our "sundry possessions," our stories last. They last because we share them. So, I'd like to offer heartfelt thanks to all of you who have shared your stories with us. Thanks, especially, to Jay Hosking, whose terrifically assured story "The Great Lakes" was a close runner-up in the short story contest. On the surface Hosking's story is about the daily struggles of a band that tours small-town Ontario, playing at places like the Chicken Shack, but it is also a study in that which lies beneath the surface of the quotidian, an idea that is beautifully rendered in the image of Hosking's protagonist laying on the lake ice listening to the groans of the monsters below. Like MacLeod's huge hound, Hosking's ice monsters are fabulist and fabulous testimonies to the sense of wonder that makes us feel most alive.

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Editor