

RUNNING AWAY (TO JOIN THE CIRCUS)

by Sophia Crocker, Grand Falls-Windsor

Junior Division Poetry

I had never been
To the fair before
Never seen the flared tents
Lift their skirts
To scandalize
The public eyes
Before.
And that was the first time, too
That there was a circus in town.

I arrived In early morning.

There wasn't much
There yet.

They were still getting settled
Around the bony ankles
Of the Ferris wheels.

Crowds of fog juggled
Over the dry, cold ground
Because spring didn't know
There was a fair today,
That it couldn't play
Gray vanishing acts In the air today.

All the people in their
Freak shows
Weren't so broken
As the paraplegic spine
Of the roller coaster
That contorted around them.
It wasn't yet
Running for the day.
Nobody was hurtling
Through space, not yet.

The gates opened –
Fair flyers fluttering
About the bars
Like people on a tall swing ride.

The sun hung low,
A diabolo,
Swinging slowly.

I couldn't have believed
Unless I'd seen
The things that came alive
Once inside

The fairgrounds;
Popcorn jittered
Tapping to be let out
Until they bought it
And the man scooped
Buttery buckets full
From his greasy glass aquarium.

I was spinning
To take in everything:
Cotton candy colored teacup rides
And Haunted Houses with
Splitting sides
Emitting screaming people.
But everyone seemed
To like it here.

There were bumper cars
Too, that whaled on one another
But were too hard to bruise.
I'm not sure why
They needed those –
Weren't the crowds enough?

Calliope music reflected back
From every angle
Somersaulting faster
Than rolling eyes in a funhouse mirror.

But best of all –
The circus.
I didn't know people
Could live on applause –
Because that must have been all
That was holding those ropewalkers
Up high in the tent
Like rafters
Of flesh and string.

Their spangled eyes
And costumes to match
Took my breath away.
And by the time the horizon
Swallowed the sun In a fire-eating act
That evening
I was theirs entirely.

I had never been
To the fair before
And I never left
Again.