

DEDDINGTON WRITING COMPETITION 2008.

The Open Competition - Poem

Winner: Steven Bliss of Woodstock

Truth

What if we all tell the truth?

Accounts clerks say 'No, your cheque's not in the post.'
Businessmen call home: 'I'll be late, don't worry,' they say,
'I'll be making the beast with two backs, not slaving away.'
And we swear our love to two or three people at most.

Doctors admit 'These pills will keep you quiet.'
Your psychologist is frank: 'There's the chair,
Just relax – in five years time you'll still be there.'
And no one even tries to sell you diets.

In courts we all plead guilty or go free,
And politicians hardly speak at all.
Advertisements have shrunk; forget the small
Print; now what you get is what you see.

Korans and bibles gather grime on our shelves.
Tongue-tied clerics feel God evaporate.
As Heaven crumbles, He knows that it's too late:
'I'm finished now. You can all look after yourselves.'

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“What if we all tell the truth?”

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What indeed! The appeal of this poem is its shrewd focus on human foibles. Society functions better, greased by a few white lies, gentle evasion, sins of omission. Could we cope with the bluntness of truth?

Beautifully constructed in four stalwart verses with a consistent “a,b,b,a” rhyme scheme, the poem uses straightforward language easily understood.

The dimensions of social interaction are passed under the microscope. Business, medicine, law and politics, advertising, can they function with honesty the main consideration? How would religion cope, it does not deal in fact; faith in the unknown and unproved is its fuel.

There is a good analytical mind here, perhaps someone in administration, yearning for the directness and clarity in others that he has. With a hint of cynicism and a pinch of humour we are given new prospects to chew over, but can we get by without our props?

The scope of this piece is wide; it scores by being succinct. It's a winner.

Maureen Dew
Competition Judge