

Hidden Words Writing Competition

Our winner, in 1st Place...

Hidden in Plain Sight

Sometimes it feels like everything about my work is hidden. When it's done well, people don't even realise I was involved at all.

A new project just landed in my inbox. Before I ever put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard these days, although that doesn't roll off the tongue nearly so well), first I have to read the source text. Not just skim reading, really, deeply reading it. I unpick every sentence, understand every nuance, turn over every phrase to make sure I haven't missed something the author meant to convey. Ambiguity is a nightmare – was that deliberate, should I reflect it? What about that inconsistency, is there an unreliable narrator at play here? I have to discover the author's intent.

I sit at my desk, mentally exploring these hidden meanings and spaces between words, and find myself gazing out of the window. Disconnecting to let my synapses fire at will. I watch the waterfowl and the people and the dogs and the trains passing by from my high vantage, and no one ever glances up. Or if they do, it's at the building as a whole and never making a specific connection with me. It's as if the building has a veil across it. I can see out, others cannot see in. I am hidden.

I spend weeks in the liminal space between original and translation, between that author's work and mine – but not mine, because it still has to be theirs. My job is to find a way to rewrite their book in my language, making necessary cultural adaptations and using natural expressions, but somehow retaining the original author's voice and message. There are different approaches and schools of thought here, but I tend to think that the reader should believe they are reading the original. Be surprised when – if – they discover it is a translation.

But it is bittersweet, that philosophy. Knowing that I spend weeks, months, sequestered in my hidden space, weaving through the spaces between words, crafting something new hidden behind something that already exists, and in the end the very fact of my existence is also hidden from my – no, the author's – eventual readers.

As I sit contemplating the final draft, an email lands in my inbox. It's my agent. They want to put my name on the cover this time...

Submitted by Nicole

In 2nd Place...

The fox, in blueyards,
Chased by the long haired dog,
Was never seen again.

Submitted by Liam

In 3rd Place...

A Riddle . . .

I think of nought

For I have no mind

My senses are nothing

I am dumb, unhearing, and blind

I care for no one

Not even myself

I own no possessions

I have no wealth

I am not mad,

Nor yet am I sane

No eyes shall look upon my face

As I lie in this hidden space.

But Still!

I stir the minds of those that care.

Their senses are made alert, awake, aware

They care for me

More than life itself

They would give all,

Much more than wealth

They bear the fear,

The torture, the pain

And accept the worry

Because they have all to gain

Life will emerge from this precious place

The time will be done . . .

For I am the being

That shall be their son.

Submitted by Jenny

In 4th Place...

Hangover fading with the sun
As each sip of beer
Soothes ~~around~~ my body
The music
Services
My soul
And a friend
Brings another pint.

Submitted by Pete