

For some, a **full stop** indicated the end of something, but it can mean a liberating experience, a release.

It was clear that some writers had taken inspiration from that prompt, not just slipped it in to their story to qualify. Those stories were most enjoyable to read and it was obvious that great effort had been made to tell a tale, create believable characters and leave me, the reader, in a different world – albeit for the briefest of time.

In third place:

Beating the Bullet

This was a poignant tale, but the writer didn't drift off into sentimentality. How would you deal with a limited life? Let it float away or meet it head on? There was humour – tinged with pathos – and this made it an ultimately uplifting read. It was worthy of its place on the shortlist and on its second reading, still kept my full attention.

In second place:

Of Metro and Men

A clever story, very clever. The writer created tension, polarised by the enclosed setting. Whilst there was inevitability in its ending, I felt the journey, literally, was well worth the fare.

In first place:

The Water's Edge

There were times when I was almost embarrassed to witness the obvious unravelling of a life. This wasn't a depressing tale, it was an intelligent insight into obsession and wasted opportunities.

The winning writer told a life's story in a few, short minutes, they created an intensity that almost suffocated and pain that could be felt. Points weren't laboured, there were no heavy-handed clichés to get a message across – just a classic example of a brilliantly executed piece of work.

On its second read I was surprised at its brevity. I'd remembered love affairs, holidays abroad, a promising career – and ultimately, that obsession and the stopping of a life. To write a story that stays with the reader beyond the closing sentence, weaving more thoughts through the imagination doesn't happen by chance – there wasn't anything short about this story.

What a pleasure to choose *The Water's Edge* as the winner of this competition.