

David Campbell Prize

For an unpublished poem by an ACT poet, valued at \$2,000.

Winner: 'The world inside their hide'
(split prize) Robyn Lance

The world inside their hide

A path winds around the wild underside
of wisteria planted a century ago.

Tentacles catch in their own clutches
and twist back to footholds and secret places

where children sit, confident of camouflage,
legs braced against a branch or dangling.

Pockets bulging, they sidle out the door
into summer days, careful not to let it bang,

and race to the world inside their hide.
One edges along the vines, climbs branches until

perched higher than he meant to go, he finds he's
face to face with an owl and backs down fast,

not daring to look 'til safely grounded.
Round-eyed and pale, he stammers, *I-I saw* ...

Flowers fill with bees, lizards rustle leaves
and owls inhabit trees but children grow and go.

Inhaling warm wisteria scent, we hear an echo
of young voices, glimpse white within bare branches.

Discarded there, obscured by bark,
two coupés and a child's silver spoon.