

ISSUE 30

\$3

# SHOWCASE

LITERARY MAGAZINE



READ \* INSPIRE \* WRITE \* PUBLISH

- \* WELCOME TO THE NEW-LOOK SHOWCASE
- \* CELEBRATING OUR 30TH ISSUE
  - TEN YEARS IN THE MAKING!
- \* SPOTLIGHT ON: SHOWCASE MAGAZINE
- \* CIRCLING THE WORLD - GREETINGS FROM FALKIRK, BASINGSTOKE, PENARTH AND THAMES VALLEY



**Celebrate with us!**

Welcome to the new look Showcase magazine. After twenty-nine issues, it felt like time for a change, time to freshen up and re-brand. This issue we present a new look and feel to Showcase - but it is still filled with the great writing you've come to expect from GWC.

We are pleased to present artwork from Wendie Donabie, an artist from one of our international writers circles. Two of Wendy's paintings were used as prompts by GWC members, with some great pieces resulting. *Undercover* can be seen on the back cover, and *Out of the Woods* on the inside



of the back cover. Writings inspired by these two paintings can be found throughout the magazine. If you enjoy these paintings, Wendie has plenty of other works for you to check out. Her bio and contact details are provided here.

Canadian writer and visual artist, Wendie Donabie, paints pictures with words and flavours her creations with alliteration, similes and metaphors. When words won't do the job, she turns to her easel and paints what stirs her heart and soul - most often her love of the natural world. Wendie has published work in magazines and in poetry and literary collections. At this time, she is working on a murder mystery set in a forested resort area somewhere in North America. Wendie is co-founder of Muskoka Authors Association and operates Heron's Nest Studio Gallery. Follow her on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and [www.WendieDonabie.com](http://www.WendieDonabie.com)



**Sunrise**

*Thea Adams*

I'm not a morning person, no!  
And not afraid to say  
For comfort in a nice warm bed  
I'd be prepared to pay.

But sometimes when I early wake  
And crossly see the morn  
I marvel at the painted sky  
And watch the sunrise dawn.



**Blue's Remains**

*Raylene Hewer*

I sit in this place – free, yet not. Broken once again.

Born into freedom, in the pristine waters of the Southern Ocean, I had family. We were together, always, as we travelled. Now my mother is long gone. Any progeny of mine – long gone also. Yet, I remain.

In 1898, my bones were saved from a beach near Busselton, disassembled and later reassembled to sit for over a hundred years in the Perth Museum. On show for all to see: generations of incredulous school children and curious adults. Even seafarers who have seen my like in the wild. And though many thousands of people have come and gone, yet I remain.

I should have passed like my ancestors. My earthly body disintegrating to provide sustenance for my fellow sea creatures. My bones scattered wide. My spirit soaring into the great beyond. While I remain, so does my soul – in this prison, this purgatory.

Before long I will be reassembled once more, to sit in more salubrious surroundings. And again the people will come. And I will remain.



**All Quiet on the Western Front**

*Jenny Lynch*

It's nearly six, it's almost dawn  
A silent voice is callin'  
So we trundle down the driveway  
to pay respect to those who've fallen  
Along the street are silhouettes  
with candles or with torches  
Some are standing in their driveway  
Some remain in chairs on porches  
And then an eerie sound escapes  
from someone's mobile phone  
"The Last Post" fills my eyes with tears  
as from a bugle, it is blown.  
At 6 am the world stands still  
as we give two minutes silence  
to respect that many lives were lost  
in horrific wartime violence.

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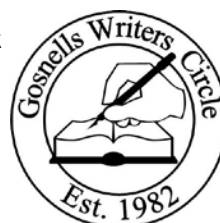
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# AROUND THE CIRCLE

As I write this column, our 'circle' has actually become a group of members scattered around the metropolitan area, due to the current strict "Stay at Home" campaign during this horrific Covid-19 pandemic.

The year started with GWC having to find a new home as we had outgrown our allotted area in the Knowledge Centre Library in Gosnells. However, a wonderful new home was found, at the Leisure Centre in Thornlie. It's big, light and comfortable and we settled in very quickly. Sadly though, after only three meetings, things became serious with the pandemic and our fortnightly meetings were put on hold until further notice. We look forward to meeting there again sometime later in the year.

However, where there's a will, there's a way ... so we now hold 'cyberspace' meetings every fortnight, whereby members still write their 'homework' piece on a given theme, email it to the secretary, and then await a combined pdf booklet of everybody's work to be emailed out a few days later. And voila! Everyone has a mini anthology to read at their leisure during their time in home isolation to help alleviate the boredom.

Congratulations to the following members for their outstanding successes so far this year: Barbara Gurney's novel *Dusty Heart* was published by Daisy Lane Publishing; Jenny Lynch added a new fundraising children's book called *The Bush Telegraph* to her Pink Ribbon Books collection; Jenny Lynch's short story, "Catching Curls" has been published in the *Paw Prints of Love* anthology, published by Gumnut Press; Valerie Latimour's company Black Jack Books published and launched *Degree of Madness* by Geraldine Wooller; Trevor Smith has published a book of memoirs called *TP - Just another Rhodie*; Sioban Timmer had her children's poem "Shadow Party" published in *The School Magazine Blast Off 2*, which is produced by the NSW Education Department. It was also made into a video clip and published online; Sioban also had a poem called "Tribe" published by Australian Children's Poetry. We are delighted to be able to bring you this wonderful celebratory edition (our 30th) of *SHOWCASE*, as a free, electronic edition. Limited hard copies will also be available at our usual distributors - hurry in before they sell out.

The times, they sure are 'a-changing'.

## FROM THE EDITOR

I like to set myself goals. I often start the year with a crop of fresh new aspirations to achieve by the end of the year.

Although 2019 was rough in many ways, it was reasonably successful in terms of achieving goals. I managed to complete my fiftieth park run on Christmas Day, and either achieved or got close to a couple of other important goals. So I was looking forward to 2020 with some new aspirations - things that would stretch me and make me work, but were achievable.

Well, we all know how the first four months of 2020 panned out. After several weeks in survival mode, I'm reassessing what I wanted to achieve for the year, and how much of it is still realistic. I'm feeling pretty positive about getting some things done, moving forwards.

Goal setting is an interesting and personal topic. I'm curious to know whether our readers set goals, and how you keep yourself motivated to achieve those goals - and what you do when it becomes obvious that there's no way to bring them to fruition. I'd love to hear your thoughts on our Facebook page.

On another topic, welcome to Issue 30 of *Showcase* magazine.

As we approached this milestone issue, there was a lot of discussion about rebranding, updating and freshening up the look of the magazine. We are all very pleased with the result, and we hope that our readers will feel the same way. We hope you don't go into withdrawal, with the magazine only being published twice a year from now on, but each issue will now be bigger and better.

Let us know what you think, either by email or on our Facebook page.

Thanks for being along for the ride for the past ten years. I hope we keep going for another ten.

Valerie Latimour  
Editor-In-Chief

"You are never  
too old to set a new goal  
or to dream a new dream."  
— C.S. Lewis

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## The Sky

Ruma Garg

Oh blue sky the daily bread of the eye  
'tis morn and as far as the eye can see it is you I see  
Full of hope, you inspire little me  
To touch you is all I desire  
Sometimes blue, crimson another  
Turning into orange at sunrise and sunset  
The colour of hope that tomorrow is nigh  
Soaked at times, dry at others  
Seamless, endless to the roaming eye  
Always a reminder there is no such thing as an ending -  
Just the beginning.  
Clear and smiling and angry at times,  
Making me happy and sometimes sad.  
My eyes a reflection of thee  
Always in the far off horizon  
It only we could meet

Theme:  
Sky



## Many Moon Musings

Barbara Walton

Over The Moon, Silvery Moon, Moonlight and Roses,  
Man in the Moon, Moon-landing! Poets have extolled  
the moon's centuries-old mesmerising attraction since  
time immemorial, writing how ethereal moonlight and  
shimmering moonbeams evoke eternal love.

## Lunar Cinquains:



Theme:  
Over the moon

Moonlight....  
Poets' sweet words  
Speak of love and passion  
Evoked by the magnetic moon  
Magic!

Moonglow....  
Paints a picture  
Through my bedroom window  
I stand mesmerised in its glow  
Entranced!

Moon...  
Shining brightly  
Through my window  
Ethereal, shimmering moon beams  
Beautiful!

Cows  
Can't jump  
Over the moon  
Nursery rhymes tell lies  
Udderly!!!

## One Thing Led to Another ...

Sioban Timmer

In the heat of the day  
Sheep sleep in the shade  
Of the trees that were planted with care

But some gusty hot air  
Breezed leaves everywhere  
Making all of the branches quite bare

So the poor fluffy sheep  
Fully woolly and weak  
Had to wait in the sun for their food

But wait, drawing near them  
Calm farmer to shear them  
Now the tree and the sheep are both nude

Not wanting to wait  
Busting rusty old gates  
A ram raising quite the loud ruckus

Racing full round the bend  
Screeched reaching the end  
Got the farmer fair square in the tuchus

Robbed of his pelt  
Strongly wronged as he felt  
The ram wouldn't end up the winner

For with one final straw  
Calm farmer no more  
Decided then to make ram stew for dinner

## As You Sleep

Anita Magee

As you sleep,  
not a furrow nor a frown.  
As you sleep,  
so quiet – not a sound.  
As you sleep,  
I take in your hair,  
your mouth and nose.  
As you sleep,  
in eternal peaceful repose.  
As you sleep,  
your eyes behind closed lids.  
As you sleep,  
so precious the life you lived.  
As you sleep,  
in gratitude and sadness I cry.  
As you sleep,  
I say, "I love you and goodbye."

POETRY

# SPOTLIGHT ON SHOWCASE

In this section, we usually shine a spotlight on a particular member of Gosnells Writers Circle. We ask them some questions and feature some of their work. As our thirtieth issue hits the stands, it seems appropriate to turn the spotlight on our favourite magazine and the journey from inception to Issue 30.

The first issue of Showcase was published in August 2010. Printed by Power Printing in Bellevue, the magazine had twenty-four pages and a lot of white space. The front cover design was a simple collage of previous anthologies, and the back cover was a full-page advertisement for Gosnells Writers Circle. Of the sixteen contributors, five are still GWC members. The others, whether they have moved on or passed away, are still remembered with fondness and gratitude for their contributions to the magazine, the Circle, and our lives.

Showcase was produced three times a year from 2010 to 2019. Page count usually stayed at twenty-four, but would occasionally go up to twenty-eight, especially as the Circle grew. This bumper thirtieth issue contains thirty-six pages, and still struggles to contain all of the work submitted.

From Issue One we have had a Children's Corner, usually with work submitted by local primary schools. From Issue Twenty-nine, this was re-branded as Aspiring Authors, as the students from Southern River College came on board to produce this section.

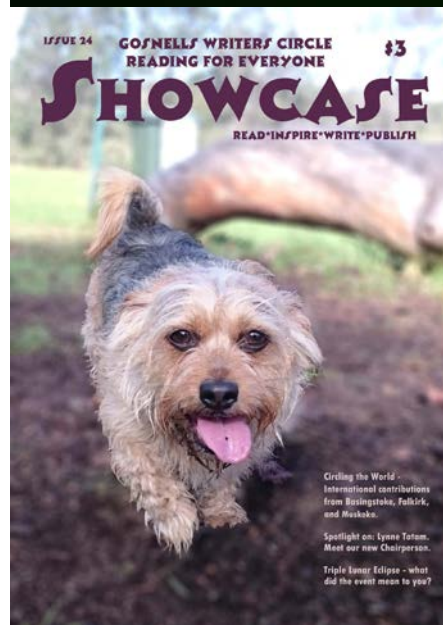
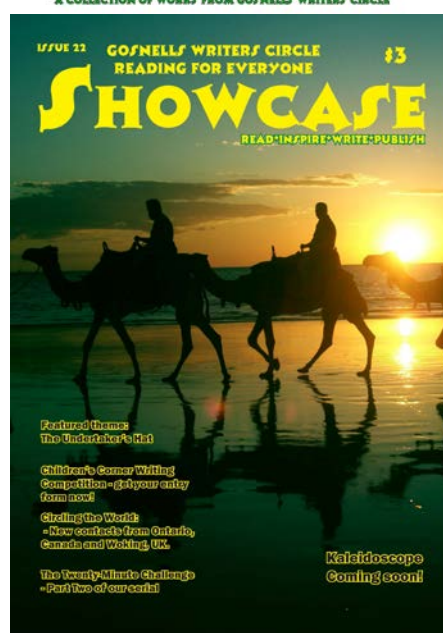
Circling the World became part of Showcase in Issue Two. Our then secretary Barbara Gurney contacted international writers circles and invited them to contribute. Thus began successful partnership with writers in various locations around the world. Now holding the position of Publicity Officer, Barb continues to coordinate Circling the World.

Issue Three began our association with Thermowest printing. Proprietor Alan Francis has provided us with amazing service at a very competitive price since that issue in April 2011.

The visual appeal of a magazine depends on artwork and photography. Fortunately we have a pool of talented artists and photographers both within GWC and amongst our friends and supporters. Cover illustrations and photos, and art throughout the interior, has been generously supplied free of charge to enhance the look of Showcase.

Advertising is the life-blood of any magazine. Finding businesses willing to pay a nominal sum to advertise in Showcase and help pay our printing costs has been an ongoing effort. Members have approached many local businesses with varying results. A few loyal advertisers have been with us for many issues, and new local businesses are always coming on board. As part of our ethos in GWC is to be involved in the local community, we are always looking for ways to engage in mutually beneficial relationships with local businesses and groups.

We have had many highlights over the years with Showcase, and overcome many challenges. It has been a time of growth and development for the magazine, for the Circle, and for the individual members involved in producing the best writing possible and presenting it in a visually appealing way. We hope that you have enjoyed the thirty issues produced in the past ten years, and look forward to continuing to produce Showcase for many years to come.



A few of my favourite covers over the years. A slideshow of all of our covers can be seen on our Facebook page. What are your favourites? Let us know on the Facebook page.

**gosnellswriterscircle@gmail.com**  
**www.gosnellswriterscircle.webs.com**

## Reincarnation

Frank Hawkins

*Worn out garments are shed by the body. Worn  
out bodies are shed by the dweller*

*Bhagavad Gita*

What did you do  
In your past life  
To become today's tormented soul.  
Were you cruel to women  
Until you were dilapidated.  
Has karma come around  
To repay past debts.  
And is that the reason why  
You're so disappointed  
And disturbed.  
Just maybe you are here  
In a present reincarnation,  
To learn everything  
There is to learn  
About disorder and psychosis.  
Why not give up  
And go along  
For a roller-coaster ride,  
If winning is a prize  
The apparition denies.  
What inarnation  
Did you do incognito  
To deserve this.  
Why can't you gain control?  
Why you get through?  
Maybe it is inevitable  
That you have to  
Pay back a past Mr. Hyde.  
Perhaps your reincarnation  
Will be better next time.

## The Park

Dianne Taylor

Children's playground empty  
Air of muffled silence  
Throughout the quiet park,

Autumn trees turn brown  
Rustling leaves falling  
Gather in rusty piles.

Squeals of laughter echo  
Break the eerie silence  
Children's voices call

Kicking up the leaves  
Laughing, running through  
Nature's playground found.

**Theme:**  
**Rustling leaves**



## Spitting Into The Wind

Carolyn Nelson

Eddie Prescott was a bad guy,  
Quite an undisputed fact,  
People closed their doors against him  
Fearing they would be attacked.  
He was better known as 'Weasel'  
Not just for his weedy build,  
Or sly features ... but his thieving,  
At which Eddie was quite skilled.

On one late December evening  
When the moon was full and bright,  
He had borrowed a horse trailer  
And set off into the night.

One of farmer Tarron's prize cows  
Had delivered a new calf,  
He was praising her achievement  
When he heard the Weasel laugh.  
On the far side of the paddock  
The full moon revealed a scene  
That had Ted reach for his shotgun,  
Using hedgerows as his screen.

The horsebox parked outside the gate  
Had its ramp dropped to the ground,  
Eddie shouted at the bovines,  
Certain no one was around.  
"In you get, you lazy cattle!"  
His voice ringing loud and clear.  
"My prize-winning little beauties,  
You're my ticket out of here."

Ted Tarron said, "You'll leave alright!"  
Eddie jumped out of his skin,  
He could not believe a farmer  
Could have got the best of him.  
Quite defiantly he shouted,  
"It was just a bit of fun!"  
It did not seem so amusing  
When Ted fired his shotgun.  
The Weasel's hat sailed through the air,  
But the warning served no use,  
He wouldn't learn that rustling  
Leaves him heading for the noose.



**Last August our Vice Chairperson, and esteemed Editor of Showcase, ran a workshop on adding conflict to a story in order to add interest to an otherwise bland piece of writing. She illustrated her hypotheses by providing a story of John spending a happy few hours shopping. She then provided a list of thirteen possible areas of conflict. An auspicious number I thought, so I took her story, added all thirteen of her suggestions and a few quotes from the great W.C. and so my story 'John's Day' was written. Easy.**

John looked out of the window. The sun was shining, the sky was blue, but a huge bank of ominous clouds frothed and foamed on the southern horizon.

"Churchill wouldn't have let a bit of cloud deter him when he swam the mighty Apies," John muttered. "I'll manage in spite of this blessed plaster on my broken leg." With the aid of his walking stick he hobbled to his mobility scooter. "Good morning, Goliath," he said, patting the handlebars fondly. "We've an important mission this morning. Perhaps not as important in the grand scheme of things as winning World War two, but almost."

The footpath was smooth, but as he crossed the road to the shopping centre car park a car turned the corner and nicked Goliath's right mirror. The driver shook his fist and shouted but John steeled himself to carry on his quest, remembering Churchill's words of wisdom.

*You will never get to the end of the journey, if you stop to shy a stone at every dog that barks.*

He was within fifty metres of the entrance when the hailstorm hit. He revved Goliath to a speed previously unattempted and less than two minutes later, juddered to a stop on the tiles.

"Churchill said, *One always measures friendships by how they show up in bad weather,*" John told Goliath. "You are a friend indeed."

John steered Goliath to the trolley bay. The supermarket emptied as customers hurried to their cars, anxious to check for damage and get home. John locked his scooter, and put the walking stick into a trolley on which he leaned heavily as he proceeded to the baking supplies aisle. He turned the corner and noticed a youngster without a trolley or a basket walking toward him. The lad came to a standstill in front of John, and spoke in a soft menacing voice.

"Hand over your phone and wallet, Grandpa. I've got a knife, and I'll cut your bloody nose off if I have to."

John thought of the words of Churchill. *One ought never to turn ones back on a threatened danger and try to run away from it. If you do that you will double the danger. But if you meet the danger without flinching you reduce the danger by half. Never run away from anything, never.*

"No," John yelled, as he grabbed his walking stick. "You're not getting my money. piss off."

A deep voice echoed from behind him. "Piss off. You heard him. Piss off."

The youngster turned on his heel and ran. John turned his head. A large tattooed fellow in a West Coast Eagles singlet stood at the entrance to the aisle.

"You okay, mate?" he asked.

John felt a bit shaken but nodded and said, "Thanks."

John supported the Dockers but decided Churchill's advice of *Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak.*

*Courage is what it takes to sit down and listen,* meant this was not the time to divulge his allegiance to his new friend.

"I'll stay close for a bit," the man said. "I'm sure you could've handled it, but maybe he's got a few reinforcements. My name's Dave. What you here for mate? It must be pretty important to be out in this."

"I'm going to bake a cake," John replied. "For my granddaughter's little girl. She's been a bit poorly."

John read the items on his list and Dave took them from the shelves and placed them in the trolley, which made the task a lot quicker and easier.

"Only sour cream left," John said checking his list. "It'll be in the fridge. I like the Philadelphia brand best." Unfortunately there was no sour cream, Philadelphia or otherwise to be found. "Oh well, we've got some cream at home," he said. "I'll have to substitute that. Thanks so much for your help."

"No worries, mate," Dave replied. "Have you got time for a coffee? I've got something I'd like to show you."

John would have preferred to get home and start baking, but it seemed churlish to say so when Dave had done so much.

"Great," John answered. "I'll meet you at the coffee shop. My shout, what do you drink?"

"Decaf flat white, I'll be there in five minutes."

John took a while to get to the only open checkout.

"We should be closed," the operator grumbled. "There's no one here."

"The great Winston Churchill said, *Every man should ask himself every day whether he is not too accepting of negative solutions,*" said John.

"Well that's men for you," the operator said, obviously not understanding. "That'll be eighteen dollars twenty-five."

"You've charged me for two packets of caster sugar. I've only got one," John complained, returning the slip. The checkout lady sighed loudly, negated the slip and rang up another. John offered his credit card.

"The internet's down. Cash only," she snarled. Then with a nasty smile of victory added, "It's been hailing, you know."

John fished out his emergency fifty dollar note and took the change she slammed down on the counter top. He packed his groceries into a bag he kept in his pocket and returned them to the trolley for his trudge to Goliath, then drove slowly through the mall to the coffee shop. He ordered two flat whites, one a decaf, and sat down to wait.

Dave arrived a couple of minutes later and triumphantly plonked a container of Philadelphia sour cream on the table.

"I could see you weren't happy, so I drove over to Lakeside Mall. I knew I'd find it."

"Churchill said, *It is wonderful what great strides can be*



made when there is a resolute purpose behind them. He'd have approved of you, Dave," John said with a smile of gratitude. "Let me give you the cash for the cream."

"Nah, you're right," Dave replied with a shrug. "Here's the coffee."

The two men spent a happy ten minutes over coffee. Dave showed John a photo on his phone of his daughter at her graduation and John told Dave about his three daughters, eleven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. When John left he was pleased to find the storm had passed and the sky was an innocent blue. He took great care in crossing the road and was in sight of home when his bag burst, scattering his purchases on the footpath. *"It is a mistake to look too far ahead. Only one link in the chain of destiny can be handled at a time,"* he quoted as he squatted on one leg, to pick up his shopping and wrap the items in his jacket. "It's a blessing nothing's broken."

He arrived home. He baked. He iced.

His cakes were always a success and this one was a masterpiece. He made a cup of tea which he drank sitting in his favourite armchair. He had just finished cleaning up when he heard a key open the front door. Margaret, Natalie and little Ruby walked in.

"Poppa," Ruby yelled, running over to hug him. "Look, Poppa, I'm not tired. The doctor said I'm better now. I don't have to go to hospital again."

"Don't knock Poppa over," Natalie said. She walked over and gave John a hug.

"It's good news, Grandpa," she said softly. "She's officially in remission."

"Look, Mummy, Poppa's made a cake with my name on. It's not my birthday Poppa, I'm not seven today, only in June."

"I know," John said. "It's a cake for you, Ruby, because you've been so brave."

"I don't think we had the ingredients for a cake," Margaret said suspiciously. "You've been to the shops, haven't you? You know you're not supposed to go anywhere on your own. Oh, John, anything could have happened to you."

John could have quoted Churchill. *There is always much to be said for not attempting more than you can do and for making a certainty of what you try, but this principle like others in life and war has its exceptions.* It was, after all, the way John always lived his life, but when he looked at the anxious face of his wife of sixty-one years, he decided against it. So instead he patted her arm and said. "I only went to the shops down the road, dear. Nothing much ever happens there."

**"What is the use of living,  
if it be not to strive for noble  
causes and to make this muddled  
world a better place for those who  
will live in it after we are gone?"  
— Winston Churchill**

## Book Review

Valerie Latimour

### Paw Prints of Love

Gumnut Press 2020

For many years, whenever life has been difficult or frustrating, my catchphrase has been, "I'm running away to Fiji!" After reading Paw Prints of Love, I'm changing my preferred destination to Stonecrest Bay, a fictional town in the southwest of Western Australia, where the anthology is set.

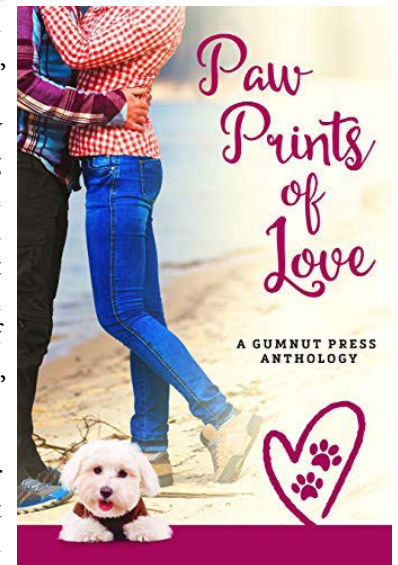
Local publisher Gumnut Press put together this collection of romance stories from submissions in response to a brief detailing certain places and characters in Stonecrest Bay. The ten short stories presented vary in style and character, and all make for satisfying reading. As expected in a romance anthology, there are plenty of attractive men and women of all ages and appearances, each with a backstory to overcome in their search for happily-ever-after. Drama and heartbreak abound on the journey to true love and happiness.

The central theme in Paw Prints of Love revolves around animals. Each story features scenes set at The Funny Bone, Stonecrest Bay's grooming salon. There are dogs and cats of all sizes and descriptions – from little fluffies to huge Rottweilers, from well-trained working dogs to irrepressible naughty puppies. Rescue animals share the pages with pedigree breeds. A supercilious cat named Pharaoh tugged at my heartstrings, bringing back memories of my own Pharaoh who allowed me to be his servant for nearly fifteen years.

The authors featured in Paw Prints of Love are all great storytellers. GWC's own Jenny Lynch penned 'Catching Curls', an enchanting story about surfers, and children affected by cancer.

The final story in the book is 'Chasing Love', written by P L Harris. The story is a fitting conclusion for the anthology, drawing together the threads of the previous tales and showcasing the best of Stonecrest Bay. Dee, owner of The Funny Bone, who has played at least a cameo in each story, is finally centre stage and finding love.

The unique beauty of the Western Australian coastline is brought to life in many of the stories, evoking a desire for blue skies and golden sand, and the sun setting over the Indian Ocean. Yes, next time life gets too hard, I'm running away to Stonecrest Bay!



The last rays of daylight shone upon the pyre. For the last three days mourners had gathered, meditated and prayed to farewell their guru. Her name was Skye. She had lived on top of a mountain at the southern tip of nowhere. By many she was considered a shaman, an angel or a mystic, while others proclaimed her to be a heretic, a witch or indeed the devil. Whether, a demon or a saint, Skye healed those in need. The sick, the injured, the mentally and emotionally unstable would seek her aid. Many travelled from far-away lands to receive their cure. Healing was instantaneous; Skye would lay her hands on a patient, close her eyes, utter strange bellowing noises, open her eyes and the pain, injury or instability disappeared immediately.

It was believed that Skye would live forever. Born at daybreak at the beginning of time, her name echoed the clear, reddish-blue sky. Skye seemed ageless, she maintained her beauty; radiant with unblemished smooth skin, emerald green eyes and long curly auburn hair. The tribal elders had always said that they remembered her as a beautiful mature woman from their childhood.

Without warning the healer was found lying on green grass outside her tent. Skye was a loner who spent her time praying to the gods, meditating and healing the sick; had never partnered.

Under a starry sky lit by a large orange full moon, a large crowd gathered for the cremation. The tribal chief lit a wooden torch, danced around the pyre reciting prayers, the onlookers joined in, chanting and drumming. The torch was thrown onto the pyre which instantly burst into flames. A sudden thunderous explosion reverberated



throughout the land. The flames receded, a bright blue light rose from the ashes which transformed into a winged apparition. The mourners became transfixed as the spirit altered into a large black eagle. The bird hovered and then swooped down over the gathering, before giving a deafening shriek and flying northward.

Hours later, at the other side of the world, the first rays of daylight shone upon the

top of a mountain at the northern edge of nowhere. An eagle hovered above, as a young woman screamed with pain. Her husband and an old woman knelt beside her; comforting her. The three, entranced by the imminent birth, weren't aware of the large bird suspended above. The eagle transformed itself into a spiritual being, descended and remained just above the mother's head. The mother yelled with excruciating pain. The old midwife encouraged her to push. A bright blue light, which resembled a halo, surrounded the young woman. The husband wiped the perspiration from her forehead. One final push, the blue light disappeared, a baby screamed. The midwife cut the umbilical cord and placed the babe in the mother's arms. The mother beamed with immense joy. The father wrapped his arms around wife and child.

The baby smiled. Her green emerald eyes and sprouting locks of auburn hair brightened her face. The three adults looked towards the horizon, entranced by the beauty of the golden sun rising and bringing light to a clear and colourful sky. In their hearts they knew the newborn would be named Skye.

## Just Couldn't Do It

Valerie Latimour

*It was a dark and stormy night.* Paralysed by the cliché, she couldn't write another word. She flirted briefly with the idea of a purple-prose storm description, as immortalised by the original dark and stormy night. She wrote and deleted sentence after sentence, desperately trying to fling herself into the task, to write a piece that would live up to that daunting first sentence.

Defeated, she tried another tack. Perhaps a piece full of clichés and overused words? Again, her inner editor screamed as she tried to assemble a collection of tired words and phrases, beaten down from years of overuse. She couldn't do it; it was too cruel to the poor things. She abandoned that effort as futile as well, and cast about for something new and interesting to do with the phrase.

An editing exercise, where an author started with the awful phrase and then changed it to something else? A poem, commenting on changes in literary fashion over the years? A story that began with someone reading Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1830 novel *Paul Clifford*, where the quote originated? That had potential, if only she'd thought of it sooner. She filed it away for a possible future writing exercise, then closed down the over-thinking portion of her brain and allowed nonsense to flow from her fingertips, through the keyboard and into the Word document.

With a quick glance at the time, she decided that 250-odd words would do. Almost 10.30, and she still had to print out her masterpiece, and pick up something for lunch on the way to the meeting.

## Poppycock

Jenny Lynch

"It was a dark and stormy night"  
or ... "Once Upon a Time"  
Hmmm, which opening cliché should I use  
to start my little rhyme?  
Do I wish to write a mystery?  
or a classic fairy tale?  
With those woeful story starters  
both story lines will fail!  
They both fail to grab attention  
No reader will be smitten  
with those hapless opening phrases  
that both need to be rewritten!  
"A storm waged in a moonless night"  
That sounds better for the mystery!  
And for the fairy tale, I'll write  
"Long ago in history!"  
But which to write? I cannot choose!  
I've developed Writer's Block  
Thank God, you'll say, we've all been spared  
from her usual Poppycock!

**Prompt:**  
**Begin with the**  
**words: It was a dark**  
**and stormy night**



## A Different Kind of Lesson

Joyce Iles

Many, many years ago I started my first year at Princess May Girls High School. This school catered for students from some outlying suburbs from the precincts of the Fremantle area and as far away as Cottesloe.

In my second year the intake of students was becoming too many for this building to manage all the pupils enrolled, with a result that some days a portion of the second year students attended classes off-site.

On certain days of the week these students, I among them, were taught at a place once commonly known as The Fremantle Lunatic Asylum. It was built by convict labour and opened in 1864 as a deposit for certain types of female patients, ranging from disturbed or problematic people to those who were considered severely mentally deranged.

We had been given strict instructions to keep within the boundaries of our classrooms and forbidden to wander around any other part of the building. Only a small portion of the rooms were being utilised by the Education Department – the rest were kept locked. Naturally this only served to whet my appetite and those of my friends.

During one of our lunch breaks, the four of us decided to wander off and take a look at some of the areas that were considered off limits. After examining part of the exterior of the building, we found a window that was not too high and felt it might be the best form of entry. I'm really not sure how we managed to open it but eventually we were able to climb inside and walk through the empty rooms.

I have to admit it was a rather eerie experience – maybe because we knew we shouldn't be there and felt guilty. Our steps were rather tentative and slow at first, as we explored the interior, even though we felt there was little chance of our presence being discovered, because of the distance away from the rooms in general use.

We felt strangely disturbed, despite having each other for company, and remained close together for mutual support. The musty smell and the seemingly airless atmosphere all helped us to remain as quiet as possible during our progress through the rooms.

As we turned and looked at each other with perhaps an unspoken desire to leave, there was a sudden bang, as though a door had slammed. We stopped in our tracks listening for footsteps or other noises, but no other sound followed. The place fell silent again.

My first thought was, *We've been discovered*; this was immediately dismissed as impossible. Then a feeling of dread took over. I looked at the faces of my friends and I saw cold fear and a 'knowing'. A knowing that we were amid something that we didn't want to put into words. Although initially rooted to where we stood, a sudden rush of shared instinct made us dash for the open window and we piled out onto the ground below, thankful to be in the open air again.

We never discussed this experience with one another – perhaps putting this into actual words would make it all seem too real; or maybe some of us were afraid we would be thought foolish for believing we had experienced a

ghostly encounter. I never forgot that day and even now the memory is still quite clear.

The building has since been dedicated to other uses, such as a home for old women, and later, a Maritime Museum. It is now known as The Fremantle Arts Centre.

Research by me has found that it is considered to be one of the most haunted places in Fremantle, with many reports of ghostly experiences by visitors.

Two in particular are mentioned. There is one ghost known as The Grey Lady who often appears standing next to a staircase. Legend has it that this woman had a mental disorder that was exacerbated by the disappearance of her daughter, and she still wanders the halls in search of her.

Another sighting by many visitors is known as The Pushing Ghost. Several women visiting the site have claimed to have nearly fallen down a flight of stairs after supposedly being pushed by something that wasn't there.

These are just a few of the known examples of 'hauntings'; however, as insignificant as my personal experience may sound, I still believe that we had every reason to believe that what we felt that day was more than just our imagination.



### Desire

Barbara Gurney

I want to touch the texture of life amid calm or chaos  
See splendour; let elegance drape across my skin

Be there  
Not here in the ordinary

I want to float around diamonds in inky skies  
Grasp moonbeams; let them squiggle over my palms

Be there  
Not here in the ordinary

I want to float around tree tops of aromatic leaves  
Grasp flowers; let their fragrance inhabit my fingers

Be there  
Not here in the ordinary

I want to float around tranquil water in aqua seas  
Grasp seashells; let them forever be mine

Not here in the ordinary  
I want to be there

## A Day in the Life

Jenny Lynch

Like most council houses in Forthlin Road, the front door at number twenty was never locked. Rapping the brass door knocker just once, Ivan entered without waiting for an invitation. The sound of singing and guitar music drew him straight into the front living room.

"Hello Mr. M," he shouted above the noise.

The middle-aged man seated on the couch abruptly stopped singing, mid-sentence, and smiled. "Hello Ivan, lad. How many times have I told you? Just call me Jim."

"What's that you were singing? Skiffle music? Sounded great," Ivan grinned, seating himself into an old armchair.

"Yes, lad. I'm practicing Lonnie Donegan's 'Lost John' song. I've got a gig at the Town Hall Dance tonight," Jim said. "If you're after the boys, they're upstairs. I think our Paul is teaching our Mike a new song."

"What, on that nickel-plated trumpet you bought him?" Ivan asked.

"No, lad, the cheeky sod went and traded that in for a new acoustic guitar. A Framus Zenith model 17 nonetheless. Go on up if you like," Jim said, as he started strumming his guitar again.

"I've actually come to drag Paul out for a while. I've started playing occasionally in a new band and we've got a gig later at the church fete. I thought Paul might enjoy meeting the boys. We play skiffle too, you know," Ivan said, as he started up the steep narrow stairs.

Five minutes later, Paul leapt down the stairs, two at a time, with Ivan close behind him.

"See you then," said Ivan, as he headed out the front door.

"Not heading out then, son?" Jim asked. "You should go with him, you know. It'll do you good. Ever since your mother died, you've been spending too much time home here with our Mike. Go and enjoy yourself for a change, like a normal fifteen-year-old. You never know what might happen. But as sure as hell, nothing good is ever going to happen if you hang around here like a bad smell all the time."

Hesitating for just a few minutes, Paul took off down Forthlin Road, chasing after his friend Ivan, shouting at the top of his voice, "Hey Ivan, wait up!"

The warm sunny weather brought out the crowds on that day, 6 July 1957. The field behind St Peter's Church in Woolton, Liverpool was heaving with people of all ages, enjoying the annual church fete. Craft stalls, cake stalls, and stalls with games like hoop-la had already started attracting huge crowds. Ivan led Paul directly to the centre of the field, where an empty stage stood.



"Damn, they're not here yet," Ivan said, looking around. "They shouldn't be long though. The parade was scheduled for two o'clock. It must be past that time now."

Just then, two old lorries edged slowly across the field, with horns tooting to get patrons out of the way. Paul stared at a beautiful girl seated on a throne in the first lorry.

"Well, razz my berries!" he exclaimed

to Ivan. "She's a real beauty. I'm guessing she's the Rose Queen?"

"I guess so, but she's not the one I brought you to see. It's the lads playing in the band on the second lorry. They're the members of the band I've been playing with. I want you to meet them," Ivan replied. The lorry came to a standstill and the band members jumped down from it as soon as it stopped.

"John!" Ivan called out. "Come and meet my friend, Paul."

John ambled towards Ivan. He was closely followed by the five other band members.

"John, this is Paul, my friend from the Liverpool Institute," Ivan said. "Paul plays guitar and he sings. He has loads of talent."

"Is that so?" John asked, nodding his head at Paul. John then turned and introduced the others. "This is Colin, our drummer, Eric, our guitarist, Rod, our banjo player, Pete, our washboard player and Len, who plays tea chest bass, just like Ivan does."

Paul nodded hello at the other five, who then began offloading their instruments from the lorry to set them up on the stage. John started warming up, getting ready for the performance. Strumming his guitar, he noticed Paul frowning.

"What's up?" he asked Paul.

"Um, your guitar – it's out of tune. Sounds like it's set in 'G Banjo' tuning mode. May I?" He extended his arm for John's guitar. Within four minutes, Paul had it tuned to perfection.

"I'm impressed," John said, testing out the now perfectly

**Theme:  
Chance Encounter**



tuned guitar. He handed it back to Paul. "Show me what you've got."

Paul grinned. He slipped the guitar strap over his head and played and sang his heart out: Eddie Cochran's "Twenty Flight Rock" was followed by Gene Vincent's "Be-Bop-A-Lula" and a medley of songs by one of Paul's favourites, Little Richard.

"That was unreal," John said. "What other talents do you have?"

"Not many," Paul replied, "although I do like to write songs. I tinker on the old upright piano at home most nights."

"Music or lyrics?" John raised one eyebrow.

"Both, actually," Paul replied.

"Me too!" John's eyes lit up. "I don't suppose you'd like to join our band, by any chance? We need another vocalist who can play guitar."

"Maybe," Paul smiled. "What are you called, by the way?"

John turned to the other band members. "Hey lads, I think we've just found the newest member of The Quarrymen."

#### FOOTNOTE:

*John Lennon (1940-1980) and Paul McCartney (born 1942) not only played together in the band, The Quarrymen (1957-1960), but also in The Beatles (1960-1970). Their songwriting partnership is the best known and most successful musical collaboration (based on the number of records sold worldwide.) They published 180 jointly credited songs.*

*This story is a fictionalised version of some true events which did occur on 6 July 1957. How lucky is the world that Paul McCartney did actually attend the church fete on that fortuitous day and got to meet John Lennon? Talk about a 'Chance Encounter'!*



## If Only

Mary Burke

I recall the calm sound of your voice.  
I recall the peace within me.

I imagined you dancing.  
I imagined you full of joy.

I dreamt you were so near.  
I dreamt you were calling my name.

I longed to enfold you gently.  
I longed for your arrival.

I reached out in love to touch you.  
I reached for your outstretched hand.

I smiled that it was me you sought.  
I smiled at my good fortune.

I blessed this second chance in life.  
I blessed this precious moment.

I sighed as your grace faded.  
I sighed as your vision left.

## The Conversation

Joyce Iles

I heard her say my name just now  
Though she knew not I was there.  
I drew back in the shadows  
Though I stood close as I dare.

Another who was at her side  
Listened with all ears  
Nodding with excitement  
At the words that she could hear.

Most people love a scandal  
And dishing out the dirt,  
To spread about to one and all  
No matter who gets hurt.

When I'm the subject of the tale  
It seems a different matter  
To hear what they were saying  
In their harmful idle chatter.

But it's kinder to forget I heard  
Those words they spoke of me  
I'll forgive them and not bear a grudge  
And this will set me free.

## The Visitor

Lynne Tatam

In the eerie moonlight  
Walking down the path  
I tripped over something  
Making my friend laugh

Looking for the culprit  
My eyes did spy  
A strange glowing object  
Had it fallen from the sky?

"Leave it alone," called Jack,  
"It's from outer space!"  
I was tempted to poke fun  
Until I saw his face

Slowly it rose into the air  
I heard my mate moan  
"Jack, don't be scared  
It's just a bloody drone."

With that, we both cracked up  
And headed for the shed  
Until we saw the mother ship  
Howling, we turned and fled.

## Over the Moon

Sioban Timmer

The man in the moon  
With his myth and romance  
Of starlight and moonbeams  
To make your heart dance

I'm so over his waning  
And his waxing to boot  
If he's full or a crescent  
I don't give a hoot

For the man in the moon  
Sitting way up on high  
Doesn't see lonely tears  
Doesn't hear when I cry

I would rather a guy  
With a warm hand to hold  
Than moonbeams and starlight  
When the evening turns cold

So give me a man  
I can snuggle and spoon  
'Cos I'm totally over  
The man in the moon.

Theme:  
Over the moon

## Thanks, Mum

Pat Marshall

"Mum, stop! Look!" Fifteen-year-old Kelly pointed to the bundle of ginger fur lying on the road verge. Both Kelly and her mother were animal lovers and always on the lookout for stray or injured creatures. Audrey brought the car to a rapid stop as Kelly opened the door and ran along the verge. She knelt to look more closely at the grubby bundle and found herself being stared at by a fluffy young cat with pain-filled eyes – the greenest eyes she had ever seen in a cat.

Audrey arrived carrying a creature cage and a towel she had removed from the boot of the car. She gently felt the cat for broken bones, decided there were none, wrapped him in the towel and put him in the cage. The two walked quickly back to the car, Kelly carrying him very carefully. She put the cage on the back seat and fitted the seat belt in place over it.

"What next, Mum? The vet?"

"Yes, we'll get Dr Allen to check him over, and see if he has a microchip. I wonder how long he has been lying by the side of the road?"

"He wasn't there when we went in to town – at least, I don't think he was. He looks as if he was dumped! What a horrible thing to do. Some people don't deserve to have the care of animals."

"Well, we can make sure he gets a good new home – if he hasn't been microchipped."

Audrey turned into the vet's car park and stopped as close to the entrance as possible.

Susan at the reception counter

took one look at the trio, exclaimed "What have you got this time?" and took them straight in to see the vet.

After a very careful and thorough examination Dr Allen agreed with Audrey that the cat had no broken bones, but he did have a nasty gash on his left rear leg, and a few bruises.

"He's only young – looks to be about 8 months old," he said. "I'll leave Julie to dress that gash and check him for a microchip."

After a careful search, Julie, one of the practice nurses, decided the ginger patient hadn't been chipped.

"It looks as if he is going to be our responsibility for the time being," Audrey looked at Kelly. "You won't mind that, will you?"

"No, Mum. I'll look after him. We need to make sure he is in good health before we try to re-home him. We'll need to give him a name."

"What do you think his name should be?" Audrey asked. "Something to reflect his colour?"

"Yes, that's a good idea. What about Rusty? Marmalade? I know! Rufus!"

"Yes. That suits him. OK, Rufus, home we go."

Over the next few weeks, Rufus settled into the routine of the Jackson household, then, one day Audrey heard "Mum, look on the garage roof" and there was Rufus, sunning himself.

"How did he get up there?" she asked.

"Probably through my bedroom window. I'm going to spell his name ROOFUS from now on, and with such a special name I don't think he'll be

## About Roofus

This is a series of very short stories about a small ginger cat.

Recently there was an Art Exhibition at the Knowledge Centre, and some of the artists were working on their pictures, with extra articles on display for sale. Among the items that Lorraine Kerridge was displaying was a small portrait (about twenty centimetres square) of a ginger cat. I fell for him, and took him home, where he inspired me to produce three stories. Two are reproduced here.

I'm sure there will be more to come.

Pat Marshall

hanging around at the shelter for very long."

"Yes, he's fully recovered now. It's certainly time we dropped him off there."

"I was almost hoping that we could keep him. It would be nice to have a permanent animal around the place, not just one in transit to another home."

"We will, one day."

"Thanks, Mum."



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## An Unexpected Visitor

Pat Marshall

"Mum, come and look at this. You won't believe what Roofus has brought home." Intrigued, I joined Cassie at the door.

Roofus had been with us about five weeks and had settled in well, to the extent that he was sleeping on Cassie's bed at night, despite my objections.

Her birthday present was a much-loved member of the family, and Cassie was very responsible in taking care of him, grooming him at least once a day. Roofus at times objected to the grooming when his coat had developed tangles, which, being so fluffy, seemed to be most days.

At first, we had tried to keep him inside, but he convinced us he should be able to come and go as he pleased.

Even though he had a cat door to use, Roofus often called to us to be let in through another door. That day, when he called and Cassie went to let him in, he had a friend with him. A most unusual friend for a cat. I was as surprised as Cassie.

With Roofus was a creature we ended up calling 'Black Jack', shortened to B.J.

Black Jack was a magpie.

Obviously hand-reared, it seemed as if Black Jack was used to being around cats as well as people, as he confidently walked beside Roofus to the back door! I wondered where he had come from, and hoped his carer wasn't worried about him. (I assumed 'carer' because I couldn't imagine actually 'owning' a magpie!)

Roofus and B.J. came indoors and settled together in one of the lounge chairs. They seemed to accept each other so easily I started to wonder if they had in fact been reared together, and had become separated in some way. Perhaps B.J. had been searching for Roofus and had finally found him, in a new home, and had decided to move in with him. From the way the two of them had settled down it seemed B.J. was intending to stay. I wondered what we were going to feed to a magpie, then remembered there was some minced meat in the refrigerator. That would have to do until I could check with the vet for a more appropriate diet.

It would seem Cassie had ended up with two pets for her birthday!

What a treat for us all.

## Life on the Sepik River

Graham Bartley-Smith

With its headwaters in West Irian, the Sepik river winds its way 700 miles to the coast southeast of Wewak.

The people of this great northern river in New Guinea were reputed to be head-hunters and cannibals. But they are the greatest sculptors of wood in New Guinea. Whether a house utensil in clay or bamboo, or a weapon, it would be decorated with original designs. These were carved into the wooden figures of birds, flowers, crocodiles and life-size human figures. The crocodile motif was used regularly; nicked by razor into the chests and backs of youths during initiation ceremonies which occurred on the upper floor of the House Tamboran (spirit house).

We all know what a cowrie shell is. These were notched into face carvings as eyes.

During the 1930s when explorers trekked into mountain regions, previously uncontacted people were eager to possess the shells. These shells were traded over the mountain ridges from the coast – of great value to the highland people as they could be used for purchase of vegetables from patrol explorers. Shells were often preferred to steel tomahawks.

Feuding was a way of life in the central highlands, which took many years to suppress. To live in peace was a totally new concept to these men who had worked continuously preparing arrows, bows, clubs and stone axes.

At a time of peace, compensation could be discussed. Some guidelines were:

Fifteen pigs for a man's life (some worth more than others).

Five pigs for one eye blinding.

Three pigs for a lame leg and so on down the scale of injuries.



The cowrie shell and the gold-coloured kina shell shaped into a crescent, also could be used to top up the payment.



# Top of the Cake

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## One Moonlit Night

Thea Adams

Mr Diddle was in his element, a beautiful moonlit night with music and friends. He sat quietly with a glass of wine, back against a tree, gazing at the reflection of the moon in the little brook whispering its way over the stony bed.

Thomas Kat was his oldest friend and although self-taught, a master with a violin. The music pulsed through Mr Diddle's body. Had he been a younger man he would have been dancing on the grass as young Francis Porringer and Amanda Scoop were doing. Amanda's little terrier, Jack, frisked around them uttering sharp yips of happiness, trying to attract first one then the other of them.

As the violin's notes faded away the two young people dropped down in the grass beside Thomas.

"Oh, that was such fun," said Amanda breathlessly.

"Mmmm, it was, wasn't it?" smiled Francis, and Thomas grinned at them both. Jack jumped into Mr Diddle's lap and licked his chin.

"So, you two, what are you going to do? You know you can't go on this way. You'll have to do something to reconcile your parents."

"And hell might freeze over!" Francis exclaimed. "Amanda's parents are the same. Just because I'm a singer they don't think I could support a wife. But we can do it together. As you saw Amanda is a fantastic dancer and between us we'll manage."

"Mr Diddle," interjected Amanda, "I really don't want the opulent lifestyle Mum and Dad seem to think is proper. All I need is Francis." And she snuggled into his side.

"That's all very well my dears, but life is more than love alone. You need to be very sure," Mr Diddle explained and sipped his wine again.

In the shadows, unobserved, a figure stepped towards them. A wealthy man, a friend of Amanda's father, approached, drawn by the music. Knowing he was a preferred suitor for Amanda he strutted forward confidently. Lucas Heifernan was sure of himself. He knew he had wealth and property and although not handsome he was reckoned to be passably good-looking.

When Lucas realised he had come across Amanda with Francis he drew himself up to his full height, his face taking on a disapproving expression and took an aggressive stance.

"Amanda, what on earth are you doing here in the middle of the night, cavorting like a wanton?"

"Oh!" she spluttered, "What are you doing here, Lucas? Spying on me?"

"Amanda, you know I only have your interests at heart. Your parents are happy for me to keep an eye on you. Once we are married you won't want to do things like this."

"Don't be such a stick in the mud. And for the hundredth time I'm not going to marry you ... ever. I don't love you." As she spoke Amanda stood, dragging Francis up with her.

Little Jack, sensitive to the tension in the air as dogs are, jumped out of Mr Diddle's lap and barked his defiant protection of his mistress, following her as she and Francis tried to move away from Lucas.

The three of them, plus Jack, reached the edge of the brook. The young couple leapt to the other side with no trouble, but Lucas, with his more portly figure, landed awkwardly on the wet stones in his failed attempt to follow them over the reflection of the moon. His twisted ankle meant he couldn't pursue Amanda, Francis and the happy barking dog. As they ran off Thomas played a triumphant jig on his violin.

Theme:  
Over the moon



## Shortcuts Rarely Are

Sioban Timmer

When you are small  
Life is all zebra crossings  
Everything moves around you  
All experiences are new,  
they happen to you, for you  
And you could be mistaken  
for believing it IS all about you,  
As you teeter along for the ride

As a young adult  
You're a global pedestrian  
Trying to keep pace  
as life happens around you  
You push on, learn the difficulties  
when you try to travel  
against the traffic  
It's really not about you after all  
You move with the herd

When you're an adult  
You can just take a stroll  
The rules are clear, you know when  
to go, stop or push the amber  
Young enough to feel  
like the part you play  
will be important, and enough  
Old enough to know you're a part,  
but not the whole  
You merge and hit cruise control  
for a while

Then you grow up  
Perhaps you have simply  
seen, enough  
Done enough, experienced enough  
to understand  
You can pre-empt others' direction,  
adopt a form of empathetic travelling  
That comes from living and loving,  
having and losing  
You know who you want to let walk  
beside you

We all map it out as we go along  
Learning from the wrong turns  
and overgrown paths  
The road we carve out as we go,  
pave for ourselves as we change  
The markers to check  
and the signs to watch out for  
Because when it comes to  
the journey of self  
Shortcuts rarely are.



# CIRCLING THE WORLD



We're forever grateful for the continuing support of our International friends. This time Tony and Les links old bards – while we receive a favourite storyline of a dog from Isobel and some exciting publishing news from Ron.

## A Dreich Morning

Isobel Quinn – Falkirk Writers Circle

It was one of those dreich, dark mornings and we had all slept in. Mum was getting on to Dad for not setting the alarm properly, and Dad was muttering something under his breath as he headed for the bathroom. I crept downstairs as quietly as I could, not wanting to get in the way as Mum and Dad rushed around trying to get ready for work.

“Bye,” shouted Dad, grabbing a piece of toast and hurrying out the door. Mum sighed, and took a drink of her tea.

“Right, Tommy, I’ve got work to do today, so you go out and play in the garden for a little while,” said Mum, opening the door for me. I eagerly dashed out. I knew my favourite ball was in the garden somewhere.

Mum works from home. She writes things, so she spends a lot of time at her computer.

I found my ball and was having fun with it when Whiskers from next door jumped up on to the fence. She just sat there watching me. I stared at her for a while, but she didn’t react so I went back to chasing my ball. After a while Whiskers stalked off, her tail in the air. Not much fun

is Whiskers, never wants to play with me. I decided to go and see what Mum was doing. She was still at her computer so I settled myself down on the sofa and had a nap.

I woke to hear Mum in the kitchen. It must be lunchtime. I mooched through to see what was on offer. Mum was making ham sandwiches. Yummy. I love ham.

After lunch I had another play in the garden. No sign of Whiskers. I surprised a pigeon who flew up onto the telephone wire where it cooed away to itself. Silly birds, pigeons. I was getting fed up playing on my own so I went back inside to see if Mum was finished on her computer.

“Sorry, Tommy, I’ve got to get this article finished. Dad will be home from work soon. He’ll play with you when he comes in.”

I sat on the seat beside the window so I could watch for Dad. After an age I heard the sound of his car and saw it turning into the drive. I jumped down and ran to meet him.

“Okay. Let me in. I’m pleased to see you too,” Dad laughed. He was obviously in a better mood than this morning. Then I heard it. Joy of joys. The rattle of my lead. “Come on, Tommy, let’s go for a walk in the park.”

## Wordsmithing Wordsworth 2020

Tony Corbin Basingstoke Writers Circle

I wandered lonely as a Cloud except I had my phone  
Floating on high o’er Vales and Hills, I heard a ringing tone.  
All at once I saw a crowd, on my smartphone screen they mill  
Dressed in green and yellow, like a giant Daffodil.  
Beside the Lake, beneath the trees,  
Discarded plastic drifting in the breeze.

Light pollution dulls the stars that long before did shine  
And did gleam and glimmer on the Milky Way  
Now trash stretches in never-ending line  
Along the littoral of the bay.  
Then thousand tourists I see at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in regimented dance.

Weak waves break, the algae in slow advance  
Where sparkling waves have long since fled,  
A Poet could not be gay perchance  
When our surrounding world is dead.  
I gazed – and gazed – but little thought  
What pain this scene to me had brought.

When on my futon, prone I lie  
Depressed or in brooding mood,  
The image flashes upon my inward eye  
Of what, once, was bliss and solitude.  
Only then my heart with pleasure fills,  
Distant memories of those Daffodils.

Dreich: (Scottish) dreary, bleak

## Hitler’s First Bloody Nose

Ron Powell of The Tiny Writers of Penarth, Wales, tells us: On the personal front, to coincide with the 80th anniversary of events in the air above the British Isles in the summer of 1940, I’ve published an illustrated book on Amazon, titled, *The Battle of Britain, Hitler’s First Bloody Nose*.

You’ll be all too aware that many Australian pilots took part in the Battle, and among those profiled in the book is Richard Glyde, one of those who died. His story sits alongside those of other pilots in a narrative that outlines the forces they were up against, the equipment and tactics they employed and how the combat unfolded. I’ve also tried to highlight the historic importance of the Battle, which really was Hitler’s first defeat.

Adding illustrations was a new departure for me, and it stretched my IT skills to breaking point at times. But I think it was worth the effort, as anyone interested can see by viewing the book on Amazon, where it’s available as an e-book or paperback.

<https://www.amazon.com.au/dp/B087YJ1JV5>



O. Disser-Poyntment  
Literary Agent  
Rowling Mews, London  
15th March 1591

Dear Mr Shakespeare,

I refer to the recent receipt in this agency of your various (unsolicited) manuscripts for our consideration. I regret to inform you that on this occasion your work does not meet the exacting standard we require of our authors. As Deidre my assistant always tells me, some are born great, some achieve greatness and others have greatness thrust upon them; unfortunately sir, you have evaded all three.

I hope this rejection does not come as too much of a disappointment (although surely it can hardly be a surprise). Each year we receive several thousand manuscripts (unsolicited) but we take on just two or three new writers; you can see what you are up against. I find your work is flawed on numerous counts and by way of kindly guidance I draw your attention to but a few of these below.

On a general point you have an annoying habit of inventing words and phrases; in fact, considerably more than I could shake a stick at. I must ask, is our current repertoire of words insufficient for you, or do you lack an awareness of their existence? Just one example is the word apostrophe, with your suggested examples of its usage. I can't help feeling that this will lead to much confusion in the future in our children's education, let alone their parents. And how our vegetable sellers will struggle with tomatoes and potatoes. What's more, if all children made up their own words who would mark their spelling tests? I urge you to desist with this unnecessary complication.

Your work also suffers too often from much indecision. An example resides in the sonnet you submitted which begins "Shall I compare thee to a summers day". Quite frankly if you the writer is unsure, why should the reader be bothered. My advice is if you are in doubt leave it out. In any event the sonnet works adequately without the first line; simple as.

Indecision also manifests itself in your submission *Hamlet* with the Prince bemoaning to himself "To be or not to be, that is the question". He then goes on interminably. Although he eventually gets to the point you should cut to the chase and remove the waffle (a little word of my own). Thus, an improvement would be "To be or not to be, that is the question. The answer is, to be, so get over it". Do you see how that works so much better?

I note also rather a lot of defeatism in your writing; considerably more than our readers would enjoy. One example of many is in the sonnet commencing "Farewell, thou art too dear for my possessing". To be blunt, Mr Shakespeare, nobody likes a loser. I suggest you replace the first line with "Cheerio, you weren't that special anyway."

I must advise you that plot is of the essence in good storytelling. However, resorting to heart tugging is not a good plot method, it's a cheap trick. In your *Romeo and Juliet* for example, one lover dies, then the other lover dies, then the first lover comes to life again (or is it the

**Les Williams – Thames Valley Writers Circle shares his short story, in the form of a letter, written for a competition a couple of years ago. He says, "Agents do not always get it right!"**

other way round?). Play-goers would depart the theatre broken-hearted, perhaps never to return. You should aim to have them leaving cheered up. I suggest you make an amendment as follows; one lover dies, then the other lover dies, then the first lover comes to life again and then the second lover also comes to life again, perhaps with a loud and cheery 'only joking'.

Apart from the flaw noted above your *Romeo and Juliet* has an adequate story line; two gangs of young bloods battling a turf war on the streets, with a girl involved. Have you considered setting it to music?

It is impossible for me to overstress the importance of titles. It is the title that first grabs the attention of an audience. Consider therefore your title *Much Ado About Nothing*. Ask yourself, William (can I presume a first name familiarity?), who wants to waste a whole evening at the theatre watching a play about nothing? Well, not me for starters. Playgoers should feel they have been yanked by the codpiece into the theatre and then drizzled with drama. So much more gripping than *Much Ado About Nothing* therefore would be *Terrible Fuss About Something*. Do you see the difference; did you just feel a tug on your codpiece?

In a similar vein I refer to your title *All's Well that Ends Well*. Where is the mystery in that! Theatre goers will be saying to themselves "Let's not bother with that one, it pans out fine in the end." How about changing the title to something like, *All's Well, but It's Not Looking Good*?

Just as titles are important so too are the names you choose for your characters. I have in mind here your character Macbeth. A far too innocent-sounding name methinks. Greater impact would be achieved with something more sinister; Mac-the-knife-Beth for example. Well 'ard, or what!

And now to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Fairies and stuff. Sorry William, but what were you on? I am left wondering if that 'funny tobacco' has now reached Stratford-upon-Avon?

I could go on and on, just as you do, but to conclude I feel that if you act on my helpful advice you may secure some modest success, although I should warn that we literary agents are rarely wrong. If you insist on persevering despite your many short-comings, I understand some writers are now resorting to the use of home-printing presses for so called self-publishing. Be warned, William, at the end of that apparent rainbow awaits an overflowing midden.

I shall return your manuscripts by carriage immediately.

Sincerely Yours,

O. Disser-Poyntment.

Ps: Have you considered joining a Writers Circle?





Poppy McNamara, Year 12

### A Mother's Love

I remember the day I first saw my mother cry - shortly after I'd just turned six. Of course, she'd cried before, but certainly not in front of me. She was always smiling when I came into the room, determined to keep a straight face and act as if I were normal. As if everything was perfectly okay and that she didn't sob into my father's chest every night. And then one day, all of it changed in a heartbeat.

"Here, Bub, have another chip." My mother offered me the brown paper bag and nodded. I remember her dangling bracelet tickling my arm, making me giggle. The sun shone brightly just above the horizon, making the ocean glisten as if it were made of diamonds. The waves lapped lazily at the shore and the warm breeze tousled my mother's long hair. I was beginning to tire, listening to the sounds of the tide rolling in and out.



I looked up at my mother, but she was looking away, beyond the sea. Her face glowed in the amber light and her blue eyes looked like stones of turquoise and aquamarine. She wore a pink shawl and a white cotton dress with a pretty embroidered hem. Her leather sandals were worn and the stitching was frayed, but she didn't mind. She looked down at me and smiled, before scrunching her nose and sticking her tongue out. I remember copying her and laughing until it hurt my cheeks.

I turned back around and she clutched me to her warm belly. A single seagull wandered over, a few metres in front of us. It squawked as its head turned to look at us, eyeing the walking frame curiously.

"Mummy, can he have one?" I reached for the bag but she already held it in her slender hand.

"Okay, but only one. We don't want all his friends

showing up." She opened the bag before looking back at me.

"Do you want to throw it?" Her words were soft and her smile kind. I remember pausing for a moment, before taking a vinegary chip. The bird came closer but stopped when I waved hello. I clutched her knee, stumbled over the sand but suddenly I was up and moving. I remember it only took two steps to reach the seagull, but they were the most important two steps of my life. Without any help from the walking frame, I actually did it. I walked for the first time in my life. I remember saying, "Don't be scared, have a chip," and placing it on the sand for the bird. It pecked gratefully and walked away.

I turned around, but my mother was silent. I scanned her face for any sign of emotion, but she just stared at me. In mere seconds, everything had changed. She began to well up and sniff, beckoning to me. I tried to walk back hastily but fell into her lap. She laughed and hugged me tightly.

"You did it, Bub! I can't believe you did it!" She continued to laugh through her tears for another ten minutes before turning my face to her.

"I'm so, so proud of you," she cooed, and I smiled as she kissed my forehead.

Thanks to the talented Arpiring Authors at Southern  
River College for their work. Wishing them all the best for  
completing Year 12 in these difficult times.



## A Side of Couch



I've made a fool of myself.

I've betrayed the ones I love the most, and now I'm in the dark. Shut out from those I hold dearest. It's my own fault, I knew it was wrong. I knew it would hurt them, wound them. Yet I still did it. I couldn't help myself.

The soft new lounge cushions just looked so ... chewable. No one was home, it was just me, my canines and a whole couch full of fluffy heaven. I only planned to nibble on one, just for a moment. But that moment turned into another moment, and that nibble turned into a full-blown frenzy and then the living room looked like a snow storm and the family came home and they shook their fingers and crossed their brows and now I'm a 'bad dog' that's 'not allowed inside'.

It's what I deserve.

But maybe, just maybe, I can prove myself to them. Prove that I'm not a bad dog, that I can be trusted inside the house and in their hearts once again.

With a newfound determination I began my search for the perfect peace offering, a symbol of my love and regret for my actions. It would be a difficult, treacherous journey finding an item capable of holding such great feelings of passion and remorse, but I was willing to face anything to show my family that the immature decisions of my past do not define the dog I am today. Even if said immature decisions took place only an hour ago, I am a changed dog.

I scavenged the vast landscape far and wide, under the swings, near the playhouse, and even behind the feral beast my former self would cower and run from, the lawn mower. It scared me no longer. The new me was a fierce, brave protector, not scared of anyone or anything – then the sprinklers turned on.

The sudden cold attack pierced my golden coat in showers of tiny wet knives, I had to seek shelter if I wanted to survive. I scurried beneath the patio and watched on as the backyard was assaulted by the grounds evil spray.

I sunk to the floor and wallowed in my own self-pity. How was I supposed to find the perfect peace offering from underneath the patio? If I didn't hurry, they'd forever think I'm a bad dog and move on, get a newer, good-er dog. I said I was a fierce, brave protector, but I was certainly not acting like one.

Just as all seemed hopeless, something caught my eye. There, hidden amongst the dirt, was a sock. Not just any sock, but a baby sock. The baby's baby sock. There it was. The perfect peace offering. They'd definitely be wanting the sock back, surely the baby had been quite upset with having one cold foot all the time.

I grabbed the sock with my mouth and looked out at the obstacle before me. I could do this. I had to do this. I had to prove myself.

The wet grass squelched beneath me as I bounded from under the patio, skidded into the sprinkler's crossfire, and quickly jumped back on to the patio where I was met with the damned glass door that separated me from my family.

I slowly made my way to the invisible barrier before me, dirty sock in my mouth, ears back and tail wagging. I caught the attention of Dad, and he came over with a stern look on his face. Oh no, I did not like that look. What if the sock wasn't the perfect peace offering, maybe I was going to be exiled from the household for all eternity.

When he came closer, he seemed to only then notice the sock in my mouth. Once he did, the stern expression changed to a softer, kinder one. My favourite expression.

"Alright, alright," Dad's muffled voice said through the glass, before he reached over to grab the door handle.

My tail wagged excitedly behind me as I shuffled into the house, the house I once knew, and now had the honour of knowing once again. I had been accepted; the peace offering was a success. But was I still a bad dog?

A hand came down and tugged the sock from my mouth, I easily let it go.

"Well, this is going in the trash, but thank you for the gift," Dad chuckled. "I'm still mad about the couch, but I can see that you feel bad. You're a good dog."

I barked happily and received a firm pat on the head before he walked off.

At last, I was a good dog. And I always would be.





## Leaves from The Family Tree

Barbara Walton

The eerie silence is interrupted, gently at first by a sound I cannot identify, then by human footsteps on the hard parquet flooring of the mausoleum-like chamber. A scraping sound hurts my ears as chairs are pushed out and pushed in again, with about six people clambering to sit at desks close to mine. The noise attacks my ears as I sit patiently. I turn my gaze to the high, ornately carved wooden ceiling as finally, their scraping noises abate.

Nobody speaks and I hear the soft and gentle eerie noise again. It's as if it is calling to me and I sit perfectly still, consciously averting my gaze from others in this giant chamber. Then I hear another, more distinct sound. I subconsciously turn my head towards it and see a very old, bearded gentleman wheeling a metal-wheeled trolley in my direction.

The man lifts four large, heavy-looking old Church record books from different Gothenburg, Sweden Churches onto my allotted desk. With a pounding heart, I take a list containing the meagre information I have about my maternal great-grandfather, Mannie Anderson, out of my wallet and place it to the left of the first tome containing birth registration information from the mid-1800s.

My hands shake as I don the mandatory clean white fabric gloves to prepare for handling the yellowed, dried pages. As I begin to gently turn the first page, my heart pounds even faster, echoing loudly in my ears. There it is again, that eerie sound, but now I identify it. It is nothing sinister or even odd, it is the wonderfully reverent sound of mine and other descendants' long-passed forbears calling out to us as to find them as we gently comb through the rustling leaves of the precious tomes being pored over in this chamber today.

Perhaps the story of my search can be continued another time....

**Theme:**  
**Rustling leaves**

## 7 Days of Sky

Frank Hawkins

A misty wafer-thin cloud overhead  
On a cool, crisp Sunday morning.  
Conjoining with the loveliest of light blue.  
Unseen birds singing softly and sweetly.  
A shimmering silver sky meets roving eye  
At a quarter past the hour of six,  
On this cool Monday morning.  
Wind howling, leaves rustling in tune.  
Cumulonimbus clouds cover the sky  
In hues of pearl-white and grey.  
The thunder cloud greets Tuesday.  
A remnant of Cyclone Damien.  
Somewhere in Southern River  
On a Wednesday night in February,  
Dense grey stratocumulus clouds  
Form on a painted, pallid background.  
Spread across a blue sky on Thursday,  
Shades of pink, grey, and fluffy white  
Cumulus clouds floating in the air,  
Gather together for one's admiration.  
A three quarter moon, high in clear skies  
On this windy Friday morning.  
And as the sun rises in the east  
The translucent moon goes off to sleep.  
Nimbostratus clouds appear on Saturday,  
Bright white above the dull grey.  
With a peek-a-boo blue sky  
It gives a promise of light showers.

**Theme:**  
**Sky**

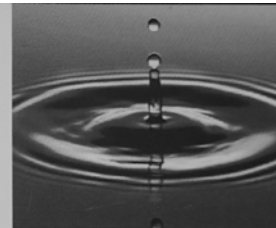


## Café Ze

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## Just A Card

Norma Edge

I will be eight tomorrow,  
Thought Charlie with a smile  
I hope this year it's a bike  
I've waited quite a while.  
But his parents had no money  
For such a special treat  
It was as much as they could do  
To buy enough to eat.  
All they could manage  
With the little that they had  
Was a birthday card  
With much love, from Mum and Dad.  
Just a Card  
On Charlie's eighteenth birthday  
He really wanted a car  
Of course, they can't afford one  
Still no money in the jar.  
Charlie was mad, disrespectful  
"You oldies are no fun!"  
His mum and dad thought to  
themselves  
*We have to teach our son.*  
On the morning of his birthday  
You may think his lesson hard  
Sitting on the breakfast table  
Was just a birthday card  
Just a Card  
Charlie learned a lot that day  
Life isn't about what you get  
It's about being grateful  
And to be giving, better yet.  
Now it is many years later  
Charlie has children of his own  
His father has now passed away  
And his mother lives on her own.  
"It's your birthday next week, Mum.  
What would you like this year?"  
"There is nothing that I need  
Please just send a card, dear."  
Just a Card  
His mother explained to him  
"Please try to understand, my son  
I have everything I need  
I'm so happy to be your mum.  
I don't see you very often  
As you live so far away  
I love a message or a call  
They say all you need to say.  
But for me who misses you, my  
son  
You mean so much more than  
gold  
All I want is just a card from  
you  
Something precious I can hold.  
Just a Card."



## Upturned

Barbara Gurney

Jerry's grasp weakened. "Nup, no good," he whispered, more to himself than to Wayne whose cheek was only centimetres away from his.

"Tell Ruthie I tried. Tell her I love her. Tell her I'm sorry."

Wayne lifted his head. "Bloody hell, mate. Don't give up. Not after all this frigging time." He spat out another mouthful of lapping waves and realigned his aching left arm. "We just have to last till sun-up. Someone will spot us."

"And, Danny ..." Jerry's hip hurt like hell where it had been struck against a hand rail before the wave flung him high and wide. "Tell him his father ..." A gentle splash and the blackness of a vast ocean accepted the exhausted body of Jerry Tompkins.

The day had begun with the excitement of two middle-aged school mates loading their three metre run-about with fishing tackle, safety gear and several bottles of Swan Lager. Neil Diamond singing 'Sweet Caroline' raised the noise level as he competed with the raspy, tuneless voices of the two mates.

When they reached several kilometres from the far side of Penguin Island, they lowered the volume of the radio and set up their lines.

"Here, have one." Wayne offered a beer from the esky.

"You beauty," Jerry said. "What can be better than this? Fishing and beer."

Wayne nodded. "Don't forget the bloody good company."

They chuckled as memories ebbed and flowed with fond recall: they'd kicked a football together, gone skinny-dipping together, been hauled over the coals for teasing sixth-grade girls, shared notes about chemical experiments in their final year, and spent many a drunken evening which had turned into an "oh, my aching head" morning together.

With ongoing family commitments their spasmodic fishing trips kept mateship alive. This trip had broken a four-month stretch and their enthusiasm for sitting on a bouncing ocean, with the occasional reset of lines or another trip to the cabin for a beer, had them grinning like showground clowns.

When the sun eased into a late afternoon glow, they counted their meagre catch, tossed their food scraps overboard and started the engine.

A monstrous wave, the one with their name on, shouted a warning as it blew apart the outboard motor and crashed across the stern. Salty water swamped the deck, soaked their clothes, filled their ears, eyes and nostrils, before dragging them under.

Wayne surfaced first, struggling to reach the upturned vessel. Jerry, who had won several teenage swimming races, paddled his rotund body towards the boat.

"Bloody hell, what happened?"

Jerry pulled his mate closer to the hull. "A rogue wave, I reckon."

"We should've worn those frigging PFD's."

"Maybe we could still find the bastards."

They floated for a while, trod water for as long as they could, but finally understood that the Personal Floating Devices and flares, thoughtfully stored in the cabin, were probably still there – inaccessible.

Wayne yelled for Jerry until his voice became croaky and his throat raw. His sobbing didn't attract any much-needed attention. Only the lonely night bird heard his repetitive cursing before he too lost consciousness and slipped into a watery grave.

**Theme:  
Shipwrecked**



They just had to be true William Wordsworth descendants, every one of them: beds of golden daffodils in full bloom swaying gently in the springtime wind, in several beds outside the imposing hotel close by to Euston Station, London. Grey skies and occasional weak rays of sunshine added to the beauty the middle-aged couple beheld as they emerged from the front doors of the hotel they'd entered for their first night in England's capital city just before midnight the night before.



Wife, Gloria, exclaimed to husband, "Oh Ralph, just look at these gorgeous daffodils. I've never seen so many in bloom at the same time. Ours at home, though equally beautiful, only flower intermittently – never all together."

While Gloria might have wished to remain gazing at the imposing buildings and the stunning display of daffodils, she knew by Ralph's impatient glance when he looked up from his train timetable, it was time to go across the road to the huge Euston Station tube station to travel to their first important destination for the day. Before leaving Perth, their bank manager had informed them there was a branch of WA's R & I Bank in the London suburb of Green Park. There they would be able to access some of the British pounds they'd not wished to carry during their just concluded comprehensive travels throughout India.

The nine-thirty morning traffic noise seemed deafening as they stood, feeling as if they'd been carved from stone, inside Euston Underground Station. Ralph was still holding the large map of all underground rail journeys in his right hand. Gloria just stood there, trying not to show how nervous she was about this, her first foray into a very busy British day. A kindly porter approached them and quickly sorted out where they needed to go to embark on a tube journey to Green Park.

Arriving there, Ralph and Gloria duly signed the joint-account papers enabling them to receive their much-needed English pounds. After stashing the banknotes into their respective bum-bags, they stepped outside the bank to make their way back to the tube station. They were amazed to hear the words, "What are you doing here, so far away from home?"

Turning towards the voice, Gloria gasped, recognising one of the primary school teachers from the town in which they had lived and worked for the past three years. Introducing Ralph, Gloria spoke excitedly to the young teacher, "Faye, this is my husband Ralph and we only arrived in England last night. We needed to come here to Green Park to collect our British money."

To which Faye responded, "Oh that's amazing - me too! Isn't it an amazing thing, us meeting like this? I didn't

know you were coming to the UK so this is a really strange encounter."

After exchanging hugs and having a brief discussion about each of their plans, they parted company – Faye to go immediately to Scotland to visit family members and Ralph and Gloria to return to their hotel before setting out on an afternoon coach tour of the huge city.

Ralph and Gloria's planned travels were comprehensive and they were eager to begin enjoying the first week of what they'd organised so meticulously. For the next nine months they would be journeying through the United Kingdom and many countries in Europe. It was time to begin the next exciting months in earnest.

The whole of those travels might well be written about at a later time, but what wasn't planned was that after seven months of being in Europe in travelling in their purchased campervan, they'd returned to London and whilst walking through Leicester Square one day, they saw Faye once again. All three of them stopped in their tracks.

Faye exclaimed, "Oh my God, Gloria and Ralph, you're the last people I thought I'd see in London today. This is amazing! Isn't it a small world?"

Ralph and Gloria wholeheartedly agreed this second sighting was more of a strange encounter than the first one, as Faye had previously told them she'd arranged to travel back to Australia two months earlier than this unexpected meeting.

**Theme:  
Chance Encounter**

## Greeting

Valerie Latimour

I met you by chance  
On the street today  
I smiled, unthinking  
At your well-known face

Without a greeting  
Or an answering smile  
You turned your face away

Why you've gone cold  
I may never know  
But I'll still smile  
When I see your face  
Perhaps one day you'll reply

In December 2019, word began trickling out of China about an ominous form of pneumonia that was making people very ill. Within a few months we were in the midst of a pandemic as corona swept the world.

The advent of COVID-19 changed the landscape of the entire world. Due to our isolation from the rest of the world, and the implementation of lockdown measures, Western Australia has so far escaped the worst effects of the virus. Both infection and mortality have remained low. Lockdown measures and the closing of businesses will have a long-term effect on the economy, and in the first wave of fear many shoppers resorted to panic-buying and hoarding. We watched, befuddled, as the aisles were emptied of toilet paper, soap, hand sanitiser, and staples such as rice and pasta. Shops enforced strict buying limits as shoppers came to blows over packets of toilet paper.

Social distancing, staying at home and paying particular attention to hygiene became a new way of life overnight. Naturally, as writers, we had to include elements of the pandemic in our art. The following pages contain a selection of corona-inspired pieces.

## And Still She Blows

Sue Palmer

The winds of change stir,  
gathering pace, they blow across the land.  
Tree leans into the wind,  
her boughs bend, but do not break.  
Her roots hold strong and fast  
anchored deep, in the solid ground.  
I hear the sound of rustling leaves,  
tortured by the reckless breeze.  
Some leaves fall, with others they meld.  
I see an ever-decaying mound ...

Still she blows, this wind called Corona.  
Driven by forces, insistent, unseen.  
The forest bonds, vows to support one another.  
Their strength lies in forging a team.  
To protect the elderly, vulnerable and weak.  
Their dedicated mission, preservation of life.  
Still she blows, this wind called Corona.  
Intent on sickness, destruction and strife.

Together they stand, together they fall.  
A force to be reckoned with, regardless of fear,  
of drifting thoughts, unspoken words,  
of grief and silently shed tears.  
A whisper stirs through the leaves of the forest.  
"Resilience, resolve, all will be well.  
It may take time, to this end we will strive.  
Be kind and gentle, in love and peace, dwell."

You see ...

*From evil, always rises the good and the kind.  
Life lessons to be learned for all humankind.*

## The Good Old Days

Joyce Iles

I remember when life was so simple  
And the problems of now, far away.  
Technology had yet to rear its head  
And crime was at least kept at bay.

We ate food that was fresh and not frozen  
Soft drinks were a treat all too rare.  
Our eggs were supplied by the hens in our yard  
And our veggies home-grown with much care

We mended the holes that appeared in our socks  
And didn't just throw them away.  
We patched up our pockets and replaced the zips  
And they'd last a bit longer we prayed.

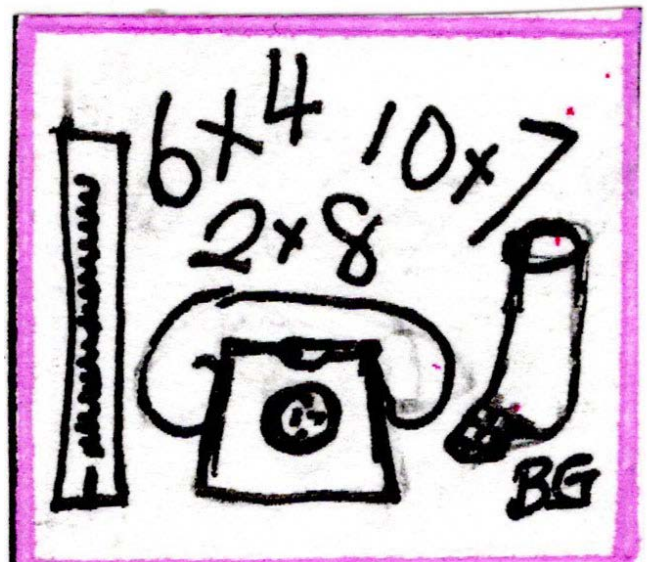
We learnt our times tables and poems by rote  
And our spelling was tested each week.  
We were punished in class if we didn't try hard  
Or were guilty of trying to cheat.

Phones were owned by very few folk  
And visiting friends was pot luck.  
We'd call on the off-chance and hope they were home  
But often this plan came unstuck.

We knew all the folk who lived in our street  
And most of the other streets too,  
We played out of doors until it was dark  
And always with kids that we knew.

Grass was the lawn in front of our house  
And weed was an unwanted plant.  
Ice was something to cool down our drink  
And was never the cause of a rant.

This list could go on for a very long time  
But there's one thing I've got left to say,  
If I had to choose between life 'then' and 'now'  
I'm damn sure that I'd choose life "today".





## The Ballad of the Rustling Leaves.

Valmay Bartlett



Susie turns the leaves that rustle  
as she slowly reads each page  
each word is a reminder  
of a past more gentle age

A time when Susie treasured  
occupations of the mind  
a time when other people  
were civilised and kind

When they didn't run you over  
or steal things from your trolley  
when shelves were full of goodies  
and everyone was jolly

So now she has a problem  
her poor mind can't overcome  
the book will be a sacrifice  
she has to wipe her bum

### Exercise

Trevor Smith

My name is Bobby. I am a small white dog registered as a Cross-Maltese. This 'cross' business is a people thing making me not pure-bred. Most dogs never meet their father, and as pups, they are taken from their mother very soon.

I live with two old folks in their granny flat. Nearly every day the old fellow takes me on his mobility scooter to the nearby stream and he allows me to walk.

I enjoy this outing as he stops whenever I choose to go off the path. It is very convenient because I use the opportunity to poop in the bush.

These days, people seem to behave differently. Our neighbours are home all day during the week and my folk seem to spend more time listening to the news on TV. The Premier chats about some virus thing and he is telling people to avoid crowds.

After a few days of no walks I heard him say that going out for exercise is permitted as long as people keep a social distance from others.

The old guy said to his wife, "That must surely include Bobby's exercise as well."

When he put his hat on and walked to the mobility scooter, I was over the moon with delight.

Theme:  
Over the  
Moon

HELLO,  
I MISS  
OUR HUGS



ARTivity  
Studio

### Despondency

Terry Duhig

Chances are that we will never meet again,  
The reasons why I still cannot recall,  
You are leaving and will not say to where,  
My cheeks are wet as tears begin to fall.

You came to me when you thought all was lost,  
Into my home and into my heart,  
It was wonderful how our love did grow,  
But now we are about to part.

Those carefree moments of joy we shared,  
Every day, so many, they'll never come again,  
I'm bewildered, stunned and oh so hopeless,  
My happy life is flowing down a drain.

My head it begins to ache, and I am feeling cold,  
Shivering, my sadness I cannot hide,  
A suitcase you pick up and are at the door,  
Telling me a taxi is waiting outside.

A swinging door slams closed, my brain awakes,  
I rush to my bedside, pick up my mobile phone,  
I smile, still remembering the number, I call  
Lonely Hearts Club, for again I am alone.

## Dream or Nightmare?

Bruce McColl

My first real memory of the Second World War was when my father returned from his term of service overseas. He had been gone since shortly after I was born.

My mum, gran, and pop talked about his return for a month or two. Then he stormed in like a long lost friend, but someone I never knew.

Before that, I vaguely remember my mum saying don't waste the milk, or the scattering of sugar she put on my porridge in the morning or the butter or jam on my toast. See, life was tough, and they had been under rationing's grasp for many years.

My life has known measles, mumps, TB, and polio, to name a few. But fortunately, none seriously touched me other than a few spots and a temperature or two. SARS and MERS were faint concerns, but this bloody Covid-19 brings back some frightening recollections.

I lost a mate to polio's grasp, and another has suffered its torment of withered arms and legs.

TB took its toll on many lives until they finally found an antibiotic to calm its advancing path. Measles brought their own concerns, as did mumps, chickenpox and flu. So today, we face another curse; just a part of evolution as it's cast upon this earth.

My intent is not to be morbid, but at times it's right to remember that nothing is forever. This current curse is a significant concern because generations have never had to face this sort of possible decimation. But this is not a dream, and it is fast becoming a nightmare.

So as I contemplate this new worry, let's look back at things that were once only a dream. Then maybe what the nightmare may throw up.

Jet passenger planes, personal computers, mobile phones, McDonald's takeaways, colour TV, and remote-controlled drones were all just dreams when I was born. These are just a few; we could all add thousands more.

Time moves on, and man evolves, and with this comes other dreams, wants, and follies. But never let us all forget that man is ingenious when pushed to respond.

We now all feel vulnerable, but this is not the first time life has challenged us. Everyone can recall at least a dozen times they had wondered what life was all about when it threw concerns at us we had to face.

The nightmare will only be if, God forbid, we stop dreaming. See, life is never black or white; it roams a field of many colours. At night it's dark, and fears abound in our brains. In the morning, the sun rises, and life seems more enticing and rewarding. As the day rolls on and flowers



bloom, it seems life can always renew. Then as the evening closes in, life transforms again as fears begin.

We live upon a planet vast, but not huge enough to stop the advance of a virus full of challenges.

We are animals of the humankind, and like other creatures, we are prone to continual viruses.

We can dream, and things will sometimes be uncovered, or we can let the nightmares reign, and from this darkness, terror will remain.

Looking back across my life, I like to dream and accept life's fascinating path. I'm not denouncing the concerns and fears that face us now, but let's all face them head-on and accept that it's part of being who and what we are.

Is it a dream? No, it's not.

Is it a nightmare? Only if we let it be.

I have seen a lot in life just as many others have, but life moves on. Let's not get down and depressed. Let's all make it as positive as we can.

Let's dream.

Think of the possibilities of travel when this virus is conquered.

Think of the beautiful things man now dreams of which will one day enhance our lives.

Think of the beauty all around us, how it exists despite the life-threatening virus.

In closing: Today I drove from my home directly to where my American Quarter Horse is paddocked. We wandered the paddocks, just us two. He greeted me with as much love as always. He doesn't know my fears, but he really doesn't care. He only wants his hay and feed, and water to quench his thirst. It's so lovely to feel so free and even for that short time to know life's a gift he and I share.



## The Best Gift of All

Mary Burke

We have all received this gift regardless of when or where or how we were born. Some of us treasure it; others curse it, while some take it for granted until something goes wrong. There are millions who did possess this gift yet were never allowed to own it - it was snatched from them. What am I talking about? I'm talking about the gift of life.

In the early stages of life, we have no control over this gift. Whatever our parents or carers decide to do or not to do, prevails.

As children grow into teenagers, mostly little thought is given to the gift of life.

When adult, some choose a deliberate path in life because they realise life is a gift which won't last forever. Others are content to live aimlessly without goals or ambitions, frittering away this gift.

Whatever we choose, there is no guarantee of success or happiness but at least in Australia, we have some choices. Is our glass half full or half empty? The answer impacts directly how we use the gift of life and largely the personal consequences for each of us.

So many handicapped people appreciate life so much and their achievements can put us to shame. Those who endure physical disability following accidents, often embrace their misfortune and say that without it, they wouldn't have accomplished what they have. Stories from the Para Olympians testify to this.

Threats to this gift are all around us and not everyone gets the help and encouragement to see life as a treasure. We are advanced scientifically and technologically, yet many slip through the net. The pandemic of the Corona virus that we're living through now and its many consequences, threaten lives worldwide. The curse of drugs and children held in sexual slavery and rising suicide rates, continue to undermine this precious gift.

Each of us can play a part in uplifting and cherishing others. In return, we will receive benefits like happiness, joy and personal satisfaction to enrich our own life.



I'm staying home like everyone else, but my Bobby needs me just the same. So I drive directly to him and see no one else, then return the same way.

I dream of when this is over. And we can return to what we accepted as a normal healthy life.

Albeit probably nothing will ever be precisely the same.

Take care of everyone, especially those who are dear to you. Take care of yourself.

Keep writing and – dream – dream – dream.

## A Tense Moment

Terry Duhig

She was not what anyone would call pretty. The face was sad, cheerless. Her dark hair appeared to have tried to escape from beneath the well-worn red cap. She sat upright, her thin shoulders hunched as if to hide the girlie parts beneath that big red shirt.

I couldn't take my eyes off her. I hoped she would not leave the cafe before I could talk to her; she had just moments earlier caught my attention when she walked past me in the High Street and entered this cafe and where I decided to follow her.

I had perched across from her at the crowded coffee bar, and now was sipping my latte, peeking upwards and sideways though wary eyelashes so that watching would not be obvious.

Had she been warned about not speaking to strangers? Should I risk it? Would she make a scene? How much should I offer her? These questions ran through my mind. They were not required for I caught the eye of a matron.

She pressed her lips hard together and gave me the squinty-eyed 'I don't approve of you pervert types' glare. I glanced away.

Then to my surprise, the girl spoke first. "Mister, can I cadge a smoke off of you?"

Aha, an opportunity. I had to be tactful.

"Sure," I mumbled. "But first I have to ask you a question." I breathed deeply. "That red shirt you're wearing ... Did you, ah, get it at the Salvation Army Op Shop?"

Her eyes widened. The thin neck snapped back as if shocked by a poverty implication.

Afraid she would scream or shout at me in reply, I quickly blurted, "You see it used to be mine and I really liked it, I wore it quite often. I'm sure it's the same shirt, I had it specially printed you see. I can prove it, my name, it's Terry, and it's written on the inside of the collar. You see my wife let it get mixed up with other clothing she donated, it was in a big bundle and she put it in a bin outside the Salvos. I never thought I would ever see it again, and here you are wearing it. It would be really great if you agree to go with me to a shop where you could pick another shirt to wear."

Reaching into my back pocket I took out my wallet and held it up as I said, "I will be happy to pay for it because I would really like to buy my old shirt back."



## Vendetta

Margaret Anderson

Viktor hovered outside the wine bar, tense, transfixed, lips moving silently. A chill wind whipped at his black leather jacket and whined around corners of buildings. Thunder mumbled in the distance through dark threatening clouds. He had a last hard suck on his cigarette and flicked it away. The cold air bit at his swarthy face as he shoved straight into the warmth inside, and finding a seat facing the door at a high, drink stained table, ordered a beer from the beefy, uninterested barman. A few regulars at the bar murmured to each other in low voices.

Lately the old men's whispering voices in his head had intensified, tormenting him, directing him finally, to this bar.

A noisy happy group burst through the door, a cold blast of air swirling in with them. Viktor stiffened, his hard brown stare drawn to the tall blond man amongst them. Paulo. He knew the name somehow despite having never met. Paulo's gaze flicked round the room before alighting on him. Their eyes locked and a frisson of recognition flashed in the newcomer's stormy blue eyes.

Viktor recognised those eyes, recognised them from somewhere deep in his gut. He couldn't say why. The old men would know, even immigrating to this bright sunny country had made no difference. Evil has no boundaries.

The whisperings in his ear grew urgent, insistent.

He rose, setting his glass down. Paulo paused level with Victor's table and they faced off. Well matched they were. Same height, age, weight. The dark and the fair. Viktor knew that the whispers had driven his opponent here as well.

"I know you," Viktor hissed.

"And you will wish that you didn't," Paulo growled, his voice equally soft, equally menacing.

The others in the group paused and stood, uncertain, alarmed and embarrassed, necks craning like silly geese. The locals slipped from their stools.

The two men leapt at each other growling and snarling, punching, kicking and gouging, crashing the furniture and sending glassware and beer flying. The furious barman shoved them through the door and onto the footpath, excited shouting people pouring after them.

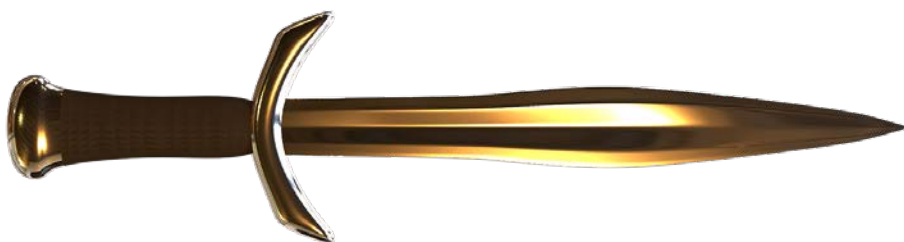
Viktor's rage was ferocious, beyond reason, and he knew Paulo's was the same. Death must be at the end of this. Strange words hissed unbidden from Victor's mouth in a language he didn't understand. His opponent spat abuse in the same language.

They struggled back and forth across the street, the shrieking crowd following. A collective gasp arose as Viktor reached into his sock and pulled out a narrow, pointed stiletto. But Paulo was as quick with his knife. Blood-soaked, exhausted and gasping, they circled each other, stabbing and slashing.

Four policemen pulled Victor off Paulo, who lay on the footpath, the stiletto protruding from his chest. His blue eyes blazed at Viktor.

"I am not dead," he snarled. "We never die. We will come for you again and again, you will get no rest, and my ancestors have decreed it."

"Fine," Viktor spat, blood streaming from his nose. "And we will defeat you again and again as we have done for centuries."



## Smoko

Sue Palmer



He sits. Inhaling deeply, feeling the warm rush of nicotine through his windpipe down into his expanding lungs. Fighting the urge to cough, he holds his breath for a second or two and slowly exhales. He closes his eyes in contemplation, thinking a cigarette was much better than any cup of coffee or tea.

His thoughts drift back to the morning, which began with a steady stream of customers wanting fresh bread, rolls and croissants. Easter was fast approaching. He and fellow bakers had risen very early, racks of bread, rolls and hot cross buns bore testimony to this.

Even now, the big dough mixers in the kitchen worked tirelessly away on the next batch. Trays of dough sat in a warm place rising beneath the cloths placed over them. Heat rose from open oven doors as cooked trays of hot cross buns were removed and set aside to cool.

He adjusts his position on the milk crate; it's not the most comfortable of seats but it will do. He wonders just how many different kinds of hot cross buns they bake. Fruit and fruitless buns, choc-chip and mocha buns, apple and sultana and spicy buns, gluten and gluten-free buns and now even a hot cross bread loaf. So many choices.

He sits thinking about the amount of butter spread on hot buns as they come out of the oven. He muses aloud, "Don't people know that consuming so many buns can't be healthy? Buns eaten for breakfast, lunch and maybe a supper-time treat. All that butter. Nope, can't be doing them any good," as he lights up another cigarette ...



## Ongoing Embrace

Barbara Gurney

*An armchair.  
Aubrey's chair.  
Barbara's chair.*

With other timber in short supply, discarded jarrah railway sleepers created much of the furniture during my father's cabinetmaking apprenticeship – circa 1940. He built many other pieces: coffee table, hall table, sideboard, sewing cabinet – all still retained in our family.

The beautifully crafted chair wandered around my parents' home, looking for a permanent spot, ending up behind their bedroom door.

I was horrified when my father declared his intention to get rid of this uncomfortable, too big, nuisance of a chair. I'd had my eye on it for years – checking it out each time I visited.

After having it reupholstered, updating the garish red cover for a muted check, it took pride of place in my home.

Every so often, I sit in this chair, recall my father's pleasure at my desire to own it, and imagine it's his arms around me.



## Marcus and Abigail

Thea Adams

Only a couple of hours to go! Everything was ready. Slowly and with enjoyment he dressed. The rustle of the fabric made him smile as he swung the cape around his shoulders and adjusted the collar. He sat down in front of the mirror to brush his raven-black hair. It contrasted starkly against the white make-up he affected, accentuated by the blood red of his lips.

Marcus glanced at his reflection and gasped. "Damn!" he said. "If I didn't know it was me I'd be scared." Marcus gave a final twitch to his cape and left to go hunting.

Halloween was his favourite time of year. Marcus knew he could openly walk the streets without being accosted by police. This time of year, when the veil between the worlds was so thin, exhilarated him. Some families took a picnic to the cemeteries to share with their dear departed or celebrated in the park, hoping their loved ones would join them in whatever form they chose.

He made his way to the park passing sheet-wearing ghosts, ghastly monsters with all manner of murderous wounds and zombies looking exactly as if they had just risen from their graves.

Marcus was a solitary person. His lifestyle dictated that he avoided others. But now he had reached the age where he missed, even needed, companionship. Someone he could cuddle up with and nibble their neck. What he wanted was a woman! He had decided the park was a good hunting ground. Then he saw her.

He approached. Almost as a sleepwalker he went forward.

"My name is Marcus. What's yours?"

"Abigail. I love your costume."

"Well, Abigail, it's not really a costume. It's been handed down through the family."

"Oh, OK. I've been watching you. You've gone past a few girls, why choose me?"

"You are beautiful, Abigail. And the perfect foil for me with your blue eyes and blonde hair." Marcus moved closer to embrace her. Abigail didn't resist. Marcus bent his head and bit into her neck.

Halloween was such a mystical time!





## The Artist's Canvas

Anita Magee

I gaze upwards, my eyes feasting on the ever-changing canvas before me. Huge, white, billowy clouds merge, morphing endlessly into familiar and unfamiliar shapes. I silently observe the Master Artist at His work. With a flamboyant sweep the clouds disperse, leaving only the vivid blue of the sky as far as my eyes can see. I wait ... wondering what next will adorn the brilliant blue.

I hear the distant squawking of the majestic red-tailed black cockatoos. The flock forms a fluid, screeching black wave, casting winged shadows and flashing their red tail feathers as they swoop into a grove of eucalypt trees. Their powerful beaks indelicately tip-prune their canopies. Copious amounts of leaf and seed debris amass on the ground, leaving their unmistakable calling card. They squawk loudly over one another as they gorge themselves on the bountiful seeds before noisily flying away. I once again wait to see what the Master wills for His canvas.

The sky's blue begins to be in-filled with shades of grey, until no blue remains. A cold blast of wind swirls around me, the air feels damp and smells earthy. Ominous dark clouds roll in from the horizon, threatening more than a light shower. Forked, brilliant white flashes of lightning punch holes through the air, exploding into a rainbow of colours. Booming soundwaves of thunder reverberate, as the holes in the air collapse in on themselves. Heavy, water-laden clouds follow through on their threat. Rain droplets fall hard and fast, saturating both me and the earth. Rivulets of water unite into torrents, carving out deep gullies as they search out a home in the rivers and seas.



The grey recedes; massive finger-painted strokes of white cloud materialise across the sky. Slivers of azure blue reappear, whilst warming, yellow-hued rays of sun alleviate the rain's chill. The Master Artist's divine nature is exhibited daily, on display for all to see and hear.



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## Simon

Lynne Tatam

Early morning sunlight bounced off the glassy ocean, highlighting the huge, granite monoliths that rose majestically from the sea bed. I sat and listened to the lapping of water, as it crept around the rocks, onto the beach. The rhythmic ebb and flow was soothing, a cool balm for troubled minds.

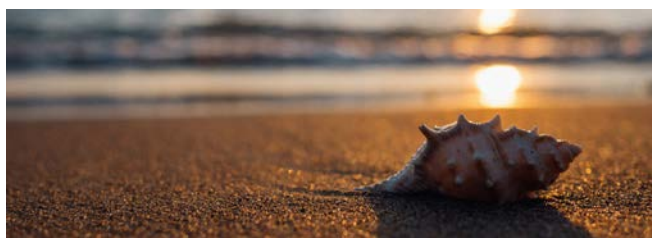
Looking around, I caught sight of a small, solitary figure, trying to rise from the damp sand. My eighty year old body groaned in sympathy. Quietly, I hobbled over to offer my assistance. It seems to be something nurses have, either inbuilt or ingrained, we can't bear to see anyone struggle.

As I drew closer it became obvious, that this in fact was a young lad. I smiled, then asked if he needed any help. It was clear this youngster was desperately ill. The bright red t-shirt he wore, hung limply on a tiny, emaciated body. His pallor reflected the cruel disease that ravaged him. With a wise expression he looked up and said "It's ok, people don't know what to say to me. My name's Simon, I'm eleven and I'm dying."

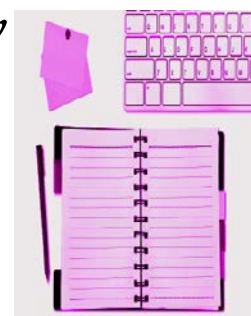
I was saddened, but not surprised by his frank admission. The word sorry seemed trite and completely inadequate. Instead, I requested the pleasure of his company whilst I walked along the beach. Simon nodded his assent saying, "It's really hard on my family. I hear Mum and Dad crying at night, and my little sister doesn't understand what's going on."

I swallowed a large lump that had formed in my throat, as he added, "I sneak out early in the morning to sit on the beach and think, 'cos soon I won't be able to do it."

The naked pain on his young face tore at my heart. Gently I took his hand, and slowly we walked along the shoreline, forgetting, just for a while...



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## Cherry Ripe

Wendy Woods

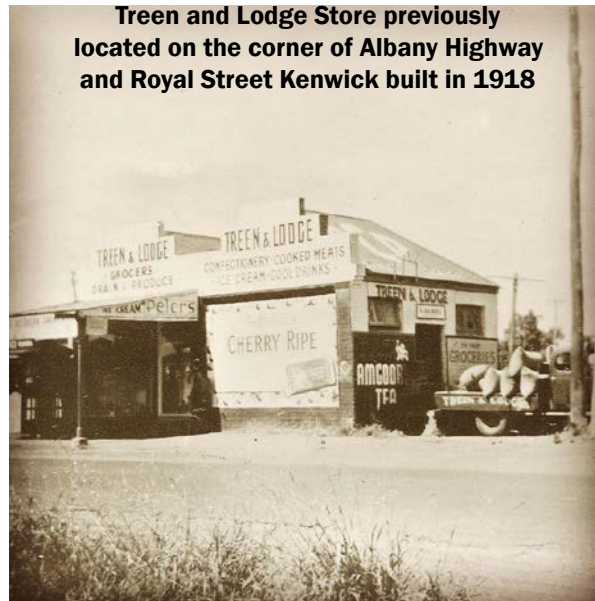
Once a week, after school, Martha skipped her way down to Mr. Treen's General Store. Her mother always gave her a list of extra fruit and vegetables to buy as Mr. Treen only delivered their bulk order every fortnight.

Martha loved the shop as there were always interesting things to see and new stock arriving every week. Such as, material for a new pinafore, lace-up leather shoes for school, straw hats and numerous lolly jars filled with licorice allsorts, minties and jubes along with other exciting items on the shelves. Large baskets filled with all kinds of vegetables made a colorful display along the wall.

Martha loved Mr. Treen gossiping about people in the area. One day she had asked him who actually built the store. Mr. Treen told her of a Mr. Hayes who in 1918 had come to Kenwick and built the store. In 1920 he sold the store to Mr Randell who then in 1946 sold it to Mr. Treen.

"I don't think they had the Amgoorie tea your mother loves in 1918 but probably something similar."

"I see you have a new sign outside saying Cherry Ripe."



**Treen and Lodge Store previously located on the corner of Albany Highway and Royal Street Kenwick built in 1918**

What is Cherry Ripe and do you have any in the shop now?" Martha asked.

"Ah, they are the new chocolate bars that came in the other day. The centre is cherry tasting nougat covered in milk chocolate. So delicious!" Mr Treen said. "In fact, I have three sitting here on the counter now. My assistant Mrs. Passmore has fallen in love with the Cherry Ripe so perhaps we could all sit down and enjoy them together."

Martha thought she was in heaven as she bit into the Cherry Ripe and savoured the texture and flavor of the bar.

"Our Christmas calendar will be out next week. We are becoming very famous for the promotional calendar. I'll save one for you," Mrs Passmore said.

Later, carrying her basket of fruit and vegetables Martha made her way home. She stopped half way to rest as the basket was becoming heavy. As she picked it up again, a red wrapper caught her eye. Mr. Treen had slipped in a Cherry Ripe. Martha couldn't wait to get home and share it with her mother.

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## Autumn is Calling

Sioban Timmer

Even as a boy, Russell was at more at home in nature.

When the wind stripped the rusty leaves from the boughs, he would spend his days like a child in the first snow of winter. He'd run and play, cast them high into the air. He would form huge piles, jump over the top of them imagining they were a roaring fire and he, a conquering hero leaping the flames to make a daring escape. From the kitchen his mother would laugh and sing out the window, "The leaves are falling; Autumn is calling. And Russell is rustling away in the garden."

The years and seasons passed, but his love for the outdoors did not and Russell followed his passion to become a gardener. When once again the trees had shed their cover of leaves, he would gather the dry and fragile remnants in his hands and crush them. He would listen to them crackle and split. Though his 'conquering hero' days were behind him, the fiery sound made him feel like a boy again and somewhere in his mind he could hear his

mother's voice, "The leaves are falling; Autumn is calling. And Russell is rustling away in the garden."

When the years had stripped the colour from his hair and the strength from his body, Russell knew that this autumn would be his last. He spent hours in his garden, sitting on the simple timber bench with his eyes closed, feeling the warm wind on his face and marvelling at how the trees prepared for their new life to start.

When the time came, Russell asked that his ashes be scattered in his garden amongst the grove of trees he had planted, so he could be lost amongst them. The crackle could be heard on the breeze as it collected the leaves in its path. They rose and circled and swept past the bench where Russell had spent so much time reflecting on how they had grown and changed together. Upon it was a simple plaque that read 'The leaves are falling, autumn is calling'.

**Theme:**  
**Rustling leaves**

## Gliding

Dianne Taylor

Excited and full of anticipation, Julie got up before sunrise to begin her long-awaited adventure. Unbelievably, she had been asked to go on a gliding camp, along with two other teachers and a group of about thirty aeronautical students. Included in the group were two girls, so the regulations required a female staff member for their benefit. The main part of her responsibilities was to be present with her group at the airfield, checking on the safety measures for the students



two people. In front of it was a larger plane, with a cable attached to tow the glider until it was airborne. They were both strapped in securely, then took off down the runway behind the tow plane. As soon as they had enough height, the tow plane disconnected the cable.

Suddenly, they were alone in the sky, with only the sound of the wind rushing past. They rose and fell riding on the air currents, until they

were quite high. The whole feeling reminded Julie of sailing, with nothing but the sound of the wind and the waves.

After settling into their camp quarters, the students were divided into groups of three for the gliding component of the camp. The students were each given the experience of being passengers in a glider, with an experienced pilot in charge. As a bonus, Julie was allowed to join in the fun. As soon as everybody was ready, the first group left for the airfield, with the remainder being occupied with other tasks.

After a lengthy wait, it was Julie's turn to take her group to the airfield. The whole process was explained, then the first student took his place in the glider. Each person was allowed about twenty minutes, so everybody took a turn. Julie was the last in her group, and her stomach lurched as she climbed into the glider behind the pilot. It seemed small and fragile for an aircraft, barely enough room for

After he gained enough height, the pilot told Julie they were going to have some fun – it was in the form of barrel rolls, wingovers, loop-the-loop and dives. Having experienced aerobatics before, Julie was exhilarated rather than terrified. She hadn't realised that such dangerous and impressive manoeuvres could be done in a glider. After some more sedate gliding, it was sadly time to land. The pilot skilfully slowed the glider and headed for the runway. The landing was quite rough, with the glider's tiny wheels hitting the tarmac.

Julie gingerly wriggled her way out of the glider, still stunned by her experience. She slept soundly that night, dreaming of blue skies, fluffy white clouds, and silently gliding through the sky.

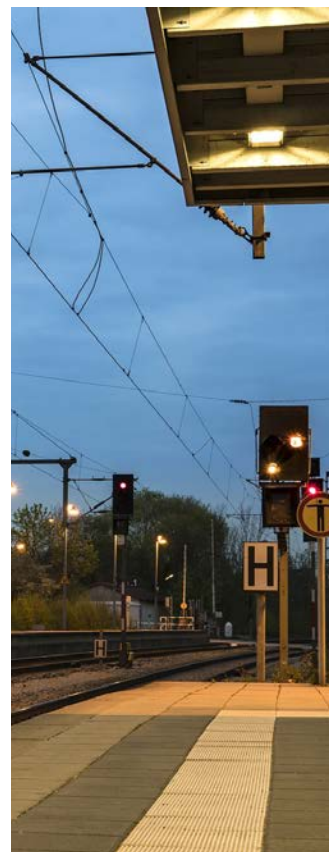
Theme:  
Sky

## Tuesday 29th July 1975

*Guglielmo Placanica*

7:25am: The suburban train slides against the platform and stops at the Armadale Station  
I, like many dressed in suit and tie, board onto the second carriage  
Luckily my preferred seat by the window is empty and waits for me  
I sit, the train departs and my daily transition from family to work life begins  
I welcome the time to myself, to let go of family circumstance  
Before the day of employer demands takes hold  
Sometimes I just close my eyes, or look out the window, or observe other passengers  
Some sleep, others read newspapers, books, or converse with each other  
People hop on and off as the train pulls into various stations  
Gosnells, Cannington, Victoria Park, Rivervale, and then over the Swan River  
Seagulls squawk and fly above as the morning sun is reflected against steel pylons  
Commuters prepare to exit as the train makes it way to the Wellington Street Station  
I grab my briefcase and wait as the doors open at 8:14am

5:10pm: I sit by the window as the train departs the City Station  
A successful, productive though tiring work day has ended and I am eager to return home  
I close my eyes; the rhythm of the train gently soothes me  
The sounds of fellow passengers fade away as I immerse into slumber  
I awake as the train leaves the Kelmscott Station; only a few minutes to go  
From the window I see the family car; my wife waiting for me  
The suburban train slides against the platform and stops at the Armadale Station at 5:58pm





## Out Of The Woods

Thea Adams

Peace was all around. The little dogs ran ahead, tails waving and noses questing. Max and Stella were loving dogs, really puppies still, but they were such a handful.

Vicki watched them explore and congratulated herself that they kept coming back to check on her. When they did she was generous with her praise. "Such good dogs, Stella, Max, such good dogs," and she would ruffle their ears. They smiled back at her. She liked to think they smiled. They had expressive little faces. This was the first time she had let them roam free, but she carried their leashes just in case.

The track they were on was enchanting. Vicki wondered why she didn't do this more often. After the long, hot summer the fresh green of the foliage in the dappled light made it more like a fairy place than a patch of bush in the suburbs. Vicki walked on, happy to hear the excited yips when the pups found something interesting. She hoped it wasn't wildlife.

Ahead, the path divided. Vicki debated which way to go and wanted the pups with her so she could keep an eye on them. "Stella, Max, come here." She giggled when first one then the other cheeky face peered at her from behind the shrubs. But she knew those expressions. Definitely catch me if you can looks.

"Come on, babies, come here," Vicki called. They took another look at her and took off. She could swear they were laughing at her. "You little devils," she muttered, "come here!" Vicki's tone became more strident. The pups stopped and stood looking at her. Careful not to spook them, Vicki kept to her normal walking pace. They watched her, all attention. She was hopeful this time they would let her catch them. In her pocket she had a couple of their favourite treats. The closer she got she proffered the treats. They were definitely interested, but as she reached towards them they gave her a glance which clearly said ha, ha, you can't catch us, and were off again.

Vicki hated these tussles of will. Inevitably one of the pups won. Max was usually the first to give up and it was so this time. She snapped on his leash. As usual Stella enjoyed giving Vicki the run around, literally. They got closer to the division of the path. Vicki knew the right-hand branch would lead her to the car park and hoped Stella would follow them. She and Max were brother and sister and were each concerned if the other wasn't at least in sight. But, no, Stella took the left-hand path. Max stopped and pulled to the left. "Stella, we aren't going that way. Come on baby, this way," and she pulled Max to the right. He barked. Stella stopped. Then to Vicki's delight she followed them.

The car came into view, but this would not be the end. Stella still wasn't on her leash. Max hopped up into the car, sitting while being attached to his seat belt. Stella stood beside Vicki. When she bent to lift Stella into the car, she ran off, just out of reach. "Oh, do you have to do this, Stella?" Vicki growled.

Luckily there was a young boy on his bicycle riding into the car park. He saw immediately what the problem was. He loved dogs so he squatted down beside his bike and called, "Here, puppy." Stella rushed up to him, eager to meet someone new. The lad made a fuss of her and hooked his fingers under the collar. Thankfully Vicki now had a naughty dog on her leash.

It was on the way home she looked in the rear view mirror to see two puppies sleeping the sleep of exhaustion.

## Look Up

Norma Edge

When entering the woods  
If darkness is upon the ground,  
Don't be afraid, look up  
So much beauty all around.

While you wander in the shade  
Birds twittering in a tree,  
Sunlight's sneaking through the  
branch  
A wonderful sight to see.

The glitter of the golden leaves  
As they fall to make a bed.  
Colourful parrots catch your eye  
Flying swiftly overhead.

If you're feeling that your world  
Is like an empty cup,  
As you're walking through life's wood  
Do not look down, look up.

Prompt: *Out of  
the Woods - inside  
back cover*

### **\*New release\***

Barbara Gurney

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is not enough*  
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## Rumours

Barbara Gurney

Singer, Adele, blared through Cilla's headphones as she slowed her pace. She'd been running for twenty minutes, her calves needed a break. She turned off her usual path around the park and sat on a weathered stump a few metres into the bush. The uneven track was a short cut back to her car, but rumours abounded about the caretaker and his determination, at all cost, of keeping everyone out of the bush, declaring people spread the dieback virus. Apparently, his wolf-like appearance and reported large sharp axe had scared many a jogger.

Cilla's aching legs slowly recovered as she chewed on a muesli bar and drained her water bottle. She rocked in time with the strong beat of Adele's next song.

When a hand gripped her shoulder, adrenalin shot through her chest. She stood, ripped the earpieces out and faced a skinny streak of a man, his grubby hand clenching a bulky axe. Her stomach jolted. The water bottle, having fallen from her lap, rolled away.

"Get out of here." The instruction didn't leave any negotiation. His tone lowered as he thundered out the repeat, "Out! Get out of here!" His black hoody slipped from his head as he shouted, "Out."

Cilla trembled, stared into the face of the threat. The madman's straggly hair, greying beard which almost reached his waist, and the dark clothing certainly add to the rumour of a half-wolf half-man inhabiting the bush.

"I'm just ..." Cilla pointed down the track. "Jogging. My car."

The man lifted the axe, ran his finger along the blade. A resultant spot of blood tracked through the grit on his hand.

"Go," he said.

"My car." Cilla took a few steps. "That way. Can I go ... um ...?"

He lowered the axe: leaned it against his leg. A dip of his head indicated his approval.

Cilla grabbed her bottle, glanced back at the man and stepped quickly away, breaking into a jog as he yelled, "If you return, remember I have my axe."

The dangling earpiece trickled out Adele's strong voice as it bounced against Cilla's thigh. As she reached the edge of the bush, Cilla pulled the keys from her pocket, rushing to be in the safety of her car. The man stood at the entrance to the track, tapping his axe against a sapling. Cilla gawked as he melted back into the bush, not daring to move for several minutes.

Adele's voice, now somewhere in the folds of Cilla's tee-shirt continued to insist, "Rumour has it."

*Rumour Has It – released by Adele in 2011*

**Prompt: Out of  
the Woods - inside  
back cover**

## Inner Demons

Jenny Lynch

Don't get too close, or you'll see the darkness inside where my inner demons live. Every day is a struggle, with these indescribable phantoms consuming my soul. I feel like I am driving through life with my handbrake on. It's not what I am that holds me back from enjoying life, but it is what I think I am not. It's the fear of failure. It's the fear of not measuring up to everyone else's expectations. And so, I hide away from the world, feeling like a storm of hopelessness, always seeking shelter.

*I know I'm the only person  
who can help me through the pain.  
Instead of sheltering from each storm  
I should be dancing in the rain.*

I want to be able to tell myself that I am enough. But most of all, I want to believe it. One day I will conquer my demons and wear my scars like medals. Then, and only then, I will breathe. I will simply breathe.

**Prompt:  
Undercover  
- back cover**

## Game in the Woods

Terry Dubig

Life in the woods can be a delight, especially in the spring. I awake each morning knowing there's plenty to nibble and dew to drink. It will require the effort of scurrying around, looking for morsels and moisture that is still settled on leaves, and at the same time being alert to a hoot and the sound of rushing air, for danger exists for small souls like myself.

Here I stand and will not flinch,

For the owl above has a very keen eye,

And if I move just one little inch,

He'll be eating mouse and mushroom pie.

Life in the woods can give a fright; one cannot forecast what the day will bring.

Being watchful when moving about, noting all others doing the same.

Finding sustenance is the name of the game, as long as one remembers that whether large or tiny, the game accommodates both the offer of enjoying the menu and being included on it.

**We are very grateful to Canadian writer and visual artist, Wendie Donabie for the use of her two paintings: *Out of the Woods* (40 x 30 inches, acrylic on canvas) on page 35, and *Undercover* (oil on canvas, 10 x 8 inches) on the back cover. These beautiful paintings inspired our members to write the pieces presented here.**  
**[www.WendieDonabie.com](http://www.WendieDonabie.com)**



## Out of the Woods

Anita Magee

Cool, damp, quiet  
Tranquility inspired  
Worrying thoughts abate  
Clarity and faith awakes  
Mind releases distractions  
Hope finds traction  
Nature's alluring charm  
Soul nourished and calm.

### Smile

Carolyn Nelson

How could Wendie know my  
secret?!

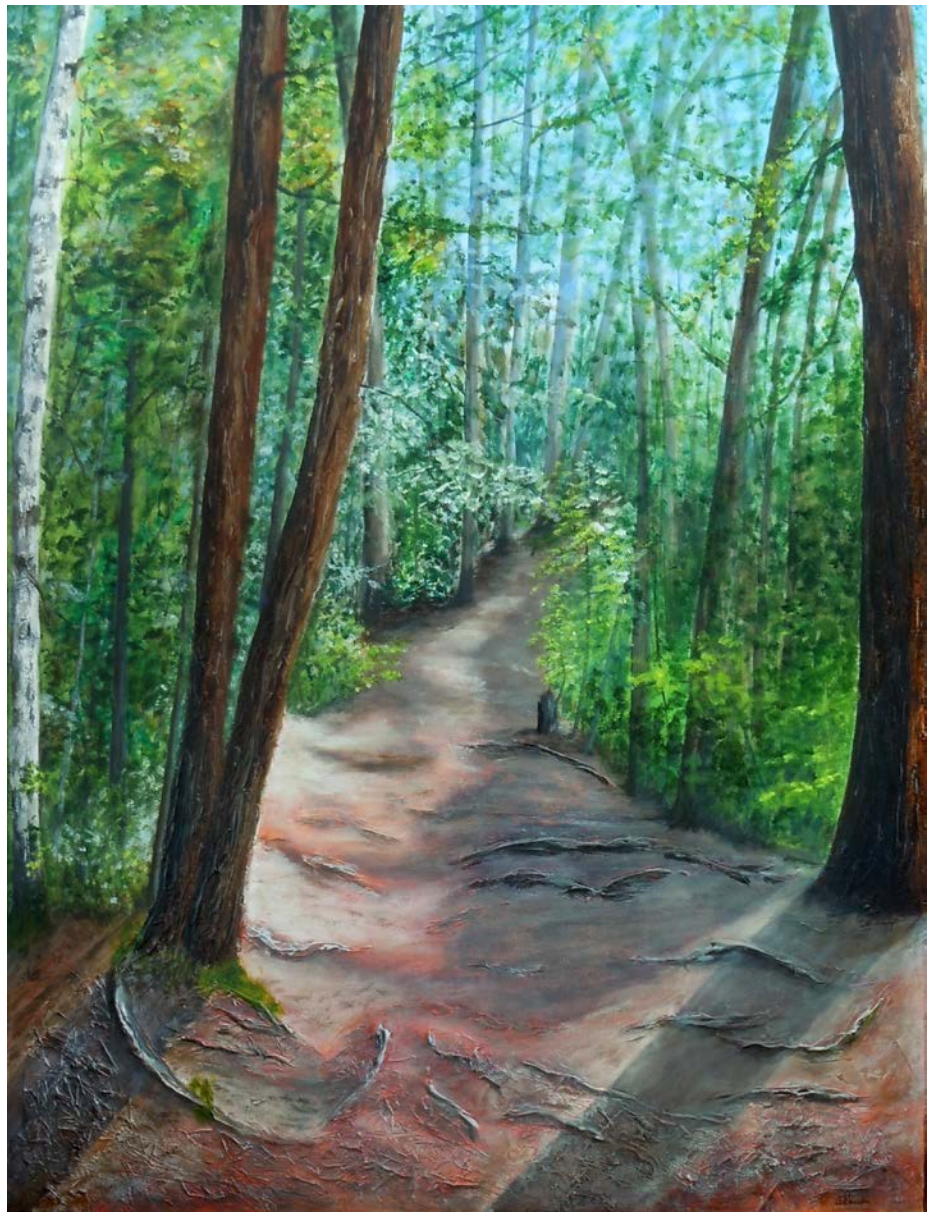
I walked here when I was small  
With my two much-older sisters,  
Sometimes we'd not speak at all.  
Simply let the forest's magic  
Seep into our healing place...  
Those we passed; inhaling silence,  
Wore the same 'enchanted' face.

## The Forest Edge

Sue Palmer

Dappled sunlight,  
rustling leaves.  
A spider web glistens  
caught on the breeze,  
that gently wafts  
across my face.  
My gaze fixed through  
time and space,  
upon the forest rising  
to greet the sky.

A canopy of trees  
where green meets blue.  
A pastel of colour  
in gentle hue.  
Gathering storm clouds  
drift lazily by,  
soft grey brush strokes  
on marbled skies.  
How precious to me  
this moment in time.  
Amazing indeed  
His great love divine!



## The Law of Nature

Raylene Hewer

The little mouse had run and run. She'd become separated from her family. The youngest mouseling, Belinda, was always in trouble for being the slowest. Today when collecting nuts and seeds on a quiet country lane, a human had frightened her.

Humans were usually so slow and noisy. There was always plenty of time to hide. But today a loud, smelly human with very fast wheels had approached at speed. The mouse family had scattered and now she was all alone. Sheltering beneath a protective toadstool, Belinda wondered how she would ever find her way home, and then remembered the little song her mother would croon each night when she settled them in to bed:

*I am a lucky mouse  
I have a nice warm house  
Beneath the tallest tree  
That you will ever see*

So there was the answer! All she had to do was find the tallest tree in the forest – and she would find her home. But where was the tallest tree?

Belinda decided to ask the wise old Owl, watching from high above her.  
And that is the end of the story!

**Prompt:**  
**Undercover**  
**- back cover**



## Oh, Dear!

Carolyn Nelson

I could wait until the rain stops  
Or run home and get quite wet,  
I'm not being indecisive,  
I am of a calm mind-set.  
What was that?!  
Oh, just a dried leaf  
Rolling past me on the breeze,  
I'm not shaking... these are not tears,  
I'm just plagued with allergies.

## Under My Umbrella

Wendy Woods

Hiding under my umbrella  
Hoping he will not see  
Flying around, seeking prey  
Hope it is not me

The swooping owl out on the hunt  
Doing his rounds at dusk  
I stand still in my hiding place  
Feet tickled by a husk

My burrow is near but yet so far  
Trembling in fright as the rain comes down  
Standing still if I can  
Don't want to drown

Must take the chance  
And dash for my home  
Can't see him now  
He's gone elsewhere to roam

So at last I'm here  
In my snuggle warm burrow  
The umbrella saved me  
Will it be the same tomorrow?



W Donachie