

# **Cottenham Village College**



## **Lockdown Anthology**

Published July 2020

This anthology is a collection of fiction and non-fiction.

Within the works of fiction, names, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead (except for satirical purposes), is entirely coincidental.

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## Contents

Foreword .....	5
COVID-19 Has Brought Out the Best in People by Juliette Page .....	6
The Fruit From Borough Market by Zara Ballard .....	8
How the Crocodile Got its Scales by Lucia Browne.....	10
The Bear and the Duck by Matt Houston .....	11
The Siren in the Woods by Lauren Beckford .....	12
Innocent Death by Theo Silvester .....	14
They Called It by Bel Allen .....	16
Another Day in the Reef by Gracie Penfold .....	18
Kitten, Kitten by Callum Starkey .....	19
How the Pufferfish Got to Puff Up! by Angus Kett.....	20
Pineapple by Shola Forbes.....	22
The Origin of Poetry by Alban Murphy .....	23
Melon for Mum by Anonymous .....	25
Burning by Martha Warde .....	26
The Penguin by Phoebe Newman .....	28
The Ferris Wheel by Zara Ballard.....	29
Summer’s Watermelon by Millie Coe.....	30
How the Kangaroo Got its Pouch by Ben Louch.....	31
It Wasn’t Mama by Rose Dean .....	32
When Will it All End? by Hannah Ward.....	34
Pangolin by Angus Kett.....	35
Coral Reefs by Mabel Jones.....	36
Butterfly, Butterfly by Lucia Browne .....	37
Kiwis by Fred Norman .....	38
Beneath the Cyan-Tinted Waves by Luis Pearson.....	39
The Hard-Working Ant and the Soldier Ant by Matt Houston .....	40
Lucky Clover by Alban Murphy .....	42
The Scarecrow Man by Leanne Jeffries .....	44
Berries by Charlotte Stevens.....	46

How the Lizard Got his Long Tongue by Phoebe Newman.....	47
Struggle by Ella Edwards .....	48
The Abyss is Quite Beautiful by Abigail Nation .....	50
Under the Howling Moon by Luis Pearson .....	52
The Fussy Pig by Rosie Dethridge .....	53
Blueberries by Emily Burgess.....	54
How the Owl Got Its Spin by Callum Starkey.....	55
Muspell: Burning Pit of Hell by Chris Bullough .....	56
Ropes by Grace Gadsby.....	57
Clocks Still Chime by Matilda Kilsby.....	59
Corona Diary by Beatrice Darby.....	60

## Foreword

You may have heard that while theatres were closed as result of plague in 1606, Shakespeare wrote *Antony and Cleopatra*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. There's no way to confirm whether this is entirely accurate. Certainly, the timeline of bubonic plague events matches the period when Shakespeare is thought to have written these plays, and references to awful diseases are found within those works. If it is true, then it remains an impressive feat. But what you have to remember is that Shakespeare didn't have the distraction of Netflix, TikTok and Fortnite. (He had access to MySpace, I believe, but only via dial-up, so he couldn't use it when his wife, Anne Hathaway wanted to use the phone\*.) Now I'm not saying that makes this anthology better than the combined works of Shakespeare. That's for you to say.

The pieces within this anthology come from a call within the school for submissions and other pieces that were sent to me as part of these pupils' continued English work. We have a range of fiction and non-fiction pieces. We have descriptive and narrative pieces and we have a mixture of poetry inspired by the war poetry we have studied, and poetry inspired by William Blake's works. There is a range of tones and moods within the collection, with some pieces being very light-hearted and amusing, while others are dark and troubling to reflect the times in which we live.

I have been so impressed by the work that pupils have produced during this period. It has been a time of great uncertainty, an unprecedented time in the modern age. All of the works included here are from pupils who have continued to focus on their studies. The work ethic demonstrated by these pupils is beyond admirable. Each piece has also been through an editing process where changes to the work were suggested, to give an authentic experience of the publishing processes.

I couldn't be prouder of the pupils of Cottenham Village College, and I hope you enjoy reading their work here as much as I did.

Benjamin Langley

Teacher of English

\*This may not actually be true...

## **COVID-19 Has Brought Out the Best in People**

**by Juliette Page**

Despite all the negative news we hear about this worldwide pandemic—the collapse of businesses and the number of people who seem to treat this crisis as a holiday—there is an army of people behind the scenes who are working tirelessly, everyday, to make this unprecedented situation, a little easier to bear. There are approximately 1.5 million people employed by the NHS in the UK: these include the doctors, nurses, receptionists, and other essential workers, who are all part of this amazing army of people.

On Thursday, thousands of ordinary civilians across the country, took the time out of their day to clap for the NHS. A hubbub of noise from almost every town, city, and village could be heard as strangers and family all gathered together in one big co-operative round of applause that ricocheted across the nation. What seemed like one simple act of kindness and reflection on the work at the frontline, brought many NHS workers to tears. "We heard you loud and clear," cheered the remarkable nurses at Nuneaton hospital.

However, it wasn't just the clapping that showed our increased gratitude for these amazing workers. Many people have individually gone out of their way to raise money for their service. Captain Tom Moore, a 99-year-old war veteran, raised over £25 million in support of the NHS and the number continues to rise. He initially wanted to raise just £1,000 by completing 100 laps of his garden before his 100th birthday. However, as millions of people heard his amazing story, more and more people donated, achieving more than his original target. A genuine, elderly man achieving the impossible, inspired many others to do the same.

Local initiatives have also been successful. Like our wartime ancestors, quarantine and self-isolation, has forced many people to think optimistically about all the things that could be done to help the situation. Around 250,000 people across the UK have joined Facebook and WhatsApp groups as volunteer shoppers for the elderly and single parents, who require the basic necessities like fruit, vegetables, and soap. Many have also designed reusable facemasks for everyone to use. Whilst this may seem like

a small effort to help the COVID-19 cause, all this work has ensured that people remain at home as much as possible and makes sure that there are fewer people outside for the police sector to deal with. All of this has helped to prevent the overall rapid spread of the coronavirus.

Whilst the NHS and these ordinary volunteers may seem like heroes, many of them are simply admirable people and civilians, with the sufferer's best interest at heart. They deserve our continuous gratitude, not just because they're helping our country, but because they work without complaint to ensure that no one gets left behind. This is why we must continue to reflect on the positive, just as much as the negative, in order to make sure that these people's work doesn't go unnoticed.

# **The Fruit From Borough Market**

**by Zara Ballard**

So sweet,  
yet so sour -  
its juice,  
Had a dry edge,  
leaving me wanting more.

I've never had,  
a fruit quite like it,  
since that day,  
in Borough Market.

Crisp skin,  
yet soft to the touch.  
Gleaming red,  
so pretty,  
so devilish.

I've never had,  
a fruit quite like it,  
since that day,  
in Borough Market.

They work, hunched over  
all day and all night.  
Pain so real,  
For fruit, so magical,  
so unbelievable.

I've never had,  
a fruit quite like it,  
since that day,  
in Borough Market.

## **How the Crocodile Got its Scales**

**by Lucia Browne**

On the African savannah, once upon a time, there was a very greedy crocodile and he ate all the fish: the blackfin tuna, the barracuda, the starfish, the blue fish, the spot fish, the blob fish and even the jittery jumpy oarfish. He threatened anyone who would come near his river that he would eat them up for his dinner. In the older days, crocodiles didn't have any scales. Instead, they had skin as smooth as a polished pebble. One day, all the animals in the kingdom had a meeting to talk about the crocodile and his greediness.

“He is not letting us drink!” said the zebras in a worried tone.

“I can't teach my chicks how to swim!” said the great white pelicans, all panicked.

“We can't keep cool in the watering hole anymore!” said the hippos sadly.

“What can we do?” asked the animals in chorus.

Their leader, the lion, came up with a clever plan; he would tell the crocodile to go upstream as there were more fish there, but really all there was a big pile of sticky, oozy mud. The crocodile would then get stuck in the mud.

They went on to tell the crocodile to swim upstream where the fish were. He agreed as downstream, he had eaten all the fish (including the jittery jumpy oarfish). He then got stuck in the sticky oozy mud – it was as sticky as glue. He was stuck there for hours and hours trying to get out. As he struggled, all the animals giggled and laughed at the greedy crocodile.

The mud started to dry and before he knew it, his silky, smooth skin was ruined. After all the mud had dried, the lions and lionesses pulled him out of his sticky situation. The greedy crocodile was no longer greedy again.

Now, he is so embarrassed, that he hides his skin underneath the surface to hide his lumpy, bumpy scales.

# **The Bear and the Duck**

**by Matt Houston**

See the swimming of the bear,  
now that he has emerged from his lair.

He finds it hard to see the fish,  
as they dart and dash and swish.

Who is that laughing near the water?  
She looks on at the bear called Walter.

She is but a small yellow duck,  
but is she now chancing her luck?

Maybe not because she is just made of rubber,  
sitting next to the soap ready for a scrubber.

These friends get together for an evening bath time,  
to encourage a little one to wash away the grime.

## **The Siren in the Woods**

**by Lauren Beckford**

The eerie blackness of the sky was a memory I was sure to never forget. It was like an ebony curse of fear which wrapped around the wooden giants that surrounded me like a coil of rope. It felt cold. It felt strange. It felt wrong. Crisp, white snow draped over the dead remains of fall leaves like a ruffled, pearly blanket. As I gazed up at the dark curtain of sky above me, the bony branches of the bewitched trees withdrew themselves by a couple of inches, just enough to reveal the slithers of the silvery night light that loomed above my pounding head. The thick mist was a coat of lost memories that whispered secrets in my swirling mind: deep, dark secrets—the kind that got you killed. But as soon as that milky light poured down onto the turned-up gravel road that lay in front of me, even the fog itself began to withdraw, mopping up the secrets it had spilled to prying ears. I must have been running for hours, days maybe, I wasn't sure. Everything looked the same in the woods. But I had to get away; I just had to.

They were bewitched, I was sure of it, all of them; they must have been. It was as if someone had reached into their once tranquil minds and flipped a terrible switch, unleashing their deepest fears, making them one of them. But one thing was for sure, they were hers now, part of her army. Like robots, their humanity was turned off and now they were nothing except a pack of soulless soldiers, destined to an eternity of servitude and slavery, all because of her deadly voice. And the worst part, there was nothing they could do to prevent it. There was no saving them now. They were gone: trapped in an eternal prison guarded by her beautiful song. Her voice encased their minds in a false dream of love and protection. There was nothing I could do to save them. Their loyalty, their lives belonged to her now. But I could save myself. And if I were to do that, then I could beat her, ruin her, kill her. And what would happen if I were to do that? Well, then I would be able to save the others. The ones she hadn't got. The warriors.

Like a tin soldier beating his little drum, my heart raced to the beat as it pounded out of my chest and into my dry throat, soar and hoarse due to the screams I had let fly out of my mouth and into the nothing that surrounded me. SNAP! A twig broke behind me, splintering and scattering over the soft chocolate dirt that sprinkled the damp forest floor.

I wasn't alone.

Someone was here, behind me. Were they one of the warriors or was it one of her army? I daren't look. I was scared. And fear is the most dangerous thing in the world. Fear drives you to do the unspeakable. It is strong enough to make you think the unthinkable, do the unbearable and say the most despicable of lies, but worst of all, it enables you to feel no guilt after you do it. I needed a weapon, or some sort of protection at least. Hesitantly, I lifted my hand and slid it into my pockets. I wasn't entirely sure what I was looking for, but I certainly wasn't prepared for what I was about to find: a dagger carved from pure starlight and topped with a sapphire pearl. Along the intricate handle, a story of the sea and the sky was carved, and like the crashing waves, it flowed as if it were water down in drips until it met the centre point of the blade, leaving only a few inches before the silvery tip. A whirlpool of questions entwined like vines in my aching mind. Who did this blade belong to? Why was it in my pocket? How long had it been there? How had it fit inside? Focus I told myself. Focus. One thing at a time. Focus. So that's what I did.

Without thinking I spun on my heel and like a flash of lightning, I was there and then I wasn't. I bolted as fast as my legs would carry me into the woods, aiming to get as far as I could before my body gave way. Then I heard it again, but this time it was louder. And nearer. Twigs crushed behind me, leaves rustled, footsteps neared. I turned around and threw my blade into the air, hoping with all my might that I would strike whatever was following me. But I didn't. No matter how hard I wished, I failed. As I prepared to run again, a cold chill ran down my spine, so unnerving, I could even feel it in my eyelids. There was only one thing in the world that could make you me feel that way, one person who was capable of such darkness. It was her. It was the siren. She was following me, and now she had found me. Now she could take me like she had the others with her bittersweet song. I was doomed. I was dead. I was hers.

# **Innocent Death**

**by Theo Silvester**

Onwards we marched like cattle to the slaughter.

We ran like dogs in the mud.

I just wanted to see my daughter.

I heard a gunshot, I heard a thud.

I was a scared tired sloth.

Our condition, critical, a shortage of gear.

Unaware of the attack with not so much as a cloth.

Unprepared, all we felt was the fear.

I shouted: "Take cover -mustard incoming."

We scuffled to fit the mask as fast as possible

One couldn't: he grabbed, tugged and tried but it was already forthcoming

His finger were numb; it was already impossible.

With horror, I saw an innocent man being killed,

As gentle as a bunny, he never hurt a fly.

He stumbled tortuously towards me, his 'duty' fulfilled,

Screaming that he loves his family and crying goodbye.

I replied "You aren't dead yet I can save you, I promise"

His face in agony as his lungs started to cave in,

I finally realise my promise was not honest.

His memory is gone; it just went in the bin!

He was wheezing and squealing

I could not handle it

I could not handle the feeling

But my friend at least he knew he did his bit.

If you had seen anything like this, you would have wanted to die.

It is torturing, his face forever in nightmares

So don't go to war again, make an elaborate lie,

For soon you find out that no one really cares.

# **They Called It**

**by Bel Allen**

They called it a tragic accident when he died. They called it fortunate when they discovered he was viable. They called it science when they began. They called it a monstrosity when they failed.

They called it a tragic accident when he died. When they performed the autopsy, they said the cause of death was blood loss; one of his arteries had been cut. It was left at that, though no cause of the cut had been discovered. The only person concerned with his death was his employer who was now short of a worker. The rest dismissed it as another unimportant death.

They called it fortunate when they discovered he was viable. The body was in its prime when it had ceased to function: it was unusually strong and had no chronic health conditions, and the man was not intelligent and did not question authority. Yes, he was the perfect candidate, and his demise would remove the problem of asking for permission: many disapproved of the project and so, they would not cooperate and had to be silenced.

They called it science when they began. Some called it an abuse of knowledge, but they were dismissed because this; it would save everyone. For each section of workers, there would be an ideal that the others were built around: the chimney sweeps would never grow taller than 5 foot, the manual workers would remain in their physical prime for longer, and then die as their usefulness diminished and so on. The man was the model for the manual workers. His DNA would be used to create others like him; they would replace all who worked in that sector currently. Did it really matter if an entire generation was scrapped so that new people who were perfectly suited to each job could infiltrate and benefit everyone as the productivity increased? No, it would be better this way.

They called it a monstrosity when they failed. No matter what they tried, something went wrong. There were inexplicable mutations which, on numerous occasions, threatened the entire project. Those with the mutations were

disposed of, but there were only so many places they could hide the mass of corpses of people who didn't legally exist. The more people they made, the more money it took to support the project, and the more they lost the support of their financiers. Eventually it was impossible to continue. They had no money left and suspicion was sweeping the city as people wondered why there were so much food coming into the city, but so little in the shops and the markets.

A few days after the project was abandoned, the man's body turned up in the canal.

## **Another Day in the Reef**

**by Gracie Penfold**

There's pink, there's blue, there's yellow, and there's green. There's any colour you could imagine. The small waves gently caress the coral. Life's peaceful here, although, it doesn't last forever...

Most of us live in peace here: we live together, we feed together, we swim together, but something always goes wrong, doesn't it? Gracefully swimming by the ocean floor, the fish is snatched from the devilish predators that lurk beneath the sand. They're squeezed to his death by the tight, painful grasp of the octopus. One by one, two by two, school by school, our lives end just like that. There's always something that happens here.

Another day's awaiting, and most of us have already forgotten the incidents of the past. Nothing seems to be going wrong yet although it never lasts like this for long. Swimming by the outskirts of the beautiful, lively reef, scouring for food scraps, I see large, finned silhouettes lurking in the distance. It lurks closer and closer, quicker and quicker, until the large, ravaging creatures drew nearer. It was clear to me that it was a predator: sharks. We don't cope well with sharks. The evil, sharp-jawed, predators of the sea have no mercy and just like that you'll be snatched up without hesitation. I hurry, as fast as I possibly can with these tiny little fins. I submerge myself in a dark space, in the reef. I'm safe here, for now...

The rapid sound of fins scurrying, fighting for their lives. The violent swishing, and crunching of bones. The horrific colour and smell of blood flooded the ocean, blanketing my vision. I rest on my side and dream the day away, waiting for yet another crisis to be gone.

I awaken to the sound of the peaceful waves and the coral gently swishing. Another day, another loss. We've once again let go of the memories of the past, living the rest of our hours or days here. Us prey don't live very long, although, that's the circle of life I suppose.

# **Kitten, Kitten**

**by Callum Starkey**

Kitten, kitten strolling by,  
Are you going to get a pie?  
*I am off to catch some mice,  
I hope they will taste very nice!*

Small kitten, why do you kill,  
The mice in the daffodils?  
*I need something to eat for tea,  
Cats don't eat pie why don't you see?*

I will make you a mouse pie,  
It will be seasoned with thyme.  
*Cats don't even eat mouse pie!  
Stupid boy, I say goodbye.*

# **How the Pufferfish Got to Puff Up!**

**by Angus Kett**

There was a pufferfish who swam through tropical waters throughout all the seas. He loved to travel the world swimming through famous rivers and diving through royal reefs. His name was Paul and he was known throughout the ocean for his most famous talent. Paul could eat over five times his bodyweight in food and could threaten anyone if there was not enough fish or kelp to eat. Eventually, Paul used his talent as entertainment and decided to show others his strange gift.

He started working for richer people and ate richer food which matched his acquired taste. He gobbled down dish after dish and then finished to a loud, cacophonous round of applause which made his toxins spread through his body with glee.

Finally, Paul was so famous that he was asked to perform in front of Poseidon himself! Paul began to salivate over what kind of sovereign food would be served to him by a god.

When the day came, he was so overrun with joy that he thought he was about to explode. When he walked inside still bubbling with excitement, he started his fifty-course, epic meal. He ate helping after helping, guzzled drink after drink, gorged himself on dish after dish and wolfed his way through helping after helping. But still he requested more. After asking politely first of all, he started shouting for more. He wanted to gobble down all the delicious food which the esteemed chefs provided for him. Eventually, he was eating more than the chefs could cook, so when he screamed more the reply came, "We don't have any more."

Fuelled by rage and overeating, Paul turned to Poseidon. Blinded by rage he started ranting with irritation. "I need more!" The audience gasped and Paul started swaying.

Poseidon shouted, "You greedy, rude pufferfish! You want more? You will never have more because you will be so full that whenever you guzzle down too much food you will expand, and then you may not have any food for a week until the painful swelling stops, and you learn to stop."

Then with a flick of Poseidon's wrist, Paul began to expand until the pain was so great that he could not eat anymore. The audience started laughing at him. He was so hurt that he waddled off the stage until his swelling stopped. He never over-ate or asked for any more again.

As the pufferfish will tell you, the moral is to not be greedy.

# **Pineapple**

**by Shola Forbes**

That late August afternoon,  
with beams of sun lining up in rows,  
with pineapple like never before,  
with spikes like spears.

Open French doors,  
Lead onto the busy narrow street.  
The wind sways against the leaves.

Spikes like mountains can't be moved.  
The pineapple, delicately carved into segments  
sits on the table between us  
as yellow as the sun as twice as tantalising.  
As we take a chunk, and bite,  
juice bursts, as sweet as your words  
Experiencing the feeling of your lips tingling,  
as we sit on the steps,  
waiting for the world to disappear.

# **The Origin of Poetry**

**by Alban Murphy**

Poetry was not a gift to the gods. It came from Vanaheim.

The Vanir were great and powerful in their woodland realm. They were the friends and enemies with the gods of Asgard, the Aesir.

One of the Vanir was wandering in the immense forests when he stumbled upon a strange tree. It was very old and large, beautiful yet powerful, controlling but mesmerising, all at once. The god brought the rest of the Vanir to the tree, showing them its power and beauty.

The gods decided to cut the tree down and make beautiful treasures from it. They made lutes, flutes, carvings and thrones from its trunk and bows. They made cloth, pages and crowns from its leaves.

However, as the gods soon discovered, these were no ordinary items. When playing the lute the musician couldn't help but to sing and make rhyming verse. When carving letters into the carvings, they found that all the words rhyme. The gods then called the tree the tree of poetry. They decided to show their crafts to the Aesir.

When they arrived, the all father, Odin, was amazed. He wanted the tree of poetry for himself.

Secretly, in the night, Odin crept off to Vanaheim with Loki. He wanted Loki because Loki could trick his way into getting the scraps from the tree of poetry. Loki went to the carpenter that was fabled to be making the items of verse. He disguised himself as a beggar and spoke in a frail voice. "Could I trouble you for some scraps of wood for my fire, for my family are cold, and without warmth they may die."

The carpenter told him to cut down a tree instead.

Loki, in the guise of the beggar shook his head. "Alas, the gods have forbidden me to harm any trees in the area."

The carpenter gave in, and gave Loki the off-cuts of his work.

Loki brought them back to Odin and asked what he was going to do. Odin said that he would burn the wood and let the fumes spread across the nine realms so that all could have poetry.

To his word, Odin did exactly that meaning that all that inhaled the fumes could have a chance of writing verse.

## **Melon for Mum**

**by Anonymous**

She knows how I like it:

Not sliced in smiles,

But delicately sliced into segments of joy.

Tiny portions of calorie-free yumminess

Melting in my mouth.

I smile, appreciating the time taken

To meet my needs once more.

# **Burning**

**by Martha Warde**

She never woke to the smell of burning.

Flooding through the window, a pool of moonlight illuminated her sleeping form. The shadows that danced across the room flickered over a glass of water which sat on the bedside table refracting the rays onto the walls. Something swirled slowly in the bottom of the glass.

Downstairs, a dark figure passed the living room window.

Silence.

Something began to glow from behind a cupboard, quietly growing brighter and brighter in the dim living room. The light flickered as flames burst through the door, licking up the sides of the wooden cabinet with growling tongues of fire. Myriad embers shot onto the floor, igniting the carpet. Snarling and crackling, the fire reached the walls, dancing across the paintings, instantly devouring their fragile canvases. Hungry tendrils latched onto the curtains, blackening the glass with soot as a thin crack crept across the surface.

A table that had sat in the middle of the room caught alight. For a second, the ember sat beneath its prey, gleaming dangerously. Accompanied by a violent roar, claws of fire enveloped the first leg, tore at the surface and warped the polished wood into scattered ash. The spreading flames engulfed the table-top, reaching up to slash at the ceiling like an animal clawing to be free of its cage. Ceilings and floors collapsed and weakened walls crumpled in a cacophony of tumbling debris and smashing glass.

She never woke to the sound of burning. Bright colours seemed to mimic the fast-approaching sunrise, wavering in the sky like dancers dressed in arrays of blood-red to shimmering gold and creating flickers that would be seen for miles.

The burning hand of flames eventually gripped the whole house, tearing at walls and ceilings, smashing windows with fiery talons, rearing its scorching head far above the roof, creating a beacon in the night sky until all that remained below was the smouldering ashes and clouds of thick grey smoke.

A distant blare of sirens slowly became distinguishable in the increasing silence. Cold darkness settled over the remains like a shroud hiding the figure that crept away. The peaceful night was suddenly disrupted again as the police cars pulled into the driveway; red and blue lights flashed over the trees surrounding the house. Gradually, the dew-covered grass filled with footprints.

No-one noticed the footprints leading away.

A skeleton house stood, ravaged by flames. Some walls were standing like charred tombstones in a field of nothing. Unrecognisable blackened furniture was scattered among the ash and broken glass. Smoke still curled into the sky in spiralling tendrils, blocking the growing sunlight and between the dense black ceiling and the burnt black remains, lay a pile of something ebony half-covered by a charred blanket.

She never woke to the feel of burning.

# **The Penguin**

**by Phoebe Newman**

Penguin, penguin, there you are,  
Snuggling with your friends afar.  
Cold it is, warm you wish,  
Thinking of the food and fish.

Penguin, penguin, cold you must be,  
Water stinging like a thousand bees.  
Fear in your eyes, no food tonight,  
Huddling in your crowd, so tight.

Penguin, penguin, there you are,  
How bleak your existence and future?  
Huddling centre, in your colony,  
So alone but, in mass company.

Penguin, penguin, please stay strong,  
Summer months will arrive before long.  
Your chick will grow before you know,  
The ice will be gone, along with the snow.

Penguin, penguin, there you are  
Another winter gone, but still be aware.  
Penguin, penguin, please take care  
The world is spinning, but might not be fair.

# **The Ferris Wheel**

**by Zara Ballard**

At first, you wouldn't have seen it. You would have thought it was an overgrown tree. But I knew the truth. I was there when the humans left the big mechanical wheel. I was there when the ivy and roots wound their way around each support beam and seat. I was there when the birds made their nests in the pods, and the rabbits made their burrows under the great metal feet. I was there, when the paint started to dull, fade, and eventually peel off.

At first you wouldn't have realised this place used to be teeming with humans, and their music and laughter. Not now all the noise is the tweeting of birds and the rustle of leaves in the wind. Not now these giants that used to spin, spin no more. Not now these paths are no longer full. Not now we roam and own these lands.

At first you wouldn't have known this place used to be full of lights, lights that now flicker but don't stay on, lights that no longer lead the way to a no longer magnificent place, lights that are no longer.

At first you would have thought this place was abandoned. But it's not. We live here. We live around this corner, and around that. But that's beside the point. You left this place for the taking; now you cannot have it back.

## **Summer's Watermelon**

**by Millie Coe**

My first slice of delicious watermelon  
one hot July day:  
I was instantly refreshed by the sweet juice.  
It was like I had drunk a glass of squash.

The red flesh surrounded by the bright green shell,  
like a brightly coloured lollipop  
asking to be eaten.

I let the juice drip off my lips and down my chin.  
I didn't care that it was going to land on my top.  
I savoured every bite and every drop of juice,  
cooling me down in the heat of the sun.

I reached for a third slice,  
Only to realise it was all gone.  
Why did I have to share with my sister?

# **How the Kangaroo Got its Pouch**

**by Ben Louch**

A long time ago, Zeus banished kangaroos away from their natural homeland to the burning hot lands of Australia. Because of the heat, the baby kangaroos could not walk as the sun shined as bright on the sand of Australia.

But after a few weeks of this, Pan (the god of nature) was unhappy about how the kangaroos were being treated. He sent satyrs to get two kangaroos and bring them to him. Twenty Satyrs went to go get the kangaroos but only three returned with only two baby kangaroos.

Their trip took them across a sea with lightning storms. Three of the ten boats were struck down. And on the way back they lost six more. They were going down like rocks skimming over lakes. As such, they brought back two baby kangaroos.

But that was enough. Pan blessed them with a pouch for their babies so the kangaroo generation would not die out. Pan also gave them a blessing to get to the wild safely without getting captured or killed. Then he set them free. That is how the kangaroo generation did not die out and how the kangaroo got its pouch.

# **It Wasn't Mama**

**by Rose Dean**

## **12th August, 1940 France**

I finally hear him coming through the cellar door with some food. It's been three months exactly now since the Nazis invaded France and took Mama away while Louis and I hid in the cellar. All we have for light is a faulty light bulb and candles.

"Sorry Cosette, only fried potatoes and onion today," he says as we start to peel the potatoes. They're not our real names; we had to change them from our Jewish-sounding names for safety. We have a working fireplace in our cellar. Once a day, Louis goes out to the shop and panic-buys but, when I say that, I mean quick-shopping, only getting a few things.

## **14th August**

The only fresh air I really get now is standing on the back doorstep one minute a day, for it is too dangerous any other way. Going on walks before had meant people stood on the other side of the round as if we had a 'Jewish virus'. We made a new play with my toys today which sounds silly for children that are 12 and 15 but there is nothing much to do being in isolation. Later that day, I thought my heart was going to stop as when it had turned 7:00pm (lockdown time) Louis still wasn't back. Fortunately, when I was expecting to hear alarms, he burst through the door with some bread and cheese.

## **17th August**

Mama bursts open the cellar door and yells to us, "Found you, get up!" but when I open my eyes, it's not mama. It's Nazis.

## **18th August**

Thrust onto the street, they force Jewish armbands onto us just as the clock strikes 12 which is now my dreaded number. I see a beautiful girl looking from her window,

with her blue eyes, as blue as the sea. She scowls and sticks her tongue out as if we started this whole war which some people find it easier to believe but as we pass her, I realise she had great sadness in her eyes and pinched, paled cheeks which her blonde hair covers and the dark circles under her eyes. She must be scared and sad- maybe she's lost someone. I half smile at her and she does it back!

Green, red, blue train carriages, the ones for taking exports, is being loaded with us Jews! There is hardly any room to stand, let alone sit down, and even though it's about three, it's getting hot! I can barely breathe as the train starts chugging along. A man is so tired that he falls back onto a side of the train. By some miracle, he falls through it. A hole: we take the chance and leap through. I feel a cold hand clamp over my heart. Guns, on the top of the train, but Louis and I are lying face down in the wet meadow. Some people aren't as lucky though. We must escape the country and the 'Jewish virus'. Somehow.

## **When Will it All End?**

**by Hannah Ward**

Dear diary,

Being stuck at home like this isn't the best thing in the world, but we have found a way around things. School lessons have been put online and it feels like ages since I last walked into school. Seeing friends on Facetime isn't the same—I wish we could just see them face to face. The things we would talk about when we see each other in months' time would be like we had been on a really, really, REALLY long summer holiday.

Everything is cancelled from clubs to booked days out—we had to spend Easter without meeting far-away family. I wish this would end, I wish, I wish, I wish. We have only had a months' worth of boring-ness, but it already feels like decades have passed. I want to know how long this will last—maybe weeks, months or years! I only we could see friends and family face-to-face then everything would be better.

I wish this would end, I wish, I wish, I wish. The key workers are working really hard like doctors, nurses and teachers to bin collectors, cleaners and post men. They risk their own lives to make our lives stay the same as possible. I wish this would end, I wish, I wish, I wish.

# **Pangolin**

**by Angus Kett**

Pangolin, pangolin shuffling along,  
Up all-night hunting and eating yearlong.  
The least known animal in the kingdom.  
Must you not be known? Is it forbidden?

Eating ants like your cousin,  
And feasting on bugs by the dozen.  
You have excellent hearing and sense of smell.  
Will you ever be known? Only time will tell.

You live in your armoured plating.  
It makes you feel intimidating.  
When threatened, you emit stinky acid.  
This is vile but a helpful asset.

Pangolin, Pangolin shuffling along,  
You are clever and strong.  
It pains me that you are almost killed,  
Without a legacy fulfilled.

# **Coral Reefs**

**by Mabel Jones**

Beneath the rolling waves, it was bursting with life. Turtles glided elegantly through the aqua blue water, taking swift turns through the sea, as the breath-taking marine life filled the oceans with colour. Pumpkin-coloured clownfish drifted through the sea anemone, its tentacles stroking the soft back of the fish. There were endless rainbow colours just below the surface: placid yellow fish swam peacefully and undisturbed, endless crimson plants danced in the turquoise water and emerald sea grass twisted and turned in the clear ocean. Inquisitively, a seahorse floated by, its soft pink body melting into its surroundings, making it almost invisible to the rest of the life beneath the sea.

Suddenly, a frenzy of sharks glided through the reef searching desperately for something to eat. Frightened, fish hid among the sea anemone and turtles swam away into more open waters, desperate to escape. A tiny crab poked its maroon head out from behind a rock, innocently searching to check if the predators had gone: the reefs had turned into a ghost town where the sharks ruled. However, as the sharks drew farther and farther away, the reefs gradually began to spring to life again. The tiny crab crawled its way out from behind a barnacle-ridden rock and began foraging again for algae near a sea urchin, whose bold red-coloured spikes sprouted out of its round body as if it were static.

Coral reefs are simply magnificent and beautiful.

# **Butterfly, Butterfly**

**by Lucia Browne**

Butterfly, butterfly, fluttering gently,  
Wings the colour of a sparkly ruby.  
As vibrant as a kaleidoscopic rainbow,  
I can see many out of my window.

Gathering nectar is its position,  
As strategic as a mathematician.  
Caterpillars have lots of plants to eat,  
Strange to have taste buds on your feet.

You have to fly far for migration,  
Then you enjoy some relaxation.  
Even if you have a short lifespan,  
Still I see you by the watering can.

# **Kiwis**

**by Fred Norman**

Sitting by the window  
with a friend  
eating kiwis  
at Land's End.

Forgive me.  
Scrumptious...?  
They were.

Mine...?  
They weren't.

I couldn't resist.  
I had to  
while I could.

# **Beneath the Cyan-Tinted Waves**

**by Luis Pearson**

Far beneath the cyan-tinted waves, under the amber-coloured gleam of sunshine and betwixt the many silver-tinted schools of mackerel, there swam a solitary creature gliding throughout the sea, one like no other. This aquatic marvel was dotted with coal-black dots, covering its milky-white skin in a dark like no other. Gliding through the many shades of yellow and pink that encompassed its surroundings, this organism silently surveyed its surroundings, looking for its next pastel-pink coloured victim to eat. As it slowly made its way throughout the thick mass of dull grey-coloured seaweed, it peered into the ocean's abyss, feeling close to its next victim.

With a sharp dart into the air, the sea critter paddled its way directly up to the surface, edging closer and closer. Whilst analysing the small basses that darted the opposite way to him, the agile animal ducked under a large jagged boulder that blocked its way. Nothing was getting between him and his prey.

Seeing the slimy tendrils ahead of him, the sea turtle snapped its head outwards, biting the animal for dear life and quickly chewed it up, swallowing the entire animal in under twenty seconds. However, the beast suddenly started choking and thrashing violently, quickly realising the bitter taste in its mouth was not a jellyfish – but rather a Tesco's shopping bag.

# **The Hard-Working Ant and the Soldier Ant**

**by Matt Houston**

The hard-working ant, named Spencer, spends his time planting his vegetable garden.

The soldier ant, named Steven, admires Spencer's dedication to vegetables which will one day help feed the colony.

Its summer and the days are long and hot. The vegetables are growing and Spencer keeps them watered in the dry sun.

One day the Queen asks to see Spencer. She wishes to thank him for all his hard work and dedication to his vegetable garden. But Spencer was sad because who would water his garden?

His mate Steven asks him why he is sad, and he explains that he is sad because he can't see the Queen because he must water his vegetables.

Steven wants to help his friend and offers to water the vegetables.

Spencer knows his job is important, and the vegetables need water otherwise they will die. But Steven promises, and Spencer reluctantly agree.

Spencer goes to see the queen ant on the hottest day of the year. Steven is busy watering when another soldier ant passes by, named Mark. Mark asks Steven what he is doing and laughs when he hears he is doing the job of a worker ant and watering the vegetables. He asks Steven if he wants to come and play computer games.

Steven, feeling bruised after he was laughed at, wants to play the computer games, but remembers his promise and says no.

Mark pleas with him and says it can be for an hour and the Steven thinks it is okay to leave the plants for an hour as they will survive and agrees to play computer games.

The pair of soldier ants play whilst the scorching sun rises high in the sky and the temperature increases.

After an hour Steven remembers his promise and gets up to return and water his mate's vegetables.

But he is enjoying the game and is easily persuaded to stay for just another hour. He can always water the vegetables later. This continues throughout the day and the temperature soars and soars. The plants begin to wilt and dry up.

When Spencer returns to his garden feeling jubilant from his visit with Queen he is shocked at his vegetables.

They are all dead.

Steven returns and sees his friend's distress at the state of his vegetables. Steven feels terrible, he broke his promise, let his friend down and there will be less food for colony this winter.

# **Lucky Clover**

**by Alban Murphy**

Soldier, soldier, trudging through mud like a wading bird,  
Soldier, soldier, walking in line like a shepherd's herd.  
Soldier, soldier, back from the field of war and strife,  
Soldier, soldier, slightly closer to normal life.

Soldier, soldier, sleepwalking on,  
Soldier, soldier, barely dreaming about days gone.  
Soldier, soldier, his company not knowing what was to happen,  
Soldier, soldier, faces dead, lifeless, ashen.

Then soldier, soldier, the dreadful cry of "gas, gas",  
Soldier, soldier, now a gas-masked mass.  
Soldier, soldier, but one's too slow,  
Soldier, soldier, writhes and shakes and quivers so.

Soldier, soldier, a bundle of rags on the trench floor,  
Soldier, soldier, coughs more and more and more.  
Soldier, soldier, oh what an awful, hellish sight,  
Soldier, soldier, crying, weeping, losing sight.

Soldier, soldier, the nearest to the dying man,  
Soldier, soldier, he crawls towards me as fast as he can.  
Soldier, soldier, rush forward to save them,  
Soldier, soldier, crying yourself, you know he's condemned.

Soldier, soldier, there's blood on your coat,  
Soldier, soldier, but even now you know of no antidote.  
Soldier, soldier, he's chokes on his own blood,  
Soldier, soldier, his broken lungs mix with the mud.

Soldier, soldier, loud as the German guns, silent as the grave,  
Soldier, soldier, sadness is death's greatest slave.  
Soldier, soldier, his breathing stops, suffering over,  
Soldier, soldier, today was not the day to lose your lucky clover.

Soldier, soldier, he was only sixteen,  
Soldier, soldier, why does life have to be so obscene?  
Soldier, soldier, children should not be fighters,  
Soldier, soldier, this boy's life should've been so much brighter.

# **The Scarecrow Man**

**by Leanne Jeffries**

Darkness. It was like an abyss. It was like a bottomless pit. It was like an infinite hole. It was black for a while, and then the mist came, a glowing, glistening, grey fog. It was water, flowing through the air effortlessly. At that moment, I was lost.

Darkness. It was lighter. The mist seemed to make things brighter, yet I still couldn't see where I was. However, I could hear things I wish I couldn't hear at all; first, the trees groaning, groaning and creaking and moaning like they were alive; second, the twigs snapping, snapping and breaking and splintering like there was someone else; third, the birds screeching, screeching and screaming and crying like they were terrified; last, the deranged laughter, laughter on a loop like a broken record. At that moment, I was terrified.

Darkness. Everything was still dark. It became lighter since I started hearing things, but now I smelled things too. The wafting sense of burning swam into my nostrils. The pungent odour of rotting flesh crept its way to my nose. The grotesque smell of chemicals filled my lungs. I knew I wasn't alone. At that moment, I was petrified.

Darkness. It disappeared. There was a flash of light and then it just left. Now, I could see everything. I was near a farmhouse, a deserted, isolated, ruined farmhouse. I snuck up to the farmhouse, where the scent of chemicals became evident. It was wretched. I couldn't breathe. I needed to get out of there. I ran as quickly as I had ever ran before. I ran until I could run no longer. At that moment, I was running faster than ever.

Darkness. It came again. I appeared at a meadow, empty except for a scarecrow. The smell of rotting flesh was more pungent than ever. I knew something was wrong, but I decided to observe the scarecrow all the same. It was placed like it was leaning its back against a pole poking up out of the ground. Its head was angled down and topped with a hat so that I couldn't see its face. Its hands were gloved and wrapped around the pole as if they were hiding something. Its legs were bent at the knee and were clothed with trousers. It didn't look normal. I was about to go closer to look to

see if my eyes were tricking me when the sudden flight of birds into the sky caught my attention. I turned my head to see if I could see what caused them to rise in terror, but I couldn't. I turned my head back to the scarecrow. Then, my heart stopped. It lifted its head, stood up, leaned over me and smiled, smiled a crooked, evil, lunatic smile. It began to laugh, the same deranged laugh I had heard earlier. It smiled showing jagged teeth. It untwined its hand and produced a blood-soaked dagger from its glove. The scarecrow man. At that moment, I was going to die.

# **Berries**

**by Charlotte Stevens**

The squeaky cleanness of the fresh berries makes them more desirable,  
The succulent flowers, more alluring.  
Knowing I could have them soon makes me all the more desperate,  
'Just one,' I beg Mum. 'No!' she said with a glare, 'Wait a while.'

My stomach rumbles!  
The growl makes my mind wander again to the berries.  
'If only I could have them now,'  
The urge to go to the kitchen is ever so strong,

I blink as the fridge opens.  
Nervously, I reach for a berry.  
'What are you doing?' Mum asks, already knowing.  
'Just one,' I plead, pure desperation in my eyes.

Hours pass pondering the delicacy trapped in the kitchen.  
The sun is low, and a pink glow has fallen over the street,  
And though night begins to fall, the heat is overwhelming.  
Finally, Mum arrives with a bowl of scrumptious berries!

I run and sit on the cold floor of our porch.  
I don't care that cold is setting over me;  
The berries cool me like ice cream on a warm summer's day  
The wait was long, but the taste cures me. The knowledge is everlasting.

# **How the Lizard Got his Long Tongue**

**by Phoebe Newman**

Goddess Phoebe of Cottenham asked all the creatures in the kingdom to present her with a gift. This gift was to celebrate her twelfth birthday. All the animals presented a wonderful gift to Phoebe. The lizard (named Jeffrey) presented Phoebe with a bowl of the most delicious and creamy vanilla ice cream. Phoebe absolutely loved the ice cream and could not get enough of it!

Although Jeffrey was pleased that Phoebe liked his gift, he was a little disappointed. As he had no tongue, he had never been able to lick or taste the ice cream himself.

To show her gratitude to Jeffrey for such a wonderful present, Phoebe told Jeffrey he could have whatever he wanted.

Jeffrey thought carefully about this opportunity, and because he was so jealous and angry that he could not lick the ice cream and try it for himself, he asked Phoebe to ban any of the animals and creatures in the kingdom from eating ice cream ever again.

Phoebe said that she would not do this and she would not let others lose their enjoyment of the delicious ice cream as result of Jeffrey's jealous wish!

Instead, Phoebe gave Jeffrey the longest tongue in the animal kingdom.

Phoebe said by giving Jeffrey this tongue he too could enjoy the ice cream like the rest of the kingdom.

Rather than denying everyone the pleasure of delicious ice cream, Phoebe had allowed the lizard to also enjoy it.

Phoebe said to Jeffrey, "Don't let your jealousy and anger overthrow you. Always look for a solution to your problem the kindest way."

# Struggle

by Ella Edwards

The muddy battlefield like a pit of sinking sand,  
Soldiers struggle, it's like treading water  
As they retreat in a sluggish fashion,  
The battlefield stares forebodingly at their dark silhouettes,  
Like cars with little fuel, men move slowly, tiredly  
Completely defenceless without equipment,  
If the opposing army were to attack,  
With senses disabled after days of hard work,  
They were a perfect target for the upcoming gas attack.

Then one soldier lifted his nose up high  
Sensing the gas that was filling the sky,  
Their trembling hands began to assemble their masks  
With difficulty hoping they were quick enough,  
But one unlucky soldier who failed to cover his airways in time,  
Began to stumble to his friends, staggering across the land,  
Drooping more with every step,  
I knew he was unsalvageable as he fell before my feet,  
A flower wilting after his requirements had not been met.

Heart-breaking, tear-stained eyes,  
Yet I could do nothing to help.  
Gasping, panting, choking for the clean air that was keeping us alive,  
When the gas cloud cleared we dashed to our friend,  
We lugged him into our weak arms  
Attempted to pull him to safety,  
His chest rising as he tried to breathe

And even he knew that he would die at war,  
Face red, eyes closing, his cries echoed around the area,  
His breathing became shallower as his lungs began to shrivel up,  
And his yells became quieter,  
As we realised that he would not last more than a minute longer.

His body became strangely heavier  
Like weights had been dropped on top of him,  
And his final words began to turn into mumbling  
Like a gramophone at the end of a song.  
Yet many young children aspire to fight in war  
To use the guns that helped us win,  
To be in the trenches that we dug,  
To be on the battlefield that we fought on,  
But they do not understand  
The pain that our hearts went through,  
Watching our fellow soldiers die  
Right in front of our eyes  
Suffering in pain.

## **The Abyss is Quite Beautiful**

**by Abigail Nation**

**Please be aware that the following story contains a theme of suicide which some may find upsetting.**

The abyss is quite beautiful. Those were the last words I wanted to say. I wanted my last words to be rebellious, not to be some sad proclamation of love for someone, or a thought on how scary the drop looked. When I died, I wanted those to be my last words because the abyss was not supposed to be beautiful. The rocky ledge beneath my feet was a terrifying sight, a steep drop complete with vicious looking rocks at the bottom, baring their teeth at the thought of their next victim. Mother Nature was toying with her victims, like a cat would toy with a mouse, giving humanity a false sense of dominance, knowing that we all, eventually, would submit to her once we are all in our graves. I had a choice. In this world, we are blind to the very little choice we have, yet here was my choice, the edge of the cliff looking like the gateway to the underworld, beckoning.

“Is this what you want?” I screamed into nothingness. The wind grew louder and stronger, as if trying to push me off the edge, as if Mother Nature was teasing me, daring me to go. There was no way around it. Now or later.

I could hear her laugh. I heard her laughing the day I came home from my school and discovered my mother hanging by her neck on the old apple tree. I was too young at the time to realise what had happened, or to realise the meaning of the note still clutched in her cold hands. It simply read: death is a wonderful thing. My fingers closed around that very same note in my pocket now. She had not written about how much she loved her family, or about how she was sorry, or about anything like that. Lots of people, after reading my mother’s note, saw it as a cry for help, or a statement about her mental health, a concerning thing. Only I truly understood it. She wrote that because death is not a wonderful thing. Death is scary and it rips people apart. That’s why she wrote it—she wasn’t supposed to think of death as wonderful—a true act of defiance.

I took the small piece of parchment out of my pocket, my fingers grazing along the words as I read them for the millionth time. Then I placed it at my feet, a small rock placed on top to weigh it down. From my pocket I took my pen and a scrap of paper, and on it I wrote my own short message and placed it with my mother's. I stepped closer, and peered into the dark drop that loomed below me. "Wait!" Cried a voice behind me I heard their footsteps coming closer. Their words became inaudible as the wind picked up again. It was now or later. "The abyss," I whispered my message to myself, and then stepped off the rocky ledge, "is quite beautiful."

# **Under the Howling Moon**

**by Luis Pearson**

Under the howling moon

where no one would see us

alongside the flowing bushes

we sat on the deck chairs

sitting, smiling at the crack of dawn.

I took the knife and cut deep into the flesh

first cutting through the tough outer layer

and then gliding my knife through the pink tender insides

letting out a slew of red coloured juice.

I sliced and diced; cutting into halves, fourths, eighths

making sure my cuts were precise.

I smoothly cut off the rind, leaving only the juicy meat

before spreading out the pieces and sharing it

biting into the sweet reward of the watermelon.

# **The Fussy Pig**

**by Rosie Dethridge**

There was once a pig in the village called Piget, and he wasn't your average pig. Most people say that all pigs like anything from food to tablecloths. But not this piggy, he would only eat something that is gourmet food. This might sound like no problem, but oh it really is. If he went anywhere like to a friend's house all he would do is shout and cry saying, "This isn't good enough."

At some points this became quite rude and offensive to his friends, so he ended out up with none. One very special day, on his birthday, he decided to go out for a walk. Someone like him never ever went out for walks! He just decided to go where the wind took him. Hours later, while looking around everywhere, he realised he was lost.

Whilst looking around for help, a young man came strolling his way. His name was Hunter. "Hey, you over there," came a squeaky voice, "are you lost?"

"Yes," replied Piget.

"Go left through the trees, and then right when you reach the fork in the path."

"Thank you," Piget said happily. What Piget didn't know though was that he was telling a big lie. As he went the continued along the path it became harder and harder to follow getting less visible. He stopped when he reached a clearing and had a sudden thought: that man looked familiar like his old friend who got once really upset when he said that he didn't like the meal that took him ages because it wasn't gourmet.

He always said that he would get revenge.

Now Piget was lost, starving hungry, alone, and afraid. All that was around him was berries that in his opinion were not gourmet so not even once did he lay snout on them.

The village has never seen him again.

He was never seen in the village again.

## **Blueberries**

**by Emily Burgess**

Blueberries perch on a bush  
so bright, so ripe, so full of life.  
We stuff the baskets, our heads  
filling with memories and hope  
of days yet to come.

Blueberries left to rot  
in the chilling air  
of the fridge. It is almost  
Too late.

Blueberries merge into one, big group  
as blue as the sky on a summer's day,  
an astonishing puddle of  
sapphire and navy,  
miserable and glum,  
slurry at the bottom of the  
icy cupboard. They  
cannot be retrieved.

# **How the Owl Got Its Spin**

**by Callum Starkey**

Long ago in the forests of Lefka Ori, Owl was getting ready for the night ahead. She was tidying up her feathers when, suddenly, a fox jumped up behind her and bit off her wing. Owl squawked and managed to wriggle out of the grasp of the fox and flutter frantically back up to her nest. She couldn't hunt or feed that night and was left hungry as she drifted off to sleep.

The second night Owl was partially recovered and starving hungry. She had to eat something, or she was to starve. She stood up out of her nest. She opened her wing and then, out of the blue, the fox attacked her again, knocking Owl and her nest from the tree, this time, taking the other wing with him. Then the fox sprinted off into the darkness.

Owl clambered into her grounded nest. This time she couldn't sleep as she was terrified the fox would come back and finish her off. She decided to stay up all night. It was calm and dark in the forest, and all was not looking good for Owl.

Then, without warning, a bright glow appeared: it was Phaunos. He was searching the forests for a fox that has been causing danger. Phaunos had been asking the whole forest if they have any information on the fox. He came over to wing-less Owl, and asked her about the fox. She told him the whole story.

Phaunos felt so bad, he captured the fox and made him apologize, and then sentenced him to a life in the bottom of a well. Next Phaunos fixed Owl's wings and gave her the ability to turn her head 360 degrees.

So that's how the owl got its ability to spin its head round.

# **Muspell: Burning Pit of Hell**

**by Chris Bullough**

It was a burning pit of hell. Fire engulfed the jagged rocks of the looming mountains in this unforgiving realm. Lava spewed from every crack there was, the glow beaming ever brighter. The sweltering atmosphere was lethal and there was no end to this world of fiery death. Ashes rained down like snow.

Noxious smoke hung in the air. The sulfurous volcanoes were relentless, the thunder of the cascading lava down the rocks was deafening. The smoke only contributed to the searing heat of Muspell and nothing could stop the ruthless smell of death.

Sparks and embers whizzed through the air like firecrackers. Rivers of lava trickled slowly down the burnt landscape, in some places forming huge oceans. No matter where you were, you could always hear the sizzling of the heat and the screams of the world itself. The unquenchable fire leapt from every corner of the blazing furnace.

The beings that managed to survive the grizzly heat of Muspell were growing ever thirstier for more lava and more smoke in this abyss of deadly fire. Hopelessness and despair were inescapable, and the ferocity of the inferno was terrifying.

This realm was truly fatal. Imminent, inevitable death waited for anyone who came here.

# Ropes

by Grace Gadsby

This was the only time Akos could ever find release, swinging from the ropes. The only time he could forget the pressures of the world and just lose himself for a moment. It was just him, the burning in his muscles, and the adrenaline powering him on. Not only was it a way to escape, it was Akos's only way. When he was up there, performing for the crowds, a feeling of invincibility overcame him, gushing through his body and suddenly Akos was not the average human, destined to fade into the background, insignificant. Akos felt powerful as awed expressions followed him everywhere. It was the most amazing feeling. So, when that feeling, the thing that defines your life comes crashing down, how can what's left seem anything but hopeless?

Akos had done this routine a hundred times before and even more so if you counted training, but he knew the final jump was always going to be a risk. When the music sounded, Akos fell into the familiar, comforting rhythm that his body knew so well.

The song started slow while Akos performed on the ground. His body shifted automatically when the tempo started to rise, and a slow smile emerged from his face. It was his time to fly. The beat hit a hard crescendo and Akos's trapeze fell next to him. Hooking a leg around the cold steel bar, Akos was jerked sharply up towards the heavens. Gasps erupted from below as he flung himself onto the neighbouring rope, contorting his body in a such a graceful way it was as though he was a bird.

Akos flew from trapeze to trapeze, to the great pleasure of the audience beneath, basking in their delight. He could feel every eye in the tent staring, completely captivated by him. He didn't know what it was about this particular audience, but he felt the need to impress even more than usual. He knew that his big finish would satisfy them. Akos, however, wanted to give them that fateful little bit extra. It's an important thing, knowing your limits. The feeling of terror exists for a reason.

As Akos was ascending for the finale, he decided to jump from a higher stage, just to

push his performance to a greater level. Akos wanted more height. The more he climbed, the more the crowd cheered, the more he wanted to go.

Exhausted and shaking, he leaned out over the top of his bar. He could see the one he needed to land on, and it was much further down than he had anticipated. For the first time while performing, Akos felt true panic rack through him. He looked around desperately to see another way down but came up empty. Akos closed his eyes and tried to slow his breathing. He could make it, right? With the audience getting impatient, Akos prepared himself to jump. Finally, he propelled himself forward, his scream drowned out by the thumping music. Akos soared like a bird through the air, quickly descending towards his destination. His fingers grasped the bar, clamping down, but not hard enough.

It wasn't like in the movies, when everything seems as though in slow motion, nor did his life flash before his eyes, in fact, quite the opposite. Everything was very fast. Almost painless. Just a sharp pang of regret and then nothing. That was it, it was over. The bird has landed for good.

## **Clocks Still Chime**

**by Matilda Kilsby**

It's everywhere:  
Everywhere you go;  
Everywhere you look;  
Everywhere you hear,  
It bites with a cold fusion,  
Taking you with it,  
It spreads like a rumour,  
It grows like a weed,  
Attacking the vulnerable,  
Lost, Lonely is what you are,  
Forgotten to the outside world,  
Streets are becoming frantically bare,  
Shelves are too,  
Desperate times leads to desperate measures,  
Hospitals are cramped,  
Villages are isolated,  
Some weave,  
Whilst others grieve,  
Silence echoes around,  
Yet the sky is still bright,  
Yet the night still occurs,  
Yet the clocks still chime...

## **Corona Diary**

### **by Beatrice Darby**

**Day 1:** This is AMAZING!!!!!! Thanks Boris! No more school for ages!

Yayyyyyyy!! I ate ice cream and crisps and binge watched Netflix all day. I could get used to this.

**Day 5:** I've finished all my Netflix shows and there is nothing else to watch. All the ice cream vanished. I bet my sister ate it all. So annoying. Also, guess what? My mum made me go on a walk today. A WALK. Who even walks anymore? It's so old fashioned, why walk when you have a Car? Never again am I walking. It was so pointless anyway, we just went in a loop. Why not just stay at home in the first place?

**Day 10:** We got school work the other day. I swear the teachers gave us more work than they do at school. I barely squeezed in time to eat my lunch. Are they TRYING to ruin my fun? Not that I'm having any. I'm so bored because there's nothing to do that I haven't already done.

**Day 15:** I miss my friends. There's this rule that we are not allowed to see anybody outside our household which just seems really unfair. Also, every-time we see someone on the street we have to cross the road or move over, so we end up practically diving into nearby bushes. Yes, my mum's making me walk EVEN MORE. As if I didn't have enough torture with schoolwork.

**Day 20:** It's the Easter holidays now so we don't have as much work, thank goodness. However, I could be at the beach right now, but NO. I'm on my couch, watching the same programme for the 500th time in a row. I'm not even allowed to go to Tesco's, let alone the beach.

**Day 25:** I WANT TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL.