

THE MAGAZINE OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF AUSTRALIAN WRITERS QUEENSLAND

This edition of SCOPE magazine is volume 72 No. 4

SCOPE

August / September Edition

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Premier Networking Event.

Award Winning Author

Jo Skinner

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FAWQ

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Queensland

Supporting emerging writers since 1921



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SCOPE is a bi-monthly magazine, depicting all things literary, from Members' writings to articles and information for writers and readers.

Featuring stories, poetry and articles submitted by FAWQ members.

SCOPE is published by the Fellowship of Australian Writers - Qld.

The Fellowship is dedicated to the nurturing and support of writers of all ages and levels, bringing them together in a connected community since 1921.

Join the Fellowship to immerse yourself in the Queensland writing community and become eligible to submit your work for the chance of publication.

[Click Here](#) to Join or renew.

Join Our Fellowship



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Editor's Notes from Sally and Russell.

MEMBERS:

Please feel free to submit your recent achievements or milestones, as well as letters to the editor regarding points of interest, events or suggestions. We will attempt to fit them in.



JOIN WITH US AT FAWQ

AND HAVE YOUR WORK PUBLISHED

[CLICK HERE](#)

WE NEED MORE SHORT STORIES AND ARTICLES

Please insure that these are submitted by the 15th of the month before each issue. That is:

February/March -15th January

April/May — 15th March

June/July —15th May

August/September—15th July

October/November—15th September

December/January—15th November.

Short stories, flash fiction, poetry and articles can be submitted at any time, as, if they miss an issue, they can be considered for the next.

[Click Here for Submission Guidelines](#)

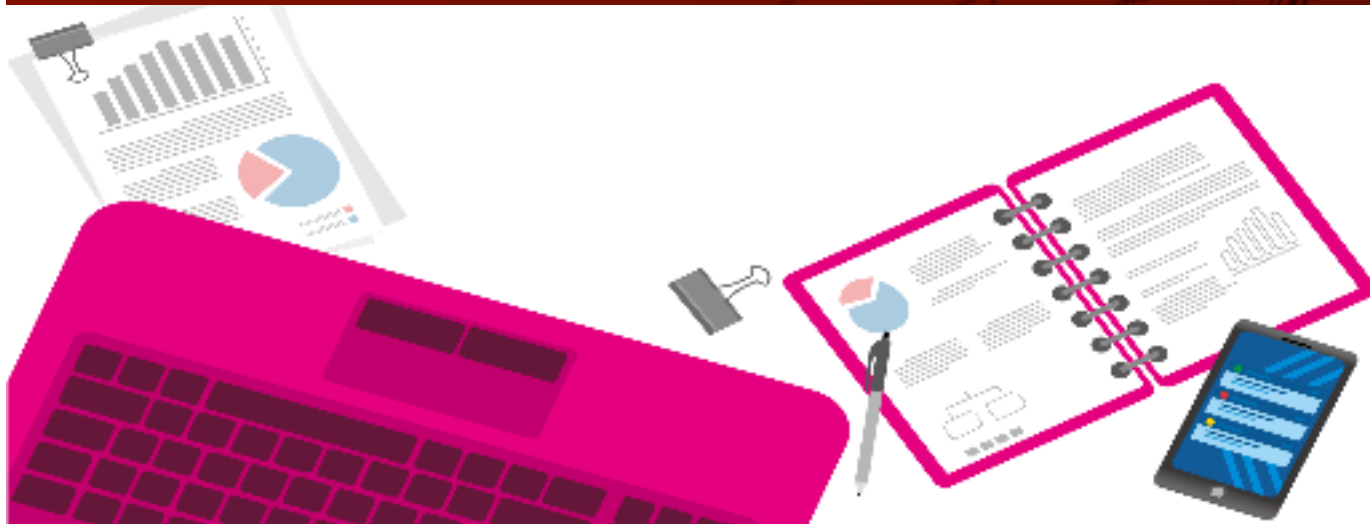
A quote that Sally found for all writers out there

'There is no hierarchy of stories. Only stories that move people, and stories that don't.

Write what you love. And be loud and proud about it.'

Valerie Khoo | National Director | **Australian Writers' Centre**

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From the President's Desk.

President's Report.

Welcome to this edition of Scope. Two recent FAWQ events warrant comment. One is the launch by FAWQ member David Jones of his novel *Beyond the Waterfall*, centred on the New England region, specifically Armidale, where he grew up. This book has raised an interesting question: why is it sometimes so difficult for us to write about familiar locales and about people, or at least the sort of people, with which we are most familiar? Perhaps more on that later.

I mention also the FAWQ author event with winner of the The Australian Fiction Award, Troy Henderson, author of *Head Grenade* and the forthcoming *River City*. Troy reflected on the importance of competitions for writers. One question from the audience was how can authors best deal with writer's block. Troy's answer was that he likes to work by routine, which for him, means doing an hour of writing every morning. Perhaps more on that later, as well.

We've an upcoming author event with FAWQ member Jo Skinner. Check out her website – Running Writing. I think her work raises interesting and important issues about sex and gender. I should mention that we are placed to partner with the Eumundi Writers Festival, a Sunshine Coast event which punches well above its weight. And we are also pleased to announce that our own Lexcia Dalton is official FAWQ representative at the upcoming Outback Writers Festival, in Winton, Western Queensland.

Keep writing, and I look forward to meeting you at one of our events.

(Dr) Jim Page

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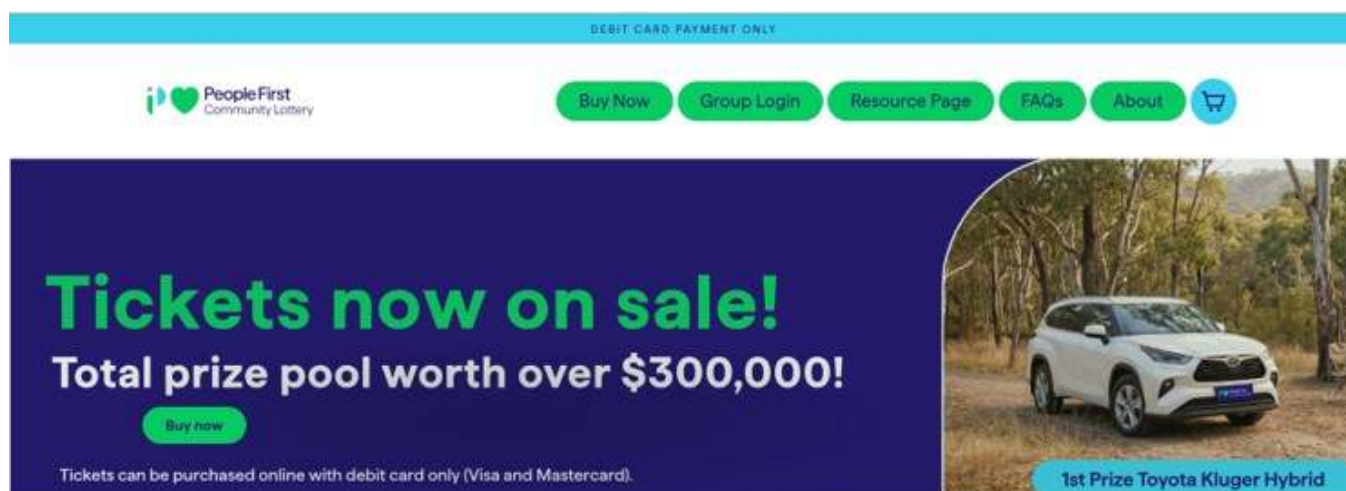


SUPPORT OUR QUEENSLAND AUTHORS

FAWQ has joined the People First Community Lottery.

Help us raise funds to support Queensland Authors

Purchase tickets by clicking the image below.



About the People First Community Lottery

Originally known as the People's Choice Community Lottery, the People First Community Lottery gives local sporting clubs, schools, charities, volunteer groups and other not-for-profit community groups around Australia the opportunity to raise funds and achieve fundraising goals. The People First Community Lottery has helped to raise more than \$22 million for community groups since its inception in 1984.

People First Bank manage the administration, marketing, prizes and ticket production for the People First Community Lottery, with support from a number of valued partners. This allows participating community groups to keep 100% of every \$2 ticket sold, making fundraising simple and rewarding.



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Outback Writers Festival

A Report by our Attending FAWQ Secretary—Lexcia Dalton

Most of the writers' festivals, conferences, and retreats I've attended have featured workshops on the writing craft. Workshops that become monotonous in their sameness and make you want to scream.

I admit it is what I expected at The Outback Writers Festival. On reflection, it is the only festival I've attended where the emphasis is on the writer and not the craft.

I can scream the rafters down when a speaker rambles on about their life from birth to career, name-dropping every other sentence to boost their perceived credibility. However, I do like to hear what inspired them to write their stories and the roadblocks they had to overcome in their writing.

So, the Outback Writers Festival met that criteria hands down with book launches and book talks.

What's the difference, you ask. Well, not much, to be honest. Book launches are hot off the press, published within the last week to up to a year ago. The author gives an outline of what the book is about, what inspired it, some of the problems they encountered, why they self-published their book etc. A book talk, to me anyway, is about a book published anywhere from a year to a decade ago. It's about the book's inspiration, development, research, what led to it, what followed on from it: any obstacles, controversies, discussions, governmental and societal outcomes and repercussions etc.

The last day saw the Tim Borthwick Memorial Session titled A Voice For Verse and featured Gregory North. Greg is a performance poet and three-time Australian champion, and a most entertaining performer.

There was one, shall I say, technical session. Stephen Marland of Boolarong Press gave an insight into printing and publishing in Queensland. Stephen has recently taken over from Dan Kelly and is leading Boolarong into new waters. It was a very informative session with some very crucial hints for writers.

The very last session of the festival was a panel discussion with Q&A session following. All in all, this was a new experience for me, not only as a writer.

The festival included other activities such as a book fair and Meet The Writers event, and a social outing (Out to The Gondwana Sky Observatory for cocktail hour) and award dinner.

The Winton Outback Writers Festival illustrated just how small a world it is. I met two ladies, one from Elimbah and one from Mapleton. Some of the writers came from Northern New South Wales as well as Outback Queensland. As an experience, I would recommend this festival to others. Take the time to research accommodation, travel arrangements, and tourist destinations.

One downer of the festival is the telecommunications and internet coverage. I have Optus, and out there I had no phone or internet connection. My companion has Telstra and had a connection.

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image by [Prawny](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Members Achievements.

Major achievements during June/July for prolific member:
Mocco Wollert

Achievements – Milestones – June 2026

Your Time Magazine:

Column – Recycling June 2026

Senior Digest USA

Column – Saying Thank You June 2026

Poem – In the garden June 2026

Society of Women Writers Q Poetry Competition

Poem – Yad Vashem – Encouragement Award June 2026

Scope

Poem – Ode to a Cleaner June/July 2026

Poem – Magi Sword June/July 2026

Poem – Old Tree June/July 2026

Poem – New Life June/July 2026

Poem – Older Poet June/July 2026



Image by [Prawny](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Members Achievements.

Your friendly co-editor of Scope, Sally Eberhardt.

Sally is currently in the finals of The Great Clarendon House Writing Challenge.

Published in this issue are the two stories that placed her in the finals –

[‘Death in Elevator’](#) put her in the top 5 writers, and her response to a ‘Swords and Sorcerers’ genre challenge, [‘Elodia and Nero’](#), put Sally into the top 3.

Please enjoy both stories – and we will keep you posted as Sally’s third and final entry is being judged!



Image by [Prawny](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Members Achievements.

Achievements for June/July 2026 – Jo Skinner

Poem 'Possession' shortlisted in the Whitsundays Writers Festival Poetry Award

Two articles in August/September issue of MINDFOOD - One about family and domestic violence and the incredible work by Maleny group Speak Up Now and another about PCOS now called polyendocrine metabolic ovarian syndrome.

Spoke as part of a panel at the Stand Up, Speak Out conference about elder abuse. Ageism is something I have written about for magazines and journals.

Had 2 stories included in this year's Grieve Anthology - a wonderful project organised each year by Hunter Writers' Centre

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FAWQ Special Event—Featuring Jo Skinner

Jo will be highlighting ‘Page Fright’ or more commonly known as ‘Writers Block’.

Venue – Redcliffe Library at 2.00pm on Saturday 29th August – followed by lucky door prizes, afternoon tea and networking.

Members:\$10 Non-members:\$15 - [BOOK HERE](#)



Jo had her first story published when she was in primary school where she won a writing competition with her winning entry being placed into a time capsule.

She became very ill in high school and was admitted to hospital for several months. This sparked her interest in studying medicine. Writing took a back seat for a long time with study, work and having a family taking precedence. The urge to write persisted like an itch and finally, in 2018, she signed up to do her first writing course with The Writers’ Studio and loved it so much, she signed up for several more with the Australian Writers Centre and Queensland Writers Centre. Once she found the courage to submit her work, she began to place in competitions and her non-fiction pieces are regularly published in medical journals and popular magazines.

Her great love is writing contemporary women’s fiction. In August 2023, she was delighted to get a phone call from Carolyn Martinez of Hawkeye Publishing advising she had a contract for her novel, *The Truth about My Daughter*. In 2024, she signed a second contract for her novel, *A World of Silence*.

Acclaimed Author – Jo Skinner, will address the problems associated with ‘Writers Block’ or ‘Page Fright’.

Venue and Time – Redcliffe Library at 2.00pm on Saturday 29th August

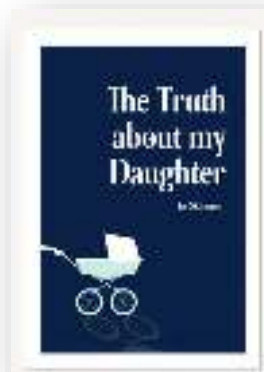
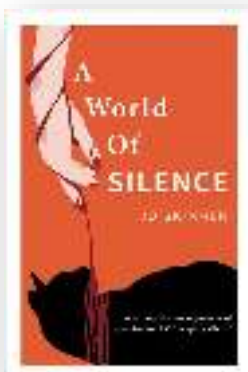
Followed by lucky door prizes, afternoon tea and networking.

Meet and chat with Jo.

Members:\$10 Non-members:\$15 – Book on the form below.

[BOOK NOW](#)

Click book covers to purchase.



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SIGNIFICANT AUTHORS EVENT

Two of Queensland's and Australia's Finest Authors

Come together to discuss their writing journeys



Author Jo Skinner and Jane Smith are doing an 'in conversation' at Books at Stones on Tue 18 August, 6.30pm. Would you mind promoting it to FAWQ members please (via FB and/or other means)?.

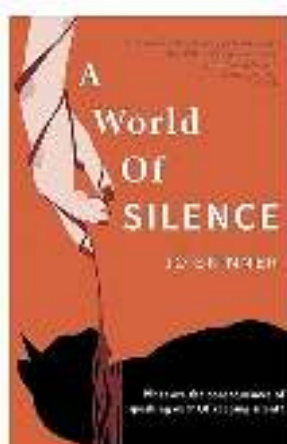
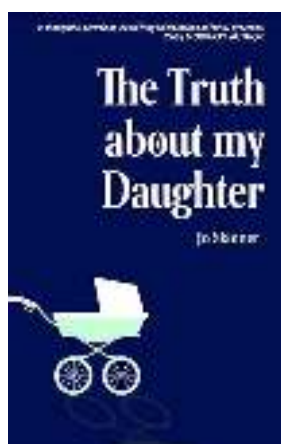
The event is free but you need to register here: <https://events.humanitix.com/books-stones-event-in-conversation-with-jane-smith-and-jo-skinner>

Info from the website:

Join us on Tuesday 18 August (6:30pm) for a special evening book chat with Jane Smith and Jo Skinner - two award-winning authors exploring feminism and survival through Australia's history.

Jane Smith and Jo Skinner are excited to run a session exploring how women have shaped their worlds in the face of challenges, misogyny and gender role expectations using their non-fiction and fiction books. A thought-provoking discussion about the ways women adapt and survive despite the difficulties they are forced to overcome.

JO SKINNER



JANE SMITH



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2026 OPEN WRITING COMPETITION

Open to all Australian residents over 18

**SHORT
STORY**
to 2500
words

**OPENS 1 JULY 2026
CLOSES 31 AUGUST 2026**

POETRY
to 32 lines

PRIZES FOR EACH CATEGORY

**1ST PRIZE
\$200.00**

**HASTINGS
PRIZE
\$50.00**

**2ND PRIZE
\$50.00**

The HASTINGS PRIZE

is awarded to authors resident in the Port Macquarie Hastings LGA

**Winners
announced
26 Sep 2026**



Entry Fee: \$10 per entry

Details & Entry Form available at www.portwriters.com.au

[CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS AND ENTRY FORM](#)

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APPLICATIONS FOR OUR 2027 Ian Wilson Memorial Fellowship ARE OPEN

The Ian Wilson Memorial Fellowship was established to support and nurture emerging children's authors and/or illustrators who explore Australian voices and themes.

The May Gibbs Children's Literature Trust provides the successful applicant with travel to Adelaide, accommodation free of charge, a living allowance, and local support, facilitating creative time away from home for 21 nights in March 2027. This Fellowship aims to be "a gift of time and support" to enable the Fellow to concentrate intensively on the development of new work, and participate in networking opportunities and professional development.

Visit www.maygibbs.org.au 'Ian Wilson Memorial Fellowship' for more information and to register your interest.

For application details, contact Samantha Rubenhold - Fellowships Coordinator:
contact@maygibbs.org.au

**Completed applications must be received by 5.00pm on
Sunday 27th September 2026**

[CLICK FOR DETAIL AND ENTRY](#)

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LAMBING FLAT YOUNG FELLOWSHIP OF AUSTRALIAN
WRITERS NSW INC

2026 NATIONAL POETRY & WRITING COMPETITION ADULT SECTION

Calling all Poets and Writers!! Help us celebrate our 44th Writing Competition.

Writers of all levels, all ages and any genre are encouraged to enter our 2026 Annual Writing Competition. Entries are now open and close midnight AEST September 18, 2026.

There is no set theme for short stories up to 1500 words (please show your word count) and poems up to 50 lines.

Poetry form can be as you choose – traditional rhyming or free verse.

Entries from school students are welcome. See entry form for word and line limits. Students may enter as individually or as part of a class 'project'. A separate Schools Section information sheet is available. For two of our Schools Sections this year, we have a special prize: exclusive time with our guest author! Keep an eye on our social media pages to find out who that is.

Changes this Year

This year we introduce the Emerging Writer entry category for our unpublished writers who have yet to win a literary prize. We have also made updates to word and line limits, as well as prize money.

Excitingly, we are now online! See all competition details at lambingflatwriters.wordpress.com

Entry fee is \$10 per entry or 4 for \$30. Entry is free for school students.

- Multiple entries are allowed for adults.
- Postal and bank details are on the entry form.
- Entries can be posted or emailed. All e-mailed entries will be acknowledged.
- The results, with judges' overall competition comments, will be emailed to all entrants who have supplied their email address. (We are unable to provide individual appraisals for entries)



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An Australian Poet Laureate

Restoring poetry to its rightful role in Australian society

An Opinion Piece by Mike Gilmore.

Australia is about to appoint its first national Poet Laureate, a welcome step in recognising the importance of poetry in public life, its place in Australia's history and its contribution to our diverse culture. Announced under the federal government's *Revive* cultural policy, the role will be overseen by Creative Australia.

The push for a poet laureate reflects a growing concern that the influence of poetry, in all forms, has been declining in modern Australia's social landscape, despite the country's rich poetic heritage from the 19th century and early parts of the 20th century. Well-known names from the 19th century include Henry Lawson, Banjo Paterson, Henry Kendall, Adam Lindsay Gordon, Mary Gilmore, Dorothea McKellar, CJ Dennis and more. These poets were celebrated by the population of the time, due not only to the vitality of their poetry about public and social issues, but also because their ballad style provided entertainment – in Australia known as Bush Poetry.

Henry Lawson was so popular and respected, that upon his death in 1922, he was honoured with a State Funeral. Lawson was often referred to as 'The Peoples Poet' and at his funeral the Prime Minister, W.M. 'Billy' Hughes, referred to him as 'The poet of Australia, the minstrel of the people'. Sadly, the current academic and literary flock rarely give credit to Lawson's achievements and quality of work.

In 1810, Governor Lachlan Macquarie employed the extortionist convict Michael Massey Robinson, as Chief Clerk. In that role Robinson also provided poems for State events and celebrations and was paid in cows for his services. Robinson was dismissed by Sir Thomas Brisbane and spent his remaining years writing disgruntled ballads. There is uncertainty about the formality of Robinson's appointment as Poet Laureate.



While many Australians can recall iconic modern poets such as Gwen Harwood, Judith Wright, Les Murray, Kenneth Slessor, Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Clive James, public awareness of contemporary poets remains limited mainly to academia. The laureateship aims to bridge this gap by appointing a current, working poet who can champion poetry as a living, evolving art form to hopefully embrace all forms of poetry. Each of these poets mentioned would have been likely candidates for the role of Australia's Poet Laureate.

I have searched for a 'duty statement' for the Australian Poet Laureate but failed to locate such a document. I hope that our new Poet Laureate would firstly look to inspire current Australian poets. Some duties of a poet laureate in other countries include:

- Producing original works for national occasions
- Advocating for poetry in schools, media, and public events
- Mentoring emerging poets
- Promoting literary engagement across diverse communities

The formal appointment of Australia's Poet Laureate marks a valuable and practical investment in the nation's artistic future. It will elevate poetry to a more visible and celebrated position and revitalise poetry to remain a vital part of Australia's national identity.

Mike Gilmour

Proud Australian. Proud Aussie Poet.

29 June 2026

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Beware the Flattering Email

An article on a growing email **SCAM**

By Russell Perry.

Many of you, by now, are receiving very flattering emails about your book, encouraging you to enlist the sender's assistance in taking your book to the world via exclusive book clubs or other means.

Because, by design, I have high exposure online for my books and my services, I receive approximately three to four of these 'offers' each week.

The emails you are receiving are part of a widespread **"Pay-to-Play Book Club" scam** explicitly designed to exploit independent and first-time authors. These emails are entirely fake, sent by automated bots or offshore scammers using artificial intelligence to harvest your book details and map out a highly convincing trap.

How the Scam Unfolds

The Hook (AI-Generated Critique): The scammer sends an unsolicited email claiming they or their group just finished reading your book. They will offer a generic critique or review that sounds professional. They use AI to scrape your public book summary or Amazon description, making it look like they actually read it.

The Bait (Massive Sales Promise): They claim to run a highly exclusive, massive book club network—often boasting hundreds or thousands of members. They promise that if you collaborate with them, they will feature your work as their "monthly pick," forcing all members to buy copies and post verified reviews.

The Trap (The Request for Money): Once you reply, they request a fee. This is masked as an "administrative fee," a "promotional deposit," a "spotlight fee," or a "tip" for the reviewers (\$20–\$30 per reader).

The Ultimate Goal: If you pay, they will either vanish with your money or attempt to steal your digital manuscript. In worst-case scenarios investigated by industry watchdogs like [Writer Beware](#), scammers try to gain access to the author's Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) account to hijack their royalties.]



Major Red Flags to Look Out For

Generic Email Addresses: Real organizations use custom domains. Scammers almost always write from generic @gmail.com, @yahoo.com, or @hotmail.com addresses.

No Real Web Presence: If you search for the book club's name online, you will find no official website, no social media activity, and no local address.

They Borrow Real Names: Some advanced scammers impersonate legitimate organizations, such as local chapters of the Silent Book Club or real Meetup groups, but they use tweaked email addresses.

Unprofessional Formatting: The text is often written with unnatural phrasing, awkward AI-generated "Mad-Libs" style book descriptions, or an excessive number of emojis.

What You Should Do

Do not reply: Replying confirms to the scammers that your email address is active, which will trigger a surge of additional spam.

Never send money or files: Genuine book clubs do not charge authors to read or discuss their books. If a book club likes your work, they buy it.

Report the abuse: Mark the email as phishing and report the sender directly to Google Mail Abuse if they are using a Gmail account.

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The Power of Observation

Flash Fiction by Susan Skowronski

Frank lowered his magazine and watched the young woman wandering about as if searching for something. She looked up in the trees and under shrubs. She looked towards the lake, then spun around and looked back at her caravan. She noticed Frank sitting on his lounge in the sunshine, and walked towards him.

‘Good morning,’ Frank greeted her. ‘Lost something?’

‘Hello. Yes. My tea towel has gone missing,’ she replied.

‘Might have blown away.’

‘Can’t see it anywhere.’

‘It wouldn’t go far,’ Frank told her. ‘Not much breeze.’

‘Maybe someone stole it.’

‘Not very likely,’ Frank commented, shaking his head.

‘Have you seen anyone around?’

‘Well, there was a bloke with a beagle here a while ago, but...’

‘What did he look like?’ she demanded to know, ‘Was he acting suspiciously?’

‘Now, let me think,’ Frank said, scratching his head and pursing his lips. ‘He was about average build, maybe a little overweight... I think one front tooth was slightly crooked. Beautiful eyes. Glossy tan and white coat. Behaviour? Yeah, pretty normal. Greeted Bouncer with joy and enthusiasm. The usual jerky lunge, retreat, left, right. The usual sniffing each other’s backsides... Yeah, pretty normal, I’d say.’

The woman sighed. ‘But what did the bloke look like?’

‘The bloke?’ Frank pondered. ‘Oh, I don’t know... about average. I didn’t really notice, I’m not very observant.’

(c) Susan Skowronski 2026

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The Last Passenger

Flash Fiction by Russell Perry

I thought I would feel more excitement; more joy when this time came. I'd been driving a cab for some 20 years and now I had decided to hang up the keys and cruise to the finish line. This would be my last night at the wheel and in fact, the next fare would be my last.

There was some feeling of regret along with the anticipation of the freedom retirement would bring. I had a nest egg put aside and with the sale of my cab licence and the car, I should be comfortable in my twilight years.

I had lost my wife Beth, three years ago, after she had lost her battle with cancer. I knew I would feel her loss more in retirement, at least work kept my mind occupied and away from self-pity. However, I had battled with my own health of late, my heart problems becoming a safety issue for a cabby.

It wasn't long before I spotted my last fare. A bloke was waving me down from the footpath in front of the White Horse Hotel. I pulled over and he slumped into the back seat, the aroma of alcohol strong as the exertion forced him to exhale as he settled. "Cahill Street thanks driver," he mumbled.

Cahill Street, I thought to myself. *My home of 45 years*. I only moved to my unit after Beth died and hadn't been back to the area since.

We pulled over in front of his address, only a few doors down from my old place. He alighted from the cab and shut the door firmly, "thanks driver."

I felt a sudden jolt in my chest and a pain down my left arm. My head swam briefly, then it passed. I gained my composure and pulled away from the kerb then noticed an elegant lady on the path waving me down. *Ahh well*, I thought, *one more won't hurt*.

As I pulled up, I recognised her immediately. It was Beth, looking as beautiful as the day I had first laid eyes on her, wearing that favourite blue dress.

I went to her as she smiled that intoxicating smile, trapping me in her orbit, as it had a million times before.

"At last, my darling Ben, now we are together always. That old ticker brought you back to me. I'll be your last passenger on our new journey."



[More Like This HERE](#)

\$2.99 or Free on Kindle Unlimited

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The Great Oration

Flash Fiction by Susan Skowronski

Frank carried his coffee to the annex and settled into his deckchair. It was a glorious morning. Apostle birds squabbled under a coolabah tree and pelicans sailed serenely in the waterhole.

‘Might throw a line in this afternoon,’ he told Linda. ‘I’ve heard there are plenty of yellow belly. Might catch a few.’

‘Wouldn’t mind a feed of fish,’ Linda agreed. ‘Look! Those crows are back in that gum tree.’

One crow hopped up to a higher branch. Higher. Higher. Then up to the top of the tree. ‘Aaark! Aaark!’ He looked down in distain. ‘Aaark! Aaark!’

The other crows ignored him. One by one, they descended to the ground. They strutted about, pecking here and there, chortling amongst themselves. One found a worm. The others demanded their share. A lively debate ensued.

‘Aark! Aaaaarrkkk! Aark, aaark, aaark!’ The lone crow stomped about on the highest branch. The other crows ignored him.

‘Sounds like Father O’Malley, carrying on in his pulpit,’ Frank laughed.

‘And having just as much as effect Father O’Malley has on his congregation,’ Linda observed.

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A touch, a smile, a memory

Flash Fiction by Danijela Hlis

Her heart is massaged by healing fingers ...her brain is being slapped with rage... for not remembering everything. Her monologue and tears her silent companions.

Mother, I miss so much what we never had. A loving daughter-mother relationship. Tears were permanent in your eyes as anger was in mine. You told me I was a ""STRŽEK"", a little restless Wren. I was never small as a Wren, but just like the bird, I learnt to make my home anywhere in the world. Fierce, inquisitive, and highly active. But never a small or frail bird.

And yet: full of warmth is my memory of you, in my care, decades later, where you sang ""*Maine Tochter*""(my daughter) with such love and joy, at this later stage of our life together. Calling my name and yet believing I was your mother. The mysteries of Dementia. How I miss being your ""*mother*"" just the way you wanted me. ""*You are such good mummy*"", you kept telling me.



Father, with so much light in my heart I remember you teaching me how to cook. Pasta and potato is all we had in those years after the war, just the two of us. And then one day, in my brain is this solid memory of a screaming me, taking your lunch to the factory, and finding your body burnt 70% due to an accidental burst of a boiling container used in the leather factory. The ambulance driver did not know what to do with me screaming ""*ati,ati*""(daddy). No one knew where to reach my mother, your wife, who was separated from you at the time, and was living with my baby sister somewhere.

I walked back to our empty home. I was about 8 years old. Later, what happened later? Who looked after me when you were in hospital? I have no memory. I can't reach into some of the dark tunnels of my childhood; there are ashes and pebbles and holes in my brain. Cognitive impairment, they call it.

You used to call me ""*vlastovka*"" , the swallow. In our culture and folklore, these birds are deeply loved. They are viewed as symbols of spring, good luck, and new beginnings. I only learnt this many years later, in one of the homes I created for myself in foreign lands.

You were both right, of course. Like birds, I had to fly. To flee from your sad marriage, the abusive relationship you had, where your mouths were snipers firing deadly ammunition at each other. I left you and my homeland behind, Restless throughout my life. Still now, staying ""still"" is impossible, the inner restlessness still knocking on the walls of my brain. But of course, the old body is fighting the idea that it may have completed the journey. In this final nest I melt the good and the sad memories into the silk that is my life.

Did you know that silk is made by farming caterpillars (silkworms), which eat mulberry leaves and spin protective cocoons from a continuous protein filament. Farmers harvest and boil the cocoons to soften the natural glue (sericin), then reel the delicate threads together to spin durable yarn for weaving.

This colourful, exotically soft silk, my life, was treasured, loved, filled with cocoons of mistakes as well as achievements, boiled in sorrows and losses as well as ecstasies. Mother, Father, thank you for bringing me into the world, giving me **life**. I so wish people around our world would, like us, be able to forgive mistakes of younger years and reunite in later life. Families living in hatred and unforgiveness are so deprived of joy and peace.

Your “bird” welcomed you into her nest, many years later, when you, wife and husband, were reunited yet still fighting. When you migrated, so frail, so afraid...as a last choice to survive yet another war.

Ati, you told me every day was a Sunday for you, felling loved and cared for. Your passing was prolonged and your suffering unacceptable. The palliative care as we know it today was non-existent then. Mamca, Micka, as I lovingly addressed you at times, your death was quick, unexpected and too soon, due to negligence of others. We had not completed our walks and chats and frying of your favourite “pohane bedrce”*(chicken thighs).

You are one of my reasons to continue my fight to STOP the neglect and abuse of beautiful frail seniors. My friends and relatives continue to

suffer. Billions of dollars are found for the submarines and tanks to fight destructive wars, but we, older people, cannot access the basic funding

we need to live and die with dignity and respect.

In my heart you live, mamca, ati, as I happily look forward to re-joining you up in heavens where we all belong, reunited. Nothing to do with religion, just my faith in the universe.

I chose to believe in things that make me happy, including a sunny, shining heaven.

For now, however, I continue to advocate, to help others believe in love and peace on earth. NOW matters. CARPE DIEM matters.



Danijela Hlis

July 2026 (854 words)



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ACCOUNTING

Flash Fiction by Barry O'Farrell

Hear the gleeful giggling? My young teenage daughter has her giggly best friend over. Here they come, running into the living room giggling with excitement. Daughter is clutching a page fresh off the printer. Wide eyed with expectation she hands me the piece of paper. She doesn't say a word.

The document is a proposition. The popular boy band of the day is coming to town in a couple of months. The girls would like tickets to the show. They can't afford to buy tickets at the moment. They are short on cash, as usual.

Unable to contain herself any longer, "They are the best boy band ever," she shouts. Well, she has probably heard three or four boy bands in her early teen life. This means her sample pool is small. I hold my tongue.

"And soooo cute," chimes in girlfriend triggering a duet of chortling.

Their businesslike proposal is this. I pay for the tickets today; repayment will be by instalments per their after-school jobs.

Yes. And yes. Yes, my answer will be yes, of course. I remain silent.

A flash of inspiration! Is it an opening? I think I am seeing an opportunity. I am thinking quickly and come up with this strategy.

Donning a serious frown. I pretend to study their proposal in detail. Finally turn the page over. The reverse is blank. Without looking up I ask, "Where is your repayment schedule?"

The girls turn their heads to look at each other for a moment. Slowly it dawns on them. They didn't hear a NO. They snatch back the page, run, and titter all the way back to the computer.

Sounds of conspiratorial whispering. Now the sound of little chuckles? Finally, hear the sound of hesitant clicking of the keyboard.

My aim is to teach an important life lesson. How am I doing?

END



JUNIPER TREE

Flash Fiction by Susan Skowronski

Beneath the gnarled, spreading branches of the juniper, a samurai warrior stands, unmoving on the well-tended path and gazes to the East.

The rays of the rising sun reflect from the hilt of his hand-crafted katana sword, and the lacquered metal and leather breastplate. No creatures move amongst the moss and lichen-covered rocks and the stone lantern.

He does not smile or flinch. One can sense his adherence to the Bushido code, his self-control and acute awareness of personal dignity and worth.

‘Mum,’ Hayden called as he entered the kitchen. ‘Have you seen Bushi? I was playing with him yesterday but he’s disappeared.’

‘You left him on the dining table. I thought you must not want him anymore.’

‘You didn’t throw him away?’ Hayden groaned. ‘Oh, Mum...’

‘Of course not,’ his mother laughed. ‘He’s out on the patio in the bonsai pot. He looks right at home there under the juniper tree.’

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Death in an Elevator

A Short Story By Sally Eberhardt

Let's see who we have on today's To Do List...

Ronald - middle-aged accountant.

Molly – weary centenarian.

Greta – bubbly teenager.

Bugger. A kid. It's hard taking those who have barely lived, but I don't get a choice.

Ah well, I'd better get moving. These people aren't going to off themselves.

I work out where Molly and Ronald will be today and find myself lurking in the corridor on the top floor of an aged care residence.



Image by Jose Luis Gonzalez from Pixabay

Molly rests in a room crowded with flowers, cards and balloons celebrating her 100th birthday.

Her son Ronald disturbs her dozing. Good, dependable Ronald. Always predictable. He'll want to take his mother outside like he does every Wednesday.

"Come on, Mum. It's a beautiful day. Let's get you some fresh air."

Ronald manoeuvres Molly into a wheelchair and pushes her towards the lift. The doors open and I slip in before them. They join me inside. Ronald can't see me but Molly smiles.

She knows who I am.

She's been waiting.

"Hold the lift!"



Image by Kai Sender from Pixabay

Ronald sticks his hand out to stop the doors closing and a beautiful teenage girl rushes in.

"Uncle Ron! Grandma! I just got out of the other lift in time to see you getting in this one!"

Well, well. If it isn't everyone on today's To Do List here in one small and convenient location. I feel like I've won Lotto.

Ten floors to go before we reach the Ground Floor. A lot can happen in ten floors. Poisonous gas, vipers, murderous psychotic episode, or a good old-fashioned snap of a cable.

I decide on the last option. Simple, not too messy. A shame about the girl though. She seems so happy chatting with her Grandma and Uncle – and their faces lit up at the sight of her.

Ah well, not long now until I can go home and binge Netflix for the rest of the day. Did I say binge? I mean research. So many ways to die – I must keep up with the latest trends.

The lift stops at the eighth floor. A woman in a white doctor's coat enters. There is something about her. Maybe it's a mousy-librarian-turns-into-sex-kitten-by-removing-her-glasses-and-letting her-hair-down kind of vibe. Or maybe I've been researching too much ...

My plans don't change.

I brace, and close my eyes. I take no delight in the more gruesome aspects of my occupation.

A whipcrack cleaves the air. Screams echo as the elevator plummets towards oblivion. I don't make a sound. Neither does the woman in white.

Thump!

The second of impact arrives. The deed is done.



The doors are pried open and people rush to help but Ronald and Molly are very dead.

Greta walks out, dazed and confused but completely unharmed.

No one sees me. I look for the woman in the doctor's coat but find only a pure white feather.

Death – 2. Guardian Angel – 1.

And yet I feel she is the victor.

I almost smile.

Greta has been reprieved.

For now...

Image by Hans from Pixabay

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Elodia and Nero

A Short Story by Sally Eberhardt

The clash of swords rang through the forest, causing birds to take flight and creatures to scurry into hiding. The size of the foes was as disparate as David and Goliath – a red-haired girl on a small black pony opposed a man on a massive grey stallion.

The girl ducked and parried, calm under the barrage. Her steed danced beneath her, anticipating every move of the larger horse, stepping sideways to move his rider out of striking range.

Suddenly the Marauder leaned far out of his saddle, impossibly far, seeming suspended in mid-air, the blade an extension of his arm, aimed straight at the girl's heart. Her mount, hindered by thick forest growth, for once could not manoeuvre away. The girl gasped as the blade bit her tender flesh, piercing her chest and nicking her heart.

The Marauder fell to the ground, winded but unharmed. The girl's mount screamed and lunged, his hooves pounding down, caving the skull, ensuring the Marauder's victory was short-lived.

The girl was fading, clinging to the creature's mane to steady her fall as she slipped down to the damp forest floor, her red blood bright against the brown leaf litter.

After protecting her village for three years, evading, chasing and despatching so many Marauders, is this how it was to end?

As darkness descended upon her, Elodia's life flashed before her eyes – back to where it all began...

No one knew from whence he came. A hairy black scrap of a thing, likely orphaned. Thirst and hunger had driven him to seek sustenance from the domestic livestock. He'd been wary of the villagers, retreating into the forest if approached.

The children thought he was a goat, albeit a rather strange one, and nicknamed him 'Capra Nero' – 'black goat' in the language of the Ancients. It was only when 12-year-old Elodia crept close as he suckled from the family cow that she noticed his long face, straight nose, and hooves whole rather than cloven. He had a beard and rough coat like a billy, but clearly he was not a goat.

'I always wanted a pony' whispered Elodia.

The scruffy colt lifted his head at the sound of her voice, poised to flee, then froze, his eyes locked onto hers. She slowly offered the back of her hand for him to sniff, and he extended his velvet nose to inhale her scent. From that moment they were best friends, the flame-haired girl and the funny black foal.

Nero (no longer Capra Nero) grew fast, strong and nimble. He and Elodia played chasey and hide-and-seek until he could catch or find her so easily there was no sport in it.

“You are a beauty,” Elodia would murmur as she rubbed his forehead. She paused at the feel of something hard under her fingertips, right between Nero’s eyes. She rubbed it but he tossed his head. Worry coursed through her veins – did her companion suffer an injury, or perhaps a strange growth?

Elodia remembered her awe as the growth continued to sprout over the next few months, and the truth became apparent.

“You are a unicorn! I thought they were a myth but here you are!”

And indeed, he was. A perfectly spiralled obsidian horn adorned Nero’s visage. The villagers, once contemptuous of the pony, now considered him a marvel and Elodia too gained new respect. No one teased her about her hair anymore.

She thought back to the first time she sat on Nero’s back – no saddle or bridle needed – their minds melded as their bodies connected. She learnt to temper her fiery nature with calmness and hone her recklessness into precision and her impulsiveness into calculated unpredictability.



Image by Alana Jordan from Pixabay

With bow and quiver on her back, short sword at her waist, and Nero under her, Elodia became an excellent hunter bringing home wild pigs and small deer to feed her village.

In hindsight, she was also training to be a warrior.

She recalled when the first child disappeared - a slip of a girl yet to see her tenth birthday. Then a second – a boy barely eight years old. A third child was very nearly stolen too – rescued from the grip of a Marauder by the bravery of her watchful mother. Unfortunately, the mother sustained terrible injuries in the fight and perished.



Image by Paul Henri Degrande from Pixabay

From that day on, Elodia and Nero patrolled the narrow paths in the forest surrounding the village, determined not to lose another soul. Elodia threw a dark green cloak over her flaming locks and dirtied her pale face to better blend into the shadows.

The first Marauder they encountered ran off with an arrow in his neck. The wild pigs finished him off. The second came on horseback and led Nero and Elodia on a merry chase before succumbing to a sword through his kidneys. The third hid up a tree and very nearly ambushed Elodia who was saved only by the fancy footwork of Nero. This marauder met his end impaled on Nero’s horn. First blood for the unicorn but by no means the last.

The pair had successfully defended the village; no more children had been abducted as slaves or worse. And they had always returned home with barely a scratch... until now....

Now she lay in the dirt, eyes closed and the acrid copper scent of her own blood filling her nostrils.

Nero bowed his head over her, tears spilling from his eyes in rivulets running down his face. The tears saturated his beard then fell in great fat drops onto Elodia’s chest as her breathing faltered.

As the tears reached the wound, the blood stopped flowing, the flesh bubbled and smoked and healed over, the skin became completely smooth and scarless. Elodia drew a deep breath and sat up, clasping her chest. She kissed Nero’s soft muzzle and put her arms around his neck. He raised his head to lift her to her feet.

She would live to fight another day.



Image by Sunrise from Pixabay

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The Street Where I Left It.

A Short Story by Barnaby Kyte



I was certain I had parked the car beside a row of iron railings, just opposite a narrow factory door painted the colour of dried mustard. I remember the hiss of steam, the clatter of something enormous turning somewhere in the factory behind the mustard coloured door. I had a faint sense of satisfaction in having found a parking space in such a crowded place.

Next thing, I was standing at an ice works, and I was cold.

I turned to go back to the car, but everything behind me had changed.

The car was no longer there, and the iron railings were gone.

In their place stood a brick wall with pipes running vertically up it, all of them trembling as if something alive was inside them. The door was still there—not in the same place—, but it had shifted two buildings down and grown taller, stretching to the eaves.

I stood with my hands in my pockets, turning slowly, trying to match memory with what I could now see.

A man approached me, hat low, and a coat buttoned to the throat.

“Excuse me,” I said. “I’m trying to find where I parked my car, a blue Hyundai.”

“Of course you are,” he replied pleasantly.

I blinked. His voice was calm, familiar even, as if we had already had this conversation.

When I looked properly at his face, I realised it wasn’t the same one he’d had a moment ago. The features had rearranged themselves—subtly, politely—into someone else’s.

“I left it just here,” I insisted.

He nodded, then tilted his head. “You always do.”

Before I could ask what that meant, he turned and walked, disappearing into the wall. Not through a door—just into it, as though the bricks had agreed to let him pass.

I decided not to follow.

Instead, I walked on. The street stretched longer than it should have, bending slightly and rising up a hill.

Overhead, a network of pipes carried steam from one towering structure to another. Somewhere deep within, some machinery clattered, something hammering in a slow, thoughtful rhythm.

I passed a woman standing beside a steam-driven punch. It was punching out what looked like cans of fish.

She looked at me and smiled.

“Have you seen a car, a blue Hyundai?” I asked.

“Several,” she said.

“Mine is small. Ordinary. Not like... this.” And I pointed to an odd piece of machinery in the middle of the street.

I gestured to the world around us, an iron walkway, high above our heads, connecting one building to another. Several men in drab clothing and wearing odd helmets were walking across from one building to the other.



She laughed softly. “They’re all ordinary here.”

As she spoke, her face shifted. Not dramatically—just enough that I was no longer sure who I was talking to. It was like watching a reflection ripple.

“Do you remember where you left it?” she asked.

“I do,” I said. “I was sure it was here.”

“That’s the trouble,” she replied.

I left her there, still smiling, still becoming someone else.

The factory entrance appeared without warning—a vast opening, framing turning cogs, as though the building itself was thinking about swallowing me. Inside, the air was still cold, despite the hissing steam, thick with oil and gas. Walkways crossed overhead. Figures moved along them, their silhouettes briefly familiar before dissolving into strangers.

I had the sudden certainty that the car was inside.

It took time to reach the floor, up and down steel stairs. Stairs rearranged themselves, leading me in gentle circles before depositing me somewhere new.

The machines here were immense, gigantic. A giant crankshaft slowly turning, connecting rods driving pistons, rising and falling. Belts conveying unseen objects from one shadow to another. The sound was not loud, exactly, but constant.



And there, between two great iron supports, I saw it.

My car.

Unremarkable. Slightly dusty. Exactly as I remembered it.

Relief came first, sharp and clear. I stepped toward it, already reaching for the door.

“Careful.”

The voice came from behind me.

I turned. A man stood there, though I couldn’t say who he was. Was it the man I spoke to earlier? His face seemed familiar, but it was changing subtly.

“That isn’t yours,” he said.

“It is,” I replied. “I parked it there.”

“Did you?” he asked.

I hesitated. The certainty I’d felt earlier wavered. I began to doubt myself,

“I remember doing it.”

“That helps,” he said. “But it doesn’t settle anything.”

I looked back at the car. Something about it seemed... less solid now. As if it belonged to the space, more than to me.

“I just want to leave,” I said.

“Of course,” he replied kindly. “Everyone does, at first.”

“And later?”

He smiled. Or someone did.

“Later, you stop looking for where you left things.”

I turned back to the car again, but it had already changed. Not much—just enough. The colour was different, perhaps? Or the shape? Or maybe it had never been quite what I thought.

When I looked around, the factory had shifted too. The walkways led in unfamiliar directions. The steady rhythm of the machines continued, unconcerned.

Outside the enormous door, I could see a familiar scene, the Newmarket Hotel, and my car parked outside it.

I stood there for a moment, looking at the scene outside the door, but I seemed to be trapped inside the factory, the dull grey monotone of the interior contrasting with the bright sunshine outside.

Then, without quite deciding to, I put my hands back in my pockets and began to walk—not toward where I had been, or even where I thought I should go, but simply along the path that opened in front of me.

Then, with relief, I woke up from one of my fantastic dreams, feeling quite cold.

I reached for the blanket.

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"Salt, Whispers and Spirits"

A Short Story by Richard Winn

Every evening at dusk, Mira lit a lantern at the edge of the old forest. Not for herself, and not for the living, but for the one spirit who still had not found their way - Sam.

Mira had been leaving trails of salt across her doorway every night for several years, not to keep spirits out, but to guide Sam's spirit home. Every year, on the anniversary of his death, Mira prepared the house the way her grandmother had taught her: a candle in the east-facing window, water and bread on the hearth, and a line of salt across the threshold. Not to ward the spirit off, but to invite him in. The salt, her grandmother had said, remembered footsteps. It could recall the path he took the last time he walked through the door, and if she laid it just right, it might remind him how to find his way back.

They lived in the high country. It was winter, and he had died in the scrub behind the house, three winters ago. The search party had found his scarf snagged on a low branch and his boots in a half-frozen stream, but never his body. Over the years, the dogs would howl at night as if they knew something was still out there. They would refuse to go near the scrub after dusk.

Mira had not stopped waiting. Tonight, the air was colder than usual. The fire crackled like it was nervous. She finished the salt line and stepped back, pressing her hand to her chest as the candle in the window flickered and then straightened.

Then she heard it. A soft knock on the door. Not loud. Not forceful. Just... familiar. Mira did not move at first. The knock still echoed in her bones, a sound too gentle for the wind, too precise for a branch. It was the rhythm that haunted her – two short taps, a pause, and one final knock. Just like he used to do, when he came home late and didn't want to wake her.

She stepped toward the door, her bare feet silent on the wooden floor. Outside the trees leaned against the house with breathless anticipation. The flame in the window stretched thin and tall, pointing straight up, unwavering. Her hand hovered over the doorknob.

"Just you," she whispered, the words, part command, part plea. She opened the door. No one stood there.

Only the salt line, unbroken. Only the dark, with snow drifting down like ash. But the cold that reached inside didn't bite, it brushed, like fingertips grazing her cheek. And in the air, a scent: eucalyptus, tobacco, and something else she hadn't smelled in years. His coat.

Her eyes welled. "Sam?"

The candle behind her flared. The floorboards creaked in the hallway, one by one, as if someone, or something, was walking inside.

She turned slowly. There he was.

Not whole. Not solid. A shimmer in the air, a shape made of smoke and shadow and the suggestion of a smile. His eyes. They were clear. Sad, and loving.



She wanted to run to him, but her legs wouldn't move.

"You found the salt," she said softly.

He nodded, or she thought he did. The shape of him brightened, held itself together like a breath held too long. His mouth moved, forming a single word: "Home." Then his hand lifted, pointed down the hallway. Pointing to the

nursery. To the room he had never seen.

Mira's breath caught. She followed the gesture, her pulse in her ears. The old wooden door creaked open on its own. Inside, moonlight pooled on the floorboards, and the cot sat in perfect stillness. The child, her daughter, their daughter, slept soundly. He turned back to Mira. Fading. "I'll show her," she whispered, tears running freely now. "I'll tell her everything. She'll know your name." He smiled. And then he was gone.

The salt at the door stirred, as if swept by a retreating wind. The flame flickered once, then returned to its steady glow. The house no longer felt empty. Mira stood alone again unaware Sam had not gone completely his spirit was imbued into the house.

The next morning, Mira woke with the weight of dreams pressed into her skin. The cot was quiet; her daughter, Lily, still slept, one fist curled near her mouth. Outside, the snow had stopped, leaving a world cocooned in white and silence.

Opening the door, Mira saw the salt line was broken. A thin trail led from the door, across the floor, to the hallway – as if someone had walked through it barefoot. Mira knelt and touched the disturbed salt. It was cold, damp in a way it should not be. Underneath the salt, the floorboard was warm.

Mira pressed her palm flat against the floorboard and felt a pulse; subtle like the heartbeat of something buried. The house had always had its own sounds: the sighing trees, the whispering vents. This was new; the house felt alive.

She stood quickly and checked every room. Nothing was out of place, no signs of intrusion, but something had changed. The photographs on the mantel - her wedding photo, the one of Sam holding her hand at the lake - had fogged from the inside, like breath on glass. Mira stared for a moment wondering, what had happened.

At breakfast, Lily giggled suddenly, eyes fixed on the corner of the kitchen. Mira turned and saw nothing. Lily pointed, babbling something with a rhythm too exact for nonsense, “Da-da.” Mira froze. “What did you say,



sweet girl?” Lily clapped her hands and repeated it; eyes still fixed on the empty corner. Then she waved and returned to her food like nothing happened. Mira was stunned and more than a little fearful. The next night, Mira laid the salt again and this time, whispered a question into the dark. “What do you want?” There was silence. The candle didn’t move, and the flame stayed still for hours. Mira eventually drifted into an uneasy sleep on the couch, wrapped in one of Sam’s old sweaters.

Early morning, Mira woke to a sound. ‘Tap. Tap.’ pause ‘Tap.’ This time the door did not open, but something did come through. A whisper, low, close to the floorboards. “Where is Sam?” “Sam, it’s time.”

Words from her grandmother, her father, her mother, and other dead family, some she had not spoken about or thought of in years. The whisper was repeated and the floor beneath her pulsed again. Stronger this time, rhythmic, with a beat, a breath, like a drum.

This was not just about Sam anymore. Something was moving beneath the house, and it remembered everything.

Mira was bewildered, fearful for herself and Lily. What could she do to remove this spirit from the house? It must be Sam still trapped and not able to find his way or not wanting to go and leave them.

Mira responded to the whispering “Spirits, I seek guidance to help Sam move on. I am troubled if his presence stays in this house.” A whisper from beneath the floorboards “Light your grandmother’s old lantern to light the way for Sam to go to the scrub where he fell. As you walk with his spirit show your love for him.”

The township spoke of many ghosts in the scrub. Some passed through like wind, whispering names that no longer mattered. Some clung to sorrow, looping their final moments like broken music. But Mira was only concerned with one: Sam.



At dusk, with Lily in her cot, Mira lit the lantern and began walking towards the scrub sensing Sam beside her as a shimmer in the air. She could see his shape, his clear eyes and the suggestion of a smile.

As Mira neared the scrub, she felt it was time for Sam to pass, “Sam,

it is time to go. You cannot stay. Lily and I will never forget you. I will always love you.” The shape glowed and flickered, the eyes fixed on her; sad eyes and loving.

The lantern flame grew brighter, not blinding, but enough to reveal a portal. Together, they walked toward it with Mira stopping short, sensing it was not for her. The shape, Sam, turned to her as it melded into the portal and disappeared.

Mira returned to the house alone; the lantern was dim but still burning. She smiled. One spirit home. Just one. That night the dogs were quiet. No rustling in the trees. No whispers. The scrub was silent, and at peace.

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A Collection of Poems

by Mocco Wollert

Let me speak words of love

Let me speak
words of love to you

Whenever darkness falls
when the moon
covers you in silver shadows
when the stars
crown your hair
with diamond tiaras

When the dawn rises
when the sun
makes your skin glow golden
when blue skies
reflect like aquamarines
in your eyes

Let me speak
words of love to you



line in the sand

life is

like a line in the sand
unstable

movements
of meandering water
erasing

footsteps
of thousands in one
rush

like a mandala
blown to coloured dust
leaving chaos



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A Collection of Poems

by Mocco Wollert

Jacaranda

My heart starts to sing each year in spring
when I see those blossoms of blue,
with the sun climbs high, early birds start to fly
and I see a promise come true.

I welcome the change when the trees look strange
when all the leaves disappear,
for I know in due time blue colour will shine
when summer days are near.

My soul starts to live when those trees will give
the world a colour so grand,
that in cities I know blue blossoms will glow
all over a spring-time land.



Deadlines

I wished for quiet hours, ready
like a patient lover to impregnate
pristine pages, to swell them
to gigantic wombs, delivering
my masterpieces of immortality.

When I broke my knee-cap, suddenly,
I rested in the quiet, pen at ready,
paper waiting, but time dragged,
sat on my mind like sandbags,
keeping the tide of words ebbing.

Oh God, I need the smell of food
cooking, searching for a pen,
visitors already on the back steps.
I need a busy office, where I sneak
a poem into the word processor.

Chaos is what I need around me,
urgent chores that cannot wait.

I need the threat of deadlines
pencilled into my diary in red,
quiet hours are my pen's enemy.



A Collection of Poems

by Mocco Wollert

beginnings

every thought
leads to another thought
every word spoken
will echo in another word
every action
starts another action
every look
opens a new perspective
every wish
reaches out for fulfillment
every breath taken
gives a new millisecond of life

Sunday traffic

Sunday traffic
roams the street
the city has put up
her feet.
Stillness fills
the empty Centre
parks wait content
for folks to enter.
High-rise towers
bleak as death
stand like tombs
holding their breath.
The city rests
or most parts do
only the sirens
come screaming through.



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“NO SHOES”

Poetry by Yo-Merry Todd-Birch

Head hung low-
Trolley-
Not obeying your command.
No shoes-
On your feet.
Lines on your face-
Speak of sadness-
A lot to say.

Worldly goods-so few-
When was the last time-
You ate?
Let me buy you-
Shoes, brand new.
Get you fed-
Something to eat-
A hot chocolate too.

Worldly goods-in the boot-
Make yourself comfy-
On the front seat.
Get you settled-
Nice cosy bed-
A good night's sleep.
To-morrow is a new day-
Sleep well.



“PUSSY CAT”

Poetry by Yo-Merry Todd-Birch

A soft cry-
Rattle-
At the door.
So forlorn-
Tired and worn-
Begging-
For a home.

Your paw offered-
I opened the door.
Asleep all day-
The lounge-
Your bed.
Purring softly-
Safe and sound.

Well fed-
Homeless-
Hungry-
No more.
Welcome-
Pussy Cat-
Your home.



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“RAIN”

Poetry by Yo-Merry Todd-Birch

Dancing naked-
Twirling around-
Far paddock-
Daylight-no less!!!
Cake of soap-
In my hand.
Discarded dress-
On soggy ground.

Joy upon joy-
Glorious rain-
Lifesaving rain.
This dry-----
Parched land-
Drinking-----
Every drop-
Joy upon joy.

Rain, rain, rain-
Lathered-----
From toes to top.
Sheep gazing-----
At this spectacular sight.
Wash my hair-
Rinse off-
Wet dress on.

Back to the homestead-
Fluffy towel-
Attire myself.
Rivers flowing-
Dams full-
Sheep entertained.
Yes, naked I was-
I confess!!!

“WHISTLE”

Poetry by Yo-Merry Todd-Birch

Yes!!
I blow a whistle-
It's my job.
Safety to heed-
Pays the bills-
Mouths to feed.

Yes!!
I blow a whistle-
It's my job.
Trains-
Come and go-
Pull in-
At the station.
Passengers alight-
Depart-
Schedules tight.

Yes!!
I blow a whistle-
It's my job-
Earns a “bob”.
Yes!!
I blow a whistle-
It's my job.



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Winter's Gift

Poetry by Suaan Skowronski

engulfed in a cold moist veil
majestic tall gums
vague shapes without substance
sail away in the drifting fog
the track disappears
into a sea of white

scent of wattle
and the joyful song
of an unseen butcherbird
remind me there is life
beyond winter's shroud

the sun has risen
fog lifted, drifted
melted away...
beside the track
spider orchids bloom



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Poetry by Susan Skowronski

Sunset at the Waterhole

Apostle birds
beneath the coolabah
cease their squabbling
fly away to roost
a pair of brolgas
dance gracefully
by the billabong
a squadron of pelicans
glide in from the east

freshly caught yellowbelly
roasting in the campfire
old man on a fallen log
gently strums his guitar
enchanted by a glorious vivid sky -
a golden sunset
over The Long Waterhole

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Note: The Long Waterhole is a camping spot near Winton Qld



Crusing at Longreach

Historic paddle-wheeler
cruising down the Thomson
glorious outback sunset
fading into night
eerie wail of bush-stone curlew
lonesome call of a boobook owl

clear dark winter skies
lit by brilliant stars
Magellanic Clouds
and spectacular Milky Way

fishermen on the river bank
swapping yarns around the fire
enjoy a plate of crayfish
and fresh crunchy damper
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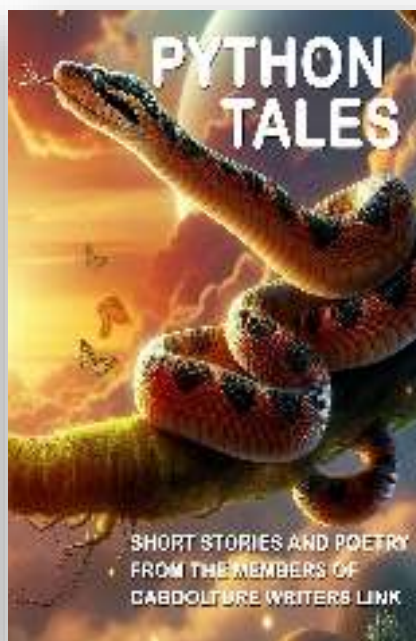
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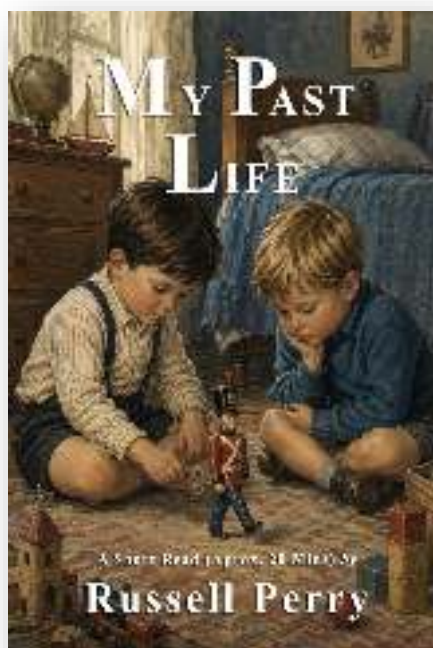
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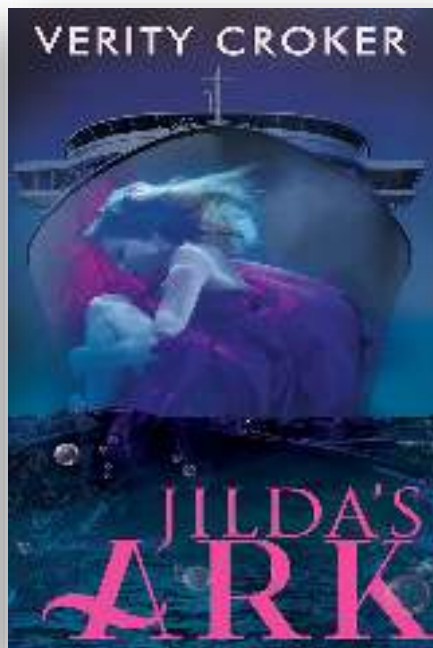
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