

THE MAGAZINE OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF AUSTRALIAN WRITERS QUEENSLAND

This edition of SCOPE magazine is volume 72 No. 4

SCOPE

October / November Edition

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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, articles and books 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.

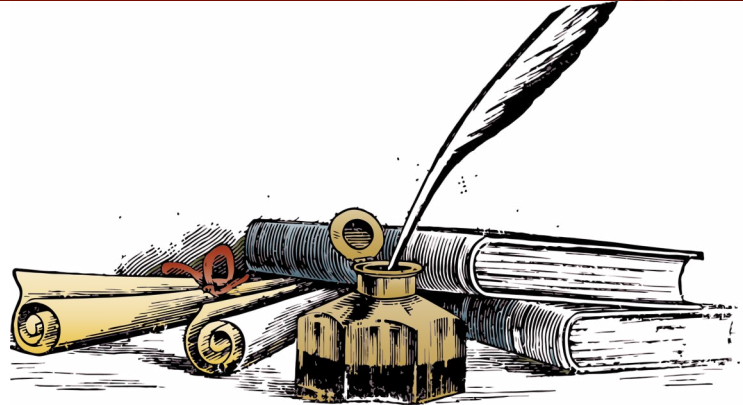
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Editor's Notes from Sally and Russell.

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

"Writing is easy. All you have to do is cross out the wrong words."

- Mark Twain

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From the President's Desk.

Welcome to this edition of Scope Magazine.

There is, as always, much happening. But before touching on this, I'd like to thank those who attended the recent workshop by FAWQ member and award-winning writer Jo Skinner, and of course Jo herself. There was much practical advice for writers in the workshop, including the importance of sleep, writing routine, learning to say no, the psychology of writing, and taking risks in writing. Interestingly, Jo suggested that writing is a way of making sense of the world. That's a profound statement, and I think one can see this at play in Jo's own work. She engages in issues such as gender and sex, which are related but not quite the same, but which I think are at the heart of this strange thing we call human experience. And I think at the centre of understanding these paradoxical modern times.

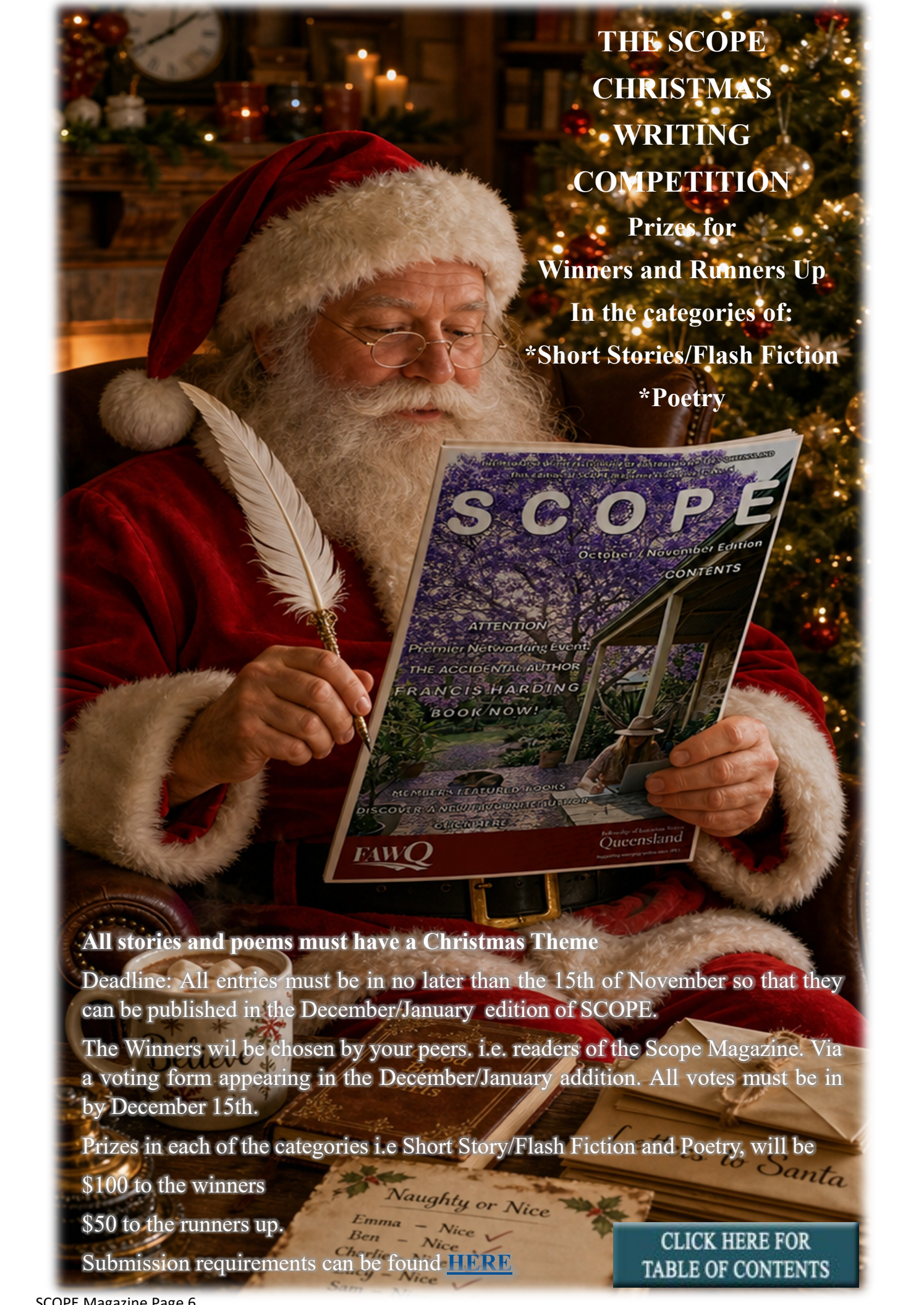
An important upcoming event is the Logan Bookfest at Beenleigh Events Centre on Saturday October 24, from 9am to 4pm. FAWQ will be in attendance and it's a great chance to meet fellow writers.

On Saturday November 28, commencing 2pm at Redcliffe Library, we have an FAWQ author event, with noted Queensland narrative-fiction writer Frances Harding sharing her experiences and perspectives on writing. I should flag that this year we've again early-bird discounts for membership renewals, with renewal via our website.

The other thing I should flag is the Community Lottery. Simply go to www.communitylottery.com.au, search for Fellowship of Australian Writers Queensland, and enter into the draw to win one of two cars. All proceeds from the Community Lottery go to the relevant community group, in this case FAWQ. It's a win-win. As an FAWQ member you can potentially win a substantial prize, and you support the ongoing-financial viability of FAWQ. See you soon at one of our events.

(Dr) Jim Page, President.

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THE SCOPE CHRISTMAS WRITING COMPETITION

Prizes for
Winners and Runners Up

In the categories of:

*Short Stories/Flash Fiction

*Poetry

All stories and poems must have a Christmas Theme

Deadline: All entries must be in no later than the 15th of November so that they can be published in the December/January edition of SCOPE.

The Winners will be chosen by your peers, i.e. readers of the Scope Magazine. Via a voting form appearing in the December/January addition. All votes must be in by December 15th.

Prizes in each of the categories i.e Short Story/Flash Fiction and Poetry, will be \$100 to the winners

\$50 to the runners up.

Submission requirements can be found [HERE](#)

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Fellowship of Australian Writers
Queensland
Supporting emerging writers since 1921

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.

DEBIT CARD PAYMENT ONLY

People First Community Lottery

[Buy Now](#) [Group Login](#) [Resource Page](#) [FAQs](#) [About](#)

Tickets now on sale!

Total prize pool worth over \$300,000!

[Buy now](#)

Tickets can be purchased online with debit card only (Visa and Mastercard).

A white Toyota Kluger Hybrid SUV parked on a dirt road in a wooded area.

1st Prize Toyota Kluger Hybrid

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

Members Achievements.

Major achievements during August / September for prolific member:
Mocco Wollert

MOCCO WOLLERT

Achievements – Milestones – August 2026

Your Time Magazine:

Column – Addiction August 2026

Senior Digest USA

Column – Chocolate August 2026

Poem – Windows August 2026

Village News

Poem – Jacaranda Bloom August 2026

Scope

Poem – Jacaranda August 2026

Poem – Sunday Traffic August 2026

Poem – beginnings August 2026

Poem – Let me speak words August 2026

Poem – Deadlines August 2026



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

Member achievements - Jo Skinner - September -

It was such a lovely and unexpected surprise to receive an email from Amanda (one of the founders and judges of the Not Quite Write competition) to let me know that my story was one of four wild cards



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FAWQ Event Report by Sally Eberhardt

Presentation by Jo Skinner – Page Fright: Overcoming the Fear of the Blank Page

In late August, FAWQ had the very great pleasure of hosting Jo Skinner who presented a workshop on Page Fright: Overcoming the Fear of the Blank Page.

Jo is a Brisbane-based GP who writes contemporary women's fiction as well as freelance non-fiction articles about women's issues and mental health. Jo's debut novel, *The Truth About My Daughter*, was published in 2024, followed by *A World of Silence* in 2025. When Jo isn't writing, she is running while plotting her next story.

Jo drew on both her experience as a writer and her medical knowledge to tackle the issue of Page Fright – that 'stuck' feeling of not being able to start writing.

Starting with each of us being prompted to know WHAT we want to write, Jo then moved on to recognizing the reasons for page fright, and the barriers to writing eg fatigue, lack of time, imposter syndrome etc.

Jo suggested various lifestyle solutions to these and then took us on a fascinating journey through the neuroanatomy of the brain and the role each part plays in writing. Many pearls of wisdom were imparted by Jo – these included a Writing Meditation that involved all 5 senses, Be an Observer, and some tips on freeform writing.

Jo's love of helping people as well as her love of writing truly shone throughout the workshop and many of us felt seen, uplifted and inspired to put pen to paper more regularly.

Sincere thanks to Jo from all at FAWQ and all attendees – you can tell we loved you from all the smiles!

Jo Skinner and Sally Eberhardt



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FAWQ Special Event—Frances Harding



Frances will be sharing insights into her life and into how she became the ‘**Accidental Author**’

Frances Harding has been many things in her life; nurse, business owner, mother of eight, publican, and now author. When she and her husband Gordon bought a run-down hotel in Western Queensland in the late 1980s, she had no idea of the extraordinary stories she would discover, and then write about.

The hotel was the Coronas Hotel in Charleville - and the writing became the books 'The Accidental Australians', 'The Accidental Publican' and now 'The Accidental Author'.

Come and hear more from Frances - there will be opportunity for a Q and A

Becoming an Accidental Writer: my journey, pitfalls, and pearls of wisdom

Frances Harding in conversation

with Sally Eberhardt

Saturday, 28 November, 2026

2.00 pm – 4.00 pm

Redcliffe Library Meeting Room

Cost: \$10 Members, \$15 Non-Members

RSVP 21 November, 2026

[Click to Book Here](#)

Click book covers to purchase.



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2026 and 2027 Dates

We gather as a group from October 14 – 20 or February 2 - 8 with villa check-in the day before and check-out the day after.

You can also extend into the *Ubud Readers and Writers Festival* from October 22 - 25, 2026.

For all information, pricing and registering [CLICK HERE](#)



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Benefits of a Back Catalogue

Article by Russell Perry

Building a catalogue of multiple titles is critically important for an author trying to gain and sustain a substantial audience. While a single standalone book can occasionally become a breakout hit, long-term audience growth, financial viability, and algorithm visibility rely heavily on having a deep backlist.

In modern publishing, a single book is treated as an introduction; a catalogue is what builds a career.

The Formular for Reader Acquisition

When an author has only one book, they have exactly one opportunity to capture a reader's money and attention. If that book costs \$5.00, the maximum gross value of that reader is \$5.00.

Paid advertising (like Amazon or Meta ads) can make it incredibly difficult to break even on the sale of just one title. However, if an author has a 5-book or 10-book catalogue, a reader who enjoys the first book is highly likely to "binge-read" the rest of the collection. This drastically increases the *Lifetime Value* of a single reader, making marketing efforts much more profitable and sustainable.

Exciting the Algorithms

Online retail platforms like Amazon and Goodreads rely on algorithms that reward activity and consistency.

Sustained Visibility: Every time an author publishes a new title, algorithms send out "new release" alerts and push the book to readers' recommendation feeds.

The Halo Effect: A new release triggers a wave of interest that flows backward, boosting the sales and visibility of older backlist titles.

Consistent Momentum: Spacing out multiple releases—rather than dumping dozens of titles at once—signals to the platform that the creator is active, ensuring ongoing algorithmic support.

The Cross-Promotional Advantage

A large catalogue transforms an author's marketing strategy from an exhausting uphill battle into a self-sustaining ecosystem.



The "Permafree" Funnel: Authors with large catalogues can afford to make their first book permanently free or heavily discounted. This low-barrier entry point draws in massive numbers of new casual readers, a percentage of whom will immediately buy the remaining paid titles in the catalogue.

Layered Marketing: Promotion phases overlap. While an author is actively marketing Book 3, they can use Book 1 and Book 2 as discount incentives, newsletter builder rewards, or cross-promotional tools with other authors in their genre.

Cultivating Superfans and Memorability

With millions of books available, casual readers forget standalone titles quickly. A multi-title catalogue—especially a book series—keeps readers immersed in a specific world or writing style for longer periods.

Emotional Investment: Spending twenty hours across a four-book series builds a much deeper psychological bond with the author's brand than spending four hours on a single standalone story.

Word-of-Mouth Engines: Readers who spend extensive time with an author's catalogue transition from casual consumers into "superfans". These superfans actively drive organic marketing by pre-ordering future titles and recommending the catalogue to their own social circles.

Building a Catalogue quickly

Don't be afraid to help build your back-catalogue with 'Short Reads'. I recommend short stories of about 10,000 to 25,000 words, preferably in a series or two. Books in this word range can be published in both eBook and print form on KDP. Perhaps use a 'Short Read' as a prequel to a novel for marketing purposes, many best selling authors do this. Amazon has a category called 'Kindle Short Reads' which is ideal for this. Always use one Author name so as to develop continuity.

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Tips for the Perfect DIY Writing Retreat

An article by Jane Smith - Award winning Author/Editor/Librarian

Have you ever looked longingly at advertisements for writing retreats in gorgeous out-of-the-way locations and wished you could justify the huge expense and just *go*? Spend a few whole days writing, with no distractions other than the trees and the birds? And share the experience with a few like-minded people?

For years I dreamed of doing this, but the small income I derived from writing made it seem too much of an indulgence. Besides, these retreats often came with extras like yoga or meditation that would have been lovely but just added unnecessarily to the expense. I was moaning about this with some writing friends a few years ago and it turned out they were hankering after the same thing. And so the idea was born: the DIY writing retreat.

We've just completed our third retreat in three years and feel we've almost perfected the formula, so I thought I'd share what we've learned. Here are our top tips for a productive and fun DIY writers' retreat.

Find the right people for you. This is the most important consideration by far. On our first retreat, all four members of my book club (all writers) participated. Sadly, one has since left town and hasn't been able to join us on subsequent retreats, but we hope she'll come next time! It's important that you all have the same expectations and hopes for the retreat. Tara, Bianca and I are serious about writing and view this as an opportunity to be productive. We're also pretty introverted but could talk to each other all day if it weren't for tip #4.



Find the right venue. Our retreats so far have all been in the Bunya Mountains. Splitting the accommodation costs three or four ways makes it affordable. We've had a different house each time, each with its strengths and weaknesses. Two essentials for us are a bedroom each and plenty of writing space. The Bunyas chalets are great because most have large living areas and plenty of verandah space. You'll need a table to work at so you're not sitting on a couch with your laptop all day. Winter is the perfect time, especially with the fire blazing.

Allow enough time. Our first retreat was for two nights, and we found that one full writing day wasn't enough. Three nights has worked well, allowing two full writing days and two part-days for a bit of writing and other activities.

Set the 'rules'. We established from the start that we wanted writing time without distractions. At the start of each retreat we agree upon writing hours and stick to them; there is no unnecessary chit-chat during those hours. We're respectful of each other's space.

Plan a schedule of activities. We always make time for a bushwalk; it's perfect after a day glued to a computer screen. We also set aside time on one night for book club. On our latest retreat, we added in a short session of watercolour painting on the verandah at sunset (perfect!). Which brings me to tip #5 (b): If you're painting, don't use a water container that looks too much like a cup, lest you mistake it for your G&T. And DON'T dip your loaded paintbrush in your drink. (With thanks to Tara and Bianca for enabling us to learn from their mistakes!)

Plan your meals. We each do our own thing for breakfasts and lunch but eat dinner together. Two of us bring food for dinners, and the third brings staples, snacks and wine. On the final night, we dine at the tavern.



Come prepared to write. While not setting rigid goals, we think beforehand about what we might work on during the retreat so we can make best use of the time. During the latest retreat, between us we: did a final revision of a manuscript to prepare for submission; prepared and practised a pitch for a literary speed dating event; made progress on a PhD thesis; wrote 16,000 words of a children's novel; wrote two articles; thought of ideas for a novel.

This was the timetable of our latest retreat:

Day one

Travel together (for extra catch-up time), arrive around midday, eat lunch at the café.

Settle into the accommodation, collect firewood, make beds.

Relax: reading, walking, birdwatching, chatting.

Dine together, then chat by the fire (including book club).

Day two

Write from 8am to 3pm, with a break for lunch.

3pm: moderate bushwalk (about 6km total).

5pm – 5.40pm: painting on the verandah.

Dine together.

Chat by the fire. Read aloud something we've been working on and give each other feedback.

Day three

Write from 8am to 2.15pm.

2.30pm: big bushwalk (about 11km total).

6.30pm: dine at the tavern.

Day four

Write from 8am to 9am.

9.30: pack up and check out.

Have coffee and cake at the café.

Read in the sun on a picnic rug (bliss!).

Noon: 3km bushwalk.

1pm: head home, chatting about what to improve for next time.

Our DIY retreats are extremely productive, but more than that: they nourish our creativity, our health and our friendship. I hope we can keep doing them forever.

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A Walk in the Churchyard

An Article by Susan Skowronski



Recently I had the pleasure of running a writing workshop for parish children during the school holidays. It was wonderful to see the children's enthusiasm.

We began with a discussion about fact and fiction. We agreed that fiction was great fun because we can make things up. We were grateful that facts are recorded especially news and science. I spoke about the records my great-great-grandfather kept when he arrived in Queensland from Denmark in 1865. One of the children pointed out we should be grateful people wrote about Jesus, so we know what happened in His lifetime.

We spoke about poetry, and how different forms can be used for different outcomes – haiku to capture a moment, ballads to tell a story and free verse to just let your feelings flow.

The children were given a notebook supplied by Anglican Mothers Union, and asked to write their name and list the things they saw on their way to our gathering. The lists included buildings, cars, clouds and trees. Then they were told we were now going to change – we would be the opposite to the people who walked in. We wrote our names backwards. Neil became Lien, Ann became Nna and I had the pleasure of becoming Nasus Iksnorwoks! What fun we had saying our 'opposite' names.



It was time for our 'opposites' to go outside to walk around the ground. We walked slowly, we noticed our surroundings, making note of little things. On the magnolia tree, we saw lichen and buds on the branches, fallen petals on the lawn. We saw many different shaped leaves, coloured flowers in the garden, blades of grass and some weeds in the lawn. We found a spider's web on a statue, and then we found the spider. We found seed pods and coloured pebbles, a plaque and an outdoor power outlet. We met a man with a small dog, and explored the labyrinth. One of the boys filled three whole pages in his notebook.



After refreshments, we reverted to our real names and settled down to write about what we seen on our walk or the things we thought about as we walked. The children were allowed to write in any style they chose, and it was great to see the variety in their work. We had some haiku (about the spider) and free verse, a story about the little dog and even a story about a dragon.

The children showed a lot of interest in the display which included my books and booklets, with some FAWQ anthologies and Scope magazines to show how joining writing groups and submitting work for publication in anthologies can help to get your name known.

International Literacy Day is celebrated on September 8 each year, to remind us of the importance of literacy, and highlight areas where reading and writing skills need improvement. Traditionally literacy means the ability to read and write, and based on this definition, Australia has a literacy rate of approx 98%. However literacy has been expanded to include using and understanding computers and technology. A recent study found that according to the new definition, 14.1% of our population have very low levels of literacy, and over 40% have literacy levels below what is considered enough to get by in everyday life.

We are aware of the disparity in literacy rates across our land, and can support efforts to address this. If ever you have the opportunity to conduct a writing activity with children, I can highly recommend stepping up! It was a most rewarding experience.

Susan Skowronski

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Out of Body

Flash Fiction by Russell Perry

Hello..."

"Aldous heard the voice but could not distinguish where it came from. Was it in his head?

He stood in white space; he could describe his surroundings in no other way. The only visible feature to him was his own body.

Where was he? Was he dreaming? He had been here before briefly, but he couldn't remember when.

"You've returned." The voice was strong but soft.

Where was it coming from?

"Where are you? ... Who are you?"

Aldous spoke softly as well not wanting to disturb the serenity. Although he was anxious and not a little disoriented in the surroundings in which he found himself, he felt safe and unthreatened. His anxiety stemmed from the whiteness, not being able to define his place in the void. It felt like a type of blindness.

The voice came to him again.

"What do you think I look like? Try to imagine me."

Aldous listened to the gentle tone of the voice and felt the rich, deep vibrations in his ears. He did as the voice suggested and pictured a tall man, dark, with African features, dressed in an orange earth coloured robe and wearing a colourful skullcap on what appeared to be a shaved head. The vision was something from his memory perhaps, or a movie or picture book.

In the instant that his mind's eye created him, the man appeared to Aldous out of the white and spoke again.

"There, that's better, isn't it? I am now something that your senses can relate to."

The tall man smiled gently as Aldous stared at him in confusion.

"Who are you? ... Where am I?"

He continued to smile as he walked toward Aldous, spreading his arms as he replied.

"I am whoever you want me to be, and you can be wherever you want to be."

Aldous stepped back from him, and then suddenly found himself in his cot at his laboratory. He realised he had been asleep and he knew that what he had just experienced was not a dream.

This was his second experience in the white void, but this time he had actually seen the voice. He hadn't got past "Hello" last time, but this time he had actually seen a person.



Aldous and his colleague, Professor Albert Wheatley, had been working with the psychoactive compounds of the Psilocybin mushroom. The mushroom had been used for centuries by Mayans and other Mesoamerican peoples for medicine and religious ceremonies. It had hallucinogenic properties but in small doses showed potential in treating several psychological disorders. They had been making good progress of late and had developed a serum which was showing promise.

Back at the beginning, as part of their research, they had both trialed small doses of the mushrooms to evaluate the effects of the compounds in their natural state and to experience why the native Indians had used them down the centuries and still did today. Now Aldous had taken their new serum for the second time.

He had been experiencing substantial headaches, probably due to long hours of work with minimal sleep, and had decided that it was a good opportunity to trial the serum. He didn't envisage any danger, as the dosage was small at around half the concentration as in the mushrooms. It had worked immediately, alleviating the headache. However, on both occasions that he had taken the serum, when he had slept that night, he had experienced the white void, and after this last experience, he was eager to explore it again.

The next evening, when Aldous felt the need for sleep, he took another dose of the serum and relaxed on his bed, hoping to again encounter the white and his new friend.

"Hello Aldous, welcome back." The entity was there, in the white, as Aldous had left him.

"What do I call you, ... What is this place?"

"You can know me by whatever name you like, I used to be Karim, in another life."

Aldous smiled, "OK, Karim it is. What is this place Karim?"

"In your terms, you are on the Astral Plane Aldous ... The fourth dimension, if you will. All sentient beings can exist on the plane, or Space-Time as Einstein referred to it, although few realize it. Each time you fall into a deep sleep, your spiritual being leaves your physical body and floats centimeters above it. This is an Astral State, from where you can travel to wherever you choose. However, firstly you must realize where you are and secondly you need a guide to enlighten you. Your use of the serum brought you here and I am your guide. The ancients discovered this through the mushrooms and used it in their rituals, some of their ancestors use it still.

"Is this all there is?" Aldous asked, casting around into the white,

Karim laughed a booming laugh, "No, your mind will open endless possibilities. Think of your body in your bed and the white will disappear. You will be floating in your room. Don't worry, I will be with you."

Aldous did as Karim asked and found himself floating on the ceiling above his sleeping form.

Karim was beside him, "Now, think of floating outside the building and it shall be so."

Again, it was as Karim predicted. He could see the Laboratory building and all surrounding it as if he was a bird.

His guide spoke again, "Now you can go wherever you wish by simply thinking it. You won't be able to interact physically, but you will be able to observe everything. Now, enough for tonight. Next time I will show you how to enter the plane without the use of the drug."

These revelations would set Aldous on a lifetime of adventure and discovery. He would learn how the 4th dimension was connected to universal knowledge, life after death, reincarnation and the many wonders of existence.

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Lucy

[A](#) Short Story by Richard Winn.

3.00 am. Lucy stood in a darkened living room staring out of the large window. Stock still, her eyes straining in the darkness scanning from left to right looking, looking for a sign.

'They will come' said David 'We need to get ready'.

Lucy had received emails with no explanation as to why or who sent them, but the message was clear, their existence was threatened. David's thinking was to get into a car and drive as far away as possible; it seemed to late to do anything. In the distance a glow, as headlights moved slowly through the trees approaching the house. 'What will we do now?' said Lucy. David turned from the window and looked at her. Lucy could see the fear in his face.

"We do what we planned," he said quietly.

"But that was before they found us."

The headlights stopped. For several seconds, neither of them moved. The house was silent except for the ticking clock on the mantelpiece. Then came the sound of a car door opening.

Lucy stepped back from the window. David reached for her hand. "Whatever happens, don't let them separate us."

After, what seemed like an eternity, a shadow moved across the front garden towards the house. Lucy felt her heart pounding. "David... who are they?" Before he could answer, there was a knock at the front door. A voice called from outside.

"Lucy... I know you're in there."

David's grip tightened around her hand. Lucy stared at him in horror. She recognised the voice. It belonged to someone who had been dead for ten years. Lucy couldn't breathe.



"Lucy..." David whispered. "Get away from the door." Lucy couldn't move.

There was a noise. Upstairs, somewhere in the darkness, Abby turned over in her sleep.

Lucy looked towards the ceiling. "My God," she said. "Abby."

David followed her gaze. "She's asleep. Keep her that way."

Another knock came. "Lucy," the voice called again. This time there was no mistaking it. "Please open the door."

Lucy pressed both hands over her mouth. David stepped closer. "Who is it?" She looked at him. David's face changed "You know who it is."

"No."

"Yes."

"It's not possible." said Lucy as she began backing towards the stairs. Upstairs, in the small bedroom at the end of the hall, Abby slept beneath a faded yellow blanket. Her dark hair was spread across the pillow, one small hand resting beside her face. Ten years old. Innocent and completely unaware the man standing outside the house was her father. Or at least, he had been.

Ten years earlier, Lucy had stood beside a grave in the rain, twenty-three years old and pregnant. She had identified the body, saw it placed in the coffin and saw the coffin lowered into the ground while she stood frozen beneath a black umbrella, staring and seeing nothing. Around her, people cried. His mother had collapsed into the arms of her sister.

Lucy had not cried. Not then. She had simply stared at the coffin and thought of all the things she would never get to tell him. He knew she was pregnant and despite everything that had happened between them, she had loved him and she was afraid. Two days before his death, he told Lucy something that changed everything.

"If anything happens to me, Lucy, you take the baby and you run."

At the time, she had laughed at him, never giving it much thought. For ten years, Lucy had learned to live with the empty space he had left behind. Now, ten years later, someone was standing outside her home. Someone with his voice.

David grabbed her arm. "Lucy, stop."

She pulled free. "Abby is upstairs."

"I know."

"He's, her father." David stared at her. "No, Lucy. He's dead."

Another sound came from outside. Not knocking this time. It was a soft laugh.

Lucy closed her eyes; she remembered that laugh.

"Daddy?"

Both Lucy and David froze. The voice came from upstairs; from Abby's bedroom.

Lucy ran. "Abby!" She took the stairs two at a time, David close behind her. The landing was dark, the only light coming from Abby's bedroom. Lucy turned the light off. She stopped at the doorway. Abby was sitting up in bed, wide awake. "Mummy?"

Lucy rushed to her. "What is it, sweetheart? What's wrong?"

Abby looked towards the bedroom window. "There was a man outside on the landing."

David entered the room behind Lucy and immediately crossed to the window; the curtains were open.

Through the trees, David saw the headlights still glowed, but the car was empty.

Abby looked back at her mother. "He knew my name."

Lucy felt the blood drain from her face. "What did he say?"

Abby hesitated, then smiled. "He said he was my daddy."

David turned slowly from the window. Lucy held Abby tight. "Did you see him?" Abby nodded.

Lucy didn't want to ask, but she had to. "What did he look like?"

Abby reached beneath her pillow and pulled out a photograph. Lucy stared at it, shocked, as she hadn't seen that photograph in years. It showed a younger Lucy standing beside a man with dark hair and a crooked smile. His arm

was around her shoulders. Abby's father.

Lucy took the photograph from her daughter's hand. "Where did you get this?" Abby frowned.

"He gave it to me."

David swore under his breath, Lucy looked at him then back at Abby. "When?"

"Tonight."

The bedroom suddenly felt cold. Lucy frowned, why give the photograph to Abby, she was aware of a framed copy somewhere in the hallway cupboard and easily accessible. Why this photograph?





Lucy turned towards the window. There were sounds of movement down below. Standing at the edge of the trees was a man and, for just a second, lightning flashed across the sky lighting up his face. Lucy saw his face and screamed. He looked exactly the same as he had ten years ago. A little older, but not different and smiling.

In the darkness, Abby whispered, “Mummy?”

“Yes, sweetheart.”

“Why is Daddy coming back now?”

Before Lucy could answer, a voice spoke from the hallway. “Because” the man said softly, “it's time I met my daughter.” They went downstairs.

The man standing on the doorstep had hair greying at the temples, and there was a thin scar running from beneath his left ear towards his collar. But the eyes were unmistakable.

Lucy backed away, shaking her head. “No. No, no, no.” “You are dead. I saw your body. I saw the coffin closed and put into the ground.”

David appeared in the hallway. “Who are you?”

“I am Lucy’s husband and you are?”

“David, David Thorn. So, what’s your name?”

“Michael Harris.”

“Why are you here, you are supposed to be dead. Dead men cannot just pop up out of the blue to see their daughter? What’s your real reason?”

Michael turned to Lucy, still in shock at seeing and hearing her husband whom she thought dead. “Lucy, my death had been staged because of an intelligence operation gone wrong. I was working undercover and the terrorist organisation I had infiltrated was using me as an unwitting link in a plan designed to provoke conflict between two countries. When they realised I knew too much, my life became expendable. My death was the only convincing way to remove me from their attention. Regrettably, the people who organised my disappearance never told you the truth. You were deliberately kept in the dark because, as cruel as it was, your grief made the deception believable. For those ten years I have lived under another identity, but things have changed. The terrorist network is active again.”

David heard Michael's explanation, it did not seem to register. Initially he saw Michael, Lucy's husband and Abby's father as a threat, physically and emotionally. This man has suddenly walked back into their lives as though the last ten years never happened. David's initial reaction was to get Lucy and Abby as far away as possible and keep running but, after slowly digesting what Michael said, David realised running may not be enough.

As if awakening from a dream, David registered what Michael keeps saying "They don't know I am here" but he had noticed a car parked across the street. The same car, parked in the same spot for several days and now someone inside the car is watching the house; the lights on Michael's car have been extinguished. David turns to Michael, "Are you absolutely certain nobody has followed you? What about that car in the street? It has been there for several days."

Michael stares through the window and for the first time since arriving, looks frightened. David realises something terrible. Michael did not come back from the dead to see his daughter; he came back because whatever killed him ten years ago has finally found him again. Lucy, Abby and David are now part of it.



TO BE CONTINUED

LOOK FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THIS STORY IN THE NEXT EDITION OF SCOPE.

Author Richard Winn

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Probably Just the Wind.

A Short Story by Peter Carseldine

In the year 1870, [Michael and Elizabeth](#) Johnson arrived in Adelaide, South Australia on the sailing ship 'Monsoon'. They took up residence in a small flat in North Adelaide until Michael, with his experience in communications in England, secured a position working on the Overland Telegraph Line, a monumental project that promised to eventually connect the vastness of Australia back to England.

After 12 months, Michael and Elizabeth left Adelaide by train, bound for Port Augusta to the north, and then travel overland to Oodnadatta. From Port Augusta, they continue north to Oodnadatta by camel train. Afghans and their camels were bought to Australia for transporting materials, supplies and people across the arid vastness of the Australian outback.

Fresh from England, Michael and Elizabeth were filled with dreams of adventure and prosperity. Little did they know of the harshness, the isolation and the challenges the environment could throw at them.

The camel train drawing a coach, took three days to reach Oodnadatta, with overnight stops at Marree and Quorn. As the coach jolted northward, the heat was oppressive and the irritating flies, trying to crawling up their nose, around the corners of their eyes and into their mouth, made the journey for Elizabeth almost unbearable. Dust settled onto her clothes and into her hair. Perspiration made trickles of mud down her forehead and face. What had they let themselves in for?

As the sun dipped below the horizon on the third day, casting long shadows across the arid expanse of the Australian outback, their destination, Oodnadatta, came into view. The small town lay at the edge of the Simpson Desert, where the sun scorched the earth by day and the stars blanketed the sky by night.

Accommodation for married couples was scarce, but fortune smiled upon them when they found a modest dwelling on a cattle station a few miles from town. The house was nestled near a spring-fed billabong, a precious resource in the harsh landscape. Not far from their new home was a settlement of the Pitjantjatjara people, whose presence was both a comfort and a curiosity to Elizabeth.



As Michael departed for work for a week, leaving Elizabeth to navigate the solitude of the outback, she found solace in the company of an elderly Aboriginal woman named Jannal, affectionately known as Aunty May. Aunty May became a mentor to Elizabeth, sharing stories of the land, the native foods, its spirits, and its ancient traditions. One evening, as the sun set in a blaze of orange and purple, Aunty May spoke of a bunyip that lurked near the billabong.

“You no fear it, [Kungkara](#)¹,” she said, her voice a soothing balm. “Bunyip, it look after the water, a spirit of our land.”

But as the nights grew longer, Elizabeth began to feel an unsettling presence. The restless wind, which blew from the north, would rattle the windows of their home, sounding eerily like someone tapping on the glass. Michael dismissed her fears, attributing the noise to the desert winds, but Elizabeth could not shake the feeling that something was watching her.

One fateful week, Michael was called away for an extended period, leaving Elizabeth alone. Aunty May returned to her settlement at sunset, and Elizabeth was left to face the encroaching darkness. As the wind picked up, its mournful wails echoed through the night, and the familiar tapping began at the window. Fear gripped her heart as she recalled Aunty May’s tales of the bunyip.

The wind howled like a banshee, and Elizabeth, trembling, retreated to a different room, hoping to escape the unsettling sounds. She huddled in the corner, her heart pounding in her chest, as the tapping persisted, relentless and insistent. Midnight came, and the wind began to die down, but the tapping remained, a ghostly reminder that she was not alone. Unknown spirits of this strange land, never experienced by a young English woman, fresh from the green pastures of Hampshire in England.

When dawn finally broke, Elizabeth was a shadow of her former self, her eyes still reflecting the night’s terror. Aunty May arrived, her wise gaze immediately assessing Elizabeth’s state. “What trouble you, Kungkara¹ ?” she asked, concern etched on her face. Elizabeth recounted the night’s events, her voice trembling as she spoke of the tapping and the fear that had gripped her.

Aunty May listened intently, her expression grave. “It is water spirit,” she said softly. “Bunyip, he come to visit you. I ask the Ngangkari² man. He protect you.”

The Ngangkari, a healer and spiritual guide, arrived shortly after, his presence commanding a calming. He carried with him an air of ancient wisdom, and Elizabeth felt a flicker of hope as he arrived at their home. The Ngangkari² examined the surroundings, his keen eyes taking in every detail. He began to lay secret charms around the house, whispering incantations in a language Elizabeth could not understand.

“Water spirit, it not cross line,” Aunty May assured her, her voice steady and reassuring. “You not let frightened. Spirit it curious, not evil.”

As the days turned into weeks, Elizabeth found herself growing more accustomed to the outback’s rhythms. The tapping at the window became less frequent, and she took comfort in Aunty May’s visits and the Ngangkari’s protective charms. Yet, the memory of that night lingered in the back of her mind, a haunting reminder of the unknown.

One evening, as the sun dipped low in the sky, Elizabeth sat by the billabong, the cool breeze brushing against her skin. She watched the ripples dance across the surface, her thoughts drifting to Michael and the life they were building together. But as twilight descended, a chill swept through the air, and the wind began to rise once more.

With the chill in the air growing deeper, Elizabeth returned to the house, then she noticed that the tapping returned, louder and more insistent than before. The former panic surged through her. The [Ngangkari](#)²'s charms glimmered faintly in the dim light, but she could feel the presence of the bunyip growing stronger, as if it were testing the boundaries of its confinement.

Desperate for answers, Elizabeth sought out Aunty May, who listened carefully to her fears. "The bunyip is restless," she said, her brow furrowed in thought. "It want talk with your spirit,. You must meet it, but as friend, not frightened,."

That night, as the wind grew stronger and the tapping echoed through the house, Elizabeth steeled herself. She stepped outside, the cool night air wrapping around her like a shroud. The moon cast an ethereal glow over the billabong, illuminating the shadows that danced along its edges.



"Show yourself!" she called into the darkness, her voice trembling but resolute. "I am not afraid of you!"

For a moment, silence enveloped her, and the wind stilled. Then, from the depths of the billabong, a figure began to emerge. It was not the monstrous creature of her nightmares, but a shimmering silhouette, gliding gracefully above the surface. The Bunyip, a guardian of the marsh lands, gazed at her with eyes that held centuries of wisdom.

"I mean you no harm," Elizabeth said, her voice steadying as she spoke. "I seek to understand you."

The bunyip paused, its form rippling like water, and Elizabeth felt a connection, a bond that transcended fear. In that moment, she understood that the spirit was not a threat, but a protector of the land and its resources.

Before the dawn broke, the Bunyip retreated into the depths of the billabong, leaving Elizabeth with a sense of peace. She returned to the house, her heart lighter, knowing that she had faced her fears and emerged stronger. The tapping at the window had ceased, and the wind settled into a gentle breeze.

When Michael returned, he found Elizabeth transformed, her spirit unbroken by the trials of the outback. Together, they continued to build their life in Oodnadatta, forever changed by the encounter with the Bunyip, a reminder that sometimes, what we fear most can lead us to understanding and connection with the world around us.

And as the wind whispered through the trees, Elizabeth knew that it could indeed be just the wind—but then, sometimes it was so much more.

¹ Pitjantjatjara word for "young woman."

² Ngangkari; Traditional Healer or clever man.

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Min-Min

A Short Story by Peter Carseldine

Stan parked his Toyota Landcruiser ute alongside an empty cattle road train¹ at the Middleton Hotel rest stop, on the Kennedy Development Road, half way between Boulia and Winton in Western Queensland.

Stan and his mate Davo looked pale and shaken as they walked into the bar of the hotel.

“You two look like you’ve seen a ghost! Run into a Min-Min², I bet.” greeted the Publican from behind the bar.

“Yer, you’re not wrong. Give us a couple of Bundies³ and beer chasers. That should steady the nerves.” Stan ordered.

“Yer gets you like that.” chipped in a truckie, sitting at the bar. His cattle dog curled up at his feet, “Had one just off the bonnet of me Mack once. The first time I ever seen one, but I was only a young fella’ back then. I had six decks of young steers an’ travelin’ toward Boulia. Nealy tipped the whole damn show over. Got used to ‘em now but, after twenty years hauling’ cattle. Mind you, you don’t see one every time. I reckon a lot got to do wif’ the weather.”

“I’ve driven the road dozens of times but never at night. Always a bit scared of hittin’ a ‘roo or wild pig or stray bullock.” replied Stan

“Well yer’ but that don’t worry you in a truck.”

A couple of Gray Nomads⁴ were seated at a table behind Stan, Davo and the truckie. They had just finished a meal and were obviously listening to the conversation. The husband came over to the bar to purchase a couple of glasses of port. He looked at Stan,

“Apologies for eavesdropping, but I heard you mention a min-min light. We were hoping to see one ourselves. I have read up quite a bit about them. Fascinating.”

“Yer you’re in the right place at the right time to see one, but it isn’t guaranteed.” the truckie broke in.

“So I gather. Oh, my name to Fredric.”

The barman had put the two glasses of port on the bar along with the change, but Fredric was still engaged in conversation.



“I’m Mack,” said the truckie, “This is Stan and Davo.”

“And you drive a Mack?” Davo asked.

“Yer, well that’s just me nickname, ‘cause we’ve always drove Macks. Me ‘ol man, ‘e carted cattle too and when I gets ‘ol enough, I took up the job, but ‘e still drives if we gets too busy.”

Fredric turns to Stan and asks, “So you saw the min-min this evening?”

“Yer, well we’d been drivin’ for ‘bout an hour from Boulia, when Davo here, he spots this light in the side mirror.”

“Yer, no, it was a bit strange. If it were a car or truck, you’d see two lights, ‘specially out here, ‘cos most everyone has spotties⁵ on their vehicle. But this was just one pale light. I sez to Stan ‘bout it, and he has a look in the rear viz and kinda gets a shock.”

“Yer, I did. Heard about them but like I said, never driven this road at night before. I puts me foot down and speeds up. but the bloody light, it speeds up too.” continued Stan. “Kept the same distance from us, then the light suddenly split in two. The pair danced around each other in the darkness, in kinda weaving patterns.”

“Stan gets distracted from watching the road ahead, and he is all over the place. Lucky the road is straight , or we would have finished up in the mulga.” Davo continued, “Then, all of a sudden, one light darted to the left, disappearing into the scrub before reappearing off to the side of us, away from the beam of the headlights. Then the other did the same only to reappear, just out of the headlight beam. Stan slammed the brakes and the Cruiser skids on the gravel road and stopped what seemed like just metres from the lights hovering at eye level out of the driver’s side window. Up close, they were beautiful, but a little frightening, pulsing from white to a pale blue, casting no shadow.”

Fredric’s wife came over and joined them, “A girl would die of thirst waiting for you, Fred.”

“Sorry love. This is my better half, Alice.” Stan introducer her all around.

All acknowledge Alice and she says to Davo, “Do continue, it sounds exciting.”

“Well, yer, bit scary.” replied Davo.

A Collection of Poems by Mocco Wollert

Letters from Susan

Dear mother-

so formal, it-is-time-to-write-home.
You tell me nothing I want to know:
I wonder if you're cold sometimes,
what you dream about at night,
who puts ribbons in your hair,
is there anyone holding you when your cry?

I went –

with whom and where?
You live in a different world now,
go to places I don't know, young places.
Would you have wished me to be with you
meeting your eyes across the room?

I did –

I try to picture you out there,
living each hour like a lifetime,
hungry for un-tried worlds, driving
in an old green Mini through night cities.

I cling to the thought that one day
we shall do the things we loved, together.

I have –

a friend that brings you books of poems,
a plant that has red flowers and the belief
life owes you all that you can boldly take.
But have you still that song, we sang, sitting
on our kitchen table, your voice pure,
when your guitar was out of tune?



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A Collection of Poems by Mocco Wollert

He Was a Man

He was a man, who took me higher than the sky, gave me
the heat of Venus, the icy winds of Pluto until I burned and froze.

He handed me storms, flaring suns, midnight blackness,
the magnet of his maleness held me trapped, willingly
I spun around his orbit in ecstasy.

He was a man, a real man; no Einstein or hero,
his looks did not attract me but then I never 'saw' him,
only smelt his skin, felt his fire.

Each time he touched me, I exploded into a thousand pieces,
only to come together brighter, more colourful, whole.



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A Collection of Poems

by Mocco Wollert

Field

I saw it with smiling eyes
painted in gold by the sun,
heard it whisper in the breeze
when autumn came.

I saw it bare under clouds,
waiting for winter's cold.

I saw you, tanned bronze,
on a warm summer's day,
heard you whisper words of love
when our autumn came softly.
I felt you turning white and cold
in my winter-stiffened hands.

The seasons have come and gone,
the ripening of new shoots,
the reaping by busy hands,
thinking of you and me
once upon a time together
while I walk the field alone.



First Australians

When birthing time came
the mothers would find
the birthing cave

in the savannah lands
black people, old as history

dreaming, the memories
of dark man's origin and past
painted onto walls of rock

tribal land their sacred world
where piccaninnies can rest
safely in their mothers' arms



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A Collection of Poetry

By Yo-Merry Todd-Birch

MAYPOLE

Beautiful dresses-
White as snow-
Billowing-
Clouds of white.
Satin ribbons-
In our hand-
Colors so bright-
In rainbow hues.
Maypole-
Standing proud.

Flowing now-
From the band-
Music so loud-
So lively.
Dancer's weaving-
Around the pole.

Satin ribbons-
Yellow's, pinks,
Red's n blue's-
Cavorting-
With billowing-
Clouds of white.

Laughter-
Clapping-
Erupts from the crowd-
Sounds of sheer delight.
Crescendo-
Dancer's bow.

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“GAZING”

Gazing-
From the window-
Mind far away-
Memories-
Days gone by.

Trees sway-
As I gaze-
In a trance-
Am reliving-
Days gone by.

Laughter-
Tears-
Love-
Help from above.

Birth-
Death-
Sorrow-
How days fly.

Trees sway-
Memories-
Of this day-
Now stored away.
I turn-
From the window.

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“PIANO”

Gliding sensually-
Over ivory key's,
Piano comes alive-
Caressed-
By your deft touch.
Note's, so true-
So clear-
Only the heart see's-
So much.

Memories-
So dear,
Come alive.
Tear's-
Sting the eyes.
I feel you near-
Feel your touch-
As the piano,
Speaks to us.

Please-
Hold that note,
So true-
So clear-
So dear.
My love and I-
Our hearts embrace-
Quietly.



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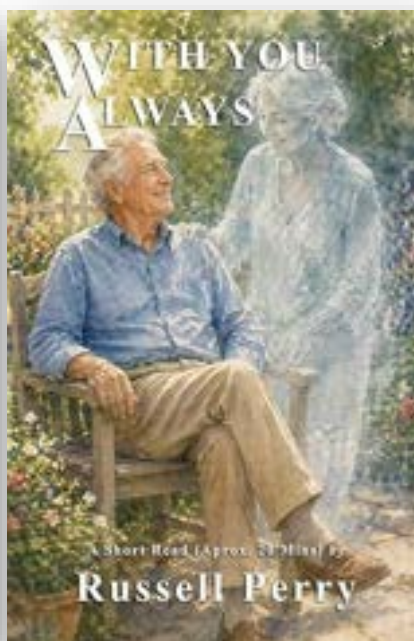
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