



RABBIT HOLE

VOL 3

FOREWORD

It brings me great joy to write the foreword for this book of creative writing and poems, not only because it contains beauty, imagination, and a myriad of unique perspectives, but because it is a body of work largely written by young people.

In my work I make it a priority to advocate greater access to creative writing and poetry, particularly for young people. Poetry gives us permission to express ourselves and explore the world around us and creates the magical conditions through which we might do that. Poetry can not only empower young people to find a language for themselves and their experiences, but it is also a tool for empathy. Poems by young people invite others to understand them better; they are small doors inviting a wider connection and that is why they are so vital.

Too often, young people see poetry as impenetrable. Writing poetry is something they might ‘get wrong’, something difficult or inscrutable, weighted with the immense pressure to emulate the poets of the past, to walk in those heavy and revered boots.

But the students whose work is printed here have shown their bravery and generosity. They have trusted themselves, embraced their writing with originality and heart. They have brilliantly expressed themselves and invited us to open the many doors we find in these pages.

Reading this manuscript I found gorgeous language, musicality and sensory explosions; a crimson sky and the bitterness of lotus seeds. I found quirkiness and personality, pigeons and olive groves, expertly woven worlds. I found short stories and journeys. I met

characters who were conduits to complicated ideas and I read poems that deftly interrogated complex identities. There were vibrant memories, there were families, there was love. There was life and death, loss and joy. I found poems of protest and defiance from the voices of powerful young women and complex emotions carefully trodden and exposed. I particularly enjoyed the many glimpses into the past as a way to understand our current moment and the moments of brave questioning and uncertainty. Some poems nodded respectfully to the much loved poets of the past, whilst also inventing a new poetics, carving out space for their young voices.

As poet in residence at Rugby School, I can’t wait to work with the students and teachers who so clearly understand the value and potential of poetry.

Cecilia Knapp,
Rugby School poet in residence 2022/2023



Cecilia (left) and Lika

Walking into the dining-room so closely connected with creative writing at Rugby School, as the site of the weekly poetry-writing sessions, was seriously nerve-racking for me at the beginning of my school career. I have felt for a long time that poetry, before anything, is vulnerability, and have proved this to myself again and again sitting at the table I have come to know well on Tuesday evenings. It has been a wonderful and inspiring thing to come together to write in a way that takes, I think, not just creativity, but bravery and honesty too. These Tuesday evenings, poetry open-mic nights, and the genuinely transformative annual Arvon trips – last spring to Ted Hughes’ old house in Yorkshire – have laid the foundations of a brilliantly supportive and diverse creative community in the School. But no matter how the prose and poetry in this anthology was written, be it alone or in company, it is all sure evidence of the powerful creative spirit that runs through Rugby School today.

Now in my final year at school, I am reminded of the XX at those first creative writing sessions I attended in the EB. Half-confident, half-embarrassed, often laughing and sometimes halfway through eating a cookie, but always daring to reveal a little raw part of themselves to the room, they still make me want to tell anyone who will listen to pick up a pen and start writing.

It is a real honour now to have been given the chance to compile this collection of poems and stories, of visions and reflections and confessions, and to offer it to you.

Lika Gorskaia,
Rugby School student poet laureate 2022/2023



CONTENTS

03	PIGEON	LAURIE GUARD
04	STORY	EMMA BOUVIER
06	THE HARSH WINTER	CRAIG RICHARDS
07	PARTHENON	NIHAL KUMAR
08	NEW HAIR	ALEXIS KAWCZYNSKI
09	NERO	LILY-ROSE PITCHER
11	OLIVE TREES	ALIX SCOTT-MARTIN
12	PASCUA	RUPERT SNEATH
13	MY FAVOURITE PLACE	ALICE TROTTER
14	THE WEALTHY WIDOW	DAISY DONNE
15	'MY STEP DID FALTER AS I WALKED ...'	JOHNNIE DIALLO
16	DIRTY NAILS	ANDREW SMITH
17	IN MEMORIAM	LIKA GORSKAIA
18	THE SOLIPSI	AMBER STANTON
20	VOYAGE, MID-JULY	LILY-ROSE PITCHER
21	FOUNDING	ALIX SCOTT-MARTIN
22	WOMEN	ROSIE DOUGLAS MILLER
23	WHY I SMILE	RHIANNON MANSFIELD
24	WHAT I SEE IN THE SKY	TIRION GIMBLETT
25	HOLIDAY HOME	TABITHA DENHAM
26	LILITH	DORA HARPER
28	THE FATHER'S ARMS	CLARA GRIFFITHS
30	NOCTURNE NUMBER 1	NIHAL KUMAR
31	MARK-MAKING	EMMA BOUVIER
33	REMEMBERING HER FACES	LIKA GORSKAIA
34	MOM'S WAGE	RUNA HARUKI
36	'SCIENCE AND RELIGION CANNOT COEXIST' - TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE?	LAURIE GUARD
37	GOD, SIN	SKYE SLATCHER
38	EYES	JAY WIGGETT
39	MY LITTLE FRIEND ROBIN	JOHNNIE DIALLO

PIGEON

Its eye was half shut
Cut from the cloth of the dodo
This bird was not meant to be flightless.
Intact, no sign of a struggle.
Could this have come of natural causes?
Wings tidy, fully fledged, whole, fresh.
The eagle-eyed might spot
The dent in the bone of the breast.
As if it just dropped from the sky
Like a scream in a summer night
Like a plastic glass that clatters down, unbroken.
Turned over, garish blood betrays the regal coat of grey and purple.
Blood tucked in the fold of the wing
Like a tissue stuffed up a sleeve
Like a hand behind the back -
Talons crossed -
Like a muffled thud onto wet grass,
Or a hasty taxidermy.

Laurie Guard LXX

STORY

You built me a papier mâché igloo
Carefully constructed from the torn pages
Of your favourite novel
I read them day in, day out
The entrance jammed by the sticky PVA
Secluded with my beloved story
My sole companion
As the snow muffles the melody
Of your voice
Spring comes
And the snow melts, dampening the doorway
It tears with ease as I clamber through
An inhalation of cutting cold air
Rushes to my brain
As I peer at the shell of my home
And read the spider-like ink
The other half of your story

Emma Bouvier E Block



THE HARSH WINTER

The winter's chilling winds came howling through the blowing fields of what was once green. Animals and creatures of old stirred in their dens, unseen to the human eye. The once rushing sound of water now vanquished into a deep cracking as little paws skimmed over the bone-chilling ice. The wolves howled in the distance as the moon floated high above in the emptiness of space. The snow settled over everything, and the creatures begged for the winter to have mercy. But winter had its frost-bitten eyes on something else, it witnessed a small silhouette of the limp rabbit, which was silently treading through the crumbling snow, each strand of hair tingling as it tip-toed, avoiding the dangers of the path it took. The minuscule creature crept through the snow as it got nearer to the hole where small images wavered around within. The rabbit tumbled down the dark mud hall in the ground. It appeared in the dimly lit area of what it called its home and then the family of the adventurer appeared squeaking with caution until they embraced one another and sat in the comfort of each other's arms as the howling winds came stampeding in the lands, flattening all, destroying the quiet peace, and drowning the wolves' howling song as the pines bent and cracked. And yet when all was gone, a single hole in the cracked sharded floor remained where little balls of hair cuddled close to each other, singing with the joy of the winter's rampage dissipating into time.

Craig Richards F Block

PARTHENON

The Parthenon shimmered with the glimmering marble
What divinity did your exposed bare ribs see?
A vivid life within a frozen stone
The gold and white and sunlight
And then the violence and the red and
Pillaging and noise
If you skip some years
You're in a dark room
Your ribs now ache under museum lights
Your home is gone;
And so are your hands
and your face
Once so chiselled and strong
Crumbles
separated from your backdrop of the Athenian hilltop
Dimness surrounds you, and the glow of your silver body has faded
a sea of onlookers come and go and some linger but not for long.
Now, frozen in time, in stone, in beauty,
But the life within is gone.

Nihal Kumar LXX

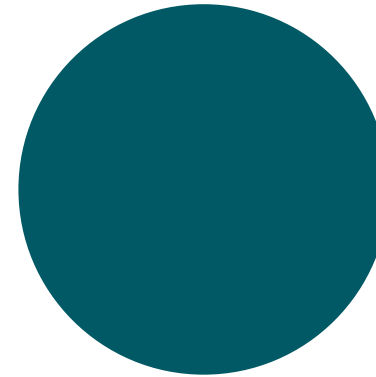


NEW HAIR

Disparity, between others and I.
Constantly. Maintaining appearances as if my
Life depends on it.
It doesn't. I realise
Relaxing, releasing, Breaking through my façade
I slip my impersonation of wilful femininity
Off, donning trousers and tie, finding comfort.
I'm not alone, of this I know, of others there are realms
but I sense the disconnect still.
I sense my aching for another biology
I know my aching for acceptance.
Still groggy, I rise in the fresh early day, realise my oneiric wills,
and move to be a man.

I move to be a man; I move away from her.
In a Saprotrophic act, he processes her decay
I gave up on
Her
carcass.
With my paintbrush of gender, I paint him.
New hair
?

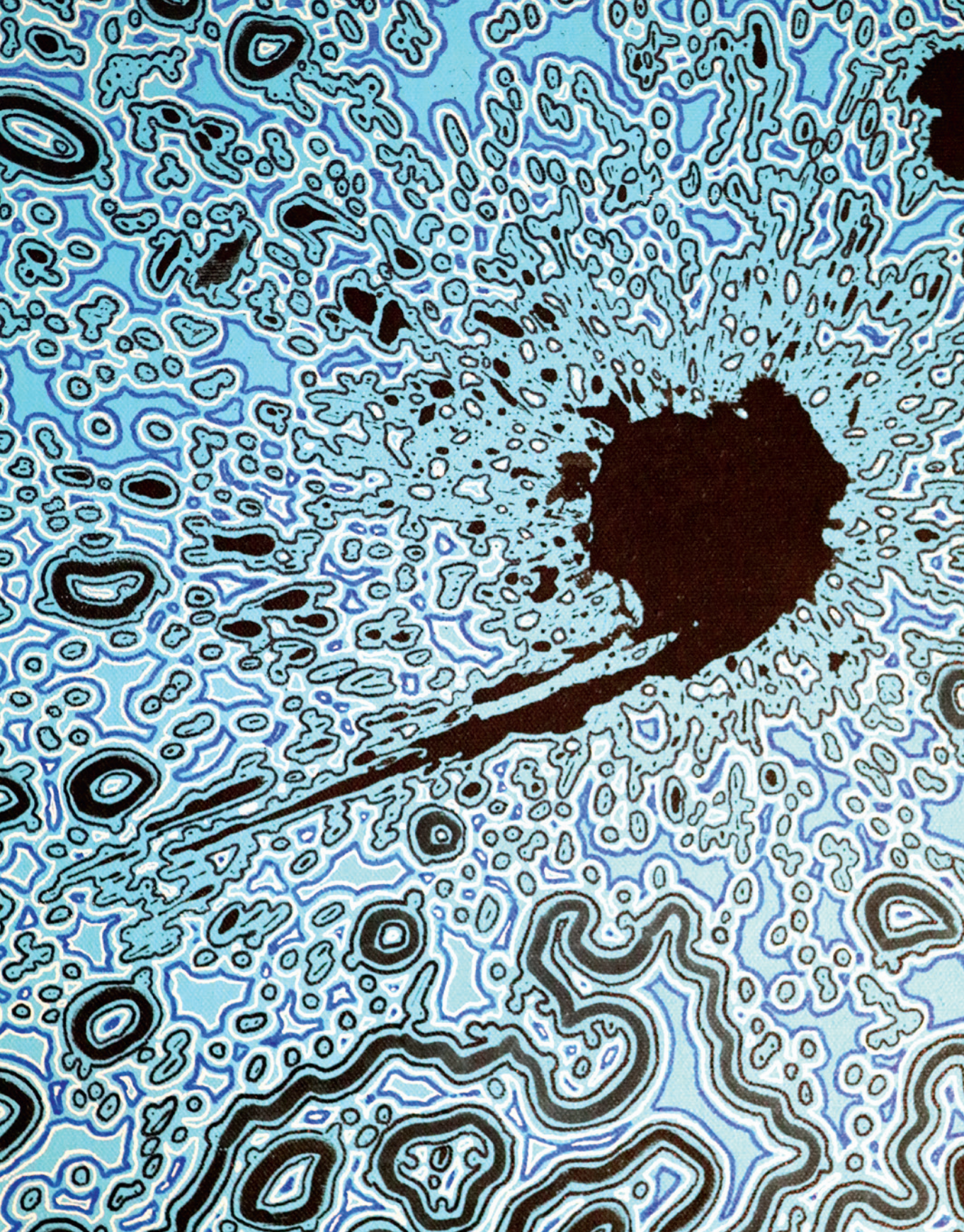
Alexis Kawczynski D Block



NERO

And in your eyes, my sweet, not only do
I see all moons and stars and gems of blue,
I see the fallen faces of the lost –
Of Rome's lost. As I cup my spotless palms
'round such a pleasant face, my fingers slip
Through the dust of the woman before, whose
Loveliness could almost compare to yours.
I remember,
As we would kiss through the green skin of grapes,
I would think how pleasant, how delicate
A corpse she could be, her paling face grey
amongst fruit: the blood-like glaze on apples,
Silver berries shining like her unseeing
Eyes – like yours, I suppose: young, not yet expired.
O, and in that nutmeg-hued robe of yours:
A dulling fire, dusted red ribbon laced
'round the lost sinners and the criminals.
What a sweet scent those candles leak, bloodied
Tears in place of dripping wax. Do take off
Your veil, duck your head, and enjoy the show.

Lily-Rose Pitcher E Block



OLIVE TREES

After Van Gogh

They are too green, even under this bright moon,
jostling, heavy branches like monstrous puppets.
Night breezes shiver their leaves and
whisper to the blue ruin on the hillside, now a stone skull.

The olive groves are buckling and writhing with ancient roots,
growing their own luminosity
until there are no more shadows
and the clouds themselves are cold, white flames.

This must be a form of madness -
born from the coiling soil, bristling with electric light,
witnessed only by a flat sky.

What is this unearthly earth,
this shuddering, terrible yield?

Alix Scott-Martin English

PASCUA

Your tears slip frozen down your face
Clasping on in lower case
Strung up and down boustrophedon, like
Bites from fish or grip from bike
But once that icy thaw retreats
By salt and Shanghai communiques
Tears dry up on their own
And leave their gold speck beneath

The cry is crimson
Set ablaze
Fight fire with stone
And paper planes

Don't stop me
I glean your hatred
I set out the inner self, flee
The shell and skin I rid

But the ice remains, melting sluggish here bare and slow and slow and bare
On days it holds me in chokehold
On others I barely notice it there
But soon will come Easter
And it'll be a storm.

Rupert Sneath LXX

MY FAVOURITE PLACE

(An extract)

The Loch is surrounded by mountains covered in a blanket of trees. The water is a mirror of clear glass. A wall of worn stone parts the beach from the road. Dominating rocks loom over us. The sweet smell of wildflowers and s'mores fill our noses. The chorus of bird song breaks the silence like a shard of glass. The song is pure and crisp, like a winter day. A minute island in the distance like the sword in the stone.

I go with all my mum's family, but my mum always does her best to make everything we do in the Highlands brilliant. Her smile is a beam of reassurance. Her laugh is a sound of truth. She loves going paddle boarding with me. She looks as at ease on the board as she would on a chair. With the paddle in her hands, she looks like a magician with her wand.

The water is a scene from a fantasy book. The entire place is quiet except the splash of the paddles and the sound of our voices.

...

The world seems to race by too quickly for me to keep up and I get left behind. Life is so demanding it is almost impossible to fill its requests. Droning voices are everywhere.

It is so different at the Loch as time seems to slow to a halt. There is always something to do. Even things like picnics that we have done hundreds of times; it always seems new and exciting. Everything there is as simple and calm as a two-year-old would see it.

There are no lies in nature. There is nothing to hide. Each mountain that has been there for hundreds of years; it is a reassurance that something can withstand time itself.

Alice Trotter F Block

THE WEALTHY WIDOW

Oh that's what you're all here for.... Isn't it?
Well, I met him when I was young and full of wit.
Who's 'him', you ask? Well, he was number one –
One of six, gosh! Men are so very dumb.
Mark was his name, I loved him so dearly;
He made me see everything, so clearly:
That you should never mess around with a gun,
Especially when you are having his son.
Only a few thousand were left to me,
Even though he had got down on one knee.
The son didn't stay too long in my house:
He wasn't much help with finding a new spouse.
The second was a magical blur,
but when he started messaging *her*...
The kitchen is very dangerous, I found.
His body agreed, dead on the ground.
Three, four and five were only months long each –
They loved to call me sweet names, like 'Peach'.
My purse had become so much more full
When it was triggers that I started to pull.
Number six was very close to my heart.
I felt like giving men a fresh start.
His bank account had seemed to be enough,
He was not like the others, more of a scruff –
But when he didn't take my car to repairs...
His head seemed fine at the bottom of the stairs.

Daisy Donne E Block

'MY STEP DID FALTER AS I WALKED...'

Yes, my step did falter as I walked,
Recalled the spot under the tree we'd talked,
The leaves would fall and we would watch them swirl,
Reflecting off your eyes, akin to pearls,
And I would take your hand back into mine,
And like willow roots we would intertwine;
And in those moments, through the leaves, I saw
A glimpse into your soul, so sweet, so pure.

Come Autumn, leaves had fallen from the trees,
I peered across the orange, amber seas,
For days on end; I trudged, and hoped, and searched,
But you had moved under the silver birch,
And you no longer spent your time with I,
For, something, someone else had caught your eye,
And as I watched him take your precious hand,
I stood adrift in a foreign land, alone.

December came along with frigid frost,
And in the icy landscape I felt lost.
You left, but truly you belonged to me,
And I was everything that you could need.
So, the morning of your usual amble,
Pricked your hand did I, with winter bramble.
Shocked, you fell six feet under the pave,
Hence now I'm laying flowers on your grave.

Johnnie Diallo E Block

DIRTY NAILS

Dirty nails. Mucky, you say. A stain on
My character, unrespectable. Yet
My life is composed of clippings.

It's just that I pick at things, I scratch,
I interrogate my surroundings by
Finger-tip, picking up memories for
Later. The grime under my nails is the record
of a day well lived, earthy, alive,
incorporated into reality,
A part of the world in a part of me.
My nails are the proof my day existed,
And I in it, that I am really here.

I pity your clean nails –
Incomplete, like toys still in their packaging,
Left on the shelf.

Andrew Smith English



IN MEMORIAM

For Rupert Brooke

Through the sepia,
I imagine him frail-wristed,
thin-skinned,
that puny golden boy among
faces
swollen with sleep
not unlike ours
in these same pews,

half-turned from the altar
in youthful distraction.

That fabled woman-hater
must have looked so

pretty in the low
electric light,
charming the old boys
to their adolescent breakdowns.

Lika Gorskaia XX

THE SOLIPSIST

(An extract)

My mind is the one thing that's true
But even then it lies
Behind my eyes is a shrew
Untamed it cries

|

Call out to a forlorn master
My mind is the one I'm sure
With my paper figures running faster
Until the paper hits the floor

|

With a hit on the head
The widowed bride lives
The child drops dead
My mind didst not forgive

|

The people crying shall no longer fear
Through no fault of mine
They linger near
The molten pyre of pine

|

Where the burned live
And the burned die
The sand streaming through the sieve
It is just the illusion of my mind's eye

Amber Stainton D Block





VOYAGE, MID-JULY

the sticky little fingers
of midsummer heat
cling far too tightly to my forehead
in these parts.

a flask of the waxlike cocktail
of light from candles and moons,
irreplaceable by modern men.

that is all i am packing.

i clamber deafly across
lands undistracted by human bodies
settle my mole form,
build my bird's nest.

it is colder here
and i like it.

Lily-Rose Pitcher E Block

FOUNDING

these boys have iron bones
forged in foundries
tongues like metal latches
hinged at the shoulders
names clattering clasps on stone

their forefathers knew soot
as dawn light
the trudge & lift of it
worn in their palm lines
bit lips tasting of rust

knew the heart of a furnace
its spilling heat
where sons were cast with ribs
that chimed

their mothers bore deep forests
felt the splintering crash of
falling trees & silence

that settles slowly stories
whispered through lost seams
& breath still misting these
iron boys' cheeks

Alix Scott-Martin English

WOMEN

We are everywhere
We live in the edges of your dreams,
And sing in the whispers of your secrets.
We tell stories of hope and love not found.
We hold knowledge, and we murmur our
Truths to glossy stars in velvet skies.
Our bodies to you are our purpose.
Our passion.
What mysteries lie in the curves of our hips
And the shine of our skin.
We have power.
Not only over you but in ourselves.
This fire behind our sweetly shining eyes.
Anger.
The scalding steel that burns in our throat.
Every comment. Every look. Every disregard.
A requirement. To be the best. To be better.
If not...
We use what we have left.
The mystery.
The 'What If?'.
'What if she did what I wanted?'
'What if she says yes?'
Sometimes we give it to you, sometimes we don't.
If we do, we can be sure you'll leave us alone.
The mystery dissipates like smoke as soon as the sun
Rises and spreads its light over your sight.
The unknown known.
The secret told.
The prize won.
The interest lost.
What's left?
What do you think is left?
A hollow shell?
Rotting, broken, used, discarded?
No.
You've forgotten.
We have each other.
A promise of love.
A togetherness.
The sacred silent secrets in the stars.
Sisterhood intertwined like knotted fingers and silver string.
Something you can't touch or take or break or grope
Or snap or hit or rape or punch or shatter.
Something you can't use, or forget.
We have mothers, sisters, daughters,
Grandmothers, aunts, cousins.
We have women.
And what more do you need than that?

Rosie Douglas Miller LXX

WHY I SMILE

Aside from the blatantly obvious fact that I am a chronic people-pleaser,
There is one other reason that I smile.
Stephanie.
My late auntie couldn't help it.
Everyone said that she had the most wonderful smile that lit up an entire room,
And could turn anyone's mood from sour to sweet in a matter of seconds.
My late auntie could not walk or talk,
But as if she was going to let that stop her.
She beamed happiness.
They said her smile stretched from ear to ear,
Or,
More aptly,
From year to year, because that's how long it lasted.
She lit up the lives of everyone she met,
Through laughing,
Through smiling,
As if she knew they needed it.
She inspired everyone around her,
Including me,
And that, is why I smile.

Rhiannon Mansfield XX



WHAT I SEE IN THE SKY

I look through the glass expecting to see the stars,
setting fire to the sky with their natural beauty,
the elegance they gift the galaxy,
miles away but they feel so near,
like a comfort, a wonder, so familiar.
But instead I see an empty sky,
no glow from a fire in sight,
an empty carcase frowning down at me,
a reality that swallows me up and tosses me around in play,
the endless magic I wish to see,
really a disappointment and a shineless old star.
The remnant of the past leaves bitter taste,
as it cannot be lived up to no more,
the second you think it might be within reach,
it moves, it runs, it falls, it disappears,
lost in the empty sea of no stars.
Leaving you to scramble, wishing for that lucky star to reappear,
to give a sign of hope, to prove that not all is always lost.

Tirion Gimblett D Block

HOLIDAY HOME

Cold, wet, sharp shells.
Slippery seaweed making it difficult to walk.
Wet sand between salty toes, mixed through the icy water.
A fire of sunset dancing through the sky.
Quiet but loud from the orchestra of waves crashing its cymbals.
A paddleboarder in the distance
Challenging his challenge.
An old, green spade, lost, forgotten
In danger of the deep rock pools, the home of baby crabs.
Looking into an everlasting cave
Never brave enough to reach the end,
Ignoring the terrifying unknown.
The horizon keeps us safe and contained.
The secret beach showing barbeques and ball games
Forever temporary.
Lights twinkling from the houses sitting comfortably in the hill.
Tasting the salty honeycomb ice-cream
Travelling through memories in the air.
Cold feet rubbing on salty flipflops,
crystallised from journeys into the sea with the red boat.
Tired from walking up forever ongoing hills
Constantly present in the artwork of views.
Boats big and small, all colours and styles, all with different stories,
Splashing through the blue blanket of the harbour.

Tabitha Denham XX

LILITH

Our love was a war of rousing rage.
My anger a vivid vexation.
You could not have me.

I was besotted with another, myself.
Why live a life of sour submission
Bowing down to you?

You do not own me. My soul is a bird
fluttering freedom.
I shall not be caged.

I tried to warn you:
I am my own
but your rigid beliefs turned my heart black.

My tears were searing drops of acid.
And then I decided
To rebel.

I became a flaming fury -
A fiery force to be reckoned with -
And you were scared.

You and your father were scared.
Power.
I found that is what frightens a man. A weak man.

You say you never loved me
But I see your bitter tears
like ink splattering on parchment. Turning it black.

You banished me to the Red Sea.
You did me a favour!
I do not miss your sanctimonious stance,

your tyrant tempers.
You have another woman now.
Somebody who won't make a fuss.

Push her into the shadows
because you are scared.
But my spotlight is not fake.

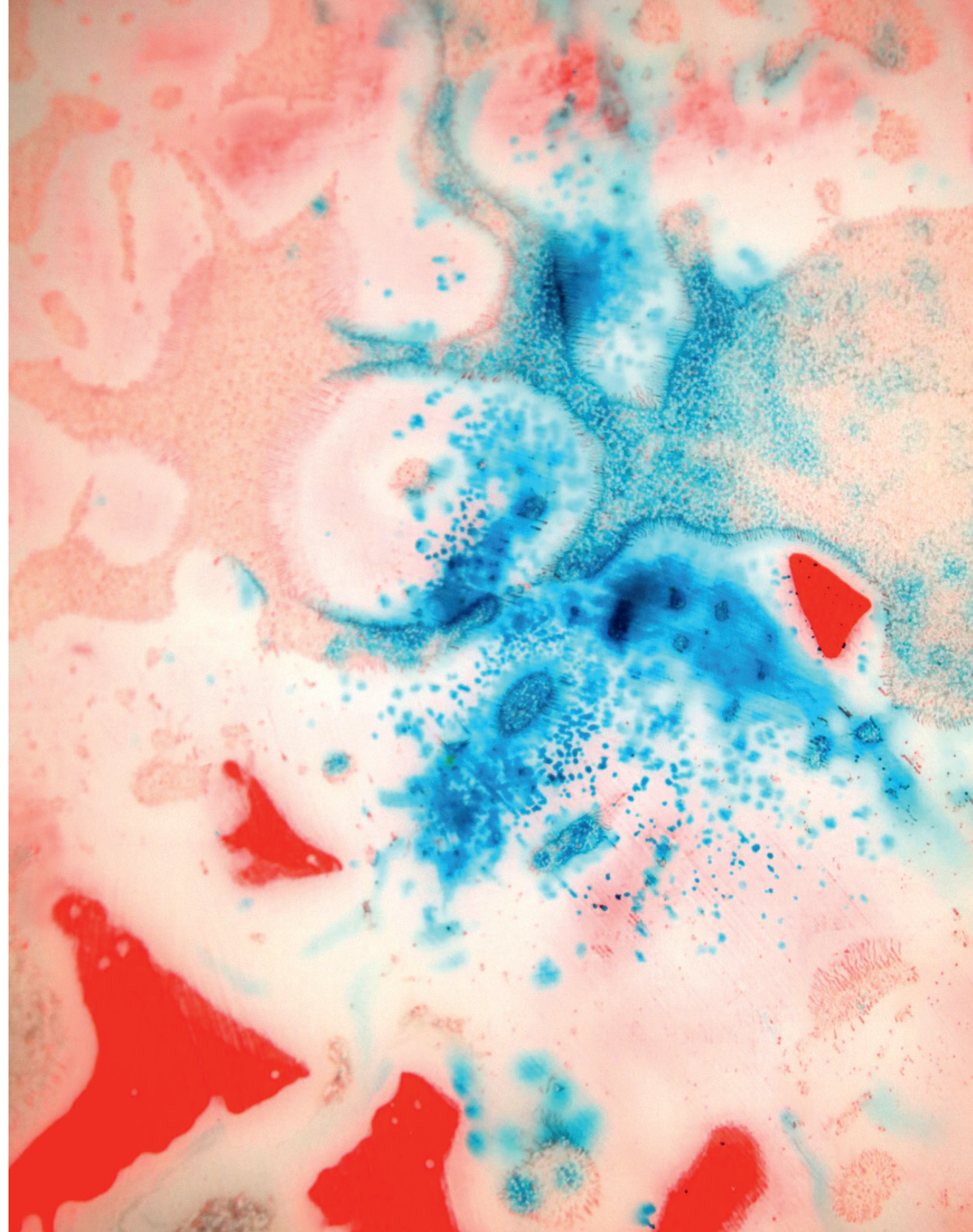
I am fire, light and power.
I am sound, songs and freedom -
A mascot of femininity.

A scared man banished me
But that was like drenching fire in fuel.
You lit me, and now I burn stronger.

Our love once was a stellar story, a cosmic adventure
now hidden in the sparkle of the stars
and the depths of our hearts.

You do not own us.

Dora Harper F Block



THE FATHER'S ARMS

(An extract)

On this particular day, Matthew decided to postpone his ship building in favour of a mournful beer tab. The factory had announced staff cuts that morning, and though Matthew was sure he was a competent and reliable worker, anxiety rumbled in his stomach. He worried that this might be the sign of larger problems for the business. As he approached the door of his regular pub, lugging his uniform in a shapeless duffel bag he noticed a sign hung on the peeling red door saying "CLOSED FOR RENOVATION". Matthew thought this was highly irritating, especially considering he would now have to venture further down to find warmth. Reluctantly, he began making his way along the street.

A lone figure hobbling its way across the pavement, Matthew would have seemed a strange sight. His large bag almost swallowed him, disfiguring his silhouetted shape to something almost inhuman. Wind wrapped its way into his long dark coat, filling it and causing it to billow like a sail. Twilight crept around the dusty yellow street lamps, which illuminated Matthew's path in irregular patches. Lines in the cracked pavement fed their way into the main road, and here and there potholes dug through the concrete. After a few minutes' walk down this desolate street, he recognised the sight of a pub's bright windows and swinging sign, which read the name "The Father's Arms". Although he had never

previously noticed it, he felt it would do, and without pausing, he pushed the door open.

Immediately past the door, he was hit by a stench of tobacco and wet wool, which seemed to emanate from a coat stand drowned in a shapeless mob of fabric. A single tungsten lamp illuminated the entry nook, casting a yellowing light over Matthew's head as he hastily deposited his bag. After finding a suitable spot in the wooden shelves, he crammed his bag down and straightened up. However, as he leant back up, the most peculiar feeling crept over his body. It spread like a warm wave from his left foot, which had entered the pub first. His knees, usually so uncooperative with any kind of sudden movement, effortlessly carried him to a standing position. He realised he no longer stooped, and could now see over the double swinging doors. Looking down at his hands, he hesitantly examined them. Gone were the wrinkles and scars that had embellished his fingers, replaced by skin that seemed uncomfortably tight and smooth. Beginning to panic, he reached for his face. The skin around his eyes had shrunk, erasing the lines of age, and suddenly his glasses made the world go blurry. He discarded them. Weirdest of all though, Matthew now had a full head of hair. His bald patch was completely gone. Now truly panicked, he reached for his affairs in a hurried attempt to leave when suddenly a hand

clamped down on his shoulder. Spinning him round, a booming voice proclaimed; "Matthew my boy! Good to see you've finally found us!" Terrified, Matthew faced the man, and what he saw made his jaw drop. The man before him stood at exactly the same height. He had jet-black hair parted messily to the side, hanging above dark eyebrows, which magnified his eyes. He seemed to be in his early twenties, and wore a thin chain around his neck. Nothing would have been extraordinary to anyone else, but Matthew would have known this man anywhere. He visited this man every Christmas, called him every week, yet never before had he seen him so young. Matthew was staring at his father.

Now not only did his father stand before him, he looked years younger than Matthew had ever known him. He had watched his father age, and knew that he now stood hunched over, and that what was left of his hair was silver. When Matthew was born he had already been in his late thirties, but now, even in the dim light of the pub, he could not have been more than twenty-five. Yet here he stood, tall, lean, and the eyes that scanned Matthew were free of cataracts. There were similarities between the two of them in the shape of their nose, the way their lips turned down at the corners. Except that this man was beaming. While Matthew's head imploded with the magnitude of what he was processing, his father

stood calmly, hand still on Matthew's shoulder. As he began to gather himself, the grin on his father's face faded to a reassuring smile. There was nothing to worry about, he said, I felt like this as well. Not exactly convinced, Matthew shrugged his shoulders, and his father's hand fell back to his side. He took a deep breath in, and felt his lungs fill with musty air. As he exhaled, he began to try to make sense of the situation. Seeing Matthew slowly recover, his father began talking.

"Outside of this mudroom is a place you probably presumed impossible. Think of it as a time machine, except instead of the machine travelling through time, time travels through the machine." Michael raised an eyebrow. "I am not the only person to get younger in here. Every man inside is exactly 22 years old, and will remain so until he leaves, at which point he will return to the exact moment he entered, and go back to his true age. Now, before you ask why you are here, let me explain; you are part of a line of men stretching through time, from father to son since the dawn of life till the unfortunate end of it. This pub, as it appears to be for you, is where we meet."

Clara Griffiths LXX

NOCTURNE NUMBER 1

After Chopin

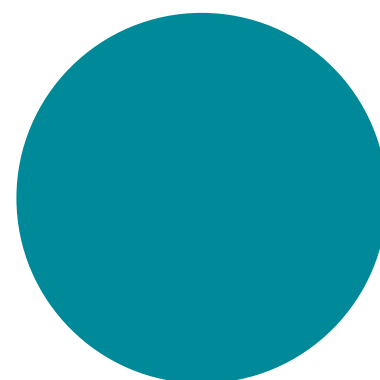
serenade and
cascades of notes into
place like placid drifts
through light minds with
chairs on one leg and
a yellow lit bar
ivory keys detach and billow in flocks
through the haze
there are flutes
of champagne
stopped
in motion
frozen in time
clouds of fluids in space
droopy eyelids and a
weak hum of conversation
moon beams strong
like steel but soft
velvet in the air
air so thick
buttery and silky
dancers roll in it
skin smoothing the
surface
agile, graceful
carving through the
orange room

Nihal Kumar LXX

MARK-MAKING

They say he hung teabags about the house
Used and drip-dripping with his presence
Beetroot-stained fingertips
His wrists twirling with memories
A selection of colourful fine liners
Inky splodges on the page
Pools of starry indigo
He took a plunge into a puddle of hot wax
Threw himself in, butterfly stroke
Dangling from the ankles
Cracking through the back and stepping out of the form
Papyrus crumpling in the softness of his palm
Arcing towards the yellow flame
Whispering upon the eyelashes

Emma Bouvier E Block



REMEMBERING HER FACES

I like to see what I can remember. This is a game I play in the early hours, in the tentative light.

I see your face squirming in the middle of the playground

Your face in a shaft of sunlight,
A glimpse of your face in the car window, caked with snow

Your face in your passport photo, glossy,
unfamiliar,

Your face wrapped up in patterned scarves of mauve and yellow
Your face in Venice, mostly obscured by an ice cream cone.

Your face in February
Your face framed on your mother's bedside table

Your face, sideways, in the purple dark

Making your slow eyes squint, so close
It makes me want to laugh.

Lika Gorskaia XX

MOM'S WAGE

"Mom, how much money do you earn in an hour?"

Amanda, the curious eight-year-old she was, had just asked me about my wage.

It was a bright, bitter morning in November. The wind howled like a wolf, changing the direction of the rain so that it pelted against the window. I closed my eyes and let my face sink into my pillow. It was telling me a bedtime story, which beckoned me to fall asleep and close my heavy eyelids.

Instantly, the clock struck 5am with a repeated chime, which sounded endless. Peeling my grey, fluffy blanket off of myself, I got out from my big and cosy cave of a bed, pretending that I did not hear Amanda. Changing out of my comfy pyjamas, which oozed with the fresh and sweet smell of soap - into a tight suit. I was in another world. To say I was still in a bit of a dream was an understatement.

I hadn't seen Amanda for more than a week. My schedule had been tight with one thing: work. I was as busy as a bee. I was burnt out.

Amanda was desperate to know about my wage and was about to cry. I had never seen my daughter cry in front of me before: I had never seen her get out of bed at 5am, either. In the end, the angel part of me forced me to fight.

"You don't have to worry about it, my love. Go to bed now and everything will be fine," I whispered.

Nevertheless, Amanda did not stop asking me. Her voice grew louder and louder like the sound of an ambulance. With a frustrated sigh, I finally said, "Okay. About twelve pounds an hour. Now go to bed and go back to sleep. I have to go to work," I shouted, using all the energy I had.

"Twelve...", I heard her say, disappointedly.

I stormed out of the house, trying not to think about Amanda and what she thought about money. Twelve pounds sounded like it was not enough to satisfy the little monster. But I did not care.

Seventeen hours had passed in a blink of an eye.

Being exhausted after work, half-dead in fact, my body was screaming at me to pass out. Almost stumbling as I strolled along, my eyes almost closing. I was making my way home. The cold landscape was bathed in the metallic glare of a giant full moon, floating freely in the starry night

sky. It was the painful nakedness of the golden house that betrayed me. Perfectly illuminated, I could see the light coming from my home, glowing. It almost looked like a golden palace rather than a house; it was sparkling.

To make matters worse, Amanda was waiting for me in front of the entrance, looking like a puppy waiting for its owner. When she saw me, her face broke into a broad and beaming smile. The cold wind laughed at me as if it was making fun of my situation. My brain capacity was filled up with work and I had no energy left. I tried to match her mannerisms, but her grinning face and the adrenaline got on my nerves.

"Amanda! Why are you still awake? What on earth are you doing here?" I started telling her that she could have gone to bed earlier and how exhausted I was, but then I started to calm myself down. Arguing never helped the situation.

Amanda bit her lip in frustration, starting to tear up. Her misty eyes stared up at me with a face like a baby, making me realise that I had spoken much too harshly.

"Sorry, I said too much, I - I was too stressed and tired," I mumbled, at a loss for what to say.

"Why have you been here to wait for me?" I asked, worrying.

Practically flying to her room, Amanda came back down with her hands clutching something.

A piggy bank.

She pushed it to me, asking me to open it. I slowly opened it with confusion. Instantly, many coins clanged and clattered through the house as they fell out of the piggy bank.

Amanda, with an innocent smile, completely contrasting her teary eyes from earlier, said proudly, "Mom, I worked for our neighbours today and made twelve pounds! I can buy your hour, right? Mom, can I play with you? I'll give you all of the money, so can I play with you?"

My coins fell from my hands, clinking to the floor.

I looked down at the twelve coins rapidly blurring as my eyes filled with tears.

Runa Haruki LXX

**'SCIENCE AND
RELIGION CANNOT
COEXIST' -
TO WHAT EXTENT
DO YOU AGREE?**

Exhaustion
dilutes the crimson passion
of my blood.
Erythrocytes.
My mother taught me
the parts of the body
my father
how to shape logs.
The log they nailed to me.
I heave.
They offer vinegar
wine left out, offered up
until even the organic compounds grew tired
gave in to that eternal sin:
oxygen.
When they pierce me
it is not blood
not the impossible coagulation of ribboned enzymes and folding
polypeptides,
interwoven thorns -
but simple molecules of water.
Weak van der Waals forces
wash away the transgressions of these soldiers
whose rough-cut dice tottered
to decide
which one
won each lot.
My loincloth to the gentleman with the facial scar
my sandals
kissed
by many a leper
To the centurion at the back.
And I think it is now
when the sky
splits
into the maw of a roaring beast,
electrons leap across the sky
sending a shudder
of light,
that the centurion's eyes
silently weep.
They see at last,
as the heart of my heart
beds back down in the shredded hay
to asystole,
that this man:
surely -
was the son of God.

Laurie Guard LXX

GOD, SIN

(Translated from the original Italian)

Jane, I have heard the voice of God, here, with more clarity than ever before.
I have seen the poverty of the people with my own eyes:
Poverty of food, homes, knowledge, Christianity.
I came here to teach them, and this is what I'm doing:
I stand before them, I bring them the word of God. The Gospel.

He stands before them, shouting words they do not understand.
He keeps repeating words: god, sin. They do not understand.
He tells them over and over: god, sin.
Eyes of stone. A face of white marble. He is different. He is from afar.
Sometimes he looks up, as I perch on a tree looking down, repeating that word: god.

Jane, when I stand and share Christ with these people
I often see a bird: on the tree above where I stand.
I have begun to wonder whether it is God, Himself;
Or maybe it is you, Jane. Since you did not join me, serving the Sovereign and
the Lord,
Perhaps the bird has come in your place. She reminds me of you.

Sometimes, the man looks at me from down there. I cannot tell what he thinks.
My feathers have colour, like all birds I know,
Yet sometimes I feel there is a glint of confusion in his eye.
I ignore it and continue to try to understand what god is. Sin.
So do the people. He has a goal, he feels he is achieving it. I am not so sure.

Jane, I am banishing Satan from these lands.

Maybe I am god. Maybe I am sin.

Skye Slatcher XX

EYES

Dedicated to female victims of abuse and persecution

Darting everywhere, exploring, probing, undressing, their gaze never lowers
Searching unwaveringly, for a heady glimpse of flesh or an outline of my form
The sheath that envelops me offers protection but is also my gaoler; a life sentence instituted at birth
A man-made prison, governed in the name of a man-made God
Controlled, condemned, every detail of my life decided, I broke out and spoke out and uncovered myself
And find myself in a twisted paradox, incarcerated and guarded by the morally superior
I am reminded that like a child, I should be seen, but not heard
I am reminded that I am but a possession, with no right to think or do as I please
I laugh; the sound cold, harsh and bitter with the realisation that liberty can never truly be mine
For even if the shackles were released, and the battle won, the eyes would pervade: ominous, omnipresent
Searching, stripping, penetrating ...

So, as I lie here walled in by my thoughts
I yearn for the day
When I am finally released
And can soar upwards to join those who went before me
As then, at last, I will finally be equal, I will finally be free.

Jay Wiggett O&A

MY LITTLE FRIEND ROBIN

'Twas one bitter morning,
In blue moon September,
When tales of a lone robin's song
Were all that I could send her.

The leaves were pale with blemishes,
The branches frail and weak,
Within the hawthorn, rot,
Bar one branch. I heard sweet

Songs of hope and promise
And tunes of yearning too,
Wound round my dear heart, fullest,
My little friend, robin, flew.

Johnnie Diallo E Block



RUGBY SCHOOL

Rugby School, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV22 5EH

Telephone: +44 (0)1788 556 216

Email: enquiries@rugbyschool.co.uk

www.rugbyschool.co.uk