

YASS WRITERS

Samples from 'Stray Leaves' published in 2009

HAIKU

By Nola Bindon

Winter

rose petals drying
remnant of summer beauty
comforts solstice days

Butternut

squat golden earth gift
conversation in doorway
reassurance ---life

Lemons

bag of golden orbs
essence of summer given.
still life on blue plate

The Now

feet move, slow wheel turns
afternoon full of bird sound
fine brown thread is spun
Autumn

riff of golden notes
falls against a black pear branch
melody lingers

THE CIRCUS ROUND THE MOON

By Agnes Skillon

I wrote this poem because of my childhood misunderstanding of the expression 'a circle round the moon' (which was supposed to predict the coming of rain). I interpreted this as 'a circus round the moon'.

Tonight there's a circus round the moon,
With childish hearts aflutter we watch in silent awe
The twirling, whirling circus round the moon.
It will rain, the old folks told us,
It always rains they told us,
Whenever there's a circus round the moon.

So we searched the skies
For telltale signs of this impending storm,
But all we see are stars,
A million, billion, trillion shining stars,
All wide awake and twinkling
As they watch with us the circus round the moon.

We see the tumbling clowns go by
So far above us in the sky,
And prancing horses black and white
With manes out trailing in the night.
And on their backs sweet maidens fair,
With moonbeams in their shining hair.

Coming slowly after these,
The artists on the great trapeze.
We watched them climb and swing and fly,
So daringly across the sky.
Then we wait with mounting fear,
To see the elephants appear.

Those lumbering beasts so huge and tall,
We're certain they must surely fall.
Come tumbling, tumbling, tumbling down,
To squash us flat upon the ground.
And now our hearts quite filled with dread,
We scramble up and go to bed.

We curl up small, our eyes shut tight,
Against the terrors of the night.
But hoping that again quite soon,
We'll see the circus round the moon.

A PAEAN OF PRAISE

By Ivy Wade

The opalescent glow that heralds the morn
The glorious music of birds at dawn
The warmth of the sun on an early spring day
The colour and scent of the garden's array.
The grace of a tree, outlined by the sky
The perfection of motion of birds passing by
Joy and love in a dear friend's face
The laughter of children, as homeward they race.
Gentle rain falling - heaven's manna unfurled
A paean of praise for God's beautiful world.

LIFE IS LOCAL

By Robin Butt

(First appeared in the 2007 Yass Tribune 'Life is Local' short story competition)

Lucky the Show's held in March when the weather's good, or supposed to be. The alarm went off at 4.30, dark still, and the kids harder than ever to wake. I mix the feeds and collect the shoein' gear. The missus always gets us a bite before we go – she's been washing shirts. We come in the back gate of the showground, and you'd reckon Dave wouldn't bother askin' me for a ticket, he should know we've been comin' for years. I park close as I can to the horse stalls.

It's 7.30am now, there's our ponies whinnying, they reckon they've been forgotten. I hand out the feed buckets, but young Joe, he's still sleep walkin', he's only nine. So I carry down saddles and gear while the kids take off the rugs and start grooming and plaiting.

The missus is rousin' about Shelley, these teenage girls are a pain – they spend so long getting' themselves ready they're late for their event. Still, she's doin' a good job with the thoroughbred.

Sounds like Mike is on the mike – ha ha – there you are, “Morning all, day two of the Yass Show, we're starting off with the Pony Club events in Ring 1, the jump course is open for walking, campdraft underway down at the cattle yards. Would the owner of the red Holden move it from the front of the Pavilion...”

Hey Shelley love, get us a hamburger at the Rotary stall. The wife can't help with the horses, comes out in allergic asthma after a few minutes, would you believe. She's up at the office collecting the kids' back numbers and paying the fees.

Hey Joe, bring that pony over here. Hell, he's lame as all... did you do his feet? Here, look, there's a bloody stone stuck in his shoe. Thank the Lord that's all it is. Put your Pony Club shirt on. Come here while I tie your number on. Stand up, you mongrel. Ah, g'day Steve, your Jason's ridin' with Joe in the pairs, they better get ready. Shelley, keep that mare away from the campdraft, she'll get all het up, take her round to the exercise yard and keep trottin'. OK Joe, in youse go. Heels down, send him on. Jeez, his bridle's loose – too late now. I'll hold the gate. Sure mate, you can stand there. Got any kids in? Oh, Canberra, eh. Some good clubs over there, you can ask them about getting' a pony. It's a great thing for the kids, and the family. You should try it. That's my boy over there on the grey, he needs a bigger pony soon. No, no trouble if you get the right horse, then you'll need a float, so check he's a good loader, easy to catch. Takes a while to learn it all, come over to that red truck later, have a chat. Nothin' to it, great fun. Jeez, look at that! They were called in first and that mongrel judge is giving them a second ribbon. Ah well, that's shows for you. See you later.

ROTARY STREET STALL

By John Buckmaster

(Composed for the opening of the new Rotary Street Stall)

What would we do without them?
These Rotarians good and true.
The things they do for this community,
And that means for me and you.

They have given us this Street Stall,
To replace one that was here
They raised the funds for that one too,
The club of yesteryear.

The old one was getting tatty
And a bit battered round the ears
It had stood on this same corner
For more than thirty years.

And for the groups and charities
It served its purpose well
With countless thousand dollars raised
From countless street stalls held.

This one built by Lawrence's
That firm of old renown
Who have left their mark of workmanship
On scores of buildings round this town.

Warren Pearsall made the fittings,
With the bench tops looking slick
And this old 'Poet' put the paint on
And hopes that it will stick.

Others too have done their bit
And no expense was spared
To make this new facility
The best thing since sliced bread.

There's electric light and heating
To make the place complete
And to combat some of winter's chills
That blow in from the street.

I hesitate to mention this,
I'm not one to complain
But there's one small thing that's
Overlooked time and time again.

Now Nesbitt is astute enough
You'd have thought that he could see
They should have put a toilet in
For those that need a 'pee.'

They'll have to cross to 'Banjo's' park
To find the nearest loo
And if some one gets run over
You can bet your life they'll sue.

But all in all - an asset
That will last for years to come
And we thank the local Rotary
For the great work they have done.

But then again we'll never know
How much better it would be
If they'd only put a toilet in
For them that need to 'pee!'

OUR BABIES IN HEAVEN By Debra Glassford

Farewell little one
From Daddy and Mummy
And two of your older sisters.
The third you will have
Already met there in heaven.
Say hello to her for us.
We love you both
And miss you both.
One who we met
One we did not.
Take care of each other
Give each other the
Hugs we cannot.
We want to tell you
How much we wanted you
How you can never be replaced
How special you are.
But the angels and your sister
Will be your comfort now.
Our arms will be open
When at last we see you
Both there in heaven
And your sister can introduce us.
We love you both -
Our babies in heaven.

ODE FOR MISS HOFFMAN. By Penny Millett

Oh country school room,
Brown scratched desk,
Ink-well inset.
Dip nib of pen
Neat hand
Inscribed
The beauty of those words
Inspired.
Miss Hoffman taught me poetry.

In her own hand,
She wrote for me.
Hilaire Belloc
Is her favourite.
"From humble homes and just beginnings"
Encouraged
My imaginings.

You must write
She told me earnestly —
Observe – Absorb
All you see
With integrity
And honesty.

Then aged twelve
now fifty three
I write again
Remembering – Miss Hoffman.
Teacher.
Friend.

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION.

By Julie Meadows

A play suitable for children — 9 year to 11 years.

Time — approximately 6 — 12 minutes.

This play highlights the fact that there are other weapons, which may cause mass destruction on this earth.

- A narrator is needed to tell the story and the three main characters need to be strong readers or gifted with good memories.
- With the three main characters Spring, Autumn and Wind identification for their characters could be done with a sign or specific clothes for Spring and Autumn and Wind could have a shredded shirt with wind blown hair.
- With the optional characters they could use colour identification i.e. Moon – yellow T shirt, Lightning – white T shirt, or use a sign or specifically painted hat to suit.

- Performed in a small area such as an assembly hall or on a stage. Characters can stay on stage or come in and out as required.
- Choreography will be needed in the final scenes depending on the amount of area you have available.

SYNOPSIS — Spring and Autumn are discussing Winter's behaviour which is right out of character. They are concerned that he doesn't seem to care about everyone else and worry what will happen if he keeps going on the way he has been. Some people think there are other reasons for this change in behaviour.

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Characters (4): Spring, Autumn, Wind, Winter and a Narrator.

Optional Characters: Mr. Season, Thunder, Lightning, Snow, Hail, Rain and Moon could be used in the background mimicking the references to their behaviour.

Narrator: As the months pass, and the years come and go, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter tell us what to expect in our lives and what to wear. One day Spring and Autumn were chatting...

Autumn: I'm disgusted, Spring! I don't know what is going on any more. Season is going to be so mad about this.

Spring: I don't know why he doesn't just tell Winter to smarten up his act and adhere to the rules of nature. It isn't fair to you Autumn, or me, if he continues on this way! Doesn't he realise that mere mortals depend upon us.

Autumn: Do you know what he said to me the other day? 'Give them a bit of stick. It won't hurt them. Lull them into a false sense of security. Let Sun have his way for a change' He was so rude to me I nearly shed!

Spring: What's wrong with him. Doesn't he realise his responsibilities are vast?

Autumn: I wish Winter would just allow Rain to do her job. Do you know he has restricted the areas she can play in? Thunder and Lightning aren't at all happy with the restrictions.

Spring: Mist and Snow told me the other day they were so confused that they didn't know what they were doing.

Autumn: He must be ill. Surely he got enough rejuvenation during hibernation.

Spring: I don't think so. His imagination must've been fully intact to think up all this!

Autumn: You would think Summer could straighten him out, wouldn't you?

Spring: He's just as bad. Don't you remember what he did last time?

Autumn: That's right... he invited us and I said I couldn't come. I wasn't ready.

Spring: But that didn't stop him trying to emulate your abilities! And Winter certainly had a few tricks up his sleeve for Summer to contend with.

Autumn: What can we do?

Spring: When is it going to end?

Autumn: Maybe we should invite Moon to assist. She might be able to bring him to his senses.

Spring: Moon is quite happy at the moment. Everyone can see her.

Autumn: If somebody doesn't do something soon, Environment will protest for sure.

Spring: Surely Mr. Season doesn't need any kind of encouragement to act?

Autumn: I think Season is past caring. He has enough on his plate keeping Cyclone and Monsoon from straying into our area.

Spring: Well it does matter. Somebody has to do something!

Autumn: Maybe we should just confuse the issue and I could start my season early.

Spring: But you already have enough to do after Fire's little tantrum last year.

Autumn: You're so right!

Wind enters and joins the conversation

Spring: Hello Wind. How are you today?

Wind: I'm disgusted, annoyed and about to burst. Winter said I had to hold on and I've been holding on for so long. If he takes much longer I'm going to explode! And that could be a disaster of mammoth proportions!

Spring: Autumn and I were just discussing how bad the situation is.

Wind: He needs to learn a lesson! And I think I know just what to do!

Spring: Well good luck, we certainly could do with a change.

Autumn: And I'm sure Mr. Season would be happy if somebody else solved the problem this time.

Narrator: Within seconds Autumn and Spring can see Winter shivering. He is being tossed about with the wind. Snow and Hail have joined Wind in creating a big storm. Winter is scared and tries to get away, because this storm is unusual. Lightning, Thunder and Rain join the storm and the noise is deafening. Moon watches.

Suddenly Mr. Season appears and casts the storm's characters away. Winter hugs Mr. Season, looking very thankful. Spring and Autumn slink off the stage talking...

Spring: Well, that should take care of Winter till next time!

Autumn: I wonder if Wind managed to dislodge El Nino...

CLIMATE CHANGE

By Jane Nauta

Such an inconvenient truth
When Al Gore says it all!
Why was it such a shock?
We knew it all before.
We've watched the droughts approach,
And yet have always clung to hope
Like Peter Cochrane in denial –
'Tis just a phase will fade away'.

It's years ago, our daughters dear,
I warned you all to build up high.
Why all these coastal strips?
The Boys Town lottery riversides.
They do such stupid things,
They build and sell and make more bucks.

There's just one thing I cannot grasp,
This greenhouse gas now building fast.

Has this grown since dawn of time?
Since smoke and breath and farts first rose?
Or is there some amelioration
The rate of which is now overtaken?

But pot is calling kettle black,
Each calls the other's science fraud.
Nigel Calder says the changes come
From right outside our crowded sphere,
A play between the sun's behaviour
And most important cosmic rays
Affect our clouds and how they form.

If this is so and coolness comes
El Nino fades away.
No need to scare with frightening doom,
But still do all to clear that gas,
Have faith, adapt to circumstance,
And meet the challenge to lazy ways.
We must stop doing stupid things.

JUST JAM AND CREAM

By Meryl Hunter

Scones with jam and cream! How that conjures up memories of scones, warm and browned from the oven, piled high on a 'best' plate, accompanied by a glass dish of raspberry jam and another of stiffly whipped cream.

Devonshire Teas! shout the roadside advertisements luring motorists to stop and try but mostly be disappointed at the tasteless scones, tinned jam and apology for cream, despite their never having known any other kind.

The scones of my childhood were the warm, browned kind, the raspberry jam made from fruit growing in the garden and the cream thick and sweet from a neighbouring cow.

Scones were staples of any self respecting afternoon tea and offered before the sponge cake and melting moments. Scones were often quickly made on Sunday mornings when the fuel oven was at its fiercest and devoured for morning tea with butter melting but mostly without jam and cream.

Grandma was a Sunday morning scone maker. Grandfather was a dairy farmer so butter and cream were always on hand and Grandfather insisted that I must put butter on thickly enough to see teeth marks in it! There began a love affair with butter and being a dutiful child I plastered toast, bread and scones with slabs of it, which were proudly held up showing small grooves and serrations, the telltale teeth marks, for approval.

So it was with some disgust that when I buttered a Sunday scone, then topped it with both jam and cream, Grandma scolded "You don't need butter AND cream - just jam and cream, my girl".

Grandma's words came back to me many times during World War II when butter was rationed and cream non-existent. But by then I had become used to lavishly buttered toast or scones or sandwiches and margarine was a tasteless substitute. My love affair with butter had to be stifled as Mum struggled with the ration of four ounces of butter per person per week. There were clever ways of extending butter by adding top milk and beating furiously but both taste and colour were gone - disappeared into this pale, thin spread.

Of course butter was not the only food item rationed during World War II. There were coupons for sugar, tea and meat - and of course clothing. Eggs were in short supply and flour often was tunneled with weevils. Housewives' ingenuity was tested to the extreme and the fathers of the time, regardless of their gardening skills, grew back yards full of vegetables and kept chooks, ducks and often cows so that their families' diets wouldn't suffer.

In Victoria's Gippsland a group of country women, all good cooks, put together the Victory cook book, crammed full of 'survival' recipes and sold to raise money for the armed forces. Printed on 'wartime' poor quality paper, my copy is now disintegrating but reading the faded text provides an insight into how much could be made of little.

Soldiers' Recipe is a dish made from tinned bully beef (an army basic) combined with beans and onion and made into rissoles. There are recipes for rabbit in many forms, fricasseed, stuffed and roasted or casseroleed; and because 'offal' required fewer coupons than chops and steak there were mouth-watering descriptions of Fricasseed Tongues, Potted Meat using ox cheek, Casseroled Kidneys, Lambs Fry and Mock Tripe disguising mutton flaps. Mock Brains, which consisted of oatmeal, onion and boiling water, tempted. Then there were tantalising recipes for Cow Heel Cutlets, Mutton Loaf and Sweetbreads and Peas. Today's fashionable Lamb Shanks, classed as offal then, appeared often dressed with parsley sauce and were not the delicacy they now are.

Desserts featured sago and suet or pastry made with dripping and wrapped around apples or covering fruit pies. Breadcrumbs often padded out the suet to make Plum Pudding, stale bread made Bread and Butter Pudding (without butter of course) but with scarce peel and sultanas dotted through and Mock Cream could be made, it seemed, with egg white, banana, sugar and lemon juice.

The inventiveness of those long gone cooks continues to amaze me. Nothing was wasted and even 'potato water' could be used as a rising agent in Vienna Bread. There were recipes for 'eggless cakes' 'one egg' cakes, dripping fruit cake, and boiled ginger cake using dripping.

One recipe, however, throws all caution to the winds and insists on six eggs as well as 3/4 lb. of butter! This was the recipe for Christmas Cake for Soldiers' Tins - to be made with hard-to-get cherries, currants, sultanas, and much love, and packed in a tin for shipping to the front line.

Along with a myriad of practical ways to feed a family in a time of shortages and rationing this tattered book, which originally sold for 2/6, offered handy home hints. White of egg

could be used as glue, or charcoal placed in an ice chest would absorb all odours. When it came to First Aid in the home, the Victory book insisted that a supply of rolled bandages was necessary, along with boracic acid, salt and elastoplast dressings, if procurable!

We all healthily survived wartime deprivations and came to enjoy eating toast generously spread with beef dripping and pepper rather than butter, in front of the open fire. Chops became a luxury and were replaced by offal in various guises, and there was never cream to top the apple pie.

With the end of the war and eventual finish to rationing it was possible to butter bread thickly again - thick enough to see teeth marks. Generous dobs topped garden peas and mashed potatoes again and even Dad was seen to butter slices of fruit cake!

Then Sunday morning scones re-appeared. Bliss to taste that butter, pooling and dripping, from scones fresh from the oven. There was jam, of course, and cream once more but grandma's voice in my head and years of no butter put a stop to my butter, jam and cream. From now on it was just jam and cream!

OLD CAT MOON

By Jane Baker

Cold against a hard sky
the crescent moon watches
a white cat stalk mice
in a frost seered paddock,
flashing its eye when a chill
little wind harries straws of grass
to drive them underground.

Tomorrow in Bad Honnef
the light of this cat tail moon
will fall across the Moltkestrasse,
giving away the black feline that
slinks along a high stone wall
towards the oaken hollow
of a black-brushed squirrel.

Very soon this old cat moon
will wrap its tail around its parts
and sleep complete, in beaming round
indifference to all the soft-footed
folk on its lunar ellipse out to find
a mouse, a squirrel, a lover
or even an elusive muse.

THE IVY LEAVES

by Valda Brown

My stepdaughter
(An absolute and unquestioned
Expert on everything)
And I sat in the garden-room
Of a hospital where her father lay ill.
Fingering the trailing ivy leaves
That hung from the terraced wall-
Where in the lush green of perfect foliage
It cadenced in careless freefall-
She said, "They're real of course, my dear,
I know, I can tell."
She knew that because she knew
Everything else you could mention as well
And was sure that what she said was true.

I had a close look at the ivy later
Carefully putting my spectacles on.
Deep inside the stems
I found a small label that said, "Hong Kong"
In the unblemished plastic green leaves,
Called everlasting, designed to last long-
Lifeless foliage, that would never die and be gone.
And there in the tangle of Nature's reflection
Forgetting the uneasy family connection
The truth came to me like the words of a song
That like the ivy, that stays ever new,
Our loved ones, though lost to a family that grieves
Will be with us forever and to us ever true
In the garden of memory that no one ever leaves

DANCE DÉLIBÉRÉ

by Alan Watts

The syncopated rhythm
slow, slow-movement prance
curved feet raised slowly and then planted
as the cockatoo performed his dance

his body rocked in sympathy
side to side with nods askance
half closed eyes suggested lethargy
or a self imposed hypnotic trance

closed lids disguised deliberation
each move so carefully synthesised
he moved towards the outer branches
fresh twigs and buds were what he prized

once there, there was no hesitation
he nipped off the buds with satisfaction
but not to eat, no, no, a primitive attraction
to random acts - deliberate destruction