

# **ANGELS' WINGS & STARS**

**Wendy Webb**



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**Wendy Webb**

*To the many who have discovered their loved ones  
in the stars, or through feathers, flowers, light and dark  
and moreso, through words*

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**A THOUSAND GENERATIONS LOST IN ONE**

*Reach/2001-08/PUBLD; Nursing Creature of the Deep*

Your life was gone before it had begun,  
A helpless body naked on the ground.  
Your egg tapped open, comfort sheer as shells,  
No brooding mother hen to keep you warm.  
You should have climbed light air, a bird in flight,  
And trilled your wisdom from a garden branch.  
Your territory marked, within the clouds,  
As hapless as fleet feathers, yet half grown.  
A thousand generations lost in one,  
Your nest a cuckold for more robust chicks.

**1996 EMPTY CRADLE**

*'Hidden Grief', Triumph Herald/1996-03/PUBLD*

I opened my present early this year,  
whispering with the angel, "Do not fear".  
Glad tidings announced with great hope and joy,  
containing the burden of one lost boy.  
Yet recognised terrors, unknown, seeped in,  
costly, the gift, impossible to win.  
I retained your burden inside my palm,  
unbearable with diminutive calm.  
The loss of the child before Christmas Eve -  
grief's joy cradled briefly, compelled to leave.

**1996 EYES OF THE BEHOLDER**

*Beehive/1996-03/Shortlist/PUBLD; PERSEPHONE Vol 1/2021*

Bent down by the weight of the years,  
shuffling by with arthritic joints.  
Deep crevices carved by the tears,  
massed in a disorganised web.  
Knobbed hands reach, clutching with cares,  
grasping door jamb to climb the step.  
The shapeless bright sack that she wears,  
billows before closing the door.  
Lowered slowly into the chair,  
she rests on the faded old suite,  
and contemplates whether she dare  
risk mounting the steep wooden stairs.

Bedridden, the old man's face smears  
as she treads through the door with care.  
Well-practised, she wipes away fears  
and sits on a chair by his bed.  
Stroking his hand, she seems to hear  
unspoken, his thoughts of the hour.  
With toothless grin she calls him, Dear,  
wandering through his memories.  
Like comfy old slippers she wears,  
he peers through her visage, and smiles.  
Snug fits this glove, worn tags to tears,  
grief's beauty grown in a lifetime.



## **1996 SWIMMERS IN A LITTLE SEA**

*Rhyme Time/1998-09/PUBLD*

Optimism is the best way to see  
this little setback. Recognise that we  
age imperceptibly. There's no reason  
for pessimism. The body's treason  
is just statistical reality.

There is no concensus. No tests can be  
totally reliable. Odds, you see,  
are illusory. Perceive next season  
with clarity. Doctored optimism.

Then sperm swimmers thrust to eternity  
in a little ball, bobbed uncertainly  
on the ebbing tide. Bewildered reason  
teems with bloody oceanic treason,  
senseless of human sensibility.  
Flotsam wreaths abandon optimism.

## **1996 NO TIME AT ALL**

*Rocky Start/1998/PUBLD*

No time at all to count your days,  
in timely sums your hours call,  
before the metred chiming plays  
no time at all -

and when your Autumn patterns fall,  
before your Spring and Summer maze;  
timeless you spin a faceless ball.  
Would you exist in minute ways  
if, senseless of your passing trawl,  
your sunset slipped without a blaze?  
No time at all.

**1996 BABY BLUE**

*Rocky Start/1998/PUBLD*

Baby blue; so pretty in your white-gowned  
lace and bows. Blue blanket wrapped tight around  
a form with bonnet and booties. Please take  
your first deep suck and feed. I'm here. Now wake -  
the broken cord, so intimate. Still bound.

Tracing the lines around your face, I found  
hair dark as Daddy's - framing formless sound.  
Lifeless, your perfect frame. Nothing could break  
the silence, baby blue.

Abandoning your body to the ground,  
comfortless with teddy bears. One frail mound  
among so many. Grave pain: yet at stake  
decaying hope and death of dreams. The ache  
for a baby that can never be found  
mortally. Baby blue.

**1996 EARLY BLOSSOM**

*Freehand/2000-04/PUBLD*

Early blossom heralds the Summer's spring  
of plenitude. Dreams desire everything  
in sequence. Golden Summer's certain bloom  
anticipates the fertile ripening womb;  
joyous as creation's chorus, singing.

Expectancy is blighted, as frosts cling  
with tightly-iced fingers that grasp and bring  
their clutching death; bearing a frozen tomb  
for early blossom.

Summer's guilt limps along with broken wing;  
its bedraggled body attempts to fling  
away bruised petals, crushed as death consumes  
the masquerade - May's Bride fleeing her Groom.  
Stillness of the womb, in death's final sting -  
May's early blossom.

**1996 RUSTY RABBIT**

*Star Tips 136/2020-03/PUBLD*

I dressed you in a lacy gown, so white  
with ribboned bonnet, tied against a night  
tucked in with Rusty Rabbit. Embers bright  
with hope from a first Christmas '93.  
But the Christmas family shall never be  
complete in '95. Stunned we see  
Rusty's twin is discarded by the bed.  
A pale shadow, forming a living thread  
between glowing coals of living and dead.  
The only gown I knitted now adorns  
a lifeless doll, tangled with bitter thorns -  
vacantly gazing as a mother mourns.  
But Rusty's embers left their empty husk,  
to germinate in morning's exhaled dusk.

**1996 PATERNITY**

*1996/PUBLD Aural Images 'Traveller's Moon', When Laughter  
Cries the Loudest,*

Eagerly you shouldered your male duty,  
in creation's joyful lightness of being.  
Procreation's desire to sire a son  
or daughter, mixed with giddiness and fun,  
as you lightly won the prize of seeing  
fulfilled a growing, ripening beauty.

Lightly you picked fruit fallen from the tree,  
summer's early windfall bruised on the ground.  
With devastating lightness of being,  
you raised impotent the frail fruit, seeing  
beauty's desecration, close-wrapped and bound  
around a being that would never be.

Struggling refusal, a chapel of rest,  
bearing your child alone in the cortege.  
The weight of the whole world on your shoulders.  
Utterly weightless, baby-weight holders.  
Cradled for the grave in duty's portage  
and mooring in the harbour's little nest.

**1996 BITTER-SWEET CHALICE**

*2000/04/PUBLD De Shird Competazene*

Your certainty brims  
confidently to the surface  
of your tomorrows,  
without the dread  
of all your yesterdays,  
clouding your life.

You grasp your life  
as it joyfully brims  
crystal-clear from your yesterdays;  
bubbling to the surface,  
intoxicated by no dread  
of drunken tomorrows.

You plan your tomorrows;  
calculating your life,  
unhindered by a deeper dread,  
as disaster brims  
unseen to your surface  
and smashes your yesterdays.

For soon they will be yesterdays.  
Every one of your tomorrows  
dredged to the surface  
as the spasm of life  
eternally brims;  
etching your cup with dread.

Drag your soul through the dread  
of mirrored yesterdays,  
as your cup brims  
bubbles for tomorrow's  
dull images of life,  
disturbing the surface.

Disturbing the surface  
of hope's dread;  
drained from a life  
poignant with yesterdays,  
yet pregnant as tomorrow's  
chalice brims.

Brimming to the surface  
bitter-sweet tomorrows, in the dread  
of yesterday's sullied life.

### **1998 CRYSTAL SHARDS**

*Reach Magazine, July 1998*

In grief's soliloquy of tarnished themes,  
a thousand hopes are cradled in one night  
and smashed in nature's sordid morning light.  
The piercing cry reverberates and teems  
in caverns hollowed out by tortured dreams.  
The winter sun glints wanly, past its prime,  
muting the buds of Spring in blighted mime.  
Joy's cradle splintered from its broken bough,  
shooting crystal shards of tomorrow's vows.  
Lapped by silent tides - the Soloist deems  
the faintest lullaby might soar. Hush the realms  
of crystal chandeliers, sparkling insight.  
We haunt the whispered vestiges of night,  
until the sunrise of our cradled dreams.

**1998 WHEN LAUGHTER CRIES THE LOUDEST**

*Viewpoint/Commended/1999-02/PUBLD; Tips 96/2013-07*

You closed your eyes,  
wiped back the tears  
and drew your mirage curtain down.  
You rouged your cheeks,  
pressed down your nose  
and poised a flower in your hat.  
You trod your tightrope in flat feet  
and feather-wiped your fallowed brow.  
Dropped down, your silken hanky swooned,  
a breeze of sighs around the ring.  
Mask-white, your grimace mixed with rouge;  
a carbon-copy as you clowned.

But did they know that when they laughed,  
you played the routine one more time?  
Or did they know that, when they cried,  
they laughed before the tears dried?

Yet only one clown understood  
that laughter is the loudest cry -  
and laughed until he cried.



**2001 STILL LIFE ARRANGEMENT - DAISIES**

*Poetry Monthly/2001-12/PUBLD; Salvador Dali Paints Juliet/IDP*

"Pushing up daisies is their creed",  
Or so I read  
And wonder why  
So many daisies pop across our lawn.  
"I shall be one with nature, herb and stone",  
As Shelley shells belie belief –  
Let fall brave Wilfred's torso.

A Daisy was not born to me one night,  
The moon smiled not, nor beamed dull pain,  
Nor harvested a single star  
Or face.

You bled my tears in aching loss,  
For days and days and days.  
A phase so small or not at all,  
A daisy chain of bleeding pears,  
Wasp-dizzied at the core.

So "Daisy, Daisy," boy or girl?  
For Owen's creed, bleed not at all,  
Just "Give me your answer, do."  
A faceless phase,  
or night half-crazed, that life could be so cruel.  
Daisies aren't the same any more,  
On the dark side of the moon.

**2005 MACABRE DOLL, after Rollinat**

*2007/Rejections Pile*

Dead babies don't need nappies;  
like hell they don't.

Babies remain well bunged-up in the womb,  
until the stealthy tomb's excruciating exit.  
Soon they need nappies for evacuation:  
endless looming nappies catching  
disgusting black excreta,  
expelled by input, down-traction, birth,  
or worse, by build-up of gases;  
gradually paling to live brown milk,  
fumigated, fermented, unpasteurised,  
thickly fat with trace elements.  
Anti-inflammatory, ant-infectionary blend;  
sustaining against possibles, improbables  
and less-sterile bottles.

So when a baby's born, a dead baby,  
cut – umbilical – from nutrients and nipple,  
there's one tenuous link to life  
that nurses fail to recognise...

They let you grieve in grey peace: pristine doll  
and pristine cot and sheets and fancy dress;  
explosive nipples decomposing painfully.

Never remember nappies.

## **2005 THE CRYSTAL CRACKED**

*Poetry Monthly/2007-10*

I remember that last time  
you sat, good like a child, I brushed your hair,  
so helpless in night waves that 'It's not fair'  
and combing wisps to careful parting, fought  
your mothering, for shine could not be taught.

I remember that last time  
you did not fill your gown, but seemed to shrink  
and, Alice, room grown brash, I could not think,  
yet pricking, as a hairpin, left that day,  
closed white-ribbed curtains finally; so say

I remember that last time.  
You floated seas of faces, grey, unknown  
and grief swept early, left me grave, alone.  
My dreams were paper boats I could not steer,  
your silence or my noise grown crystal clear.

I remember that last time.  
It's shattered now, your vase cracked on my shelf;  
no sweeter sorrow's faded petal: health.  
Rage, mirror, mist! I comb my hair's remains,  
meet hell's moored face – shine heaven's wakened pains.

**2005 HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL**

*Celebration of Love/2006/Poetry Monthly*

The world blooms less, my friend, when you are gone:  
cold breath an icy morning in damp shade,  
for in full warmth I bask where fair love shone.

Your absence as the wind, a screaming wrong  
that leaves storm vegetation's trail unmade.  
The world blooms less, my friend, when you are gone.

I rest upon late evening sun, so strong  
and certain that each dawn is newly laid,  
for in full warmth I bask where fair love shone.

As greening spring, I grieve you, spent and prone,  
plant autumn bulbs: dream-pots will not degrade;  
the world blooms less, my friend, when you are gone.

Weak winter growth shoots hope, though quite alone,  
while quiet seasons wait and roots unbraid,  
for in full warmth I bask where fair love shone.

None dig on frosty mornings, bend for one  
faint snowdrop, where love's riot will not fade.  
The world blooms less, my friend, when you are gone,  
for in full warmth I bask where fair love shone.

**2005 OBITUARY**

*GARDEN/2006/PMP*

It was a good obituary: 'He died  
serving the Lord, mowing the lawn  
for a committee meeting.'  
His reverend memory buried, safely.

Much later, the truth:  
he had gone, vanished, disappeared  
like Elijah's chariot, fire and angels' wings  
and softest down to pillow widowed grief.

He was found, of course; later.  
Discarded on the compost heap,  
grass trimmings too great for a St Francis heart.

Always, he served supper like a servant  
washing disciples' feet,  
not as the Queen offering Maundy money.  
His family table – Eucharistically great –  
disowned like an Assisi son.

In the cool of the evening the Gardener came  
caring not a fig for fruit, for sun, for stars.  
Creator of the sky and sea,  
who moulded wood and compost too,  
dug in his liquid fertile gold  
to make good flowers grow.

**2000 NURSING CREATURE OF THE DEEP**

*Writing Magazine/1<sup>st</sup> Prize Pantoum Comp/2001-03; Perfect Binding/Alison Chisholm/2021*

My infant son was dead before he breathed,  
A fish forever in a sea of sand.  
As lifeless as the ocean his stars seethed,  
So beach him in a boat without a land.

A fish forever in a sea of sand,  
He trod no shifting dunes, if dunes mean days.  
So beach him in a boat without a land;  
His wreck no more, since parent duty pays.

He trod no shifting dunes, if dunes mean days,  
His hour-glass breathes in heaven, ours on earth;  
His wreck no more since parent duty pays  
Into a milky paradise of birth.

His hour-glass breathes in heaven, ours on earth;  
As lifeless as the ocean his star's seethed  
Into a milky paradise of birth.  
My infant son was dead before he breathed.

**2005 SORROW**

*Insp by Robert Herrick 'The Coming of Good Luck'. Tips 2007-12*

So sorrow comes, like thick volcanic ash,  
dark presses creaking rafters into trash.  
There is no weight of sorrow by degrees  
where gentle sunbeams lift or sad lives cease.

**2007 SALTIRE GRIEF**

*[Poems 1896, Poem XXXIII 'Griefs' Emily Dickinson]*

*2009/08/PUBLD, Reach/Aug 09*

Grief is a measure of the pain  
I weigh upon your heart,  
to test its weight, as great as mine,  
or if I have the lesser part.

The length, the date, its birth, I wind  
around my deepest hurt,  
to lapse the silence of a pause  
where love lies pulsing in the dirt.

There bleeds despair and cold and need  
migrating from my eyes,  
yet crows land on the plank of death  
to nail light from all lies.

Your grief is pierced upon a hill  
of skulls where comfort gifts  
such saltire spreading shape of pain  
that ghosts mine – just like yours – and lifts.

**2007 UMBILICAL**

*2009/10/PUBLD, From Newcastle to Malta*

Your cord, consuming, traces heaven's thread  
of nurturing beginning into end,  
where Dorothy is floating in a sea  
of fluid-suckling gulps of Milky Way.

Until my scream of rage torn from her womb,  
an angry tear of blood in earth's hot crust.  
The shooting stars are rattles in my deep,  
where suckling paps are fat and filled with death.

My labours bear down on a crowning sun,  
expiring in eruption's magma breath,  
to bleed the ocean into flooding paps  
of wasting milk that pools to swan-sail flesh.

A breathless scream, umbilical, in death,  
as I am falling, falling into heaven.  
A frozen doll's face blanches water white  
and I have all I need of heaven's bread.



**2007 YESTERDAY**

*2007/09/WEB*

One day there will be no more pain;  
Today there is too much of pain.  
One day there will be no more hope;  
Today there is too much of hope.  
One day there will be no more sun;  
Today there is too much of sun.  
One day not a flower will grow;  
Today all the flowers still grow.

Tomorrow all this will have passed.  
Is there hope when all this is past?  
Tomorrow this pain will not dream.  
Is there hope, when pain is a dream?  
Tomorrow a new sun will spring.  
Will winter be worth a new spring?  
Tomorrow no flowers will fade.  
Will their peace be as bright when they fade?

Now's past in the prime of a pain;  
Today is a moment of pain.  
Now's passed in a moment of hope;  
Today is a moment of hope.  
Now's passed in a sunrise and fall;  
Today is a sunrise and fall.  
Now's past in a flower's brief scent:  
Today is a flower, brief sent.

## **2008 LOST AND FOUND**

*2010/05/PUBLD Star Tips (117)/2017-01*

By the sunshine flower stall,  
where Valentine shoppers bloomed,  
she opened her purchase from the Autumn Fayre  
- as petals fluttered out of focus  
of her pavement vision.

Confused, she picked up papers, photographs;  
a bunch of precious memories inside  
The Old Curiosity Shop.

Though February chilled her bones, there she paused,  
to finger blooms of days gone by  
and smiled the shine of Sean's fine face,  
so like the boy she lost.  
If only she could find a spare frame, for  
this Adonis, this cherub of her past:  
the long-time owner of her book.

She would not grieve, now she had his manhood's picture,  
and though the colouring was not quite right  
and angle of his nose all wrong,  
yet it would do.  
Better than nothing.

The surgical collar puzzled her,  
until Lassie made her laugh aloud  
and then she remembered that false memory too.

No Valentine would write, not many a year,  
but brilliant lilies, daffodils, all shone  
the summer of her past Greek holiday.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

This postcard would do now,  
to burn the remnants of her Midas loss  
and friends she might have known  
if this had been her.

She shivered at the shade of strangers  
passing by  
and then she found the treasure of all past:  
for there, in primary shades of spring  
and scribbled hearts,  
she read a pencilled letter, crayoned sketch,  
to the Tooth Fairy.

### **2008 PARADISE**

*2009/06/PUBLD, Salopeot/Issue 132/Jun 09*

It is an obloquy\* of what is meant,  
an end of season, end of life, disparagement;  
to dismiss paradise without a thought,  
abusing present day, as if it had been bought.

**2008 TWILARK**

*2008/Autumn/PUBLD United Press 'Angel's Breath'*

It is not God you hear along the breeze;  
serene in flurried lively tones of birds.  
It is the resonance of souls that slow,  
for twilight's falling on the fields in sleep.

It robs no blissful Eros, joy's ascent  
in dawning chorus full of flight-flushed breast.  
This is the summons of all fleshly sense,  
for twilight's falling on the fields in sleep.

Alluring Midas touch. All luminous  
as angel incandescent raptured blue.  
This English wavespan, golden gravelled shores,  
of twilight falling on the fields in sleep.

Resplendent feet of New Jerusalem,  
immersing white horse grief in sun-speck jewels.  
In lyre breath, dusking skylark rises: sloth  
as twilight falling on the fields in sleep.

It is a gift that we have lived at all,  
unwrapped and trashed on earth before the curtain call.  
There is no other stage we could repress,  
to rise up in soliloquy for fine redress.

Go down and exit quickly, dim the light  
before you are upstaged to quit in darker night.  
Offstage you lived, a paradise in wings,  
to climb sun-steps' arena where an angel sings.

**2008 DARK SIDE**

*2011/03/PUBLD, Rubies (7th=) Comp, Rubies/issue 17/Mar 11*

I am the dark side of your moon,  
though continents are crossed to bring your hope  
and you left when I couldn't cope  
without my baby's breath; when born too soon.

I am the dark side of your love,  
though yours has gone to sing in brightest heaven  
when his heart broke at surgeon's leaven,  
which simply paused his rise to God above.

I am the dark side of your sun,  
though mine's an arrow prayer without a name  
and yours – a daughter – teaching just the same,  
when tender power in prayer is done.

A Psyche drags the earth in Eros' shade  
until my lord has earth and heaven remade.

**2008 BREATHLESS (Nagauta, Jap. = Naga-Uta)**

*2009/11/PUBLD, Quantum Leap/Five By Featured Poet]*

So rock, my baby,  
into feathered arms of peace.  
Still to the breathless  
wings of clouds and endless days.  
So stop in pages  
of each turning leaf, to wind,  
and tremble moments  
as I walk on by the lake.  
To mirror sky draughts  
drunk in deep reflection's dregs.  
Pouring light in waterfalls;  
angels circling, tickling breath.

**2008 IN MEMORIAM**

*2009/03/PUBLD Quantum Leap 5 by 5/2008 (4th)/Runner Up*

There is no end to grief that's born of love,  
for absence brushes, breathless with despair,  
in little moments no-one else can share  
and yet the heavens bear all hope above.

There is no grief beyond a hope of sorts  
when there are no more tears, not yet awhile,  
in sunshine or in rain, or infant's smile  
and then new peace styles waterfalling thoughts.

There grief will fail and pool to tranquil shades,  
where gates of memories of place reflect  
a garden which will bloom in sweet respect  
and absent love neglects to Everglades.

All moments and all photographs remain  
and so one hopes that time will ease the pain.

**2009 PEARL SKY**

*Star Tips (139 Xtra)/2020-10/WEB*

There is something sacred in all people,  
beneath an arcing silver sky,  
where God is in and through and over all.  
Where stillness rests the deepest sense that pearls  
the one true earth within eternal palms.  
Thread with me, pearl by pearl, and so adorn  
all earth with every soul around God's neck.

**2009 LOVE'S JOURNEY**

*eTIPS/Feb 12*

There are no words undressed for every style.  
Scenes crossing your face, in the sun or rain,  
are silenced by your pleasure and your smile  
into that sound expression of a stain.

Scenes crossing your face in the sun or rain  
lay sacrifice enough, for night or day,  
into that sound expression of a stain.  
For, washed and tumbled, love will find a way.

Lay sacrifice, enough for night or day:  
slow walks around Stonehenge into the past.  
For washed and tumbled love will find a way  
in memory; as Tess looked, at the last.

Slow walks around Stonehenge, into the past,  
are silenced by your pleasure and your smile,  
in memory; as Tess looked at the last.  
There are no words undressed for every stile.

**2009 POINTS OF STARLIGHT**

*'The Pessimist', G K Chesterton. 2010/PUBLD , Quantum Leap/5 by  
5 Collection/2010*

He made the stars, I can't do more,  
to prove that God is good:  
as cradled arms of coffin-white  
were lowered where I stood.  
To rock a son so fast asleep,  
that could not gravely stir,  
the dull grey sky, the people's tears  
to see him breathing there.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

Such bauble pain that heaven arranged,  
around that tree of stares,  
gleams sorrow's globes to jewel the night  
in clear and brittle spheres.  
Such snarling rock of stages, rolled  
to snag around damp earth  
that hoary spans of lifeline limp,  
to babbling lies beneath.  
Praise everything – all that has breath –  
where sea prints and inhales;  
yet not this blood, this flower born,  
for simple grief exhales.

Though people die, or dead (though live),  
your fuse shot to the stars,  
to shatter each frail breathing self,  
to snuff out Eden's smears.  
A glob of spit, the moon shines yet,  
all wobbling in God's hand  
and now I fear dashed shooting streams  
bend particles, now stained  
with humankind, or evil good,  
to weigh Three Sages, track  
in camel years the Field of Blood,  
past Har Megiddo's lake.  
Such single sorrow; solitaire,  
set in the Throne, to shine.  
Glistening points of light, refracting  
gods that realign  
the cradle, rocked, all grave clothes white,  
to prove where God is good.  
He made the stars, I can't do more,  
where his bare prints have stood.



**2009 BREAK, BREAK, BREAK\***

*\*Alfred Lord Tennyson; 2010/03/PUBLD, A Mermaid's Tale*

Break. Break. Break.

I dressed a neonatal doll  
and hugged it tight, but all alone  
where a husband could not follow  
onto shifting sands.

The night was long, an infant with me  
in a cot beside the bed.  
Nurses worried in the doorway.  
None can wake the damned.

Break; break; break.  
Uncheckered sobs dimmed his dark insight,  
delivering the silence.  
Bearing down chaotic/heightened  
ebbing/flooding tide.

Wave on wave of informalities  
posed to frame no answer.

Cracked and throbbing, turgid mourning  
wakes the Milky Way.

Break, break, break.  
I dreamed a neonatal doll;  
baby blue eyes glazed, alone.  
I had to wake, I could not follow  
the fulsome flowing moon.

**2009 PRE-RAPHAELITE**

*2012/10/PUBLD, Poetry Cornwall/Issue 35/Oct 12*

There is nothing more beautiful  
than a father cradling a baby in his arms  
for the first time,

a baby wrapped in pure white  
as a father carries the baby  
in his arms for the first time.

Ophelia framed in a bathtub.

Carrying, stumbling,  
carrying, bearing,  
carrying, delivering.

There is nothing more beautiful  
downstream, flowing downstream,  
than a father, dressed smartly,  
carrying his baby, wrapped in white  
in heavy arms,

holding baby for the first time  
surrounded by friends, relatives,  
the minister; along the path  
past the church, flowers caked,  
risen, sliced into a mound  
the colour of earth.

Carrying a baby encased in white,  
in his arms for the first and last time.

Grave as a garden.

There is nothing...

**2010 COMING ROUND CROMER CLIFFS**

*2012-01/PUBLD eTIPS, Star Tips Xtra 141 2021-04*

The crunch and splurge and spongy  
steps along the shore  
the tide going out  
the tide, the bladderwrack

the crunch and splurge and spongy

out to sea  
the ocean liner passing like a ship  
and I remember last time we were here  
and seagulls darting in the stray

the crunch and splurge and spongy

you grabbed me by the throat  
but, back at home  
it never was the same again  
the crunch and splurge and spongy

seagulls darting bladderwrack of tides

and love me, love me not  
we came there once  
so very long ago  
when you were 3

the crunch and splurge and spongy

you, always there, and licking at ice cream  
you came, a twinkle in my eye  
and in your dad's – our courting days  
the crunch and splurge and spongy

seagulls darting, bladderwracks of joy

## Angels' Wings and Stars

and I came there alone, when just 19  
it seems like yesterday  
when did you grow? how has it been  
an ocean, tide, the ebbing, flow

the seagulls darting on the shore

the crunch and splurge and spongy  
and one day, bungalows, and beach huts  
houses like hotels,  
and even this lighthouse

switched off, beaming dark

and drowning, drowning,  
all the cliff tops fall...  
to darting on the tide  
with seagulls

### **2010 DAWN MOVERS**

*2012-04/WEB Etips*

Except it wasn't dawn, it was men  
two or three, who was counting?  
Always men, loading like a jigsaw puzzle  
and what goes in must come out  
all day, one day, only a day,  
to move out, move in  
changing, changing, all change!

Taking so much care:  
to stay up late and pack and label.  
All life neatly boxed  
to move, upgrade, and spread  
like maternity.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

We were moving up in the world,  
The bump was moving down, down,  
down to the delivery suite.

All planned, so organised,  
with changes of address, everyone notified.  
It did not seem to matter that the housing chain collapsed.  
At last, just in time,  
six clear weeks until delivery

of the pram and cot and Moses basket.  
The sofa, chairs and kitchen equipment,  
eased out safely. Unwrapping yesterday's news,  
and bubble-wrap photographs  
to hang on new walls.

A larger house, with room to grow,  
a premature nursery.

Nothing happened at dawn, the room was not packed  
with men, moving, delivering new life.  
It happened late at night,

the monitor switched off  
when the heartbeat did not bleep bleep bleeeeeeeep!  
Silence then, in the big house, with a nursery.  
Six weeks, plenty of time,  
and one dawn that rose forever.  
All change, all men, and nothing to unpack.

## 2011 SWEET SIXTEEN

*M Whitaker 'Letting down summer dresses'. 2017-05/Star Tips 119*

There is a time for every season  
under heaven,  
but not above.

And I remember now, just sweet 16,  
the age when, so grown up, you'd stay out late  
or play your MP3, watch loud TV,  
and take a clutch of GCSEs, and then  
to college, Uni, apprenticeships, the world  
your oyster.

There are no clothes to let down,  
so very let down, to watch you grow  
and see what colour were those eyes?  
And all you'd know, and what you'd choose.  
Your personality, your interests, tastes  
in food? In culture? In daily pains of youth.

So much to say, so much to do  
and would you have needed DLA?  
Wheelchair-bound, or lifelong care?  
It's not there anywhere, for me to know  
and I can't show the world just how you grew;  
what school you went to, how long you grew your hair.

I only know one thing, down fine and dark  
as your father's.  
Oh, and another thing, you looked – oh –  
so much like your little brother.  
Except, you were so young to die  
and I will never know the colour of your eyes.  
So young to die  
that day, that hour, that moment  
before you were born.

**2011 ASHES TO ASHES**

*PUBLD Poetry Cornwall/Issue 41/Oct 14*

The ashes are a source of argument.  
I wonder what will happen when it's over?  
Will we be friends; or never speak, once spent?  
The ashes of a life, it's all just bother.

There's disagreements over what is done  
and nothing little matters less nor more  
if brothers do not speak again. To stun  
formlessness to rage and hammer thaw;

in some country pub, beside blazing fire,  
in wintertime, to cheer the ghost that's gone.  
Chink glasses, in memorial, aspire  
to dreams of better times. No past is won

by love nor hate. It's finished, let's remember,  
or, if it's easier: forgetting in December.

**2011 EYE OF THE STORM**

*2012/07/PUBLD, Rubies/Issue 19*

The sky spread all of heaven in one sky  
of clouds' magnificence in breath of clouds.  
By garden flowers, I looked up; passing by,  
the sound of wind in trees, and oh what sounds

of clouds, magnificence in breath of clouds.  
The storm rose from the earth, beyond my storm,  
the sound of wind in trees and, oh, what sounds.  
New-formed my thoughts, they spectred into form.

The storm rose from the earth, beyond my storm  
and, safe as houses, angels rose up, safe.  
New-formed, my thoughts; they spectred into form  
like wreaths that wrapped up smoke into a wraith

and safe as houses. Angels rose up, safe,  
by garden flowers. I looked up, passing by  
like wreaths, that wrapped up smoke into a wraith,  
the sky spread all of heaven in one sky.



**2011 BEYOND THE FALL IN AUTUMN**

*'Fall Hiking Boots' Kay Weeks. 2020-09/PUBLD Star Tips 139*

One heart drops down to bare feet on the rug,  
where I have dumped my empty Lakeland boots,  
as arteries and veins are laced to tug  
the safety of my self and earth-born roots.

Here, too, the winds are jittery with peace,  
the sun is setting splinters, warped off-course.  
Your wraith is dreaming me awake with shrieks  
of unimagined youthfulness. I'm hoarse

from moments' past; it's too late once you go:  
your mind's own laces are untied, like shoes,  
so clouds storm wildly. Too late in their flow,  
to bring that face forth now; that face is yours.

Your winter chills; my autumn's golden-leaved.  
My heart outpaces time while your fall's grieved.

**2011 FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

*2022-08/PUBLD Lothlorien Poetry Journal (Vol 11)*

There is a photograph I never share,  
although it's locked inside my darkest soul.  
And if I showed, would anybody care?  
They'd hide, unfriend what cannot be made whole.

This picture I see clearly as you post  
your loss, with sad expression, on the web.  
I sit there in a nightdress. Raise the host,  
and let the closed eyes stare. So still and dead.

I did not have so many months to grieve,  
for less is more; and nothing screams the loudest.  
This whirlwind was too secret to believe  
how unfurled limbs, so perfect, were the hardest

to spread, to count the fingers and the toes,  
reflecting features everybody knows.

**2012 HARBOURING HER FACE**

*2012/08/WEB, Malawi reading; 2015-01/PUBLD Star Tips 105*

I can grieve the simplest petal-spoiling rose,  
pale bulksome form of badger's roadkill heap;  
squashed whiskers, Mrs Tiggeywinkle's nose;  
and yet you are not dead, for so you sleep.

There are no timbred sounds than I can scribe,  
controlling paws to pain of startled deer.  
You simply creep, stalk strains of spite inscribed  
as vanishings beyond your mist-rise fear.

I grieve your absence: youth/ life/fickle waste  
that tussles restless pillows into night.  
No photo hides more shards of smash-frame haste  
and your face had no mother's place; by right.

Great whispers these: you were and are not moored  
than you deserve; to grief's, to be adored.

## 2012 WINGS OF NOW

*PUBLD The Mortal Man/Jae-Alexander Linsey/Lulu.com/May 13,*

The tears have started, and they will not end,  
where good news travels formally and fast.  
Too late to read them; late to see the vast  
support and paperwork, to make amend...  
slowly now. Slow down. It is such cheer-  
FULLness to his emptiness. He's gone.  
Procedures, to laws' letters. Nothing's long  
in reparation. There's none. Were such (H)ear...

(s)tinging into aurals of my brain.

'You silly boy; my sweetheart; youth's fair dream.'

'Our beautiful, our darling one,' it seem..

so certain, that in silence, and in

SANE:

You flew – Icarus – dazzling, to the sun.

And now I live, and now my life is Donne.

## 2012 WHY?

*PUBLD The Mortal Man/Jae-Alexander Linsey/Lulu.com/May 13*

This Autumn seasons mellow fruitful fall.

And that's a lie – Not. Yes it is ! It is...

beyond belief that we were born for this,  
the worst of nightmares; every parent's hall  
of memories, without its flesh to hold.

For leaves have slabbed on pavement's hard impasse;  
where sunshine's fading – set – its final gash;  
this pile of buried waste that's now stone cold.

The pillars rise to arch an angel sky,

as woodland breezes' murmurations swell

vast crowds of witnesses, where heaven's,

And all shall be, shall be... a shell-shocked shy

daubing – Daliesque – cloud-forming city.

While cobwebs glister paradisaal pity.

Well?

## **2012 THE FACTS**

*2012/11/PUBLD, DAVID/Order of Service*

I see him through the door; I can't go in.  
A husband takes my hand and leads me where  
I should have been; laid out; where red drapes thin  
in disguise of the death that's lying there.

'You silly boy. And we can't make you better.'  
It's much too late to heal; to plaster; share  
the meaning of that final fragile letter  
that's written on your lips. No place for prayer.

They cover up the evidence; that's best.  
I want to take your hand, lead you away  
into the party lights;            traffic abreast,  
away, third right till morning's sordid day.

The good news is there, lying, paduasoy,  
that so familiar body was my boy.

## **2012 ODE TO TREES, SLEEPING**

*The Mortal Man/Jae-Alexander Linsey/Lulu.com/May 13*

Give me a pillow, and I will place your bed  
beneath the bark of trees, where my heart lies  
in draining winter's storms that spring to flies  
of rooting / shooting / budding / bleeding dread.  
Gone now. To rest beneath that canopy  
of soughing skies, and blackbird's cocked-up head.  
Red robin breaks me to its winter's dead  
and frozen is its song-stepped harmony.

Grow me a summer's daisies; footsteps bred  
through primrose dreamers, squirrels' dancing rise,  
like leaping, larking, angel-glistered pyres:

that wrench me – screaming – into autumn's tread...  
Where you, my son, lie sleeping deep-stilled hours;  
yet I rise, counting moments into flowers.

## **2012 PROPERTY; DESISTING**

*2013/11/PUBLD The Mortal Man/Jae-Alexander Linsey/Lulu.com*

In the mourning I shall get up, and yet lie as sunset rain,  
where the empty shoes are crying, lacing up my eyes with tears.  
In the mourning, where they're empty, and will never be filled again,  
where the belt is dangling useless from the trouser pressed of years.

There the mourning priests are ever on the tide of all my days,  
where the souls are worn, and colour fades, to cherry toes, now gone.  
There the bay is vast as bagging up of emptiness' sad lays,  
where the check-list's full, the contents not, and undressed skin pinks  
wrong.

Then a T-shirt rises ghostly, as the smile that haunts my days  
in the neverness of emptywear that daubs fresh hope and style.  
Then that shopping bag of prizes, trophied high to greet new doors,  
opens to the land of study, in the morgue of reclaimed bile.

In the morning will he need them? Show I want them; want again  
the boy in blue jeans, hoodie, stylish wonderwear's complaints  
of moment-lasting lostness in the body's frozen face,  
that haunts his hanging pastness where a dreamworld, pausing, waits.

## **2012 BLUEST SKIES OF GRIEF**

*2012/11/PUBLD, DAVID/Order of Service*

The air is golden in its morning light;  
grief fails to grab me daily by the throat.  
Too soon enough storms brood a skein's despair  
and morning, morning rising brightens hope.

And now, today the bluest skies of grief,  
that lighten 19 candles into church.  
To cut this cake to pieces. Share me out!  
Consumed in death, snuffed out in one hour's lurch

from 9am; the bank. The old shout loud,  
in grumbling pensions; prices; how the young...  
spend, spend and spend; or, pushing, rush too fast ---  
as I breathe slow; heart strained; infused and wrung.

Heart strained, infused and wrung in loud noise-bright,  
too soon..... enough..... storms brood a skein's despair.  
The air is golden in its morning light  
where bluest skies of grief are everywhere.

## **2012 PIETA, AND A MAN**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

I've lost my greatest treasure in the world  
and, though it's not a man – who's picture-perfect –  
like women; nothing is; with great respect:  
replaceable? They are... my life's unfurled

leaf-shoots to tell you truly, I trust ten,  
rooting as one body of the nicest kind  
and Titian scenery, good looks, fine mind,  
embodied (symbiotically). A must,

## Angels' Wings and Stars

I need that packaged into flesh; as one,  
in multiplicity; for DIY.  
And, please don't ask just what – nor even, Why?  
Transfiguring just two in one, is Donne.

My greatest treasure cannot be replaced;  
as Mary weeps, Pieta love's released.

### **2012 HALLOWEEN**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

It's Halloween, two weeks since you first died;  
or, since we found that uniformed, dreadful sound  
of your name, on the lips of death. They *found*;  
identified the next of kin, and tried

to tell us gently into that good night:  
Rage, rage against the dying they wouldn't name,  
except with husband present, robed the same  
as silence – like a rock – to share the light,

where good news travels not at all; but bad;  
ghosting into shades of fresh All Souls.  
This hallowed e'en, too soon All Saints' breath tolls,  
as beacons torch across land's sorrowful sad.

My baby ghost, go swiftly to that light,  
in deepest starry skies of glistered night.



**2012 KISSING DEATH**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

I kissed your stubbled cheek. Without complaint,  
you let me stroke your fair hair. Falling back  
in shock away from that high forehead. Death  
lay silent-shored, disguising what had been,

*of necessity*, laid bare beneath pale skin  
and round your neck, of exhaled ebbled-out tides  
of veins or arteries, of brain or stomach.  
Yet I knew – without such – that you'd grown cold

as feet that stayed and could not run away.  
Knees, once yours, would never tense again;  
and shoulders, broad as strapping boys. So proud.  
Waiting that first girl you dared bring home...

My son, I am your heir to grief's foul shroud,  
and yet, those lashes / mouth / deep brow...

so proud.

## **2012 IT IS DONNE**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

The last time that we spoke, it was my birthday,  
abrupt as, Mother, off my case, I'm busy!  
So numbness in my heart-gouged hole drained dizzy.  
There never could have possibly been a worse day

for your deep voice to die upon my brain.  
Such Fresher fashion! Mum and Dad aren't cool.  
*I love you son. Just ask. Grown past... to school!*  
My beautiful, best time of year. The pain,

as seasons blaze and fade, then fall away.  
Now, Indian summer emeralds, I wear,  
because you loved green – son – EARTH shed my tear...s.  
Wansfell broods; transfigures sky to grey.

My Tyger, Tyger, burning bright, you're gone.  
And now I live, and now my life is Donne.

## **2012 LOST DIAMOND**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

Shall I tell you why you should grieve for my son?  
His smile could light the heavens in my face.  
Should I ask you what would help you see your loss?  
His teenage angst could crowd to storm my brow.  
Would I show you all your joys and all your pains?  
His mind the Koh-i-Noor; its radiance pure.

Shall I tell you why my son's loss is your own?  
The Montparnasse too short, for so few words.  
Should I ask why my grief shakes your Sacre Coeur?  
The Eiffel's angst could crowd to fairy feet.  
Would I show your loves and hates, all buried? Cold.  
So multi-faceted; yet, best uncut.

## **2012 IN DADDY'S EYES**

*2012/11/PUBLD, DAVID/Order of Service; Malawi reading/Apr 13*

When did you grow so tall? It seems to me  
like yesterday, for you weren't there at all.  
Like yesterday, you were in Daddy's eyes,  
now welling grief, for son you've grown so tall.

Like yesterday, for you weren't there at all,  
except this ripening in Mummy's stomach.  
Now, welling, grief for son. You've grown so tall,  
so rock-a-bye, so rock-a-bye. A hammock

accepts this ripening in Mummy's stomach.  
Then, one day you were cycling round the Close,  
so rock-a-bye, so rock-a-bye, a shamrock  
of Daddy's eyes; though deepest blue light rose.

Then, one day, you were cycling round the Close,  
dull hurt of hands, arms, feet; brow's failed reflection  
of Daddy's eyes, though deepest blue light rose  
to shame such teenage angst in your complexion.

Dull hurt of hands, arms, feet, brow's failed reflection.  
When did that youthful pale skin – have to – die?  
To shame such teenage angst in your complexion.  
Despair me, die me, tell me... my son, Why?

When did that youthful pale skin die?  
Like yesterday – you were. In Daddy's eyes,  
despair me; die me; tell me, my son, Why?  
Then you did grow so tall; it seems to me.

## **2012 THE BURIAL**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

If I could choose death anytime of year  
it would not be in Autumn fall, not yet,  
not now nor ever,            not when crowds  
gather round to weep our tears unshed.

It's simply in their grieving for our pain  
that numbs the tide to silence and to stillness.  
So easy to sympathise with their loss  
and yet, and yet, it is not theirs; but ours.

One day soon, when that great storm hits earth,  
to shake the golden sunshine's vivid hues;  
then Winter will lie barren on our hearts,  
too old to breed new heirs; too old to see

the symmetry of broken trees against  
such skyline of a blue, or greyest sky.  
Until that day, in wake of such Remembrance,  
our bonfires burn the greatest Halloween.

And, if that is not quite enough for Autumn:  
the last words that he spoke to me, so clipped  
and yet – unhurried – did he want to stay...  
on that telephone for awhile longer?

My birthday season; his last words; hung up;  
and now the Winter falls to silent snow.  
Barely is Christmas in the shops and sales  
and yet, it is not there where mourning lies...

it is simply at the graveside of our dreams  
          and his. Buried beside those tree-roots  
for his pillow. A yawning family grave, the first  
in line. And every Autumn I must grieve such fall.

**2012 TAKING WORDS OUT OF THE MOUTH...**

*"... but strong in will to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."*

*Tennyson; Sarasvati/0613/Jul 2013*

And though the past is gone, it seems not yet  
that we are null, nor could ebb like the tide.  
Now that our strength has pooled and flowed away;  
which way? We do not say, in old days – gone –  
that storm that moved all earth/the seas/and heaven.  
For that, though sad to see, which we are now,  
we are; and not; for ebbing flows away.  
Until, one equal temper of our souls,  
of heroic dreams, and then our hearts wait, while  
they are made weak, to weakly form and flow  
beyond the strands of time; by fate or flotsam.  
To stand so weak, but strong in will. Oh, yes,  
so strong in will, to foam and surf; to strive:  
a sail out in the deep, to seek, to find.  
A clear horizon beckons seagull screams.  
To find it all, tomorrow, and not yield.

**2012 DREAMING AN OLD DREAM, BLUNTLY**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

So shallow, babe, it's so shallow,  
and that's the way the dreamscape leaves me  
lost.  
I knew I stood there, as they heaved on ropes,  
to lower into that good night; his face  
was hidden in a shroud, a white lace voile.  
I could not see nor know who lay so still;  
his face was covered so I could not see.

My apron strings – a mother's – how they stretched  
and there I stood and watched his space go down,

## Angels' Wings and Stars

into a very little thing, within a palm,  
and there lay all the earth; my leaven, life  
lay lifelessly, and hidden by a veil.  
So shallow, babe, so so shallow.

It was a young man, true. A young man  
with blond hair.  
And yet it was not you, he lay so still.

They held the ropes to lower him so far,  
and yet the grave was shallow shrift of earth.  
A little thing, held in the cusp of death,  
and I could not see who was lying there.

It was not him, and yet, that cloth I saw  
in the funeral home; it covered his fine hands.  
And that was best; too much of grief to see  
the hand that sucked the thumb – always the same –  
and wizened like an ageling. Worn like acorns.  
So wisely pull the voile over his hands,  
to shroud that mystery of corms, so cold,  
and buried in the earth in winter's fall.

The face, why was it hidden?  
Did I know?  
To see that face uncovered, as they lowered  
my infant, sleeping. Into that good night.  
A blond-haired, young man. Give me my dream again  
and I will gaze at love so cold and still.

And yet, not him, So shallow, babe,  
so so so shallow.  
And yet his flesh was buried, oh, so deep,  
a seagull on the current of the tide.  
The first to ebb and flow away to heaven.

**2012 AWAKE OR SLEEPING**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

Most dreams vanish in the shade of morning dark,  
though it is light enough to stagger to the bathroom,

dress my morning face and puzzle what to wear  
and then, happy or sad; sunshine or morgue.

No dream walks across my bathroom floor,  
nor downstairs, to lounge away the morning,  
nor chills my fingertips, nor freezes toes  
and yet, there's some invisible web remaining

glinting in the winter's frost and shine.  
What is it? I don't know. For awake  
I see nothing; nothing at all; and, sleeping  
I wake to stillness; void; no wraith

of a wreath fading, on a grave somewhere,  
so long ago.. Last month.

## **2012 LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

We took the Coffin Route as Autumn bloomed  
and now it seems an age ago; and yet  
my son's alive and well but yesterday,  
so I don't even let his mobile pulse.

What would I hear? Would anyone pick and answer?  
Or would it scream for sleeping policemen; lie  
that there could be a voice – his answerphone  
proclaiming some last words that ring aloud.

No care package was enough, it seems to me,  
for freedom's gravely full of waking shades:  
that leave a young man standing death's attention,  
without the help he's always had before...

to talk him round; to calm his fears; to be  
there to find coarse warmth as he grows cold.

## **2012 APPLE-SHADING ROSE**

*2012/12/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying, Crystal/Winter 12*

The flowers fade and just a few stars shine,  
that always shone the firmament before.  
Their beauty in decay is lovely mine:  
cut, washed and multi-faceted and sure.

Some flowers – seems to me – will never die;  
these glorious mysteries still treasure love,  
and though their dreams are buried where hearts lie,  
they watch as shooting stars to heaven above.



## Angels' Wings and Stars

My greatest bloom has faded. Petals fall  
forever in a mother's lap and pen.  
These apron strings arch through that highest hall  
of angel wings and feathers, fluttering...

Sleep tightly, son, this rest is your reward.  
Your memory, all's left to be adored.

### **2012 STILL BORN TO VERSE**

*Star Tips (131)/2019-05/PUBLD*

Stillborn, I breathe your life  
in the beauty that is lying there, so soft  
as flesh that cannot course nor race nor flow,  
and yet, most precious petals fall so still.

Stillborn, imagination rises tall  
as all of life laid bare, to each formed part.  
So still and yet so beautiful, I lay  
all dreams within your stars, and how they fall.

Stillborn, you do not know what life's about,  
nor lose that innocence of smile, or thumb.  
Dreams fly to heaven; fall down fast to hell,  
and so, this poem - still - lives on and breathes.

## **2013 SEAGULL BY MOONLIGHT**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

Speak, son, to me, of times when we were young  
as cakes and candles, balloons screeching high,  
and laughter, like no tomorrow passed us by.  
Remember me, my son, when we were strong,  
and how my heart aches, where it once belonged.  
No reason to stay. Buyers don't ask why  
this lovely house is swallowed as birds fly.  
So, seagull, stay. Etch tides to buoy this wrong,

for you have paled to moonbeams' deepest dark  
where: Feather me, no feather me no rest.  
The egg has smashed to smear a sun-streaked nest,  
there pavement holds all heaven's yolk. What lark  
could count my sons aboard; or dove their flight  
of sparkling respite's laurel wreath-filled night.

## **2013 WHAT APPEARS**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

Remembering the good times: like a mirror  
hanging in a curtained room at night  
and there's no morning light to dull the bulb,  
glaring achingly without its shade.

Every detail of that room is lit  
vividly as heart's kinetic power,  
to presence what is not; nor ever after.  
It's patterned in the carpet of dull shock.

There was no getting round the words that played  
from uniformed procedures to the parents.  
Nothing that could soften such a drop.  
No note to increase pain, nor moisten meaning.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

So draw the curtains back to moonlight phantoms,  
to count the beautiflorous stars that shine.  
Bathe ashen faces wasted into madness,  
then ask what lives and breathes in memory

### **2013 FURTHER ON AND DEEPER IN**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

My son, I want you here. Come back to me!  
I see you through those splodges of my mind,  
that lead me in where fairies dance and find  
the infinite, beyond that veil I see.

It leads me in, through woods and scratchy branches,  
to somewhere perfect, opening with light  
of hidden things, beyond my feeble sight:  
they're butterflies; rose-scented petals; chances

to find you lost in beauty. Not in death.  
What shades of grey could blur my heart to blue,  
in paradisaal morning light with you.  
I hope you're waiting, in my final breath.

Dark shades of nothing fade, as I step out –  
beyond that path/that rock where angels shout.

### **2013 BABY SHOES**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

I have a pair of leather baby shoes,  
well-worn and scuffed, Hush Puppies, laces threaded.  
The sole is clear, with pristine clean design  
and sticky, muddy remnants of the past.  
They're turquoise blue, those lovely leather shoes  
kept for posterity from long ago,  
and now I should introduce you to my son:  
a strapping lad, full-grown, broad-shouldered, tall.

Each shoe has a five-pointed leather red  
star, enclosing leather splodge of sun  
shine. Shine brightly, beam me light tonight.  
Each lace-hole red, red collar for your feet  
to keep them soft for life; ease heel and toe...  
These tiny shoes are all that's left, my baby.

### **2013 HEAVEN SCENT**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

You could have changed my path. I hoped you could  
have made life flow its stream of betterment,  
and yet you coursed to laughter's heaven-sent  
of flooding into youthful veins and blood.  
You should have known the shit that I was in,  
I told you time and time what you didn't know.  
My son, your pain/bewilderment. Did it show  
a freedom to leap high, high from your skin?  
*You made no difference..* How you changed me, son:  
what laughter in your Daddy's eyes, now past.  
We thought our dance with love and joy would last  
eternal wakes of wreaths at midnight. Gone –  
I'm toddling in the Milky Way, my Mother  
wraps star-shine fast asleep, to dream another...

**2013 FACELESS ANGEL**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

You left me there at work, the buggy was  
a double buggy – he was toddling round:  
all-clambering and climbing everywhere.  
And yet, and yet, a baby was strapped in.  
Perhaps I imagined this? Please take it back,  
the toddler needs it. Where've you left the baby?  
At home? At HOME! Please hurry, take it now.  
Why did I need a double buggy, by the lifts?

You folded; disassembled; oh, so slow  
and now I did not know where the baby was:  
No face. No features. Like it wasn't even there;  
and then, I wanted to scream aloud a name.  
I had a photo ID; could the office wait?  
That infant – Who was he? Younger than my last-born.

## **2013 EMMAUS IN SNOW**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

Shall I tell you the best Mother's Day I've ever had?  
Will you recognise, when you see your own, grown large  
as your life/theirs? Will you know when heaven's there;  
walking past, along the road to Emmaus...

The day began quite early, in grief and pain,  
it started like any other – though it was quite early  
and restlessness ghosted dreams to that wild chasm  
a stone's throw along the road; the way back home.

It seemed like nothing new, and yet we talked  
and made our plans, and shared a lot; yet could not settle  
to anything or nothing that would make more sense.  
Just so, the hours passed; until it was over.  
And then, a mobile rang; and then another.  
And then a social network message arrived.  
The food and drink were sumptuous, immemorial,  
though neither more nor less than at other times.

Snow lay on the ground, undecidedly fluttering,  
and the weather warmed neither hands, nor feet, nor hearts.  
Every hour passed, as hours must; together, or busy,  
yet remembering.

And were our hearts warmed, when we laid this down?  
And how did all those messages arrive, one after another?  
The food we shared; the wine; such hands of blessing,  
is with us now. As gifts. Now the sun has set,

He's gone. He left us nothing, nor a forwarding address,  
and yet the sun will shine some other day.  
Every season passing; storm/rain/shine; birds,  
it is enough. He's here. And we will remember...

**2013 FIRST BALLOON**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

The scrapbook full of memories  
to leaf through pages of wedding plans.  
All yesterday's prices, tomorrow's love;  
each shade memorialised forever.  
And there, beyond congratulations,  
or cake and flowers:  
a pause recording infant celebration.  
Everything in order and on time,  
and then that breathless moment  
glued inside the final leaf.  
It lay there, clearly labelled –  
Baby's first balloon.  
Its string released and,  
as the scrapbook (held so long)  
was lifted...  
fragments of a life fell out  
like dust.  
Breathless on its string;  
for it had perished.

## 2013 COLOUR PURPLE

2013/04/PUBLD, *Grief that's always dying*/WWB, *Tips 95/May 13*

Yesterday,  
oh yes, yesterday,  
it was six months ago  
and, like a good mother, I let you  
go. Purple in hope,  
like nothings that could sky  
a brighter dawn.  
So purple it remains forever after,  
when you were young;  
as you yourself remains  
forever after.  
Long ago, just six brief months  
is all that's left of all your yesterdays,  
when you picked up the phone  
and said, It's me,  
David. How your voice aches in my soul,  
to hear just one more word  
of purple prose.  
Every word you never thought to say.  
So I walked in the woods,  
in mud/reflections.  
Nothing else to see but helpless limbs  
crowing to the heavens and the crows.  
No pairs of eyes to watch,  
no flit nor scurry.  
Nothing else there; nothing  
except the breeze that chilled  
my blood; and yours.  
Purple is for all those yesterdays.  
But, oh, what of tomorrow?



## **2013 THE BOY WHO CRIED**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

Was it how it happened? The boy cried wolf...  
and how they listened to his sorry tales,  
until one day they bored, let him sleep it off.  
And so he slept forever, to be twice as good.

They had no way of knowing; he kept so quiet  
about his disability. He would be free  
to live as others. Work, rest, party, play,  
and then he gave the eye; his silence screamed.

They took him to his room. He could sleep it off,  
they did not understand what could never be;  
for a wolf is always wild, how that wolf could howl,  
but – never – tame the wolf nor its wildsome nature.

He slept it off, in the growlsome of his den.  
His wolf-coat dimmed to the blanching of dull sheep.  
No more to shoot the stars of his awesome mind.  
One of them. So still and just as dead.

## **2013 BLUEBELLS FOREVER**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

Oh, how I wish that bluebells always bloomed  
in springtime in our hearts and clearest sight,  
beyond that moment's summer, when, consumed  
by brevity and loss, their faded light

wasted into loam, to fire a star.  
I wonder when you will return in spirit,  
to dance in woodland dell's new-planting, far  
from home. A rooting sapling's joy, felicity

## Angels' Wings and Stars

of raindrops. Angel me, to rest awhile,  
into that sunset you stepped, deep in morning.  
Oh, then, my seasons bleed, drift winter's pile  
of gloriflorious buds. Your hair adorning

the morning star, at sunrise. Step through time's  
bluebell wood, forever's ariel chimes.

## 2013 HELIUM BALLOON AND SUNFLOWERS

*2016-09/PUBLD Star Tips 115*

I placed a helium balloon, to stand so proud  
on opening night, for star shine's virgin show.  
Forget-me-nots, fresh buttercups as loud  
as Calendar Girls' loves/hates, or joy-tracked woe.

On opening night, for star shine's virgin show,  
the teddy bear's stone silence held on, bobbed  
as Calendar Girls, loves/hates, or joy-tracked woe,  
refracting sunshine. There, no rainbows robbed

the teddy bears. Stone silence held on. Bobbed,  
like 18 years' all-weathered, wizened grieving;  
refracting sunshine there. No rainbows robbed  
their effervescent toasting; Autumn leaving,

like 18 years. All-weathered, wizened grieving,  
permeating laughing-gas to shrouds.  
There, effervescent tasting, Autumn leaving  
stop-staining vanishings of shading clouds.

Permeating laughing-gas, to shrouds...  
forget-me-nots, fresh buttercups as loud  
stop-staining vanishings of shading clouds.  
I placed a helium balloon, to stand. So proud.

**2013 AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

In the long ago forever,  
when I was young and free  
and my autumn-golden hair strands  
danced like waves on gleaming sea.

Then my voice was loudly singing  
through the rattling of dull chains,  
as love's itch kissed brash and freshly,  
embracing hope's remains.

Oh, what long ago for-never  
captured spring's Persephone:  
in her sweet-step doom of flowers  
faded bright in memory.

Will she brush against next season's  
sentient melodies' embrace?  
Where this winter chills her lively  
to a joy-found faith-deep place.

Lover, cherish inner silence  
of the damned breath's coldest skin,  
till those melting fleshly earthworks  
blade and bud their wandering.

One day to shoot sky-daisies  
in an ashen storm-blached plain's  
darkened fulsome depths of richest  
brightened dust-steps of remains.

But for now let us remember  
Pluto's rage of loved ones; gone  
to that long ago arced rainbow  
treasure chest where dreams belong.

**2013 TIME FOR BED, SWEETHEART**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

Crawling slowly along the path  
past two teens – like angels at the tomb  
of a busy gardener, long ago.  
Busying with concrete, and a white van  
crushed between a tree and passing place,  
until I sighed the engine silently, alone.  
And there, broke bread, watching pairs of  
butterflies in flight,  
synchronised by brokenness of air.  
Unloading self and stripping of tired wheels,  
I eased along a parallel world in bloom:  
and there the gardener paused (from UEA),  
retired and satisfied by grief – so hard –  
and three times every day he petted, watered  
and tidied like a corporation lawn.  
Beds; so many beds; all angel-groves;  
and every petal sang of greater love:  
that tended, nurtured, every day.

His wife. Grief-stricken by  
the stillness of departure  
to motor-neurone disease...  
the last great pain? Of swallowing;  
the time; the waste; the loss.  
Every day, for over twenty years,  
he'd tended, nurtured, bloomed – his lovely wife.  
Until I dragged away; his words, like air,  
dancing on my currency of departure.  
Then, as I passed on by – those careless lads  
had vanished in their white van; back to work.  
What lesson for such youthfulness? To place  
a gravely laden message, set in stone.  
My son, memorialised for passing care-  
LESS-ness; where his muchness was laid to rest.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

No gardener to tend an empty tomb...  
so, butterflies, wing petals for his kisses,  
to nectar sunshine in this great abyss.

### **2013 NINE MONTHS**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

It's nearly nine months on, I hope you know  
that as a mother, it was almost time  
and then some. You were late. My labour slow.  
And how like yesterday, all was there,  
nor never vanished in its freshling image.

So nine months is enough for new life's birth?  
It's barely one stray breath; a lock of hair.  
If I could – like the doctor's daughter – grow  
your clone again; oh to see that shining smile.

I don't know if I would. Though dreams, like misers,  
give me nothing. Take all trace of you  
and yet, without the history... what's a life?  
A mother, I can barely trace the image:  
of your personality. Your self.  
What do I know? What did I ever see?

Except, I know there never was another,  
though every youthful face/blond hair I trace  
for signs of that incarnation of your form.

You're gravely finished; set in stone; I know  
that Grandma's love is silent as your grave  
and, oh, to hear your voice. To see you smile.

Just three months now, until it seems like... yesterday.

**2013 THE CATHEDRAL AND A PATH**

*2013/11/PUBLD Grief that's always dying/WWB*

There is a stash of rubies in the sky,  
a flutter-shuffling flowing royal robe  
and, there are emerald garments, vivid bright  
in luminescence of a doubting shore.  
One solitary crow filled feeble air,  
to dance on stone, on daisies carpet-brave  
as feet that still to cushioned flow, reclining  
in sleepfulness of dreaming by and by.

A peregrine ennobled flight, to prance  
around a Salisburysque, aspiring shrine,  
to clash hair's-breadth of aerial combination  
and pass its prey – to feed – to drop; to fall...  
what Constable could brush those skies again?

And, mother, are you there? He came so often,  
to contemplate dull earth and see no poppies;  
everywhere they beacons bright remembrance.  
And there, a noisy carload tumbling out:  
That wasn't there before. Do you see? There's water...  
and so I gardened rubies/emeralds/sunbeams  
that contemplated, dancing through their leaves  
of Autumn's softly fallen. Oh, remember.  
Did no-one wait an hour? I came to speak  
and silence filled my language; framed in trees.

## 2013 ALPINE SUMMER

*'the hand... dead old June...heart's loose strings.'* *'old, sorrow/sweeps.'* EW Wilcox *'Tired'*

2013/11/PUBLD, *Grief that's always dying*/WWB

That dead hand, in its summer-brightest June  
has stripped the bed, to spring-clean much too late,  
dust-gathered forehead/brow/skin. What a state  
beyond the deepest melodies. Retune

this *heart's loose strings*. Play joy behind these eyes,  
to dance the hills with children – never old –  
melting souls, not feet, to crumple cold;  
tobogganing at speed with racing skies

forever blue-veined at the touch of air.  
The hand of dead old June has reached out hold  
with *sorrow sweeping* empty beds so cold.  
And there, a chair, still-empty like a stare.

Cleanse, tone and moisturise, wiped dust has gone;  
to sky-filled birdsong's grace, where hearts belong.

## 2013 BREATHING MOMENTS

2013/11/PUBLD, *Grief that's always dying*/WWB

The meaning is in moments. Some have found  
fulfilment in the clouds, and stars that shine;  
though simple little feet and hands – not mine –  
may touch our hearts with warmth and love's surround.

The meaning is itself; it is enough  
as paradisaal pity's vast hereafter.  
So human spirit's wrapped in pain and laughter.  
No need for angels' wings, nor all that stuff

## Angels' Wings and Stars

as dreams are made of: dream-held bauble brightly,  
to rest, to sleep's refreshing fast-flowing river.  
Enough for heartbeat moments, to consider  
all Pooh-stick matter hands release so lightly.

Eyes rainbow what is now and is no more,  
framed in that lung-span world that we adore.

Framed in that lung-span world that we adore,  
eyes rainbow what is now and is no more.

All Pooh-stick matters, hands release so lightly,  
enough for heartbeat moments to consider.  
To rest to sleep's refreshing fast-flowing river,  
as dreams are made; of dream-held bauble-brightly.

No need for angels' wings, nor all that stuff.  
So human spirit's wrapped in pain and laughter,  
as paradisaal pity's vast hereafter.  
The meaning is itself. It is enough;

may touch our hearts with warmth and love's surround,  
through simple little feet and hands. Not mine:  
fulfilment in the clouds, and stars that shine.  
The meaning is in moments some have found



**2013 SOUVENIR FROM LODDON**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

Finding an unseen message on the mantelpiece,  
written by an angel, I feel sure,  
but not until I lifted the feather duster  
to wipe accumulated dust and pain.

Finding it in a charity shop – so cheap –  
and only ten minutes until their closing time...  
thinking it would grace next winter's tree  
and chime the dance of branches dressed in garlands.

A pottery angel chime to lighten tears  
that glistered future tinsel, bells and baubles,  
memorialising absence? Poured wine; empty,  
the glass that smashed when crystal clear and new...

No dreams. No angel feathers. Nor a star.  
Just an ornament-fired posie with a heart.  
It tinkled air, as lifting it to clean,  
my finger traced its unread message: COURAGE.

**2013 WHY THEN...**

*'Wherefore' by E W Wilcox. 2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

Are sorrows borne again within a dream,  
stabbed like a fresh wound into heart-felt past?  
Last night I did not dream of you, nor seem  
as old love woken – sleepy – to outlast  
the fire in an angel's eyes; sweet kisses  
of silver water pearling such great price  
of birdsong melodies, where deep sleep misses  
a face – a face.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

Such glory in a phantom's mourned-for scene,  
familiar as that cross all shades must bear  
downstream: forever flows betwixt/between  
dull warning sirens backwards, everywhere.  
Drifting like a Pooh stick far beneath  
my bridge of sighs. That red rude tree that's weighed,  
creaking as planed woods of troubled wreaths  
of waters – of waters.

The deep night settled on me there, so wrong.  
No drowning, flailing, grasping at pained sight  
of black despair; so lost; supremely gone.  
Those pearls my eyes – as stars – no veiling light  
to wake me, wake me, please God, it's a dream!  
Face. No face.

### **2013 DRAGON SHADES OF SKY**

*2013/11/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB*

June is the cruellest month, it seems to me,  
beyond the season's weather to perform  
a brevity of parting seas, to be  
dawn drenching sails, left overnight, to storm

grey eyes that shade to silhouettes: frog-still  
their camouflage. The world is wide awake.  
What breath will cast away, as fresh sails fill  
night's emptiness, to blanche twitch-anchored lake

reflecting densities that crawl or leap  
as dragons framed in fairy-books, to fly...  
into the breath of fire, its whispered deep  
in cumulus, where wraiths ride Ariel sky.

Such seagull wings slice crew, lest fenders stretch  
this painful month, of deck-shoes no shades fetch.

**2013 THE LONGEST MONTH**

*2013/08/PUBLD, Grief that's always dying/WWB, Reach/August  
13/Issue 179*

It is the busy month, so full of sun,  
to celebrate the years, the days, the moments.  
So, one day when we're old, and warmth has gone,  
we will remember gifts of promise opened

on vast tomorrows. All that life could hold  
clasped in a tiny pair of hands. Such feet  
to kick, and play, and run. Milestones unfold  
like flowers in the corn. Their laughing bleat

as lambswool keeps us warm. Where is that scythe  
in pastures fallen, like fresh new-mown hay?  
And youthfulness will poppy where we writhe  
to see the joy of fields of gold today.

Soul feathers rise, where angels fear to tread.  
There doves arc to tomorrow's sky instead.

Their doves arc to tomorrow's sky. Instead,  
soul feathers rise where angels fear to tread,

to see the joy of fields of gold today.  
And youthfulness will poppy where we writhe  
in pastures, fallen, like fresh new-mown hay.  
As lambswool keeps us warm; where is that scythe?

Like flowers in the corn. Their laughing bleat,  
to kick and play and run. Milestones unfold.  
Clasped in a tiny pair of hands – such feet,  
on vast tomorrows, all that life could hold.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

We will remember gifts of promise opened...  
So, one day, when we're old and warmth has gone  
to celebrate the years, the days, the moments:  
it is the busy month, so full of sun.

### **2014 UNCLE PAUL**

*2014/06/PUBLD Reach/June 14*

Vows, flimsy as life, to never write a poem ever again,  
so this is not. It is itself.  
But what of him, this uncle – gone?  
I whispered him away at Earlham,  
to dance and play, to learn to live again...  
with Andrew; and with (David) star-shine bright.  
And when I got home – later – then I heard  
my grave concern had raised a new-formed ghost.  
So, Uncle, say you will, to wraith those love-lost genes.  
Yet were you, Who? Who's anybody, ever after?

There's laughter, all I know about that soul:  
that smile, that local voice, all Suffolk-borne and bier.  
The familial house you lived in – it was theirs -  
and now you share such narrow double plot,  
to dust and ashes, and those fading wreathes.  
I always thought you were like (him), just a little,  
your own grand-nephew/my own uncle-in-law.  
Tragic, optimistic; oh, such plans  
to mark those three score years and ten...  
like life; like love; such failure to materialise.  
But I don't want to see you, no, not now,  
for you are less than bones, than clothes, than skin  
and every part that breathes in Earlham yet...  
with soil and wriggling, sprouting, blooming things  
that learn to wing and fly in moonshine night.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

Beam full; your life was enigmatic then;  
and now I'll never know what person lied.  
The preacher's mirror, like a new-found Christ?  
Or David's beaming smile and tender muscle,  
grown old to face the world.  
To face – oh, then...  
It was not through that looking glass lunar-gloaming,  
for neither will grace family meals again.

And then I proof-read all those words and found  
my son's own name, misplaced; with shining stars...  
The pen ran out; the next one fell apart  
and then I grieved my living son, revising hard:  
study time; exams; then off to Uni;  
still frailty hopes Uncle Paul's the last family ghost.

### **2014 EARLHAM BRAMBLES**

*PUBLD/2017-09 Star Tips 121*

Autumn hangs, expecting death,  
as Earlham blooms in shades of sunset skies.  
Squirrels, lively as dull buried nuts,  
squirm over leaves and tracks of burnished nowhere.

Old father time walks slowly, picking brambles;  
he's never heard of blackberry wine, nor chocolate,  
and so so shades along where infants breathe  
slowly as the worm; he prods and picks.

I hate him – wish he'd prick his finger. Die  
and fall a thousand years cormed in one day,  
so no princess could kiss his yesterdays  
in sacramental blessings. Break;

## Angels' Wings and Stars

he's eating infants tucked up tight as night:  
beyond the Beatles; Genesis; or Toyah.  
And yet he has his reasons. All men die...  
There's children howling to a cold north wind.

The graveyard's damp impatience problems sunrise.  
Lost ones' mothers' arms are limbs of trees.  
Ignore the dead that scavenge sunshine blackberries;  
pensioned paupers grasp live shades of copper.

### **2014 EARLHAM ROPE**

*PUBLD/2019-05 Star Tips 131*

The plum tree coppers rich bright shades;  
a spirit level of butterflies  
flap and flutter in their tensing breeze  
and then the scrape of spade on concrete/earth.

A folding picnic chair weights me to watch  
the reach of seascapes tidally ebbed out,

the screams of children splashing; long ago.

Sunday morning, on bended knees,  
a woman leans with clipping shears;  
as ghosts are busy toiling at their garden:  
blooming greater love that fades and falls.

Lines of knotted rope and scattered soil  
anthill up to heaven's slime and trickle.  
Gravelled tyres pass by, regretfully,  
the choir of cars and lorries shush through leaves.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

Privetly, the hedge grows high,  
a row of houses hiding what's inside.  
All smiles and laughter, frowns contained within  
a nothingness of silenced breathless place.

My husband knelt just so to bring to life  
that joy of infancy and toddling grace,  
expanding like a beautiful mind and body  
that now lies resting – so they say – at peace.

This work will soon be done: to frame his life  
and curb a garden sunny with daffodils.  
If not here – Where? And When? All Autumn falls.  
Drenched father/child bike by well-wrapped in light.

### **2014 PHANTOM FOAL**

*PUBLD/2017-12 Metverse Muse (Issues 47<sup>th</sup> to 49<sup>th</sup>)*

It's been two years. I don't know how to grow  
a phantom limb so sleep can seem as whole.  
Recuperation's microcosmic, slow.  
I shy and startle, canter with no soul.

Beyond this paddock, gate, this pile of hay,  
how can I mount, to ride, to rein in dreams?  
Phantasmic shine can't breathe light shades of day.  
My foal's stillborn in slimy starry seams,

gushed out and cut, to lie and there to lay  
nuzzled with no sugar-sweet held hand.  
If only fields could lie and coats could stray  
into a pasture some day, there to stand.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

No limb, no foal to wreath love's greater cost,  
my phantom heart beats still its startled lost.  
My phantom heart beats still its startled lost;  
no limb, no soul to wreath love's greater cost

into a pasture some day, there to stand.  
If only fields could lie and coats could stray,  
nuzzled with no sugar-sweet held hand.  
Gushed out and cut, to lie and there to lay.

My soul's stillborn in slimy starry seams.  
Phantasmic shine can't breathe light shades of day.  
How can I mount, to ride, to reign in dreams  
beyond this paddock, gate, this pile of hay?

I shy and startle, canter with no foal.  
Recuperation's macrocosmic, slow.  
A phantom limb, so sleep can seem as hole...  
It's been two years I don't know how to grow.



## **2014 BIRTHDAY COUNTENANCE**

*PUBLD/2019-09 Star Tips 133*

Tomorrow is my birthday. I don't care  
how life got this far. It's been two long years  
since you picked up the phone and said your name,  
the simplest way you always spoke to Mum.

Today we're going Greek. It is the best  
and perhaps the only one for miles around.  
It reminds me of a man, a man that died:  
the ambience, the feast, the music loud.

My husband took a photo; lamps turned down,  
I held a table candle (like Halloween).  
The glow was warm and flattering and sweet  
and such a true likeness, glinting love and sparkle.

True profile of a nose, pink skin-worn dim,  
told of a secret picture I couldn't share.  
No-one could trace its countenance into stars,  
nor clutch the fear that breathed a mirror still.

My son – in this – the image of his Mum,  
my hasty mobile picture's subdued light.  
My death, my life, he lay in the funeral home,  
no glint nor sparkle left – his lids closed tight.

## **2014 AT THIS TIME OF YEAR**

*PUBLD Quantum Leap/Issue 71/August 2015*

The gifts and giver change each year;  
bravely, too, the table's faces.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

The gifts and giver change each year  
according to those flames of love

that make one hated, one held dear,  
buried by each mound of pity,

or human sympathies or sighs  
nostalgically remembered.

Wars cease; the bird is carved and shared.  
Entrenched courses tried, surrendered,

bravely, to the table's faces.

\*

Bravely, too, the table's faces:  
the gifts and giver change each year

as tidal seasons – old and young -  
vanquish yesterdays. Their places

weigh on hearts in silent longing  
for empty boxes, phantom trees.

Candles snuffed, like names and wrappings,  
dreams of silent night or angels'

sussurating wings envision  
mortal Halleluyahs singing  
bravely to the table's faces.

### **2014 AUNTIE**

*PUBLD/2016-01 Journey of the Meagre Poet*

The music rose on electricity, tinny and loud,  
false as a Crematorium.  
The woman minister politely asked:

## Angels' Wings and Stars

*each one can choose to sing – or not –  
according to the wishes of their stars...*

So no-one led; to follow, who?

It was a hymn she loved,

All Things Bright And Beautiful,

and I remembered my first tiny flower:

vivid blue among the grass.

She named it for me, wandering in the meadow,

beyond the bridge, the M1 spread beneath.

So mourners breathed through trashy noise

and no-one asked if this were fitting tribute for her life:

the good, the bad, the reverend mercies...

and those things only said if there'd been a Wake.

*Aunty, I'm embarrassed, let me sing.*

My loud voice sprinted long and lusty tones

to breathe in springtime, where there was just death.

They may have hated me, to drain the silence

to stillicide of another mother's grave

departure. So aged and grey, my cousins;

what a murmuration of white sticks.

Visited my Dad, her brother's ageing blindness.

Then brother/sister, we went to Enderby:

laid flowers on their parents' grave.

Just so we trawled the village, ate and drank.

*The curtain closed.*

The house almost beyond repair.

*We walked outside, said our goodbyes at sunset.*

A hard drive we had of it, getting home.

But set down

this. Set down

this. My first flower, as a child,

given to me. Its name?

*Forget-Me-Not.*

## **2015 AUNTY MARGE**

*PUBLD/2016-01 Crystal*

The weather was fickle beauty, storm and story  
of one long life in every part and moment,  
just like the Crem's appointed person; words  
were more than everything: they filled the room  
awash with empty chairs.. And just one row  
that did not groan with weight of family life.

It was enough, these few, to host a moment  
that would not come again. The curtain closed  
and that was it; we trooped outside, on cue,  
and watched the road pour down with relatives,  
all gathered in the car park, awaiting their turn  
to enter into chapel, later; to pause.

What rest was there? The crowds that filled a room  
with absence, poignant as that silent call  
to remember her – the way she was – to draw  
strength from what remained. The memories.  
What were they then? The piper calls the tune...  
who pays the piper hears, and so reflects

as thoughts that hang in shame; alive in air  
of breathless self inside and out.  
Where were the mourners for this sorry crowd?  
It did not matter; not a single word,  
of children, siblings, grandchildren, relatives, friends.  
No less a life, immaterial as air,

the songs and tales told all; a life worth note  
and mourning and the greatest of formal respect.  
It was soon over; a trinity fell outside,  
to see, or not, pink-scented blooms laid out  
in silence with the mourners. Laid to rest,  
their memories so far away from there.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

So was it sad to sit on a squeaking seat  
that risked unmuffled awkwardness in moments?  
It was itself, a Crem, a service, professionals;  
the least of family to bear such weight of love  
and loss; and ageing; Alzheimer's; slow decline.  
A mother, grandma, carer;        so live / so still.

### **2015 GRIEVE, GRIEVE AGAINST THE DARING OF THE NIGHT**

*PUBLD/2017-12 Metverse Muse (Issue 47<sup>th</sup> to 49<sup>th</sup>)*

Do not go raging out of youthful light,  
no age flames brighter than the latest wake.  
Grieve, grieve against the gently daring night.

Though women may be wise and know what's right,  
In silence they hear man flu's every take.  
Do not go raging out of youthful light,

good women sigh relief, their smiles bright  
as frailty exhales its sleep-stormed lake.  
Grieve, grieve against the gently daring night:

wild women dance and play in sunbeam flight,  
and learn, too late, no phantasm's a rake.  
Do not go raging out of youthful light,

grave women never dye hair blinding white.  
Blythe eyes could burn like meteors – a mistake;  
grieve, grieve against the gently daring night.

My father's lost all sense of time, is quite  
demented by my presence/age/name. Break...  
do not go raging out of youthful light,  
grieve, grieve against the gently daring night.

**2015 TWENTY YEARS**

*Star Tips/2020-05 (Issue 137)*

It's twenty years since I first saw such grace,  
laid out in sweet delivery: bathed clean,  
tucked up inside that cot; and your sweet face

as flawless as fresh newborn skin, to trace  
the nose, the ear, that eye-crease blueprint sheen,  
its twenty years since I first saw such grace.

Such dark hair – like your daddy's – oh, so brave,  
that carried your white crib of earth's demean.  
Tucked up inside that cot. And your sweet face

caressed by stars and soil and vivid lace:  
reflections white as grief's late-buried scene.  
It's twenty years since I first saw such grace.

Your brother's rattles placed in empty space  
with his twin, rusty rabbit's, pace-chased mean...  
Tucked up inside that cot. And your sweet face

grown large as teenage angst to dream such waste  
as rattling in that place where angels lean.  
It's twenty years since I first saw such grace  
tucked up inside that cot; and your sweet face.

**2015 STEPHANIE MAY**

*Journey of the Meagre Poet/2016*

Silence is so wrong, when it's the same blood.  
It's only been four years and I can't say  
what's remembered of our loved ones? All say good

as anyone about their dead. I should  
speak how large the gap; or how quiet in May  
silence is, so wrong, when it's the same blood.

And nothing fills the place where she once stood.  
So many tales replay when we've grown grey;  
what's remembered of our loved ones. All say good...

Her sons grieve and live on, though heirs may brood,  
and many miss her ways in life's rich affray.  
Silence is so wrong. When it's the same blood.

A few more years for her future's ghosts... My mood?  
I only say that I'm sad she couldn't stay.  
What's remembered of our loved ones? All say good.

As colourful as life. She's gone. Nothing would  
be better/worse than it is. We're all just clay.  
Silence is so wrong when it's the same blood.  
'What's remembered of our loved ones?' all say. Good.

**2015 YESTERDAY (22 years)**

*PUBLD/2018-03 Star Tips (Issue 124)*

It's yesterday when I first saw his face,  
delivered freshly sweet into the world,  
a looking glass in which to frame my place.

So candles always burn for my son's grace  
and strength and smiles and future, soft-unfurled.  
It's yesterday when I first saw his face;

still counting yet – now 22 – since lace  
wrapped round him like a Christening, conferred  
a looking glass in which to frame my place.

I held the gifts in fragile love's disgrace,  
each joy-fuelled moment, palely-faded; spoiled  
its yesterday, when I first saw his face.

No name but rose-fall's bitterest loss, to trace  
the calendar, clock and cardscape, undeterred.  
A looking glass in which to frame my place,

among widows, orphans. Words may yet embrace  
the page; the book; gold lettering fresh-etched, curled.  
It's yesterday, when I first saw his face:  
a looking glass in which to frame my place.



**2016 FIVE YEARS**

*PUBLD/2019-05 Star Tips (131)*

There is no grave for flowers. It makes me sad,  
the undeserving rich: they have it all,  
except for family love, that I recall  
has no home – laid to rest is not so bad...  
as this nothingness; this nowhere; lily-pad  
your offspring in one pond; for I'm appalled  
by grievances that tadpole/spawn/hop, walled  
as winter hearts in shade (kept out) so, glad?

Built castle, moat and battlements... Loves choose?  
No entry! Private! No through way! No tune,  
no table shared/bouquet/milestones achieved.  
Will they only meet at funerals; whose?  
We're dying fast: who bleeds, who's gone too soon?  
To bury quarrel's ashes... is that believed?

**2016 THE PATH TO AVALON**

*PUBLD/2017-06 Reach (225)*

Rising across the plain, in almost-mist,  
the Once and Future King is laid to rest.  
I zoom and focus, capture something vague  
as Avalon: the boats have moored and gone  
and Somerset Levels have retreated for a while.

The flood is past. I gaze like Xanadu,  
my Nether Stowey/Watchet are no more  
than long ago, of someone's phantom dream  
of Dunster-la-Mer; my son then back at school.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

We wandered round the trinket stores, and Merlin  
in every phantasmagorical one could buy.  
Abbey ruins stood behind car park wall;  
the Glastonbury Thorn was padlocked behind church gates;  
the sun broke through/clouds fled in parousial parting.

The magniloquence of angels beneath our feet  
planed far below, like a carpenter at his lathe.  
Wind whipped the tunnel's mount, to vanishing  
so long ago, when we climbed up that tor.

Gone now – transfigured – simple family journey  
to Avalon all-vanquished in the mist.

### **2016 AUTUMN FOLLOWS SPRING**

*PUBLD/2017-09 Dial 174 (111)*

If I were to leave you  
it would not be for another;  
for men are fickle, weak and always follow  
their hearts, their plans and mounting appetites.

If I were to leave you,  
it would not be for dreams;  
I had them all with you, it now appears  
that nights will blaze to sunset in a while.  
If I were to leave you,  
it would not be wild fancy life's experience  
in books, on TV screens, or Cyber-dating,  
nor friendship, music, poetry, nor wine.

A different age/ or childhood/ values/ culture  
could bouquet chance, or gender, family life,  
to bloom and fade in myrrh of no tomorrow  
beyond horizons of a different stage.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

If I were to leave you  
it would not spring from love, though love is death;  
a poet's pining is too much Adonis  
and you have given and received it all.  
If I would leaving leaving ever leave you  
finally forever like the tide,  
wild fickle blazing sunset faints and shades, dear,  
grimly reaping grief of endless loss.

### **2016 ROSE PATH...**

*PUBLD/2017-12 Metverse Muse (47<sup>th</sup>-49<sup>th</sup>)*

I wandered down the path to nowhere, then  
all nettles, overgrown, I could not see  
the sting or scratch of what I knew back, when?  
Beyond the trodden way, that day when we  
were there, breathing the air, the chill of dawn.  
Could anything prepare me then – for now?  
I pricked my finger on that fickle thorn  
and laughed the sky to blue, the sunshine, how  
it bloomed the day, the morning of our love.  
Gone now, all waste, all nettles of the past.  
You live – perhaps – only in heaven above,  
so how can death – like love – not die, outlast...

My breath; my moments; all those days, so brave  
now I have cried and watered your cold grave.

**2016 THE MORTAL MAN 2016**

*PUBLD/2017-08 Reach (227)*

I wandered only like the crowd  
from Ambleside, then up Stock Ghyll.  
My breaths were panting very loud.  
So hot and sweaty was no thrill.

Then lark-rise sounded loud and clear,  
the sheep, like clouds, were far below.  
I shivered – chill – for photos (dear)  
and paused, or was just walking slow.

Then panoramas spread around,  
I didn't look... or they would find  
me lying prostrate on the ground  
and at the top it was so wind.....Y.

From Wansfell Pike to Windermere,  
Grasmere, Rydal, the Irish Sea,  
Kirkstone Pass and mountains so sheer,  
I'm glad it was all clear for me.

I staggered to the Mortal Man  
in Troutbeck; downed red rabbit's tail,  
then wondered if my steps could span  
the Struggle; Jenkyn's Crag; or fail...

This tale will not now end, because  
one Aussie Sheila by the fire  
warmed herself with tales, and us...  
penned no last line; it ends quite dire!

## **2016 RELATIVE MOMENTS**

*PUBLD/2016-10 Reach (217)*

My sister's gone. I don't know where she is.  
I saw her in that coffin one last time.  
Her presence does not get much more than this:  
She is my moment's absence in the grime.

There is no place for flowers pooled in grief,  
no wood nor stone impressions to uplift.  
Thus, five years does not give me much relief,  
nor Floriade my sister's life as gift.

She lived her own life her way. There were tales,  
cremating half the gene pool in her wake;  
inspiring human spirit, where men's fails...  
gargantuan loss, dust-petals mourners make.

My sister's gone. I know where she is now,  
in hearts as relative moments may allow.

## **2016 DAVID & THE TIGER'S EYE**

*PUBLD/2018-04 Metverse Muse (50)*

Sometimes the heavens gather, all in line,  
to hurl outrageous flames, misfortune, pain.  
Such slings and arrows brook no stones, yet sign  
a quaking shepherd boy in trouble again.

Sometimes they all have faces like close friends,  
or enemies – by blood and chance direction.  
They scream like sirens, cannot make amends  
nor transform moments from their sad complexion.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

Some times, the safest place is to stay inside,  
avoiding rocks and giants in each cleft.  
One day the gods will silence dovescotes, abide  
within/without the tiger's eye. What's left?

Sometimes, all phantoms, now the world is calm,  
restored, one day forever, without harm.

### **2016 UNI DAYS REVISITED**

*PUBLD/2021-09 Star Tips (143)*

September almost vanished down the Loke.  
The river, ripely full, flowed on downstream.  
Each horse out in the field wore winter coat;  
we paused en masse, to swell our tide to dream.

Some people had not met for forty years:  
we cut the cake, blew candles out and shared  
brief moments, joys and sorrows without tears.  
Not all could travel – some had barely dared...

And yet, as one, our Uni days like gold.  
We walked and talked, meandered years all bridged.  
No way of knowing when each life glows cold.  
We shared that moment – time – life unabridged.

Five eggs smashed (Waitrose car park): seemed to say  
that's life; and friendships; loss; and one bright day.

**2016 SONNET FOR IAN T**

*PUBLD/2016-11 Star Tips (116)*

Gone now. I don't know why. How can life be  
absent in a moment? Too soon, past.  
Whose presence now is fading, might outlast  
my fickle flickered lifespan I can see?  
That smile, that welcome, tan, that lovely voice,  
that caring nature piled with laurel wreaths  
of heartfelt moments shared, where silence grieves  
and wonders what it's for? Is any choice

left our mortal lot? So raise a glass  
and down a pint, down at the local pub.  
Laugh loudly, share with friends, don't think of shine  
except the brightest shooting star to waste  
the universe in human frailty, stub  
last sparks of all of us; his now, in time.

**2016 AUTUMN BEYOND SMEATON'S TOWER**

*PUBLD/2016-11 Star Tips (116)*

They say one can be lonely in a crowd:  
At the best-loved man's own funeral, packed out,  
I roll Hoe bowls, can burble none aloud  
for Smeaton's Tower perspectives all about.  
I say I cannot cry there some fine day,  
no white sails except seagulls on the tide...  
to mark bouquets bereft where studies stay  
new student intake futures, the ocean wide.  
They say my son's own carer was all heart,  
the sort of man on whom everyone depends.  
The Crem, so full of waste that must depart;  
packed out with tear-strewn faces, family, friends.  
None better; gone forever; lost in time.  
We mourn those moments drowned beneath the rhyme.

## 2016 IAN'S FUNERAL

*PUBLD/2020-09 Star Tips (139)*

It was a shock, of course it was,  
to hear the news in dribs n drabs  
and dread.

Meaning leached its contents white as death,  
nothing could have kept me from the Hoe  
to bowl my waiting moments - so at sea.  
The raucous call of white sails on the tide,  
those seagulls dun with winter coats, and parents.

Blessed that you were carer for my son,  
that dip of beak and call to message home  
with all events of troubling waters, strides  
of winds of youth and fish and clouds and storms.  
Went to your funeral, Ian,  
barely four years since my son passed these shores,  
for stars and angel skies and grieving faces.  
You went, of course, affected by that loss,  
so much to wish that heart could give, just, answers.

Devastating loss and absence here  
and yet the tide of carers huddled round,  
to give your cardboard coffin its due weight,  
with 'Uncle' scribbled large and tremoring flowers;  
a daughter trembling on the winds of pain.  
Packed out, with tasteful eulogies and praise,  
a brother's paper plane of words grown dim:  
Armadas on the tide, with white bow tie.

The loss as great as every person present,  
passing songs and life, a humanist crown  
to wake the dead. Oh, no,  
beyond redemption.  
The sky? Beautific blue.  
The sun shone bright



and every grave on that hill stood up so proud,  
as laughter stormed with pewter, all so earthed.  
A day that left no eyes dry... as the sea.  
The bar would pull late pints to wake the dead.  
Boss man, goodbye.

## **2016 TWILIGHT, WALKING HOME**

*Star Tips 141/March 2021/PUBLD*

The landscape's dark, it's dark,  
It's light, so full of light – no, dark, no,  
No light

It could be light, is light, is absence, is the sheen  
Of night,  
Reflecting, as it does, last vestiges of place.  
My place, or yours, or theirs,  
The shadows.

It's getting dark,  
I'm here, in this and walking home.  
I hope it's not too dark to light my way, my way  
Back home.  
It's there, I hope it is, beyond that distant horizon  
Where it's still light.  
It is?

Or not.  
So dark, forever dark, the deep might stray  
Beyond this river's still tranquillity

**2016 CHRISTMAS CAROL/The world is...**

*Star Tips 144/December 2021/PUBLD*

The world is shifting on its axis now,  
I'm mesmerised by joy in deepest pain.  
No stars collide, collude, or near-miss howl  
their Northern Lights' discomfort where I drain

Beyond this mortal coil, for time's compressed  
to fast-track my life's knowledge in few days.  
So social types assume that I'm undressed  
for all occasions, as if words could – space –

Too much/too soon/too late. My ship's come in  
and social types think: boats are female too.  
So how can I express what's in this spin?  
A worm-hole, black-hole, sink-hole. Words too few

For Christmas past and present, future, maybe.  
Or, Scrooge humanity so that they see.

**2017 EARNING A GOLD STAR ALONG THE ROAD**

*Web Star/2021-12/WEB*

Adrenaline pulsing through arteries of tarmac,  
there – on an impulse – darting to the flow:  
two trailer-slatted loads, pulled tractor-slack.  
I saw the learner driver going slow.

There on an impulse, darting to the flow,  
with oncoming traffic flashing, hurtling fast,  
I saw the learner driver going slow;  
braced for bomb-blast debris flying past.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

With oncoming traffic flashing, hurtling fast,  
the L-Plate slid between each tractioned load.  
Braced for bomb-blast debris flying past;  
held back by jellied legs that might explode.

The L-Plate slid between each tractioned load;  
I contemplated dreams from late last night:  
held back by jellied legs that might explode,  
guessed he saw me moving into sight.

I contemplated dreams from late last night,  
so hugged him close and much too long to grieve.  
Guessed he saw me moving into sight;  
happy to be there. Now he had to leave,

so I hugged him close and much too long to grieve;  
found a golden star on bathroom floor.  
Happy to be there, now he had to leave.  
Sun sparkled morning light through that brash door.

Found a golden star on bathroom floor,  
two trailer-slatted loads pulled tractors slack.  
Sun-sparkled morning light through that brash door;  
adrenaline pulsing through arteries of tarmac.

**2017 TIME FOR SILENT BRIGHTS**

*PUBLD/2020/01 Star Tips (135)*

There is a time that people change their minds,  
while others live in loss that feels the pain  
through separation folding down like blinds.  
Injustice screams insanity and blame.

While others' lives, in loss that feels no pain,  
fill with warmth and joy and family cares:  
injustice screams insanity and blame  
at bridges left unbuilt or beyond repair.

Thrill with warmth and joy of family cares:  
memorialise the past, its presents brought  
as bridges left unbuilt or beyond repair.  
Wars' waste lulled into fields of Silent Bright.

Memorialise the past, its presence brought  
through separation folding down like blinds.  
Wars waste, lulled into fields of Silent Bright;  
there is a time no people change their minds.

**2017 BLOOMS BURSTING WITH LIFE, FRAMED**

*PUBLD/2018-05 Cockatiels and Bold Women, St Giles Hospice*

I want to be remembered after all  
the joy and pain of life that knows me well.  
My changing mind's a movie that can't spoil:  
restored, it has some breath and tales to tell.

The joy and pain of life that knows me well  
in paintings or in photographs, sublime;  
restored, it has some breath and tales to tell.  
My colour/form shoots seasons from good loam.

In paintings or in photographs, sublime,  
appealing to fresh senses from the past.  
My colour, form, shoots seasons from good loam,  
framed and displayed like bursting blooms, not lost.

Appealing to fresh senses, from the past,  
my changing mind's a movie that can't spoil.  
Framed and displayed: like bursting blooms, not lost,  
I want to be remembered after all.

**2017 GRAVE THEFT**

*PUBLD/2020-01 Star Tips (135)*

Thank you for the theft from my son's grave,  
it made me cry again and that is precious.  
Yesterday I would have trashed the heavens  
to see your just desserts, or make you suffer.  
I do not wish for you the gravest pain,  
now, though there are moments; step aside,  
you cannot know the cost of quick reward.  
Your children must be starving. Lost your job?  
I think your reason's meaner; find new ways  
to fix your habit; gain, if it's your loss.  
If you could steal from paupers in their graves,  
you don't know how little's left behind.  
A mother – I know well what treasure's there;  
priceless waste that cannot breathe again,  
not in this world, not beneath these stars.  
So would you take what's left? Placed there with love.

**2017 CHRISTMAS EVE**

*PUBLD/2018-11 Star Tips (12\**

You're in your instant now; it's hard to say  
my moment's been and gone and all is trashed  
beyond a baubled lifetime fixing. Brash  
to tread my twinkle toes to dust. This daze

Is far beyond dull words to fix. I leave  
the Christmas that was then or not, as now,  
to fix one mangy rule, my hound's dark howl  
beyond redemption's bloodless Prince of Peace.

Beneath the white-washed stars, as snow, bewitched,  
I replay childish years of hope and joy:  
for gold and frankincense, though myrrh's no foil  
of future dead – nor past – the room's unlatched

To birth pangs mounting palm fronds into hay.  
My morning's risen. Yours? Just an empty plate.

**2017 RAINBOW LEAPING**

*PUBLD/2018-04 Dawntreader (42)*

The rainbow is not here, it's gone to earth,  
my heart alone is leaping at the sight.  
I think no other sky holds greater worth  
than what I can no more behold; not quite:

Up there, beyond the blue, just up and when  
I breathe no more; if breathless adoration's  
the cost of mending heart's gouged frail beat, then  
to see the best may dull heaven's compensations.

So, simply, my heart's leaping at dull words,  
lifeless in their grave (where rainbows prism;  
of multi-faceted diamond sky-filled birds,  
and sings soliloquys of branchless schism).

It rains; the sun shines; rainbows brief as joy:  
nature's heartfelt moments without alloy.



**2018 BLUE FOR A BOY**

*[Inspired Ronnie Goodyer] Star Tips 144/December 2021/PUBLD*

Student – man - shock of blond hair, freshly laundered,  
fell untypically away from his face;  
no smile today, nor look, nor voice.  
Lips powdered pale. Why not vivid red?

Teenager, grown fat with meds,  
baggy institutional shorts, feet bare on rocks,  
to paddle, laughing, in a Cornish sea,  
returning from his pizza/pop to care.

Angelic, eight, his fingered serious 'Hush!'  
Released the pause of his audio cassette,  
launched, confident and loud, nativity hymns,  
mum trembling with her Sony video Hi-8.

Orange-bright meconium – bathed him clean –  
the midwife passed hot baby for the breast.  
Delicate blond hair, blue eyes, all feet and fingers:  
Beautiful forever; and so perfect.

## **2019 REACHING FOR RAINBOWS**

*'Villanelle' by Michaela Eldridge (Quantum Leap 85, Feb 19)*

It's true that some of us grow old and die:  
not gently and not late, though just as cold.  
Bywords, though young, stretch far spread into sky,

where moonlight and dense dark shout that stars lie  
beneath the trodden sod of our heart's gold.  
It's true, while some of us grow old and die,

we whisper with life's endless stream, just, Why?  
Some innocents leave before first breaths unfold,  
by words, though young stretch far spread into sky.

Rage at the middle-aged that cannot fly  
nest-eggs in retirement, their fledglings bold:  
it's true while some of them grow old and die.

If we had known the cost of grief's foul cry,  
gone gently into faceless dreams untold  
by words - though young stretch far, spread into sky.

What rainbow light and dark glints eye to eye?  
Rich seams of treasures we can never hold  
its truth: while some of us grow old and die.  
Bywords, though young, stretch far spread into sky.

**2019 MORNING AS BROKEN**

*Star Tips 137/2020-05*

It's Eden here today: my naked heart  
lifts where seagull spans unbroken blue  
of morning hopefulness and all that's true  
in budding lilac spread, a tree apart.  
A cusp of blossom strains: one bluetit's start  
from mellow-forming summer green hill's queue  
for birdsong in its branches. Springtime, too,

Seeds outsmart  
that human need for heaven's unrivalled pain.  
Prodigals sprout with daffodils and dance...  
All hellebores return so blanched and white,  
like feathered fancies: loved ones come again,  
breathless in a joy where loves entrance;  
and still the garden lights up deepest might.

## **2019 AND YOU, MY FATHER**

*Star Tips 133 PUBLD 2019-09*

Morning as broken as the shivers of my art,  
squirming too early, too sleep-lost when the rain comes.  
Blackbird has soaked my bright canvas with dull worms,  
parting dull tunnels of earth tracks gouged to airspace.

Squirming too early, too sleep-lost when the rain comes,  
nightmare and absence; dark phantoms draped in dreamscape.  
Parting dull tunnels of earth tracks gouged to airspace,  
screaming for plastics discarded until the call.

Nightmare and absence, dark phantoms draped in dreamscape,  
hums loudly; my father, a hover without wings.  
Screaming for plastics discarded until the call:  
earpierce – not air peace – wrung loudly into silence.

Hums loudly – my father – a hover without wings,  
stringing brash sunset at his ending and my start.  
Ear-pieced, not air-pierced, wrung loudly into silence;  
acquiescence of the butterfly left cold now.

Stringing brash sunset at his ending and my start,  
blackbird has soaked my bright canvas with dull worms.  
Acquiescence of the butterfly left cold now:  
morning as broken as the shivers of my art.

## **2019 BIRTHDAY POEM IN OCTOBER - NOT**

*PERSEPHONE 2021 (Vol 2)*

*'It's going to be in the 90s today,'*  
and he was – 93 – or, like a close shave,  
nicked too soon. Too soon,  
his *'Unexplained Expected'* requiring a Coroner

## Angels' Wings and Stars

to confirm he died of 'age-related frailty';  
and much else.  
So, driving teary miles – almost safely –  
no dancing women nor camels, until  
sitting in that seat, there: *'Lovely display.'*  
*'Oh, we're just about to change it.'*  
Consuming (possibly Jaffa) oranges,  
drinking in John Wayne, Sophia Loren,  
Clint Eastwood, Doris Day, and the Sundance Kid.  
Cowboy Westerns (his favourite).  
Sighed across town, opened door,  
clutched a silver locket at my throat;  
it broke, the cheap chain of my youth; from Dad.  
Longing for a pretty thing, a keepsake,  
safely cusped in my hand. My heart,  
quivering at a Turkish barber cut-throat.  
It's August (summer holidays), the Queen:  
same age, same generation, better luck.  
We talked and signed: considered music; moments  
to eulogise, speed off with rumbling tummies  
to wake the dead by stomach-sickened roads there; still:  
awaiting cherry blossom, winding round cars,  
retching speed bumps/security lighting/leylandii.  
He's off, in a month or two, to some Goose Fair:  
parked off the main road's Victorian terraces; there.  
Rumbling, crumbling back towards his youth...  
his infants learning – impressionable – who nicked what;  
who lived to tell the tale; who's not yet born.  
Looking, looking October in the face:  
September doubly gone to summer snow.  
One child (a poet) looks down without Santa,  
begging for baubled fairy lights, like blossom.

**2019 THE PERFECT DAY**

*Star Tips 135/2020-01 PUBLD*

If I said it was the perfect wedding,  
with all the family gathered round  
smart-dressed and polished, looking like they'd rather  
not attend, or move the clocks on forward:  
then you'd not understand.

If I said it was the perfect couple,  
no feuding relatives on either side,  
the service quite surprisingly well-attended,  
each song and hymn known well enough to strain  
beliefs; and then some more.

If I said the vibrancy of Autumn  
fell on those sun-drenched petals gathered round,  
until the heavens opened like loud music  
and cameras/bodies/brollies dashed for cars,  
then you would see, perhaps

The day with me like no other, gifts like angels,  
writ in the clouds undressing white to grey.  
Strangers greeted friends - aged recognitions  
grimaced right to smiles and gestured shadows  
then as now; forgotten.

If I say perfection dies with living:  
the priest conjoins in blessings of Goodbye.  
Winter chills the mound of fresh-faced flowers  
none wake to raise the heavens as night falls.  
Oh, then you'd understand.

## 2019 CUSHIONING THE BLUE

Such barefaced cheek left; all I could adore:  
undressed in weakness – Aslan with no mane –  
he'd had a close shave many times before  
that sunshine could not grow, nor rise again.

Undressed in weakness, Aslan with no mane:  
Apollo, like a blanket, wrapped him round.  
That sunshine could not grow nor rise, again  
a jacket/cap hid bald pate/older ground.

Apollo (like a blanket) wrapped him round:  
retirement hard, that golf course - finding balls -  
a jacket/cap hid bald pate/older ground.  
We prayed against the Fates' traumatic falls.

Retirement hard, that golf course (finding balls),  
red biking scarf wrapped tight round scrawny neck.  
We prayed against the Fates: traumatic falls.  
Close shave – so many times – and how, by heck!

Red biking scarf wrapped tight round scrawny neck,  
he broke so many thirsts by land and tea.  
Close shave (so many times), and how. By heck:  
ex-wives, ex-homes, ex-jobs; Grimm's weeping sea.

He broke so many thirsts by land and tea,  
that beard always regrew; new tales to tell.  
Ex-wives, ex-homes, ex-jobs, grim reaping sea:  
so rich, such life – all heaven and all hell.

That beard always regrew – new tales to tell –  
he'd had a close shave many times before.  
So rich, such life, all heaven and all hell;  
such bare-faced cheek left all I could adore.

**2019 STORM CLOUDS ON THE MARSHES...**

*PERSEPHONE (Vol 2)*

Walked Marston Marshes in the pouring rain,  
-new Anglian rolling stock went rumbling by-  
the grey of storm clouds in my heart again.

Swan-ghosts passed, where no damselflies remain.  
A symmetry of trees rose to bare sky;  
walked Marston Marshes in the pouring rain.

Floods spread like puddles, where fresh tears have lain,  
the cattle hunkered down, to feed or die.  
The grey of storm clouds in my heart again,

thin shades of crow – beautiful, yet so plain:  
just tinny blackbirds' calls, to flit and fly.  
Walked Marston Marshes in the pouring rain.

When, drizzling broily, will dull squelchings drain?  
More fowl than fiend, wood pigeon failed to cry,  
the grey of storm clouds in my heart again.

In Narnia's nowhere, another speeding train:  
a sapling brash with Aslan's mane asked, 'Why?'  
Walked Marston Marshes in the pouring rain,  
the grey of storm clouds in my heart again.



**2020 THE THIRTY IN 2020**

*(In Memory of Joan Sheridan Smith), PERSEPHONE (Vol 2) 2021*

The symmetry of life wakes griefs so raw,  
for death's a close shave of my Dad's (last year).  
This mourning dress a journey, heart's at door,  
his birthday; now your funeral's all here.

For death's a close shave of my Dad's last year.  
At 88 you caught the train to share  
*his* funeral; your birthdays now all here;  
she introduced you then, so like a prayer.

At 88, who caught the train? To share  
the basket bloomed beautifully with flowers;  
she introduced you there so, like, a prayer.  
Stained glass laid warm and simple candles' hours.

The basket bloomed beautifully with flowers:  
alone with Covid markings, friends must choose it.  
Laid simply warm as stained glass, candles' hours,  
awkward among strangers' muffled music.

Alone with Covid markings, friends must choose it,  
fleshed characterful laughter lifted/fell.  
Awkward among strangers/muffled music,  
connecting us with all that hearts can tell.

Fleshed characterful laughter lifted/fell,  
this morning dress a journey arts adore:  
connecting us with all that hearts can tell.  
The symmetry of life wakes griefs so raw.

**2021 NELL'S VILLA**

*Star Tips 144/December 2021/PUBLD*

Every time I wish to visit you  
- like the dark side of the moon-  
distance too great; at this time.  
Oh, I would hold your hand,  
it's quite enough,  
whispering sweet nothings' long ago.  
So sad for husbands/wives/or partners:  
eternal loss of moments  
    sinking into tinny music/that curtain.  
Hugging banned?  
Yet you, my father, in that great unknown,  
is one year (two?) too long to miss such joy?  
Before; it's too...  
No June, no August, falling sweet September;  
no rage left now – I'm glad it passed you by.  
No hands; I gravely wait permission to visit.

**2021 SILENCE, FRAMED**

*Reach 2021-05/PUBLD (Issue 272)*

Today it was the best day – full of silence –  
my infants were the best there'd ever been.  
This garden plot fulfilled by vigorous violence.  
There's more in sight, in planning, than is seen.

My infants were the best there'd ever been,  
all baby fat/hair/perfect family size.  
There's more insight in planning, than is scene,  
robust play and toys and sky-blue eyes.

All baby fat/hair/perfect family size;  
gone in too many moments, sunflower-tall.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

Robust play and toys and sky-blue eyes,  
framed in a photograph's last mirrored foil.

Gone in too many moments, sunflower-tall,  
this garden plot fulfilled by vigorous violence.  
Framed in a photograph's last mirrored foil,  
today it was the best day full of silence.

### **2021 LOCKDOWN EASES**

*Star Tips 142/June 2021*

There's peace enough to hide the sky turned grey,  
to Eden dreams and hopes of summer skies.  
There's just enough to hope another day.

To think of children laughing sand-steps' way,  
to storm their castle like the tide/like flies.  
There's peace enough to hide the sky turned grey,

the harsh-pruned conifer that's taut to play  
like Evergreen's bare hulk and lighter rise.  
There's just enough to hope another day.

There's unleaved branches branching, twigs that stay,  
awaiting blossom/fruit that ripens/ dies.  
There's peace enough to hide the sky turned grey.

The threat of storm clouds rain for whispered May.  
Brash tulip-glow, new fires where snowdrop brides.  
There's just enough to hope another day.

There's birds and bumbles, humans fear and pray,  
no garden is less glorious by size.  
There's peace enough to hide the sky turned grey,  
there's just enough to hope another day.

**2021 THE TREE**

*Sarasvati 2022-06/Issue 65/PUBLD*

I've wondered when you might have been  
more than daffodils and closed blue eyes.  
If you had been perfection of dull genes,  
or more – the death of children's sweetest fruit.

I have a gravestone yet to lay – your grandsire's,  
it costs the earth; again;  
its silence speaks.  
I wondered if your voice would seem well-known,  
that heavenly sound of children ever-after.

I cannot believe our gene-mix bled so poor,  
that earth could live oblivious of yours;  
your sibling's.

**2021/058 GARACHICO (ANGELS)**

*Littoral magazine/Winter Solstice 2021-12/ONLINE*

Choose your goal,  
and if it's moth-eaten by life's fecundities,  
it will do.  
She grieves her husband far too soon, equates  
absence devastating as Bowderstone.  
And yet, one day, her grandchildren will shoot as stars;  
one day.

She's praised with accolades of worth, and caring,  
no children, yet a megalith of siblings rooting  
to earth a Milky Way of daffodils;  
and ancestors living like Star Trek's Genesis Project.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

He's planting, reaping, sowing like Gardener's World, the system kicks in a caring package of support. She lives. She's fading slow; oh, they had dreams, and now the family's gathering round in prayer.

Grieving that her caring duty's ended,  
too soon – younger than the Queen – she's lost her mother.  
And Nonna, too frail for Tea with Mussolini.  
The tears – like stars; descendants as the Norfolk Show.

He's gone to meet his mother; long past teatime.  
We rumble past (his motorcycle cavalcade).  
Unknown; his stories breathe in/out awhile,  
a Bevin Boy, with Santa's snow-white beard.

My goal is like El Teide – not quite extinct –  
fuming out to sea's volcanic flow.  
Safely on high ground, as lava sets  
in stone: my dreams of motherhood's  
descendants.

## 2021 THE JOURNEY

*Crystal 22-03/PUBLD*

The funeral, you might say, was satisfactory:  
the midwife delivering a pre-deceased premature history,  
prescient with demise.

This was easy for her: a full/complete life,  
relatives/friends moist-eyed  
in all the right places.

Packed hall, post-Lockdown, and hymns;  
oh yes, singing.

The daughter beautiful, the son intelligent...  
(The son brave, the daughter intelligent).

## Angels' Wings and Stars

*If* you can sound last hours, let love show,  
with every mourner grieving their own loss...  
then nothing of your self will be forgotten;  
and bravely I will be a man, *my son*.  
A hard time I had of it - the journey -  
set down in my native county,  
the hotel/restaurant full of foreign  
phrases/wine/no dancing.

The wake bled chandeliers' tears/a bar queue,  
and distractions from bier and depth.  
The poet in me dies with fewer mourners,  
a grave that's hidden on some distant moor.  
Or, I pray, tucked in beside my firstborn;  
love of my life following late (aged 95)...  
when all my qualities have been long-  
forgotten.

### **2021 TO THE EARTH IN WINTER**

*Winter Writing Sanctuary; Crystal 2023-01/PUBLD (Issue 133)*

Grass freezing cold, the rain pours down;  
shivering in my nightie, wrapped  
tight with hat/scarf/coat: the ground  
is sodden. Pigeons fluffed up. Stacked,

in pecking order, bird-feed bright.  
Chill nostrils flare, teeth ache. They wait  
their turn – my absence – awesome sight:  
contrail/cloud-glow eyes down to plate.

The glistening glass waits patiently.  
Brash hellebores bud stars so dark.  
My dead lie earth-still, while complacently  
deep bulbs sleep on. Birds lark their spark.

**2022 JOAN**

*Crystal 2022-05/PUBLD; LANDSCAPES 2022-06/Amazon*

She's gone. They loved her. She was special to them all,  
as eulogy took quite some time to form.  
The words vanished in the ceiling of my poor ears;  
she's there – in flesh alone – where minds conform.

No Upwords moments mark the passage of friendship,  
she's gone in all but fire and wood and ink.  
The bloom of flowers, white with grief, could tremble:  
she's lived more than Her Majesty can think.

So lay to rest the joy of connected moments,  
each photograph an icon of the past.  
It's finished, the future's door now widely opens:  
those treasured hearts and minds hoard dreams so vast...

So dress well/smile a 100 contented dreams;  
stay positive with everything life seems.

## **2022 COUNTING SEASONS, BOTANICALLY**

*Wildfire Words 2022-04 Botanicals/PUBLD ONLINE*

When the neighbour's leylandii hedge was dug up,  
exposing three extraordinary gardens (the grass much greener),  
he asked, 'Got a body in there?'

Wooden fences returned privacy, deep-roots dug out  
among builders' rubble/bones of Fluffy or Rover/and barbed wire.  
My simple wooden grave marker died down, as driftwood  
on the tide of maternal grief. I planted narcissus, hellebores,  
grape hyacinths, Galanthus; deciduous shrubs; evergreens;  
ground cover. Ten years passed – like life (his) –  
and I sat down, back to fence, admired my baby prunus  
confetti-rich with blossom, its fall.

Syringa rage-rages soon, against the dying scent of life's  
rich loam. No bodies here; just memories.

Now there's a grave marker for my white-bearded pater...  
the stone memorial on the wings of tarmac (A47, A17, A52)  
where he breathed his last, gently, in a care home.  
Every season raises stars, in every stage of grief; and shade.

Botanically challenged by favourite colours, birthdays, blossoming;  
and fall. This poem simply counts – by lines - my firstborn's years  
(colour: green).



**2022 27 TODAY**

Landscapes/2022-06/PUBLD Amazon

I bought a ring today:  
sterling silver, cubic zirconia,  
patterning of wavy seas and sparkle.  
Sat ‘like a steam train’  
of Bake & Grind ‘at the station’  
awaiting arrivals and departures  
(of cup cake and mocha).  
‘Steam erupts, spoons stir’  
as I remember 27 years – gone so fast.  
‘But the journey’s just begun,’  
sat in Muffin Break in the shopping mall,  
placing the brand new ring  
on my little finger;  
beside the green stone (almost 10).  
So how would you celebrate?  
Think I don’t deserve it; should forget?

That mountain – 10 – sinks horizon in late-Fall;  
beside a virgin ring on my little finger.  
Pray for starry skies, dark passing clouds  
to count stark shades tonight.

That I'm mum?  
Numb. Mumbling. Mummers in a play...  
'Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio.'  
Horatio? Andrew.  
My boy: so loved, so wanted,  
                        so worth remembering.  
Raise a glass, anyone?

That date – 27 years ago –  
we didn't bring baby home  
to meet big brother.

## **2022 SOLSTICE LIKE YESTERDAY**

*Wildfire Words, Sky Solstice 2022-06/PUBLD ONLINE*

I remember that day so well, like it was yesterday,  
the day forever after when the Beatles' song moved me  
to nostalgic tears; unsuitable at my age.  
Sky so dark; the night I laboured into the shortest day.  
Night felt like the longest, to deliver a firstborn.  
Proud mum, blue-eyed blond-haired boy.

Mystique deep-breathes the blood-shot moon  
in – you know – THAT month. I could make this happy,  
but you wouldn't believe me. How could you, unless...

Simply, I will say, he was beautiful.  
Self: beaming for England, husband drove home  
that day. The summer solstice, the longest day  
Except, for me, the longest night and the shortest day.  
Learning to change first nappy; breastfeed successfully;  
sleep eventually; full of hope, the future.

I could say there were 19 happy years that followed;  
we traversed Stonehenge regularly (or the M5/M4).  
Would you believe me? How could you, Except, if you...  
They were happy years. Hellish as life itself.  
We learnt – everything.  
(Oh, there are special mums out there; they say, no way...).  
For us, he was our whole world.

Each sunrise/sunset, like the Mona Lisa:  
perfect, impossible to explain, argue over  
and yet; beautified on moonshine,  
starbright, sunless days. Contemplate your own.  
They were enough.

## Angels' Wings and Stars

No *'Tyger, Tyger'* was as wild: diagnosed autistic, aged 4 ¾.  
Icarus-bright with symmetry and fall (aged 19).  
Lying by seasand. Beneath poppies. Beyond hotels (like houses).

Yes, it was the shortest day; the longest night. No sky.  
Like, Yesterday.

## 2022 WILLIAM

*Sweetycat Press 'Zoo Anthology'/PUBLD 2022-09/Amazon*

My tiger is wild: at night, alone in the forest.  
 Burning eyes – seen late, too late.  
 In dreams, in nightmares, heaven's view.  
 Mostly friendly; else, I wake up.  
 Don't believe my beautiful enigma?  
 He's real and fierce – more real than you...  
 in the walk-through treetops (out of sight);  
 elsewhere, a pride of lions with young;  
 face-painting, essential.  
 I remember Blake's 'Little Lamb':  
 cute, cuddly, innocent;  
 until that one day

he scratched out my heart.

My eyes didn't believe it kept on beating.  
 Bloody. Gaping. Utter nightmare.  
 Don't see my tiger anymore,  
 since Yesterday, when we buried him.  
 Cold. And read aloud:  
     'Tyger, Tyger...'  
 No forests now. No tiger.  
 He was wild; we were tame.  
 Now? Night, night...

## **2022 LOST AND FOUND**

*Facebook 2022-10/WEB; WEB Star/2022-11*

Oh, Scotland count the days, the weeks, the hours  
beneath a Yorkshire sunshine, rain or storm  
at Hunslet, an industrial northern town  
in Victorian England's darkest times.

Remember, please, this toddler with blond hair,  
(or red or sooty). Who knows and who cares?  
The one planting memorial in the ground,  
no parting details; just the flowers of age.

See Births and Deaths from 1837,  
the poverty of absence, hope and aeons.  
Aged 2 Years And 6 Months. Who knew him then?  
In Memory of TW Landreth. (Died)  
That date – 27 years ago –  
we didn't bring baby home  
to meet big brother.

## **2022 EPITAPH**

*(Insp Writing Magazine/May 2022) QL 2022-11 (4th Prize)/PUBLD*

'If I should die,' please do not be surprised  
my old and creaky parts could cease to be.  
The rest would follow shortly – can't you see  
how life that's for the living is comprised  
of struggle/heartache/ work/moments of joy.  
Dull legacy's ephemeral. Rejection  
beautifies the heartrate and complexion.  
So make the moments spark your own toy boy.