

Focus on Family Creative Writing Group

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Dedications

Karen Dorman	- To my husband Paddy, my lifesaver!
Joyce Cunning	- To my husband Jack and son Paul.
Ruth Holloway	- To my mum Rosemary for always being there for me and listening to all my stories
Colette Maani	- To my mum who is ever a source of strength and love
June Gamble	- to my three children
Roy Anderson	- to my mother and sister for their help and encouragement
Rosemary Dunbar	- to my husband and sons
Linzi Dunne	- to Alex and Rhianna

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The White Feather

It was a Saturday morning 28th August 2009. I woke up feeling lousy. My foot had kept me awake all night and I had to get up two or three times during the night. I was to help my brother-in-law at the car boot sale this Saturday morning and I felt no more like going out helping than flying to the moon. My hubby reckons that things would go on quite well with out me. But I don't go through life like that. If I say I'm going to do something, I like to keep my promise. I said I would go and get ready but first decided to put on a load of washing in the machine. My oldest son had left in a bag of clothes belonging to my youngest son who had died in October 2008. They had been washed before but I thought I would freshen them up again. I was sorting through the washing and I spied this white feather lying among the clothes. People have told me that a feather is the sign of an angel and I just feel that this was Paul telling me to carry on with what I am doing and that he is near at hand. I lifted the wee feather and have put it away inside my Bible. My car boot sale was very successful and I just felt that what happened that morning made my day.

Rosemary Dunbar

The Christmas Tree

The tree stands in the corner

Decked with shiny lights

Underneath, all the presents

Wrapped and shiny bright

Now it's Christmas morning
Snow is on the ground
Everyone is excited
Because Santa called around
As the gifts are opened
There are shouts of glee
From this happy family
Gathered round this Christmas tree.
Now the day is over
And all have gone to bed
The tree has lost its sparkle
And is looking like it's dead.

Rosemary Dunbar

Why I became a Volunteer

I first thought about volunteering in 1996. I got in touch with Coleraine Volunteer Bureau, got my registration form filled in and an interview was set up.

My first volunteering position was to help serve tea in the Red Cross tearoom.

It was Thursday 27th March and I was to start at 10am. I never made it to work for I fell and broke my leg in 3 different places. I ended up in hospital for three weeks. This accident completely changed my life from being my own boss running a video shop to sitting doing nothing. The business had to be sold and I felt useless. My confidence disappeared and my morale hit rock bottom. I was in plaster for 13 weeks but it didn't stop me getting out and about and I had a lot of support from my good friends. After I had become more mobile I decided I was going to do something with my life so I got in touch with the Volunteer Bureau again and joined up for two courses that were available. One was a computer course and the other was a self-confidence course. This was the best thing I could have done for I began to find out things about myself and it gave me the confidence to try different things. The Bureau is staffed by a group of very friendly and helpful people and they have given me back my life.

I volunteer as a Home Start help. I have three families whom I visit once a week. I have been visiting one of my families three years, my second family two and half years and my third family one year. They are all brilliant and I look forward to my visits. I play with the children and read to them and just have a chat with the mothers.

My second volunteer position is in Coleraine hospital in the bookshop that belongs to Mountfern. One of the trainees at Mountfern helps in the shop along with a volunteer. The shop is open 5 days a week from 1.30-3.30 and the books are donated by the public. I enjoy this work very much and I love meeting all the different people. I have been doing this for three years.

My third volunteer position is with Praxis. I have befriended a young person who has been in care. I have done this for about a

year. I take him for lunch, the pictures or bowling. My expenses are all paid by the Bureau or by the company I volunteer for.

Volunteering has become my life and I enjoy being involved in all these different organisations. I like meeting all these new people and I feel that I am doing something worthwhile. I have gained a lot from all the different classes run by Coleraine Volunteer Bureau and have enjoyed all the different day trips arranged by the Bureau as well.

Rosemary Dunbar

The Light in the Midnight Sky

You can see the dark or you can see the stars and moon.

Hope is brightest in the dark if you open your eyes to see it.

It's when things get really tough we start to think about our lives, hopes and dreams.

It can be a wake up call to get on the right path.

Now is the time to take action, to fulfil your dreams.

It may seem impossible but you have to try, you have to go for it,

No matter the odds your destiny awaits but it will not arrive on your doorstep.

You've got to put in the effort and doors will open,

Though at first they will seem all closed.

I have been waiting for that open door all my life,

I am locked behind a closed one,
But it's little steps that will take you to your dreams,
Do a little everyday and do not give up hope.
For that moon out there is willing you to brighten up your midnight sky,
And though I'm stuck in the dark,
I want to be a writer no matter what,
I want to be that star to someone, to open their hearts and minds,
All through the wonder of storytelling.

Ruth Holloway

Ice Blue's Wish

Ice Blue was not a popular fairy. You see, everything she touches turns to ice, so the other fairies run when they see her coming. The frost fairies welcome her but only if she doesn't touch them. Ice Blue's heart though was not ice, she had a warm heart. One day she wanted to help an injured squirrel but knew if she touched it, it would turn to ice. So she ran to get help. This led her to be asked to be a messenger fairy. She would be told what to say and to whom and then she would fly off and deliver the message by word of mouth. She was quite good at this, this meant she could help and not have to touch anything. She did have problems opening doors which meant she'd have to holler for someone to come and open it for her. Still she enjoyed the job and the fairies were

beginning to accept her. But she wished in her heart that she could stroke a cat, touch the soft blossom flowers and hug a tree, all this the other fairies took for granted but Ice Blue wanted it more than anything. And so when she went to see a fairy witch she stated her wish. She was told to drink a potion which would put her to sleep and when she woke up again she would become normal. This she did but things did not go back to normal, she touched things and they heated up, the complete opposite which was even worse because she was setting fire to things. Ice Blue cried in despair, would this nightmare ever end. Then she saw a white bright light and an angel descended from a beam of sparkles.

“Never fear the angels have heard your plea” said the angel “did you not know you had me, your guardian angel, that you are not alone. You see good fairies have a guardian angel and bad fairies a fallen angel. You are good and pure of heart and I am your guardian angel Dreama, nice to meet you”

Ice Blue stared in amazement “you can help me?”

“Yes I have been sent to heal you” the angel said.

She put her hands upon Ice Blue’s and a blue light passed over them, no freezing or burning appeared to happen to the angel.

“Now try touching something” the angel suggested.

“I don’t know that I should” said Ice Blue “I’ll either turn it to ice or burn it”

But the angel insisted so she touched the chair and it did not freeze or burn, so she touched the vase of flowers. She felt the softness of the petal and sighed in awe. This is what she had wished for. She ran outside and hugged a tree, she stroked every animal she could find, and she was delirious with joy.

She turned round to thank the mysterious angel but she was gone, back to the sky she supposed. From then on there was no holding her back, she touched everything and anything and it was oh so wonderful. She had wished and it been answered.

Thank you she said silently in her head to the angel.

“You are welcome” the voice replied in her head, it was her angel talking to her “I am always here, you are never alone” the angel reminded her.

Ruth Holloway

My Future

The day has come

I'm going away

No longer with my parents

I will stay

My own boss I will be

From regulations I am free

New friends and strangers I will meet

To achieve my goals I must compete

Reading books and studying hard

A first class honours is on the cards

Rosemary Dunbar

The Bann Flows Past

As a child I sat on the river's edge and watched the Bann flow past

It meandered slowly northwards until it reached the sea at last

Along its route it passed so many fishing spots of old

Like the Salmon Leap then you'd Dougan's Bay where many yarns
were told.

The salmon travelled southwards on their journey for to spawn

It was a pleasure just to watch them from early dusk 'til dawn

Now the river passes silently, no sudden splash or sound

And neither fish nor fishermen along its banks are found.

It's sad so rich a legacy has been allowed to slip away

Man's greed, pollution and ignorance have somehow won the day.

At least I've still the pleasure when in bed I turn off the light

Of the salmon rising endlessly as I dream throughout the night.

Roy Anderson

Feeling Terrible

I got up on Sunday morning and felt terrible. It felt like I had no air and I didn't want to do anything. I had to eat something before I took medication. I didn't eat much for two days. I should have eaten something to ease my arthritis tablets. I didn't know the number of the call out doctor. Eventually I got through but they didn't understand me, so I had to call Susanne to contact them. I told them I wanted an appointment but they wouldn't take me seriously. They rung me and asked about my medication and they gave me something I can only take three times a day. Shortage of breath is a regular problem for me. On Tuesday when I took my medication I was hoping that I would be well for my meeting as a Shadow Council delegate in November. I have a special certificate awarding me this position and I am looking forward to taking part. I worry that it will be too hard to put across what it is like to have a disability. Those who don't live it you don't know. You have to be in people's shoes to understand.

June Gamble

Rose Dew and the beauty contest

Rose Dew was the most beautiful fairy in fairyland, apart from Queen Titania of course. She was entering the fairy beauty contest and everyone knew she would win; some fairies questioned whether they should even bother having one this year since Rose Dew always won. Rose Dew heard all these rumours and decided that maybe she had better sit this one out to give another fairy the chance of winning. So without telling anyone she did not go to it. Everyone was looking for her but she did not turn up. So another

fairy Pink princess got lucky and won. Rose Dew was a bit disappointed in missing out on the trophy but she knew she had done the right thing in giving another fairy the chance to win and she felt more beautiful inside. Kindness makes you beautiful on the inside even if you're not as beautiful on the outside it will shine through and people will see your beautiful heart.

Ruth Holloway

My Thoughts

Sad and alone I stand and watch

The waves along the shore

My life is over, the time has come

I want peace for ever more

The seagulls cry as they duck and dive

My thoughts are far away

Why am I here I do not know

So help me God I pray

Nothing so bad it can't be fixed
The answer is clear they say
Someone has answered me about
These awful thoughts today.

Rosemary Dunbar

The Sock

In all the households of today
There are lots of games that people play
But the one that takes me to the fair
Is trying to find a matching pair.

My son has thought of an idea
To try and make things very clear
Why not buy them all the same
So you don't have to play this game.

I sometimes wonder if I'm going blind
The missing sock I just can't find.

I've been trying for many a year
But this problem won't disappear.

To solve this problem would be great
And what a difference it would make
Whoever comes up with a plan then
Should make it onto Dragon's Den

Rosemary Dunbar

Lost Twins

There were a lot of highwaymen in my area up Murder Hole Road (on the way to Limavady). They used to hang them outside a manse up there. I was born in a house in Dunasilis, which has since been knocked down. On the way to Castlerock I often see the area that I was born in. We had nicknames for the roads around us. My mother was from a family of fourteen, from Upperlands in Magherafelt. My Dad came from Ballinrees. There were seven of us. We lost two twin sisters who were younger than me. My mother never forgot the lost children. I have a lot of Scottish blood in me.

June Gamble

Adult Education

A thought has finally struck me I've been sitting up all night

I've found the answer to my problems which will end my current
plight.

I've too much free time, I'm on the Dole, my thoughts are all doom
and gloom,

I've decided to do some courses and go back to the classroom.

My plan of attack is simple I'll check the library and local press.

There's bound to be some courses that will help relieve the stress.

I'm not seeking out certificates, diplomas or degrees,

I just want to have fun while learning – it's just myself I have to
please.

So once the weekend's over the search will then begin.

I now have the motivation, to fail would be a sin.

I'm no longer reminiscing or dwelling on the past,

I'm concentrating on the future, treating each day as my last.

So just be warned I'm fifty and signing on the dole

I've got life by the short and curlies, and I'm ready to rock and roll.

Roy Anderson

The Brightness of a Shadow On a Broken Wall

Before every act think of its end and not just its start.
Begin with faith that change can come no matter what.
How that builds or breaks this world depends on you.
All you can choose is the role you play, when and where.
Usually you can do more than you think
But end up doing much less than you should.
Love gives you confidence, fills you with hope
Helping you grow giving you space.
Life passes like a shadow on a broken wall
But you have a beauty that needs to be seen
Come out of the dark, paint your bright colours
If only a second's glow, burn bright and clear with might

Colette Ma'ani

Missing Love

Today I hunted for your hugs
I searched everywhere, everyone
But you are gone
Like a physical itch I feel your pull
Longed to rest my head upon your chest
And feel your arms knock away all blows
Both within and without.
Rest awhile on that dear heart
Let its beat help my own find
A steady resonance
Know that love again
Rebuild all its worn walls
Celebrate the sanctity of shared time and memories
Of tears, of hopes of pain
To know and be known
Makes of me my core
That steady knowing look
That sees what others cannot
The measure of me

Yet knowing that,
Loves even more
I fear this world does not even see or care
And I use the days to tread out the hours
That time spreads before me.

Colette Ma'ani

Sun's Magic

The sunshine warms my soul
Bringing inside out
Surfacing the good
Like freckles on a glowing skin
Memories ease cold joints into liquid gold
And heat sinks deep working out the cramps
Of frosted emotions
Stuck in the past
Leaning back to soak it up
The rays of heavenly love
Work their magic

Colette Ma'ani

What has life taught you?

What you don't learn to deal with the first time around will certainly reverse over you at least a dozen times until you do.

Holding grudges against people is like carrying their groceries everyday for them. You'll not get paid or gratitude for this load just expectations. Your expectations that they care or that they'll change when perhaps they never will.

Colette Ma'ani

What the Picture shows

This is a clown getting ready for a circus. I love to watch the circus at Christmas on TV. But now they no longer have circuses just the same films again and again!

But laughter is a good medicine to have. I sometimes do daft things to make people laugh. I have often lost my keys or purse and reckon I provide much laughter.

I love the acrobats swinging across the ropes. I've been to the circus just once at Coleraine but they had so little compared to TV.

I used to have a dog that should have been on TV. It could run out the door as fast as a cat and clear a 6ft fence. It was a half terrier half Pomeranian.

I miss him so much.

June Gamble

Tips for a happy life

When you are full of wind and need to fart

Let it go, let it go, let it go

When you're angry fit to burst

Suck it in, suck it in, suck it in

When someone's hurt your feelings to the bone

Have a big sweet coconut bun.

When you've done something wrong move on

But do something good twice to cancel out the debt

When you've said the wrong thing and hurt someone

You're a pratt, you're a pratt, you're a pratt

If you meet a bully in this life

Stand firm, stand firm, stand firm

If you meet a hurt soul

Listen well, listen well, listen well

When you walk a beach alone

Soak it up, soak it up, soak it up

When you've a good friend through thick and thin

Thank them well, thank them well, thank them well

When you can see the beauty in the rain and cold

Hug yourself tight, hug yourself tight, hug yourself tight

When you can't sleep at night no matter what you do

Let it go, let it go, let it go

But be sure to leave the window open like your mind

Let it go, let it go, let it go

Colette Ma'ani

There will be days like this!

There will be days like this!

When the sun is shining high

In the deep blue sky

When bees hum contentedly

In among the sweet scented flowers

Bare feet in the sand

Lapping water washing the cares away.

Not a care in the world

Everything is fine

What were those worries all about?

This is how life is meant to be

Thank God for days like this!

Karen Dornan

Bright Sunshine

Bright sunshine

Bright sunshine streams in through the window

It's great to be alive

A new day has begun

Peace and tranquillity fill my dreams

Rosemary Dunbar

Laughter

Laughter is free

That's what they say

Try to laugh

Every day

Smile and be happy

You will make friends

If you are happy you are strong

And through this life

You will carry on

It's good to laugh

You hear folk say

It keeps the wrinkles

All away

Rosemary Dunbar

Faces at the Window

Faces peering at the windows

Staring out into the night

In the shadow stands a woman

Ominously staying out of sight

Her heart beats loud but like a statue
Stands frozen to the spot with fright
She hears a baby crying
Suddenly, reminding her of her plight
Quickening a mother's instinct,
Like a tiger
For the child deep inside her, to fight.

Karen Dornan

Volunteering

- V- value and feeling good – that's what I get from volunteering
- O – optimistic – volunteering makes you feel optimistic about your future
- L – lots of opportunities to try different things
- U – unique – volunteering makes you forget about your own needs and concentrate on others
- N – nurturing – volunteering is good for nurturing the mind
- T – time is precious so why not do something worthwhile in your spare time? – volunteer!
- E - ego – volunteering certainly boosts your ego!

E – energy – volunteering gives you that get up and go feeling!

R – raising awareness about volunteering and telling people about the benefits you get from volunteering

I – interesting ways to develop new skills

N – new friends are made through all the different groups

G - getting out and about on different day trips

Rosemary Dunbar

Welcoming me back home

The lights of Belfast harbour

Are welcoming me back home

I've been at university

And no more I wish to roam

My big plan was to see the world

And meet some different folk

But a one bed roomed box that cost the earth

I was beyond a joke

I'm glad that's it over
And I've got my degree
A 'Stay at home' that's what I am
No more travelling for me

Rosemary Dunbar

The Angel Of Reflection

Sometimes we need to search deep inside our hearts,
Deeper still into our souls,
Leave all our worries on angel wings.
Use your creativity to solve all your problems, the angel will show you how.
She will put opportunities for growth in our path, though sometimes it feels like torture,
We must trust that we are going on a journey that will end up in a destination so wonderful and bright.
So don't be put off through the dark tunnels of life,
Work with what talents you are given and discover some new ones on the way.
For these are the answers to find joy and purpose in this sometimes cruel world,

Heaven is waiting but first you must earn your place here on earth,
You have to go through the bad times to get to the good times.
For surely you must know your angel will make it all worthwhile.

Ruth Holloway

The Angel in the Globe.

Poppy hurried down the stairs excited. It was Christmas morning and she had a doll waiting for her. She had picked it out months ago. It had caught her eye one rainy Tuesday morning on the way to school and she had asked Santa for it. She had every faith that Santa would not let her down. But when she came down she saw no sign of the doll. Her mother's face was a little sad. "Santa couldn't bring you the doll" she said "but he bought you this instead, it is very special"

Poppy felt a pang, if her father were here he would have given her the doll for sure, but not even a doll could bring him back.

She opened the parcel and saw that it was a crystal globe with an angel in the middle. Immediately poppy fell in love with it. She was a bit sad she didn't get the doll but at the same time glad she had got the globe instead. She shook it and snow made the angel glisten. She played with it most of the day and before she went to bed she shook it one last time. This time she could have sworn the angel moved but thought she was probably dreaming. But that night she was awakened by a voice, she sat up and turned her lamp on, she went over to the crystal globe and there inside the angel was alive and speaking to her!

“I have been sent to protect you” the angel said “and to take away all the sadness you’ve been feeling since your daddy died” it was true she had been sad since her father had died, her mother had tried to make the best of things but she couldn’t bring her father back.

Then the angel became still again. Every morning poppy shook the angel globe and each time she felt a spark of happiness, enough to keep her in a good mood that day. Of course she was still very sad at times but the angel had uplifted her heart. It was the best Christmas present she had ever received, she had quite forgotten about the doll now, she got something more magical and special than she ever imagined possible.

Ruth Holloway

The Laments of the Angel of death

The angel of death looked down upon the dead kitten in her hands with tears in her eyes. She didn’t like her job at the best of times but today she just couldn’t face it. The precious life force of the kitten had gone and the wonder of it’s creation over. What a waste it seemed, she wished there was something she could do to bring it back to life and so she embarked on a way to try and save it. First she flew up to the angels of heaven and asked if they could help.

“You can’t bring back life” the archangels told her “your task is to take dead souls and allow them to pass on to the beyond. That and nothing more”

“But I can’t, it’s only a kitten, it barely got a chance to live, it just seems so sad, please there has to be something we can do for it”

“You must accept death, death is not the end” Archangel Michael told her.

So the angel of death cried in despair.

“Why are you crying?” said one of the most beautiful guardian angels with long brown hair “the kitten will live forever up here with us, isn’t that a greater destiny?”

“But this kitten had owners, people who loved it as I love it. They must be breaking their hearts”

“But they will see it again, indeed it may even be reborn”

The angel of death still couldn’t accept this. But she knew her task had to be done. So she took the life Essence, for a cat does not have a soul but still an inner essence and helped it to pass on, it appeared in front of her in spirit form. From then on the angel of death would fly up to visit the kitten from time to time and accepted that it was in a peaceful place and would have a happy eternity. It helped her to get on with her job and it was no longer a sad thing to her that creatures should die for they had a greater destiny to live in the heavens.

Ruth Holloway

The moonlight masquerade

It was the night that Essence had been waiting for, the moonlight masquerade where all the magical creatures came together for a night of merriment, dance, romance and a good time. This year Essence was hoping to meet her fairy prince. It was nice to be a moonlight fairy but it got very lonely. Spending hours gazing upon the moon checking it didn’t fall out of the sky or move. The moon

was a tricky thing, it often threatened to fall down and she had to use her fairy magic to hold it up when it took this notion. Humans had no idea how hard it was working with the moon and its constant bad moods. Tonight she was free to dance and frolic underneath the moon and some other fairy was standing guard tonight. She had picked a blue starlight gown and a masquerade mask. She liked the mystery of a masked ball, you could meet anyone and fall in love and not know who it was the next day, searching for that special connection you had that night. It was a chance to let yourself go and she would tonight. It was a cold evening but nothing could dampen her spirits. Soon it was time to go, she grabbed her shawl made of spider webs and made her way to the dance.

There was already quite a crowd, fairies of all shapes and sizes, unicorns, dragons, witches, goddesses to name but a few. She surveyed all around her. Then she stood to gaze at the moon and as she did so a tall male masked fairy asked;

“Can I have this dance”

She smiled and said in response “why of course” so he took her hand and they danced to the tune of the violin and harps some fairy entertainers were playing. He was certainly a very skilled dancer, and as they swayed to the music, him holding her in his arms she got swept up in the magic of it all and knew she was falling in love and with whom? That was the mystery of it all and it enthralled her. The night had to end sometime though, she realised she had danced all night with a strange fairy. They hadn’t even paused for a drink of fairy ale like the other fairies did, so caught up in each other they had been. Surely they would feel the connection when they met again and even though they didn’t know what the other looked like surely they would somehow know?

The night ended with a romantic kiss. I have found my prince
Essence thought.

The next morning essence awoke with the panic of maybe never meeting her prince again, of not knowing who he had been, then she reassured herself they would meet again. But for two whole fairy months she had not sensed his presence anywhere near until one night she heard a voice behind her. The same voice that had asked her to dance that night, her heart pounded, it was him.

She turned round only to come face to face with a male fairy whose face was like a horse's behind, but she knew in her heart that it didn't matter, she had found him and she would not let him go over petty reasons. He took her hand and smiled.

"Do you love me as I do you?" he asked.

"Yes" she said whole heartily.

Then the ugly glamour wore off and he became the most handsome fairy she had ever seen with long brown hair and eyes as bright as a squirrel's.

"I was testing you" he said "to see if you accepted me even if I were ugly, if your heart was true, and I can see it is"

They embraced and kissed.

"At last I have found you" she told him.

"At last I have been found" he replied.

Ruth Holloway

Dear You

I've been where you are so don't despair

I know that you feel alone

I can assure you John that's not the case

You're certainly not on your own

At some stage in life

Everyone feels that all is doom and gloom

And no longer the happy ever after as written by Mills and Boone

Without the downs there'd be no ups

Without good there'd be no bad

So get off your arse and face the world

Instead of sitting there feeling so sad

It's said that laughter's the best medicine

Of which I'm inclined to agree

As well you know you'll hear my laugh

Long before you finally see me

So pick yourself up
Start the day with a laugh
We all have troubles to bear
It's best to talk about such things
Especially to those who care

I'm always here to listen
I know you'll find that strange
The fact I'll have to wear a gag
I'll leave for you to arrange

So give me a ring
Day or night
Or better still knock on my door
You'll always find a warm welcome
You're a friend whom I'd never ignore

Roy Anderson

My Soul mate

Four years ago I lived alone
Happy being by myself
Never dreaming that I'd have company
Content being left on the shelf
Until I met my soul mate
Who was also lonely and free
The bond we shared together
Was plain for all to see
She's always there to comfort me
To pick me up when I am down
In the time we've spent together
I've yet to see her frown
I hope good health will see us through
Together to the end
My Soul mate, my Companion, my Black Mongrel
My True Friend

Roy Anderson

I love this time of year

I love this time of year. A long warm sunny day, a bag of potting compost, all my different bedding plants and all my hanging baskets and good window boxes laid out in my back yard. I know that I can go into the garden centres and buy baskets and window boxes already filled with flowers but I just love the feeling of achievement I get from planting out my own original design. After spending the whole afternoon planting and arranging the different colours of flowers in each pot I hang up the baskets and put the window boxes onto the windowsills.

Now over the next few weeks I will water and feed my plants and hopefully they will spring forth and bring me a brilliant display of colour.

Bright sunshine streams through the window

Its great to be alive

A new day has begun

Peace and tranquillity fill my dreams.

Rosemary Dunbar

A Present for my daughter

Blackie was bought from a woman who went to Australia. I think he was homesick and that's why he always ran out of the door to try and get back to his previous owner. His old name was Max and

he was a bit confused by me calling him Blackie. Names are like that sometimes. We brought a kitten in the boot of our car to my sister-in-law's parents and it kept yamming so much I said, "Keep quiet, Tootie Fruitee" and that was its name ever after. No other name would stick. Blackie might have escaped often but he always made it home eventually. Even when I left him at a friend's house for a week he managed to find his way back to my door. So even though he kept escaping he somehow always came home. I got a real shock when I discovered Blackie was not a he but a she. My next door neighbour told me that Blackie was going to have a pup. I was shocked. Blackie had one little pup half terrier and half Pomeranian. Blackie's pup had the same desire to escape as she and would get out through any hole in the hedge or jump over the gate. I really enjoyed both dogs and I miss them.

June Gamble

Feeling so alone right now

I know you are feeling so alone right now. Feeling as if life has been completely ruined. Your eyes have become dead without that spark of joy. I can tell you are going through the motions looking for a way out.

I wish there were no bullies in this world to torment and corner you. If you hadn't already been so beaten down by other things perhaps this latest blow would not have been so fatal.

I feel your distress. I know you cannot sleep. Can find no way ahead and the dark maze that has become your life has no light to guide you.

In desperate moments you waver tired of all this pain. Desperation fuels your growing stress. Your eyes have now a hunted quality above the dark hollows beneath.

Our conversations seem inadequate to the need of this urgent moment. I fumble to find the words that can block this deluge of blackness descending.

But please listen to my words.

This pain will pass. There will be a day that you will breathe easy. Your mind light. You'll laugh and live and feel so much joy again. I know you cannot see it now. Cannot even imagine it possible. But it will come if you give it time. For if life can bring pain and loss and despair, it also brings one guarantee. It will always bring change too.

I know you cannot feel it yet but change is like the air we breathe necessary to life. So hold fast, hang on in there. Hold tight to life. Because change is coming. You may not see it or feel it but it is working its magic.

And in that dark maze you find yourself there will be light somewhere. You need to believe that and begin look and to hope. For before a search begins we need to know what we have lost. You've lost hope, now be patient but be strong you've just begun, joy will come.

Colette Ma'ani

Now Christmas is once more upon us

It's a magical time of the year.

Most people are thinking about presents

For their family and friends they hold dear.

It's a time to give and a time to share

To thank all those who show that they care.

Why can't the Christmas spirit last twelve months of the year?

When people in the world could live without fear

It would be a world of helping, of loving and giving

It would be a wonderful world in which to be living

So let's all be thankful for what we've got

And remember it's always better to give

May all of you live as long as you want?

And never want as long as you live.

Roy Anderson

The Volunteer Bureau

I was out of work with nothing to do
I felt like banging my head on the wall
Then I heard about the “Bureau”
And I decided there to call
The staff were pleasant and friendly and my
Doubts were put to rest
As I discovered the scale of the “Bureau”
Where my strengths would be put to the test
There are numerous placements available
Like gardening, painting or helping the sick
There are charity shops, care work or courses
I found it difficult which one I would pick
You meet people, have fun and social days out
It’s certainly not all work and no play
So get down and enrol at the Bureau
Even though it’s a job without pay.

Roy Anderson

Friendship

Walking up garden path

Knowing my friend is there

Waiting to greet me with her cold wet nose

While wagging her tail in the air

She then runs to the hall

And fetches her lead

Knowing I'll take her a walk

She's the only true friend

In whom I can trust

The only one

To whom I can talk

Roy Anderson

Imagination

Imagination is a wonderful thing
It can brighten up the dulllest day
The mundane becomes surreal
You can imagine anything you like
The world is full of possibilities
It can change your state of mind
Make you smile instead of frown
The simplest object is a magical surprise
You don't need much to work with
When you have imagination
Just let the magic do its work
Make your own entertainment
Instead of watching rubbish TV
Pull yourself out of reality
Just for a minute in time
You can make the whole world
An exciting place
All you need is imagination

Ruth Holloway

A Poem for Mother

Mother

Kind hearted, helpful

Baking, caring, cleaning

My mother was protector

Organiser

June Gamble

Sometimes

Sometimes love has its way with your heart

It can open it up, or it can tear it apart

Sometimes love can really leave you hurt

It can make you cry, without even a word

Sometimes words can be lovely and sweet

But other times, hurt right down to your feet

Sometimes words can really go deep

And you'll think about them as you're falling asleep

Cause love is a river, a never-ending road

It's the path to your heart
A one way ticket round the world
Love is a fire, a never dying flame
It can fade away, but re-ignite once again

Sometimes people can be nasty as hell
They can cut you up, leave your heart bleeding as well
Sometimes people can hurt you by mistake
But there comes a time, you've taken all you can take
Sometimes we just need to understand
What love really is, it's a masterplan
Sometimes we just really need to know
It takes courage and patience and time to grow

Cause love is a river, a never-ending road
It's the path to your heart
A one way ticket round the world
Love is a fire, a never dying flame
It can fade away, but re-ignite once again

Linzi Dunne

If You Do Nothing Else

If you don't do anything else, be kind
It is the best reward you will find
Take a risk and go for it,
Or you'll end up feeling like a git
Say those words you want to say,
You may regret your delay.
If you say you're going to do something, do it,
Even if you can only manage bit by bit.
Pace yourself, it's not a race.
And if it is you'll get your place.
Life is hard, yes that's true,
But doesn't life suck when you're feeling blue?
Take a break and cry it out,
Then go back to getting about.
Stick with your hobbies, your favourite things,
These are what make your heart sing.
Find a solution or distract your mind,
After a rest you'll be fine.
To put on your spiritual armour and face a new day,

Try and keep those demons at bay.

If you do nothing else read this poem out loud,

And do something great that will make you proud.

Ruth Holloway

Children's Story

Once upon a time there lived two little girls with their mum and dad and granny. They all lived happily together in a big farm house out in the country miles from anywhere. The two little girls were great company for each other. They did everything together. If you saw one of them outside, two seconds later the other one was just behind her. They didn't have electricity so they had lots of time to do things together and they both had lots of dollies and teddies to play with. These were their imaginary friends and they were never fed up living on the farm. They had lots of fields they could play in. Their house had a big upstairs and they used to use the landing as a hospital ward. They would play doctors and nurses and their patients would be all their dollies and teddies. Their granny spent a lot of time playing games with them and reading them stories and taking them for long walks in the country. They used to gather lots of sticks for firewood and granny would tell them lots of interesting things about the countryside and all the different wildlife. Both girls had imaginary friends and their granny told them that if they had any worries they were always to talk to their imaginary friend and then they were to take this friend with them and go and tell a grown up their worries. They were never to be afraid to talk to their parents. Their granny was a very

wise lady and every night when the girls went to bed they would all snuggle down together and they would all say their prayers and ask God to take care of them and their family. Life was great for this little family and although they were poor and did not have a lot of material things they were content and very happy.

Rosemary Dunbar

My Granny

Once upon a time
That was how they all began
Those lovely bedtime stories
Told us by our nan
They were full of surprises
And never one the same
Her memory was brilliant
And we were never bored

She would talk about her childhood
And all the things she'd done
Her life was so exciting

And she had so much fun.
My granny was so precious
Loving kind and true
And I still miss her very much
Especially when I'm blue.

My granny taught me many things
And this is what I do
She taught us how to talk to God
And this will help us through.

Rosemary Dunbar

Friend
Bossy, dictator
Short, medium, dirty
Blond, chatty, teasing, untidy
Hitler, dictating, bossing
Unfaithful, hurtful
Enemy

June Gamble

Birth

Smiling, happy

Exciting, cuddling, new

Baby, wonderful, grave, awful

Sad, crying, grieving

Missing, loss

Death

Linzi Dunne

Love

Floating, smiling

Longing, caring, sharing

Heart, content, people, hurtful

Numbing, evil, angry

Consuming, clenching

Hate

Linzi Dunne

I hear it all night
Pitter, patter goes the rain
Driving me insane!

Linzi Dunne

What is in a name?
Does it make us who we are?
It's done me so far.

Linzi Dunne

Fairies flutter fast
The air is filled with magic
Unicorns dance by.

Ruth Holloway

I dance on the breeze
My fairy wings sparkle bright
With dew from the grass

Ruth Holloway

Hope

Optimism, cheerfulness

Smiles, sunshine, happy

Dreams, positivity, depression, suicide

Dumped, hopeless, rain

Pain, trampled

Despair

Ruth Holloway

Dreams

Fantasy, castles

Clouds, fairies, unicorns

Floating, heaven, boredom, mundane

Nightmare, ordinary, bummer

Awakened, everyday

Reality

Ruth Holloway

Black

Dark, dire

Dripping, inward, coldly

Driving, out, all, leaving

Bright, space, within

Shining, true

White

Colette Ma'ani

Starving

Famished, rumbling

Hunting, crisps, chocolate

Stuffing, handfuls, refilling, trough

Sleepy, aching, belly

Bursting, full

Bloated

Colette Ma'ani

Water splashing hard
Overhead, shoulders and back
Cleaning body, mind and soul

Colette Ma'ani

Tottering gently
Unsure of his feet arms out
Exploring this world

Colette Ma'ani

Yesterday was bright
A taste of spring has arrived
Shoots and bulbs shooting

Karen Dornan

Bouncy, black, curly
My cheery wee dog Roley
What a star he is

Karen Dornan

Past
Dark, sea
Best to forget
Time to move on
Today I am happy
Bright, happy
Future

Karen Dornan

Energy
Productive, delivering
Getting things done
A low energy day
Sluggish feeling low

Achieving nothing

Energy less

Karen Dornan

Flanders Field

War had been declared again

All young men had to go

Join the army, learn to fight

To kill another soul

We left behind our parents

Our loving home and friends

To sail away to a foreign land

With the guns on which my life depends

I didn't even know you

You'd done no harm to me

They told me that I had to fight

You were my enemy

I didn't even know you
You'd done no harm to me
We met one day on Flanders fields
It was either you or me

Widow Mary lost her only son
He was her pride and joy
The Mitchels also lost a son
He was just a boy

He was just a lad of fifteen years
Full of laughter and fun
Another young lad from our street
Killed by the enemies gun

Another statistic is what they say
When another life is lost
Too many young men from our street
Died to pay the cost

To fight for king and country
Will we never learn?
How many thousands died today?
How many maimed and burnt?

No matter what country you're fighting for
What had been achieved?
Nothing, but sorrow heartache and grief
That cannot be relieved

Joyce Cuning

The game they call bingo

Is everyone ready the bingo caller cried?
No said a voice from three rows back
I've left my specs behind

Not you again Mary the bingo caller cried
You had no specs when you came last week
I know they're broke she sighed

Can anyone help Mary the bingo caller cries?

Here said a chap from the back of the hall

Try these on for size

Will those specs do you Mary the bingo caller cried?

Yes, these will do grand thank you young man

I'm very much obliged

It's time that we got started the bingo caller cried

Eyes down look in for your first number

Number ninety-five

Ninety-five shrieks Mary where did that come from

My book stops at ninety

I think that I'll go home

Just you do that Mary the bingo caller cried

You've kept us later again this week

And I'm getting rather tired

I was only joking said Mary its only a bit of fun
Let's start again I'll cause no more fuss
Unless to shout BINGO I've won

Joyce Cunning

Missing

I wish you would just come home
Oh what a week I've been through
I'm sitting here in my pjs
And all I can think of is you

I've missed you so much since you left
For 8 long years you've been my friend
I prayed I'd never see this day
Swore you'd be with me 'till the end

Don't want to cry anymore
My eyes are blinded with tears
I hope nothing bad's happened to you

My heart's so sore with the fears

I've been searching up and down the streets

Keep peering through the window at night

But so far nobody has seen you

So far there's been no sight

I've been thinking about putting up posters

So many drastic actions I would take

Just to have you back in my arms

So come home for goodness sake

I long to hear you purr in my ear

And sharpen your claws on the mat

To trip me up wherever I walk

And be my typically annoying cat.

Linzi Dunne

Magical and Inspiring

Things are always difficult
When you aspire to see
The best in yourself and others
You need to focus mind and body
Reach deep inside
And you will find a treasure trove
Of hopes and dreams and special things
Magical and inspiring
Just take the time
Believe!

Karen Dornan

Come Nearer

Angels I can't feel you near, come wrap your wings around me.
Free me from this endless toil and pain and put a smile upon my face.
Help me draw strength to face the fight and fulfil my life's purpose.

For I know that you are looking down but I need you a little closer.
Shower me with life's sweet blessings instead of an endless curse.
And make sure that at the end of the day I can rest at ease and shut
my eyes in peace.

Ruth Holloway

The Train Tracks

Exciting and thrilling playing this
Game of try and catch me
The noise, the lights, the thundering roar
Its power and smell, close by

Running free with friends laughing
Living life to the max
Feeling alive for the very first time

Young and free daring fate
Feet on the rails, cold and hard
The sound of the engine coming up the track
Screams of warning, the bravest

Staying longer than the rest

Dashing back from the brink

As the metallic monster trundles past

All of us giggling at the near death event

Feeling alive as never before

Risking everything to feel something

Colette Ma'ani

Coming of Winter-

The coming of winter arrives for us all,

And life becomes cold and frozen.

But when you're stuck in a rut only you can get yourself out of it.

Everyday you carry on and you wonder what life has to offer.

It's become boring and you're frustrated out of your brains.

Now is the time to make those dreams happen.

To put on a brave face and decide not to take life lying down.

You can be the person you want to be,

All you have to do is try.

Ruth Holloway

Some People Dream

Some people dream of riches, of sun and sea and sand
I often dream of old Coleraine back in my homeland
No matter where I travel
Be it London, Paris or Rome
I know that I'll return again to the place that I call home.
My journey's almost over
I'm getting off the train
It's just like when I left it
It always seemed to rain.
The skies now clearing above the town
Once filled with factory smoke
Now jobs are scarce, chances few
To many it's a joke.
The harbour's now a car park and a massive superstore
Once filled with boats and Dockers, now memories once more.
They say these are the good times and that they are here to last
I somehow feel the good times are memories of the past.
I've mixed feelings about returning home, it's filled me with
despair

My tears of joy and sadness just show how much I care.

At least I've still the memories implanted in my head

And I know I'll see those pictures when I lay down in my bed.

Roy Anderson

Despair has a friend.

She stands alone in contemplation, searching for her soul inside.

She's been rejected, feels unloved and tries to spread her wings and fly.

But she doesn't feel alive, her wings are weighed down by despair.

She looks up to the sky and prays for brighter days.

Her heart can no longer take being broken and she wants to sink down under the ground.

But light shines upon her face reminding her there is hope.

She is loved by so many angels but she's too bitter to acknowledge it as truth.

All she wants is him and she cannot reach that gold at the end of the rainbow.

But hearts will mend and one day she'll forget him,

She'll reach that sunlit sky and shine bright with possibilities,

Her life is not over, it's only just beginning.

Ruth Holloway

Old Bann Bridge

Walking across the old Bann Bridge takes me back to my
childhood years

The sights of the river and the banks where I played have filled my
eyes with tears.

The new sights seem weird and strange as they appear in front of
me

But the river Bann is just the same as it flows northwards to the
sea.

As I approach the top of the Bridge Street the whole Diamond
comes into view.

The shops, the banks even the old town hall all appear to be brand
new.

Whatever happened to the Old Diamond where as a boy I used to
play

Now filled with delivery vans and shoppers all rushing without
delay.

The crowd all seem to be strangers made up of all different types,

No longer the old men on the corner idly chatting while smoking
their pipes.

I've seen enough of the changes

I'll now return to the place I now dwell

And I thank God for the memories I cherish

Of the town that I love so well.

Roy Anderson

Magic Fifty

Now I've reached the magic fifty I've got my second wind

Life's full of fun and laughter once again

Each day's a brand new challenge and adventure

Now I no longer even think about my pain.

I'm grateful that fun's been a big part in my life

But I've also had suffering and pain

A good laugh everyday keeps the doctor away

And for that I can hardly complain.

Some people take life much too serious

They forget after work and rest comes play

I don't own a big car

Live in a big house

But I have a good laugh everyday.

Now being 50 and single

Alone in a flat

May not be some peoples' idea of fun

But be rest assured I've got a new lease of life

And I'm not leading the life of a nun.

So for all of you lonely people out there

Being fifty is not the end of the line

Have a laugh, have fun

Get out there join in

Enjoy life like I enjoy mine!

Roy Anderson

Hope

Hope is the thing inside that never lets you give up.

Hope is the angels gently holding you in their wings.

Hope is the heart and soul crying out for another chance.

Hope is the good things that come unexpectedly into your life.

Hope is the morning after that's better than the day before.

Hope is that person you meet that says just what you need to hear.

Hope is the people who surround you when you're ill.

Hope is like them for they never leave you alone.

Hope is the answered prayer that comes just when need it the most.

Hope is the one that captures your heart and whose smile makes you melt.

Hope is so many things rolled up in one,

But most importantly hope is always there, though you feel like it's trapped inside.

Ruth Holloway

The Mary Rankin

Born in the Mary Rankin

Growing up in old Killowen

No matter where I travelled it's the place that I called home

I've lived in Enniskillen, Belfast, London and in Kent

But I've always thought of Pates Lane, Dunlop Street and Kyles Brae

But walking up the new Killowen there's no trace of them today

It's called regeneration.

But somehow that sounds hollow.

Especially coming from strangers, it's a bitter pill to swallow

No open doors, no laughter, no children in the street.

Thank God for happy memories no computers can delete

Those days have gone forever.

Dear knows what lies ahead.

It's time to dream of better days as I settle in my bed.

Good times will surely come again from the seeds that we have
sown

And once again you'll hear the laughter when you are walking
Down Killowen

Roy Anderson

Happiness is a wing away

She's found a place where she belongs, the path is so much
smoother now.

But she sees that all those bad things led to here, if only she'd
known at the time,

She didn't need to cry those tears but they healed her all the same.

So now she flies with ease and smiles but she knows that hard
times will come again.

But why let it spoil the moment? She asks herself.

Of she goes to bring joy to her day and sparkle a little fairy dust for
others too.

Because the best thing you can do every day is make another
happy.

Ruth Holloway

Tobaria of the waters

Her beauty twinkles in my mind,
A star, ethereal being of nature,
Protector.
Holds the sparkling waters of healing,
In her ever fragile hands,
Urging us to love each other,
Fairies know the answers,
Behind our human sorrows,
Far more wise than we,
They know that love can heal our pain,
Their love for the universe means that there is no need for tears,
When fairy magic is near,
Tobaria will wipe them away,
With fairy glamour,
And reveal ourselves to us

Ruth Holloway

Praying

When we pray
We open our hearts
To our innermost being
Praying connects our
Heart to our soul
And we travel far away
From our animal instincts
To a place
Where our soul basks
In the rays of our higher power
And captures all that's good
To feed and replenish
Both heart and soul
For this moment we are
Complete, safe and protected
Regenerated and fulfilled
We are ready to return
As a better human being
With our hearts joyful

And thankful
For all the good things
Life can bring,
And ready to give and share
With others a portion
Of life's bounty.

Karen Dornan

The Daughter I never thought I would see again

My baby daughter was a nice little child. It broke my heart when I had to give her away for adoption. Her aunts and uncles and grandfather did not want to know her. I had to make a promise to my father that I would not do that sort of thing. Just to satisfy them I had to give her away and my sister Linda had a daughter and she wasn't married either. My brother and his wife adopted her so she was kept in the family. For many years I often thought of her, I called her Carol. Many years later I met with her and her adopted parents had renamed her Susan. Instead of calling me mum she just calls me June. I gave one away and got two back. Susan has a wee boy called Ian. It was a shock to me because I didn't know I would ever see her again. When I talk to her she is always asking about her half brother and sister. Hopefully we will be together very soon, it would be nice to have my family together.

June Gamble

If Tommy didn't get his way

Is the porridge ready?

All the children are in

Banging their spoons on the table

Making an awful din

Tommy stop pulling Mary's hair

And kicking your friend beside you

It's bad manners to stick out your tongue

Why are you always so naughty?

If Tommy didn't get his way

He had a nasty habit

He'd bite the child who was nearest him

Having them screaming and crying.

His Mum had been told of his tantrums

And of all the children he'd hurt

Their parents were cross, said Tommy should go

Let's talk to his mother first.

While talking with their parents
With Tommy by her side
He bent down and bit her on her leg
He was in for a big surprise

She turned and caught his fingers
Pushed them in his mouth
Clamped his teeth down hard on them
You should have heard him shout

The remedy changed young Tommy
From a naughty boy to a model youngster
Who shares his sweets and toys

Joyce Cunning

Dreadful Day

Aagh I'm ready to squeal
Is it any wonder I drink?
This day couldn't get any worse
I need a good strong one now I think
The house is a mess
I look a state
And last night's dinner
Still on the plate
I've been cleaning all day
And still I'm no further
It's a lot to do with my son
And my messy three-year-old daughter
I cleaned the kitchen
Took me half an hour
And now she's sitting there
Covered in blooming flour

Linzi Dunne