

## **Work in Progress – Pushkin Prizewinners’ Week 2013**

*These are pieces of writing begun at Moniak Mhor, which the children have continued to develop under the guidance of the two tutors, Diana Hendry and Gerry Cambridge.*

### **Coffee Cup with Tea Inside**

Jutta Katay Fodor

Coffee cup, with tea inside  
You must be really confused  
The word ‘coffee’ on you lied  
Or you are simply misused.

Once you fell off the bookshelf  
When I was sitting below  
And almost shattered yourself  
As well as hitting me a blow

Coffee cup, with tea inside  
You are left in some odd places  
Where I kick you aside  
And you leave tea stain traces.

## **2008**

Maria Grigoriev

Alexey finished school, it was May 2007. Yet he was already eighteen, but he felt himself like a child. Alexey failed his exams, so he couldn’t go to university. So he didn’t know what to do. Alexey had a friend, Mihail. He was a really strange person, he was middle height with a dark complexion. He looked like a gypsy. He seemed to know Grozny and had some business there. Now he came to Alexey and said, ‘Don’t worry, Lesha, you don’t need to go to university.

- Why?
- Because here, in Grozny, you won’t get any education and how you can imagine yourself in Moscow.
- OK. But you know I have nothing to do. I should go to the army, because you know my parents died. My Granny is so old, I can’t disturb her future.
- Don’t worry, I’ll make you a false certificate, that you’re married.
- Thank you, but what do you want me to do?
- I want to offer you some business.
- It’s illegal.
- Shhh, don’t say so. You know our country. It’s so stupid. Many good things, which are legal in many well developed countries, illegal in ours. Well listen, it isn’t very modern, but no-one in Grozny actually didn’t do this like I’m going to. You know it’s Karkaz, and everything there is criminal so I won’t be illegal. But as you know, many people of Georgia or Azerbaijan would like to

have something from Russia and some people from Russia would like to have something from Asia.

- Drugs?!
- Shhhh. I tell you, in Holland and Jamaica it's legal.

And Alexey agreed. He didn't know why, but he did. They started to work. Alexey didn't understand what they were doing. They have been meeting some very rich Georgians and Russians. Mihail usually said that they'd agreed. And then they went about and gave some things for some dark complex people, or take some things from them. They were working this year for one year. It became May again. Mihail said to Alexey, 'Lesha, I think I've taught you many things. Now I think you're ready to do something on your own. See, I'll give you some medicine, and I'll be in Georgia tomorrow. George and Arnop will meet you.'

Alexey was driving through the mountains. He was a little nervous. He felt very bad. He felt sick, dizzy. And so suddenly he stopped the car and shouted, 'I can't live like this any more!' Then he took the medicine and threw it over a precipice. Then he threw his mobile phone after it. Then he fell on his knees and shouted, 'Oh God, I really haven't believed in you, but now I understand you're there. Give me a chance! I can't live with it any more! Please, I need to change!'

Soon there began a war. I won't tell you about this war, just that it was Russia versus Abhazia versus Georgia. Alexey didn't talk to Mihail any more. Now Alexey was standing in a small room. He was bald and wearing a soldier's uniform. The old man asked, him sadly. 'Alexey, are you sure that you want to go to war?'

- Yes, I'm sure. May I have one call?
- OK, here's the telephone.
- Thank you.

Alexey took the telephone and spoke into it.

- Misha. Hi. It's Lesha. I'm going to the army, you'll understand. Bye.

Alexey was gone. He fought bravely and he was killed in Abhazia. The Georgians took the Russian army cars and blew up the Russian bases, so Alexey was killed. No one could know the names of our heroes in this war, but I think he was a hero.

And Mihail, I think he moved to America and became a leader of the Russian mafia. He has never been put in prison.

## **Words from the Soul**

Jutta Katay-Fodor

The words flow down my arm  
Like the blood that is in  
My veins, it is pumped  
From the chambers of my  
Heart, now on the page and  
Flowing still onto a  
Story which is spun in  
An intricate web of  
Pen-written letters which  
Sparkles in the brightness  
Of my words like  
Morning,  
Crystal-clear, glassy dew.

## **My Musical Inspiration**

Laura Minty

I met my piano teacher, Jennifer, when I was six. I was mesmerised by her long flowing red hair and the way her hands moved over the keys so effortlessly and gracefully. Almost instantly I had a new idol. I made a promise to myself that one day I would play as well as her. That cold October day in the small music room in the building full of musicians was the day my passion for music started. Her musical ability has helped me to pass five practical exams and two theory exams. Her insane amount of patience has prevented me from quitting when I lost faith in my musical ability. She has inspired me to push myself musically and she has changed the way I listen to music forever. Watching her vivid blue eyes scan the music as she plays, making the most wonderful sound come out of the piano is amazing. To put it into one sentence, Jennifer inspired, inspires and will forever continue to inspire me to create and play the most beautiful music I possibly can.

## **My Friend**

Alisa Matyunina

I've known Ilya since I was four years old. He lived six months in Russia and six months in Scotland. I can't say I didn't miss him when he went away. I did. But he wasn't gone long enough for me to despair.

But several years ago, he left. I was filled with a deep sense of loss. I was hit by the realisation that I had found the friend I had been searching for, only to lose him.

I met Ilya again several years after his unexpected departure. He visited me when I was on holiday. I should have been happy about him coming. I should have anticipated it with all my heart. But I dreaded it.

I feared that the teenage Ilya would not be the boy I played hide and seek with.

What a surprise I was greeted with. Ilya had become a young man with nut brown hair and matching eyes, an amazing intellect and a shining sense of humour!

We spent the week boating, swimming, fishing and doing lots more. Ilya had a particular gift for art. The objects in his pictures seemed to come alive. A warm glow of happiness filled me from my toes to the ends of my fingertips.

Everything ends at some point and that week ended all too soon. But I'm not sad, because I know that although we're continents apart I have a true friend.

## **Swallows**

Ariane Branigan

Navy blue waistcoats and  
Bright crimson ties  
Flashes cream underneath  
as they fly.  
Cartwheeling, darting  
All over the sky.  
Those birds with their  
Waistcoats and bright crimson  
Ties.

## **8 things seen through an owl's eyes**

Stephanie Glendinning

A forest bathed in sunlight,  
A sky crammed full of stars,  
A sea of open, hungry beaks,  
A deadly river of cars,  
A creeping rodent's blinking eye,  
A field swooping nearer.  
A pair of claws stretched out, prepared,  
A world seen so much clearer.

## **Water**

Gregor Yule

Transparent friend of  
Anyone and anything  
So patient water

## **Light Bearer**

(inspired by an image of an angler fish)

Ariane Branigan

Oh bearer of light,  
Bringer of change.  
Illuminate the darkest crevices,  
Reveal the deepest depths.  
Graceful, serene, deadly  
A gliding contradiction.  
Sliding through the blackest waters,  
Elegant, beautiful, lethal.  
A shimmering murderer.  
Oh bearer of light,  
Swim on.

## Untitled

Bruce Morrison

“Mum, I’ve been thinking...” Oscar’s mother was shocked. Oscar? Thinking? Somehow it seemed very unlikely. “What have you been thinking, then, dear?” she asked her son as she dumped a large pile of washing into her basket. “Well mum...” Oscar continued, “You know how, like, um... the army have been... uh... recruiting and, um, stuff, so uh, yeah, can I like join?” Oscar’s mother was completely dumfounded by this request and was silent for a minute. “Oscar...” she began slowly as her son listened up. “I don... I don’t think it’s a great idea for you. Personally, I don’t think you’d be a very good soldier.”

“What? Why?” asked her son, slightly offended.

“Well...” his mother replied awkwardly, “You’re not very fit, you can’t fight, and you struggled at school... I mean...”

“But they can train me up, can’t they, mum?” interrupted Oscar, determined to get permission, “Remember those adverts that they do on the TV: *‘join the army: we see potential in you that others don’t’*? I could be their best soldier, mum. Wouldn’t Granddad be proud?” Oscar’s mother, Gemma, went blank for a moment, and even Oscar could tell that she was deeply upset. “I-I’m sorry, mum...” Oscar began, before Gemma interrupted, “We’ll discuss this with your dad after tea, alright?”

Later that evening, after Oscar’s father had returned from work, the three family members sat in the living room: Oscar stretched over one settee, his mum and dad sitting on the other. Gemma sipped a large mug of tea as her husband spoke, “You see son, the thing about the army, is that, it’s not like a holiday. You need to understand that. It’s no scout camp. Sure, there’s berets, tents and badges but there’s also guns, bombs and tanks. You might not even make it through training. I’m sorry, son. We don’t want to lose you.”

“But Dad,” Oscar complained, “Can you just listen to what I have to say for a minute. This whole army thing might really sort out my life. Change me for the better. I can’t get a decent job and I did terrible at school, so, unless you want me here all your life then I think I’d better fill out a form. Besides, I know that you can’t really stop me, not legally, but I still know that if I go you might feel betrayed. You have to trust me, dad, and you too, mum, because I think that we all know that this is for the best. They’ll toughen me up. Promise.” His parents looked at each other awkwardly, as granddad stared down at everyone from the mantelpiece in his khaki uniform and forage cap. Gemma was the first to reply. “Well, son, I suppose that if you really want to, then, we can’t stop you, and I think that your father and I agree that, if this is what you really want, then go for it.” Oscar was relieved to hear that from his mum, even though he knew, deep down, that that wasn’t what they wanted.

## **The Lone Sock**

### *Or The Benefits of Owning a Tumble Dryer*

Iain Mackenzie

Oh black sock  
Alone on the washing line  
Impatient dryée, 3 days in the making  
Swaying swiftly in the wind  
An aspiring wind sock  
Peg slowly loosening  
You take to the air  
And land in a puddle

## **The Angler Fish**

Iain Mackenzie

The fisherman in the dark  
Her deceitful beacon glows  
Her false lantern a magnet  
Towards her wide jaws  
And thin white daggers

Floating slowly in the deep

## **Low Pressure**

Iain Mackenzie

A slow wandering stroll  
A mile high gaze  
With brothers and sisters  
Weeping silently in unison  
And casting deep shadows

## **My Grandad**

Rhianna Urquhart

My Grandad is extremely important to me. He really is. I know that I probably met him at Wick General Hospital because that is where I was born. I can only assume that because it was Caithness and because it was April, it was raining.

My Grandad's name is Robert Webster. He's got blue eyes and silvery white hair. He used to work at Vulcan, Dounreay. He's had a triple heart bypass. He takes my brother and me on holiday every year.

My Grandad lives next door to me as we moved from Wick to Thurso. It's really helpful for things like Christmas and birthdays, and the dreaded Maths homework.

Every night for the past month he has patiently talked me through things like trigonometry when my maths teacher won't. My Grandad is the only reason I can do Maths.

I tell my Grandad a lot, and I think he keeps me sane.

## **You'd be...**

David Morgan

Green – new natural life providing safe living conditions for all sorts.

Monday – start of a new week, or a new beginning.

September – trees lose everything, like we did, however it will soon come back.

Map of Britain – you fought for it, you won it, therefore you deserve it.

Lion – brave and sometimes mad, in more ways than one.

Spider – stops flies from ruling the world, like you stopped the Nazis.

Disease – chicken pox as people either get you, or they don't.

Coffee – you were warm on the inside, but a sudden burst of caffeine would spark a crazy idea.

Chicken curry – you were good to many people, however the spice would kick in and show an evil side.

A Rainbow – when things were bad and the rain poured, you brought light which confronted the rain.

The Great Wall of China – you stood firm, protected your country and made it what it is today.

Winston Churchill.

## **The Letter from John**

Polina Eremina

“I, John Hanson, promise to leave home before 10pm today. If I don’t do this, you can kill me any time.” This letter was on the table, like an unfeasible dream. Because there is nowhere to run. And if John can, he would run away, but he didn’t have legs. Only yesterday he threw a bomb at the enemy. But now he is a disabled soldier, lonely and nobody needs him. When John went to war, he was a valuable person. His dog – Lasti – was always next to him. But since the war began he is obliged to go and leave here. He thought that Lasti would wait for him but yesterday when he came back, nobody greeted John. He was alone, absolutely alone. How to escape? How? How to survive, alone?

“Help, help me!” cried John. But no-one heard him. “Where are you, Lasti?” And only silence responded to him. “I want to leave home! I want to live! Oh God! Please, I want to leave home! God! Do you hear me? I hate you! Why would you help me? Hate! I hate everything! I’m alone I’m sick! My soul is aching! Help!” he cried.

Suddenly he fell and he started to bleed profusely. Because he didn’t have any strength he couldn’t stop the blood. Far off was heard, “Bow wow!”

“It’s Lasti!” thought John.

And a really big black dog came rushing in to the room. She ran up and started licking the wound from which the blood flowed. But it was too late. He had lost so much. He died.

## **Me Meeting Murray**

David Morgan

A special person that I have met is Andy Murray. He is the number one British tennis player and is currently ranked third in the world. Tennis is one of my great passions and it was an honour to meet someone who I look up to so much.

It was April 2012 when a friend offered me a ticket to watch a doubles match in the Davis Cup between Great Britain and Russia. It was held at the Braehead Arena which is indoors. Although Andy Murray wasn’t scheduled to play, he was there to watch his fellow countrymen.

The teams were warming up when suddenly I spotted Murray giving out autographs. I had brought pen and paper in case of the unlikely scenario that he would be there. He was, therefore I tore down the stairs, raced round half of the stadium but eventually stopped as I almost knocked over a queue of people who were after his autograph.

After what felt like hours, a couple of minutes later, I was first in line. He had short, frizzy hair, and soft blue eyes, close to a grey tone. I felt great happiness but also disbelief as standing before me was one of the world’s elite sportsmen. This intensified as he spoke the words, ‘Quickly, I need to go.’

After meeting Andy Murray, it has driven me on to want to succeed in tennis.

## **Alcohol**

Laura Minty

Heart-breaker, though you mend the hearts of many  
Life saver, though you ruin the lives of some.  
Giver of indifference, though you bring back painful memories.  
Holder of souls, though so many have conquered you.  
Bottle of sorrows, giving the false illusion of joy.

## **The Mirror**

Polina Eremina

How tired I am from hanging on the wall.  
Why am I obliged to reflect all  
that approach me? Why can't I reflect only  
beautiful slim people? And not reflect you,  
Mister? So the mirror thought  
as in it the fat man appeared.  
He settled his collar, unbuttoned  
his jacket's lowest button.  
He touched his moustache and licked  
his lips. His fat face expressed pleasure.  
Because today he ate chicken with crispy skin  
and potatoes boiled in their jackets.  
Fat Mister decided to mark  
by celebration this good dinner  
and lifted the vodka from the shelf.  
He reached for a glass, opened the bottle  
and took a sip. He felt hot and he tidied his thin hair,  
muttered something and poured fluid into the glass  
right up to the brim.  
Then he came to the mirror and  
clinked glasses with his reflection  
and said, "Cheers!"  
He drank the contents as fast as a  
cheetah chasing its prey.  
The mirror was at a loss, but continued  
to reflect the man.

One hour later the chubby man completely lost control  
after the booze  
and threw his glass at the mirror.  
It shattered into tiny pieces.  
But every piece of glass reflected  
his smirk.  
"Why?" whispered the mirror.

## **I'm going to be a Princess When I Grow up**

Alisa Matyunina

I closed my eyes, pressing my head on the desk. The coolness spreading through my forehead. I lost myself in Mick Jagger's voice which floated through the room like a waft of hot walnuts on a cold day. I swayed gently, my hands sweeping the desk, picking up a thin layer of dust.

A quiet knock on the front door woke me from my trance. I rushed to open it. A postman in a red t-shirt retrieved from a brown bag a small parcel and white envelope.

I flew into the sitting room discarding the parcel which was addressed to my Mum, and gazed at the letter in awe. On the front it said "Abigail Adams" in blue ink. It was strange how the little piece of paper would change my whole life. My hands shaking, I slid my finger under the flap. I retrieved a white piece of paper, and began to read:

*Dear Miss Abigail Adams,*

*We would like to thank you for your application for a place at the London College of Sport.*

*We have assessed your application, and are very happy to offer you a place. Should you wish to accept this offer, please reply by the...*

I dropped the piece of paper. My heart lifted up into my chest. I collapsed onto the sofa, then stood up and started pacing around the room. I stopped and stared at a photograph hanging on the wall. My shining face looked up at the camera, as I clutched at a medal in my hand. I had succeeded in my dream. I managed to get into one of the most prestigious colleges in Europe. I had made it. So many people hated their job, but I had succeeded. I had my whole life ahead of me, and I would spend it doing what I loved. Something that many kids dreamed off, but few achieved, a princess of a sort. Nothing came even close to running. It's probably what a bird feels, a feeling of exhilaration and being free.

I needed to tell someone. I felt like my chest was about to explode. But everyone was out. I looked up at the clock. Mum wouldn't be home for another three hours. I reached for my mobile, but decided against it. Such news was better broken face-to-face.

I flew out the door. I could imagine a joyful smile playing across my parents' lips, even little John would be proud of his big sister.

I raced across the pavements and roads; my shadow following me the whole way. I ran past shops and cafes from which people gazed at me in wonder. I neared the office block. I could see my Mum's office window, see her figure. She turned her head slightly, and saw me through the glass. At first her expression was one of confusion, but it cleared when she saw me waving the sheet of paper. A warm glow spread through the ends of my toes to the tips of fingers, as my Mum smiled proudly at me, like I guess she did when I was born.

All of a sudden, her face clouded. She gesticulated frantically, here lips moving silently, as though she was trying to tell me something. My smile faded slightly, I felt my ball of light shrinking. I looked around me, all I could see was a busy street, but then I saw it. A large green truck was coming towards me with immense speed. I tried to run, but for the first time in my life, I couldn't move. There was a screech of brakes, and I felt as though a black sack had been thrust upon my head, and I was plunged into darkness.

*The girl's eyes fluttered open. She frowned slightly, but then seemed to make sense of her surroundings. Her eyes darted around the room, like a cat examining a new area with mild curiosity. She pushed her hands against the mattress, but found that she couldn't move. Unimaginable horror hit her, as she stared down at the flat and shapeless duvet lying casually over the place where her leg used to be.*

## **My Mum**

Polina Eremina

Today I am born. I feel pleasant fear of the unknown. My mum bawls, maybe she doesn't want to see me in this world, because I will eat her food and share her room with her... But maybe my mum cries because she hates winter, you see, in that season every day it snows, maybe she cries because out of doors it is January and really cold weather... Probably.

Ooh look! I'm here! I see the world. It's my Mum. She is smiling. I want to talk but I can't. All right, I'm smiling too. She has beautiful green eyes and a kind, lovely face. Her hair is wavy. I hope I will have the same wonderful smile and kindness. My mother has a necklace so she believes in God. It is He who has given me the chance to live in this unusual world. I feel happy. I think that my Mum loves me. And I love her so much. My mother is the most important person to me. I'm looking around. Everywhere cold, beige walls. I think quickly, IU will live here. I want to know! Please say to me! I want to live here with my nice Mum, I love her... May I?

## **Angler Fish**

Maria Grigorieva

I feel like an angler fish  
Because everyone is afraid of me  
And I can do whatever I wish  
Because everyone is afraid of me  
I'm an anger fish, it's me.  
And I can catch God.  
And if you see a helpful light  
Don't hope, it may be mine  
And if you want to sleep at night  
Don't say so, I can find you.

## **My Uncle**

Iain Mackenzie

I walk out of Inverurie and into a crisp wind on the way to my uncle's house. After ten minutes of walking, my mother, sister and I are on my uncle's street, we can see him greeting us with a wave from down the road. We walk towards the house while we wave back. Now at the house we go inside and are herded into the living room by my aunt. She has long, frizzy hair, a welcoming face and she always insists we leave with enough food to last one, maybe two millennia. My uncle is preparing soup in the kitchen while my aunt talks to us about her childhood and then asks us about our own. I'm reminded of something I've wanted to try for a while by the train schedule in the corner. When my mother gives me permission I leave the house and put a coin on the nearby railway line and wait for a train to pass. One comes quickly and crushes the penny flat, I pick it up and return to the house. We chat while sharing soup together, say our goodbyes, return to the train station and go home

## **Moniack Mhor**

Polina Eremina

Moniack Mhor  
Forever and all.  
Pushkin Prizes.  
Always in us.