

No.1 A Snowflake

by David Pryle

In the ice-lab,
through a frozen microscope,
I marvel at your shape -
a snowstorm starfish
unique as a fingerprint,
individual as a face.
Forged in the frost furnace,
embroidered from the etui of angels,
engraved by the tiny tools of God.
You swirl by the billion,
coalesce like coral,
coat the contours of the land:
make strange the world.

No.2 A Winters Tale of Cuillin Ridge
by Hayes Turner

We tramped out of Glen Brittle under flickering stars
Before the sun had risen
To fire the demon Trolls from black Coruisk.
Climbing hard we touched the diamond tip of Sgurr Nan Eag
Before he'd seen us
On a January dawn.

A shrieking eagle wheeled over Sgurr Dearg
As we abseiled out of his icy kingdom
Through the hoary reefs to the Stone Shoot.
And the sun slanted sharp
Through splintered crags of needle rock
On a January morn.

Cutting steps on Am Basteir, lifts the soul
Amongst the Gods. They stay their wrath
To hurl us from our precarious ledge on the Bastards Tooth.
Blood soaked pitons and ropes, grow deeper scarlet
As the sun haemorrhages away
On a January afternoon.

Down to Sligachan on tortured limbs.
Through white crystallised heather, Ptarmigan ground.
The grey tuille shades of evening fall.
And it's cold. Cold as the tomb
As the sun slumbers on
Through a deep January night.

Braver souls have stood astride the Himalayan range.
Stouter hearts have bearded Alpine peaks.

But nothing will lift them to higher plane
Than a January traverse of the Cuillin Ridge
Through the halls of the Winter sun.

No.3 An early winter in West Lancashire

by Alan Proffitt

Winter is early this year.

The trailing skeins are confused against
the hard edged blue, while the fields
fear the pink steel of the evening sky.

The eye-scape scans the once gentle land,
catches shapes of crazy decoration.
A confection of pure white, perfect
for greetings, yet unyielding in its message.

Canals are starting to solidify.
The brave and half-floating residents,
in boats less colourful and bold, hold and
huddle up against their stoves
which smoke angrily against the
sparkling threat. Walkers, some with
steaming dogs, crunch the pinched ruts;
and march to their hot drinks with red, seared faces.

Winter is before December this year.
We knew the previous deep cold days
but it is here before the jobs are done.
News of snow forces me to repair the shed.
I curse and knock numbed fingers,
drop small nails forever in the mud and leaves.
Scraping dead windscreens, I fear a journey,
or losing grip and hope for grit or salt.

As daylight falls our cats simply camp by gas.
They shun the world outside, where, in the
still darkness, an owl's hoot is blown and captured
in the zero void of the holding, leaden night.

No.4 Closures

by Daniel Holt

From the chill-describing air the tendrils take shape.
Slowing to an Archimedean point, cells contract
To explode in a many-fingered firework display.
The town's whole pulse is slowed.
Not yet the shortest but the coldest day so far.
By the rockery waterfall encroaching visions of
Molten rock and flame rendered in ice stop
Passers-by. The only fingers water can't outrun.
Little twin sisters laugh, pose, blow the smoke
Of mummy's cigarettes into the covetous air, fossilised
Stubs underfoot, as cars creep carefully along
Untrustworthy roads and grown-ups conversations
Tend to forecasts, festivities, snow.

From the white-knuckled hills, across the Fylde
The cold hands gently rocks the bough to stillness,
Besieges the house of the oldest man around, who,
To keep pain's equilibrium in check
Shuffles across the kitchen floor as if it were a frozen pond.
Their tiny fistled hearts clenched, buoyant on
The bare breeze, without noise the seagulls scan
The white expanse. No ice-creams to swoop upon
Today: The cafe's doors are closed, the shutters down.
What little heat the sun can spare is not enough
To warm the air. Puddles lie imprisoned. Dripping
Eyes are found out and by nightfall aren't crying.

No.5 First White

by Cath Hill

There it lies, the first white,
Sparkling, shining in the early light.
The cold steam rises beautifully eerie,
Slightly sinister yet subtly cheery.
The smell of winter catches the throat;
A frosty blanket covers new hope.
Watch the dogs' razzle dazzle dance of joy,
Their icy confetti launched like a toy.
The muffled noise of nothing
Save muted chirps and tweets,
Fun still to be discovered on crunchy crystal streets.
It is perfection on borrowed time,
Drink in the moment;
For right now it is life sublime.

No.6 One Day In January

by Hayes Turner

We climbed up the steep track, crunching ice splinters
And snow chards beneath our feet.
Breath came in hoary clouds
As a steam engine flagging on the brow
The path uncoiled into Eggerslack Woods.
Birch and Ash, Oak and Elm dance indecently,
With limbs entwined in grotesque disharmony,
Their naked bodies draped in a satin shimmering white.
The path inveigled us onwards.
The path of Goldilocks and the three bears.
The path of The Old Lady Collecting Fuel from
The picture hung upon my childhood wall..
We moved silently through that breathless world.
Utterly still and quiet until a pheasant skeetered
With wild cacophony from the burnished bracken.,
Disturbed by a man in an Astrakhan coat
And a girl wrapped in Russian furs,
Who came from a clearing by the wall.
“Happy New Year”, cried the man in the Astrakhan coat.
“Happy New Year”, we called.
The girl in the Russian furs smiled
And the snow fell gently down.

No.7 Snowstruck

by Moira Lazarus

Peace, poured in soft abundance,
Blankets the world.
We are muffled, cloaked, enclosed
In angel-whiteness and held still.
Draped trees bend their quiet acceptance,
Branches crystal-heavy,
Honouring the ground.

This is benediction, this is purity.
The silence drenches me.
Once, years ago, I woke with snowfall
Floating in the deep night sky. I saw
Infinite generosity - the sky brimming over
Sharing itself with the earth,
Simply too full with beauty.

The coldness was like truth -
Clean, clear, purging -
And the silence rang through me
Deep as a bell.
I drank it in: the
Utter silence, the stars and I
All One.

Now, in a back garden magical as Narnia,
I kick through powder soft drifts calf-high.
Thickness engulfs, swallows each step.
Underfoot, packed flakes creak
But the air absorbs the sound and
Hush pervades.

My cat's concerned. His paws disappear;
The ground is not where it should be.
Then, Zen-like, he accepts and adapts.
Every day he watches the dance of
Snowflakes outside the window
Every day he purrs, flowing from moment
To moment, effortless as the falling snow.

No.8 The Ice Man

by Philip Burton

Jokul Frosti aka Jack Frost

In what was once my Shangri-La -
the Antarctic Peninsular -

my shelves of ice are being unmade.
It's getting warmer each decade

so I think to track you down
in your smug electric town -

pick your lock with an icicle pin -
find your kitchen - burst in -

and - when your freezer is undone -
tip your ice-cubes out for fun!

You'll dry things up when you awake
treating the spill as your child's mistake.
Mf....

But remember, as you mop the floor,
polar icecaps have no door.

If you can't foster the world's ice,
buy water-wings is my advice.

No.9 Ode to a frozen Lake

by Theresa Bowley

A walk in the park one cold day in December
A selection box of folk on walkabout
“Beware” the sign says don’t they know ducks cannot read
The lake is frozen like a scene from holiday on ice

The ground is heavy and whiter than white
A shining sun is out in the sky, but why?
Malards and Canada geese look lost and bewildered
Under the sunshine the frozen lake cracks and sends them crashing

A family of songbirds are singing in tune at last
Children are searching for their last snowballs
Robins can finally get their berries breakfast
The lake is no longer frozen, the ice drifted away

But the noses are still red like Santa’s
Snowflakes are melting and my feet are thawed
The day in December feels more like in May
The lake is now glistening and the ducks are back on their stage!

No.10 The Snowball

by Shirley Elmokadern

She holds the snowball
in her mittened hands,
satisfied she's patted
a perfect globe.
She presses it to her lips
and gently takes a bite.
Her tongue tingles with the taste
of a thousand dendrites.

She bends down and pushes
the snowball carefully
across the virgin snow,
relishing the crunching
sound it makes,
as it grows
and grows.

Face glowing with exertion
she tramples a twisted,
path, as she searches
for only the purest snow.

She rests now, enshrouded
in her panting breath,
bones rattling with cold.
She gazes at the snowball
through frosted tears.
It has grown too big to hold.

*No.11 The View from my Window on a
Winter's Morning*

by Kenneth Venables

The sun, so weak can scarcely rise
To gild the misty, leaden, skies.
The frozen Ground is iron hard.
The frosted grass like glazen shard.
The barren border's rearmost edge.
Flanked by the ghostly frozen hedge.
Like hanging veils along her face
Bejewelled webs of priceless lace.
The fountain stilled, with ice embraced.
The pool unrippled, ice encased.
The entire scene so still and dead
As if all life in fear has fled.
The scene though beautiful is dread.
I shudder. I'll return to bed.
But then a movement takes my eye
Eliciting a joyful cry.
Beneath my casement, on the sill
A Robin lights and starts to trill.
He loudly sings in proud display,
Demanding breakfast, right away.
With quick response to meet his need
I haste for water, bread and seed
And stand in silence, thrilled to see
This hungry bird, sustained by me.
I vow provision every day
Until the sun returns to stay.
I'll furnish through this wintry state
Sufficient for him and his mate.

He casts a wary eye my way
Implying, "I'll be back each day."
A flash of red, he takes the wing.
With promise of a future Spring.

No.12 Winter

by Brenda Clare

Winter is a lonely man,
Ice-Blue his mournful stare,
Icicle tears fall from his eyes
And hoar-frost shrouds his hair,
Alone in frozen fields he walks
An outcast, shunned by men
Who shrink and shiver at his approach,
Bar their doors against him when
Rejected, in blizzard fury
He rattles hard the shutter's latch,
Slides fingers through the keyholes
Prowls and howls and around the thatch,
Until exhausted, growing older
In the shadows he slowly dies,
And men rejoice when he is dead,
At Winter's passing, no man cries.

No.13 Winter Geometry

by Don Nixon

I like the geometry of Winter days.
Slant angled boughs, obtuse or stark acute
now intersect on pallid parchment skies.
Ice needles glint, refracting radial rays,
stitching vectors on a rhomboid root,
and hem frost leaf lace in the canopies.
Arrowhead patterns on the pristine snow
are etched in by a feeding crow below.
Is this how Euclid came to be inspired,
wondering like Newton below a tree,
theorems in some gaunt arboreal chart,
cold science by imagination fired?
Thus Mathematics branches into Art,
one final twig to prove it QED.

No.14 Winter Night

by Bernardine Kearns

The bitter wind did twist and stir. Still and silent shone the moon,
The only company for her, a beacon in the velvet gloom.
As blackness overcame the blue, The snow produced it's ghostly light.
Across the frozen landscape flew her silhouette against the white.
On and on, her footsteps went, beneath which crunched the gentle
snow.

She raced against the black, the scent, of danger in the winter glow.
Her mind was firm and resolute, her heart was frail and terrified,
Her senses rang, alert, acute....aware of what the shadows hide.
Just then, a bird's cry pierced her mind, her heart lurched hard
against her chest.

Through cold relief she breathed and sighed, but ever further on she
pressed.

The world around was quiet and still, the empty ground stretched far
and vast.

A light ahead broke through the chill, a glimpse of home, of peril
passed.

Fixated on the tiny light, her footsteps matched her pounding heart.
The stirring air did not taste right, she stopped, and all thoughts tore
apart.

For as she stood there, petrified, the crunching footsteps didn't cease.
They slowly stalked up from behind, on ground as soft as lambkins
fleece.

Lungs un-breathing, heart in throat, gagging every will to scream.
Skin crawling underneath her coat, her eyes reflecting moon's pale
gleam.

Within a heartbeat, up she shot and tore ahead with all her force.

Her breath was hard, her veins were hot, she battled through her homeward course.

Not far behind the shadow chased, determined to consume the light. Bloodthirsty in increasing haste, and thus began the desperate flight. Every muscle flexed and pounded, hitting hard the frosty floor. Tall, skeletal trees around did scratch the air with fingered claws. A shadow overcame the moon as clouds ascended overhead. The snowflakes fell in heavy swoons, white and cold like souls of dead. The howling wind rushed in her ears, the blinding snow attacked her face.

Her eyes pressed out it's icy tears, as close behind the evil chased. On she fought with all her will, across the ice from death's cold grip. Which came and reached out for the kill, and on the ice her feet did slip! Within a twist of roaring white, a ruthless claw had grabbed her coat! Hook-like fingers sunk in tight, and headed for her fragile throat. Her piercing scream sliced through the air, but snow absorbed the pleading cry, The wind gushed hard and tossed her hair, breathing; "Give up! It's time to die!". Then, through the black and blinding white, She broke free of her coat and fled. But something flashed against the light and splashed the snow with shining red. She clutched her bleeding arm and ran, as white flakes flew with scarlet drops .

The light of home ahead expanded.... but the hunter never stopped. Black ice came beneath her feet, but on she pushed with nimble haste She slid over the glassy sheet, not one split-second could she waste. Through the night the light bore through, to which she tore in desperate heed

She ripped ahead, and light consumed, as home at last, her life was freed.

She glanced behind, but all was gone, hidden under fresh felled white. To which the moon knew, as it shone, had vanished in the winter night.

No.15 Winter optimism

by Joyce Reed

Come into the garden, where ice,
brittle as butterscotch, cracks
at the fountain's rim.

The gathered morning
shows ruched folds
filling the rockery's decline.

Snowdrops droop in dormitory borders
mulched tight in the season's sleep.
All promises breathe secretly,
unseen.

This hoary white
would suit you as a bridal gown.
The cedar tree is swagged with snow,
and frosty feathers fall. Diamonds
thread the willow's tent. They'll spark
with fiery arrows when the sun comes up,
and birds print hungry tracks.

The garden gleams
with a borrowed light. Please come.
We'll make snow angels
on the lawn, whose jealous green
is hidden for a while.

This is our day,
unsullied. With the peaceful stoicism
of the penguin,
I shall wait for you.