

— The —
**Treasure
Trove**

Six-word stories, *three-line poems* and other
creative writing gems by *Forgotten Australians*

OPEN PLACE

Support Services for Forgotten Australians

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{ celebrating the
spirit of creativity }

During the creative writing sessions that produced the writing in this book—held first in Bendigo, Central Victoria, and then at Open Place in Richmond, Melbourne—we played. We decided to have fun. We didn't worry about spelling or grammar or whether we had ever put pen to paper in this way before. Because of the respect that each person showed for the contributions of others, we were able to throw shyness to the wind and simply experiment with the flow of creativity. The pieces of writing in this book were created using a smorgasbord of writing techniques including 6-word stories, 3-line poems, sentence starters, sentence middles and sentence endings, hot topics, visual images, symbols, character profiles and unsent letters. We delighted and astonished ourselves and each other with what emerged. We did not set out to tell any particular stories. We set out to celebrate the spirit of creativity that is expressed in writing in some ... but that exists in everyone and is healing by its very nature.

Karen Masman, Creative Writing Facilitator

Dear Reader,

The Treasure Trove contains the creative work of a number of 'Forgotten Australians'. During 2009, 2010 and 2011, over twenty Forgotten Australians from Open Place took part in creative writing workshops. These workshops were led by Karen Masman who encouraged participants to place their contributions into the 'treasure trove'—the name given to a box placed in the centre of the table—in the hope that someday the thoughts, feelings and aspirations of these Forgotten Australians would be seen and appreciated by a wider audience.

Forgotten Australians have a history of being overlooked and disregarded. Their childhoods were spent separated from family and community, brought up in the institutional confines of orphanages and children's homes. Many were abused; emotionally, sexually and physically. Their circumstances were only brought to light via the Senate Inquiry of 2004 which concluded: 'There has been wide scale unsafe, improper and unlawful care of children, a failure of duty of care and serious and repeated breaches of statutory obligations.' There are 500,000 Forgotten Australians.

On 16 November 2009 the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, made an apology on behalf of all Australians. He said : 'We recognise the pain you have suffered. Pain so personal. So let us together as a nation, allow this Apology to begin healing this pain.' The work of healing the pain continues.

Open Place, a support service for Forgotten Australians, plays a part in responding to some of the needs identified in the National Apology. Open Place was instrumental in facilitating the creative writing workshops that have produced this beautiful and touching book.

I particularly want to thank Karen Masman who gently and sensitively encouraged the blooming of these creations. I also want to thank Karen, and the staff at Green Graphics, particularly co-owner Step Forbes and very talented designer, Frida Shoo, for the page design and print production of *The Treasure Trove*. I also want to thank the funding bodies for their continuing support of Forgotten Australians and Open Place— Department of Human Services (Vic) and FaHCSIA (Commonwealth).

Most of all, I want to thank and acknowledge all those who participated in the creative writing program and who agreed to have their contribution included. Some have chosen to be identified only by first name; it is sufficient that you recognise your own contribution. Many of the contributions achingly provide a glimpse of lives unimaginably altered and affected by traumatic childhood experiences. Some of the pieces of writing sparkle with wisdom and insight, some are filled with humour, and still others intrigue with the clarity and uniqueness of their vision. And all contributions demonstrate an astonishing depth of resilience and courage.

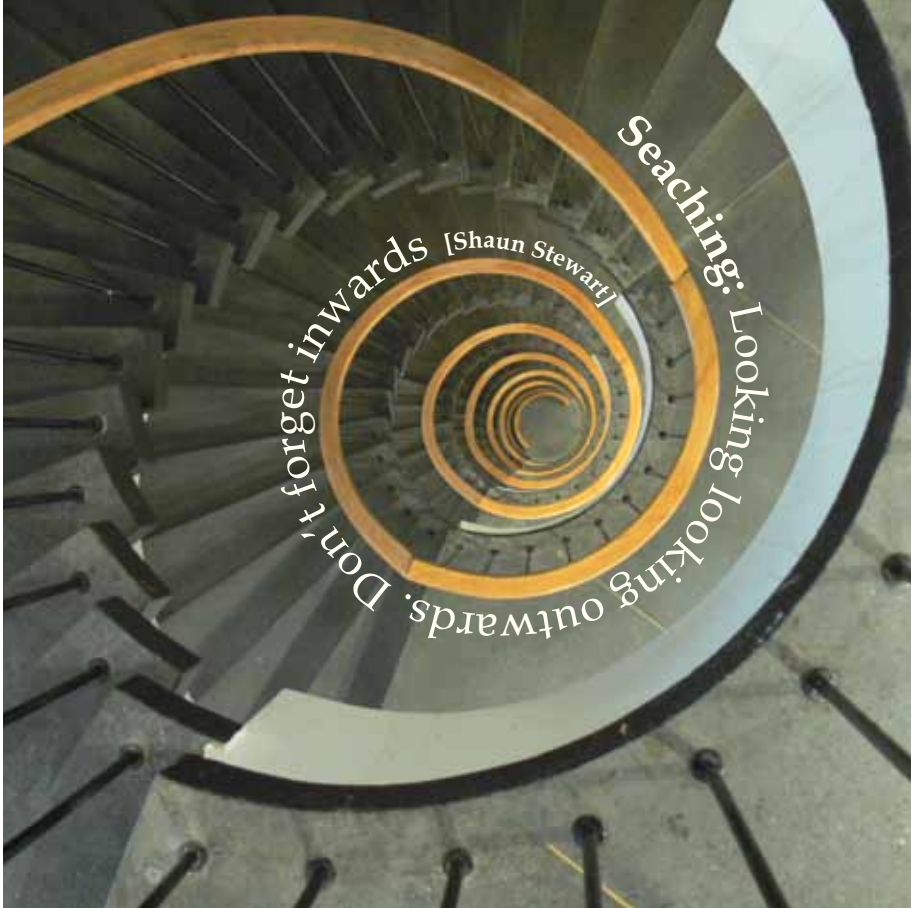
It is fitting that this book of memories and reflections is launched on the anniversary of the National Apology.

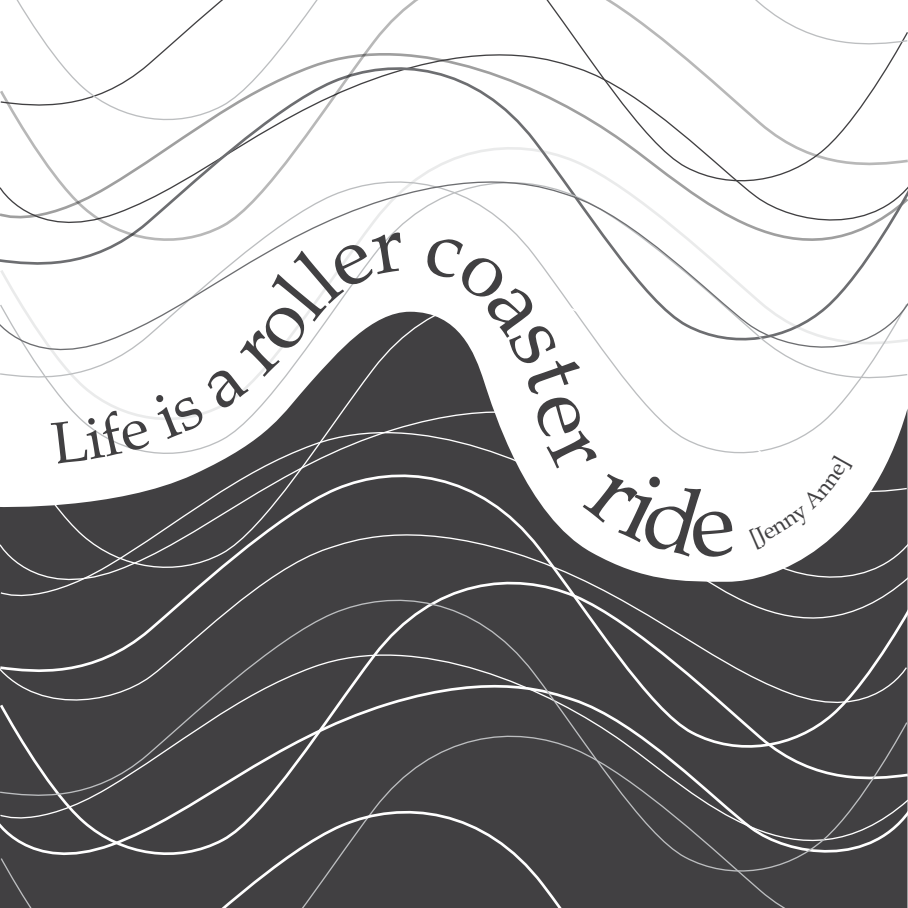
Simon Gardiner

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I'm here to tell a story...

[David Martin]





Life is a roller coaster ride
[Jenny Anne]

Have waited so long
for intimacy

[Irene Gilchrist]



Lonely

is a state of mind

[David Martin]

A memory
of an instant past
haunts my being

[Shaun Stewart]



Curiosity in life never stopped me

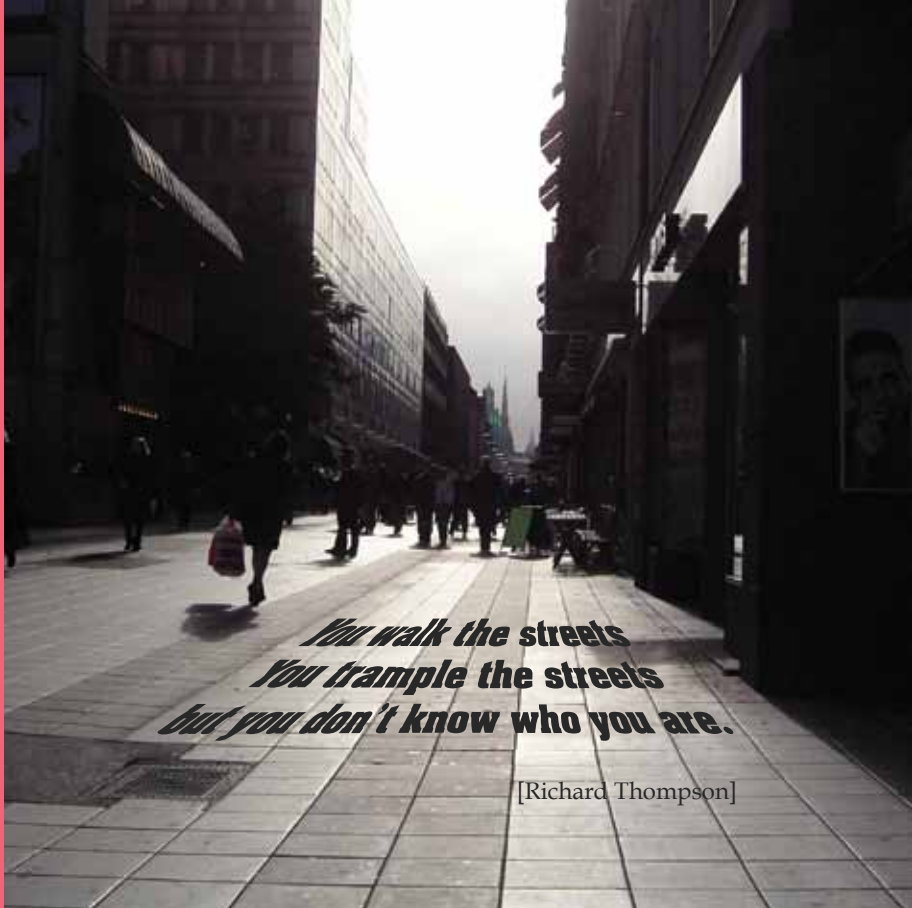
[Irene Gilchrist]



You've gotta laugh

There's too much seriousness!

[Mari]



***You walk the streets
You trample the streets
but you don't know who you are.***

[Richard Thompson]

My laughter
turned into *crying laughter*

[Colleen Flanagan]

A giant oak
like a father with hope and vision
protecting those in its shadow

[Leonie de Dreux-Crawford]





A seed ill-planted
still grows

[Shaun Stewart]

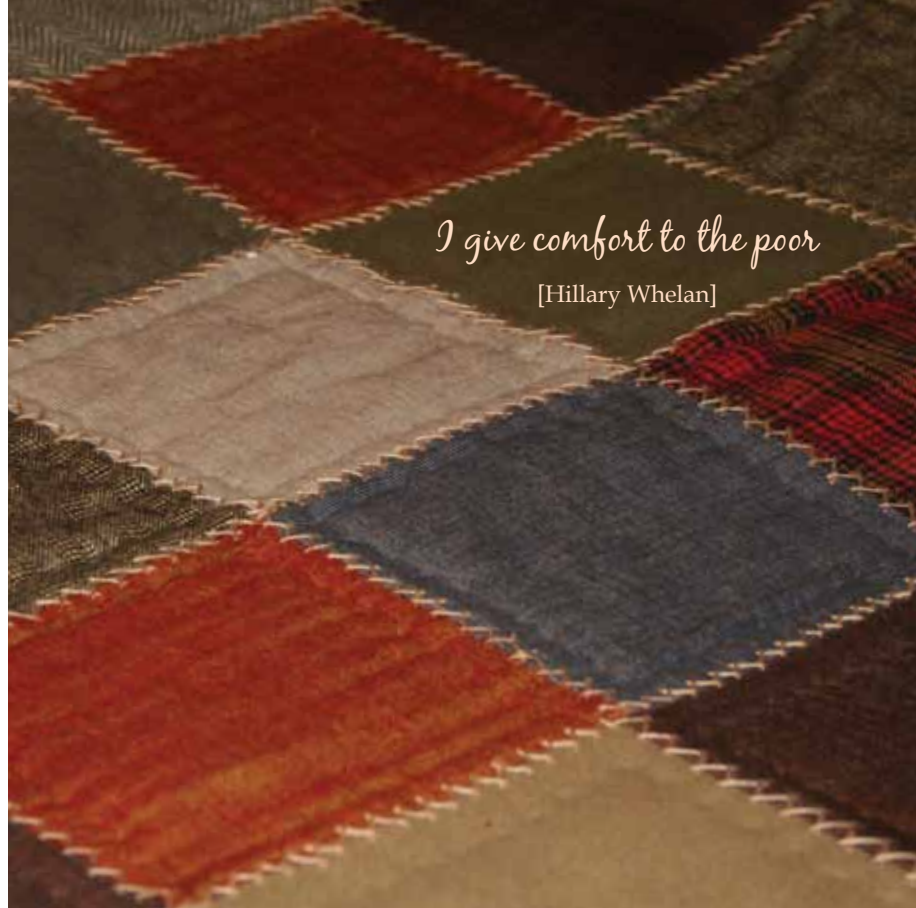
I see the future running there

[Leonie de Dreux-Crawford]



Birth most painful joy in life
[Kerry Krueger]

I give comfort to the poor
[Hillary Whelan]



One day
times flies like a clock
tick tock ticking

[Richard Thompson]



The old window frame
like a picture on a wall
putting memories on view

[Sue]



Words of Advice to a Child

Live on the edge--you can see both sides.

Stick to natural beer. Chemicals and preservatives do ya head in.

Life's overrated. Enjoy!

Nothing wrong with coming second.

The grass is greener, yet what goes around comes around.

Don't barrack for St Kilda.

Water, water; walk, walk.

[Shaun Stewart]

Words of Advice to a Child

Don't focus on the face, look into the eyes.

Don't look at the body, look at its language.

Don't listen to the words, but the sound behind them.

In every heart there is darkness and light. Look for the light. If you can't find the light, walk away, until another day.

I love you even when I don't feel love.

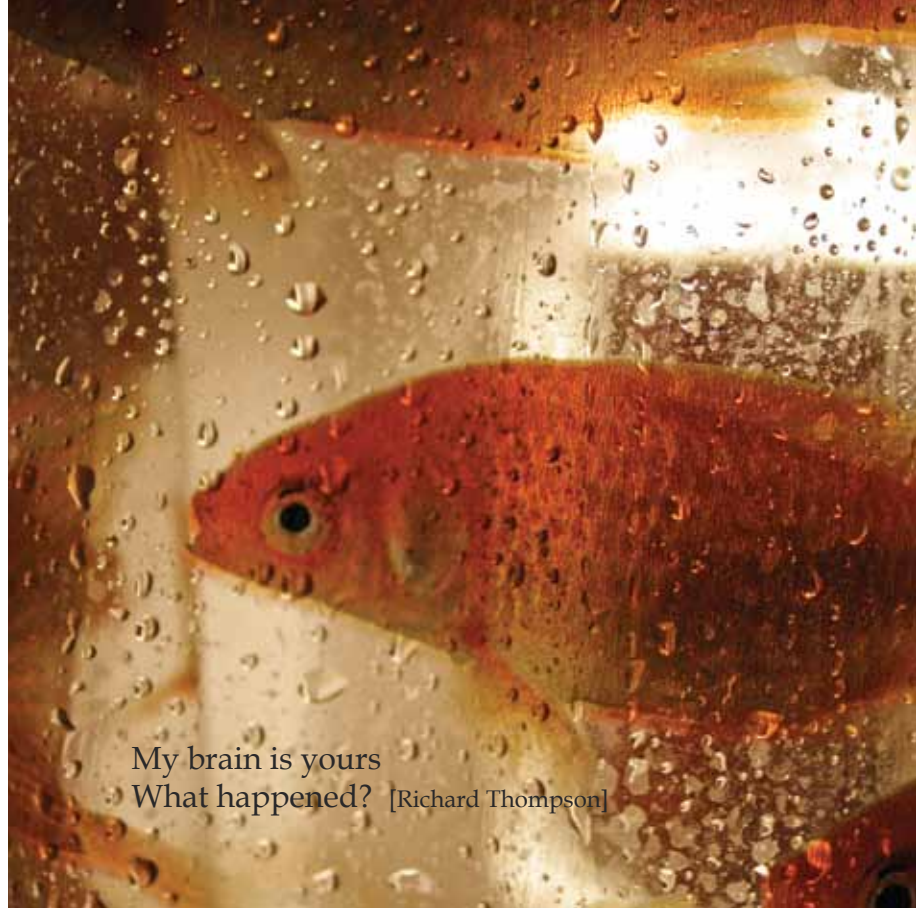
[Leonie de Dreux-Crawford]





See a stranger
ask them in

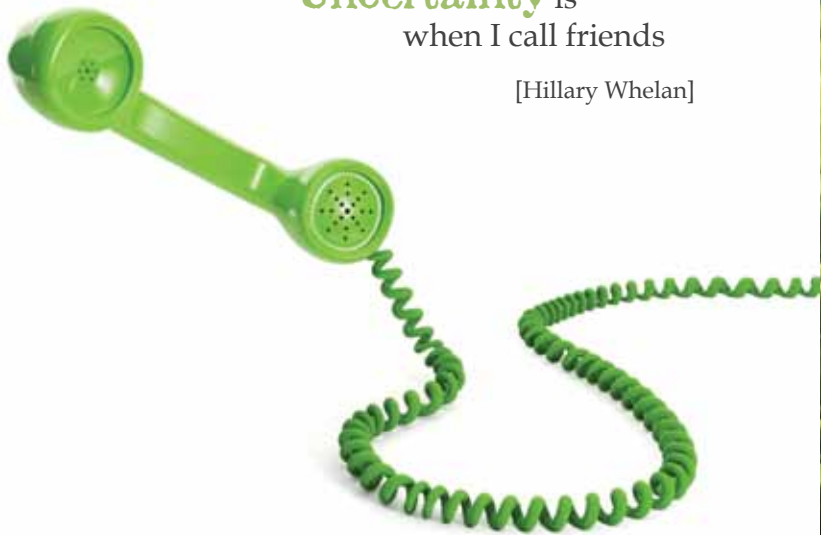
[Hillary Whelan]



My brain is yours
What happened? [Richard Thompson]

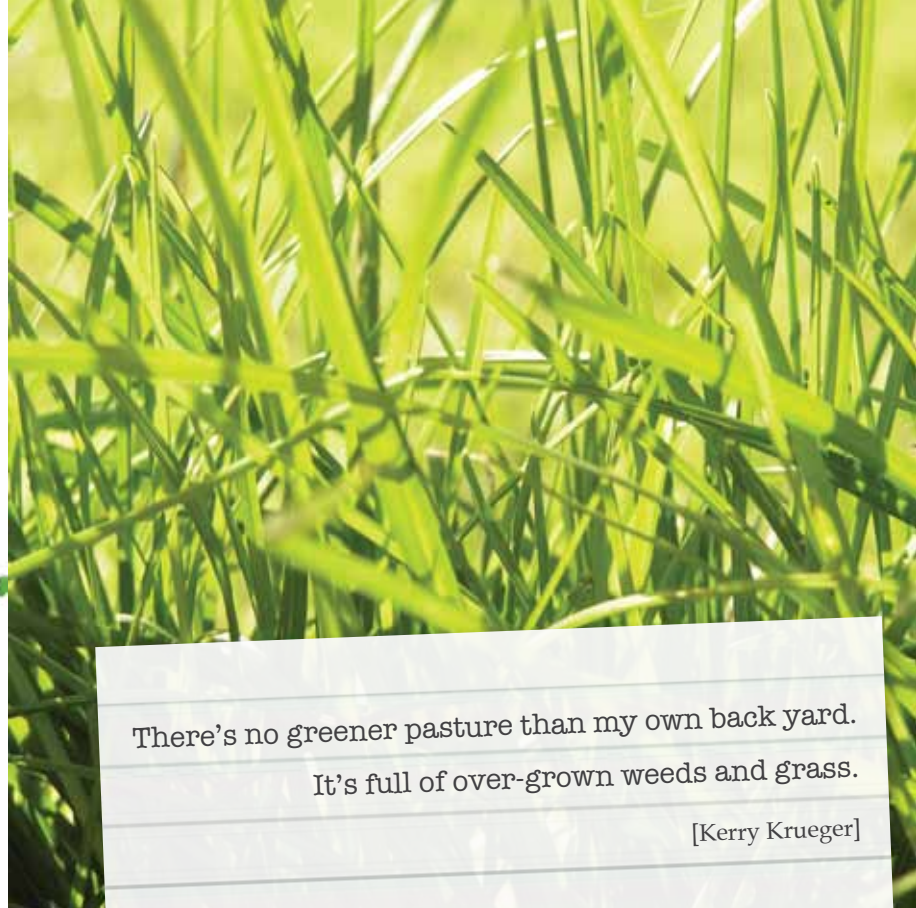
Uncertainty is
when I call friends

[Hillary Whelan]



There's no greener pasture than my own back yard.
It's full of over-grown weeds and grass.

[Kerry Krueger]





Writing group
lovely
talented
precious
people

[Leonie de Dreux-Crawford]



Lonely

Sometimes the journey is just

ours

[Shaun Stewart]



Little girl
Loving fun
Forever me

[Naomi]



Relax

Relax mind and body

The sun on your back

The smell of nature

Shut your eyes and listen to relaxing music

Don't stress yourself unnecessarily

Relax, Take time to think

Take time out

Walk in the park or bush

Smell the trees, listen to the birds

Talk with good people

Walk the dog

[David Martin]



Beauty

is my passion for flowers

[Hillary Whelan]



Beauty comes from the inner self

[Hillary Whelan]

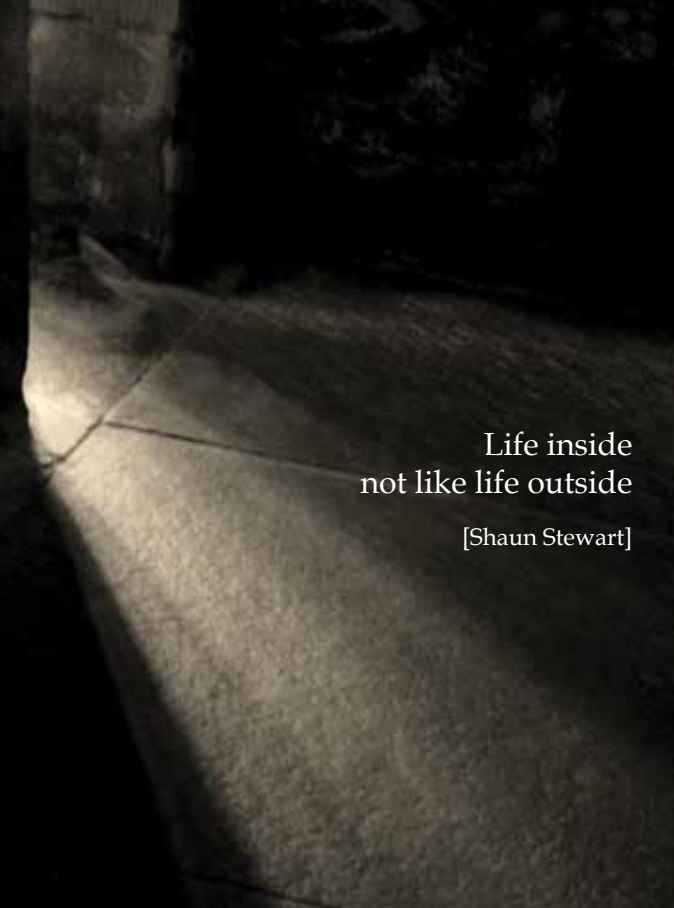


A good book will last forever

[mari]

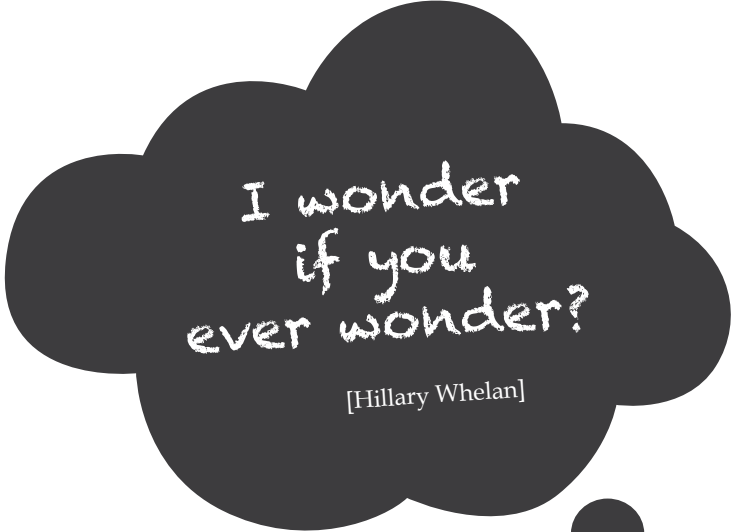
My strength
will carry my burden
[Hillary Whelan]





Life inside
not like life outside

[Shaun Stewart]



I wonder
if you
ever wonder?

[Hillary Whelan]

*Belief in spirit
High with love*

[Irene Gilchrist]

My gift is to *help others*

[Hillary Whelan]



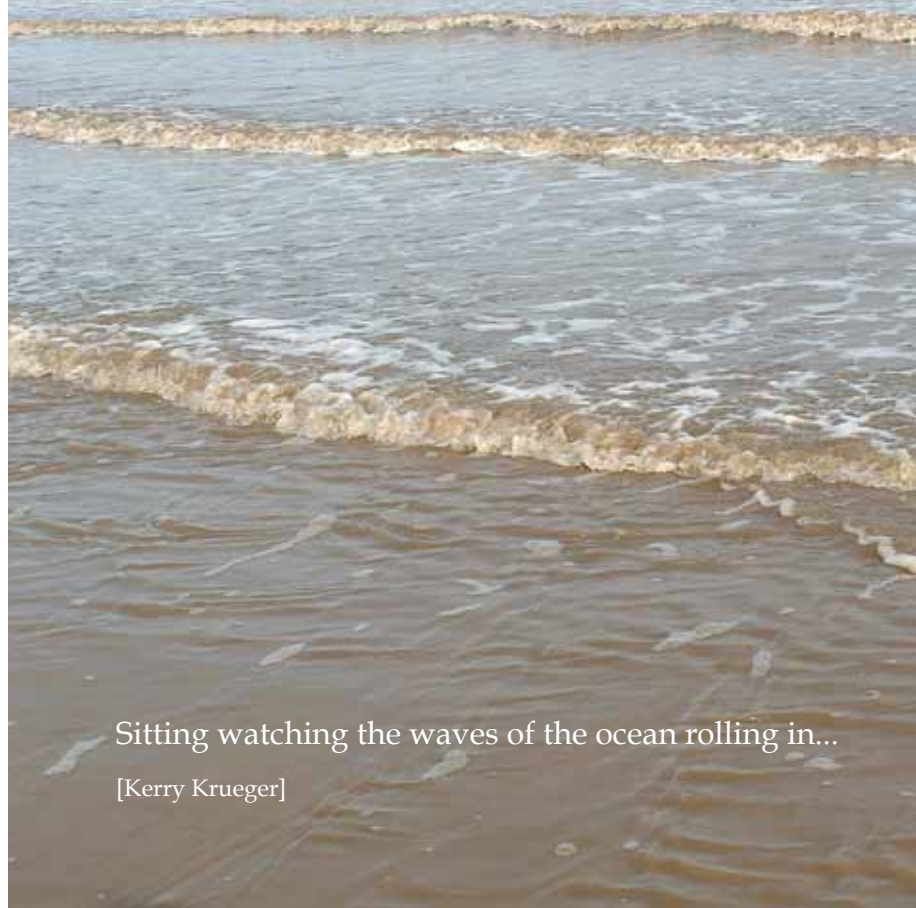
My gift is
my precious life

[Hillary Whelan]



Walking on fallen leaves in Autumn...

[Kerry Krueger]



Sitting watching the waves of the ocean rolling in...

[Kerry Krueger]



A dry river bed
Like my mouth after a night on the turps
Promising myself never again

[Kerry Krueger]

Once had a child

but
denial

[Bryan Cronin]





*Recognising my sadness
was my awakening*

[Shaun Stewart]

Being numb
Leaves you
Without love
[Colleen Flanagan]

A Broken Teddy

Teddy had belonged to many generations of people before she came to be with me. I found her on the floor of an opportunity shop and was delighted for I had never had a teddy of my own. She was a brown, jointed, miniature toy but I felt great comfort with owning her. It was quite obvious she was to be swept up with the rubbish.

I had always felt that way ...
so home she came with me.

[Irene Gilchrist]



I only met ya a cuppla times

But You

you understood

You

you shared my pain; of the unknown but yearned

We

we shared a moment

You

you gave your Soul

I

I found a piece/peace

We

we stood together

a very comfortable moment

a moment I will cherish for ever

Thank you Uncle Bruce

[Shaun Stewart]

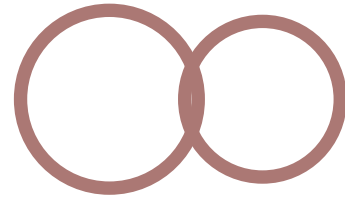
Shocked,
excited, frightened

Meeting my brother

[Sue]



The road that leads to nowhere [Richard Thompson]



I would like to thank my loving husband
for forty wonderful years of our married
lives. He has been my soul mate in my
life. I love the person he is.

[Margaret]

Understanding

is a blessing from God

[Hillary Whelan]

Understanding

is a gift we're given

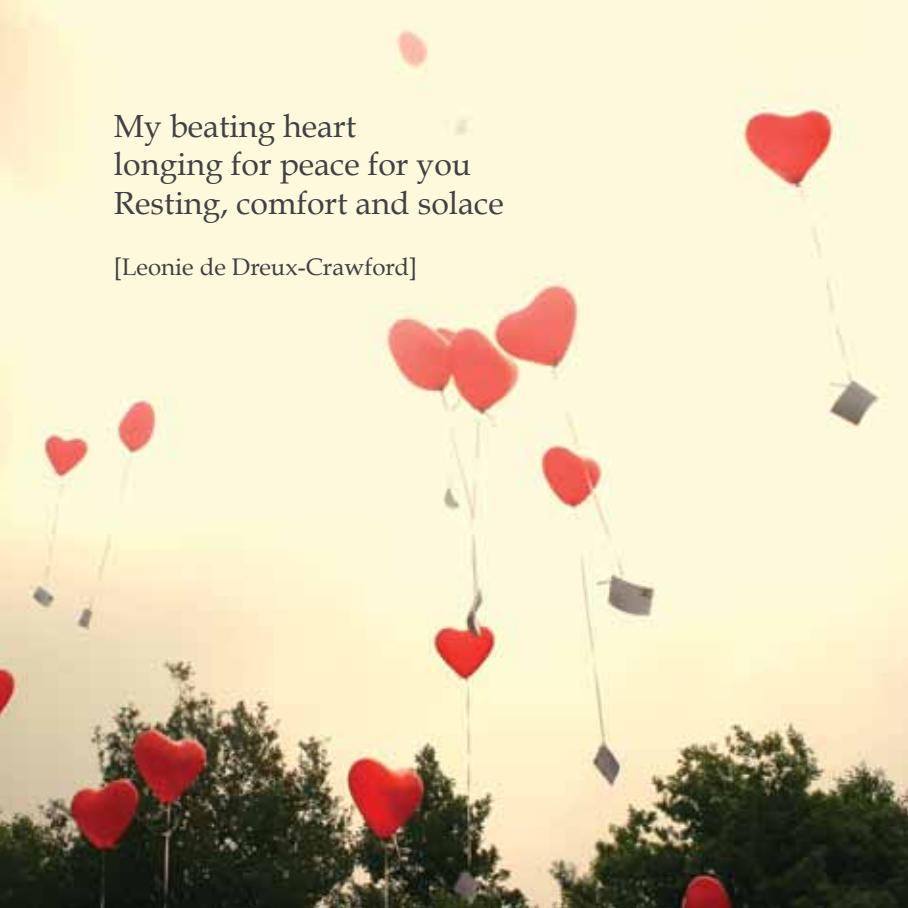
[Hillary Whelan]



Fear

Fear makes me scared about what's real
I wonder what makes it such a big deal
Can I overcome these feelings so strong?
Why does letting it go seem very wrong?
Is it sometimes a crutch I can't let go
Or is it because it's a thing I really know?
As I work through it and with it, it seems
Fear I've worked out is left for bad dreams
I will now walk forward with happiness within
I leave fear behind and let new life begin

[Margaret]



My beating heart
longing for peace for you
Resting, comfort and solace

[Leonie de Dreux-Crawford]



*Don't forget me
I love you*

[Leonie de Dreux-Crawford]

Precious

My mother's pink and gold diary. I don't have any other pieces from my mother. We didn't have much time as mother and daughter as she left us when I was nine years old. Later in life we saw each other occasionally. My brother gave it to me--he had more to do with her. I thank him for that.

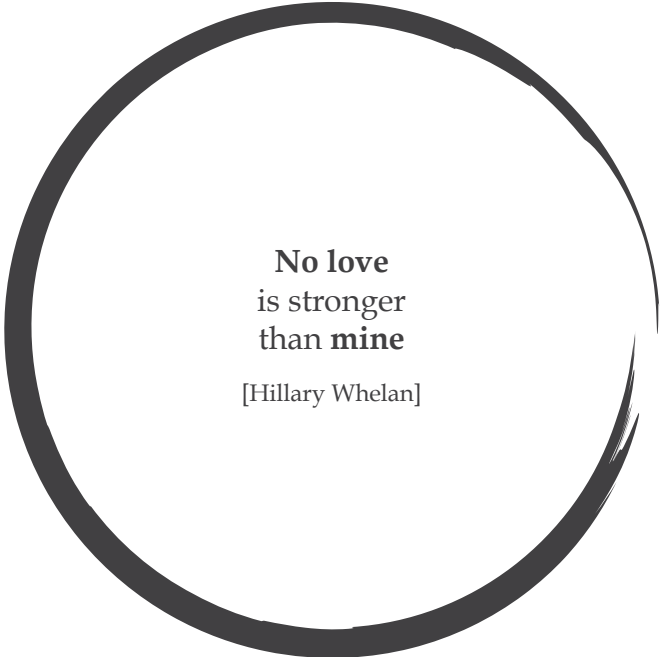
[Shirley Ross]

Take Two
Take two, take time,
Look back and reflect
It's people and things you shouldn't neglect
Look back but move on
Do a better job
Be a better person but don't become a snob
You don't want judgement so don't judge another
Be the better woman, wife, mother or lover
Now you can see what you have become
Don't let yourself down, the race you can be
Being the best person you can be
Others you now meet will all see
[Margaret]



I use a veil of comedy.
It helps me hide the
real hurt I feel. I love
when I can laugh.

[Shirley Ross]



**No love
is stronger
than mine**

[Hillary Whelan]



*When I hear the rain on our
tin roof, I lie and listen and feel relaxed.
When the rain stops I go down and see
rain drops on the petals. We have over
two hundred scented roses!*

[Margaret]

[Survival] The seed of survival is within [Shaun Stewart]

Petals

Last week I went to the nursery and picked out different colours of pansies. There are orange, purple, white, black, yellow, white. There are over two hundred pansies. When they grow they are going to put on a beautiful show. I just can't wait 'til they are growing there. People go past and tell me, 'How beautiful your garden is!' and that gives me so much pleasure.

[Margaret]





Always remember me

[Naomi]



Always remember
to think positive

[David Martin]

Always remember
Believe in yourself
Enjoy your humour

[Irene Gilchrist]



Always remember

Life is an illusion

All is never what it seems to appear as it is

[Bryan Cronin]



My guardian angel is always saying:

*Always remember
To be true to yourself*

[Colleen Flanagan]

*Always remember
You are doing your best
Even if you don't think so*

[Shirley Ross]



*I found love
and kept it*

[Leonie de Dreux-Crawford]



It Helps

Sing pain ...
If I sing pain
It helps me endure
my deeper pains
that society may never see
It helps to see others
and in their deep eyes
filled with unresolved issues
that you may never experience

[Richard Thompson]

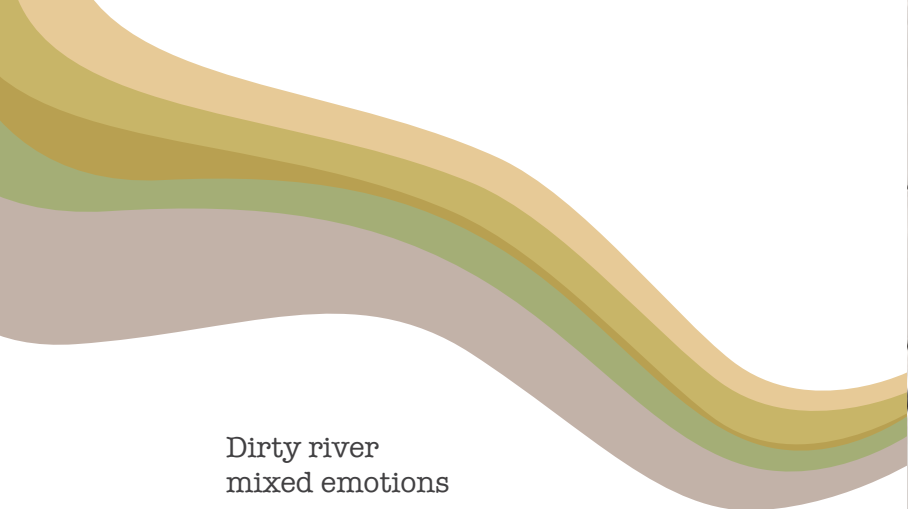


Patterns

Patterns in life are all habits too
Some are useful, some make us feel blue
To break them it's hard, but try we must
instead of old patterns, just have some trust
We all have the choice to change who we are
When we work it out, we can go so far
My patterns for years have become old
The new patterns will be as good as gold
So step forward, step out, be a better me
I'm sure new patterns will give a life of glee

[Margaret]





Dirty river
mixed emotions
shedding false identity
[Shaun Stewart]



The small jigsaw of identity can keep you from growing

[Shaun Stewart]

Too many birthday cakes
like eating life's sweets
looking through the window at life's stage

[Mari]



I love you.
You love me

[Sue]

Go That One Step Further

The dog was hit by a car and no one stopped.
But a boy walked by, carried the dog off the
road. He sat with the badly injured dog and
comforted him until help arrived.

Moral of the story: Take time to care, as it
might be you one day, in need of help.

[Mari]



*One day
I'll write like a pen with a knife
I scream for resolve*

[Richard Thompson]



Hey Burleigh 1

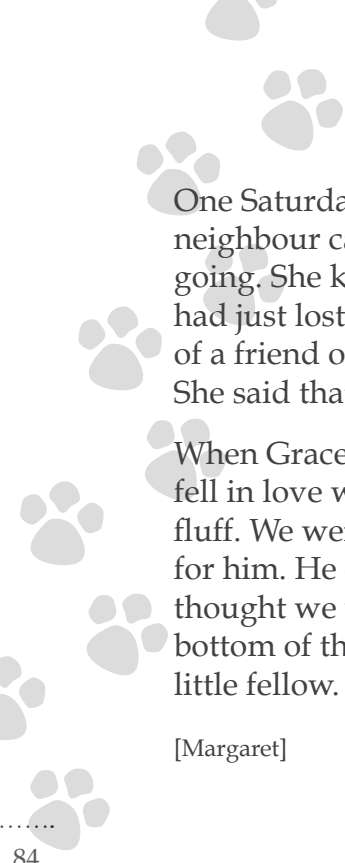
Hey Burleigh
Just wanted to thank ya for the spirit shared
Always with respect I walked your realm
with peaceful caution placed steps upon your place
In many times I drew from you and searched 'inside'
the sense of calm yet awareness to danger you nurture
is transferred and embraced.
The surf that protects you
'FAAAAAK' it's fun!
From a mild cruisy peeler to 'ya balls in ya face' pumpin!
Again a place of Respect and Lore only to be embraced

[Shaun Stewart]

Violets were purple

Til we met

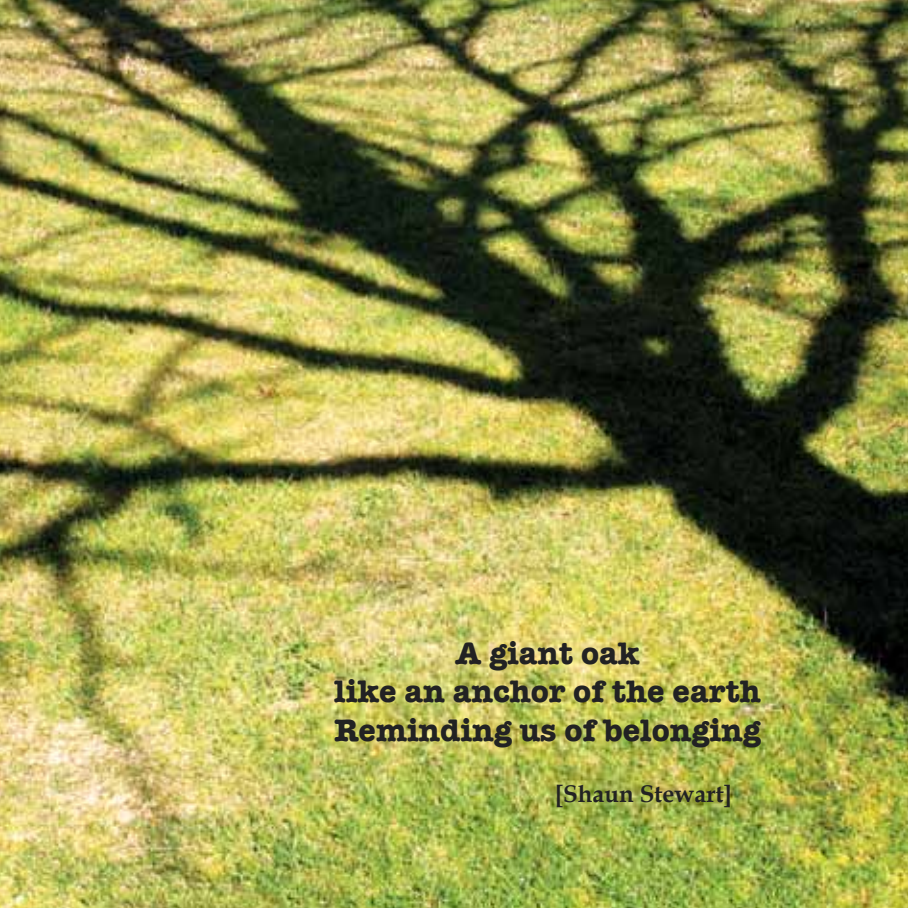
[Richard Thompson]



One Saturday afternoon my next door neighbour came in to see how I was going. She knew I was down because we had just lost our dog. She told me the dog of a friend of hers had just had puppies. She said that would pick me up.

When Grace bought the puppy in, I just fell in love with him. He was just a ball of fluff. We went down and bought bedding for him. He chewed the basket up so we thought we would let him sleep at the bottom of the bed. We have still got the little fellow. He is such a little cutie!

[Margaret]



**A giant oak
like an anchor of the earth
Reminding us of belonging**

[Shaun Stewart]



Communication Breakdown

Communication lost in our great cities
and empty country towns
reaching out into other countries
like a black cloud
smogged by unessential needs.
Yet hope, love and respect for all
no matter who we are
that's all one asks.

[Richard Thompson]

*Yesterday was minutes away
here today*

[Mari]

W
s M q F
a g
L U
D O
P
b

i

The ship of life rocks and rolls

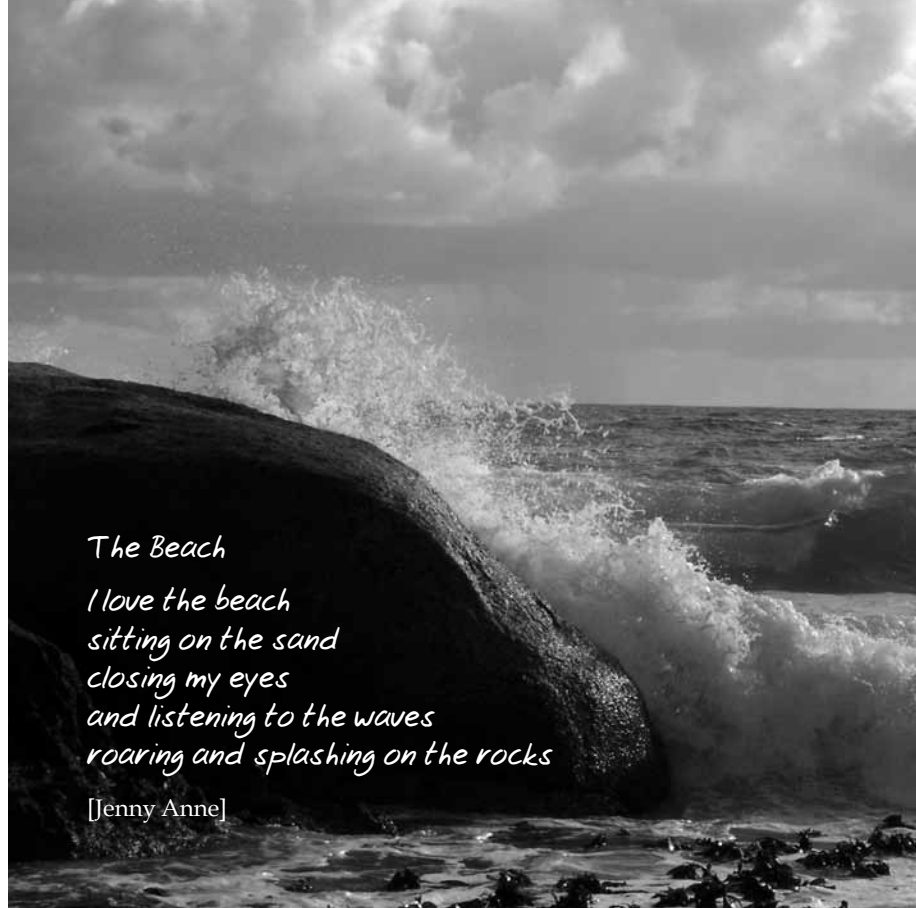
But sometimes it is peaceful and still
But sometimes it is peaceful and still

[Mari]

The Beach

*I love the beach
sitting on the sand
closing my eyes
and listening to the waves
roaring and splashing on the rocks*

[Jenny Anne]



A note to Santa

Once upon a time I wrote a note to Santa.
Down and out and living on the street,
many years had passed me by...

long forgotten.

One day to my surprise, along came Santa
and I asked him for the gift.

He leaned towards me and said,
'Look out past the bay, in the channel of the ocean.
Look upon sea before you.'

So I did.

There was an old rusted fishing trawler.
As I boarded, within the arch of the old trawler, hanging in
front of my eyes
was a pair of binoculars.



I picked them up and looked through.
At first glance, a coral reef that resembled a lost seashell
I once had.
As I went in further I found lapsed over the side into
the water
an old hand-held fishing line.
I pulled it up to see what it had, and found an old broken,
torn, rickety bear
resembling my childhood
Being both mystery and myth of the human tragedy
of the survival and impact and loss of identity of
institutionalised care.

Sadly, a true tale and little imagination.
The fiction is where as children in care
we went within our own mind's eye
and *disappeared*
and went *invisible* within time.

[Bryan Cronin]



I'm fascinated by animals that
other people don't like.

[Leonie de Dreux-Crawford]

A Journey on a crooked path [Mari]



Alone.
No family

Yes, family
Yes!

[Naomi]

Waiting for love

Have got it!

[Irene Gilchrist]

Fart met bark
in the dark!

[Richard Thompson]

*The pain and joy
of loving my family.*

[Leonie de Dreux-Crawford]



Love from the inside




goes out

[Leonie de Dreux-Crawford]

Guardian Angel

Don't spend time and energy worrying. Take a step of faith and hope for the very best. Be positive and enjoy your new place of peace. It will be a little patch of heaven for the whole family.

[Mari]



Some things are best left
alone

[Richard Thompson]

*Listening, caring
the life of 'Griefline'*
[Sue]

I'm glad the future is veiled.

[Mari]

Hey Burleigh 2

You pulled me through the hills, I thought,
To a place in my heart
Never been so identified by a place before.
Then came the people: Brother Bib, Timbo, Beau
and Uncle Ron, to name a few
and of course there was you.
You woke me from a slumber
heightened my senses and presented another
now I have it always
and for that I thank you.
It's much deeper than that
for I can't find words or actions that justifiably explain
the incredible step to belief I did gain.
To Bib who I've mentioned, with patience
and wisdom led me to walk
I look forward to marching away
to a hot fire, yarns and tea
where we look up to the stars just you and me...
Ohhh Buggalbeh!!!
Bib, Widjabal Bundjulong.

[Shaun Stewart]

Daddy's girl

hated by older sister

[Kerry Krueger]





Wish

If only Mum would cuddle me

[Shaun Stewart]

Don't worry

I *Flip Flop* too

[Richard Thompson]

No such thing as
dysfunctional.

Cry for help.

[Mari]

Little Boy Lost

I was an embryo before birth

I was a newborn child

I was a new lung that took that first breath

I was a new presence to the essence of existence

I was created human. An essence of life the light

I was human before being dumped

I was dumped before abandonment

I was abandoned then forgotten

I was forgotten then an orphan

I was and became an orphan.

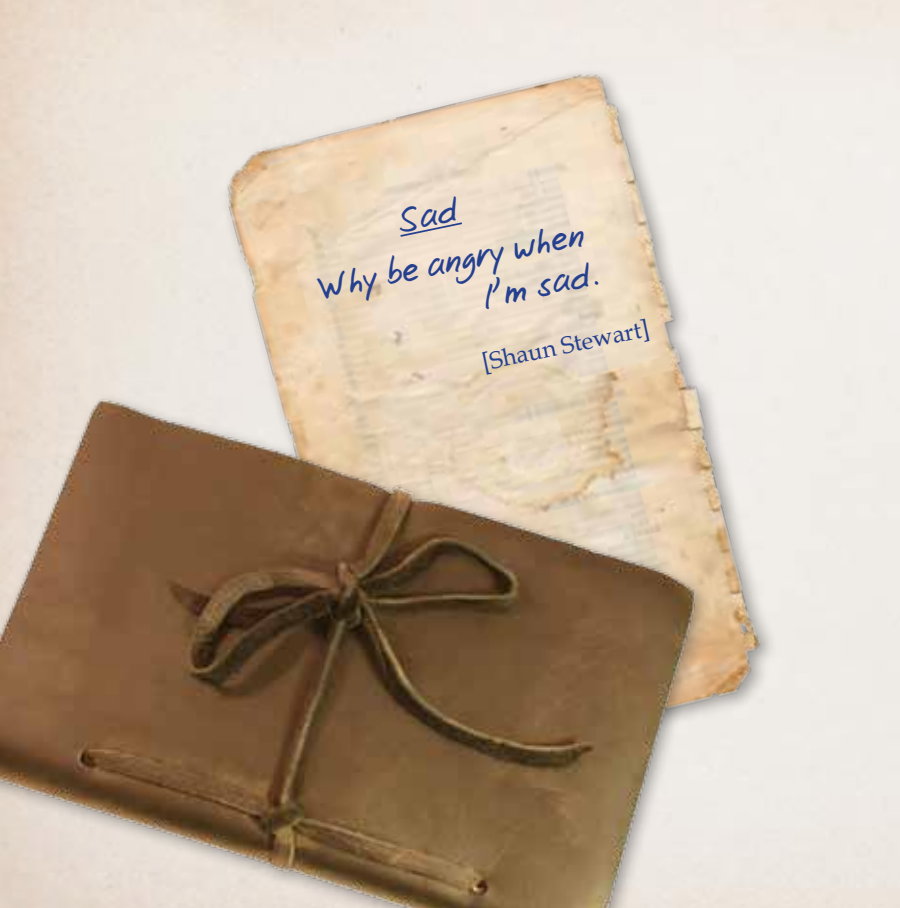
An un-identity

Institutionalised, beaten to raw, maimed, broken.

Starved of affection, warmth, love,

compassion, want.

[Bryan Cronin]



Sad
Why be angry when
I'm sad.

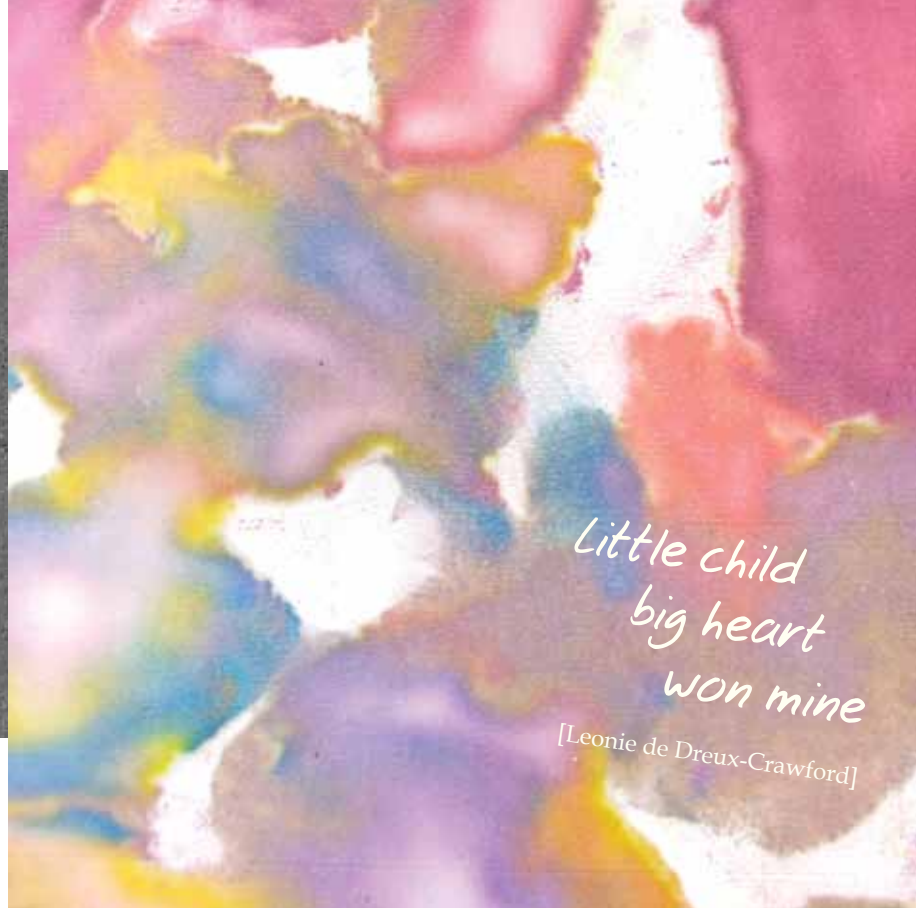
[Shaun Stewart]

Unexpected family gifts
are the best
[Mari]






Tired
I'm tired of this
new start
[Shaun Stewart]



*Little child
big heart
won mine*
[Leonie de Dreux-Crawford]



The old dog
Like an old book
dreaming of past pleasures

[Mari]

Hey Unc

Hey Unc,
What a ripper ...
you've been there all along
Could've drawn ya
and I can't draw

Clear as day
I kept you close
Only mine,
slowly I let you out to very few

STRONG, DETERMINED, EVERLASTING

Just a few elements of awareness you encouraged
Now I can touch you
I look forward to our continuing *spiritual journey*
And *thank you* for being there

[Shaun Stewart]



My story has now been told.

[Hillary Whelan]

