



WRITE ON!



BEFRIENDERS HIGHLAND LITERARY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NUMBER 9

SUMMER 2016

Hello one and all.

As we reach our 9th edition I would like to make a special mention to **Keith** who has been an ever present on the pages of *Write On* since we started. His insightful poems are always enjoyable to read and I hope you join me in applauding his fantastic contribution to the group.

In this issue we also have great new work from Isolde, Maureen, Jenny, Betty, Stephen and Graeme. We continue to follow family life in the 1970's & 80's as revealed in Jim's Diary entries. Plus there are some wonderful short stories including Stephens's piece titled 'They Were Going to Be OK'.

Enjoy the issue and we hope you find inspiration within these pages. Publishing work is a big part of being a writer and can be a very rewarding experience. If you are thinking about writing & submitting something, why not give it a try. Our supportive group is here to offer you encouragement and be a platform for your creativity.

- Alan Duncan



Maureen has suggested we feature a section of our newsletter where each of us can share useful ideas & tips on coping with and overcoming such issues as memory loss & anxiety. If you have personal experience of these issues or others, perhaps you have developed your own ways to overcome them and would like to share these with the group. We would really welcome your contribution to this Self Help column. To get us started Maureen has some of her own tips & methods in the **Self-Help** feature on **page 4** of this issue. **Thank you Maureen!**

NEW: Film Night



Befrienders Highland is hosting its very first film night in October. Graeme had the fantastic idea of holding a film night to show films based around mental health & friendship as well as showcasing short films created by Highland film makers. Graeme has put forward the first film so we will be showing the friendship based film: **Planes Trains & Automobiles** starring Steve Martin & John Candy [*Write On* reviewed the film in Issue 7: Winter 2015]. The film will be shown at **Eden Court** in Inverness on **Sunday 9th October 2016**.



Beforehand we will be screening a selection of short films including work by **Write On** members.

If you would like to come along please get in touch. It is sure to be a welcoming & enjoyable way to share an evening together. There will be lots to see and an opportunity to meet with other members during the interval. Let us know if you would like to attend! The short films will start from 6pm with Planes Trains & Automobiles starting at 7pm. Befrienders Highland have 25 tickets to give out to members on a first come first serve basis. Contact us to book your place. Otherwise tickets can be purchased from Eden Court.

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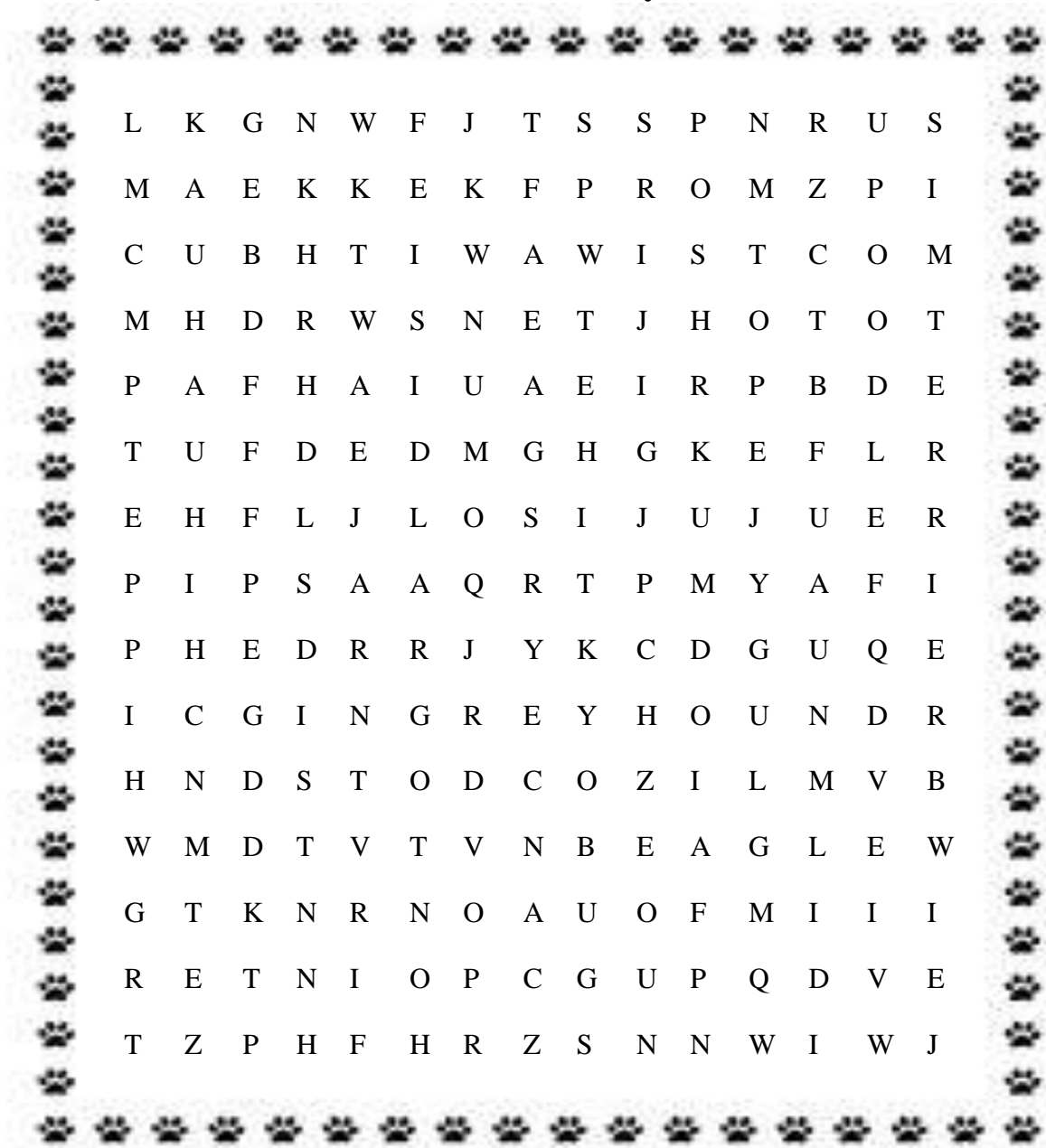


Write On contributor Muriel has set group members a challenge to produce a piece of creative writing based on an unusual, strange or not readily identifiable object.

To read about the challenge in more detail, please turn to **page 5** of this issue.



Word Search Puzzle by Isolde



* The words listed below can be on the horizontal, vertical, diagonal and can also be in reverse spelling order. Good Luck and Have Fun!!
[Solution of the Puzzle will be printed in the next issue]

FIND THESE BREED TYPES AND CIRCLE THE WORD

BEAGLE

CHIHUAHUA

COLLIE

CORGI

DALMATION

GREYHOUND

LABRADOR

POINTER

POODLE

PUG

SCOTTIE

SHIHTZU

SPANIEL

TERRIER

WHIPPET



by Betty

Boxer

Who cares? It's easy to find my squeaky toys in the dark.

Greyhound

Do light bulbs move? If not, I'm going back to the sofa and wait for daylight.

Labrador Retriever

Pleeeeeeeze, Can I? Can I? Please, please, please!
I promise I won't eat it.

Golden Retriever

The day is young. The sun is shining. We've got our whole lives ahead of us. Let's spend it outside together as nature intended.

Jack Russell Terrier

If I bounce off the furniture and walls, I'm sure I can reach that ceiling lamp.

Pomeranian

Why bother changing it? I have no difficulty peeing on the carpet in the dark.

Rottweiler

Sure, we'll just move the pram a little closer so I can keep an eye on the baby at the same time as I climb the ladder.

Chihuahua

I've got the perfect solution. You can carry me in one hand and the candle in the other.

Border Collie

Stay there and I'll get all the bulbs together, then we'll separate out the right one.

Old English Sheep Dog

What light bulb? I'm sorry, but I don't see any light bulb!

German Shepherd

I'll change it as soon as I've led these people out of the dark, checked to make sure I haven't missed anyone and made one last perimeter patrol to see that no one has tried to take advantage of the situation.

Scottish Terrier

Och. Dinna be daft. I canny reach That! Fetch me the Torch man?

Poodle

Sorry dear my nail varnish has to finish drying. Before you change the bulb could you help me into on my new collar? No not that one - the rhinestone studded one please.

Dalmation Puns by Maureen

What kind of dog can use the phone?

A Dial-Matian

What did the hungry Dalmatian say after his meal?

"That hit the spots!"

Why are Dalmatians no good at "Hide and Seek"?

They're always spotted!

What's black and white and red all over?

An embarrassed Dalmatian



A Dog's Practical Reference Dictionary

BATH: Always follows an invigorating roll in some delightfully smelly substance, an activity humans are jealous of and therefore they have devised this degrading form of torture.

BIN: Any container containing odoriferous edibles and entry into which is designed to be a test of ingenuity.

CHILD: juvenile humans of optimal size and disposition regarding the ready sharing of treats.

DEAFNESS: voluntary affliction brought on by being commanded to sit, stay, fetch or come; Symptoms include tilting the head and staring blankly at the person giving the command.

DOG-BED: A soft and cosy fabric-covered resting place - frequently an elevated longish flat surface located where humans sleep and watch television.

DOWN: A forcefully delivered verbal command uttered by exasperated humans.
[For further clarification, see the definition for the word "Jump-Up"]

DROOL: salivary response to nervous stimulation initiated by expectation of morsels of food passed under the dinner table by human hands during their mealtime.

DRY-FOOD: also called kibble or mixer. Package labelling differentiates dry food ingredients according to breed, activity and age but all dogs agree they are the same tasteless unappetizing crunchy bits requiring considerable additives like mince and chicken to be edible.

[- To be continued]

Just a Reminder to All of Our Members
We are taking submissions for next year's calendar

There are so many inspiring images in our world
Why not take a photo of one & share it with our members

Submit any kind of photo throughout the year
under the broad theme 'What inspires you?'



Members can send them on to:
admin@befriendershighland.org.uk

(or)

Befrienders Highland
19 Church Street, Inverness, IV1 1DY



Maureen offers two strategies
Pertaining to two different personal issues:

Maureen has suggested a couple useful ideas & tips on coping with and overcoming such issues as memory loss & anxiety.



1. Maureen's first helpful hint relates to a sense of anxiety brought on in social encounters where likability is believed to be a function of possessing a good physical appearance. She explains that "this is when you sit there and think that you look dreadful and you are so ugly that no one would want to have anything to do with you."

Maureen suggests that for her, the best way to help counter that nagging inner voice that affirms her negative self-image, is to shift the whole paradigm into a positive frame of reference. By approaching the situation from a fresh perspective that takes a quite different slant on the matter, Maureen has found a way to face being in a group without stressing herself about how she looks. She simply reasons that because she looks so bad, at least someone else seeing her will feel better because by comparison this person may feel that he or she look better than her.

It matters not to Maureen whether the other person's reaction is as she imagines because behind it all, she reckons her belief needs no proof – the idea itself that she has helped someone and by extension that she is doing something good is justification enough and the tactic suits her fine and even cheers her up.

2. Maureen's second helpful hint deals with a common occurrence that she feels shouldn't trouble those of us who experience it – that of being in the act of doing something and suddenly losing the plot so to speak. Specifically, Maureen is talking about forgetting a task at hand that she has set for herself moments earlier. While walking through the house for instance with the intention of getting an item from a certain room her concentration strays and consequently she can't think what it is that she's set out to do or look for.

Maureen says we shouldn't worry because our memory may kick in by just retracing our steps. Rather than go into a panic modes she tells herself to stay calm. She doesn't try to force herself to remember. Quite the opposite, she doesn't let her mind dwell on seeking out whatever it is she is searching for and instead she relies on a kind of auto suggestion prompted by retracing her steps. She explains that "whilst returning to the room the thing I originally needed leaps into my head and my hand just reaches out and finds it".

ARE YOU UP FOR
THE CHALLENGE?

Muriel's Writing Challenge

Muriel has set all **Write On** members the challenge of taking an unusual object and creating a piece of creative writing around it. To get us all started we offer you the curious looking object pictured here but please feel free to use your own object if you prefer.

Here are a couple suggestions to guide you:

- Use the object as a starting point for a story or poem
- Create a history & purpose for the object –
How did this object come into being?

The more inventive & unusual the better!



Whatever the object is, your writing can be purely imaginary and may even be theoretically possible. It will be really interesting to share together the different meanings & stories that are created from the same item.

Send your entries in to the usual postal and email addresses and we will publish them in future editions. **Write On** would like to exhibit these works at the Scottish Mental Health Arts & Film Festival alongside images of the objects. When sending in your entries, let us know if you would like to include your writing in this exhibit.

A bit of History:

The Origin of the American Bread clip by Betty

Humorously known as an *Occlupanid*: a taxonomy term coined as a parody of scientific classification

Floyd G. Paxton (March 7, 1918 – December 10, 1975) was the inventor of the square “**bread-clip**”, a notched plastic tag used worldwide for sealing plastic bags and securely holding them closed. Paxton came up with the idea of the bread clip while on board a plane flying home in 1952. Trying to devise a way to reclose the bag of peanuts he’d opened, he used his pen knife (not yet banned on flights) to cut an expired credit-card into a key-hole shape that would grasp and pinch the bag shut.

In the early 1950s, more and more automation was utilized in the manufacture and packaging of food. There was a growing need to efficiently close plastic bags on the packaging line. The *Pacific Fruit* packing firm approached Paxton for a better method of bag closure that would replace elastic bands; specifically something with “re-closability” which would enable a fast and easy way to open and completely seal food inside plastic bags. The purpose being to diminish spoilage, this would become the prime selling point aimed at a growing number of budget conscious consumers.



Paxton’s simple plastic clip tag certainly met the criteria. As he tells the story; remembering his bag of peanuts on the airplane, he hand-whittled another clip from a small sheet of plexiglass to show the fruit picker representative. With an order in hand for a million clips, Paxton had to then design a die-cut machine to produce the clips at high speed. Later he successfully patented his high-speed “bag closing apparatus” which made the clips, inserted food such as loaves of bread into bags and applied the clips for the finished product. Paxton’s bread clip tags also known as *Kwik Lok Closures* are manufactured by the Kwik Lok Corporation, a company founded by Floyd G. Paxton and based in Yakima, Washington with manufacturing plants in Yakima and New Haven, Indiana.

The " I " Guide to Living Life by Isolde

I don't want to contemplate the worst end in sight
I want thoughts that bring me contentment
I don't want to dwell on my endless terrible plight
I just want to put aside all my resentment

I don't want to complicate everything
I look for simplicity
I don't have to find my entire Being
I just search for clarity

I don't seek soulmates in perfect harmony
I gladly settle for a true friend instead
I don't take pride in word weaponry
I'd revive a spirit, not leave it for dead

I don't follow an approved plan of action
I'm guided by creative intuition
I can't live up to another's expectation
I ask his support for my mission

I don't need all the answers
I'll manage with just a few
I've no interest in social cancers
I just want to hear good news

I don't question my very existence
I live for the moment that I'm in
I don't struggle with avid persistence
I let myself go along with the flow within

Voices by Jenny

Clouds floating over hills with faces appearing,
Blown by silent winds over Glens so appealing,
Beside burns rippling through heather so endearing,
I can almost hear voices through the years, calling out.

A croft house sits quietly beneath dark brooding hills
Intently listening to the song of the rills
Making their way slowly in the evening chill.
I can almost hear voices through the years, calling out

Centuries of battles, of lives re-enacted on the slopes
And the domes of those ancient peaks
In the winter, snow beneath deer's hooves impacted,
Lies with sunlit glows in bright orange streaks.
Even now I hear voices through the years, calling out

The voices of clansmen in their graves-unmarked
The voices of heroes at their rest-undisturbed
The voices of crofters ousted in clearances-perturbed
The voices come clearer through the years, calling out.

Every day I stand and look at this picture and
After all these years it still holds me in awe
The peace and tranquillity have not always been there
Even now.....

I can clearly hear voices through the years, calling out.



Fortress by Stephen

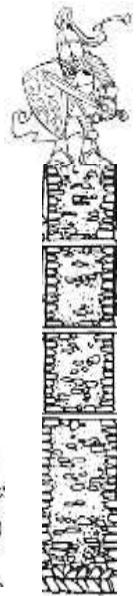
I have turned to you more than once
When my walls have crumbled
And my armour has fallen from me
When I've been before you as though naked,
All of my failings exposed

I've knocked on your walls.
I've tried to get in,
To get through
But they are too strong and
Your armour's impenetrable.
You turn me away
Or I turn away
But not before you tell me to rebuild
My walls, which I do.

And I put my armour back on
But neither lasts,
My walls are weak,
My armour thin.
Should I turn to you again?
Will you weaken?
I do not think so.
You are too strong.
I know this is a good thing.

But sometimes I wish that you were not so strong.
I wonder to, what your walls are built against?
Are you being strong to protect me when I'm weak
Or are you simply happy alone within your walls,
Not wanting to let me or anyone in?

And what if you were to weaken
And suddenly found yourself there for me?
What would I do?
If you had not the strength to turn me away,
Would I have the strength to turn away
As I should,
Or would I stumble into your arms?
Arms I so want to fall into sometimes.
I don't think that question will ever be answered
For you are just too strong.



DRUMS by Keith

I'm on my second set of drums
I practice quietly, spinning out
Poems and paintings in rhythm

I'm on my second phase of painting
Sketching the rhythm of the mountain

I'm in my second period of writing
The gap due to illness
The rhythmic flight of birds on the river
Inspires me quietly now

PRAYER by Keith

While we pray for eternal peace
Will the wars ever end ?
Maybe God will intervene
At the last moment.
Praying for that.

Dogs Asleep by Isolde



There is nothing else most dogs would choose
Over a good long walk and back for a snooze
Dogs come in every kind, practically any number
But they're all just as cute, curled up in slumber
Some settle down for that blissful nap
Cosy and warm in their person's lap
Others find that place to be quite odd
A sofa is the best spot to have a wee nod
Jump up, circle twice and down each dog sinks
Comfy on the cushions catching forty winks
Rounded body with tail to nose
A furry ball in restful repose
Life seems so content and complete
When a dog is snoring fast asleep

Monumental Cock-Up by Jenny

Gypsy and Amber are two beautiful girls who show alternate fortnights.
Amber has a wonderful glow whilst Gypsy has dark red highlights.

They both belong to my friend Dotty who went a little potty one Saturday morn
When she packed her cat up and set off to a show at the crack of dawn.

Gemba Gypsophilia was left at home and was understandably miffed.
When asked why, she stuck her head up high, "You'll soon find out" she sniffed.

At the back of 10:00 Dotty turned up home again and set Kitamba Doralamber free.
She turned on her heels, grabbed a box and a cat who on the way through the door shouted "See!".

Dotty weaved her way back, dodging police and cameras, and made Milton Keynes in record time.
She was lucky to escape with her licence clean and even luckier without a fine.

The Cat Fancy laughed but judged Gypsy first because she was the best by far
Even though for the last half hour she'd been locked in a car with a mad woman, our Dotty Ooo Lala

Gypsy sat back that night and recounted her plight whilst the rest looked on in awe.
Amber was pleased 'coz she'd been at ease asleep all day indoors.

Perhaps next time Dotty shows, she'll listen to her cats who know better which one should be going
Though after a day like that I should think either cat will have had a gut full of showing.



MEMBER *Stories*

CRUSH [PART 2] by Graeme *Part 1 is in Issue 6

Paul found himself isolated at the bar. Anybody wishing to buy a round of drinks was deliberately placing himself or herself as far as possible from Paul. Glancing at his watch Paul saw that there was still an hour and a half before the night was finished. Two options faced him. The first was to find Johnny, who was obviously enjoying himself elsewhere, and leave but Paul steeled himself to face everyone and enjoy himself. But everything changed immediately with the blood-curdling scream that emanated from the toilet area.

One of Dianne's friends came rushing into the function suite, her face ashen white. The music stopped and everybody stood still. Only Paul summoned up the nerve to walk towards the woman. As he stepped closer the woman shouted that Dianne was dead. Paul stopped in his tracks. Numerous scenarios whirled through his mind. Had she fallen, did she have an unknown medical condition? His questions were answered when Dianne's friend screamed that Dianne had been murdered. Accusingly looks were immediately cast in Paul's direction. As Paul stood motionless, his heart heavy, some of the men found it prudent to grab him to prevent any potential escape from the man everyone assumed was the culprit. Trying to leave was the last thing on Paul's mind.

The police arrived swiftly. Nobody in the entire hotel was allowed to leave. Johnny had reappeared five minutes after the discovery of Dianne's body. As Johnny tried to sympathise with his friend he stated that he had left the function suite to get some fresh air. Unfortunately no one had seen him and Johnny was worried that the police may not believe his alibi. Despite Paul being found guilty by the audience in the function suite, Johnny assured him that people would certainly have seen them together at the entrance door and saw Paul enter the room whilst Dianne headed towards the toilet where she sadly met her death.

Paul was interviewed first as potentially the last person to see Dianne alive. He could feel the daggers being drawn outside the manager's office where he now sat. The atmosphere inside was even more intimidating as obviously the two Detectives facing him had been made aware of Paul's history and feelings for the victim. Paul could not believe that even in such tragic events people could be so cruel. The questioning came quick and fast. Paul knew he was completely innocent but he still seemed unable to completely convince the two Detectives. Apparently Dianne

Moore had been strangled with a ligature. Even the policemen could see the hurt in Paul's face as he visualised the pain and suffering that Dianne would have suffered in her final moments.



As the three men sat in silent contemplation, before the questioning restarted, a knock on the door startled the three men. A younger faced Detective entered the room. The two older Detectives stood up and left with their colleague leaving Paul alone with a constable.

For what seemed like an eternity Paul sat in silence. Racing through his mind were memories of Dianne. He could not help himself feeling remorse at his actions when the two had passed in the doorway. If he had summoned the courage to talk to her she would not be dead. Paul even envisaged that perhaps if he had unburdened his guilt and apologised for his actions he and Dianne may have even been friends.

The two Detectives returned. Only one sat down facing Paul. If the news of Dianne's death had felt a hammer blow to his head then what he was soon to be told would make him feel physically sick.

The police had made an arrest for the murder of Dianne Moore. A witness through in the lounge bar had seen the alleged murderer enter the ladies toilets almost immediately after Dianne. Such had been the witness's inebriated state that he felt they were perhaps undertaking a secret liaison and had kept quiet, completely ignoring the incident. Only on hearing of the murder did he come to his senses. On his arrest, a full confession had been forthcoming from Dianne's killer.

As well as Paul, someone else had a crush on Dianne Moore. She had spurned his advances for numerous years and even had to change jobs when her killer had started at the same place of employment. Over the years, this obsession had turned to anger at the rejection that he felt. The school reunion had created the perfect opportunity to initiate his revenge. Through the

night, knowing about the history of Paul and Dianne, he had been sizing up the perfect moment. From outside the function suite he had spied on Paul as Dianne had approached him. The murderer's prayers had been answered when Paul, as he had anticipated, could not talk to Dianne. Knowing the ladies toilets were empty, the murderer had followed his victim inside and strangled her, hiding the body in a cubicle before climbing out of the window in the cubicle. As expected the car park at the rear of the hotel was deserted, enabling the murderer to walk quietly back into the function suite where their return would go unnoticed amid the furore of the

discovery of Dianne's body. Johnny Payne was now in custody.

The young Detective escorted Paul from the manager's office. Paul was struggling to walk as the shock of the guilt of his best friend for the murder of the most beautiful woman he had ever met still preyed heavily on his mind. As he returned to the function suite to collect his coat he found the whole room deserted save for the bar staff who were tidying up and Dianne's friend who had discovered the body. On seeing Paul she walked slowly towards him, entwined his hand into hers, the word 'Sorry' on her lips.

THEY WERE GOING TO BE OK by Stephen

Gypsy, his black and white collie dog with one blue eye and one brown, lay on the floor, her head resting on her two front paws, her eyes fixed on him. She was sad, because he seemed sad, and somehow not there...where was he? *'Where is he?'* she thought. He kept picking up his mobile phone, holding it a while, then putting it down again.

He picked it up again, heaved a deep sigh and then, after a long moment, tossed it to one side. Gypsy sat up, the tip of her tail wagging, she still wasn't sure where he was, but, he still didn't seem to be here. He sat up and gazed out the window, and seemed to be, well, miles away.

Then he said quietly, as he stood up, *'This won't do'* and he strode through the door into the hall; Gypsy's questioning gaze following him. She heard him put on his boots, and take a jacket from the coat hanger. He came back and took his hat from the table and looked down at Gypsy with a look she doesn't see very often, a sort of *'I'm not having it'* look.



'You stay here' he said to Gypsy, looking down at her. She stood and gave a little whimper while her sad eyes looked up at him longingly. *'Don't give me those eyes'* he said. *'Stay. See you later'* and pulling on his

hat he strode to the door and stepped out into the low blinding winter sun and crisp bright snow.

He took a few steps, stopped, and then, somehow knowing what to do, put his hands to his mouth and whistled very loudly. For quite a few seconds a long piercing whistle carried in the still late afternoon air.

Gypsy was up at the window straight away, barking. He turned and looked at her with a glower. She stayed up at the window, but stopped barking.



He turned and looked south. Nothing. Silence. Stillness. He waited. Somehow, just like he knew that he had to whistle when he didn't know that he had to whistle, somehow he knew he just had to wait. And Gypsy stood on her hind legs up at the window, waiting too. But what for?

He looked South, into the low winter sun, into the cold blue, south to a horizon of low white hills. He sighed and said *'come on...come on...'* And...

And, well, a long time passed. He didn't know how long but a long time. He was very cold and very fed up. At last he lifted his gaze from the ground in front of him, muttering what he'd muttered several times already, *'It shouldn't take that long'*. Then, as he looked south once more, he thought, *'How long should it take... as the...crow flies? It's not that far'*.

He heaved another sigh and turned to go back into the house. He glanced at the window and saw that Gypsy was no longer there for she had given up long before he had.

Long lonely hours later as the last red embers flickered and began to die in the fire, he turned his thoughts to going to bed. He hadn't heard from her. It must be the phone signal and he thought, *'She'll be ok'*. But he wasn't ok. He wasn't because he hadn't heard from her.

He sat forward in his chair in which he'd been slumped all evening, rubbed his tired face with his hands, shutting his eyes for a moment. When he opened them again the embers in the fire were aglow again, very aglow and then not, then aglow again more brightly, then not again, as though something was breathing life back into them. And each time the

embers glowed he heard a kind of great whoosh, whoosh, whooshing sound outside that grew louder and got faster as did the pulsing of the embers. And then the embers stopped glowing and the whooshing sound abruptly came to an end with two thumping thuds from outside, one straight after the other that shook the whole house!

The dragon landed on the moonlit lawn where he took a deep breath and gave himself a shake. He peered down at the dwelling. He lowered his great head so that his long jaw was just above the ground and looked into the little window, but the blinds were drawn. He looked to the side of the window and saw the door. He extended his scaly forearm and the longest of his three talons until the tip of his claw was just an inch from the door, and then he very lightly tapped.

Gypsy was under the sofa, shaking. He had stood up and was looking towards the window. There was not a sound but for a very deep slow steady kind of breathing sound, almost like that of a roaring fire, only kind of, well, not roaring, not like a lion roars anyway. Maybe like the opening and closing of a furnace door kind of roaring. Then came a very, very loud knock on the door, it was almost as though someone had picked up a very large round stone and was using that to knock on the door.

He knew who...what it was, he knew, only...it couldn't be, could it? *'Stay, Gypsy. Stay. Good girl. Gypsy's ok'*, he said. His heart was pounding as he stepped towards the door of the sitting room. Opening it he walked through into the dark kitchen. It wasn't dark a short while ago when he had come through to make a cup of tea, moonlight had streamed in through the windows then, but now the moon was obscured, by something very big.

The dragon withdrew his forearm and lifted his head and extended himself to his full height, taking a step back he waited.

He slowly put his hand on the door handle and slowly opened it. The dragon saw the door slowly open. But, well, he thought, well...then he said it in his great deep Welsh dragon tone *'Well ?'*

Still nothing appeared in the doorway.

'Come, come', said the dragon.



Still nothing. The dragon drew a great deep breath and as he exhaled said *'Look...I've flown a very long way to be here so if you don't mind'*. Still nothing. *'Look, I haven't got all night.'* Still nothing.

He stood in the doorway, not daring to look out. Not daring to move as he heard it speak...it speaks! It can talk! It's a dragon and it talks!

The Dragons furnace like breathing had eased after the labours of his long flight. Then it spoke again, only this time not quite as loudly, and for a dragon, he hadn't been speaking that loudly anyway, but it was loud, but not this time, and it sounded less... tired, less impatient, but still very Welsh.

'Look, its ok, its ok. I believe you called. I'm sorry I took so long I...well... I went the long way round see' Still nothing from the doorway. *'I was out when you called, and when I got back the wife said I'd had a call right, and she said that I had got to go down to Scotland, and so I did. And well, yes alright so it was the wrong way to go! I know that now don't I but I did what the wife told me to do because that's what you do isn't it'* And then.... came a reply.

'She says that' He said.

'What? Who? Who says what?' asked the dragon.

'She does. Ellen. She says she's coming down to see me, when it should be up'

'Well you need to understand right that our lady folk get things wrong in that way, see. And well I didn't think. I just set off like and I thought as I was on my way I thought,' Blimey this is taking forever isn't it?' And I thought that I was never going to get here didn't I but I did, didn't I and well I'm here now so...' the dragon paused from his long and slightly embarrassed sounding explanation for taking so long, then added *'Anyway... you called'*

He couldn't believe that he was standing in his doorway listening to a Welsh dragon telling him why he had taken so long to get here. He couldn't believe this and he couldn't believe that a dragon had come, or that it had flown round the world to get here, because he'd called. A dragon had flown round the world, was standing outside his house on his lawn, was talking to him in the middle of the night, was apologising for being late, and had answered his call. A dragon!

Neither spoke or moved for what seemed like ages.

The dragon sort of cleared his throat and said *'Are you alright there?'*

There was no reply.

'Look. I get it right. You didn't think I'd come. You didn't think I even existed. Well see, I do and I'm here and I'm here because you called and I'm guessing it's to do with this Ellen lady and I'm guessing she's from Wales because she says she's coming down to see you when she means up, right? I'm guessing you two have been talking and wondering how you can get together right, and you wished that there was a dragon that could fly you to and fro. That's right isn't it?'

Still nothing!....

'Right. Well then, I'm also guessing that you need to get DOWN to see her -Right?'

.....

'And you'd like me to take you?'

.....

'It's ok. It's what I do, only, well, I haven't done it before. See... you are my first caller...and I am sorry that I was late'

'Yes', a wee voice ventured.

'Yes what?' asked the dragon.

'Sorry. Yes please' He corrected himself.

'No I mean yes what...' The dragon shook his great head and frowned *'No, I mean what do you mean by yes'* said a puzzled and rather tired sounding dragon.

'Sorry I mean yes please, if you would, if you can, please, take me, to Wales, to Ellen'

'Yes...I can...of course I will. I'll do that. I mean, well...look...I'm sorry... I'm new to this right and I'm not really sure what to say or how to say it and well I am really rather tired having gone all that way round and well I don't mean to sound...(the dragon sighed)... I mean I haven't meant to sound angry or impatient or anything like that. I'm just tired and you sound like a nice enough fellow and well I'm a nice enough dragon so I think we'll be ok. Ok?'

Nothing was said in reply. He stood in the doorway whilst the dragon stood outside.

The dragon waited.....and then said, quietly (for a dragon) and with great tenderness.

'It's ok. You don't have to say anything. Your need must be great and, well, maybe you're not really feeling very ok, and maybe the lady Ellen isn't ok either, and that's why you called. It's ok. I'm here for

you and I will take you to her, if you'd still like to go. And if you don't, that's ok too. Don't worry, its ok, alright?'

'I would very much like to go, thank you. And, no, I'm not really very ok, and I don't believe Ellen is either, but we both might be...if we weren't so far apart, and if we could see each other, instead of...well...never mind.'

'It's ok' came the gentle dragon's gentle reply. 'We can go, and, if it goes ok, I mean, between you two, then, I'm always there, just call, and I'll know won't I now, to come UP, and so I'll be here much quicker next time and hopefully if you two are happy seeing each other and happy with me then we can make it a regular thing see? And then hopefully instead of not being ok and sad... because I can tell you are sad even though I haven't seen you I only heard you say a few things... I know you're sad but hopefully you won't be sad anymore because you two will be together...well at least together more than you have been.'

'That would be nice' he said. *'Thank you'.*

'So it would' said the dragon

'Umm, what about Gypsy, my dog? Ellen has a dog, Pepper, and we were hoping they might get on', He asked.

'That's ok, Gypsy can come too' said the dragon.

And He looked down and noticed that Gypsy had come to stand beside him in the doorway. She looked happy, and not afraid. The slow steady wagging of her tail said so.

And He noticed moonlight again, on Gypsy, and on him, and when he looked up again he saw that the dragon had bent down and was looking at them with kind eyes and a smiling face full of moonlit scales and great long pointy teeth.

'It's ok' said the dragon gently.

They were going to Wales. A kind patient dragon was going to take them. They were going to see Ellen and Pepper, and they were going to be ok.



WEEK ENDING 25th November 1979

One evening during the week without asking to get down from the table, Madelyn slid down slowly from her chair but then suddenly slipped and hit her chin on the table. We both had a laugh because it served her right for trying to sneak down from the table. Saturday we went to Colchester and did some shopping and got some stone to carve "Portland". Then we went swimming. Poor Evelyn was really having a tough time with her teeth so she was put on Brandy for medicinal purposes.

WEEK ENDING 2nd December 1979

Grace took Madelyn and Evelyn for a session with the photographers for their long awaited portraits which will stand on the mantelpiece of the Grandparents. While Madelyn played down at the workshop, Evelyn went and had her ears tested, the outcome of which is that she is to see a specialist. Usually I put Madelyn to bed and get a kiss but this night I wasn't getting a kiss, the reason being that I had told her she could not have sweets. This week we went to Colchester to shop and we went by train which is a first for both Madelyn and Evelyn. I kept getting digs from Madelyn about swimming which has been missed this week. We came back on the bus.

WEEK ENDING 16th December 1979

This week Evelyn started eating the same food as us adults and found she had quite an appetite for it. On Tuesday Grace got the photographs and frames for them which we thought were very good. Saturday Judy came to baby-sit for us while we had a dinner on the Firm. We also got Madelyn her Christmas present, a tractor-trailer from *Cash and Carry*. Whether or not she realizes it is to be hers, I cannot say. Evelyn pooped in the bath. Although her teeth were playing up, she tries hard to get on her feet but I don't think she will be walking by Christmas time.

WEEK ENDING 23'd December 1979

Well, having finished work no earlier than usual, we loaded up the van even though Madelyn and Evelyn seemed to have colds, teething and tonsillitis. Grace bought some medicine which helped although Madelyn's voice sank into her boots croaking. We headed for London staying with Grand-dad and Nan Harper, then on the Monday morning it was down to Biggin Hill to spend Christmas with Kimberly, Robert, Constance and Lawrence, Grand-dad and Nan Hamilton and Grand-dad and Nan Harper together with the four of us.

Christmas Eve Constance and Madelyn finally settled down in Constance's bedroom. Evelyn had to be taken out and put into Grand-dad and Nan Hamilton's bedroom because she was crying so much. Lawrence slept with Grand-dad and Nan Harper. Kimberly and Robert, Grace and myself slept downstairs on airbeds in the lounge. We brought all the presents from various hidey-holes, sorted them out and piled them around the Christmas Tree. Kimberly had brought some stockings so we put a few presents in these and left them at the bottom of the beds.

Christmas day arrived at about 6:30 a.m. with Constance and Madelyn holding hands saying "Father Christmas did not leave us any presents", so we told them he had and that they should look to see what was at the bottom of their bed. When they came back downstairs the next time it was with their presents which they had opened. They were told they could open the rest of the presents beneath the tree after breakfast.

So after breakfast everyone gathered round the tree and opened their presents. Madelyn sat on her tractor-trailer though her feet did not quite reach the pedals. The other presents she received were a ski-suit and Lego from Nan and Grand-Dad Harper, Lego from Nan and Grand-Dad Hamilton, a dress and sweets from Vanessa and Ron Weston, money and bubble-bath from Auntie Belle Harper, money from Auntie Hamilton, a doll and sweets from Mr. and Mrs. Hickford, jumpers from Auntie Barb and Uncle Jed, a book and scales from Kimberly and Robert, a Token from Uncle George and Auntie Hannah, a picture and dominoes from Ryan and Laura. For Evelyn £5 Premium Bonds from Mum and Dad, a ski suit and crawler ball from Nan and Grand-dad Harper, turtle and knife, fork and spoon set from Nan and Grand-dad Hamilton, a Teddy Bear from Kim and Rob and a dress from Ryan and Laura.

Before dinner, we managed to go out for a walk. Constance, Madelyn and myself bought back a lot of Holly to decorate the room with. That morning everyone was quite happy although soon Constance wanted Madelyn's toys and Madelyn wanted Constance's toys and neither was sharing. In the afternoon we lay exhausted, having earlier forced our dinner down followed by games. Then came our Tea and another round of games and finally bed. For the next 2 nights we had a good night's sleep because Nan and Grand-dad Hamilton looked after Evelyn, Madelyn and Constance all sleeping together.

Bar opening presents, *Boxing Day* came and went much the same as Christmas Day had. We all left the next day. Grace, Madelyn, Evelyn and myself came back to Nan and Grand-dad Harper's for a nice lazy holiday visiting Auntie Flora and Auntie Madge and Uncle Matt, Don and Meryl although they were out visiting Auntie Dot and Uncle Rodney and Alec. Took Madelyn and Evelyn on a London bus at night to see all the decorations along Oxford Street, then we walked down Regents Street to Trafalgar Square.

My Memories Fade

WEEK ENDING 5th January 1980

Madelyn and Evelyn settled well at Nan and Grand-Dad Harper's; staying up late, eating far too many sweets. No doubt about it, Evelyn amused us all one evening in fact my Dad nearly wet himself as they blew raspberries to each other all night long with Evelyn really putting her whole body into it. When Nan told Madelyn to "poute it doune", Madelyn copied Nan's Scot's accent repeating "poute it doune". Nan got such a laugh at this. I wish I had heard this. Grand-Dad now wears a nightcap in bed and Madelyn saw this when she was sleeping with Nan and Grand-Dad. Auntie Belle knitted both Madelyn and Evelyn a hat and when we got home and Madelyn went to bed, she had to wear her hat as a nightcap. We saw the New Year in with a drink and a wish though all too soon we were having to leave for, sort everything out there and then back to work. Noticed Madelyn isn't really herself.

WEEK ENDING 13th January 1980

Last week Madelyn seemed really unwell. I came home on Thursday to find her laid out on the settee, white and off her food. Really sad. Evelyn however, is on the mend. She got up her feet and since this has made some progress towards eventually walking. She is so pleased with herself. She will be walking very soon. Grace thinks this will be before she is one year old. Evelyn also now eats at the same time and the same food as us and she is a regular Gannet. On Tuesday Grace got Madelyn a spoon, fork and knife set. Madelyn used the knife for putting in her mouth, refusing all guidance. Sunday Madelyn caught her finger in the Jack-in-the-Box.

Grace went to the Dentist on Friday and could not leave Madelyn and Evelyn with me because I was out, so they all three went to the Dentist and had one heck of a time so I was told. Lately Madelyn has been using her newly found swear word in the right context no less. After being told not to use that particular word, a few minutes later she used the same word again. She got a good smack on the bottom.

WEEK ENDING 20th January 1980

Friday Grace took Evelyn to the ear specialist to get a proper examination on her hearing but he was unable to detect any fault. His advice was to just keep an eye on her and should we feel at all worried then not to hesitate before contacting him. Both Madelyn and Evelyn have colds. Evelyn is getting to be a bit much crying all hours and allowing us very little sleep. Early Sunday morning Madelyn was sick, the reason likely being that she had eaten so many sweets.

WEEK ENDING 27th January 1980

Evelyn took her first step on Tuesday then accidentally fell into the potty. She didn't think much of that. Just the same it won't be very long before she is really taking steps. Sunday Evelyn had a good appetite, finishing her own meal and then sampling Christmas pudding with Nestles cream. Later in the afternoon when I felt like having some cold Christmas pudding, there appeared Evelyn and Madelyn. From now on I can see that things will have to be shared.

WEEK ENDING 3rd February 1980

Came home from work one evening and went upstairs where Madelyn and Evelyn were in the bath. Evelyn got so excited to see me she fell backwards and slid under the bath water. Saturday we all went to Colchester, the prime purpose being to take Madelyn swimming. She was very excited and greatly looking forward to this so you can imagine how upset we were when we were told the pool was closed for repairs. Madelyn's face said it all, a complete story of utter disbelief. We felt as if we had betrayed her but perhaps the sweets softened the blow on the return trip.

WEEK ENDING 10th February 1980

Evelyn gained her third tooth. Saturday we all went to Bury-St-Edmunds to the Sports Centre which we all thought was A1. Madelyn and I went swimming while Grace and Evelyn were able to sit downstairs watching from below. We'll certainly be going there again.

On Sunday Madelyn got a splinter in her hand. Grace held her still while I, Doctor Crippen, dug in with a pin, lifting the skin to extract the splinter. One gone splinter, a 50 pence reward and lots of post-surgery hugs and soon everyone were hearing about the splinter operation.

We are having a purge on Evelyn's sleeping habits. For some night now she stirs in the night whereupon we go upstairs, then again and again this happens. In the morning as well after having won the evening's battle with her tears, the struggle for supremacy continues. Among the morning's brighter events, Evelyn climbed the stairs with some help and Madelyn was stunned when she saw a frogman come out of the water.

WEEK ENDING 17th February 1980

[to be continued]

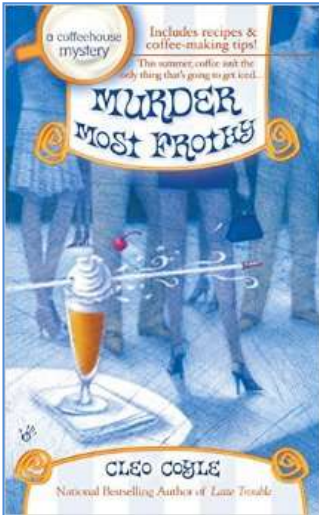


MURDER MOST FROTHY

book review by Isolde
Author: Cleo Coyle



'Murder Most Frothy' is a rich and entertaining blend of suspense and New York atmosphere that will keep you captivated right to the last drop of coffee in your cup



This is the fourth in the Coffeeshouse Mystery series revolving around the manageress of the *Village Blend*, an independent coffee shop in Greenwich Village, New York. This summer, the central character, Clare Cosi, leaves her Manhattan coffee shop behind as she heads for the wealthy Hamptons oceanfront --and to perhaps the biggest jolt of her life. At her rich friend's fabulous fourth of July bash, more than the coffee gets "iced". While she tends the coffee bar at the sumptuous beach house mansion owned by David Mintzer, there is a failed attempt on this millionaire's life. The sound of the shots fired is covered up by the fireworks shooting off in the vicinity. Claire is certain--even if the police aren't--that the bullet was meant for her employer and not the deceased man found in David's bathroom. She sets about trying to find the killer / assassin by herself, despite, the police, and members of Claire's family, and even the disbelieving intended victim David telling her not to.

In this murder mystery Clare continues her bold and brash tactics as an amateur sleuth which for a New Yorker would come natural but for others; her nosy stubborn streak might seem a bit much. Here's a quote from a scene in which Clare is caught snooping through a suspect's house and is asked "*Where the hell do you get your nerve, Clare Cosi?*" She replies: "*Eight to ten cups of coffee a day. At least.*" As she carries out her investigation, the disturbing facts she uncovers are going to keep her up at night—even without caffeine.

Not only is she wired on coffee but she's also obsessed with how to prepare the perfect cup of coffee or espresso and so the story provides us with detailed descriptions of coffee-making par excellence. If you're not really into coffee, prepare to be converted into a coffee lover. And if you are already a connoisseur and want to understand coffee as one would appreciate fine wine, this is the series for you as author Cleo Coyle goes into great detail about the kinds of coffee beans available, coffee roasts and blends, and "pairings" of certain delicious deserts with specific coffee flavours.



For me, part of the lure to read this series is the actual coffee and dessert recipes listed in the glossary of each novel. This one featured one that I plan to try: *Claire's Chocolate Walnut Espresso Brownies*. I'm looking forward to reading other books in this series as much for their recipes at the back as for the mysteries themselves.

The Coffeeshouse Mysteries Series : Where coffee and crime are always brewing



For any of our readers who are interested in reading *Murder Most Frothy*, we have acquired several paperback copies of this coffeeshouse mystery which we will happily give out to our members on a first come first serve basis.

SING STREET A FILM REVIEW by Graeme



Sing Street is a feel-good musical with huge heart and irresistible optimism. The charming cast are excellent and hummable tunes make for a great soundtrack. These all help to elevate a familiar plotting: a boy growing up in Dublin during the 1980s escapes his strained family life by starting a band to impress the mysterious girl he likes. It is an uplifting story line and I found an underlying message: being who you want to be should be at the fore-front of all our lives as well as having an understanding of others and accepting their views, even if we do not agree with them.



This is the best film I have seen this year.



Write On Film 'Passion' Premieres at University's Creative Showcase

The University of the Highlands & Islands recently showcased their students' work and Write On members were invited to join in. This gave us the opportunity to screen 'Passion', the film produced last year for the Mental Health Arts & Film Festival. On the 1st of June at the UHI Inverness campus, our film was shown in a state of the art theatre to a full house and received well by the audience. A fantastic evening was had by all.



Marin Bannon- Media Studies Lecturer



We wish to extend congratulations to everyone who participated and who made the evening such a success. First, big congratulations to Jim, Graeme & Marion for creating the film. You deserve to feel really proud of your achievement. Next, a big thanks certainly goes to Martin Bannon & everyone at UHI for screening 'Passion' at their event. And finally, massive "congrats" ! to all the students on their fantastic work. We look forward to working together on future projects!

There will be opportunities in the future to develop projects within the group with UHI. Of course Alan will keep all our members posted on any upcoming activities.



Passion can be watched on Youtube

Paste <https://youtu.be/7F4KVkflfQs> into Search

Befrienders Highland creative writing group members reflect on life & friendships



Passion

Noun:

Any powerful or compelling emotion or feeling, as love or hate

Derivative of Latin *passus*, past participle of *pati*: to suffer, to submit