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# TAW U3A CREATIVE WRITING GROUP

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**MARCH 2021**

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## INTRODUCTION

### INTRODUCTION

By the time you read this Booklet that momentous day MARCH 23rd will have been reached and a whole year of our lives will have gone by without us leading a 'Normal Life' as we know it. No U3A Coffee mornings, group meetings to learn a language, paint, go for walks with friends through this beautiful countryside we live in, go on coach days out to visit gardens and historic houses, learn a new skill or pass our knowledge on to others ad infinitum....

But we must be grateful that we are still here, eager to get back to meeting our friends for coffee and a chat, but most of all go where we want, when we want and not be scared of a tiny little enemy that we can't see.

We've been very lucky in Creative Writing that one of our members, Bob Beattie has kept our love of story telling alive by publishing this Booklet every month for a whole year. Luckily, we should be able to get back to meeting each other in April in a garden and as we are such a small group this is possible.

For this month's offering, however, you will have to put up with me producing the Booklet as Bob has started an Open University Course and has too much on his plate. We have decided not to do any more Booklets during the coming months, but if there is enough interest, will do another one in maybe the Autumn and a Christmas Special.

I hope you all re-join this wonderful organisation that enables us to meet new people, learn new skills and enjoy our retirement years to the full. Hopefully see you all again soon.

Sue Boyd  
Group Leader  
Creative Writing.

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A Stormy Night  
by June Liddy

I lay in bed listening to the roar of the wind. It echoed down the lounge chimney in gusts. It whistled through unknown gaps in the window frames. It came in waves as if a giant was breathing out fiercely then taking a gentler breath in before spitting violently out again. The rhythm was hypnotic and my breath seemed to mimic it.

Then I heard a loud ear-piercing creak of wood against wood. The trees in the neighbour's back garden groaning and rubbing against each other, I imagined. What if the wind felled them? Would they reach my house, I tried to calculate? Would I be buried under leafless branches? Would I be crushed?

I lay disturbed listening to the tempestuous storm. Then the rain began to lash against my bedroom window so violently that the panes reverberated. It sounded like horizontal sheets of metal splintering against the glass.

I held my breath while listening to a grating, scraping sound. Then a bang, bang, bounce sound. I recognised my plastic bucket being blown, tipped and bouncing away across the garden. Then came a heavier plastic grating. Yes, that would be my patio chairs being strewn about by the wind, I guessed. Should I go outside and retrieve them? No, it was too fierce and dark and wet and I was scared.

I tried to identify and pinpoint all the sounds I was hearing. There was now a knocking. Was that the fence? I knew it was a little unstable without the wind blowing. It was one of those jobs we meant to repair but hadn't got around to it. Now was it ripping apart?



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Suddenly the room lit up momentarily. Lightning. I braced myself for the thunder. One, two, three, four! A loud clap resounded through the valley and rumbled for a few seconds. My heart was racing and the room felt full of tension. I willed the storm to move on. I dreaded what I would find in the morning.

Morning eventually came although the wind was still active. I gingerly peeked between the curtains. Considering we had 70 mph winds last night the devastation wasn't as bad as I had imagined. My plastic table and chairs were banked up against the hedge, the compost bin had overturned and a lid was missing from another bin. Luckily the trees in my neighbour's garden had held up and my fence was fine albeit a little wobbly. The bucket funnily hadn't moved so I am not sure what the bang, bang, bounce was! I walked round and fixed everything back as it should be. I found the lid of the compost bin and replaced and anchored it down with a brick. I also anchored the table and chairs. I was ready for the next night of storm but hopefully it would not be as bad and I would be able to get some sleep tonight.

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## A STORMY NIGHT

By Wendy Pentling

Another deafening crash of thunder, Mavis held her breath. She was still quite a distance from the cottage she had rented to recuperate for the summer and noticing the blackening clouds in the distance, she looked around to seek shelter.

In the distance, by the beach steps, she spotted the derelict ice cream kiosk and with head down made her way through the sodden grass, trying to stay back from the cliff edge

The lightening came, a brilliant shock of white in the sky forking to the ground.

Willing her legs to go faster she made it to the hut just as the rain began falling in great sheets and wriggling in through the open flap at the rear, Mavis managed to get inside. Peering through the gloom she could just make out by the face of her watch that it was eight o'clock and the storm was still raging outside.

Pulling her thin jacket tighter she thought it best to stay put until the storm passed and feeling in her pocket for her phone, she realised it had slipped out.

“Blast” she muttered and poked around the floor “my God what on earth?” Her groping fingers felt something big, wet and hairy and finding her phone she attempted to use the torch to see better,

“That's great, battery is flat”.

She guessed the bundle on the floor must be discarded rags, they smelt awful. Another fork of lightening lit up the kiosk,

“Oh my God” she exclaimed, as two eyes were fleetingly reflected by the light.

Hurtling herself through the gap Mavis attempted to run back the way she'd come. At one point she thought she heard voices, but the thunder was deafening.

Slowly opening her eyes, Mavis realised she was on the sofa in front of a blazing log fire and her partner Peter appeared with a steaming mug of tea.

“No time for that, there's a body in the kiosk up by the beach. I need to ring the police”.

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“You are suffering from exposure. You were outside in the storm for hours. You need to rest”.

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Mavis disentangled herself from the fleece throw, then remembering her phone had no charge picked up Peter's and dialled 999.

The police sergeant kept asking the same questions infuriating Mavis.

“How many times officer do I have to repeat myself. There were definitely two eyes staring at me when the lightening illuminated the booth. I did not imagine it. Why don't you look for yourself?”

“My men are there now madam”

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On answering a knock on the door Peter saw two men in yellow oilskin jackets standing in the porch with water running onto the floor. The sergeant appeared and closed the hall door,

“Well lads, is there a corpse?” he enquired.

“Oh yes Sarge,”

Returning to Mavis and Peter, the policeman confirmed the deceased had been found and returned to the farmer and Mavis looked at the officer with a puzzled expression.

“Oh Mavis” Peter, unable to keep a straight face dissolved into laughter, “your body was the remains of a dead sheep”



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## ONE STORMY NIGHT

By Sylvia Wiseman

As the wind rattled the window frame and the rain lashed the leaded glass Martha turned in her bed and pulled the covers closer. She was pleased to be warm and comfortable and she curled her toes in pleasure. No one should be out on a night such as this.

Her eyelids became heavy and she fell into a restless sleep but the wind howling in the chimney interrupted her dreams conjuring all sorts of terrifying images causing her to toss and turn. So, when the sharp knocking at the front door awakened her from her slumbers, she drew herself out of the covers and rubbed her eyes – was it a dream? But no, there it was again, the urgent banging on the old oak door.

Wrapping her nightgown tightly around her she took the candle and cautiously made her way down the stairs.





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Holding the candle high she opened the door a crack and was met with the face of a young woman. The haunted eyes that met hers were dark and tearstained, she was quite obviously terrified, her clothes were soaked and torn. Martha drew the young woman inside, "Help me please" she begged.

Putting an arm around the girl she helped her into the warm kitchen, the fire still glowing. Sitting her beside the red ashes she fetched a cup and filled it with warm milk from the range. The girl clasped the cup eagerly and put it to her lips, her shoulders still shaking. "Don't let him find me" she whispered through chattering teeth.

"Who - who are you afraid of?" Martha wondered

"Him from the Manor – he came to my room and tore me from my bed but I struggled and hit him hard with my bed pan and he chased me down the stairs shouting and threatening to kill me. I could hear him panting behind me as I ran through the woods so I stopped and picked up a branch and as he came upon me, I hit him with it".

It was well known that the drunken lord of the Manor liked the ladies too much and it was rumoured he had killed his wife as she lay abed after giving birth to a daughter, neither had survived but there had been no prosecution.

Martha knew the girl was in grave danger and prepared for a visit from the dangerous predator.

She blew out the candle and together they waited for the onslaught. They heard the boots on the path and then the fierce banging on the door. She opened it a jar and smelled the stinking breath and saw the bloodshot eyes. The man raised his fists but Martha was quicker than he and the last thing he saw was the glint of the knife.

Penny was fuming as she watched Adrian slam out of the door and stomp down the path to his car. It's all his fault, she thought angrily, as she tried to calm herself down, and I'm not staying here with such an unreasonable man.

Two minutes later she had made her decision. It was simple – all the camping gear was packed and waiting in the hallway, ready for their short break in a few days' time so – why shouldn't she have a couple of days without him? She could do what she wanted – it could be "her" time. She stared at the bags and boxes. She could put up the tent – she'd done it enough times when they'd gone off together, and she knew how to connect the gas stove, and do all the other little tasks involved.

They had both been looking forward to their weekend of wild camping up on the moors, enjoying the peace and quiet of the countryside and the fresh air. Last time they'd done it they'd cooked sausages on the old camping stove, and skinny-dipped in the icy cold stream, shrieking with laughter like two naughty children. Later they'd snuggled down together in a massive double sleeping-bag.

It had been an unfounded argument, she considered now, wondering if she could have reacted in a different, less aggressive way. However, she knew that Adrian had been wrong, and as she had tried to put him right the row seemed to escalate.

"I'll show him," she said sulkily to herself, "and he can stay at home without me and see how he can cope."

Snatching up as many of the various bags and boxes as she could carry, she crossly tramped down the path to her own car, piling everything into the boot. Turning to go and collect more of the camping equipment, she noticed their dog, sitting on the path staring at her. "Oh, Bruno" she patted him. "I suppose you'd better come with me – I don't know when Adrian will be back."

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Adding some tins of dog food to the already loaded car, she sat Bruno on the front seat and, with a long sigh, set off. Only a few miles down the road she realized that she should have left a note for Adrian telling him not to worry or call the police as she would be all right and would be back in a few days. Returning to the house, she scribbled a note and left it on the mantelpiece. Once again, she set off with Bruno safely harnessed in the passenger seat. “We’ll have a nice quiet couple of days, hey Bruno? Just you and me and lots of nice walks up on the moor.”

The sun was shining brightly as she came to the camping spot. Surprisingly, she found the tent harder to put up than she had thought, then realized that she’d had Adrian to help her in the past but, somehow she managed and although it was a bit saggy, she was happy with it. She carted all the necessary gear into the tent then hitched up Bruno’s lead. “Walkies!” She called, really looking forward to a nice bracing walk over the moor.

Feeling refreshed and happier as she returned to the tent, Penny briefly noticed some rather grey clouds over to the west. Probably a shower on the way, she thought, good thing I got the tent up in time. Having fed Bruno, she set up the stove and cooked a quick ready meal – there was no way she was doing “proper” cooking while she was camping. Checking her mobile, she saw nothing new except that the signal was showing as very weak. Sighing, she picked up her book and sat with a cup of coffee, enjoying the pale sunshine and listened to the sounds of the creatures of the countryside.

After a while she noticed that the sun had set and the sky was darkening. She started to feel a bit chilly. “I’m getting cold” she said to Bruno, “it’s a bit early, but I’m quite tired and an early night would do me good.”

At last she snuggled down into the huge sleeping bag, Bruno on his own blanket over her feet. “Oh, Bruno,” she stroked his floppy ears, “I’m so glad you’re with me, you’ll keep me warm, and with your scary growls you’ll frighten away any marauding creatures that come sniffing by.” Within seconds she was fast asleep, warm, cosy, and tired after the events of the day. Later, in her deep sleep she found she was

being roused by a rumbling sound. “Shush!” she called to Bruno, then realized that it wasn’t Bruno at all. It was the sound of thunder which was now accompanied by the patter of heavy raindrops on the tent roof. “Oh, no!” she thought. “Oh, well, I can’t do anything about it – I’ll just stay put until morning.” She lay there listening – was it her imagination or were the drops getting heavier? And was she sure she had secured all the guy ropes? The tent seemed to be flapping in a rather alarming manner, and the wind was beginning to become quite frightening. “It’s only a little storm,” she told Bruno, trying to comfort herself. “It’ll soon pass, and the sun will come out in the morning.” Bruno just stared sadly at her.



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Then all at once an almighty blast of wind ripped out the front of the tent, lifting up the groundsheet, and dragging the zip on the sleeping bag. Penny screamed as a cold, wet, sheet of muddy canvas covered her shoulders, and Bruno leapt up and dashed outside into the wet and muddy field.

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“Bruno!” she shouted, “come here!” and Bruno, being the obedient dog he was, came back – into the tent - splattering sodden paw prints all over the now soaking sleeping-bag and covering Penny with loving, grubby slobber. “Oh, Bruno!” Penny was near to tears now as another massive gust suddenly ripped the tent in two. “What shall I do?” She shivered as the gale howled around her, and the icy raindrops slithered down her back. Sobbing miserably, she realized what she had to do. “It’s no good, Bruno – we’ll have to abandon the camp.” Collecting up as much as she could, she dragged it all back to the car and stuffed it into the boot. Abandoning any thoughts of keeping the passenger seat clean and dry, she strapped Bruno in, and set off.

Bedraggled, wet, cold and miserable she unlocked the front door and entered the warm living room. She stared. There, on the table was a huge bouquet of beautiful flowers and a large note bearing the words “I’M SORRY” She stared and then turned to a sound behind her. Adrian stood in his pajamas, “Oh Penny – I’m so sorry – it was all my fault!”

“No, it was *my* fault – I’m sorry, I was *so* stupid.” She fell into his arms and then suddenly a thought occurred to her – “What if it *hadn’t* been a dark and stormy night?”

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## A STORMY NIGHT

By Sue Boyd



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The wind was howling around the building when Philip came off to what is called ‘The Twilight Shift’ at Sainsbury’s. It was now midnight and bitterly cold. As he started the short walk back to his home, large drops of rain started to fall, turning into a solid sheet of water cascading down onto his head, running down the back of his thin jacket and within seconds he was soaking wet right through to his skin.

When Philip had left home at 4 pm although the sun was gradually sinking down behind the hills, it was still warm and so he’d decided not to take his van, but walk to work. He’d also grabbed the thin jacket he’d been wearing that day, having only just arrived home from a day out with his mates fishing. He’d made himself a sandwich when he got home, had a shower and popped his head around the kitchen door where his father John was putting the ingredients into the bread maker.

“I’m off now Dad. See you tomorrow. You’ll have to get something out of the freezer tonight for your dinner”

“Thanks for finishing up the last of the bread” grumbled John, “now I’m having to make another loaf for tomorrow”. Turning around, he looked at his son,

“I wouldn’t wear that jacket if I were you. There’s a terrible storm coming in from the West tonight and you’ll be soaked. By the way here’s a shopping list for you and especially don’t forget butter as we’re right out of it.”

Grabbing the list from his Father, Philip took no notice of his dire warnings of a storm on the horizon, picked up his phone and was out the door.

Now as he drudged through the pouring rain, he suddenly remembered the list.

‘Well it too late now’ he thought as his hands closed round the soggy remains of the list, ‘but I do wish I’d listened to Dad’s warning and bought my van.’ The vision of a lovely steaming hot cup of coffee, a slice of his Father’s new loaf, liberally spread with marmalade (minus butter because he’d forgotten it) and snuggling under the covers of his bed kept him

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going. Soon he was standing outside his front door. Feeling in his pockets he suddenly realised with a sinking feeling in his stomach, that he hadn't picked up his door key. Dad had been warning him for months to hide a key somewhere in the front garden, but there was always something more important to do such as sorting out his fishing tackle or playing games on his I-phone.

'Perhaps Dad didn't lock the door when he realised that I'd forgotten my keys' thought Philip, but 'No' the door was firmly locked and bolted. There was no point in hammering on the door or ringing the bell either because the storm was making so much noise and anyway Dad always took his hearing aids out at night and couldn't hear a thing anyway.

Philip suddenly thought of the summer house which was right at the end of the garden. That was never locked up, there was an old sofa inside and perhaps even a blanket left over from the summer and maybe a few biscuits.

Slipping and sliding on the wet grass with bushes snagging at his clothes, tripping over stones and why oh why had Dad built a stupid wall at the end of the lawn? Philip eventually made his way to the summer house. It was pitch black inside and his phone was running out of battery, so the light was very dim. He could just make out the old sofa, but had forgotten that the springs were coming through the worn fabric so he wasn't going to get much sleep on that tonight. To add to his misery, there were a few biscuits left in the tin, but they were all soggy, the blanket and sofa were soaking wet from drips coming through the roof and Philip remembered his Dad asking him to help him repair it, but of course he never got around to it!

Next morning John came down the stairs in his dressing gown to make his morning cup of tea. The sun was shining, the birds were singing and there outside the glass porch door, was his son, soaking wet, freezing cold and in a foul mood.

"Don't say a word and especially not 'I told you so' and he stomped off into the bathroom and didn't emerge for about an hour.

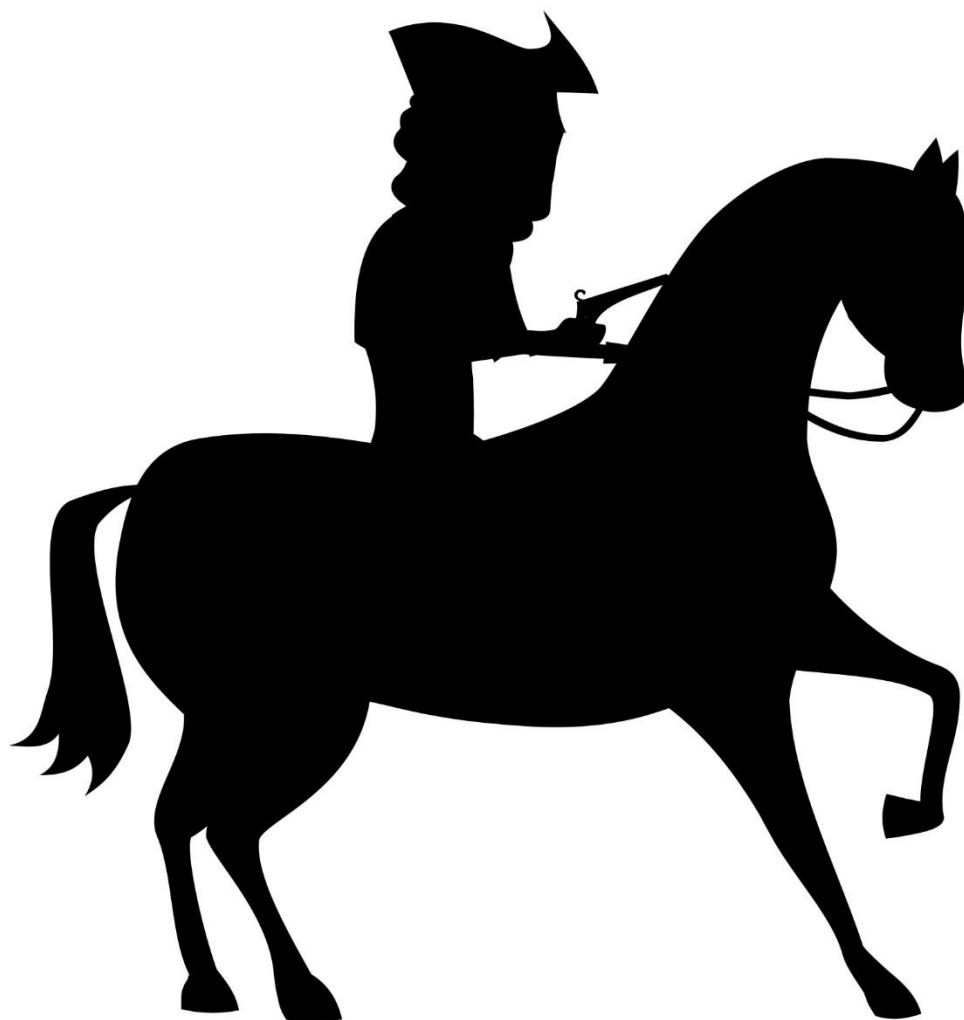
"Do you want a hand mending the summer house roof?" asked Philip at the weekend.



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STORMY NIGHT  
BY ROBERT BEATTIE

“It was a dark and stormy night as the highwayman came riding, riding, riding, the highwayman came riding over the moonlit moor.”



“You’re not starting with that old rubbish again are you? You always start your stories with a storm and darkness and this time you nicked words from a poem. Why don’t you start one with some sunshine.”

“I don’t. I’ve written about sunshine before.”

“Yes, but the rain soon came and everyone got wet. For goodness sake! And anyway, how could the highwayman be riding in the dark if the moon was out?”

“Well, the moon came and went because the clouds were being blown about”

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“But you haven’t said that. According to you, it’s just dark and stormy. How about starting, if you must, by saying something like “It was a darkish night with scudding clouds but moonlit?”

“That doesn’t sound dramatic enough. I’m trying to create a threatening atmosphere and what you say wouldn’t do that.”

“And, if it’s so dark, how does the highwaymen see where he’s going? Where is he going, by the way?

“If you’d let me get on with the story you would find out he’s off to an inn to see his mother whom he left to seek his fortune 10 years ago.”

“Is the inn home to him?”

“Yes. It’s the only home he’s got.”

“And I suppose his name’s Jack.”

“Well, I hadn’t thought but, yes, that would do.”

“So, it’s Jack’s Return Home is it.”

“Don’t be silly. Now you’re making fun.”

“No, I’m not but I don’t want to see you making a fool of yourself. And another thing; what’s he riding? Is it a horse, a donkey, a mule or what? He’s not riding in a car is he?”

“No, it’s a horse he’s riding.”

“Well, the horse wouldn’t be too keen on galloping about on a moor in the middle of the night in the dark and in a storm. What’s he going to say about that?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t thought about that yet either.”

“And does Jack’s mother know he’s coming? It will be a hell of a surprise for him to turn up after 10 years. Has he been home at all since he left?”

“I hadn’t got that far.”

“It seems to me that you haven’t thought this through. Why not change the whole story to something a bit cheerier? Like “It was a lovely sunny day as the ex-highwaymen” (he’d reformed you see) “rode over the moor to see his old mother ten long years after he left her. She was so looking forward to seeing him and had put out flags on the inn she ran. His girlfriend was there too, waiting for him with her 8 children all standing in a row.”

“8 children? Where did they come from?”

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**“The usual place. You see, he’d sneaked home to see her a few – well, at least 8 times – during the 10 years he’d been away.”**

**“Hadn’t his mother noticed the kids and wondered where they’d come from?”**

**“Yes, but she came from Alsace so thought storks were involved.”**

**“You know, I can’t be bothered with this. I’m going to have a kip. Why don’t you get off my nose and fly home”**

**S, Bird flew off and the dog rolled over and was soon snoring.**

