

Dredged From the Depths of an Ancient Inbox

Beowulf Mayfield

Preface

Most of the poems in this ebook were written in the mid-noughties, the time when I stopped performing poetry. Performance was the thing that kept me thinking about new material and once that stopped, the writing wound down as well. However, a handful of poem ideas still presented themselves, made it to the rough draft stage and got sent off in emails to writing friends dotted around the world.

I always meant to include this handful of poems in a booklet but then photography came along, got serious and the plan went on the back burner... until now.

It was only a matter of time before I got interested in creating an ebook and I stumbled on a handy iPad app called Book Creator that was great for creating a photobook but not so great for working with a lot of text. Since I also needed to get my head around InDesign, I dug out a couple of handy tutorials and I'm working on this with one eye on a "how to" guide. So far, so good.

When I stopped performing poetry, I stopped committing poems to memory and even stopped taking care of my written drafts and print-outs. Luckily, I was able to find those last poems by trawling through a couple of email archives. It took a few hours of electronic dredging but in the end I found them, did some editing and now they can have a chance of a life in the world.

The moral of this story is take care of your work – you never know when you may need to refer back to your notes. Digital storage is handy but CD-ROMs and portable drives have a nasty habit of corrupting and can become outdated and unreadable far too quickly. Print-outs and paper books may be bulky but at least they don't depend on access to a particular operating system.

The last poem in this set – My Marmalade Is In The Wrong Fridge – was written in May 2017, and is the result of thinking about poetry again. Maybe the poem bug hasn't gone for good after all...

Enough rambling. Enjoy the poems.

Beowulf Mayfield, May 2017

Chemical Warfare

I planted sunflower seeds
Tucked them up in soft compost
Watered them well.
A few days later
I found green shoots poking out of the earth.
“Hey fat boy!” they shouted.
“Give us something to drink.”

I gave them water
And the sky turned grey
And gave them more.
They pushed their heads higher,
Sprouted leaves to catch the sunlight
And their roots sucked up the rain.

Then the slugs came sliming by.
They bit off the heads of the young plants,
Chewed the fragile leaves
And left the stalks to die.

Late one night I went out to gaze at the new moon.
I looked into the flower bed
To see how the survivors were doing.
There was the enemy;
Fat, brown and sickly,
Slurping its way
To make a midnight feast
Of more of my precious plants.

I rose,
An angry emperor
Determined to protect my people.
I fetched a handful of salt
And dropped a pinch of poison on the invader,
Long and pointed like a soft turd.
It fizzed angrily
And the plants cheered
“Let him have it, fat boy!”

And I dropped more white death
Until the body buckled
And melted into slime.

If these creatures
Were prepared to be patient
They could have high-rise restaurants
With enough giant leaves to feed them until autumn.

But they're slugs
And they're stupid
And they're selfish
And they deserve to be killed by a fat giant
With a monster tub of salt.

A Red Umbrella

Contrasts well with grey clouds...

Lasts longer than a red rose
But isn't nearly as romantic...

Used to be black but one day it doubled as a sword
In a fight to the bloody end
And blood's a pain to clean off...

Got caught out in a rain of terror
Pouring from menacing clouds of dark oppression
And bears its battle scars with pride...

Tells the rain to STOP!

Free Entertainment

It was an English summer barbecue.
We stood in the garden
Drinking warm beer
And wine from plastic cups.
The smoke made our eyes smart
And we hoped the rain would stop.

Movement in a lighted window
Across the street caught my eye.
She looked about 37
Her mousey hair fell in curls about her shoulders
And she was naked from the waist up.
I could see her breasts
They were white and they were pointed.

I turned to my drinking companion
“Turn round slowly,” I told him.
“Look for the lighted window
“And make it look like an accident.”

He turned
Found the window
And spluttered his beer down his shirt front.

“See what I mean?” I said.
“See what?” asked a blonde woman who was walking round with a bottle.
“Free entertainment,” I replied carefully, fearing a lecture for leering.
“Topless entertainment!” Spluttered my drinking companion.
“You can see the tits and everything!”

The blonde and her friends piled to the fence, peering up at the windows
across the street.

“Where? Where is she?” they said. “We want to see her!”

I glanced back at the window
The light was gone.
“Show’s over,” I shrugged.
“Oh, that’s a shame, we missed it,” said the blonde.

“What are we going to do if she comes over here?” asked my drinking companion.

We waited but we never found out.

The Bones of my Grandfather

The bones of my grandfather
Studied Divinity at Cambridge and were ordained in the Church of England
At a time when younger sons were expected to follow the rules.

The bones of my grandfather
Knocked on the doors of families whose sons never returned from the
Battle of Britain.

The bones of my grandfather
Held the nominal rank of RAF Wing Commander and knew one of the
Second World War's most daring squadron leaders whose achievements
were celebrated in a famous 1950s film.
In private he described him as a maniac with a death wish.

The bones of my grandfather
Saw many ghosts and was called upon to perform exorcism.

The bones of my grandfather
Owned a fez, smoked a pipe and ate soft boiled eggs at breakfast.

The bones of my grandfather
Would hold a knife blade against the tabletop and strike the handle to make
a wonderful TWANG sound for my four-year-old amusement.
My grandmother called it his awful trick.

The bones of my grandfather
Made wine from dandelions and elderflower
And his home smelled of early summer.

The bones of my grandfather
Wrote five books on the Church of England in the 1960s
Which are still listed on Amazon.

The bones of my grandfather
Raised three sons: a music teacher, an English teacher and a private school
teacher.

The bones of my grandfather
Left two cats and a wife who taught her eldest grandson to make sloe gin.

By the way, the bones of my grandfather were called Guy, had blue eyes
And knew how to wire up a train set.

My Marmalade Is In The Wrong Fridge

My dream job is being done by
The wrong person,
Appointed by people who got up
On the wrong side of bed
Leaving me with the nightmare of
Scouring the job sites again...

My ship has yet to come in.
Maybe it dropped anchor in the wrong harbour
Or perhaps it was looted and scuttled by pirates
So my treasure lines the wrong pockets...

My friend is offering me a round of toast
And apologises that he's out of marmalade.
I remember I bought a fresh jar of marmalade yesterday
But today it's in the wrong fridge.

And that's it...

If you liked these poems, please visit my website www.wulfie.co.uk where you'll find a few more bits and pieces in my writing section.