

ATLANTIC //

Pat Winslow

(Oxfordshire)



The trick is to launch yourself flatwise, to fly, as it were,
like in those childhood dreams where you'd long-belly over
grass and hedges, fences and trees. Do this without thought
or prevarication. The intention is to beat straight into it,
clean as a pin through the cold salt-scrubbing green,
dear cold that unbolts and unlocks, unscrews all that's been
holding you tight for so long. On your back now, hanging still
like a dead one, buoyant, heart knocking. Keel over, kick heels,
crawl, churning, arm over arm, splice like a shark,
slice like a double-sided windmill. Switch to backstroke
then breast, a ladling scoop, head below and up, then slow
dog-paddle. Wade out, thigh deep, preceded by your shadow,
a perfect dark replica of yourself climbing from the olive drab,
dragging seaweed, an ungainly lumber over hot stones, slab
footed on glittery sand, mica speckled, and slump, shocked
by gravity, by the dull dead thump of human weight.

EXILE //

Paul Francis

(Shropshire)



Hugo ends up in Guernsey, forced to roam
because he can't shut up. He's on the run
with royalties enough to build a home.
"Three-storey autograph" – so says his son.

He raids the junk shops, finds chinoiserie,
commissions carving from a ton of oaks,
laying a trail of personality –
a lover's secrets, Latin mottoes, jokes.

Up at the lighthouse top, he claims a den
where freedom's champion can work all day,
then sleep. The mistress, and the family,
recede. Will Garibaldi come to stay?
Occasionally, he rests his busy pen,
stares out into the blue, where France must be.

THE GHOST OF ME //

Marlene Morris

(Jersey)



Belle Vue no longer
It carries another name,
Houses another family.

I sit opposite in my hire car
Watching the ghost of me,
Standing at my bedroom window,
Watching me.

Sunshine catches the house.
Shadow dad opens the garage doors,
Smiles in my direction.
Cut flowers in the front room window.

Shadow mum,
Shadowier still,
Bunches flowers
Somewhere deep inside my history.

She would have closed all the curtains for a funeral.

I drive away
From the ghost of me
And shadow dad
Starts to scythe the hedge.

THE BLUEBIRD PLATE WITH THE SWEETHEART ROSES //

Charity Novick

(Cambridgeshire)



The day we said we should be done,
we ate tomatoes, sliced so thin
the pattern on the plate showed through.
My favourite, random plate. Its twin
was dropped long since.
We never had a wedding list.
Our stuff was mismatched, chaos-kissed.

You sat and sobbed out all the ways
that you would change. Meanwhile, I sat
and made tomato-flesh slide slick
and warm across a frantic, fat
chipped cornflower bird.
Through jellied juice, I watched it screech
for golden seeds, far out of reach.

SIGHT //

Pat Borthwick

(Yorkshire)



Once I saw a camel on the road ahead.
The clever camel must have heard my car
because the closer I got
the more it morphed itself
into a man on a bicycle with a sack.

I suspect, that had I checked
my rear-view mirror when I'd overtaken
I'd have seen that same camel again
lumbering along on its way
towards Le Foulon.

ON BALANCE //

Terry Quinn

(Lancashire)



a half moon bay
mid summer
midday

on the horizon
islands were perfectly matched

that's when I asked her the question
the perfect spot
at the perfect time
minds and bodies meeting

ten years later
she's still not replied
my best friend
how good is that

UNLUCKY //

Susie Gallienne

(Guernsey)



I was going to give a rabbit's foot
To wish you luck today
But the foot was on a rabbit
And the rabbit ran away.
And I'd found a four leaf clover
Because for luck that's meant
But it got eaten by the rabbit
Before the rabbit went.

LIMBO //

Juliette Hart

(Jersey)



you went
briefed and blackberried
on the red-eye
to a business class bed

leaving me
your T-shirt crumpled
under a dented pillow

you texted twice

do you know that the further you travel
the closer you become?

SNAPSHOT //

Cherie Haughton

(Guernsey & New Zealand)



I forgot my camera today
and so I'm taking a picture with my pen:
clear blue skies, grassy lawn,
cascading rocks, stones,
pebbles to the sea.
Coffee cup warming my hands,
though it's not cold today.
How many times have we been here before?
One hundred?
Yet each day is new.
The islands shining clear in the distance.
Morning sun beaming and
you, little one in my arms,
reflecting the sun's rays
in your smile
illuminating your entire face,
while my coffee takes effect.

ACCIDENTS //

Lewis Robin

(Guernsey)



Sorry
It seems that
I must have
Accidentally
Lost it

That item
You most loved
It's gone now
It won't be found

So now
You cannot have it
It was nice
But now it is lost
Keep this note

EAVESDROPPING //

Marcus Buchanan

(Guernsey)



As I sit here
On the bus,
Two people in front
Decide to discuss,
Talking of what they dislike.

‘I hate that feeling
That you’re being followed,
When someone refrains
From returning what’s borrowed.
That’s what I dislike.’

‘When you’re getting ready
And you have no clean tops,
When talking to someone
And someone else eavesdrops.
That’s what I dislike.’

So me being me,
I feel I agree,
Lean forward and whisper in ear.
‘Quite right, good stranger, quite right,
That’s what I dislike.’

LESSON FOR LIFE //

Freya Carter

(Sheffield)



In maths, they say
algebra is important.
It can be applied to *life*.
I wonder if they mean it.

$y = mx + c$

Life = gradient + cut-through

Gradient: the steepness of the slope,
fighting forwards, upwards, onwards,
our struggles.

C cuts through y.

The cross over.

The no return point.

C could be cherubs, choirs, candles,
the light at the end.

C could be corpses.

They never teach you that.

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