

## ***Playing in the Snow***

***Selected Poems by Matt Purland***

### **Playing In The Snow**

We would run and hide  
But always find our way home  
We would talk in class  
But always do the work  
On the way to school we  
discussed the latest comics  
And we always ended up laughing

Every other day  
There'd be somebody's new joke  
Someone would be on  
And we would have to get them  
In the dinner queue we  
were cheeky to the older kids  
And we always got big helpings

In the summertime  
We would play at war  
Joining in a line with  
Twenty other friends and  
Scaring all the girls we  
Thought that we impressed them  
And they always mocked and pointed

What if I could now  
Tell that kid its story  
As it ran around  
And built its snow defences  
Playing in the snow  
Is all we ever dreamed of  
Hiding behind snowy walls and waiting

### **A Modern Poem**

I'd love  
To write a modern poem  
I'd love to feel  
The  
Freedom flowing through my pen. Like fuel  
No stanzas would I  
Being  
Young  
Have for  
What use have I for them?  
I would prey  
Upon my life  
Giving  
No excuse  
For my muse.  
I would write of my toaster  
Sleek and black and my toothbrush

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Which hangs  
Rocking  
In its rack.

Not art or life or love for I  
Eschew  
The tools of romance. What use have I  
For it?  
Nor heroes of literature  
Myth and verse  
They make my rhymes  
Worse.  
For inspiration I would go to the front  
Door  
And look out.  
Not to books  
Do I look  
Or a painting or two  
Well, maybe a canvas  
All covered with blue.

I do not need to feel  
Pain  
To be able to write  
Not I  
I look to a  
List  
For shopping  
And revel in its bliss imaginary  
Thinking  
This is a poem  
As true as Keats.  
As brave as Yeats.  
As full

Meaning is meaningless  
I abandon all thought of it  
A poem is what you want it to be  
What does it make you feel?  
What does it say  
To you?  
What can you gather from its  
Tangle of words  
Is the key.  
If you ask me what is its meaning  
What is its point, its reason for being  
You will be shown a smile.  
Whatever you want  
Friend  
If you ask me isn't  
This  
A cop-out  
I will reply

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This is a  
Modern poem.

The old  
Rules do not apply I have no need for punctuation, wit or verve or anything chiefly which will  
make for you this a poem to cherish and  
Love

Rhyme is a sin  
Isn't it?  
Unless  
I wish to make a point.  
Alliteration adds mystery  
To  
My meaning  
When  
By happy chance  
I implement it.  
Nothing to swoon  
Over  
Here.  
My everyday  
Trials  
Are  
Laid  
Bare  
For  
Your  
Interest.  
What is most interesting is

If you look  
Closely  
At  
My modern poem  
You will see  
A collection,  
Merely  
Of sentences  
Cut up  
And  
Splashed  
Across your page  
Randomly.  
Like  
A cup of spilt tea.

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### **On The High Wire**

You up on the high wire  
You're so well balanced, so brave  
You're the one they all aspire to  
You walk a perfect way

You up on the high wire  
You're so skilful, you're so strong and  
The way you gently walk that wire  
I see nothing is wrong

But when you come down to earth I've seen you  
I've seen you crying  
Because he's gone away, gone and left you  
He's left you all alone

You up on the high wire  
All in sequins, you're a picture  
Everybody's got their eye on you –  
Holding their breath for you

But when you come down to earth I've seen you  
I've seen you crying  
Because he's gone away, gone and left you  
He's left you all alone

Up every night, every night  
My sweet child, you haven't got a choice  
But to come down, down, down

You up on the high wire  
Your faith is a slight wire  
Your face is a white fire  
Don't you ever think of him

Don't let him win

### **An Unruly Lamb Speaks Out**

Mum  
(What now?)  
What are you doing?  
(Eating grass)  
Why? You're always eating grass.

Is there anything else to do around and about?  
(I don't know)  
Well, everyone just seems to eat grass all day  
Do you like it then?  
(You'll learn)

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Mum  
(What is it?)  
There's a funny man looking at me  
(He's just a rambler)  
He's got a camera. He's coming towards us and seems to be pointing and talking  
(Just ignore him. Look away)  
I'm coming to stand underneath you for cover, get out of his road like  
(Yes, that's it)

I'm just going over there now  
(Where)  
Over there, into that field  
(This is our field)  
But I wondered what's going on in that field, you know  
If there's anything else to do  
(Like what? Don't wander too far)

Mum  
(What is it now?)  
I've been into that field  
(Right)  
There are some cows there you know  
(\*Fascinating\*)  
Are you still eating grass?  
(Er, yes)  
But you can't still be hungry surely, can you mum?  
(You don't understand a sheep's vocation)  
What's a vocation mum?

Will I be a sheep one day?  
(With luck you will. With skill, ingenuity and cunning. Just keep eating the grass. Don't look anybody in the eye, that's the thing)  
And will I eat grass all day mum, like you?  
(Whether you want to or not my son)

Don't you ever get sick of it?  
Have you ever thought of eating anything else?  
Hey – a bumblebee. Look. Look at him!  
I can play with him  
(I don't think he likes it)  
(No. I don't think he liked that, did he. Stay close to me)  
There must be more variety to life. Is there, mum?

Mum  
(What do you want now?)  
I'm just going to play over there by the woods  
And see what's up there, you know  
(You'll soon come gambolling back. You always do)  
I just thought I'd find out if there's anything up there, you know, in the woods

I couldn't get through the gate. It was all locked up with padlocks  
(Surprise, surprise. Come over here)  
It's not fair being cooped up like we are. Are we locked in mum?

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(We like it this way)  
Yeah, you and all the rest of the sheep. Look at them munching away

What about us lambs, eh? What about us?  
I hope I always stay a lamb  
(One day you'll be a sheep. I hope)  
Then I'll understand....  
(Then you'll understand)

#### **Come Inside Love**

Come inside, love  
It's getting cold out there  
What are you looking at?  
There's nothing to see

I'm looking for a spaceship  
I saw it on TV  
I saw they're advertising  
For a pilot – that.s me  
I want to fly out of this house  
And miles into the sky  
Because there's nothing here for me now  
And everything to see

Come inside, love  
Your tea is on the table  
Your father's home and he's hung up his hat  
He's sitting down with his paper

I'm looking for a new life  
And a voyage beyond the stars  
I'm looking for take-off and danger  
And missions into Mars

I want to fly into the galaxy  
And far away into another world  
Because there's nothing here for me now  
And everything to see

Come inside, love  
Your father's getting impatient  
He'll clip you on the ear  
If you're not careful, lad  
He's waiting for his dinner  
And we need you here with us  
Oh, won't you please come inside, love  
And stop making a fuss!

I'm going to Neptune and planet Venus  
I'm manoeuvring my ship  
And if you want to come with me

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You're going to have to leave me be  
Because I'm Captain of my spaceship  
And I'm on my way to Mars

I'm speaking quickly, Mum  
You're fading – and your image is fading fast  
I'm leaving now  
I'm leaving now  
And over and out

#### **Keep Going**

I went to school, well everybody goes to school  
My favourite teacher was a guy who set good books  
I found the hardest thing at school was how to spell  
And I'm appalling now, especially when I'm tired

My mother worked and brought me up  
We were friends until I turned fourteen  
Then she found herself a man to love her, she would say  
He was nothing like you, nothing like you

I got married aged nineteen, not to my first love  
I'm divorced now and a mother to my boys  
They keep me sane these two, I wouldn't have it any other way  
And we don't see him any more

I left my second job to have my first son  
I'm working all the hours I can get  
I've always kept our head above the water's edge  
Stopped the water's ruin

I went north, at first I lived in a cheap place  
Until a friend was kind enough to put me up  
So I went looking for a job, and I found work in engineering  
Something I have always loved

I got my own house and made a friend  
It's never easy when you're moving on  
You'll always need to find a person somewhere  
You can call upon

She brought her girls and all their things and all her clothes  
We settled down and made a life that wasn't hard  
We lived as any couple would with two young girls  
We had our ups and downs like anybody else

Though they were my joy, growing up  
I couldn't help but think about you  
And every day that passed I lost another piece of you  
Like a fool

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One day I'd like to meet the one who'll sweep me from my aching feet  
Who'll take the ends and make them meet  
If he exists, that is, my friends say he does not exist  
But I've always been quite the optimist

If they call I will come running  
I will walk through fire forever if they ever want me to  
It seems that we have lost the time we needed that could make us friends  
And I do not know what to do.

#### **Overboard**

Under the trees  
I can see the train arriving  
I know you will be waiting for me  
But I know I won't be gone  
And the temperature is rising

I brush aside the flies  
From out of my eyes  
In the barren waste of a town  
That was never any good for me

You've got to understand  
It isn't my fault  
This time  
I'm sad, but I can't go that way

Coming, you're  
Walking slowly up the hill  
With a weight of expectation  
I can't possibly fulfil  
Away beyond the trees  
I know you won't hear me so  
I know you can't see me and  
I've got to go

You've got to understand  
It isn't my fight  
This time  
I'm sad, like you never went away  
Never went away  
My life had gone astray  
And your coming back has made me see that

Now  
I only wanted to be yours  
I wanted to be only yours  
I'm overboard  
Overboard

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#### **Speaking German**

Kohnt ihr mich mit dem wagen abholen? is the only German phrase I know  
Which is great if you want a lift back from somewhere

But not so useful when:

Buying stamps in the post office  
Booking an appointment at the dentists  
Ordering a pizza from a company using the phone book  
Or buying a ticket for the cinema

After three years of German lessons I decided not to take it any further  
My acquaintance with the language all but ended then  
Apart from one phrase

Kohnt ihr mich mit dem wagen abolen? stayed put, and lodged itself in my mind  
I would love an opportunity to use it for real

But could I reply to:

Fine, but where do you want dropping off?  
Yes, it'll be ten euros  
Well, I'm going on somewhere and you're welcome as well, but I won't be driving home till  
about three at least so –  
I'm not sure I'm going your way. OK go on

Vocabulary tests followed one another like a herd of wildebeest  
Escaping across a plain of blank faces, in flight from the smirking teacher (who spoke only  
German during lessons)  
I found myself lost, stuck but for one phrase

Kohnt ihr mich mit dem wagen abholen? always would stand me in good stead  
Stated with conviction, at sensible intervals, it brought a breath of authenticity

But what if he asked:

Have you learnt your vocab list?  
Are you booked on the German trip?  
Have you brought your money for the deposit?  
Why don't you just listen and pay attention?

Now when I recite the phrase to friends as part of schoolboy past  
It brings a look of wonder and, oh you've done well to remember that, I don't know any French  
and I studied it for five years  
I can't help feeling that four hours a week for three years could have taught me more than one  
phrase

Kohnt ihr mich mit dem wagen abholen?

Yes, but do you want sugar with it?

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### **Very Old Apple**

I've got an apple in my fridge  
I'd never eat it, no  
I don't know what it's doing there  
And wish that it would go

### **When Soldiers Came**

How long will they be in our town  
Will they be staying overnight  
And will they try and take us down  
Will all our men take up the fight

I watched them enter, made no sound  
Was breathing quiet as a mouse  
I ran up to the burial mound  
And saw them stop outside our house

The din they made upon our door  
Before you could get up they broke  
A window, knocked you to the floor  
With batons made from polished oak

The trial was short and hurt me  
A deserter from your army life  
The general was amused to see  
The faces of the child and wife

I kept a diary every day  
That you were kept away from me  
And when one year had passed away  
I threw your clothes into the sea

And watched them sail away, away  
The other shore would call them home  
I sometimes see you when I pray  
With clothes of grey bedecked by foam

### **Buying Things**

There are dandelions growing  
In the wooden framed greenhouse  
All the glass has gone now  
But you can put some more in

The roof of the house will need  
Attention shortly  
I'm only sorry that I  
Didn't have the opportunity to do it

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Would you like a cup of something at all  
Or must you be  
Yes we must carry on

My son bought me that  
Grandfather clock there  
The case is mahogany; the hands are ebony  
I never thought I would have owned it

The kitchen is below stairs  
I can hear the girls laughing  
As they cooked on a summer afternoon  
If I listen very carefully

So I think everything is okay  
You'll let me know  
If you need any help, won't you?

Of course I'll keep the paintings  
They're going into storage  
I wouldn't think of selling  
What has taken me such an age to buy

This one is a cousin, well loved  
It's a pretty painting and the detail is there  
A very clever likeness  
Yes, a clever little painting

I'm very grateful for  
The renewed interest you have shown  
In my house

### **On Toblerones**

Because Toblerones taste better  
At room temperature  
I leave them on the side now  
To get a bit warm

Their funny shape responds somehow  
To the moderate heat of Economy 7  
On an ordinary March day

I found out to my cost  
As being keen to keep my comfort foods fresh  
The fridge is where my Toblerone – 400g, big is not the word – was kept

A mistake that I won't make again in a hurry

Some chocolates  
Such as easter eggs – to name a good example  
Are infinitely better cool

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And respond to the chill of the fridge  
And taste much nicer with a crunch

No one likes a soft easter egg

#### **Direct Debit**

Monday:

Today I saw a man in the street with a clipboard and fluorescent coat  
He said, Have you got a minute; to help these problems  
He told me when I did stop that the problems were getting worse  
He told me I could really help if I paid by direct debit  
He asked me if I'd pay by direct debit

Tuesday:

Today I saw a man in the street with a clipboard and fluorescent coat  
He said, Have you got a minute; to help these problems  
He looked kind of cold as I said, No thanks, sorry.  
He didn't tell me about the direct debit  
No, he didn't really get to the bit with the direct debit

Wednesday:

Today I saw a man in the street with a clipboard and fluorescent coat  
He said, Have you got a minute; to help these problems  
I felt really heartless as I tried to ignore him, just walk past  
I knew he wanted to tell me about the direct debit  
I didn't want to get into the thing with the direct debit

Thursday:

Today I saw a man in the street with a clipboard and fluorescent coat  
He said, Have you got a minute. to help these problems  
I was on my lunch hour, I was in a rush to buy someone a birthday card  
He looked at me and in his eyes could be read: direct debit.  
He'll just have to wait for someone else's direct debit

Friday:

Today I saw a man in the street with a clipboard and fluorescent coat  
He said, Have you got a minute to help these problems  
I thought, I have got time for people. In fact, I do help. And I like volunteering  
But I think he only sees in me a direct debit  
Is he paid commission on the number of direct debits?

#### **I Have A Rose**

I have a rose lain in my drawer  
I keep it there in case you leave me  
On that day I'll offer it  
To you to prove I love you still

You don't know yet about the rose  
It's hidden with some crumpled laundry

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Lain upon the softest cotton  
Quietly waiting for its purpose

I bought the rose and hatched this plan  
When all was peace within your arms  
The time will come though soon I know  
When it will be a useful ally

And at the moment when I hold  
My hand out with my secret flower  
And colour surges to your face then  
You will know I love you still

### **Lonely Star**

There's a lonely star shining in the sky tonight  
A lonely star shining, breaking up the night  
I knew you were watching me from the carousel  
It would've been easier if your friends weren't there as well

Could you see me as a poet or an impossible dreamer  
Do you see me as one of life's lack-lustre politic old schemers  
I thought of myself as nothing until I met you  
Did you think the same as me or were you just passing through

You got into a discussion about Tolstoy and Descartes  
The only cards I knew about were the ace and queen of hearts  
It's only my intolerance that stops you getting through  
Did you think the same as me that night or were you just passing through

Kicking open a door you found me asleep in your old chair  
I wouldn't have been so idle if I'd known you'd find me there  
Sleeping on the job, my excuses couldn't prove  
That I'd never met a girl who looked as beautiful as you

Packing up my case that night you had no right to be so calm  
I'd have stayed if only once – just once – you'd tried to twist my arm  
My heart was breaking. So long – you couldn't watch me go  
I would've gone before if I knew then what I now know

So goodbye lonely star. Goodbye to all your friends  
And all the people watching me lose who are chewing their tobacco ends  
Goodbye from me. I hope you can sleep.  
And forget you ever knew me because I seem to have lost that need

### **Official Tour**

It is said that Mary Queen of Scots  
Was imprisoned in this house  
I think if you look up there at that casement  
You can see where her face would have probably looked out

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She stayed in many of the famous country homes  
Up and down the country  
I can't think that her life was all that bad  
What with all the banqueting and jousting

Did they have jousting at that point?

Public enemy number one was Mary  
Not a particularly lucky lady, but nice I should think  
As we wander back around to the garden area  
We can see the stables where her horses probably waited

We think that she was moved from house to house  
For her own personal safekeeping  
In my own humble opinion I think it was more a case of  
Look who's coming round to dinner

Did she actually eat with the other noble ladies?

As you all know of course she was eventually beheaded  
A cry would have surely rung up from her native land  
Of course Scotland was her first love and I'm sure always remained so  
Where she probably wanted to be laid to rest

If you would like to gather near the car park  
Just there – yes, that's it – we've nearly finished  
Can I say how much I've enjoyed this tour today  
And ask you to please stop in at the gift shop before you go to your coach

No, I don't think they would have had a gift shop in Mary's day, no.

### **Stowaway To Moon – Latest**

When I got home my TV was on  
I turned it off when I went out  
It gave the same pale light as the moon  
I heard a voice trying to shout  
A woman's face came on the screen  
She made me catch my breath, she looked straight at me

There's a girl lives alone on the moon  
Nobody knows, I'm the only one  
Only wants to come home soon  
Tired of being far from everyone

She told me everything about her life  
How she'd stowed away in '72  
On the last ever rocket to fly to the moon  
So young, didn't know what to do  
As she watched it blasting away  
All alone, no one ever came back her way

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She spent some years by the Sea of Tranquillity  
Then made a stranded satellite tune into earth TV  
She picked up signals, all she got was me  
And for quite some time now she's been trying to make me see her

I asked her, How on earth do you cope, living all by yourself on the moon  
Too hot by day, too cold at night – with no friends, atmosphere or food?  
She said she just kind of lived with it  
Eating moon rock, drinking water from hot springs

She has a face as pale as moonlight  
And dark eyes, darker than the moon's dark side  
Shines all day, though sunshine hides her face  
I knew I had to help her to rejoin the human race

So in the dark, in the garden next door  
I made a net the size of four small stars  
I cast it, aimed directly at the moon  
To my delight I caught it, dragged it down to earth  
I pulled it closer and heard a sweet sound –  
The music of the spheres – then she leapt down to the ground

I let go and the moon span back into its orbit  
She dazzled me, she was glowing – her eyes, her smile, embrace, her kiss  
On my way home I couldn't have dreamed of this!  
And that's the whole truth – I'm not trying to lie – I've given you the gist

### **Trees Keep Their Secrets Like We Can't**

Trees keep their secrets like we can't  
Long after we are dead they stand up tall  
Silently growing, strengthening, spreading  
Watching solidly as we fluctuate, rise and fall

Trees cling to each other like we don't  
Huddling in gangs with strong high branches  
Patiently sending themselves to heaven  
Gossiping in groups and mocking error

Trees know instinctively what we don't  
How cold it is going to be, when rain will fall  
Keeping one another notified, tuned in, their knowledge spreads  
Secretly, tearfully glistening in their light dewy pall

### **You Can Only Go Where Your Heart Leads**

She calls me up to tell me she's leaving  
I ask if it's in a hurry but she says she isn't grieving  
And that sometimes when you're suffering  
And which way don't like no way, you can only go where your heart leads

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It's a mystery that I for one can stand and watch and see her go  
But when she smiled and shook her head I felt like anything but low  
And when we met last Saturday, after the last train had gone,  
I got down on my knees and asked for her to stay  
I said, You can only go where your heart leads

And somewhere through the hazy coffee smoke she spoke  
I heard her voice but no noise broke the chill  
We agreed to meet after the fourth of July  
And I got a pretty good picture of how the land was lying  
Because she was crying

Summertime brought a new perspective on the way that I felt  
She was calling me but it did not feel real  
I heard a warning bell, but well, all she did was dispel my fears, and all my tears  
She said, You can only go where your heart leads,  
And you can only go where your heart feels

#### **That Same Attraction**

I only came because you made me  
I wanted not to call you  
But I guess that same attraction was there even then  
You promised me a dinner  
Then we'd walk to the Counter  
Along the river, and watch the sun go down

At what point did we go wrong  
Our plans were carefully set  
Everything we could have done  
Was done to keep us falling  
From ourselves and the rest  
At what point did we go wrong

We both knew that we shouldn't  
Be married or together  
Who could say fairer. At least we both knew that

A definite arrangement  
What sorrow sweet as parting  
Standing there my own eyes met yours and I fell transfixed

At what point did we go wrong  
Our plans were carefully set  
Everything we could have done  
Was done to keep us falling  
From ourselves and the rest  
At what point did we go wrong

A miracle had happened  
As you know we both were friends  
Our sheer imagination had contrived to make us fools again

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## ***Playing in the Snow***

### ***Selected Poems by Matt Purland***

I take your hands . . .  
I hear a sound . . .  
A sound like 'Please forgive me – let me go'

I kiss your face  
And I start to fade  
Back into the furniture  
Is this our fate?

I kneeled before you  
I gave you my hand  
Why can't we go our own way  
And leave it at that, as we planned?

#### **Motor Moped**

Can you give me an assurance that you mean what you say  
Will you have sold it when I come back later today  
I've always wanted a moped, and this is my big chance  
A brown and solid gleaming motorcycle romance

I don't care if you laugh at me  
I don't care if I can't really speed  
Because the person on this moped is me

The person on this moped is me  
I will polish her politely and touch her body lovingly  
Won't cover her with stickers, or treat her slovenly  
We'll be set free as we drive along together  
And all my friends are saying 'Can't wait to see you in your leathers'

I don't care if you laugh at me  
I don't care if I can't really speed  
Because the person on this moped is me  
The person on this moped is me

Oh what could have made you sell me down the river  
It's disgusting and childish and makes me want to quiver  
Say you haven't sold her – please keep me not on tenterhooks  
I want my pretty moped – don't want any fender books

It's breaching your honour how you put someone on her  
And watched him ride away – another sale, another day  
What can you be thinking – my baby's gone and left me  
My baby's gone and left me – bereft

I don't care if you laugh at me  
I don't care if I can't really speed  
Because the person on this moped is me  
The person on this moped is me

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## ***Playing in the Snow***

***Selected Poems by Matt Purland***

### **Wednesday a.m.**

Wednesday a.m.  
Sitting on the steps of my lover's house  
Looking to the sky for inspiration  
Dreaming of a dry wind to melt my perspiration  
And I wonder, if things could ever be the same  
And I wonder, if you can even recall my name  
Or what I said last time we met

I love you, baby  
I love you, baby  
I love you, baby

I hope that maybe  
We can go out tonight

At weekends  
You were always the one who let me hold your hand  
Running for the last train after midnight  
Keeping all my hopes and expectations water-tight  
And though sometimes I feel that I can take the pain  
I'm so tired, because all you want to do is play  
And I can't stay with you that way

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