

# SHIREMOOR SCRIBBLERS 2008

## GROUP ANTHOLOGY

### Based on THE FOUR SEASONS



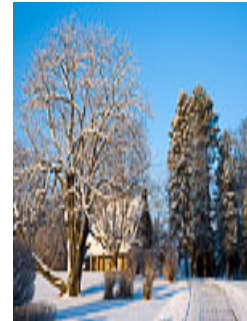
SPRING



SUMMER



AUTUMN



WINTER

Photographs by Trevor Morris



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## INTRODUCTION

Shiremoor Scribblers are a group of amateur writers who come together periodically to discuss and share their thoughts and ideas about creative writing.

As a group it was decided to do an anthology about the four seasons in our own words with short stories and poems.

"And this is the result."

We hope you will enjoy reading it.

# SPRING

|                         |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Ode to Spring           | Kitty Brightwell |
| Spring                  | Ann Moir         |
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**ODE TO SPRING** - by Kitty Brightwell ©

You are the Blackbird throwing his song and his heart up to the sky

You are the disappearing frost melting away from the river bank

You are the little family of ducks followed by their chicks

Little legs going faster and faster trying to keep up

You are Mama and Papa Swan sedately showing off their cygnets

You are the cloak of delicate green adorning trees shrubs and ferns

You are the wonderful regeneration of life to our wounded world

And last but not least

You are the warmth which will invade my ancient knees and unlock them for a

Few months,

Oh the joy. I can hardly wait.

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**SPRING** - by Ann Moir ©

Apple tree in spring;  
Pale-pink blossom, taking flight -  
Abundant promise.

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**TYNEMOUTH LONGSANDS** - by Ann Moir ©

Springtime sun,  
Excitable dogs  
Smell of ozone  
Driftwood logs.

Gliding seagulls  
Crashing tide  
Walking along  
Nowhere to hide.

Children playing  
Lovers in pairs  
Picking up shells  
Losing your cares.

It calls me home  
I feel so blessed  
It is the place  
I love the best.

---

**ODE TO LIFE** - Just a thought by Kitty Brightwell ©

Oh the surge of life. The lambs gambolling in the fields  
every species reproducing

All of nature and humanity blossoming in the warmth  
after the long Winter

The Gods pledging once again the promise that life never  
ends. It only changes.

---

## THANK GOD IT'S SPRING - by Hazel Mynard ©

No touch, no smell, no natural light, no sound except the air purifier's engine, clanking trays and buzzers. Plastic aprons, rubber gloves, masks, sterile dressings, antiseptic, drips, pills, pain, injections. Death always a possibility, looming in the background. Everything crisp clean and white. Seven weeks locked in isolation my own sterile submarine.

Then the most incredible blinding sunlight, blue skies, white wispy clouds. I feel my senses have been hit by a bolt of lightning, moving through my body, jump starting me, everything tingling, alert and very acute.

Colours, smells and sounds are so intense I am gasping for breath my whole core trembling with excitement, fear and relief.

We are pulling out of the hospital covered car park.

I lift my hands to my eyes it's so bright to me.

We pass roundabouts, one completely smothered in Lavender, very green verges full of vibrant different coloured flowers, so incredible to my eyes. It was as if I had entered an artist's studio, every vibrant colour imaginable was being used.

I open the window; the smells are intoxicating, my nose picking up even the most delicate fragrance; the bright, light blossom, green, woody cut grass and trees, fruity, sweet flowers. I feel quite heady and elated in nature's own perfumery.

Sound is almost deafening; yet I'm picking out different bird songs, a solo Robin high in a tree, the unequivocal tune of a Blackbird amongst all the other ear splitting drama.

Emotion welling up inside me, it is the most glorious sight I have ever seen. I may have looked on many occasions but to see it, feel it as I did this day was as if I was learning to live again, something was physically breathing new life into me.

It was SPRING, blossom trees, flowers, baby birds, courting, long sunny days, no coats, ice-cream and picnics, everything stirring after winter.

Tears flowed down my face as my eyes and ears took it all in. A symphony to my senses.

The touch of a hand, flesh on flesh, so simple. Yet so very precious, moving, understanding.

I was alive, ALIVE, I wanted to shout out, but let loose a long deep contented sigh, my body quivering with delight, instead.

Winter was behind me, spring was mine and I was going to grab it with my whole being. Like a child totally enthralled and awe struck with a gift, not wanting to let it go. Mine was LIFE.



**THE CORN SPIRIT** - by Hazel Mynard ©

I have been whispered about for thousands of years.  
People have feared me, loved me and watched me in awe.  
They have told stories of me throughout the ages.  
Wrote about me in all manner of guises,  
Drawn me, painted me and made models of me.  
To some, I am the devil himself,  
A powerful shape shifter, someone's soul.  
I can be a thing of beauty, sacred with agility and speed,  
Something to seek out with lens and camera.

I can be quite a comical sight,  
With my long ears, strong back legs and big feet  
But you do not want me to cross your path,  
As ill fortune may follow your journey.  
I can be solitary, mystical, elusive, difficult to find.  
When the day and night are of equal length  
I am a sudden flash across a field.

Spring comes, the boxing begins,  
Together when the moon is full, we sit in rings  
Like the witches of old,  
Our eyes never closing, not even in sleep.  
It can take just a whiff or a crunch, the crack of a twig  
And we're off running,  
Running; darting one-way, then another  
In a strange and alarming manner.

Running, running, a dash for safety, criss-crossing over the fields:  
Running, running, then gone, out of sight, invisible  
The same however, cannot be said of you,  
You are always in my sight.  
I am always watching you.

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**BREATHLESS ANTICIPATION** - by Ann Moir ©

Above: frost-covered soil, tough and barren  
Left from winter's harsh cold ways.  
But underground's a different story  
A contract of warmer times.  
Seeds and bulbs start to grow  
As weak sunshine filters through  
To the place where promised beauty lays.

After months of warming, nurturing,  
Earth gives up its floral show  
Baby snowdrops, white bonnets nodding,  
Crouching low on delicate green leaves,  
Purple-robed crocus then start to appear,  
And hyacinths, waxy, sickly-sweet,  
Sneak, deviously, into the status quo.

Finally, while flamboyant tulips  
Flounce for our attention,  
Common golden daffodils humbly reveal  
To all creation - the news  
That spring is here with every crumpled leaf  
That unfurls from every tree, branch and stick -  
Breathless anticipation.

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## A WARTIME SPRING - by Kitty Brightwell ©

Nobody took any notice of a young WAAF struggling through the crowds in Kings Cross railway station on the evening of that fateful day in 1941. Every body else was struggling too.

Katy had just come back off leave and had arrived in London late at night in the middle of an air raid. Suddenly she heard a voice asking "Give me your bag kid where are you trying to get to?"

Taken by surprise she could only stutter "Uxbridge"  
" Good oh" he said " so am I this way to the tube station".  
Soon they were boarding the train to Uxbridge.

When they found seats he said, "thank the Lord we don't have to change anywhere, we don't have to do we I couldn't bear it."

"No," said Katy, "It's a straight through train".

She had begun to wonder if he ever stopped talking. By the time they reached Uxbridge he had got the story of her life out of her, and she had learned he was a Londoner. His parents and only sister had been killed in the Blitz. He was a Spitfire Pilot. His name was Jamie, and his brother Michael was in the Royal Navy serving in a submarine. Katy was curious too and asked, "Why are you being sent to Uxbridge instead of one of the fighter stations?"

"Well I did something daft a couple of weeks ago. I managed to get myself shot down into the Channel. It was a while before I was picked up. When I was and they got me to hospital I had a bullet in my shoulder and a nasty wound on my head I have been sent to Uxbridge for a couple of weeks to recuperate before I go back on ops."

When they arrived at their destination Katy had a chance to have a good look at her good Samaritan who incidentally was still carrying her bag as well as his own. What she saw was a tall dark haired young man with blue eyes. And she decided there and then he was very attractive, and when they had checked into the guardroom and they parted to go to their own quarters. She had no hesitation in accepting when he suggested they should spend their free time together while he was at RAF Uxbridge.

Katy woke up next morning looking forward to what the day would bring. She suddenly remembered it was the first day of spring. And as she made her way to the ops room where she worked she noticed how colourful the station looked.

Everything had blossomed and sprung to life while she had been on leave. Even the squirrels and birds were busy gathering the abundant food supplied by a bountiful nature. She wondered why she suddenly felt like singing. Anyway she put that idea out of her head when she spotted the Corporal waiting at the entrance to the Bunker with the permanent scowl on her face. "Come on hurry up you aren't on leave now." "And a good morning to you too" Katy said under her breath.

She went down into the ops room to be greeted by her workmates, and was soon hard at work as the daytime air raids had started, but although she was so busy she kept thinking about those kind blue eyes.

2pm. The end of the shift. They all turned their headsets and plotting sticks over to the relief crew, and made a beeline for the exit. Katy couldn't wait to get out of the Bunker (the hole as they called it) and she ran up the 75 stone steps, dashed out into the fresh air and there he was. Of course all the other girls ran up the steps as well. They wanted to see what Katy was all excited about. They all stood silently gazing at this vision "where on earth did you find him?" to Katy, and to Jamie "will you bring some friends with you next time?" Katy and Jamie made their escape to the cheers of everybody in the vicinity. Laughingly holding hands running at full tilt towards the main gate. The guards joining in the fun.

The next two weeks were the happiest two weeks of their lives. The weather was lovely. The air raids were less frequent for some reason. Perhaps it was just that they were too happy to notice them. They danced, they walked, they talked. They visited every place they could in the Uxbridge area. Just happy to be together. The day came when he had to go back to his fighter station.

Katy had never felt so lonely in all her life.

They still met of course. At a prearranged spot near Marble Arch just inside Hyde Park. When he was free Jamie would phone and quickly say "same place, same time, day after tomorrow."

When she went to their meeting place after his latest call she had a premonition. She didn't know why. She just felt uneasy. After an hour waiting trying to decide what to do she suddenly saw two of Jamie's friends hurrying towards her. She knew before they told her that Jamie was dead. His Spitfire had been shot down and had burst into flames before falling into the Channel. There had been no time for him to bale out.

Going back to the RAF station she found her favourite spot where she usually sat to watch the wildlife. Looking around watching the squirrels, rabbits, birds, trees and flowers. The whole area was teeming with life. She thought to herself. This is what resurrection is all about. Life does not end. It just changes.

This all happened a long time ago, but memories linger.

Katy is a very old lady now, but every time she walks through Kings Cross station she hears a voice saying "Give me your bag kid, where are you trying to get to?" She smiles and answers "Uxbridge Jamie, Uxbridge."

Remembrance of a Springtime

Long ago.

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**HAIKU** - by Kitty Brightwell ©

Crowds of daffodils along the roadside  
the shrubs in all their green finery  
Food everywhere for wildlife

The dawn chorus  
the sound of the skylarks song  
the song of the breeze through the trees

New life and new growth  
the joy of life and glad to be alive  
to run barefoot on the beach

Warmer days  
Energetic and at one with nature  
People in rowing boats on the park lake

Living in Gods good earth  
and the best is yet to come  
Alleluia.

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# SUMMER

| Title                           | Name            |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Summer of Love                  | Carole Hughes   |
| Acrostic Poem - Summertime      | Ann Will        |
| Summer Solstice Bright Semester | Barbara Haswell |
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| Granny Takes a Trip             | Carole Morris   |
| Haiku                           | Ann Will        |

## SUMMER OF LOVE - by Carole Hughes ©

Laura and her husband had parted company after 20 years of marriage, eighteen months ago. It had been heartbreaking. She had moved back to her mother's with her two children and started work. She had lost weight since her marriage breakdown, grown her hair to shoulder length and at the start of the summer had shopped till she dropped for new clothes. Laura hadn't admitted to herself that she was preparing to move on.

It had been a lovely summer. She had sat in the garden most of the time, the sun caressing her body giving her that lovely summer lustre. The swallows were back nesting in the archway at the side of the house. The Fuchsia bush larger than ever with its cerise and purple flowers, at the bottom of the garden, the sweet peas with their delicate pink and blue flowers created a mantle of colour against the wall, the summer breeze wafting their heady perfume over her.

"Joanne's on the phone," her sister shouted through the window.

"Hi Laura, weather forecast's great for tomorrow, I've decided to have a barbeque. Oh by the way I've organised a blind date for you, he'll pick you up at one o'clock," Joanne blurted out.

"I wish you wouldn't do things without telling me. What's he like?" Laura asked.

"Newly divorced and lonely. See you tomorrow," she said putting the phone down.

Laura chose a white linen dress with black buttons and a black patent leather belt, black patent peep toe high-heeled shoes, and a large white floppy sun hat, black and white striped sunglasses. She had painted her toenails and fingernails in bright red and tonged her freshly shampooed hair into a pageboy. Laura was pleasantly surprised, she couldn't remember looking as good as this in ten years. She stood in front of the long mirror on the landing her thick black hair glistened, her vivid blue eyes enhanced by her tan.

The doorbell rang on the dot of one o'clock. Laura ran down the stairs and opened the front door. There he stood.

"Hello," he smiled, "your chariot awaits," he bowed comically.

She laughed instantly, he wasn't very tall, dark eyes, and dark hair sleeked back. His navy shorts and white shirt, ideal for a barbeque.

He had a slight accent.

"I'm Greek, my name's Dimitri. I'm lecturing at the University," he said as if reading her thoughts.

Dimitri glued himself to her the whole day. They drank and talked, laughed and danced into the late evening. That was the beginning of the most beautiful summer of love. It was ecstasy as they shared the pleasure of their desires that turned from the sweetest of friendships and blossomed into the deepest love. She could hear the wind, playing their song "Summer Breeze" by the Isley Brothers as he whispered, "I love you."

Dimitri taught Laura to love again. This time it had been totally different, intense, sexual, loving, romantic, wild, exciting, possessive. At thirty-nine she had never known a love like this. They both realised how lucky they were to have found each other.

"My soul mate," he would say.

Dimitri had moved to England seven years ago to marry, it had only lasted five years they hadn't had any children. At the end of this summer he was planning to return to Greece. He was the kindest, most loving man Laura had ever met, her two sons Jonathan and Gregg really liked him, they went everywhere as a family that summer.

As summer began to draw to a close Laura knew she would never forget Dimitri. He had made her realise her husband had never been right for her.

She held back the tears as Dimitri hugged her then quickly disappeared through the departure gates in the airport. Laura drove home feeling deserted.

It was still warm as she walked around the garden. I never told him I loved him she thought. As the swallows flew away Laura knew that was the end of her wonderful summer of love.

"I couldn't leave you," Dimitri's deep voice trembled behind her. Laura turned and fell into his arms.

"I love you," she sobbed

**ACROSTIC POEM - SUMMERTIME** - by Ann Will ©

**S**ummertime and the living is easy, sun, sea and sangria,  
**U**nderneath a beautiful blue sky with fluffy white clouds  
**M**eandering streams saunter over the riverbeds  
**M**aking hay while the sun shines brightly down  
**E**ternally lasting days of bright yellow light  
**R**unning barefoot through the golden sands  
**T**aking time to sit back and enjoy life  
**I**nterested in everything growing up around you  
**M**aking lovers promises underneath the sky every day  
**E**xhausting the children with long days of fun and play

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**SUMMER SOLSTICE BRIGHT SEMESTER** - by Barbara Haswell ©

Under the weather rarely this season  
More energy, lighter living  
Men wear shorts and mow their lawns  
Even the sad manage a smile.  
Rain, if it comes, the gardeners welcome  
Time to indulge in long lazy evenings  
Ideally the time to explore the outdoors  
Many people excited and in holiday hats  
Dogs pant prolifically, long tongues cascading.

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## SUMMER HOLIDAY REVELATIONS - by Ann Will ©

Paula, a blonde in her mid twenties with legs up to her armpits, was looking forward to her holiday. She and boyfriend Danny worked in the same office and were booked for a break in Spain. 'Great,' she thought, 'sun, sea and Sangria with Danny. Blissful. I can't wait. Two weeks away from my horrible boss. Danny was six foot two with wavy dark hair and a crinkly smile, close to the big Three O. She thought they were a rock steady couple

Paula got through the next week buoyed up on hope, a frenzy of packing and re-packing deciding what to take. Danny did his packing mechanically and quickly not really noticing what he was packing. He seemed to be in another world. Departure day dawned hot and sunny. Paula dressed in shorts and t-shirt for the flight, Danny in lightweight linen trousers and cotton shirt. The journey to the airport went smoothly. At the airport they found their flight was delayed. Danny became fidgety. Paula couldn't understand his mood and said, "What's the matter with you Danny?" Danny shrugged his shoulders and said "Nothing's the matter with me I just want to get there." Take off was announced and boarding began. Once in the air Danny finally settled down and looked happier. Disembarking they were transported to their hotel. Hotel Paradiso Royale was described as luxuriously appointed in the brochure. Paula and Danny were disappointed with their room. It was average size, drab and sparsely furnished, not conducive to romantic nights. Complaints to the management got them nowhere. They were told, "Take it or leave it." "Oh well," said Paula, "We'd better take it, everywhere else is fully booked." Danny shrugged again, made a non-committal sound and said, "I'm going for a drink, you coming?" Paula said, "I'll join you shortly, I just want to freshen up."

Quickly changing into a bikini Paula hurried down to the pool. But where was Danny? No sign of him at the poolside bar. Paula stood irresolute. 'Where's he got to?' she wondered. Drink in hand Paula wandered around the Pool looking for signs of Danny. She sighed and stood undecided. Suddenly spying him with another girl she ducked behind a big plant. 'Who's that he's talking to?' I wonder. The girl looked about Paula's age of medium height with Brunette hair. Paula watching them thought they seemed very friendly for new acquaintances. She was about to join them when the girl turned and quickly walked off. How should she play this?

Danny had his back to her as she walked up. "There you are Danny, told you I wouldn't be long. Seen anybody you know?"

Danny stood undecided for a moment then said, "no why do you ask?"

"Oh I thought I saw you talking to someone," said Paula.

"You're mistaken, someone walked past me that's all," said Danny.

The words 'Danny lied to me, why?' kept running through Paula's mind. Their first night was an anti-climax. Danny sat in a very pensive mood all night. Paula tried to keep conversation going but gave up after a while. She said. "I'm going back to our room, are you coming with me?"

Danny said, "I guess so, there's not much happening here."

They set off for the room together then Danny said, "Oh, I'm going to reception, I'll be back shortly." Paula went up to the room and waited but Danny didn't appear. She fell asleep waiting. Waking next morning he was in bed beside her. 'Where had he been?' Paula wondered. Danny didn't say anything about the missing hours. Paula decided to play it cool hoping they'd have a good day. Their day didn't go well at all, no romantic little gestures from Danny he was like an automaton. Paula wondered why things had gone so wrong. She was trying to be upbeat and positive but Danny's mind was elsewhere. He found an excuse each night not to go to bed at the same time as Paula. He was always in bed with her in the morning when she woke up. Paula tried talking to him but he shrugged her off and wouldn't say anything. Finally she said to Danny, "do you want to cut the holiday short and go home?"

Danny said, "Yes, please."

The travel agents were amazed but did what they could to get them an earlier flight home. The first one was on the Sunday morning. They took it. The time dragged till take off. Back home Danny prowled restlessly round the flat then suddenly said, "I think we should call it a day, don't you?"

Paula, devastated, said, "where's this come from, I thought you and I were good together?"

"We were, but not any more," replied Danny. "I've met an old girlfriend and we're rekindling those feelings."

"Is that the girl you were talking to at the pool?" asked Paula.

"Yes, since you ask," said Danny.

Back in the office there was sympathy for Paula. Word had somehow got round about Danny and the ex girlfriend getting back together. It took Paula a little while to realise she wasn't heart broken at all. Now that Danny had moved out she was somehow relieved. Jonathan, her grouchy boss, suddenly became friendly and caring asking how she was with a twinkle in his eye. Paula couldn't believe the difference in him now that Danny wasn't on the scene. She batted her eyelids at him and smiled shyly. Jonathan asked her out on a date and Paula said yes, suddenly feeling alive with hope for things to come.

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**TYNEMOUTH BEACH** - by Carole Hughes ©

Barefoot, sinking into  
Sun baked sand

My lungs, bursting  
With salty air

Gently, waves  
Rise and fall

Listening, to  
Seagulls' call

Wind, tussling  
My unruly hair

Sun, dancing  
Across my face

Never to vanish  
From my memory,  
This place

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## SUMMER AWAKENING - by Barbara Haswell ©

AUGUST 2006

The world ended for Maggie suddenly and cruelly without any time to prepare or consider what life would be like without Fred her husband of 42 years. He died in the garden at 4.00 p.m. They were enjoying the last of the strawberries on the patio to the hum of early wasps and late lazy ladybirds. Their garden was their haven, quiet and secluded swamped by Bob Brown's gigantic conifers shady and serene. Bob was a gentle eccentric single and solitary, they were fortunate; some people have to endure families, children bored barking dogs, balls, trampolines, radios, barbecues and the like.

From the time of Fred's desertion because that was the anger that Maggie felt, why did he leave me; and with no children to soften the grief and emptiness? It just did not happen. They had managed fine the two of them until Fred was no more.

The autumn came Maggie remained in her safety zone. Fred's cap sat on its peg and his pipe on its stand. She looked each morning for Fred's return as she set the breakfast table for two.

On line shopping met Maggie's basic needs. Christmas came and went. No cards sent or invitations from well meaning friends accepted. The silence and lethargy of loneliness and solitude were engulfing Maggie's heart and soul.

Spring was not heralded by Maggie. Her numbness and stuckness surrounded her dark and lifeless existence. Her curtains remained as tightly closed as her home. No one could enter. Callers not welcome.

JULY 2007

Maggie was awoken through triple double-glazing to the sound of sawing, squalling, the jingle of a radio station and as she opened the stiff windows the smell of sizzling bacon. Maggie's sad eyes blinked sharply at the scene. Fred had talked of sheltered housing and must have achieved this. The trees were falling proudly to reveal light, energy and a busy happy young family. A slim blonde girl thirtyish waved and smiled a heavy baby dangling from her bronzed arms and tugging playfully at her vivid yellow bikini top. A toddler barefooted and grasping a half eaten bacon sandwich licked trickles of bright tomato ketchup from his chubby fingers as he shouted the chorus of Bob the Builder.

A lean tall man, dad Maggie presumed, turned sausages and bacon over a large barbecue pit the aromas reminded Maggie of their camping holidays, every summer they went, glorious memories warmed her person.

A tent was erected at the bottom of her new neighbour's garden and after an outburst of hysterical giggling two scantily dressed identical girls emerged, twins thought Maggie as they paraded towards the food touching up newly applied sun screen and lip gloss. "Hi." called mum, "let us get to know each other. I'm Cassie, my husband Steve, his twin daughters Molly and Megan on loan at weekends, our two tykes Brett and Ben. The chef today is Steve. Come and join us. We've been here three months and thought your house was empty." "Yes," replied an awakening Maggie but in a different sort of way.

Maggie nervously but excitedly stepped through the unused connecting gate. She felt soft grass under her feet. Observed summer flowers in full bloom. Admired a clear blue sky and heard the chirping of summer birds as they attended to their young.

Ben the happy "Bob the Builder" looked quizzically at Maggie's pallor and neglected hair and grooming but saw only love and kindness in her cornflower blue eyes.

"Would you like to be our new Nan 'cos our Nan has gone into the sky, when it thunders she is helping God to move the furniture? Good eh, just like Bob the Builder."

"Perhaps she knows my Fred then Ben."

As the innocence of childhood embraced the wisdom of maturity holding hands Ben led Maggie to the brand newly erected trampoline where they bounced and flopped and twirled together. Ben shrieked with delight and Maggie felt the dark gloom of loss, sadness and despair begin to lift. Yes she was experiencing a welcome summer awakening.

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Haiku - by Ann Will ©

Eagle soaring high  
On thermal currents  
In a summer sky

## GRANNY TAKES A TRIP - by Carole Morris ©

'Things were better in our day, weren't they Dad?' grumbled Sally, even though she acknowledged the fact that it made her sound like a right old fart.

Dad, alias her husband, ignored her, as usual.

'Here we go, kids...*when I was young...*' trilled Sally's son, in a sing-song voice.

'Well they were! I mean look at Shay and Shanelle, they're hardly into their teens and she dresses like a lap-dancer and as for him, you'd think he was Jamaican not *Geordie!*'

'You've got to keep up with the times, Gran!' snapped Shanelle, whilst bumping and grinding to the latest Pussycat Dolls hit.

Sally rolled her eyes to heaven. It *was* different in her day. Better too. When she was thirteen she didn't even know what sex was! Well, bits of it, she supposed, but nothing on the scale of the kids these days. She despaired sometimes. Her grandkids were growing up too fast, wasting their precious childhoods trying to be mini adults.

Sally remembered the heady days when she was young, when everything was fresh and exciting. 1967, the Summer of Love. How she had longed to have been really part of it, instead of just seeing it all on TV. That whole summer, with its warm, carefree days, when everyone had seemed happy somehow, was still etched indelibly in her mind.

Sally's grandchildren came round every Sunday, and she was under no illusions that it was anything other than to hold their hands out for their pocket money. Of course she loved them, but did they have to be so greedy? Not to mention bloody noisy? Did everything have to be accompanied by music these days? Music? That's a laugh, she thought. She picked up the CD case that Shay had casually tossed on the floor. 'Sexually Explicit Lyrics' said a silver sticker. Her spirits sank. When had she become old? When had modern life become rubbish? When had R&B become a load of scantily dressed girls grinding their crotches in your face while a black man droned on about guns, bitches and 'hos, she wondered? She could remember how she used to hide her tranny under her candlewick eiderdown and listen to Wonderful Radio 1, and the fabulous records they used to play. Now that was real music.

She closed her eyes hoping her ears would soon follow suit so the less than dulcet tones of MC Sex Z would somehow blend into the background.

As she lay back, wonderful memories drifted back into Sally's mind. Thirteen years old and filled with dreams. It had seemed like the whole world was on the brink of something really exciting, just like she was. 1967, the Summer of Love. I wish I'd been older...If you're going to San Francisco.... If only I'd been older....Flowers in my hair... If only...

'Come on, Sal! Quit the daydreaming. We'll have to get a move on. I told Maggie and Annie we'd meet them at the club!'

Sally blinked and looked around her. Orange woodchip walls, check. Burnt orange nylon carpet, check. Poster of Jimi Hendrix on the wall, check. It was her old bedroom! She rubbed her eyes. She shook her head. And as she turned and caught a glimpse herself in the mirror of her white G-Plan dressing table, she nearly fell off the bed! She warily eyed the lurid pop-art calendar on the wall. 1967, it said, in bold black lettering. She gingerly rubbed the fringe of her short suede skirt between her fingers. It certainly felt real. But it couldn't be real. In 1967 she was only thirteen. She should be in knee socks with a stretchy hair band, and here she was in a fringed skirt and waistcoat with a paisley scarf round her head. And Jeannie, last seen pressing the kinks out of her hair with her mother's iron, now stood in front of her with flowing pre-raphaelite locks, resplendent in an Afghan coat and purple flares.

'Jeannie, what's going on?' Sally gasped.

'You've been out of it, that's what! Have you dropped some acid?'

Acid? Thought Sally. What *is* she on about? She swung her long American Tan clad legs off the bed, and considered she was looking good for a fifty-three year old Gran.

Jeannie dug around in her velvet bag and brought out a small plastic box, dribbled some spit into it and shuffled a little brush into the gooey mess.

Sally stared, open-mouthed. 'What's up? Haven't you seen mascara before?' said Jeannie. 'Jeez, you are really freakin' me out, man. What gives?'

'What gives,' said Sally, amazed at how young her voice sounded. 'What gives, is that I'm a fifty-three year old grandma, and I'm sitting here in my old

bedroom...'

Jeannie almost poked her eye out with the mascara brush. 'Man, you must have had some good stuff! Grandma?' she said, and dissolved into giggles.

Sally could feel panic rising up in her. 'Jeannie you don't understand. I've got to get back.'

'Get back? Get a move on, you mean! We're going to see Cream, remember?'

Sally slapped both of her cheeks to wake herself up. Cream? She'd never seen Cream; she'd been too young. What on earth was going on?

Sally wondered if she had actually died and gone to heaven. They had just walked the length of Carnaby Street with all of its trendy boutiques filled with Twiggy mannequins wearing the latest fashions. Bright, gaudy colours were the order of the day, pop music jangled constantly and every wall seemed to be adorned with a Union Jack or a psychedelic poster. Compared to the grey, rainy 2008 setting that Sally was used to, everything looked vibrant and new.

Jeannie dragged Sally into the Bag o' Nails club, haunt of all the hip and happening beautiful people of the day. Sally was mesmerised by the weird coloured images projected on the walls and her befuddled thoughts were being accompanied by her heartbeat doing its own drum solo. It was all too loud and too dark but to the fifty-three year old Sally, who had missed out on all of this first time round, and was feeling quite hip in her suede fringed ensemble, it was fabulous. Outtasight, even. Everyone had long hair, and wore the most outlandish clothes. Some guys wore Edwardian army jackets, others flowered shirts, whilst the girls looked fantastic in satin hot pants, and op-art mini dresses, with fake eyelashes painted on and pale, pale lips. A sweet, heady smell hung in the air.

How the hell did a granny from Newcastle end up as a nineteen year old in Swinging London in 1967, the Summer of Love? Sally hadn't a clue and as she watched a tall, rangy guy in John Lennon glasses saunter past, she didn't much care.

'Jeannie,' she hissed urgently, 'Isn't that Scott Walker?'

'Wow, yeah! He's a dish isn't he?'

Sally felt like Dorothy in the land of Oz. Everything was so weird, yet so wonderful, but she felt she had to get back home.

A kaftan-clad guy sidled up to her. 'Hey, baby,' he said, 'What's your sign?'

Jesus! thought Sally, he's young enough to be my son. She appropriately made the sign of the cross and sped off.

As Cream blistered through their set, people started dancing, making Sally feel like she was trapped in an episode of Top of the Pops 2! Though trapped wasn't the word. She was having the time of her life. She gazed at the dancers intently, as they weaved their bodies to and fro. She wanted to join in, and was mentally rehearsing her steps, when a guy took her arm.

'Want some?' he asked, slipping a sugar cube into his mouth.

Sally had warned Shay and Shanelle about the perils of drugs, but had never even seen any. Until now.

'Er, no, but thanks anyway,' she said airily, trying not to sound like a square.

'No sweat,' said the guy, nodding sagely. 'They can take you back.'

'What?' asked Sally urgently. 'Take me back where?'

'Yeah... flashbacks, man...they can take you back,' he said again. And as his eyes pierced hers, he held out his palm. On it was another sugar cube.

Kaleidoscopic colours whirled over them, and as her pulse throbbed along with the music, she could hardly think straight. Was this guy saying she could go back? Sally peered at the guy through the shadows. She decided he was really a hunk in his tight leather pants and if she squinted in a certain way, didn't he have a certain look of Jim Morrison of the Doors? She could take the sugar cube and go back - to what? A husband who didn't care about her and for whom the feeling was mutual, a dead end job in a call-centre, being put upon by her kids, and used as a bank machine by two pre-pubescent gangsters...or she could stay here in the Summer of Love and have the chance to do everything again, to do everything right this time.

Not my bag, man,' said Sally, feeling, she decided, quite groovy. 'But why don't you buy me a drink? Bet you I can predict next week's number one!

---

**HAIKU** - by Ann Will ©

Lightning flashing  
Thunder crashing  
Electric summer storm

---

# AUTUMN

| Title                          | Name  |
|--------------------------------|---|
| In A Sense                     | Lesley McConnon<br>Marilyn Veuger<br>Sylvia Hyland<br>Thelma Turner |
| The Glory of Autumn            | Sylvia Hyland   |
| Bubble Bubble Toil and Trouble | Marilyn Veuger  |
| The Evening of the Year        | Thelma Turner   |
| First Autumn                   | Marilyn Veuger  |

## IN A SENSE - IT'S AUTUMN

By Lesley McConnon ©

Marilyn Veuger ©

Sylvia Hyland ©

Thelma Turner ©

Rose-gold sun on turquoise sea -  
Lighting the way for fieldmouse thieves,  
Slanting rays blushing hedge and tree,  
Sparkling the drops where the spider weaves....

Autumn is really not my scene -  
I like it when the leaves are green!

Whispering whoosh when the silent bat glides -  
Scurrying feet where acorns fall,  
Rustling leaves where the badger hides,  
Snuffling hedgehogs - owl's eerie call ....

Messy leaves - blocking the drains  
Rotting and stinking when it rains!

Air, misty with woodsmoke and wet soil,  
Sweet smells of toffee apples and Parkin-  
Savour meat stews, bubbling to boil -  
Bowls of goodness - Nan's broth and dumplings!

This is the season for other folk -  
Autumn just doesn't float my boat!

Last days of summer - cherished, lazy, still -  
Beach bags stowed, as chills breeze in -  
Nip in the air! Early frosts kill .....

Hairs stand on edge on sunkissed skin -

Dull, dark dawns and misty mornings ...  
Romantic? To me ... just boring!

Celebrations, evil deeds and lights...  
Feasts of flavours - old traditions -  
Bright sweets at Dewali, charred grills on Bonfire Night -  
Bobbed apples at Halloween. Crops come to fruition!

Shorter days and longer nights ...  
I like it best when days are bright!

.....

Swirling smoke, golden leaves,  
Evening dusk - early moonbeams.  
Twigs, leaves -whispering, rustling ...  
Sound in the undergrowth - creatures bustling!  
Newly sharp air makes noses tingle,  
Guy Fawkes pennies in pockets jingle -  
Meaty offerings - barbied too long -  
With new-made pickles to tease the tongue!  
Fading flowers clutched in small fists -  
Cheeks caressed by chilly mists.

.....

## THE GLORY OF AUTUMN - by Sylvia Hyland ©

To me, Autumn has always been full of wonder.

I love to hear the rustle of leaves falling, as the trees shake themselves free of dead foliage. To see those very same leaves (so called dead) go dancing down the lane is enchanting. When I see the beautiful shapes and colours, being trodden underfoot, it makes me feel rather sad.

As I stroll down the lane, wrapped up in my warmest clothes, the crisp air whips up the colour in my face and I can feel a sharp freshness all about me. My thoughts return to an Autumn, long ago. It was a bitterly cold year. Outside, everywhere was quiet and still, with only the occasional hoot of an owl to disturb the evening air.

Indoors, what a difference. The fire all aglow, with our beloved cat, 'Shandy', curled up beside it, purring with pleasure. On the hearth mugs of steaming chocolate, dark brown and welcoming and hot buttered toast. Here we would sit, warm and snug. The rug by the fire had all of my favourite autumn shades worked into it. Such warm, rich colours with every conceivable shade of green, gold and brown. I had worked every stitch of the rug with such loving care, knowing that one day it would take pride of place in our home.

Our very first home. Such a long time ago and yet it seems like only yesterday. The children had been so excited when they had seen the cottage. They had liked living at Grandma's house, but this was to be their very own garden and there were even some trees for them to climb. What fun it was to sweep up all the shiny wet leaves that fluttered down, covering the lawn, like a huge multi-coloured carpet. To wheel the wheelbarrow, brim full, over to the sizzling bonfire, was an endless source of delight. The burning leaves crackled and snapped in the bright glowing fire.

The years had gone by and the children had grown up. The trees in the garden seemed forlorn, shaking their heads in unison, to think that they had been deserted by their young companions. Until, the next generation showed itself. Then, once again, the garden came to life with Guy Fawkes fireworks and bonfires. Once more, the trees could hear the laughter of children surrounding them.

Slowly walking home, I feel no regrets at the years passing by. True, we are now in the autumn of our years, but they have always been special to me.

Home at last. The warmth of it envelops me. Such peace and happiness always greets me from within. Everything is much the same as before, except perhaps my cherished rug is looking rather tattered now and 'Shandy's' daughter now stretches herself out, where her mother once slept.

My walk has been an inspiration and I feel quite elated as I reach for my paints. Gazing out of the window, at the wonderful scene before me, I shall endeavour to capture on canvas the *Glory of Autumn*.

---

## BUBBLE BUBBLE TOIL AND TROUBLE - by Marilyn Veuger ©

Geraldine drew the blinds against the failing light. Trick or Treat had come around again. I think not, thought Geraldine; those little buggers were so rude. They called her the witch. Ironic really as when she was a girl, the most unkempt house in the street was where the witch lived and they would dare each other to knock on the door without getting caught, or they would have a spell put upon them or be changed into a frog forever. Now she was the witch. Well, that might work to her advantage tonight-Halloween.

She looked into the hall mirror, a picture book witch looked back, grey straggly hair that hadn't seen a hairdresser for years, and she even had a hair growing out of a mole on her chin. When had that popped up? Her nose was hooked and her eyebrows met in the middle. She's let herself go, that's what they said in the village when she went shopping. She didn't react, pretending not to hear them. Her fingers were gnarled with arthritis; she even had a black cat called Familiar, a joke to herself. The besom was in the garden shed, kept for sweeping the autumn leaves up. Yes, Geraldine thought, a witch was what she had become.

Geraldine walked back into the sitting room and sat on the sofa, staring into space. She was alone in the world. She had never married and being as she was an only child had no relatives that she knew of. The autumn of her life had crept stealthily upon her. She looked down at her clothes, witch-like clothes, long black skirt and big, black, baggy cardigan. Was it too late to change?

Geraldine looked into the hall mirror and a picture book princess looked back, thick, glossy, curly blonde hair held with two diamante clips. Porcelain smooth skin with bow-shaped pink lips and finely defined eyebrows. Yes, I'm beautiful. She was waiting for her handsome fiancé; they were going to the ball. Her dress was gold Lurex with silver stars embroidered on the bodice. Thomas was a solicitor and the love of her life. They had been together three years and were due to be married in a few months time. He was late; Geraldine paced the hall. The clock struck ten. He never came.

The door knocker went. Geraldine passed the picture book witch in the hall mirror, opened the door and said:  
"Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble

Fire burn and cauldron bubble  
Cool it with a baboon's blood  
Then the charm is firm and good  
Eye of newt and toe of frog  
Wool of bat and tongue of dog."

Children scattered screaming through the gate.  
The witch closed the door.

---

## THE EVENING OF THE YEAR - by Thelma Turner ©

Season of gold with jewelled leaves and ruby berries and silver dew dusting emerald grass. Cool, misty mornings with diamond drops glistening on every tree and branch until the sun bewitches them away. Wine-purple berries of Sloe and Elder tempt birds to feast before travellers and home-brewers cheat them of their bounty. Indian summer days and long warm evenings, spreading disbelief that winter is on the way.

This is the season of fecundity, swollen with the wealth of the coming year. The Matriarch of Seasons - abundant, bursting with grains and fruit. Pregnant flowers, heavy with seed, wait until the right moment to release their precious burdens. Light morning winds tease and caress the trees shaking their glowing, leafy heads until their curling tresses weave a magic carpet on the ground, and Ash keys whirl and swirl to join them down below.

Adolescent creatures copy their elders garnering the gifts that fall - hiding and storing acorns, nuts and Beech mast against bleaker, scarcer days.

Bright coloured birds muster overhead, carolling and waiting as long as they dare before bidding farewell and flying to their winter homes.

Lovers - young and old, holding hands, stroll the parks and lanes relishing the last warm evenings. Happy children whoosh through the curling leaves, gathering them up to see them swirl again. Downy heads of Dandelions float away on their breath as they count off the hours - meaningless in the Springtime of their lives. Polished conkers find their way into pockets and they wonder at the single-winged seeds of the pinecones.

Their faces glow like the Autumn world around them as they wander sleepily home and a golden sun stretches its beams and yawns warm breath across the evening of the year.

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## FIRST AUTUMN - by Marilyn Veuger ©

James ran through the pile of crisp, crackly, yellow leaves. He stamped down with his Bob the Builder blue Wellington boots, which flashed red lights across the ground. He squealed with laughter and threw a handful of leaves in the air as he stomped up and down.

In the corner of the garden by the shed and the water butt was a tower of leaves. James approached whooping and hollowing and dived on the pile. The leaves crinkled and cracked and crumbled under his weight. Next doors cat hissed and clawed his way up the fence indignant at having his sleep disturbed.

This was the first Autumn of James' life, the trees plopped leaves down onto his soft downy head and scuttled across the lawn in the gentle breeze. James ran on his boots flashing red into the amber, yellow and brown leaves. Up the yellow slide he went leaves sticking to his feet, he slid down head first onto another pile of leaves, what fun her was having!

Mammy and Daddy were bagging the leaves into green plastic sacks, Daddy was raking and Mammy was bagging. James joined in but it was slow going as he only put one leaf at a time in the sack. Daddy kept throwing leaves at James until Mammy said she was going indoors to get them all refreshments. She returned with beer, tea, juice, and ham sandwiches.

On the tray was the camera and Mammy told James to say cheese and snap went the shutter. A first Autumn for James' album!

---

# WINTER

| Title                | Name              |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| The Big Night Out    | Deborah Moorhouse |
| Six Haiku            | Charles Donachy   |
| History              | Deborah Moorhouse |
| Nightmare            | Deborah Moorhouse |
| No Chimney for Santa | Leslie Webster    |

## THE BIG NIGHT OUT - Deborah Moorhouse ©

Mum surprised us all when she said she'd love to go to the concert tour of the latest winner of a Reality TV talent show. In a moment of weakness I said that I would go with her. Dad had half-heartedly offered with the statement "he couldn't stand the screech of opera but he'd go with her if she really wanted to go." So I bought the tickets for Mum and I, put them away and then forgot about the concert.

The months sped by and here were Mum and I queuing in the dark, freezing cold, December night outside the concert hall. I couldn't help notice that I seemed to be the youngest there even though I am in my forties!

I wasn't really looking forward to this, hadn't listened to this bloke sing; oh dear, it was going to be a long night, or so I thought.

Mum was so excited, 'past herself'. She'd had her hair and make-up done, high heels taken out of their box and trouser suit on. Mum had pondered for days on what to wear.

We made our way to our seats, eight rows from the front - great seats - result! After getting our toes crushed by a gent trying to squeeze his way to his seat, we settled down to munch our way through melting maltesers, before they became inedible. Mum produced a small pair of binoculars, which I promptly told her to put away - we were in the stalls not the back row of the Gods.

With mounting excitement and anticipation in the concert hall, the show began to deafening applause - the hero of the hour appeared on stage accompanied by a wonderful orchestra and enthralling video backdrop. You could feel the buzz in the theatre and it wasn't just from hearing aids. Despite my disapproving glares, Mum kept singing ... and she knew all the words unfortunately.

When the interval bell rang it meant a queue of Guinness Book of Record proportions for the Ladies loos and for the soft, melting Cornettos. The bell went for the second half.

The end in sight - the final stretch. 'Time to Say Goodbye,' he sang his heart out and left the stage to a standing ovation. Every Gran that could was up clapping and cheering. Mum no exception. To my surprise there I was ... on my feet clapping away feverishly with the rest of them during the encore. I could

just catch a glimpse of his sweaty face as he gave a bow. "He's much shorter than he looks on Telly," Mum had informed me.

As we queued once again, this time to get out, I noticed that this had, in fact, been a family event, not just for us. It seemed as if lots of sons and daughters had popped concert tickets into the Christmas stocking of their much loved Mums, Dads, Grans and indeed Granddads. I've never seen so much love and happiness in one place. What an unexpected pleasure that evening had been for everybody. An unexpected bonus as I hadn't realised what that night out would mean to us. A new, shared memory to treasure together.

It seemed potty that I hadn't really wanted to go.

---

**SIX HAIKU** - by Charles Donachy ©

Hoary mountains; soaring eagles,  
Snap cold breath hanging in space.  
Wished Spring delays.

Xxxxxxx

Massive, cold snow flakes  
Riverside's misty veil withdrawn.  
Fishermen slowly return.

xxxxxxx

Hailstones and sadness  
Ship's mast completely frozen  
Hands bitterly cold.

Xxxxxxx

Wintry sun appears  
Shimmering flowing river  
Steamer slowly goes.

xxxxxxx

Sunshine sucks the air  
As heated fret arises.  
But not one bird sings.

Xxxxxxxx

Hill walking shepherd  
Filigree gossamer webs.  
Glistening in the Spring.

xxxxxxx



**HISTORY** - by Deborah Moorhouse ©

Individual  
Snowflake drifting down to earth  
A mass grave your fate

---

**NIGHTMARE** - by Deborah Moorhouse ©

I peek out of my window  
And see the ground is white  
Jack Frost has been dancing  
Over the land last night

My breath is all foggy  
Like steam before my eyes  
The bedroom is freezing  
As cold as arctic ice

I know my bed is cosy  
But I do not have that choice  
I pull on my old dressing gown  
As I hear my young child's voice.

I go downstairs and make breakfast  
A warming bowl of oats  
We get dressed quickly  
And muffled up with coats

Step out into the morning  
The sky is blue and clear  
The sun begins to melt the frost  
As we stroll towards the mere

The lake is like a giant mirror  
Reflecting all the scene  
I turn my back just briefly  
It's as if you've never been

Standing there beside me  
You've slipped beneath the ice  
All I see is grasping hands  
And terror in your eyes.

A scream freezes in my throat  
As I push against the layer  
Instead of tending to hungry cries  
I'm in a chilling nightmare.

---

## NO CHIMNEY FOR SANTA - By Leslie Webster ©

London, Christmas Eve 1942, was not a good place to be. The cold damp air was heavy with the smell of brick dust and burnt wood. I was not happy! My gas mask, in its rough brown cardboard box, was chafing my legs and the string holding it was biting into my neck. To make matters worse the woollen Balaclava helmet knitted by Gran (with more love than skill) itched like mad. Mum was holding one of my hands, the other was deep inside my overcoat pocket clutching a piece of shrapnel I'd found that morning outside the bombed shell of what had once been my school. The jagged edges served to remind me that even at ten years of age nothing was forever.

We'd had a right Royal dinner that day, rissoles, or little bags of mystery, as Dad called them, powdered spuds and greens, which I'd eaten to "keep away the pimples." This was followed by a chocolate pudding made with solidified rice and spoonfuls of bitter tasting cocoa powder, all washed down with Ministry of Food concentrated orange juice.

I thought of the past Christmases we'd spent at Granddad's house in the highlands of Scotland. How I wished we were there now, running free by the side of the swift flowing burn with its clear water, freezing cold from its journey down the snow capped mountain. But it can't be, Granddad's "gone to live with the Angels" and the dreaded Hun is on his way. I was sure the Fiendish Mr. Hitler was out to kill me personally.

Smog was closing in on the steadily lengthening queue outside Holborn underground station. We'd soon be let in, the last train would have gone by now and the man will switch off the "lectricity - then, the mad dash down, deep beneath the war torn city and a relatively safe night's sleep on the platform. Mum was speaking to the lady in front of us, "We had a near miss last night, oil bomb landed at the back of ours. Thank Gawd it was a dud. Just left a ruddy great hole and oil everywhere." Then she turns to me and say's, "Don't worry son we'll be safe down here tonight, and tomorrer we'll see about getting you evacuated into the country." Something must have been affecting her eyes; I could see they were damp as she wiped them with her hanky. 'I hope they send me to Scotland,' I thought.

The gates opened wide enough to let two or three people through at a time, then it was one mad, hand clutching, leg flailing, descent to platform one. Mum knew you had to be dead quick to stake your claim, otherwise you'd be

stuck with a pitch next to the lift shaft and that would mean "having the wind up your kilt half the night."

Beds were made up with blankets supplied by faceless people called A.R.P. and W.V.S. but not before mum took a packet from the bottomless carrier bag, (again made by Gran from scraps of oil-cloth), the powdered contents of which was sprinkled over our bedding. I knew this ritual had something to do with "night, night, sleep tight," but I wasn't sure what.

A badly played mouth organ picked out the melody of "Keep the home fires burning," but this was drowned out by a large ruddy faced lady singing, "Run rabbit, run rabbit, run, run, run," this was taken up by first one, then two, ten, twenty, then the whole station - "HE'LL GET BY WITHOUT HIS RABBIT PIE....." I saw the mouth organ being returned to an inside pocket. "Thank Gawd fer that." Someone sighed.

Mum tucked me in, I didn't really understand this big adventure going on in my life, but I did know that my Dad - and God - were somewhere up above me looking for Mr. Hitler, and they're going to get him before he gets me 'Cos my Dad can lick anyone

As I drifted off to sleep I could hear people softly singing "Silent Night, Holy Night," and I'm sure I remember feeling a tear on my forehead as Mum kissed me goodnight. "Merry Christmas," she whispered.

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Yours,

Hazel Mynard and Ann Will.

# THE FOUR SEASONS



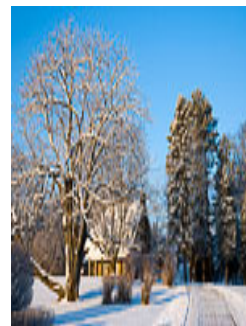
SPRING



SUMMER



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WINTER

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