

# Underground

<http://www.underground-writers.org>

## Note from the editors

Hey! We're on the ball, we're ready and rearing, we're... we're... out of metaphors!

We're getting more submissions with every issue, which is great to see. Keep on writing, folks, we're more than happy to read what you've got for us! We hope you enjoy the issue and look forward to more from Underground in future!

### Talk to Me

Karen Murphy © 2010

You said you liked the sky better  
when it's cloudy—

it could be any sky you liked.

It was sunny that day,  
you didn't like that.

It taunted you with its bluntness,  
so much so you couldn't look at it.

You said you didn't like it when  
the sun was in the sky.

I didn't want to believe you—  
but you seemed to like clouding up your eyes.

You said you liked to imagine  
your own sky instead of seeing  
someone else's,  
or more accurately, I liked to think,  
instead of seeing mine.

You said it hadn't been your sky today,  
but it was getting better.

Our sky, I had corrected,  
but I already knew it wasn't mine.

*Pick of the Month!*

### No Tears Shed

Mark Jackson © 2010

At the end of a life spent in utter pride  
what questions linger in the dormant mind,  
what life of chosen solitude led,  
that would end in silence with no tears shed.

In ageing years when support is sought  
from those whose love in frail arms caught,  
what sorrow is absent from deathly bed  
when a life could pass with no tears shed.

In distant home, in sufferance lied,  
among strangers a woman gave up and died,  
what hope of remorse when all prayers said,  
when a family remains fractured,  
the mother is dead,  
and a life passes in silence with no tears shed.

But though these stanzas have you crucified  
it would be false to say that I never cried,  
I hold onto tears for what I never had,  
as your life passes by me one tear I shed.

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## Echoes of a Whisper

*Dejan Djurdjevic, 2009*

The taxi pulls up at the kerb and I struggle to get my wallet out of my jeans pocket. After I pay the driver I step out into the crisp morning air, sling my backpack onto one shoulder and walk towards the double doors of the hospital which is silhouetted by the sun breaking sharply over the top. On the way I pass a man wearing a t-shirt that reads: "You can cock up your life by being a dick."

My flight leaves in under an hour. Taking into account the morning traffic, I have very little time. Why is it that so many things in my life are relegated to stolen moments?

As I enter the hospital I am engulfed by the warmth and smell of roasted coffee beans. The cafeteria is brimming with people; exhausted night staff sipping cappuccinos, their open lab coats showing washed-out green overalls; sombre visitors sitting wordlessly opposite each other over chequered tablecloths. I walk toward the reception counter.

"Are you family?" asks the woman, her eyes cast downwards beneath a furrowed brow. I see her peeling name badge says "Leanne" with a smiley face next to it. She looks up at me blankly. "I'm sorry sir. It says here 'family only'." She looks down again and continues working. I stand there until I realise that I have been dismissed, then wander uncertainly towards the door. An orderly passes by and we bump shoulders.

"Excuse me," he says, flashing a quick grin. I seize the opportunity. "That would be ward 40 mate," he offers. "Take the elevators on the south side. Don't take the ones on the north; they don't stop on that floor." He gestures generally past the cafeteria and I thank him, then stumble down the corridor wondering which way is south. My eyes feel gritty and my nose is still running from the cold air. I sniff back the clear fluid and wipe

ineffectually with my sleeve wishing I had a tissue.

Before long I find a bank of elevators. One opens its stainless steel doors and spills out a catering trolley full of clanking dishes followed by an orderly with glazed eyes. At the same time I'm jostled from behind as someone rushes to get in; a stubbled man in ugg boots and torn denim, smelling of tobacco. His kids rush after him. "Let me push the button Daddy!" says the little girl.

"No, let me!"

"It's Elliot's turn sweetheart. You coming in mate?" He's staring at me, holding one hand against the doors. I shake my head and smile weakly.

## Does Dark Matter Matter?

*John H Lewington, 2010*

Boffins discovered Dark Matter,  
The stuff that's not there...but does matter.  
We're told that matter is holding us tight,  
It's a matter of fact which the Cosmos finds right.

So Dark Matter's a glue they say,  
If matter's not there- the worlds float away!  
Matter appears to be there, but not reflecting light,  
It refuses to radiate but it's Dark Matter... right?

It's comforting to know Dark Matter is there,  
While the Earth self destructs polluting the air.  
Here few destroy many over matters unfair,  
What matters if humans no longer care?

Dark Matters discovered but not dark Bin Laden,  
He matters more than any celestial equation.  
The fact of the matter Obama tirads Iran,  
Where the Dark Matter of Iraq might happen again.

So spare a thought for Dark Matter,  
Where ever you are.  
You might yet become matter,  
The mist of a star...

I'm looking for something – anything – to tell me where the elevator goes, but all I find in the sea of green wallpaper is the LED which blinks: “G, 1, 2...” There is a long pause. “5”. I need the fourth floor.

I'm wandering along the corridor again, looking at framed black and white pictures of nursing sisters, a cabinet with old surgical instruments. I step aside to allow a bed to be wheeled passed.

The man in it has his eyes squeezed shut and jaw clenched, but the staff are chatting amiably. Then I recognise Sandra. I've seen pictures of her on Facebook. I know she works at a hospital. She stops abruptly and glares at me.

“What are *you* doing here?” I start to stammer in reply, but I'm not sure what to say. I'm surprised she even knows who I am. I wonder what she's been told. “Can't you read between the lines?” she asks. I shrug my shoulders and she stares me down. I see the dried snail trail my nose has left on my sleeve and I put my hands behind my back. When I look up she is shaking her head and waving me away contemptuously. “She's in 401. To the left as you get out of the elevator. You're lucky - he just went home with his parents. Make it quick. The last thing anybody needs is a scene.” She walks off and I'm left to look for the elevators again. I can hear her colleagues whispering as they retreat down the corridor and her saying “I'll tell you later.”

A quick glance at my watch tells me I have less than 10 minutes to catch a taxi back to the airport. I've been wandering around the hospital for almost twice that time. At that moment a side-door bursts open and I catch the sight of a stairwell.

I'm running up the stairs, feeling the sweat trickle under my armpits and counting the floors. When I reach the fourth I push open the door and fall into a stuffy warmth; the smell of baby powder and soiled nappies. I stagger down the hall, past the nursery, looking at the room numbers: 419, 418, 417... A nurse looks up from her workstation: “Can I help you?” I force a smile

and shake my head. A happy father pushing a see-through crib nods and winks as he passes me. I see his baby inside, eyes wide open, a fist in his mouth and an oversize bright blue beanie covering his head.

I pause at 401, still panting. The door is closed. I take a breath and knock gently. There is no answer. I open it and step inside.

She is sitting up in bed, hunched over. Her fine hair is matted and tangled. If she has looked up I haven't noticed. I walk over and put my hand on her shoulder and she starts to sob quietly. I stand there stupidly, rubbing her bare back through the open hospital gown.

Then I hear a raspy cry, like an echo of a whisper, and I walk over to the crib near the window. He is inside, a shrivelled, writhing prune with clenched fists. I open one of his hands with my finger and he grips it with white knuckles. I stroke his flushed, pimpled cheeks as he flails hopelessly from side to side, mouth gaping.

Back at the airport I sit on a moulded plastic chair, numbly watching the Morning Show on a plasma screen, announcements echoing over me. I see the gate opening and people rapidly forming a queue. A man and woman embrace, then he stoops to hug his children, one of whom is crying. I pick up my backpack and hurry past them. This is, after all, just a dream. When I walk through the gate I will return to reality; to where the cobwebs of my mind will catch memories and other detritus of time.

### Australia Girl 1

*Susanne Harford, 2010*

A pretty flower  
She sits  
Tight-jean-legs akimbo  
High heels.  
On the grass in the sun  
Happy

### Australia Girl 2

*Susanne Harford, 2010*

Alone. Sometimes  
She feels so sad  
In the city. Waiting.  
But not for  
Long

## Warnbro Sound

Rob Butler, 2010

I hear the sound of distant voices, empty and sandy beaches stained with gold.

Reminds me how we'd danced to the water to cool our toes.

The shattered mind of being  
sends time drifting,  
creating and destructing.

There is the call of seabirds above the sound.

Reminds me I am an intruder in these dunes.

The silent swoop and climb of a hawk, and the rabbits that freeze then run,  
reminds me they don't want to die.

Evening clouds consume the sound,  
and a distant red haze is being swallowed by the sea.

Reminds me of watching the sun fade to just a golden lining on the horizon,  
sitting on sandy steps, listening to the music that won't let you go,  
how I'd ran breathless with the failing light and fallen to my knees  
with a heavy chest and tight stomach, calling your name  
and casting your charms into the sea.

Reminds me of how the wind and rain had drowned me through my skin,  
the silver-alloy sky; storm clouds that grew upon the sound,  
like a ghost ship lost on gentle seas, waiting to sink and boil,  
then rise and tear the sky in two.

By night the sound is vast empty darkness, the ocean velvet black.

Reminds me of the soft slap and whisper of the tide that tip-toes through my window  
and carries me to sleep.

Of laying on the sand and watching the stars and moons crawl past,  
and of all my friends who said they'd never call, which troubled me a while,  
but now I'm not sure if I care.

Bordered by dunes and followed by the eyes of homes and alone with the breeze,  
reminds me of swimming out to the deep blue, gentle on my skin, your green dress  
through my fingers. Of you being just out of reach and slipping away.

Reminds me of being seven years old and never wanting to leave,  
I just wanted to stay and swim, so "ten minutes longer" is all she'd say.



So last time around, we  
asked you to write some-  
thing around the theme  
'Chameleon'.

This time we're going to  
crack onto a writing  
exercise! Don't let that  
creative spark sit by doing  
nothing. The exercise  
involves writing about...  
\*drumroll\*

### Challenges

For more information, see  
the website!

### Self-Portrait

Christopher Keen, 2010

He combs his hair with utmost care,  
Fears not that people stop and stare,  
This man is made of style and class,  
His snappy dressing is no mere farce.

Above all, he yearns for attention,  
Looks this good warrant a mention,  
To all his friends, a hero is he,  
The very man they want to be.

Yet 'tis a lie, deception, illusory,  
A mask... that hides reality.

### Remember to visit us online!

Chris Hocking (Underground Writer), 2010

Check us out, we are online,  
With a fancy, spiffy, new design,  
Send a submission, we'll have a look,  
Or sign our shiny new guestbook!

Really, though, we're online with a brand new design, and as always, we're just  
dying for any submissions you might want to send our way! Keep your pen to the  
page - or fingers to the keys - fellow writers!

For submission guidelines, and anything else about us you want to know  
(including things you probably don't or couldn't care less about!), check the  
website: [www.underground-writers.org!](http://www.underground-writers.org!)