

## STEAK AND MUSHROOM PIE

POEM BY ANDY HICKMOTT  
ILLUSTRATION BY RYAN INZANA

Let us play detective, like a character from one of your throwaway novels. Whodunit? Who sowed those mushroom spores? Line up the suspects in stripes clutching placards to their cancer-free chests; the man who blew asbestos dust off worn brake shoes to save a bob at Halfords, the man who once breathed through Golden Virginia as though his pipe were a snorkel, the man who fingered a thousand paperbacks, benzene bleeding from every hackneyed cliché, the man who furrowed a million miles at the pile-inducing helm of a lead-excreting Bedford diesel, or the one who fell foul of a spiteful God. All or none of the above. Now here's the twist, the last page reveal, your final meal will be your butcher's death.



A few key elements of the poem lifted. Collaged together. Good flow through the image from top left to bottom right. Limited and relevant color palette. Appears to be a link from the head at the top, through the veins and tubes, to the blood trickling out at the end. Visually arresting, in keeping with the grisly nature of the poem.

The balance, or lack of it, in the layout of the text is mirrored in the balance of the illustration. Again, elements of the text have been lifted and collaged. Lack of a face makes an immediate impact. Beautiful use of colour – monochromatic with a touch of pink.

## A FAMILY VISIT

POEM BY CHARLOTTE WETTON  
ILLUSTRATION BY LAURA RIEDINGER

I tidy the peripheries,  
straightening the edges of my face  
a crisp, black line along each eyelid  
but lift not a finger  
to the dizzying  
internal fairground,  
implusions,  
thoughts that  
sub divide  
grow wings  
and crash  
like dodgem cars.  
Candy floss finger prints  
all over my glassy insides.



## WHERE THE ICE SINKS

POEM BY LYNN HOFFMAN  
ILLUSTRATION BY SANDRA DIECKMANN

(FOR MH)

There is a world that thrives a half an inch above  
and five seconds behind the one we know.  
In this world, ice sinks to the bottom of the pond in winter  
and marks the longest, coldest day of the year with its bass-note woe.  
This is a world in which each day the tide returns  
more meekly to the land, the beach expands  
and waves pile up in flagjack layers in the center of the ocean,  
monstrous piles of water shored up by perverted gravity.  
And in this world, we - from time to time, in fork-toed shoes  
climb the salty waters mid-sea mountain  
and stare along the gently curving path of light to the wave trough  
where you,  
sweet determined maniacal you  
are paddling in a jet black wake,  
pass the curious, inflatable long-limbed fish,  
your head erect, eyes chocolate-bright,  
grinning, barking, snorting  
ever closer to us and home.



Surreal and fantastical. Appealing patterns and shapes. These contrast well with the realism of the sleeping creature (bear?). Fantastical colour palette works well with the nature of the poem. The overall impact of the illustration is good, but slightly sickening.

Beautifully illustrated. Very Edgar Allen Poe. Perfectly amatched the essence of the text. Makes you want to fall into the image. It adds to the poem, rather than just complementing it. The illustration could work as an image in its own right. The poem definitely adds to it, though. Very successful.

## BLACK INK

POEM BY SEAN CHARD  
ILLUSTRATION BY PEDRO SEMEANO

Tree tops liquid full of black ink  
Absorbed by leaves in tones of jet  
Three hundred prayer flags flap and link  
Arrive and set out from the west  
Pierce clear sky of empty blue  
Like drifting plumes they rise and skew  
In pairs the ghosts emerge and call  
To rusted fields the couples fall  
And find the banks of broken land  
In gangs that rob the soil unarmad  
Shards of darkness scattered there  
They cast away to live on air  
Three hundred prayer flags flap and link  
Tree tops liquid full of black ink



## RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

POEM BY IRETI ODUGESAN  
ILLUSTRATION BY MARCO BEVILACQUA

Balaclava et al  
They charge, fully charged  
Barging through barricades  
Made up of human shields  
Breaking bones, blood  
Spilling on stone cold  
Flags fold under the burning heat  
Of hands that ignited them  
Union Jack, black  
Sly hangs low  
They duck, slowly pushing forward  
Over the border  
Bringing this street  
And the next  
Down to its knees  
Overturning anything in their way  
So pray,  
For the lies on the lips of leaders  
Are leading them astray.



Creating a literal collage of the various aspects covered in the poem. The frightened face of the child being prominently placed brings home the message. It reminds me of the murals painted on the walls in Northern Ireland. Its abit of a confusing mess, but perhaps that's the point.

I love the houses in this illustration. Their fragility contrasts well with the solidity of the black mountains. I'm not sure if the overall illustration gels well with the message behind the poem. It definitely has a ghost-like quality which seems to work.

## AS CITIES RUN LIKE COLOURS

POEM BY SOPHIE CLARKE  
ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS NICKELS

As cities run like colours in the wash to the foothills of the last wild spaces, a vote is held to raise the mountains to the ground.

Workmen wear hard hats against falling stone. People gather with camera phones to film the equivalent of a thousand cathedrals

taken to pieces. A museum is erected to preserve the fact: a polished trig point, a spring of heather suspended behind glass.

Some enjoy the landscaped park, brimming at weekends with pushchairs and dogs, artfully constructed to give the impression of walking

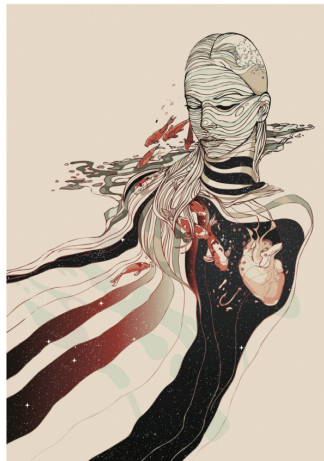
on the tops. Elsewhere, an estate agent gushes about the awe-inspiring views, how you can see for miles on a clear day, unattended to the sea.



## TRAWLING

POEM BY VIVIEN STEELS  
ILLUSTRATION BY CHALERMPHOL HARNCHAKHAM

Sinking shut into sleep  
silk-soft cotton mesmerises feet  
to litpae hallways housing  
damp-filled skirting boards,  
mirrored doorways, wisped ceilings,  
all signposting to secluded cellars  
where one, inhibited,  
breathes like a barnacle  
clinging to the underbelly,  
labyrinth of night starved with senses  
and there he sits, silver as fish,  
sand-blasted hand grasping  
the hook of your heart,  
pulling thread in and out,  
mending the net,  
re-designing the web that  
will trawl the waters of the world  
to drag salty words of treasure  
into the limelight of your luminous eyes  
from wild, wild mermaids.



The style of this illustration emulates the dreamtime origins of the poem well. The figure blending into the other elements of the image, creating a not-quite-solid, not-quite-there feel really helps complement the text. I love the starry space seen through the ribbons of the figure. A beautiful image that draws you in to look at, and explore further.

The ambiguity of the poem is mirrored in the illustration. I really love the style of illustration, using black and white, crudely coloured over. There is beautiful detail – textures, dripping sap, flaking bark – all of which build a picture of the forest that complements the picture built by the text.

## YOU DO NOT HAVE TO SAY

POEM BY JAYNE STANTON  
ILLUSTRATION BY JESSICA DURDEN

You do not have to say,  
how she drew you in, flanked with ferns,  
led you to lose yourself behind the mist veil.  
Tripped by tanglewood, she rolled you,  
trammelled in the undergrowth, witness  
to the slow undressing of her late limbs.

how we found you, drunk on sap,  
sporting hips and haws like trophies.  
Even now, your split-bark skin leaks laughter,  
reeks of rot. Warnings waste in callused ears,  
your reputation purpled by berried  
statements from your brambled fingertips.



## SLEEPOVERS

Poem by Bethan Parker-Luscombe  
Illustration by Esra Raisa

Sticky haribo against my lips,  
Stopping the words I wish to whisper,  
In the darkness of the night  
Giggles floating along the air,  
Like musical notes,  
The feel of smooth skin on hands  
We hold as we run to the bathroom,  
Too scared of ghosts and men wielding axes  
To brush our teeth alone.  
We unfold our hearts like diary pages,  
To one another as we hide under sleeping bags,  
Sheltered by the torch's glow.

Now I wish I had those hands,  
That heart and that crumpled hair  
Spread over the pillow like a map,  
The scent of excitement to  
Flow into my heart, making it beat like  
It once did, as in spotty pyjamas we huddled near,  
Watching those grown-up films,  
Back then, our only fear.



The pose of the girl perfectly captures the nervous fragility of adolescence. The simple colour works well, the pinky-purple reminiscent of teenage girls. The covered face and black ink splodges help to make the image more intriguing and effective. The My Little Pony is a nice touch.

Perhaps a bit too much of a literal interpretation. It doesn't show much thought beyond what was offered by the poem. But it is a visually appealing image. Again, the colour palette is black and white, with one other colour used sparingly. The line drawing of the old man is particularly nice.

## LACES

Poem by Neil McCarthy  
Illustration by David Lemm

How many times, singing, have I  
untied your laces, pulled  
off your shoes and held  
one to my nose, pretending  
to sniff some foul odour  
if only to make you laugh?

As you grow older you will  
forget such gestures; the  
world as you come to know  
it, an open envelope of  
good news and bad. From  
dependent to child to boy to  
adult; an alphabet sung backwards.



## COME FIND ME

Poem by Rosie Allabarton  
Illustration by Tom Kitchen

Come find me when my hands are small  
bite-sized, bloody, half bitten off by geese  
the size of me when I am a few years older.  
Come find me, crumbs snow-drifting to my feet  
my throw too weak  
to scatter further across the water.  
Come find me under cushions and throws  
hiding, stowaways  
in the living room that will in no time at all  
hide hurt feelings, secrets  
eating into the walls.  
Baby blankets  
stuffed into mouths, fraying, fraying  
no one's saying too much now  
when nothing's changed  
years down the line.  
Come find me sitting on the stairs  
sleep filling my eyes like grey cement  
worry etched on baby's brow  
who even now won't go to bed.



I quite like the use of the titular lungs as a frame for the main illustration. The way the image brings together the brief suggestions mentioned in the poem works well. The lights/gaps surrounding the main frame also help create a fragile, ephemeral feel.

## LUNGS

Poem by Peter Jenkins  
Illustration by Herds of Birds

Lacking words you rely on pure  
sound, a cry wrenched hot  
from your lungs, the stretched howl of a hurt  
animal, quivering, desperate, bare.

Or hardly there, a hint of rise  
and fall, a kind of fluttering sigh  
is all your butterfly breath. We see  
a soft wing-beat, the faintest trace.

We see a simple being  
in moment after moment,  
each whistle of air hesitant, brief,

thin threads paying  
out ceaselessly, weaving a garment,  
a life, from lung-spun breath.



## ASTRONAUTS & COWBOYS

Poem by Jack Varnell  
Illustration by Matthias Seifarth

I have not grown up to be  
the cowboy, Indian, or astronaut,  
I wanted to be when I was a child.  
I own no pistols, arrows, or horses.

I have not grown up to be  
the lawyer, judge, or doctor  
my father would have been proud of.  
Yet I am far too much like him for my mother to be.

I have not grown up to be  
the soldier, hero  
or prince charming  
that would have kept my loves in love

Standards and expectations-  
mine or others - real or imagined,  
prove only one thing.

I have not grown up.



There is something querkily appealing about this illustration. The not-grown-up sentiment of the poem allows for this jovial approach. It hasn't tried to be too literal, or cram the whole poem in to one image.

I love this illustration. It makes you want to touch the page. She has taken one resonant moment from the text, and used it to produce an image that relates to the whole. It manages to communicate a sense of strength, tenderness, grief and, of course, love.

## TO LOVE

Poem by Emma Jones  
Illustration by Kate Copeland

I saw you once at the site of an earthquake.  
A woman lay in the rubble,  
Her panic filling the air thick as brick dust  
And strangers' hands, arms, heaved to free her  
Strangers' brows furrowed, rolled with fresh sweat  
Strangers' lips blossomed with whispered hope  
And there you were.  
In the pulse of blood through thickened veins  
In the drop of sweat that darkened dust,  
You. There you were.  
I saw you on the slave ship  
In the soothing hush of mothers' shush  
The warm and murmured lullabies  
I saw you in the death camps  
You were the last morsel, torn in half  
Proffered with knotted, knuckled hands  
In these darkest of places  
I have to remember:  
You. You still survive  
In the clutched embraces  
And the tears of grief,  
You sit, so quietly,  
Underneath.



## BEFORE WE MET

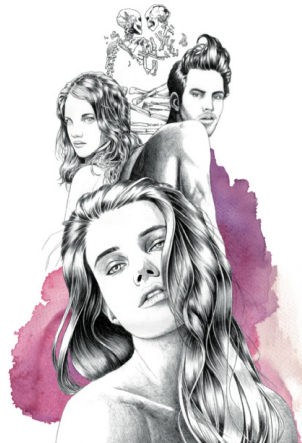
Poem by Krishan Coupland  
Illustration by Florian Meacci

This is how the world reduces  
to a single point around  
which you feel your life  
revolving.

Dividing ponderously into  
before and after.  
As with an accident  
or a funeral  
or a surgery  
or a heart attack.

Before we met.

And after:  
just after.  
Walking home,  
lungs and heart and head in fission,  
those blue hours. Waiting.



This illustration has a very dated look, very 1980s poster. It is technically very good, but I don't think the illustrator has done anything that innovative or imaginative with their interpretation.

There is something very appealing about this illustration. The positions of the figures, and the lines of the floor boards, and the raised hand, all add to the intrigue and discomfort. I can see why the shadows are there, but I don't think they are necessary – the considered, distracted face of the male contrasting with the animated figure of the female tells the story.

## ANOTHER COMMON ROOM

Poem by Matthew Stoppard  
Illustration by Sam Pash

Love shoved me in  
and a gallery of shadows circled  
to play pantoon knowing my game is five card brag.  
I shook hands with one of the men,  
feeling her skin across his palm;  
he mocked my decade of childhood flab,  
I crawled to the corner and cried myself thin.

The boy who gossiped a drunken version of herself,  
faint and vomit-laden in a large garden shed,  
said his father knew Nostradamus,  
threatening to tell her all about my dud sperm  
and when I will soil my paisley pyjamas.

Queensbury pose, dressed in my sister's boyfriend's clothes,  
I boxed each shadow, including three teenagers  
and a onenightstand, then propped open the door  
of her wiredrawn history  
as she walked past the gates of mine  
on her way to calm my fists.



## ADDICTIONS

Poem by Valentina Cano  
Illustration by D'Andhra Bascomb

The need I feel is not audible  
but it pounds its fists against  
my egg-shell skull,  
trying to break out in a spill of yellow goo.  
It pinches me as I lay down,  
twisting my legs up,  
veins knit like cables in a sweater.  
It knocks my cups to the ground as I cross the room,  
poltergeists of anger and shining failure.

If I could shut it up,  
in a cage, in a closet, in a dust bin,  
I would tear away the film that chokes,  
swipe it away like an empty spider's web,  
grind it tightly with my heel.

This need will kill me,  
pointy toes and wire hair sawing me away.



This is a very garish and unsettling image, in keeping with the sentiment of the poem. I find the ghosta and squiggles a little bit too crudely drawn and childish. I don't know if this is intentional, but I don't feel it helps communicate the poem's message. I'm not that keen on the colours, either, but it isn't supposed to make you feel nice and settled – so in that way it works.

I don't particularly agree with the sentiment of this poem, but I quite like the treatment of the illustration. The combination of line, photo-realism and coloured splodges works well. Not sure it communicates the message effectively. I find myself drawn to the twisted legs.

## IS

Poem by Madelaine Jones  
Illustration by Eva Solano

Not the pseudo-science of mashed tongues and tangled legs;  
not somatic, dramatic or exciting; your heart  
should mumble, never beat (too energetic);  
electric glances – forget it.  
Something much softer and greyer:  
the monotonous hum of hatchbacks on the school run;  
casseroles that's over cooked and under seasoned,  
a two-up two-down in a leafy suburb;  
a Christmas card with your name in crayon  
and so many kisses they look like trellis.



## MAKING TRACKS

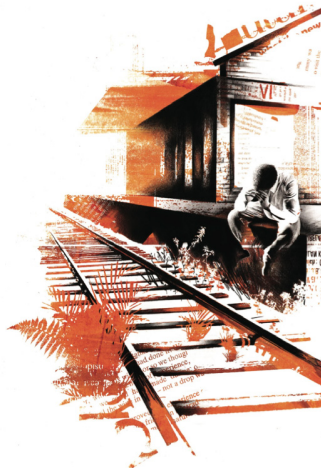
Poem by Sean Chard  
Illustration by Ben Brooks

Tired, like countless times in the past,  
With nothing left but unpleasant silence  
in orbit around us – bored and  
loitering for months.  
We wait on abandoned platforms,  
blistering and staring at clumps of dead grass.

No train but the tracks click all the same;  
unsteady heat rises from iron lines.  
Dust is captured in sunlight's lever –  
disturbed by the ground's inflamed surface.  
Paint peels from the waiting-room door  
and inside a stale horde of ghosts reverberate.

We stand at the white lined edge of the platform  
And like sleepers in-between the hard grey rocks,  
we are the same but different – bolted to the ground.  
The breeze moves an empty cardboard coffee cup  
to rest up against the tracks and like a stuck record  
it taps, jumps and replays the top – a fitting motif.

We have waited here so many times before;  
invisible trains rattled past us, their gusts pushed us back.  
Too afraid to cross the line and unable to see  
our new destinations, we stood for nothing.  
But today we are where we need to be,  
We are done and we are undone. End of the line.



This illustration is very different to the others, and is a refreshing change. The layers of newspaper print, screen printed blocks and photographic imagery, enhanced by the vibrant orange, create an arresting impression. It is a unique and effective way of communicating the message of the poem.

The overall effect of this illustration works well. I like the pastel shades and limited colour palette. Dividing the images up into 'pebbles' is a nice way to lead the eye round the page and links in with the text.

## POSSIBILITIES

Poem by Sally Blackmore  
Illustration by Gabriella Barouch

I had grown used to meals for one,  
said I'd not regret or grieve  
the web of dreams unspun,  
though as years pass I have begun  
to wonder more than to believe  
there could in fact be someone  
for me, out there, for love, for fun.  
From brain's dim cellars I'll retrieve  
dusty hopes, schemes half begun  
of fond romance, two into one –  
that another heart and mine could cleave  
and weave new patterns, warm, fine-spun.

