



INKSPOT ENTRIES – June 2015
Theme -Scarecrow

This year from 18th July to 1st August Pevensey Villages Partnership are staging the first ever Scarecrow Festival throughout the villages.

To tie in with this Inkspot chose the theme 'Scarecrow' for their June meeting.

For this meeting a prize was awarded for what we considered to be the best story.

The winner was Colin Hilliam, whose moving story simply titled 'Scarecrow' can be found on page 1.



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Winner of Inkspot's Scarecrow Short Story/Poetry competition

Scarecrow

by Collin Hilliam

Only my brother, of all the people I know, claims to have no internal narrative, the ongoing account of your thinking and doing which little children will often vocalise, as in "Now I'm spitting on the cat. Tinker runs away upstairs, so I'm off after her. Now Mummy's calling me, sounding cross, so I'm hiding under the bed."

My own narrative often wanders off message: watching a newflash, I'll find myself lost in the past, a commonplace of ageing, but I find I'm often re-running tableaux from past times, trying to set them right, to minimise conflicts, to initiate happy endings, to somehow soften the implacable history.

One such narrative that often recurs features the scarecrow I knew in my childhood, a fellow schoolboy I remember as Tom. Now I have little sense of smell, but even I knew that he stank. His face and hands were grey and scabby, his clothes were past repair, hanging off him. He had no money for school dinners, nor the bureaucratic imprimatur to get them free: he scavenged and stole around the school, effectively unchallenged because he had the loudest and vilest tongue imaginable and because no member of staff would touch him, nor even speak of him, let alone to him, if they could help.

I found him harmless. He never attacked nor threatened me, nor anyone else that I could see, so I largely ignored him. There were better things to worry about, like the brothers Alfie and Ernie, bigger boys both, who liked to round up us littlies with privet switches, in order to confine us for our break or lunchtime within little pens they built of broken bricks on the wasteland backing our playground. "Belsens" they called them, as in "Let's build a Belsen camp." They were tolerably clean, tolerably dressed and so passed under the radar of the school staff; certainly, those on playground duty studiously ignored their industrial-scale bullying. After all, they did it on the wasteland, not in the schoolyard.

But Tom the scarecrow was in another league. Like Hitler, or the war itself, he was an affliction we all had to bear. No-one ever thought to wonder why he wore rags, why he raged and cursed so vilely, why he stole food every day. He was a little imp of Satan, sent to torment the school and its staff.

He simply vanished one day, his passing unacknowledged. It was only much later that I found out his background, his alcoholic and promiscuous mother, the home without heat nor food nor light, the procession of drunken, violent boyfriends he had to avoid.

That he somehow dressed himself, fed himself and kept enough track of time and place to come daily to school was a testament to his indomitable spirit.

I like to imagine that he was taken into care, cleaned up and civilised by adoptive parents or by a children's home, eventually released into a kinder world, when he was old enough to cope. But the doubt remains, whether his story really had a happy ending, or whether one of his feckless mother's paramours had "Done him in", as playground whispers had it.

And that leads me naturally to recall my own scarecrow episode, at the grammar school, when I somehow over-ran the time available for my paper-round, so had to set off in the torn trousers and jacket which I used for work, cramming food into my mouth as I cycled, against the clock, to school.

I was acutely aware of the flapping and the draughts about my knees, of the way my ripped jacket would billow like bats' wings if I raised or swung my arms. It felt like those nightmares of turning up naked in company.

But my schoolmates knew exactly what to do: they uniformly ignored me, looking past or through me, no one of them willing to greet me. They were mostly private preppers and suchlike snotties, I knew, as I felt myself demoted from their grammar-school class.

So, like Tom before me, I scared off no birds, but whole classrooms of schoolboys and masters, and, no matter how often I revisit it, the scene remains one of snobbery and shame, untouched by either friendship or Christian charity. After three generations, I should have given up, but the compulsion remains, to find some good in these scenarios, to wind up the memories, somehow, on a positive note. ♦



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Scramasax = Viking sword. Fyrd = militia. Bearded axe= double sided axe. Theigns= Leaders(mid ranking nobility).

The Fooling of Halfdan
by Tadpole

With bearded axe and scramasax
The heathens stalked the shire
Halfdan and his warriors
Laid waste by fear and fire.
King Alfred summoned out the fyrd
To meet the heathen host
And called upon the village theigns
To swear a holy oath
and stand square upon the battlefield
'neath Alfred's dragon banner
and with ashen spear and linden shield
drive them from ville and manor.

So the English army gathered strong
All who were fit and able
And found courage in the battles song
They sang round the kings own table
And every man throughout the land
Paid heed to Alfred's call
And rallied to the meeting place
Hard by the kings own hall
And with the gathering of the host
They set off towards the east
For Halfdan was in London town
And they marched to slay the beast.

So every town and hamlet
Was left sore undefended
Save by maids and bairns and olden folk
Who the home hearths tended
But Halfdan was a cunning man
And had spies throughout the land
They brought him word so soon he heard
Of all all King Alfred's plans.
As Alfred marched towards the east
To give battle to the foe
Halfdan and his heathen hoard
towards the north did go.

So with Alfred's army in the south
Halfdan's hoards marched north
and with all the towns defenders gone
he laid a siege to York
But one woman on the battlements
Saw Halfdan's hoards draw near
So she rallied all the citizens
And bid them not to fear.
"But we're all alone the people cried
And the enemy is strong
We darest not fight the heathen hoard
With all our young men gone".

The woman's name was Lady Jane
She had a cunning plan
So she called out once again
"Come let us make a stand
on the morrow we will make a fight
we'll be resolute and strong,
Halfdan will not attack tonight
and tomorrow he'll be gone."
the people shouted "Lady!
How then can this be?"
She said "My friends when darkness falls
all come along with me".

So when at last nighttime came
And the heathens took to ale
All the townfolk ventured from the town
The young and old and frail,
Into the meadows around about
Each did make their way
To carry out the Lady's plan
Before the break of day.
They toiled through the whole night long
The enemy to deceive
And the sight that met the heathen's eyes
Halfdan could scarce believe.

Silhouetted on the battlements
An army stood once more
A thousand soldiers scattered round
Where none had stood before.
Halfdan bid his men retreat
While they still had a chance
Less the city gates be open wide
And the soldiers did advance.
The citizens of York gave out
With insults and with jeers
As Halfdan's army marched away
And in the distance disappeared.

And so now to the nub of it
I anticipate your question
How on earth was Halfdan fooled
By the good Lady's suggestion
How was an army conjured
When the men were all away
To stand upon the battlements
At very break of day?
Well I'll tell to you the secret
Of how Halfdan was undone
So gather near and lend an ear
My tale is almost run

Here then is the explanation
Of why the heathens did retreat
How York achieved salvation
And how Halfdan's hoards were beat
When that night the townfolk ventured out
With darkness all around
They stole into the fields about
Making not a single sound
And the soldiers on the battlements
That filled Halfdan with fright
Was just an army made of scarecrows
That they'd gathered in the
night.



Running with a ‘wooden gait’
by Terry Page

“Claims the guy just appeared from the hedgerow and ran straight in front of the car. Running as if on crutches – a bit wooden like. ‘e didn’t have a chance to brake. Not a pretty sight, apparently, Sarge, blood all over the place, although I didn’t get there till they were about to cart the body away.”

“Where is he now?” queried the Sargent on duty.

“The paramedics took the body and ...”

“No, no, the driver! Where is he?”

“Oh, I’ve put ‘im in the canteen with a cuppa tea but e’s a nervous wreck and I wonder if we should call the doc?”

“I’ll go have a word with him first. Sounds as if it wasn’t his fault: dark night, unlit country lane and you say the guy he hit was wearing dark clothing?”

“Yea, except he had on a big floppy hat with a feather in it. The driver said he particularly noticed because it was flopped down in front of the pedestrian’s face and flew off onto ‘is windscreen as ‘e hit the vehicle.”

“Wasn’t a bright red hat by any chance was it, Mitchell?”

“Dunno, didn’t see it, Sarge. Is it important?”

“Well, we had a report last week, from the same place, Jevington Village. Some old dear claimed a tramp, or vagrant had swiped her hat and run off with it. Hang on let’s ‘ave a look in the report and see if there’s some description. It was....it was, last Thursday, if I remember rightly.

Wonderful things, computers – when they’re working prop... ah here it is. 88 years of age Mrs Vera Cosworth reported;

‘ A foreign- looking vagrant snatched my hat in broad daylight and ran off. He had a curious wooden gait and was wearing a mask.’ Time of the incident about 14.30 hours.”

“Bit awkward, running with a wooden gate, Sarge?”

“No, no, Mitchell, gait, **gait!** He ran off looking a bit ‘wooden’!”

“Oh, I see what you mean, Sarge. The medics said he looked a bit of a tramp, but he was wearing a good tweed jacket. I retrieved it from the roadside and put it in the ambulance just before they left with the body.”

“Hang on, Mitchell, a tweed jacket? Wasn’t a Harris Tweed by any chance, was it?”

“Didn’t notice Sarge. Just looked good quality – you know, well made”

“Well find out, sharpish and see if you can retrieve it. We had a call from a Major Sandersfoot. He’s from Maldon Bridge: that’s near Jevington, isn’t it Mitchell?”

“Same neck of the woods Sarge. D.I. Nicholson lives out that way.”

“Yea, well, Major Sandersfoot rang and he was not a happy bunny. I took the call: he was gardening, hung his coat on the wall and up comes this tramp and makes off with it. He had, I quote, a ‘curious wooden gait’! An expensive Harris Tweed coat, apparently, with his wallet in it.”

“Sounds like it could be the same guy, Sarge.”

“You’re very quick Mitchell. Anyway, where is he now?”

“The ambulance took him straight to the morgue, Sarge. No sign of life at all. We’ll have a report from the coroner later this evening.”

“This evening! What, they putting in a bit of O.T.?”

“No, but apparently they’ve got a bit of a backlog. That fire in the block of flats: fireman pulled out five bodies.”

“Oh yea. Well let’s go have a word with our upset driver and we’ll, hang on a minute, ere’ we go. Let’s just take this call.”



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“Covington constabulary.Hello Frank, I heard you were busy with those fire victims. Nasty business..... Yeah, yeah..... Do what? You are joking. The officer is in front of me now, but he didn’t get there until the medics were just about wrapped up. He said there was a lot of blood!..... No, you’re kidding? Those medics are going to have egg on their face.No pun intended. Yea, I’ll tell Mitchell, he’ll be amused.”

“Well that was the doctor at the coroner’s and his report makes for interesting reading. Reckons cause of death was almost certainly a sharp-pointed instrument into the ‘abdomen’ – probably a long nail. There were also ligatures of garden wire to limbs. No loss of blood, but lots of body tissue or, to be more specific, ‘straw’. Also many fractures, not bone, but wood. Are you beginning to get the picture Mitchell?”

“No I’m not sure I am, Sarge.”

“Put simply, Mitchell, the stiff down at the coroner’s is a scarecrow and the coroner’s office thought the medics were having a laugh.”

“But, but, the blood Sarge, all over the car, over the road?”

“Oh yea. They said you’re very welcome to pick up the dead chicken that was obviously nesting inside the scarecrow. Oh, and while you’re down there, Mitchell, retrieve the coat that probably belongs to Major Sandersfoot and we’ll see if the hat belongs to Mrs Cosworth.”

“And, er, will you be telling em that we have apprehended the villain who nicked their property, Sarge?”

“Yea, well, let me deal with that Mitchell and we’ll consider the case ‘closed’.” ♦



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Scarecrow.

by Adam

Why am I here in the warmth of the sun?
For I cannot walk and nor can I run.

The Crows are not scared, neither Robin nor Wren.
What use am I Lord, May I ask you again?

With both feet buried deep in a hole in the ground,
I can't make a noise, no, not even a sound.

What use am I here, standing still all day long,
when I can't even sing the simplest of song?

With a chest filled with straw and both leg stuffed with hay,
my nose is a carrot, what will Father say?
My jacket is torn and my shirt is a mess,
with both socks full of spuds, oh! the state of my dress!

My gloves do not match and my hands cannot grasp,
so I cannot perform ere the simplest of tasks.

My head is a swede and my shirt is a sack
and my trousers are torn from the front to the back!

My eyes cannot see and my tongue cannot taste
My ears cannot hear, Oh! Dear, what a waste.

As I don't have a heart, then I can't shed a tear,
So I ask of you Lord, please, why am I hear?

While I'm warmed by the sun, I'm so cold in the night,
when the mice are about and I'm filled gull of fright

I can't hold her hand, No I can't steal a kiss
I can't even smile. Oh I'm so sorry, Miss!

But I'll tell you a secret that's special to me.
My post in the ground will soon be a tree!



The Mawkin

by Christine Racher

Sarah was on holiday, her accommodation, an old country inn situated in a village called “Creeky End”. The time was late October, there was a chill in the air. The leaves crunched underfoot as she walked along the pathway. The fog started to descend all around and the wind whistled through the trees. It was getting late and darkness would soon be upon her. She needed to find her way back to the inn, but was lost, Sarah had to keep calm and not panic.

In the half light, creepy shadows start to appear. Out of the dim light and fog she could just make out what looked like a couple of people in the distance. She thought it was an odd place to be having a conversation at this time in the evening.

As she approached them she called out “Hello, I wonder if you could help me please”?

But there was no answer. The closer she got the stranger the figures looked, they were actually standing in the middle of a field. But no, they were floating! Who are they? What are they? Something bizarre is going on. Then she noticed a gate with a path leading to a spooky looking house on the hill. As Sarah approached the gate, she noticed the family name of ‘MAWKIN’, the name sounded familiar to her.

The house was in darkness, Sarah knocked on the door - no reply. She stood on the doorstep wondering what to do next. There was no signal on her mobile. In the darkness she fumbled for a torch in her bag. The torchlight was diffused in the ever thickening fog. There was a barn nearby, the door was ajar, and it creaked open as she pushed gently. Sarah entered, it was late and she was feeling tired, she laid down on some hay and immediately fell asleep. Waking the next morning, to her surprise she was surrounded by figures, which frightened her, they were hanging on shepherds crooks, she turned one around. In doing so the thing fell towards her, it had the scariest face you’ve ever seen, she was instantly startled and it fell apart as it dropped to the ground.

She scooted outside, then turned, saying “Well I never, they’re all scarecrows”.

After that revelation, she ventured over to the house.

Sarah knocked on the door, it opened, and a voice called out “Come in my dear”.

Hesitantly she entered, “Hello” said Sarah “I hope you don’t mind but I slept in your barn, you see I got lost in the forest, it was getting late and....”

But before she could say anything else the elderly lady butted in “Slow down dear, breathe now, I hope you wasn’t frightened”?

“I was a bit, but why so many”?

“We make them for the scarecrow festival”

“By the way my name is Sarah, I’m staying at Creeky End, and I think it’s the other side of the forest”.

The elderly lady laughed “You did get lost didn’t you, that village is just a mile down the road, oh and my name is Rosina Mawkin, this is my husband Albert”.

“Good day ma dear” said the old man.

Sarah felt like she had been in the house for hours and began to feel tired, Mrs Mawkin directed her back to Creeky End.

When she awoke the next morningshe was still in her outdoor clothes. When Sarah went down to breakfast she noticed a leaflet for the scarecrow festival at reception. Whilst waiting for something to eat she had a look at the details for the festival.

“No, that can’t be!” she exclaimed.

“What is it?” asked the waitress.

“It says here that Mr & Mrs Mawkin were the ones that started the scarecrow festival, and that their legacy lives on to this day”.

“Yes that’s right, it’s actually the 50th anniversary this year” replied the waitress.



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“But I met them last night”.

“No I don’t think so, maybe you read about them last night, although I have heard that strange things happen at this time of year” said the waitress.

“But everything seemed so real, I just can’t believe it, so it was just a dream” said Sarah.

Later on that day, as Sarah was leaving the village, she passed a large poster, with a photo of Mr & Mrs Mawkin and some of their scarecrows, she could have sworn that Mrs Mawkin and one of the scarecrows winked at her. Spooky! ♦



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Scarecrow

by Mary Larlham

In a field of golden corn
There stands a figure so forlorn
He stands erect upon a stake
His arms spread wide and mouth agape

This body made from soft sweet hay
Is dressed with garments brightly gay
His purpose is the birds to scare
From pecking seed if they do dare

He stares across the field of gold
A lovely sight he can't behold
And on his head an old cloth cap
Where upon a crow is sat



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Broken Promises
by Lynne Wood

‘Give it back’ Maggie wailed, ‘it’s mine. I didn’t say you could have it’

‘If you want it, you will have to come and get it,’ taunted Peter, holding the plastic carrot from Maggie’s toy grocery shop, high up in the air out of her reach. ‘We need it for our scarecrow.’

‘What’s a scarecrow?’ Sobbed five year old Maggie, interested despite her indignation.

‘You will just have to wait and see’ teased Peter, running off with the carrot and with a pair of her mothers’ tights dangling from his pocket.

‘How is it going Peter?’ Their father asked at supper later that evening.

‘We’ve finished him dad’ Peter declared triumphantly, ‘He looks quite realistic. I’m sure he’ll do the job.’

‘Excellent work!’ Their father praised, ‘We need a good scarecrow if we want to get a good crop this year. Let’s go and look.’

‘Me too, me too’ exclaimed Maggie bouncing up and down in her seat. She never held anger for long.

‘Oh no you don’t,’ said their mother firmly, ‘You’re off to bed. You can see it in the morning’

‘We’ll bring it back from the barn and sit him at the table so you can see him tomorrow at breakfast before we put him out in the field’ her father said, kissing her goodnight.

Some hours later Maggie woke up. There was nearly a full moon and it was like a lamp shining into her bedroom. She lay there looking out at the stars. She never pulled the curtains shut in her room. It wasn’t that she was afraid of the dark, she just loved looking out at the wonderful view of the open fields on which their farm stood. As she lay there imagining what it would be like to ride on a star she realised she was a bit hungry, and so crept out of bed, and made her way stealthily down the stairs. She thought her mum didn’t know about her midnight excursions, but mum always put a little tin of biscuits somewhere within Maggie’s reach. She had such a small appetite mum didn’t mind the few extra biscuits she consumed. Maggie pushed open the Kitchen door and got the shock of her little life. Sitting at the table was a really scary looking man. His eyes were nearly popping out of his head, which itself sat on a very short stubby neck surrounded by great big bulgy arms. Hand over mouth she stifled a scream but then as the moon moved round the house she realised it was just the scarecrow. Her father had kept his word and brought it in to show her.

There was enough light for Maggie to do a thorough examination. Peter was right he did look very realistic if very scary. Peter, and the twins John and James, from the cottage down the lane, had made a fine job of the scarecrow. His legs were encased in a pair of trousers, which old Joe, the twins grandfather, had finally thrown out. The legs themselves were made of straw stuffed tightly into each end and held in place with some baling twine. Maggie was sure that it was a flannelette shirt of her fathers’ that enclosed the body and arms. It was the head and face that was so weird. Two ping pong balls painted with a black dot protruded from the head and were held in place by their mothers tights which had been pulled right over the mass of straw that made the head. Maggie’s plastic carrot stuck out of a hole in the tights, giving the scarecrow a beaky nose, whilst the mouth was just a thin crayoned line marked on the nylon. Maggie decided she did not like the scarecrow very much.

‘You look a bit fierce’ she thought to herself. ‘I know what we can do,’ and pulling a chair behind her she went over to the fridge climbed carefully up onto the seat of the chair



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and opened the fridge door. Looking inside she selected one of the small round potatoes they had had for supper. Going back to the scarecrow she clambered up onto his lap and inserted her little fingers into the hole in the tights and pushed the carrot down so it lay sideways and gave the scarecrow a smiley mouth. Then she pushed the round potato into the enlarged hole to make a little button nose.

‘There, you look much nicer now’ she smiled, satisfied with her handiwork. ‘You can be my new best friend and I am going to call you Joshua’ and putting her arms around him, she gave him a cuddle and snuggling down into the warm flannel of her father’s shirt, her warm body aglow with love, she closed her eyes and started to fall asleep. At that precise moment the moon fell directly onto the scarecrow bathing them both with a pale ghostly light which imbued the scarecrow with life all of his own.

‘You’re a naughty girl Maggie’ Scolded her mother next morning, lifting her up into a hug that belied the severity of her words. ‘you’ve got so cold down here in the kitchen. Let’s get you nice and warm then we will go together to watch the men putting the scarecrow out into the field.

Whilst Maggie was being warmed and cosseted, Peter and his dad went out and sank a large wooden stake into the middle of the barley field.

‘How are we going to fix the scarecrow to this?’ Asked Peter as his father firmly patted down the earth around the stake.

‘Hmmm,’ said dad eyeing up the scarecrow dubiously. ‘I’ll have to see.’ Just then the twins came running up the lane carrying a broom and an old worn jacket of their father’s.

‘This is what you need’ they exclaimed breathlessly. They slipped the broom through the sleeves of the jacket and then stuffed the scarecrow’s arms through the outstretched sleeves buttoning up the jacket down the front. Now all we have to do is nail the broomstick to the upright stake and we’ll be done. Standing back to admire their handiwork, Peter’s dad snatched off his cap and placed it onto of the nylon encased head of the scarecrow.

‘There that finishes him off nicely’ he declared. ‘Let’s all go and get some lemonade and biscuits.’

The quartet marched off leaving the scarecrow in the hot summer sun hanging by his arms from the broomstick.

‘This is not very comfortable’ he thought and tried wriggling around to find a more comfortable position. Attracted by the movement a big black crow came swooping down and perched on the scarecrow’s hat.

‘Those eyes look nice and big and juicy’ thought the crow, ‘they will provide much nourishment for my chicks.’

‘Ouch’ said the scarecrow as the crow tapped vainly against the celluloid eye, ‘that hurts,’ and he tried to move his head away but what little neck he had, was so scrunched down into his shoulders by the weight of his body dangling from his arms that he had little room for manoeuvre.

The crow kept tapping away for a few more minutes but eventually gave up. ‘Well that was an empty promise’ he thought disconsolately as he flew off. ‘Oh thank goodness’ sighed scarecrow, ‘my eyes are so sore.’ He hung limply on the broomstick. His arms and shoulders ached agonisingly. He felt the straw in his chest and tummy sagging downwards whilst his dangling legs felt bloated and throbbed incessantly. Then he felt a tickling sensation running up from his feet to his stomach. A little harvest mouse with bright mischievous eyes had come along to investigate. The mouse nuzzled aside a bit of the jacket and slipped inside. She felt the warmth of the flannelette shirt and nibbling a little hole she started burrowing down into the straw. ‘this would make a lovely place to build my nest away from danger’ she



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thought. The scarecrow was really distressed now as bits of straw were flung here and there as she circled around inside the scarecrow's tummy. He felt his insides were being torn asunder as the mouse's claws dragged bits of his insides around. Eventually the mouse reappeared, 'You are far too scratchy' she reproved. 'and you looked so promising I am very disappointed', and she scampered off with a quick flick of her tail.

'Oh dear' sighed scarecrow forlornly, 'I was looking forward to some companionship it is so lonely stuck out in this hot field all by myself.' And he thought longingly of little Maggie who had hugged and kissed him last night. All through the long blistering hot day the scarecrow hung on his broomstick cross. His chest sunk low, contracted out of shape by the weight of his body on his arms. He could scarcely breathe and the pain in his swollen legs was more than he could bare. Throughout the afternoon he was variously attacked by birds pecking at his eyes or his potato nose. Towards afternoon a pair of herons who lived by the stream came swooping down to investigate.

'Oh no, please don't touch my eyes again' the scarecrow muttered despairingly. But instead the herons tugged at the baling twine around the scarecrow's trousers, they would use it to weave into their nest of twigs in the rushes. As the baling twine came loose, straw tumbled out onto the ground.

'Ooh that's such a relief,' thought the scarecrow as the swelling in his legs was reduced and some of the weight lifted from his arms. But his relief did not last long. As the afternoon dragged painfully by, the scarecrow heard voices in the lane alongside the field. Peter and the twins were coming home from school. They clambered over the gate into the field and there was much conspiratorial whispering and giggling. They bent down and picked something up from the ground. Something whistled past the scarecrow's head, then he felt a thunk as a flying stone caught him in the chest and thudded to the floor. For what seemed like for ever the scarecrow was bombarded with flying missiles. Stones hit him in the face, dislodged his eyes and his nose, pounded his body mercilessly.

'I say Peter,' said John, 'He's looking a bit raggedy, your dad's not going to be pleased.' Peter looked at the scarecrow aghast, he was torn and broken and no longer looked at all real. Peter felt a bit ashamed of himself. 'Oh dear, how am I going to explain this to dad.'

In the end it was not necessary for Peter to face his father, because at that moment the sky darkened, heavy drops of rain began to fall and as the boys ran off home the wind began to pick up. . All through the storm ridden night the scarecrow was slowly destroyed with bits of straw tossed carelessly, like promises, into the sky. ♦



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Love Is Blind.
by Tadpole

I wandered through the barley fields
all on a summers morn
and then at once I spied a lass
with hair like ripened corn.
“Hello my dear” I said to her
“I bid to you good day,
I wonder if you fancy
a roll within the hay.”
But she did not answer me,
just scared away the crows.
So first thing in the morning
to specsavers I will go.



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What Scarecrows are made of?

By Melitta Cullis

Well here i am standing here in the sunshine, the rain and the wind and if I last long enough I guess I could experience the snow of winter 2015

I arrived here from all over the place and my whole being has so many stories so here are a few to let you know what I am made of and just who I am...

Take a look at my trousers they belonged to Susan and she loved to run, she ran on the beach, she ran on the street, she even applied for the London marathon but that was a tough one and she didn't get a place so I hear that she ran in the Hastings marathon and did well with her time Bexhill was one of her favourite proms to run along when training.

My shirt belonged to a guy called Martin and he worked in the city quite a good job he had by all accounts... ha ha ha..... yes he was an accountantfor one of the big banks so this shirt was quite an expensive one.... cost an arm and a leg it did .. well at least a couple of arms ... and I guess that would that mean he was called a white collar worker ... well I have his collar now and a nice starched one it was when my creators were making me ... it is a bit splashed and smelly now from the cheeky black and squawking crow that was not scared by me and pooped on it the first day I was put here in the field

My scarf is.... wellquite a sad story here ...it belonged to a little lady that has now passed away ... she lived in the village all her life and this scarf was given to her by a soldier she met from the USA during the 2nd world war she sot treasured this scarf Her family didn't want any of her possessions when she died so that is how I have got it round my straw filled neck.... Sad when people don't hold memories high enough to keep even a scarf.....

My shoes well boots actually ..I heard my creators saying lets not use shoes but bootscos that way he may be more sturdy on his feet... yes I am sturdy ... how ever there will be no leaping off down the beach like Susan did in my running trousers with these boots on oh and the great big steak fixing me to the spot ...hey ho I'm destined to stand here til I fall apart I guess....

Now the flower in my button hole belonged to David it is a silk and plastic carnation the one that David used for every wedding he went to He used to film weddings for couples and so wanted to always look the part and this flower meant he was ready for any wedding he was asked to film.

Ah Yes the Jacket where my flower is displayed it belonged to a grand old man that lived in a local care home He died recently and his jacket ended up in the new local Charity shop in Pevensey Bay highstreet yes I know that is the future but I am a scarecrow and have time to dream of things to come. So yes it was destined for a charity shop but one of the members of staff at the care home knew my creators were making me and so gave them this grand old gentleman's jacket and I do feel very proud wearing it ... He was a man of great faith and attended the local church and this was his Sunday jacket... No one knows this but there is a church song sheet in the inside pocket and I just wish my arms would bend so I could take it out and have a sing while the cats away the mice will play ... or while birds are on the wing the scarecrow will sing

Now here's the thing I have given my reader permission to tell you about one other item I am made of but you the listeners have to suggest the item so here is one of the suggestions that you came up with earlier and she will now attempt to ad lib the story of that item. ♦



The Scarecrow

by Jill Parker

The Keane boys said I'd be cursed
by the loathsome thing just for looking.
Each dreaded journey home from school
had me running in terror past their farm,
head down, pretending not to notice
the demonic clown face spooking me
from the field; ragged arms ready to grab.

On moving up a year, everything changed
and I strode defiantly along the lane to look,
but only a scrawny scarecrow now remained
where the bogeyman once lurked.
I jeered at his ludicrous striped pyjamas; threw
a stone at his head in revenge for my foolishness.
A tangle of straw had been pecked
from a wound in the neck - even birds knew.



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Old Bert Figures it Out
by Marylyn Palmer

Old Bert was Farmer Bill's best worker.

The Farm hand, characteristically thin was dressed in the Farmers old and tattered discards of trousers and checked shirt. A brown floppy-brimmed hat donated by Farmer Bill's Wife perched atop his sack head. On which his facial features; black blobs for eyes and lop-sided smile had been painted by the couples ten-year-old son. And although not attractive to look at and despite his appearance being neither frightening or threatening either, he still managed to do a splendid job off living up to his nickname by scaring the crows - and their seed-eating cousins - from Farmer Bill's precious crops.

Although Bert took pride in his job, and revelled in Farmer Bill's praise that he was 'The best Scarecrow a Farmer could have,' his role was not an easy one. To begin with he found it very tiring standing on his feet all day and holding his arm straight out to the side. And although useful at times, the wooden cross-shaped prop shoved down his back and along his arms, often dug uncomfortably into him.

Another thing he found hard to tolerate was having no respite from his duty or shelter, and was forced to endure all types of weather; wind, rain, fog, and sun beating down on him. He especially disliked the rain, when his straw body was sodden to the core and became heavy and cold. Or when the snow settled on his rangy frame then melted, icy water dripping off the brim of hat, through his clothing, making him shiver.

Today though, at the beginning of the summer with a warm burst of sunshine and a cloudless sky, the weather was not to blame for his unhappiness. Nor was the unbending wooden stake that he was speared on causing him any significant pain. Today on this morning Friday the 5 June 2015 the same thing that he had suffered almost from the first day of his existence 5 months ago, was making him miserable. It was the fact that for the last 22 weeks and 2 days Old Bert was doing his task as bird scarer too well, and he was lonely.

He stared sightlessly into the distance over the expanse of the field, as he had done for his all of his 156 days, thinking how he could somehow attract the birds for company, without them picnicking on the Farmer's crops. Deep in thought, he didn't see the squirrel until he felt a pressure on his shoulder and turned to see the small furry animal. For a moment, he was dumbstruck at the sight of the creature. For this was the first and only animal that had dared to come into the field, let alone use him as a seat in all his 3744 hours as Sentinal.

He watched mesmerised as the squirrel nibbled on an acorn, which it held firmly in its little paws. After a short while, the bushy-tailed rodent looked up from his snack and noticed Old Bert observing him.

'Hello there, nice day isn't it,' he said in a friendly manner.

'Well yes it is,' Old Bert replied. 'Excuse me if I am staring, but you are the first creature I have seen, let alone spoken to, for 224.640 minutes.'

'I've only just moved into area,' the Squirrel said. 'I thought it was rather quiet here.' He took a quick bite of his nut. 'You must have been rather bored to have worked out the exact time you have been here.'

Old Bert sighed. 'Well I've not had much else to do. I'm a Scarecrow – as you see – and done my job - frightened off every living creature. So I've been all on my own since I began work here - 13,478,400 seconds ago.'

The squirrel twitched his nose. 'Well I've seen the birds you've got rid of. They are in the gardens on the other side of those trees. The people are happy to feed them. They fill up Bird Feeders with seeds and nuts and the birds gorge themselves silly on them. I pop in now and then and pinch a few nuts for myself.'



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‘But you are here now. You’re not scared of me. Why is that.’

‘Well nothing really frightens me,’ he said proudly.

‘Does that mean you will start munching on Farmer Bills crops. If you do, I might lose my job. I know I am lonely, but I don’t want to be jobless. He trembled, Or worse still, be used as a Guy and thrown on the bonfire on the 5th of November.’

‘No fear,’ the little Rodent assured him. ‘You’ll keep your job. I have my own stack of nuts squirreled away. I’m not interested in a bit of old wheat. Anyway it’s been good chatting to you, but I must be off now, the Mrs will be wondering where I have got to.’ He scampered down Old Bert’s side and jumped to the ground, dashing across the field toward a clump of trees.

‘Come back again soon,’ Bert called after him, ‘and bring your friends and family too.’

He watched the Squirrel disappear among the foliage thinking over their conversation and suddenly a brilliant plan popped into his straw brain. He would get the Squirrel and his friends to make him into a Bird Feeder. That way he could attract the birds, make lots of new friends, without the fear of them decimating Farmer Bill’s crops. And that’s what happened.

The Squirrel and his army gathered seeds from the people’s gardens – using their cheek pouches as carrier bags. Delivered them to Old Bert and stuffed them into his straw body. And almost straight away the birds flocked to partake in the tasty feast. Then sated, they spent time chatting with Old Bert, before flying off in search of the next meal.

After a few days though, the Squirrel arrived alone.

‘I’m sorry,’ he said, when Old Bert asked where the other were. We are calling a halt to our mission. I am afraid it is all getting too much for us. We’re spending so much time gathering bird food for you that we’re left with no time forage for our, precious acorns. Besides which a number of our ladies have given or are about to give birth, so the males are needed at home would be needed at home.

Old Bert was disappointed, but said he understood and was very grateful for the Squirrels help and the fact the that the Squirrel promised to visit him now and again.

Left alone, Old Bert pondered on his lonely life. It has been nice to be surrounded by friends, the never-ending monotony of the days taken away by their chatter and amusing stories. But now it was back to normal, he would just go back to being a lonely old pile of soggy hay and tattered clothing. His bent in resignation,

The sound of a tractor rumbling over the fields towards he, made him look up. Aboard the vehicle were the Farmer and his kin. A sinking feeling ran through his body as it dawned on him that the family had seen the flocks of birds and the numerous squirrels in the field and had assumed they were after the crops. To them it must seem as if he wasn’t doing his job properly anymore. And it was obvious they were here to relieve him of his post. He was to be pulled apart and discarded.

He drew in a deep breath as they approached waiting for them to rip him from his wooden support, strip him of his attire and dump what was left of him in the field, to rot. Then he noticed them lugging a large sack towards him and was astounded when they began taking handfuls of seeds from it and shoving them inside him. Shocked he listened to their conversation as they went about their work, piling more seeds into his innards and under is hat.

As the three of them chatted, he learnt that, unbeknown to Old Bert, the farmer and his family had been watching the comings and goings from their farmhouse, taking turns to peer through binoculars. They had delighted in watching the Squirrels scampering back and forth over the field, through the trees and back again to visit Old Bert and hide their seeds in his frame. And were enchanted by seeing the birds flock to perch on his outstretched arms



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and on his hat. The family convinced that the Straw Man and the birds were enjoying a good old natter. They realised that by having something else to eat, the birds were not interested in the crops and were all disappointed when the wild life entertainment came to a stop. The wife had apparently commented that the Scarecrow's body looked, as if it had slumped down and had noticed his head dropping forward, to stare at the dejectedly at the ground.

He learnt how they decided on a plan of action, bagging up a huge mound of wheat seeds from their stores so they could fill Old Bert to the brim and turn him into a permanent giant bird feeder.

At now they had succeeded. They had stuffed as much seeds as they could in between Old Bert's stalked form, until the thin Old Man was double in size, trousers tight round his waist, taut across his body, shirt buttons threatening to pop off. Then with a pat on the back from the Farmer, a hug from the son and a straightening of the body by the wife, they hopped into their tractor and made their way back to the farmhouse.

From that day onwards, with the Farmer and his family constantly refilling him with tasty seeds, there was no more counting the months, years, days, hours, minutes or seconds for Old Bert. Yes he still got tired at times and hated getting cold and wet, but he was able to put up with that all more easily now. His life was so much better. He had friends galore to cheer him up he was never lonely and as Farmer Bill continued to tell him, he was 'The best Scarecrow a Farmer could have.' ♦