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Raymond Deckys
Susan P Branch



AN AUSTRALIAN WINTER'S TALE

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COLD INNIT

Geoffrey Gaskill

It wasn't cold here like the old country.

He'd read the poster about coming to Sunny Australia but all he found was another kind of chill.

He arrived on the winter solstice and a dour Customs man stamped his passport. 'Cold innit?'

The words, *You don't know what cold is*, sprang to his lips. Instead, he nodded. 'Yes, cold.'

MORNING SURF

Jacinta Orillo

Beneath a hazy winter's sky, the keen surfers gather at the lookout. The surf below them peeled to the left in lazy tubes.

They stomp their feet, blowing into their hands.

'It's like glass', one exclaims.

As the others trudge back to suit up one of them turns; something had caught his eye.

Water spray, followed by a fin. Whales.

BOARDING IN JINDABYNE

K E Barden

Ice prickles her skin, biting her cheek like a kiss from jack frost. In the Snowy Mountain's breeze, she is warm, alive. Her heart thrums, her boots lined in wool. The snowboard

is her anchor, her courage. The timer goes and she is free. She sails through hail, wind and ice. Until she crosses that red line, and wins.

DOG GONE

Guenter Sahr

Been coping with winters of discontent for nine long years. Black dog come slinking down my street, come to my house, into my front yard. Black dog snuffles along the brick course of my house, back and forth, back and forth in the moonlight leaving pawprints dark in the hoare frost. Since May 21 that dog be gone.



Black Dog, by Rau Illustration
rauillustration.co.uk

ONE DAY AT A TIME

Allan Barden

Is grief comparable to a cold, bleak winter? At least an Australian winter passes to another brighter season and some relief.

Perhaps exercise, an enjoyable book or movie, a holiday or a fine wine can help one alleviate grief for a while, but it is never really overcome.

It's just one day at a time.

WEATHERING HEIGHTS

Raymond Deckys

Summer was content. She was a seasonal creature and didn't mind sharing with her three sisters. She loved partnering with Spring, but the yearly trek could sometimes get a bit treacherous. Autumn was testy because winter arrived early. She overtook on a narrow winding road. A horrid screeching sound. Just then the weather fell off a cliff.

WINTER SOLSTICE

Kevin Drum

Sunrise, watery and struggling, maybe, before I awake. The early-morning mists, rise from rain-soaked land. Bare-boned trees humming like muted cellos.

Vibrant bottle-brush, golden wattles, bird-beckoning. Turned up collars, gloved hands and beanies.

Thermometers struggling to reach mid-teens, giving up.

Glowing-hot heaters, curled cats and soft slippers.

Then as sudden as an exclamation mark, darkness once more.

BEACH BABY

Ian Stewart

Don't leave the baby on a Bohemian beach, or any other beach, for that matter. When Shakespeare's Antigonus did this a bear got him. If he'd done it in Australia, it would have been a 'drop bear'. And if Crocodile Dundee had done it, he would have had to face a croc. Babies belong at home.

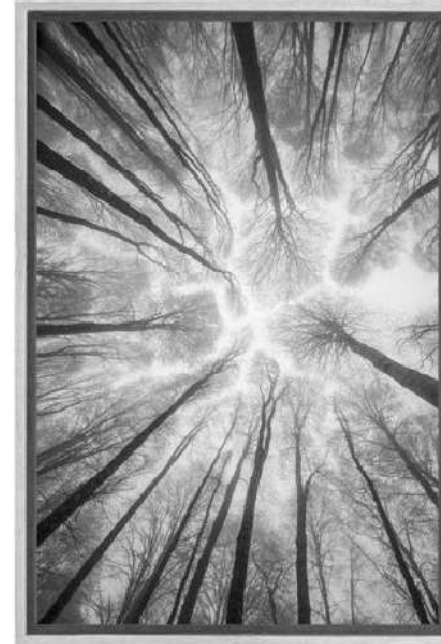
THE REUNION CUP

Jenny Macaulay

Leon, momentarily mesmerised by the kelpie's eyes, glanced up at the young woman who held the cup. Winter Solstice Sheepdog Trials. Her features were uncomfortably familiar.

'I named her after my mother, Hermione,' she said. 'She died shortly after I was born.'

'So, your father raised you?' he asked, biting his lip in uncertain expectation.



THE GOLD AND THE GREY

Giselle Sim

Rain mists the air and carries the smell of dirt and smoke.

A scene belonging to a realm of ghosts.

Fields of gold and blood in the dirt. Tries to be family fun, glittered with lights.

The gold still hides under the abused soil.

Grey smoke and mist tell the same story.

Only the trees live as witness.

PLOVER ON HER NEST

Krishnaleela

so vulnerable it seems
you
sitting there
cold rains
morning frost
there's no protection
but undisturbed you wait ...
trucks and cars
too close
why did you choose this place?

so trusting it seems
you
guided by a different Song
and he too
never far
you are so protected
in humility you wait ...
earth below
sky above
this place is perfect!

A COLLINGWOOD WINTER

Michael Cains

There was never snow or frost in those filthy Collingwood alleyways. Clothing layers added to whatever she was wearing kept the cold at bay. Her prized overcoat, t-shirts, sweaters and track-suits, never removed in the years she had lived on the streets. It wasn't the cold but the wind and the driving rain that stung her most. And the indifference.

HAPPY

Fern Smith

He roofed houses between Bega and Bermagui. Summer surfing with family. His children and granddaughter adored him. He was the level playing field between the quarrelsome. The happy soul at the back of family photos.

One bitter winter day, wife and daughter found him with twine pulled tight against his skin, staring out to sea.

A LONELY AUSTRALIAN WINTER

Kevin Drum

A musty locked-up room, childhood memories and empty bed, dank and mildewed, like yesterday's ambitions, unfulfilled and forgotten. Downstairs they wait, guarding a

now-empty nest, from what? The old wall telephone jangles. 'Reverse-charge call from Ibiza, do you accept?'

'Hi mum the weathers great here, it's summer solstice and its party party. Please send some money? Love you.'

A CROSSFIT WINTER

Allan Barden

Winter is here. It's cold and wet as he prepares for his CrossFit class. In class he works hard to keep warm with wall balls, kettle ball swings, pushups, and other taxing activities. Soon he's hot and longs for cool comfort.

CrossFit completed he ventures into the outside world. It's cold and wet. Winter is still here. He is cool.

TRUFFLES

Dana Broekhuizen

Muffling, snuffling, truffling
Muddy noses in the dirt
The hunt is on.
The dogs are loose.
I never went to the South of France.
Black gold can be found here too-
Fragrant diamonds in the mud
Collections snuggled in a woven basket
Grated over too-melted butter and bread
Above cosy toasty soup
Bellies are cosy toasty full and fed.

A QUEENSLAND WINTER

Michael Cains

They hated winter. Retirement loomed and Coolangatta beckoned. They headed north, joining the escaping throng of likeminded Victorians heading to where they holidayed in Winters' past, relaxing on cloudless warm days, never cold. Into a new house, leaving Winter behind.

They didn't count on the heat and dripping humidity of those Queensland summers!
A small price to pay, they thought.

WINTER BLUES

Kevin Drum

His mood matched the winter weather, dark and foreboding as he stared out of the train window. He hunched into his collar, hands deep in pockets, sullen, self-obsessed, dreading the walk home from the station.
He opened the front door, and the warmth and cooking odours washed over him. 'Welcome home honey, we're having your favourite tonight, a Tom Cruise.'

GUITAR WINTER BLUES

Allan Barden

Learning guitar is frustrating. Is he too old to learn?
He's been told that to think old means you are old and learning a

new skill when ageing benefits the mind, body and spirit.
It is another bleak winter's day. An opportunity to try again. He strums some folksy notes. Sounds good. He'll keep at it.
Thanks bleak winter's day.

THE TALE OF THE TAIL OF AN AUSTRALIAN DOG IN WINTER

Claudia Collins

'Hi! I'm George. Nice to meet you. I have a pet human—quite well trained, but when we go 'walkies' she needs a leash in case she gets lost. She made me a tartan coat to wear in winter. A kind thought, but my tail hangs out. Brrr! You can tell that coat was not designed by a dog!'



Winter Birch Tree, by Jenna

BUSH WINTER

Susan P Branch

Blue, green and ochre coloured gum leaves shivered in the icy wind as snowflakes drifted silently from cloudy, grey skies. A flash of multicoloured feathers peeked out of the tree trunk hollow, then quickly retreated into the warmth inside, while below, an echidna probed hungrily for ants in the leaf litter with its elongated sticky tongue.

COLD WINTER

Dana Broekhuizen

Drops of cold, whistling wind
Across metal tram lines
Right, left, right, step out
Dodging umbrella spikes.
Miserable Melbourne weather,
I scold.
Wrapped up in my winter woolly coat
I almost trip over them
Burrowed tight into a shop front
A sign, his dog, a sleeping bag
Winter seems especially cold this year.

A WINTER'S CAR TALE

Karen Lamb

I crunch my way to the car and dash a jugful of water onto the windscreen, jumping backwards to avoid the penance of damp, then freezing clothes. I pull a sleeve over

my hand and grab the door handle. Alas—frozen shut—and the windscreen refrozen now too. Grabbing the jug, I re-enter the house for round two.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

Geoffrey Gaskill

They knew it was not the midsummer night's dream of their imagination. More like a winter's tale.

By the twelfth night, the tempest still howled. 'Much ado about nothing,' they agreed. 'All love's labour,' Lady Macbeth wailed, 'is lost!' 'How could it ever be,' Hamlet agreed, 'as we like it?' Eloping had been a comedy of errors.

HOMELESS

Kevin Drum

Under a bridge the freezing winter winds and pelting rain, cold, probing, bone-chilling. My companion edges close, sharing. Alone without kin or kind we live in solitary existence. Then, an apparition soaked and dripping. A soothing voice and the proffered hand of compassion. 'Here, some hot soup matey, and a meaty treat for your friend. We understand.'

THE OUTSIDER

Kerstin Lindros

Chants ring through the park. Lanterns and twirling flames cast their heart-warming glow. People's hearts beat as one to the rhythm of the drums. Children rub hands by the fire, then join their parents at a bench. From a safe distance, the owner of the plastic-covered bundle stowed underneath watches and waits until all the magic has died down.

NIL PERDITA

Adrian Brookes

With an ursine growl Guenter says they've barred us from our regular table at the Box Office Café because someone's filming. We're exiled to the outer section, where a Bohemian wind howls and sleet batters the awning. Perhaps we should simply exit, pursued by a bear? No! We hunker down and compose our winter's tales.

TO EXPLAIN OR NOT TO EXPLAIN

Allan Barden

'Will you be going north this winter to visit family?'
'Yes, maybe,' he says.
'What are your kids doing?'
He thinks of both children. But he omits one. Does he explain this omission or let it pass?

'How many kids do you have?' Does he say, *one* or *two*? He usually says *two*. Sometimes he explains.

NEW SENSATION

David Bridge

Tonight on Ozflix, *Bear King*: Spurned heiress turned jillaroo, Perdi, with her fugitive catfishing lover, Flori, discovers her estranged father, reformed gang leader Leo Leontes, abandoned her and left her mother, Hermi, for dead because of a love triangle gone wrong. Will Leo's Hillsong repentance win her back and save Hermi from her secret struggle as a living statue?



Winter frosty leaves, by Kateryna Bilokur