

# WORDPLAY

## Writers' Forum

Intelligent, Interesting, Informative, Inspirational

Ezine, Issue 11, December 6th 2010

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[www.wordplaywriters.com](http://www.wordplaywriters.com)

## CRACKERS FOR CHRISTMAS!

WordPlay comes to the end of its first year, and what a year it has been. Membership continues to grow month on month both locally and globally, through our e-membership option. Our sole purpose of encouraging writers to write and then getting them read has been more than fulfilled, above and beyond this publication. The ezine's sister publication, 'The Story behind the Story', is being readied for its first issue in January, and we are now calling for submissions for the second issue due in April 2011. WordPlay is now regularly mentioned in publications such as Writers' Forum, and Writers' News. This month we have had an article featuring five of our members printed in another national magazine aimed at writers, 'Self Publishing Magazine'. The world of WordPlay, and the services and activities we offer for writers around the world, are now recognised as being synonymous with quality and affordability. Throughout our first year, we have added to our service

provision in line with the needs and requirements of writers of the English language around the world. We now not only provide what we believe is the most comprehensive package of services for writers available today, but also offer discounts (on already highly competitive pricing) to our members that puts perfecting writing skills and work within reach of all pockets. Whilst we are talking about our services, we have developed a number of e-courses for new and established writers that will be released in January 2011. Keep an eye on our website for further news. Our thanks, as ever, to everyone who has supported our efforts. If you fancy doing something a little different, why not follow member John Edwards' lead and hold a night of poetry, storytelling and frivolity? Inside, read his account of a recent

'Open Mic' night he put together, and which was supported by WordPlay – including readings from ten of our members, amongst other local writers. He plans another for January. For all authors (WordPlay members or not), we have now launched our unique online bookshop, where book readers can buy signed copies of any of the books for sale. And unlike many other online booksellers, our marketing and sales facility is free to all authors. This being the festive season the main theme of this issue is Christmas – but given the 'breaking news' some space has been reserved to our own single page 'cut and paste' souvenir Royal Wedding tribute. Talking of Christmas why not buy any writing friends of yours one of our membership deals. It beats socks! Whatever you do, enjoy – and keep writing. Michael and Ian

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WORDPLAY

Writers' Forum

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How our internal competition works:

Any genre of writing is allowed.

The maximum length of work is 1,000 words of prose, or 40 lines of poetry.

Entries are judged by all the members of WordPlay, on an anonymous basis, so the winner is the piece most enjoyed by readers of writing.



## THE WORDPLAY INTERNAL WRITING COMPETITION JOINT WINNER

Theme: Christmas

### A NEW BEGINNING by JOY LENNICK

'A centimo for them?' David searched Cassandra's face for a reaction. 'Sorry?' Too busy nervously twisting a strand of her hair (the colour of polished chestnuts, he thought) behind an ear, Cassandra didn't hear him. How could this newly introduced acquaintance of hers know that he was her first 'date' for thirty years? . This was a mistake...She felt as gauche as a teenager; shouldn't have let her friend, Josie, talk her into it. "Oh, but he's such a sweet guy, Cass. He's had a rough deal too. He's only going to buy you tapas and a drink, for goodness sake. He's not inviting you into a den of iniquity. Well, not just yet...". She giggled, adding: "I should be so lucky". And so Cassandra had reluctantly agreed and the three of them had enjoyed *tapa al fresco* outside a café near the sheet fountain in Torrevieja. While hesitant, Cassandra soon warmed to the "genuine guy" as Josie had described him. As planned, after coffee, Josie left them having "Forgotten another appointment!" which left Cassandra temporarily tongue-tied. David had saved the awkward moment by suggesting a walk. 'Your thoughts...a centimo for them,' David repeated. 'Or I could up the stakes to a euro?' he teased. Cassandra's face eased into a smile. 'That's better. Look, if it's any comfort to you, I'm not feeling exactly relaxed myself. After all, you're my first date for fifteen years. How about that?' 'Oh, I can top that, David,' (he thought her voice velvety, not shrill like Veronica's had become over the years.) 'I haven't been out with another man since my darling husband of thirty years left me for his silicon breasted, blonde secretary. Such a cliché, eh; about a year ago. Please don't say you're sorry. I've been sorry enough for myself. But I came to realise, courtesy Josie, that life continues as it should and that there are more desirable places to live than Ilford. It was a good place to live when I was a child but has changed beyond all recognition. What about you? Where do you hail from? Josie said that you have been travelling for a while.' 'Yes, I have: Peru and India...A restless soul was I! Other than that my history's a bit boring,' he grimaced. 'You should let me be the judge of that. But I'm an absolute sponge when it comes to travel stories.' 'I'll get the boring bits out of the way first, eh?' He had a disarming grin, she decided. 'Apparently, I was an obnoxious, only child. Mother gave me away to a band of gypsies. Unfortunately for her, they sent me back.,' Cassandra giggled. She did like a man with a sense of humour. 'I was born in Bournemouth. Do you really want to know more?' 'Yes. Fire away.' 'Father wanted me to literally follow in his footsteps. He was a high wire walker in a circus, but I had no head for heights.' 'Pull the other one...' Cassandra looked incredulous. 'I'm deadly serious. I became an accountant instead. Then I met Emma. Wham! She was really special. We married, but she died from a brain haemorrhage before she was thirty-five.' 'Oh, I'm so sorry.' Cassandra reached out and gently touched his nearest arm. 'Me too...' he sighed, continuing: '..And then, five years later, Veronica stepped into the breach. A bad move as it turned out. You know the scenario – lonely man meets attractive, manipulative, but shallow woman. A deadly cocktail! Fortunately, we never married. Apart from shooting the rapids, cutting a disc –forget Sinatra – and climbing Mount Everest, that's about it.' Cassandra's reaction pleased him, while she was asking herself why Josie hadn't introduced them sooner. 'Now, more of your history, Cassan...' She interjected. ' Oh, please call me Cassie: Cassandra is such a mouthful.' 'Quite an eyeful too,' thought David, taking in her green eyes and ample, pleasing figure, whilst Cassie was thinking 'Hovering on the brink of handsome, late fifties perhaps.' She liked his soft brown, greying hair; thought he could do with a bit of exercise (pouring over those accounts.) and was wowed by his eyes. They were the same shade as the sky. Cobalt? Periwinkle? And mischievous to boot.' She suddenly felt light hearted. 'I was also an only child. Sadly Dad died young in a riding accident and Mum never fully recovered from the shock. I became a graphic artist; married first time round far too young. It only lasted a year, but fortunately we were blessed with a daughter, Louise, who is a speech therapist, is happily married and has two gorgeous children. Douglas was ex military and is doubtless

colour-filing his sock drawer as we speak!

2.

He inspected every room after I cleaned it. I like a house to be a home, don't you?' 'Indeed I do!' David said with feeling, picturing the breakfast debris in his sink and the three pair of shoes peeping from beneath his bed. 'Why did you choose Torrevieja?' he asked, by now intrigued by the woman before him. 'Serendipity really. A friend mentioned she'd holidayed here. I came, saw and was conquered. Especially after I met Josie and she put the screws on.... By the way, whereabouts do you live?' 'In Josie's apartment block.' He treated her to another smile, melting any lurking inhibitions. 'Oh, I didn't realise. The plot thickens...' They sat on a convenient bench, and listened to a couple of warring seagulls shrieking overhead, while a playful breeze tinkered with the boats' rigging in the harbour. They discussed the pleasing new walkway, their fondness for the elegant La Plaza de la Constitucion, displeasing graffiti, and where Cassie lived. They watched – mindful of their growing friendship. - the Christmas lights come on near the Casino and when David said: 'We mustn't miss seeing the Nativity scene in the plaza,' Cassie thrilled at his plurality, couldn't believe they had only met a few hours before and wondered....'

## **CASH PRIZE SHORT STORY COMPETITION**

**NEXT CLOSING DATE 25TH FEBRUARY 2011**

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### **Second Prize**

**£25**

**WordPlay Writing Accreditation**

**Entries judged by judging panel,  
more details at**

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# WHAT ARE YOU READING?

Our members review their latest read.



## 61 HOURS by LEE CHILD

Lee Child is one of my favourite authors, and so I found it impossible to resist buying the first copy of '61 hours' that I came across. His hero, Jack Reacher, is the coolest hero you will come across in any modern day thriller series.

This tale starts when a bus crashes in a fierce blizzard in the middle of South Dakota. Reacher, the youngest of the bus's occupants, finds himself in the midst of a deadly confrontation in a town called Bolton. One brave woman is following her principles and fighting for justice. There's a cold blooded assassin on his way to make sure she fails in her mission. To live long enough to testify against the bad men, she's going to need Reacher's help. But to do so, Reacher will have to take on enemies who have more strength than he could ever imagine.

The next sixty one hours after the bus comes to a dangerous halt will define Reacher's future existence.

This book hits the mark spot on, though I have to say that Reacher is more brutal than in any other that has gone before. He metes out justice as only he can, and Child's unique style of writing in short sharp sentences keeps the tempo moving in Reacheresque fashion. Superb.

**Michael Barton**

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# TON UP!

Let off steam in 100 words....

**At this time of year, we think it inappropriate to print any bah humbug rants....but we really couldn't resist!**

Christmas comes but once a year. Thank goodness for that. The main problem is that it starts in late August and drags on until early January – so it lasts almost a whole year.

The dilemmas. Will Jake send me a card? I can barely remember who Jake is. Have I sent him one just in case?

Then there are the presents. Once you reach a certain age both you and your friends and family have surely got all that you want or need. So, you buy them something bland and unwanted, and quite possibly receive it in return, utterly forgotten, next year. For the really special ones in your life you resort to credit card extravagance – well you don't want to appear cheap, after all.

But, Xmas is for kids. Those'll be the kids you lie to for as long as you can. 'Yes, Rudolph really enjoyed the carrot you left out for him'. By the age of ten most kids have got every gizmo going. Reach for that credit card again.

And then we eat – hugely – things that would ordinarily not pass our lips. Turkey. Does anyone choose this dry meat at any other time?

Still if you are a traditionalist and bother with a proper one, you can while away the dark days of the next few months Hoovering up pine needles.

Fear not, Easter will soon be upon us. It starts in the second week of January.

Ian Alexander



## THE WORDPLAY INTERNAL WRITING COMPETITION JOINT WINNER

Theme: Christmas

### TEA WITH MR CHRISTOPHER by MICHAEL BARTON

Its early afternoon on Christmas Eve, and the door bell rings. I run and jump into the arms of the man dressed like Father Christmas. He used to bring two sacks. One for me, and one for Jack. Jack's my big brother, but he went away two years ago. He used to cough a lot and, in bed, he breathed funny. It sounded like coins rattling in your pocket. Daddy told me that Jack went to play in heaven. He said we would see him again soon.. But Father Christmas only brings one sack now, so I don't think Jack's coming home. I miss him. Jack told me that Father Christmas is really Daddy. I think Daddy knows that Jack isn't coming home, too. Mummy cries some mornings, when she is looking at a picture of Jack on his bike. When she cries I cuddle her, and she cuddles me back. Then she stops crying. I've got Jack's bike now. When I ride it, I pretend that Jack is on it too. Mummy laughs when she sees me jump into Daddy's arms. His red coat is thick and furry. His hat's got a bell on it. He tickles me, and I start laughing. Then he takes my presents and puts them around the tree for the morning. He leaves, saying he has to visit other children. Five minutes later he comes back as Daddy, dressed in his work clothes. Soon he'll take me to the shops, to buy Mummy a present. I want to get her some perfume. It makes her smell like flowers. After we have been into the shop, we walk back to the car park. We haven't done our good turn for Christmas yet, and Daddy says I can choose. It should be Jack's turn because I picked last year, when we took some turkeys to a big house where old people live. On the corner of the street, there's an old man dressed in dirty clothes. He's got a grey beard like a wizard. A bit of cardboard hangs around his neck, with writing on it. I ask Daddy what it says. "'Cold and hungry, please help",' he tells me. I pull on his hand and he comes down to me so I can whisper in his ear. 'Hasn't he got a Mummy or a Daddy?' Daddy shakes his head. 'What about a brother? Do you think his brother is playing in heaven, with Jack?' I ask. Dad swallows hard, like he always does when I say Jack's name. I stand there for a moment, and then I ask Dad another question. 'Can we take him home, for dinner, for our good deed. For Christmas' I say. 'Jack would think it's a good idea, if he was with us.' I ask the old man his name. 'My name? You can call me Christopher.' Fifteen minutes later, I'm sitting at the dining room table with Mr Christopher opposite, playing with his beard and smiling. I can hear Mummy and Daddy arguing in the living room. I don't think Mummy's happy. Suddenly it goes quiet, and Mummy comes into the dining room. She looks at the Mr Christopher. 'You must be James's Mum,' he says, holding out his hand. 'It's a great pleasure to meet you. I must say your son is a credit to you. As is that exquisite smell coming from the kitchen.' He sniffs the air, and with a big grin he says 'I've always been partial to home made sausage rolls, and,' he sniffs again, 'warm mince pies.' Mummy smiles, and shakes his hand. Then she calls out to Daddy. 'John, can you take our guest upstairs and find him some clean clothes?' At the dinner table, Mummy has put out some Christmas crackers and wine. There is a big plate of sausage rolls, some crusty bread with cheese, and mince pies with thick cream. Mummy and Daddy sit at each end. Mr Christopher is wearing Daddy's favourite fluffy red dressing gown. With every mouthful, Mr Christopher seems to get fatter. His face gets redder, and his beard gets whiter. I start laughing, even though Mummy and Daddy are very quiet. 'You look like Father Christmas!' I shout. He laughs, long and loud. For a few seconds the room is filled with the sound of his big, deep laughter. 'If I was Father Christmas, what would you ask me for?' Mr Christopher replies. 'Please, don't tease my son' Mummy says. 'Tease him?' Mr Christopher says, before peering at me from over the rim of his round glasses. 'Do you mean to tell me that this innocent young boy is a non believer?' 'No, no! I know that Father Christmas is real!' I say, looking at Daddy, and then Mummy. They both sit quiet, and I tell Mr Christopher what I would like for Christmas. 'I want Jack to come home. So I can show him how I can ride his bike now.' Mummy starts crying, and Mister Christopher puts her hand in his and says 'Christmas is a time when the very strangest of things happen. 'Now, I really must be on my way. You have plenty of things to do before tomorrow. Thank you for your hospitality, and a most delightful meal,' he says, picking up the last sausage roll before leaving the room and disappearing down the garden path, still wearing Daddy's fluffy red dressing gown. Mummy and Daddy just sit, wide mouthed and unable to speak. On Christmas morning, I am first up. I am sitting in the living room, when Mummy and Daddy come in. 'Can I open my presents now?' I ask, jumping up and down. My Daddy smiles a big grin, and then says to me 'Your Mummy and I have got some good news.' He touches Mummy's tummy and gives me my best Christmas present ever. 'You're going to have a little brother soon.'

## ALTERNATIVE RECIPES

Food...one of the highlights of the Festive season?

### CHRISTMAS CAKE

You will need the following:

1 cup water; 1 cup butter; 2 tsp. baking soda; 1 cup white sugar; 1 cup brown sugar; 4 large eggs; lemon juice; 2 cups dried fruit; nuts; 2 tsp. Salt; 1 FULL bottle of your favourite whisky.

Sample the whisky to check for quality. Take a large bowl. Check whisky again to be sure it is of the highest quality possible. Pour one level cup and drink. Turn on electric mixer. Beat 1 cup of butter in a large fluffy bowl. Add 1 tsp. sugar and beat again. Make sure the whisky is still OK. Try another tup. Turn off the mixer. Break two legs and add to the bowl and chuck in the cup of dried fruit. Mix on the turner. If the fried fruit gets stuck in the beaters pry it loose with screwdriver. Sample whisky for tonsisticity. Next shift two cups of salt or something. Who cares? Check whisky again. Now sit the lemon juice and shtrain your nuts. Add one table Shpoon of sugar or shomething. Whatever you can find. Grease the oven. Turn the cake to 350 degrees. Don't forget to beat the turner. Throw the bowl out of the window. Check the whisky once more. GO to bed. Who the heck likes fruit cake any-way???!!!

**Joy Lennick**

### A MAN'S CHRISTMAS FEAST

Microwave anything you have left in the freezer, add booze.

**Ian Alexander**

***An email sent by Maureen Moss to her ex-husband when he was desperate enough to ask her to return to the UK to cook Christmas dinner for him and their children.***

Warning! The sender of this email takes no responsibility for the outcome of any advice contained herein. Moreover, any damage – temporary or permanent – to the health of anyone whatsoever as a result of consuming or regurgitating any product contained herein, in whatever quantity, at whatever time, wherever and however or with whomever will be the responsibility of that person or animal. If there is anything else the sender of this email has missed out she now declares herself irresponsible and therefore immune from prosecution as a result of anything she has ever said or done in this life or the past, or the next.

**Essential – Xmas won't happen without:**

White wine –lots - suitable for smoked salmon starter

Red wine for turkey – lots - I guess you won't need much coaching around what alcohol to buy but if unsure, please ask, I'd be delighted to help

Tawny port for the chef -might consider sharing with another person if sufficiently flattered

Vast quantities of whatever other booze you want (I like Baileys)

**Quite important**

Turkey – about 5kg? Ask a female friend. Giblets included preferably. Can be fresh or frozen, but if I'm cooking it I want a proper turkey not those shitty ready sliced, stuffed or whatever boneless jobbies

Xmas pud – the richer the better, see disclaimer above

Half bottle brandy

Either: ready made brandy butter – not a patch on home made

Or: packet icing sugar + Lurpak or other unsalted butter

Cream or ready made custard for those greedy enough to have both or those who don't like brandy butter

Packet mince pies (Marks n Sparks?) for when no-one should eat again for at least six months but someone is just pushing herself to her limits

125g / 4oz frozen or fresh cocktail sausages – as last resort, chipolatas will do but more work for the chef cutting the bloody things up small, then the meat squeezes out of the cut end, goes hard and sticks to the base of the pan which then takes even longer to soak and clean than usual

125g/4oz streaky bacon

250g/8oz smoked back bacon – preferably rindless & fat free if poss – for amazing stuffing with brandy and breadcrumbs

Packet bread sauce mix

Jar cranberry sauce

Packet dried apricots

Fresh parsley

Tin plain chestnuts – sweet ones will considerably alter the gastronomic experience but let's not be picky

Tin cooked apples or 250g/half pound frozen sliced apples or as last resort 2 med cooking apples which will be more work for an already overworked chef bladibladibla

500g/1lb sausage meat (you can get it frozen in a weird tube thing)

125g/4oz fresh breadcrumbs – actually you can use stale old ones or frozen but under no circumstances the golden breadcrumbs for coating fish – they don't work, I've tried

**The boring stuff**

Milk – 3 litres, oil, eggs , plain flour, gravy mix, wooden cocktails sticks (double up as toothpicks for those of us with gappy teeth)

Salt, black pepper, cornflour, bread, teabags, really nice good quality decaffeinated coffee for chef who doesn't drink tea OR

Earl Grey decaffeinated teabags which she might condescend to drink if pushed

Soft drinks , Flora spread or similar, 4 very large spuds OR: packet Aunt Bessie's frozen roast potatoes – scrummy, quick and easy and probably full of e-numbers but who cares

Sprouts if you must but for you alone and you will have to cook them yourself and eat them in the garden where we can't smell them – and that includes the post prandial farting

**Finally: Really extravagant, stuff of dreams list**

New dishwasher or beautiful, leggy Swedish blonde - for washing up, what else?

Male version of the Swedish blonde for the chef – not for washing up

Even more chocolate – suggest chocolate brazils – don't care what anyone else wants

# Michael Barton, WordPlay Executive Director, has set himself some goals to achieve next year.

## New Year's Writing Resolutions



### THE HANDY HALF DOZEN

Finish that novel, and then get it prepared for submission to agents or to self publish.

Note: use WordPlay's professional editing service. They will critique and write my synopsis as well. As a member, I'll get up to 30% off standard charges.

#### Improve my short story writing

Invest in a WordPlay Creative writing course. Its an e-course, home study, which means I can work at my own pace, and fit it in with my busy schedule. With a dedicated mentor and plenty of exercises to complete along the way, WordPlay e-courses are a great investment in my future writing. And, they're adding more early next year!

#### Enter more competitions

Having completed the e-course, now will be time to put my new skills to the test. I can use WordPlay's competition listings to find the best comps to enter, and as a WordPlay member I can enter their cash prize competitions free of charge.

#### Add to publishing credits

Review and rewrite short stories. Use WordPlay's critique service to hone them to perfection. Send more stuff to WordPlay ezine, and 'The Story behind the Story' (as a member, if a short story is accepted for publication, WordPlay will pay me, too!). Look for other routes to market through duotrope.com.

#### Keep on top of writing news

WordPlay plan to add a news stream on their website next year: this should help me keep abreast of developments in the marketplace.

#### Write to a schedule

Everyone tells me I should be more disciplined with my time. In the new year, WordPlay will be publishing a writer's schedule that will help me organise my time for my writing.



#### A Broken Man

Peter 'Hud' Hudson, ex SAS officer, is on the road to recovery from post traumatic stress after a failed mission in Iraq first time around. His life is torn apart for a second time when his brother Jack – the UK Government's Foreign Secretary – is brutally assassinated in his own home.

#### A Secret Society

The reason for Jack's murder is detailed in a file of research that he leaves for Peter to discover: a file that reveals the truth behind an organisation known as Schengen. And Schengen want it, for the time has come for them to realise the prophecy of the Fourth Reich, and see the creation of an empire that will encompass the whole of Europe and seek world domination.

#### A Race Against Time

Enlisting the help of his ex-wife, Hudson finds himself in Paris and framed for the murder of his brother. As Schengen's net draws tighter around him, he finds himself with nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. His is now a race against time to clear his name and save Europe from the grips of Schengen and an Al Queda plot that would see the future of the continent changed forever.

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## FLESCH IT OUT AND READ IT EASILY

I expect we all frequently use the spellchecker options in Microsoft Word. However did you know that this function also rates your work with a 'Readability' rating based on the system devised by Rudolf Flesch an Austrian author, readability expert and writing consultant.

His system uses a rating algorithm based on both word and sentence length to arrive at the final grading level. Your ratings are shown in the panel displayed by Word when you have finished using the spell checker (to make this active, go to tools, and click on 'options'. Open the 'spelling and grammar tab, and tick the check box next to 'show readability statistics'). The Flesch reading ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade level will give you an indication of the readability of your work which you can use to decide if it is appropriate for your intended readers. An index value of 90 – 100 indicates your writing is easily read by an average 11 year old student, whilst a value of 0 – 30 is writing aimed at graduate standard readers.

For more detailed information on how to interpret your readability ratings either search through the Word help or visit Wikipedia.

## THE BUTTERFLY COLLECTOR

by Fred McGavran



A collection of gems. By day Fred McGavran is a highly regarded Harvard-educated lawyer. My moonlight, he crafts page-turners that draw on his deep experience with law and life. McGavran's masterly writing invites comparison with John Grisham. But stir in Stephen King and Kafka—an eye for the absurd, an ear for dialog, and a wicked sense of humor. McGavran ranks as a top lawyer-writer. His abiding concern with moral values reaches into literary traditions that include the best of Melville, Chekov, and Graham Greene. His stories go down smoothly, but they linger and haunt. These stories are required reading for law-and-lit fans, lawyers with a sense of humor, and devotees of the art of short fiction. **Michael H. Hoffheimer, Professor of Law, University of Mississippi, USA**

'sardonic, erudite, and unexpectedly frightening. He will leave you wanting more.' **P.F. Kluge, Writer in Residence, Kenyon College and author of *Gone Tomorrow* and other novels**

Fred McGavran's first collection of short fiction, *The Butterfly Collector*, etches the American *haute bourgeoisie* with satire that stings in carefully observed detail but then predictably swerves into generous invention. The world he works with is O'Hara's and Upkike's suburbia, mildly Midwestern, citified—but populated by lawyers, priests, occasionally therapists and academics, most of them aging badly, few of them attractive to women. His Dickensian devastations of the law, updated with *voir dire*, take turns with a magical realism. McGavran writes about memory, often about an unfortunate inability to remember selectively. Things keep coming back—submarines that rise years later to disgorge their dead or, elsewhere, unkillable bears and stags. Oddly, dismembered limbs run through his stories, metaphors for what travels uselessly. **Britton J. Harwood, Professor of English, Miami University, USA**

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## A Christmas Limerick

Christmas is here at last  
bringing memories of the past.  
Mistletoe and Holly  
and all things jolly  
and a chance to get truly rat arsed!

Jennifer Kearney

## TINSEL TREE

Presents wrapped in paper silver  
Got a rhyme I can't deliver  
His for me  
Mine for him

Former ones, rectangle shaped  
Latter, pretty, sellotaped  
Opened later, face just beamed  
Only think what might have been.

Roberta

## Christmas Spree

What a time I had at Christmas  
Eating everything in sight  
All sorts of drink as well  
It really was a terrific night

Friends and loved ones making merry  
Let's have another glass of sherry  
Then the neighbours who live near  
Called around for a glass of beer

to have some Carol Singers at the door  
Invite them in let's drink some more  
Oh here's the pudding that's just dandy  
Means we'll have brandy

I've not had a go at that punch yet  
That'll go down a treat I bet  
And the mince pies are still to come  
Maybe I'll have mine with rum

We played a lot of silly games  
Then we opened the champagne  
All those bubbles went to my head  
I'll probably spend tomorrow in bed

My friends told me I enjoyed my day  
I was only sick twice by the way  
Oh I had a smashing time  
I just can't wait for auld lang's syne

Mary Kilduff

## WORDPLAY: OPENING DOORS FOR POETS WORLDWIDE

Poets abound. Not only can members get their efforts read here in the Ezine, but WordPlay will be holding quarterly competitions dedicated to the verse voices amongst you. (Scriptwriters note that we will be running similar opportunities bi-annually). Keep an eye on [www.wordplaywriters.com](http://www.wordplaywriters.com) and our other publications for details.

## Gender Gap

Xmas simply accentuates the existing gulf between the sexes. Once you have already accepted that men like to spend all day shopping for shoes they will never wear, and women like beer, football, and farting, you are on the right track.

And then there is XMAS!

For men this begins somewhere around about December 23<sup>rd</sup> after a good pub lunch, or later. For women this starts around about mid April. At this point they will start ‘dropping hints’. HINTS!

‘Oh, I really like red things’. Make a mental note.

So, come 4pm on December 23<sup>rd</sup> you stagger out of Yates’, having arrived at 11am, and head for Poundworld – or 99pWorld if you are in Hounslow. In the preceeding nine months she has chosen, wrapped, ribboned, and tagged with a loving message your gifts. You purchase a comedy Red Nose (brilliantly remembering the colour hint and the importance of laughter in a relationship). You spend ages wrapping the non-rectangular present, using several rolls of sellotape and some paper that is vaguely silver.

Come Xmas morning, and after the first coffee and mince pie, gifts are swapped. Hers to you first. The wrapped, ribboned, and tagged gift is proffered. The tag reads ‘Your warmth is all I crave’. You open expectantly to receive the ever heart warming ... socks.

Her turn now. She attacks your wrapping in the manner that you do with vacuum sealed bacon. Peel (fail), then teeth, and finally the cordless saw that you treasure. At last – bacon. The red nose eventually appears. Does she don it, walk around the room pretending to wear shoes 5 sizes too big, making her hair stand up and down whilst throwing a pretend bucket of water, containing shredded paper, over you? No. She speaks the only truths of the day. ‘Darling, you shouldn’t have’. Followed by ... ‘Did you keep the receipt?’

Festive Frolics & Happy Humbug everyone.

**Ian Alexander**

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# NEWS FROM WORDPLAY AND ITS MEMBERS

## AFTER THE EVENT – OPEN UP ON OPEN MIC!

Why would anybody want to stand in front of their peers and bare their inner most thoughts? It is not for me to answer but they do want to. Writers, write in their own world and without any intrusion. It is almost secretive existence but at some time we all need company, a laugh or drink or two and very often all three. I think that it is good to air ones thoughts and feelings and just get that second (or third) opinion-a sounding board for what we think, and write.

So, I now come to the idea of arranging an 'open.mic' session. I exposed the idea to a group of people and saw some reticence and maybe, even fear. Coercion would be too strong a word and so I pursued the course of praise and some massaging of certain egos. Cupboards are there to store things in and not for people, their imaginations and their creations. Get them out into the light I say, and so they did at Chadwicks, Villa Martin on Tuesday evening on 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2010.

We had plenty of readers and most people had the opportunity to read at least twice. The criteria I employed were to keep it fairly short- after all poetry is bad enough without it being too long! - and keep extracts from books to no more than three to four minutes. After the event and upon reflection it is very important to choose the right piece and even give a short introduction to it but that is all for next time. I thought that the mixture of poetry and prose worked well and with the added benefit of several of the bars' regulars joining in which all helped to make it a very good evening.

Arrangements are that easy to do, communicate, advertise, find a venue then keep on bloody nagging. It worked for me, for the cupboard has been bared and the scribes have shaken off their cobwebs and come blinking into the light and exposed their souls. Well done for everyone and the stars did shine brightly. I am now thinking of the next time that we will do it all again next year.

**John Edwards**

## **'THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY'**

**Here at WordPlay, we love great fiction. We also love to promote great fiction, particularly stories penned by (as yet) unknown talent. We also love to reward writers of great fiction.**

**This is where our new quarterly publication, working title "The Story behind the Story", comes in.**

**We want YOU to submit stories of between 1500 and 2500 words, in any genre from thrillers to romance, murder mystery to humorous (excluding erotica).**

**Add in a 100 word biography, written in the third person, and a couple of sentences about the inspiration that led to the writing of your story.**

**Circulation will be to subscribers of the WordPlay monthly Ezine, and selected Literary Agents.**

**Closing Date for submission for the second edition is 30th March 2011, with and expected edition date of April 6th 2011.**

**For more information see our website [www.wordplaywriters.com](http://www.wordplaywriters.com)**

### **Member News**

◆Both Rob Innis and John Major have had short stories published in an anthology of Expat writers work, available for free download at <http://www.writersabroad.spruz.com/>.

◆Rob also had a flash fiction story accepted for the fund raising anthology '50Stories for Pakistan'. Available from <http://www.bigbadmedia.com>

◆Michael Barton has had short story "A Mindless Attraction" commended in the December/ January Writers' Forum Short Story Competition

## KATE AND WILLIAM

Together at last. A nation rejoices. Bunting abounds. Street parties need planning. Prominent positions on pavements are bagged. Confetti at the ready.

So, two people who have been shagging for a decade have decided they won't find anybody else. But this is just not anybody. This is Royal, and therefore a national occasion.

Where will it be? When will it be? Who will design the dress? Sleepless nights for all. The ring is second hand – well, we are in the middle of an economic crisis!

The lady in question has already denounced being called Kate. How common is that? Henceforth she will be known as Katherine. Katherine of Arrogance, perhaps? An echo of Catherine of Aragon. Remind me, what happened to her?

Of course, we no longer be-head spent spouses. How could we with her lustrous, Cheryl Cole like hair? Perhaps that is her route to public affection – she looks like Cheryl Cole.

Whilst be-heading is not an option, de-braining is. Remember the delicious Diana? A nation still mourns (Well, the Daily Express does anyway.) The real tragedy of her demise for most blokes is that had she lived we'd all have got a go eventually.

Maybe he will change his name too. Willie is the obvious choice. Were they to have announced their troth at half-time at a football match, as some couples do, they would have been greeted in song. That song would have been 'You don't know what you're doing ...'

There is much planning to be done by all of us. Get some DVDs in. close the curtains, and enjoy.

Ian Alexander

## **THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES OF WRITING**

**WordPlay would be member, Ebenezer Scrooge, reveals all!**

### **Where do I write?**

I write at my desk in front of the fire. Never any more than two coals. Wastes money. When there's snow and ice on the ground, I let my man, Bob Cratchit, put a match to it.

### **When do I write?**

When I have invoices to send. Mostly every day. Christmas Day is my favourite as it's so quiet I can concentrate better.

### **How do I write?**

With ink and a quill. On parchment. I charge my customers for the paper.

### **Why do I write?**

If I don't write my bills out, I don't get paid. It's an economic necessity.

### **What do I write?**

Bills, bills, more bills.

**OVER TO YOU.....**

**Tell us about your writing.**

**Email them to [wordplayezine@mail.com](mailto:wordplayezine@mail.com)**

# A TO Z OF WORDS

PLAY WITH WORDS

## CHRISTMAS ALPHABET

### A is for Angels

With halos so bright  
Whose carols were heard  
On that first Christmas Night

### B is for Bells

So merrily ringing  
Joy to the world  
Is the message they're bringing

### C is for Candles

That so brightly shine  
To give a warm welcome  
To your friends and mine

### D is for Doorway

With garlands of green  
To make Christmas merry  
As far as they're seen

### E is for Evergreens

With fragrance so rare  
So plentiful at Christmas  
Their scent fills the air

### F is for Fun

The whole season long  
From trimming the tree  
To singing a song

### G is for Greetings

A merry "hello"  
With a heart full of love  
For people we know

### H is for Holly

With berries so red  
To make into wreaths  
To hang overhead

### I is for Ice

On snow covered hills  
Where sledding is fun  
Along with the spills

### J is for Jesus

The Christ child so dear  
We honour his birth  
On Christmas each year

### K is for Kris Kringle

So merrily he stands  
He is who they call Santa  
In so many lands

### L is for Lanterns

I am sure that their light  
Helped Mary and Joseph  
That first Christmas Night

### M is for Mary

Her heart full of love  
For her little son Jesus  
Who came from above

### N is for Noel

The angels did sing  
To herald the birth  
of Jesus, our King

### O is for Ornaments

So shining and bright  
With lights on the tree  
To sparkle at night

### P is for Packages

With ribbons so gay  
All 'round the tree  
For our Christmas Day

### Q is for Quiet

Christmas Eve Night  
With snow covered hills  
Glistening so bright

### R is for Reindeer

Who pull Santa's sleigh  
To your house, to my house  
They know the way

### S is for Shepherds

Who first saw the star  
Over Bethlehem's manger  
And followed it far

### T is for Trees

We decorate so gay  
Then wait for old Santa  
To hurry our way

### U is for Universe

Where Christmas brings joy  
To all in the world  
To each girl and each boy

### V is for Visiting

Friends near and far  
We travel by plane  
Or by bus, or by car

WordPlay's regular last page is the final, favourite part of the ezine. Here members are simply invited to do what we all do - Play with Words. Sign up at [www.wordplaywriters.com](http://www.wordplaywriters.com) and start playing. Whatever you do, enjoy writing.

### W is for Wise Men

Who brought gifts so rare  
And knelt down and worshipped  
The child they found there

### X is for Xmas

Or Christmas by full name  
No matter the language  
It all means the same

### Y is for Yule Logs

Whose bright sparks fly high  
To give a warm welcome  
To friends passing by

### Z is for Zeal

We show at this time  
In giving to others  
And loving mankind

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