

cold has begun seeping through your skin. Everything seems damp and formless. You avoid your eyes in the shop windows as you slip out of the close and head up the street to buy milk and tea bags.

All day you drink scalding cups of tea. Over weeks you have begun to realise that the cold is spreading into your arms, down into your fingertips. You worry that soon you will not be able to move your arms and this possibility of being paralysed; the roar of your heart in your ears is almost as terrifying as the cold itself.

You have a morning ritual and it seems to keep the panic tethered for a while. You boil the kettle for the first cup of tea, you wash your hands five times with scalding water. The water has to be hot enough that you cry out as you hold your hands under the tap. Then you dry them with a clean towel,

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paying attention to each finger. You clean under your nails with a special file that your daughter bought for you when she visited last Christmas. It is part of a little nail set that you keep on top of the bathroom cabinet and you replace the file in its special groove in the zip-up case. By now your hands are pink and raw, but this somehow gives you a sense of accomplishment, vague contentment even. But by the time you reach the kitchen you have begun to shiver again.

You make the tea slowly, careful to follow the order of things: teabag, sugar, boiling water. Remove the bag. In the bin. Stir - eighteen times. Milk. Stir again. In the minutes you take to complete this the tea has cooled and you have to throw it away and start again. Your tongue is covered with tiny white blisters.

You remember how you used to sleep like spoons. It must have kept you warm, but you can't really recall the feeling. How careless you must have been then. If you had had foresight, you might have found a way to store his warmth in your body, to save it like some kind of molecular battery. It seems to you now that these oversights and stupidities are the crimes of your life and you have taken to writing them down on scraps of paper. The list is short but damning. Small slights, petty offences. Wry asides at a neighbour's expense, a tilt of an eyebrow instead of a smile at a joke. A birthday forgotten. You confess, murmuring the litany quietly to yourself. You write lists. You make cups of tea. The cold continues to colonise your body.

**Peace at last**  
Tom Murray.

MAY 1919: SCOTLAND.

As he breathed his last he didn't see the whole of his twenty-two years flash before his eyes. Only the shimmering figures of the village folk through the clear water as they watched him drown.

AUGUST 1917: FRANCE.

A shell landed somewhere close blasting him with mud and guts and ripped away skin. He stumbled, but kept on going, then he tripped over something embedded in the mud. He fell on top of the spongy mass. A moment later something heavy landed on his back trapping him like the meat in a sandwich.

DECEMBER 1918: SCOTLAND.

The hard widow's stares followed him as he limped down his own village high street. Girls that he had gone to school with, laughed with, kissed, now spat their sadness and bitterness at him.

AUGUST 1917: FRANCE.

He lay there for what seemed forever. He didn't recognise what was left of the face underneath him. Only the scar on the little finger. An accident with the anvil when Jimmy Rogers was seventeen. Jimmy Rogers. One year below him at school. It wasn't until the medics came that he realized that the figure pinning him down was Jimmy's brother Robert.

JANUARY 1919: SCOTLAND.

A new year. A land fit for heroes. No-one except his own mother had spoken to him since he'd come home.

SEPTEMBER 1917: FRANCE.

He lay in the hospital, the shrapnel still in his thigh throbbing, the tears burning his face like liquid gas. Words came to him in bits and pieces.

“The last of his village.”

“All wiped out except him.”

MAY 1919: SCOTLAND.

As he breathed his last he was happy. Happy for the villagers as they turned back to their village. Happy that the pain was finally about to end.

## New Releases

**Ice Cream**  
Phaidon



**I**ce Cream is a selection of 100 emerging contemporary artists, chosen by 10 esteemed curators. With over 25 countries represented and no restrictions on age or media, the book represents significant global developments in new art. This ranges from the illustrations of cult musician, Daniel Johnston, to the cutting-edge installations of Sue De Beer. There are also 10 source artists - those selected by the curators as influential and significant either to themselves or to the contemporary art world at large.

The book opens with a debate between the contributors as they discuss the fluctuating role of the curator. The artists have been given four pages in which to represent their work, including a commentary by the curator who selected them, an exhibition history and a bibliography. This attention to detail ensures that the art is represented in the best way possible, second only to the near-impossible task of viewing each piece in its intended setting. The book provides a compact and engaging alternative, essential for both collectors and those who are just discovering the contemporary art scene.

Alexis Somerville

**A Pig with Six Legs and other stories**

Edited by Gavin Pretor-Pinney  
Sceptre



**W**hat a wonderful concept. The Cloud Appreciation Society brings *A Pig with Six Legs and other clouds* to us as a follow-up to *The Cloudspotter's Guide*. It is a wonderful collection of clouds that look like many things; in some respects it is reminiscent of childhood when your imagination went wild and you could see objects in the clouds. An extract from the manifesto of the Cloud Appreciation Society is “we believe that clouds are for dreamers and their contemplation benefits the soul. Indeed, all who consider the shapes they see within them will save on psychoanalysis bills.”

*A Pig with Six Legs and other clouds* is inspiring and delightful. The images depict real things such as a dragonfly, fusilli pasta, a poodle, and even The Grim Reaper. What is most wonderful about this concept is the temporary nature of clouds; these images were taken just at the right moment. It certainly makes you want to lie on your back and stare up at the sky.

Shirley Stevenson