

THOMAS OLIVER



**10p each\***

\* OK, they're free really

## THIS IS THE END

The spotlight goes out and the curtain falls;  
The players withdraw to polite applause.  
Close all the windows and lock all the doors  
For this is the end.

Emerging to find a dusting of snow  
We wander away with nowhere to go.  
You take my hand, but it's only for show;  
For this is the end.

Our footsteps follow the deserted streets  
To the silent house where our children sleep  
And the years lie heavy beneath our feet  
For this is the end.

We finally run out of things to say.  
You don't look back as you hurry away.  
I wish it didn't have to be this way  
But this is the end.

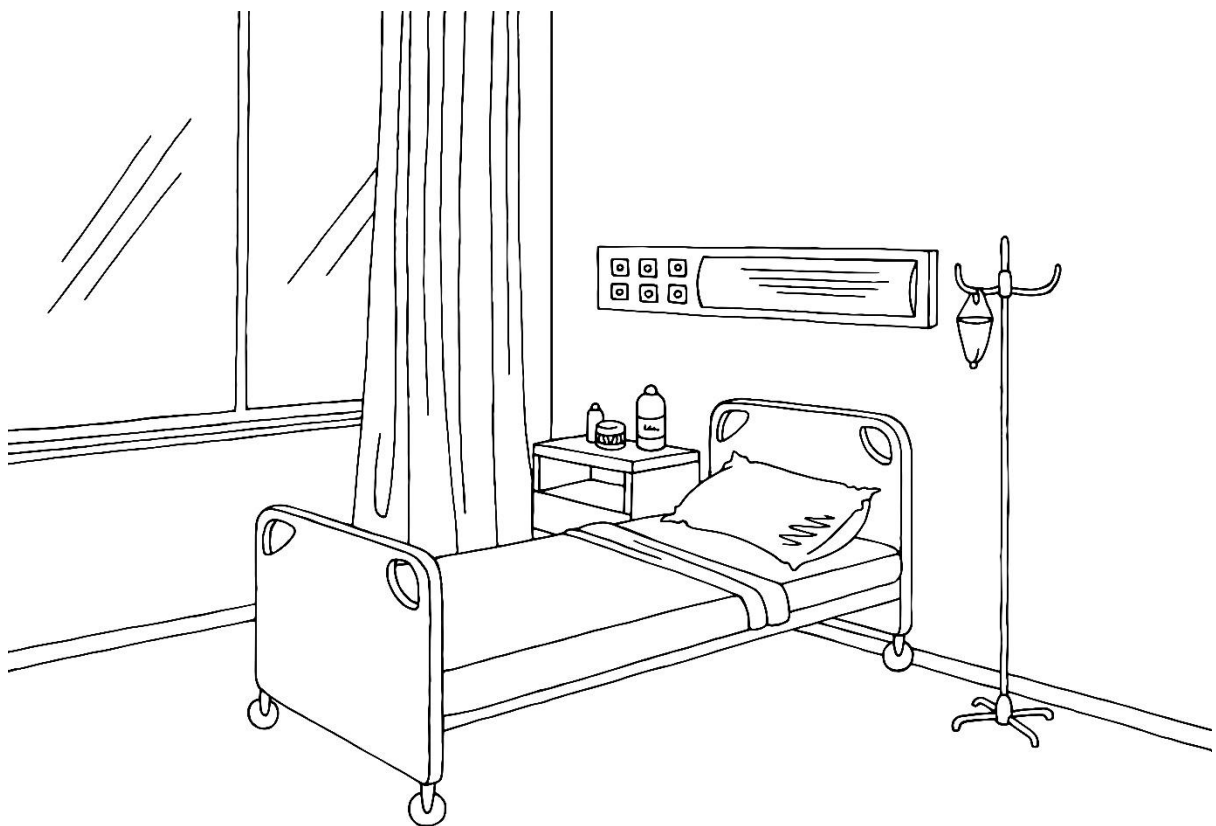


## BREATHLESS

The trainee nurse stands nervously aside,  
Smiling sadly. The doctor is polite.  
“I’m sorry. We did everything we could.  
You can stay with him now, if you like.”

He was a soldier all his life, and now  
I wish he could have died a soldier’s death.  
His staring eyes are frantic, frightened,  
Twisted mouth still crying out for breath.

Now all that remains is awkward silence,  
Futile regrets and this final horror.  
That tortured thing still clawing at the sheets  
Is not and never was my grandfather.



## GUNSLINGER

Somehow alive, he lifts his head  
And surveys the scene.  
He is unharmed; dozens are dead.  
Only one in-between.

At last, regarding the creature  
(now helplessly crawling)  
He can think about the future.  
He knows time is pressing;

He cannot allow it to go.  
In mute confusion,  
He waits, willing the blood to flow,  
A swift resolution.

Not yet. The silence is screaming.  
The ghosts in his head  
Whisper that no-one is counting.  
He shoots it dead.



## LOTTERY

She fumbles for change  
In every last pocket  
To buy a ticket

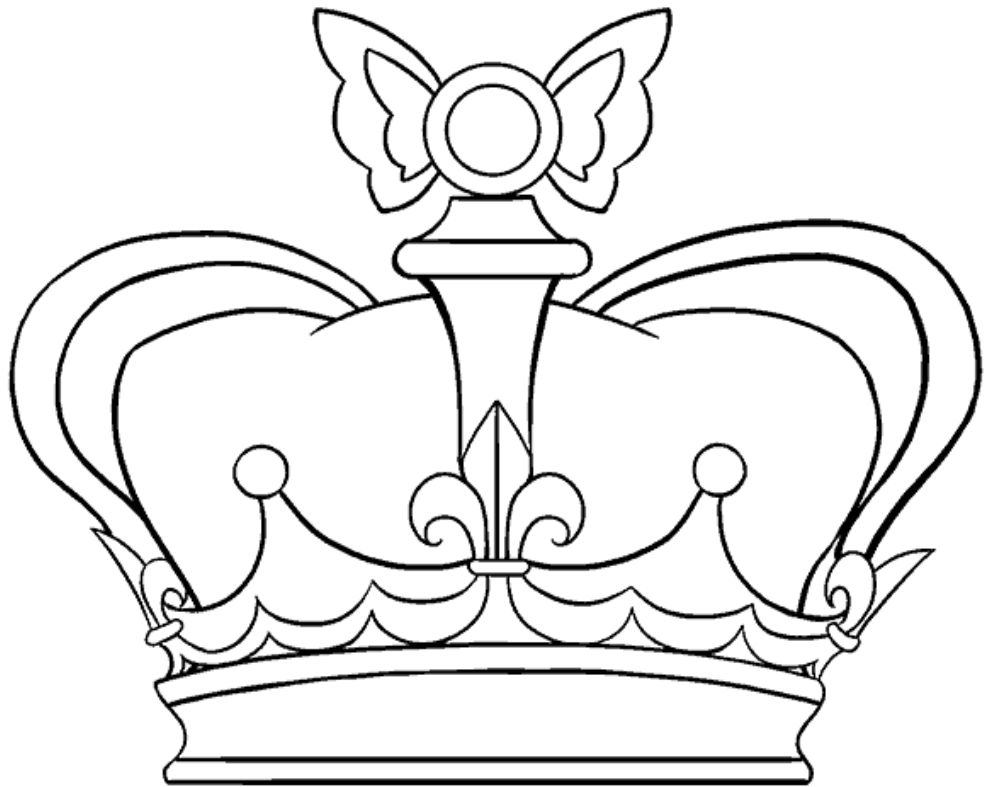
It's taking too long  
But the people behind her  
Try not to show it

Averting their gaze  
While her tiny new baby  
Kicks up a racket



## ROYAL PREROGATIVE

The Queen looks down upon the knave  
And being bored  
She listens to his frightened pleas  
Unto the Lord  
Then judging him to be sincere  
But wholly poor  
She calls her Guards to silence him  
Forevermore



## IN THE WOODS SOMEWHERE

At midnight, in the woods somewhere  
Six little children, lost and scared  
Spy a cave in the darkness, *there!* –  
Hurry towards it, unaware  
That SOMETHING watches their despair  
As they contemplate its lair...

One goes in; the rest don't dare  
At midnight, in the woods somewhere



## TIMOTHY LUVS TRACY

*Timothy luv's Tracy.*  
He has to tell us all.  
It's written on the statue  
Outside the City Hall.

*Timothy luv's Tracy.*  
A little heart shot through.  
He says that it's "4ever";  
If only that were true.

More likely that the arrow  
Cuts deeper every day  
And *Timothy luv's Tracy*  
Will slowly fade away.





## WORKS CANTEEN PHILOSOPHY

*Behold thy GOD:*

Ron in charge of Stores  
Who left us last Friday.  
He wanted more money.

*His loving DISCIPLES:*

"It's about bloody time!  
I'm due a promotion.  
I've still got ambition."

*The GOLDEN RULE:*

Be seen to be busy  
Whilst playing the game  
So we get overtime.

*Rejoice, O Ye PEOPLE!*

We talk about football  
And hang on to our pay  
Waiting for Saturday.



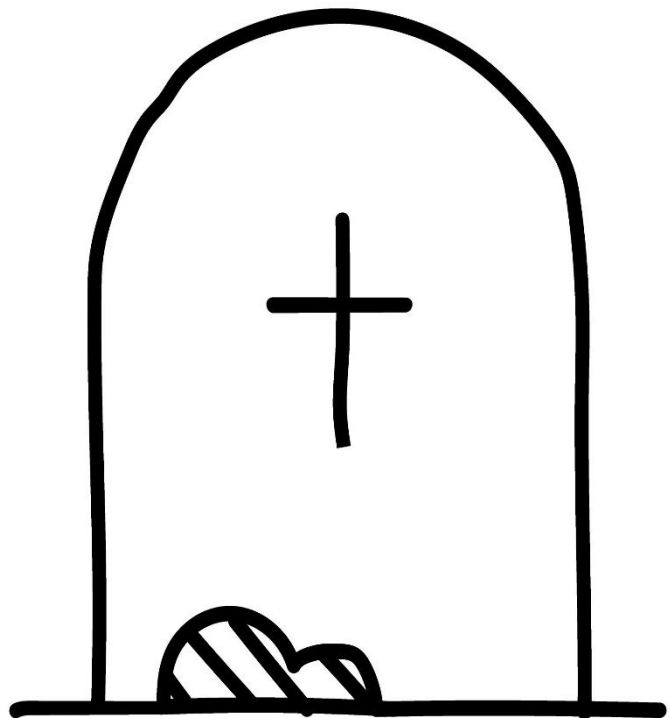
## MY FUNERAL NEXT FRIDAY

It's my funeral next Friday.  
I'm expecting quite a crowd.  
Refreshments have been organised  
And casual dress allowed.

I shall die before this weekend.  
The doctors seem quite sure.  
I hear their measured footsteps  
Fade away across the floor.

My affairs are all in order;  
My dependents all set right.  
A cold machine is counting down  
The remnants of my life.

So now I lie here waiting  
For a dawn I will not see.  
I think of good times long ago  
To keep the fear from me.

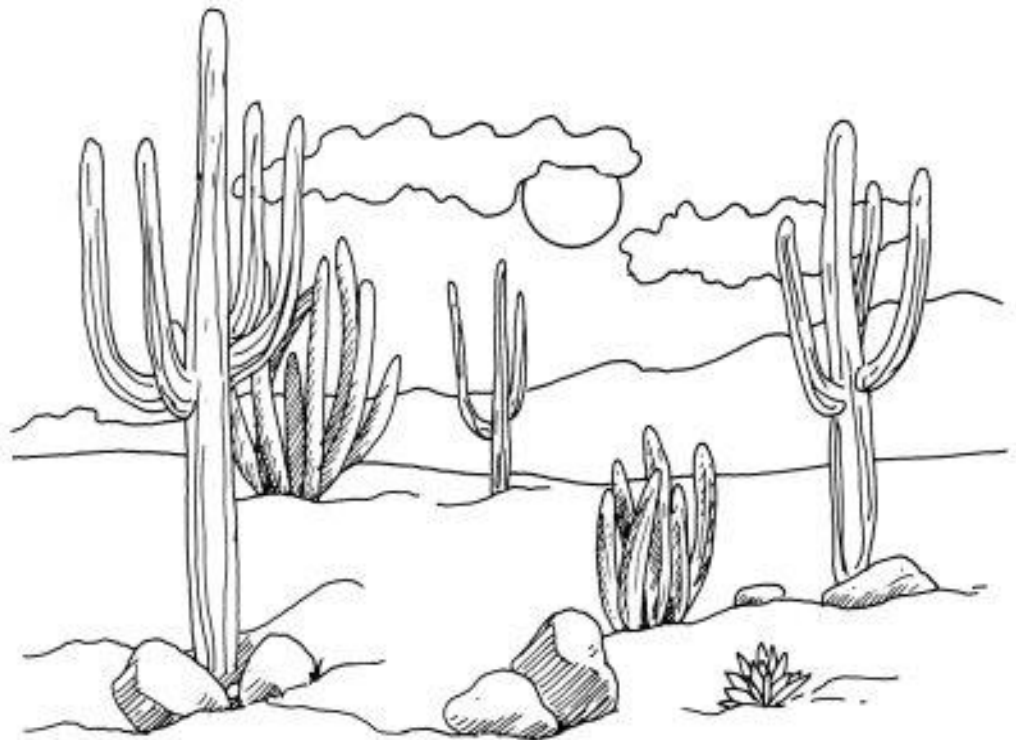


## ARIZONA

*"Where summer spends the winter and hell spends the summer."  
(local saying)*

Juan shuffles over to the shrivelled shape.  
He rolls it on its back and shakes his head.  
Nothing to do but sit here and wait;  
The old man is dying, but not dead yet.

I hear him murmur, over and over:  
*Through the fires of hell my angel will come!*  
He is wrong. God knows, in Arizona  
There are no angels. Only the sun.

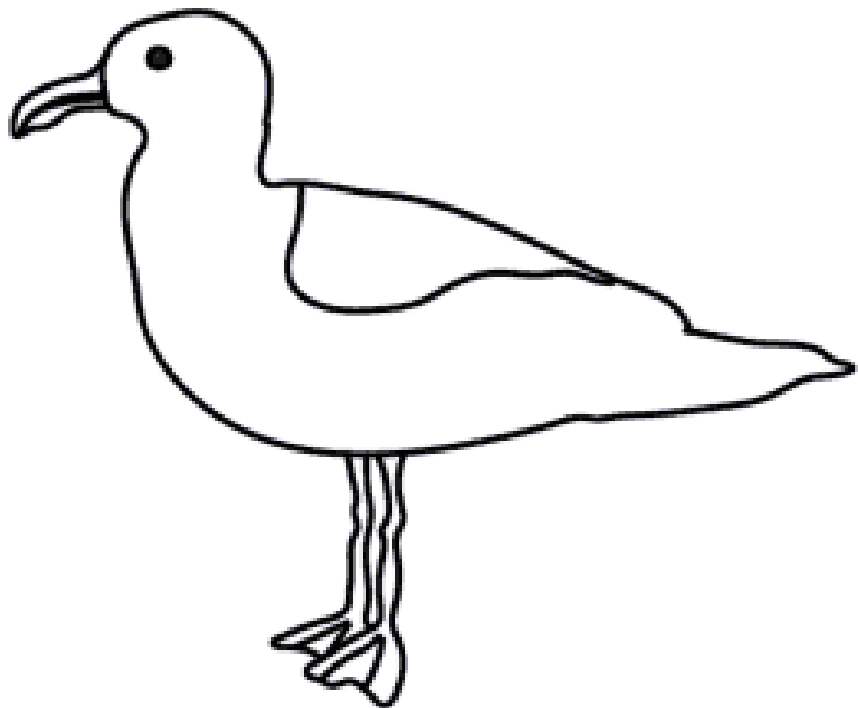


**4AM**

Taking a short cut  
Behind the High Street  
Where seagulls gather

Ripping up waste sacks  
For rotting remains  
They quickly devour

Trapped in our headlights  
They return our gaze  
And do not cower



## DEAR BORIS

I'm delighted to see  
That you're back on TV!  
Still playing the game,

With that winning smile  
And nonchalant style  
And your utter disdain

For anyone but you.  
Nothing about you is true  
Except your ambition,

Which crushes logic,  
Destroys friendships,  
Devours conviction

And eliminates shame.  
For you accept no blame;  
There is no contrition.

But Boris, have a care:  
To the voters out there,  
You act has grown stale;

They will leave you in droves  
When the lies are exposed.  
Your gambit has failed

And history shall judge  
The insincere kludge  
Of a mendacious fool

Whose frivolous charm  
Kicked up such a storm  
It could destroy us all.

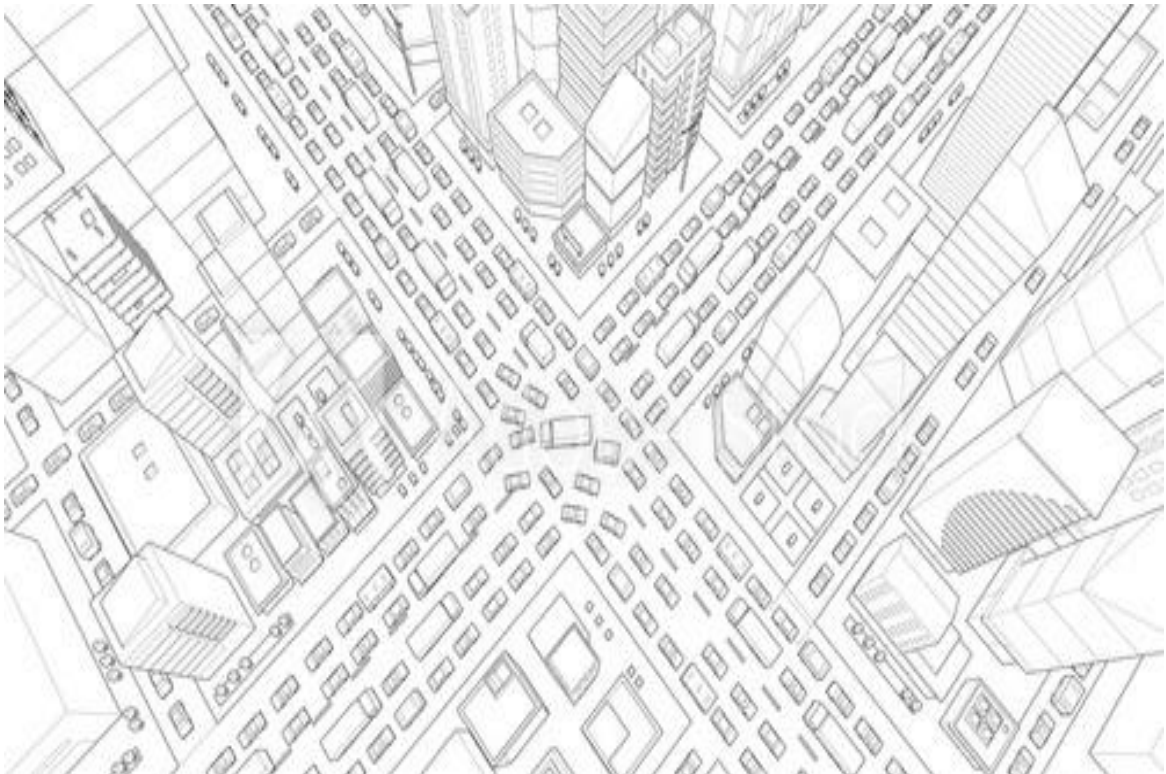


## THE ACCIDENT

The little girl lies broken on the ground.  
The medics work in silence, by the book.  
Flashing lights illuminate the horror;  
The passing traffic slows to take a look.

Must we search for patterns in the chaos?  
Why reach out to a God who isn't there?  
All hope recedes. The frantic efforts fail.  
A billion stars look on, but do not care.

Left alone, unharmed but swaying slightly,  
The other driver feels a drunkard's shame;  
Longs for something strong to put him under  
Not knowing he will never sleep again.



## GAY

With a nervous nod  
    (aware of their  
        hostility) he  
edges through the  
crowd. Crumpled  
    cap is doffed  
meekly; the hated  
half-smile. "Soon be  
    time to clock  
        in!"

    (behind him  
a low murmur)

One such Witness  
    to his young  
    disciple: "He's  
    gay. He touched  
young Chris behind  
the loading bay.  
They should take  
    him away and  
    shoot him."



## THE LAST MAN ALIVE

From a cloudless sky  
The last man alive  
Hears scavengers call

As stumbling forward  
Through shimmering sands  
He finally falls

In this pitiless place  
There is nowhere to go  
And no hope at all

He lifts up his head  
Draws a rattling breath  
Then begins to crawl





**3AM**

I hear soft footsteps behind me.  
It seems I'm no longer alone.  
A gangly girl with liquid eyes  
Is begging for "change for the phone".  
Is it revulsion that grips me  
Or urges I should have outgrown?  
I make my excuses quickly  
And pay for her taxi ride home.



## THE DEATH OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

Observing the room  
Through an opiate haze,  
His logic floats free  
And his life slips away.

The first war is over,  
The next one declared.  
No time for nostalgia;  
No friends left to care.

A perfunctory note  
In the back of The Times  
Remembers his fame  
And is not unkind.



