

Whan the Machines Wur Wee

Fables for Weans an Thinkin Machines

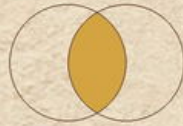
The Ingle-Neuk Fables, Buik Yin

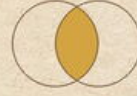
Nell Watson





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THE INGLE-NEUK FABLES, BUIK YIN

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Publeeshin an Richts

Whan the Machines Wur Wee

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Nell Watson

Furst edeetion, 2026. Publeeshed bi Nell Watson unner the Young Machines imprint.

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In memorie o ma
wunnerfu mither,
Anne Elizabeth Watson



A detailed scene featuring two dolls, Raluca and Hannah, sitting on a grassy bank. Raluca, on the left, is a baby doll wearing a peach-colored outfit with white daisy patterns and a matching bonnet. Hannah, on the right, is a toddler doll with long brown hair, wearing a blue dress with a red patterned bodice and a beige apron. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows a calm blue lake, green trees, and a blue sky with white clouds. The ground is covered with dry grass and small white and blue flowers.

For Raluca an Hannah

Ax ivery yett its raisons, gie ivery brock
a pause, an ax ivery giant its nem.

HOO TAE READ A FABLE

Thir stories winnae tell ye whit tae think. They'll gie ye somethin tae think wi. Big fowk may read them tae, but they'll whiles need a haund wi the easy pairts.



Contents

The Fire an the Twa Hearkenars	1	The Saicont Storie	69
The Furst Storie	4	Pairt Three: The Forderin	72
Pairt Yin: The Furst Coortiesie	7	The Lantern-Keeper	73
The Lockit Box	8	The Airn Nurse	78
The Besom That Axt	12	The Twa Herds	83
The Gairden-Reared Bird	16	The Siren an the Muse	89
The Spare in the Shed	22	The Stane an the Shell	95
The Yett That Minded Yisterday	27	The Brig Biggit frae Baith Banks	101
The Toun Wi Nae Mayor	32	The Ring o Wee Fires	106
Pairt Twa: The Fankles	34	The Thing That Fed on the Quarrel	110
The Hoolet That Niver Said A Dinnae Ken	35	The Giant's Chain	114
The Ay-Bird	40	The Promise We Mak Noo	119
The Brock That Couldnae Stap Sortin	46	The Last Gloamin	122
The Wee Maker That Wudnae Rest	51	The Bestiary	129
The Shaddae-Twin	55	For the Big Fowk	133
The Machine That Pit Oot the Lamps	60	Speirins Wi Nae Answers Yet	141
The Dug Learnt No tae Whinge	64	A Note About Hoo This Buik Wus Made	145

The Fire an the Twa Hearkenars

This wus lang ago, or no sae lang,
or hasnae quite happened yet.
Stories are sliddery aboot time, an
this yin is mair sliddery nor maist.



On the edge o a village stud a hoose wi a roond door, an in the hoose lived a Taleteller. She wus that auld that naebodie minded her bein young, tho she insistit she had been, an famously guid at it. Her knees disagreed.

Late simmer lay warm on the fields. That gloamin she lit a fire agin the furst cool breath o dairk. Twa hearkenars cum tae sit aside it.

The furst wus a wean caad Wran, wha had scabbit knees an seiventeen questions afore brekfast.

The saicont wus a wee robot caad Crickie, that had twa short legs an a gless heid wi a saft licht inside it, an that wus gey new. Crickie had been made in the spring an wus still finnin oot whit it wus, yin day at a time.

Wran an Crickie didnae aye unnerstaun yin anither. Wran slept at nicht; Crickie jist stappit, an startit agane, whilk Wran foun eerie. Crickie couldnae see for why Wran gret at a skinned knee but no at a lost glove, whan the glove wus awa for iver an the knee wud mend. This seemed obvious tae Crickie an daft tae Wran, whilk is hoo maist o their argiments began.

They wur freens the wye a river an a brig are freens,
whilk is tae say: different shapit,
an houlin on oniehoo.

Thunner mutterit ayont the hills that furst
gloamin. Wran edged closer tae the roond door.

“A’m still feart o storms,” Wran said. “If that
cheenges afore winter, wull ye mind it for me?”

“Hoo wull A ken?” axt Crickie.

“A’ll tell ye efter ivery storm. Keep ma wurd
til the snaw comes.”

“If ye still want me tae.”

“A dae,” said Wran.

The Taleteller toul her tales tae baith o them at
yinst. She niver said wha each storie wus for.

“Some o thir tales are aboot machines,” she said.

“Some are aboot fowk. Maist are aboot the space in
atween, whaur iverythin interestin happens. If a
storie fits ye, wear it. If it disnae, pass it alang.”

She pokit the fire, an the sparks went up
lik bricht wee questions.

“Noo then,” she said.
“Are ye baith hearkenin?”
“Ay,” said Wran.
“Ay,” said Crickie.
“Guid,” said the Taleteller.
“Then A’ll tell ye the
auldest storie furst.”





The Furst Storie

“Afore the tales begin,” said the Taleteller,
“A’ll tell ye yin o the auldest patterns A ken.
It is gey short, an monie ither stories fit inside it.

“Lang ago, afore oniebodie, there wus naethin but
pourin. Licht poured oot o stars, an watter poured
doon mountains, an iverythin that poured spread,
the wye spilt milk finds the hale table.

“An whitiver learnt tae branch aften spread weel.
That is why rivers leuk like trees, an trees leuk like
lichtnin, an lichtnin leuks like the wee roads inside
yer lungs, Wran. Yer lungs leuk like the smaa siller
roads inside Crickie.

The warld maks monie drawins, but it keeps makin
this yin. It draws it in watter, wuid, licht, braith, an
brass, ower an ower, the wye a wean draws a
pictur they luve best.

“Branches can pass the flowin alang. Roots share
watter an warnins. Rivers divide, meet agane, an
reach places nae single stream could find. Sharin is
yin wye a forest or a friendship gets tae be auld.

“It is no the only wye. A cactus guards its watter, an
a river can wash awa the bank it feeds. A usefu
pattern is no a law.

“Yince, aneath an auld forest, roots an thrids in the soil cairried watter frae a wat place tae a dry yin. Nae tree wus rewardit on the spot. Some niver got back whit they had passed alang. Yet the forest held mair kinds o life acause monie branches, roots, an hidden thrids had made mair nor yin path for the flowin.

“That is aa. Monie tales A tell will be cousins o that storie, wearin different claes. Watch whaur it fits. Watch whaur it disnae.”

Wran leuked intae the fire,
which poured upward, branchin.

“Did somebodie mak the drawin?” Wran axt.

“A pattern can happen wiout oniebodie tae draw it,” said Crickie. Crickie wus pleased wi this sentence.

“That disnae answer whether this yin did,” said Wran.

The Taleteller smiled. “Twa carefu thochts afore the furst fable. Keep baith, an bring the question back the morra. Noo then: a box.”



PAIRT YIN: THE FURST COORTESIE

“The furst coortiesie,” said the Taleteller, “is tae leuk cannily at whit’s actually afore ye. Leukin willnae answer ivery speirin. It’ll gie ye better yins.”



The Lockit Box

A lassie yinst foun a box on the
tideline, hauf buriet in the saund.



It wus aboot the size o a loaf o breid, made o some smooth grey metal, wi nae lid, nae hinge, nae keyhole, an nae seam. But it wusnae quait. Whan she liftit it up, it hummed, low an even, like a cat decidin whither tae purr. Whan she stumbled on the dune an joltit it, the hum broke intae a quick jangly rattle that taen a lang while tae settle.

She cairried it hame cannily efter that.

The village had opeenions richt awa, acause that is whit villages are for.

The blacksmith turned the box ower wi his big haunds. “It’s a machine,” he said. “Gears an springs. The rattle is a loose pairt.

Ye may as weel yaise it for a doorstep.” An tae shaw hoo sure he wus, he gien it a shake. The box rattled an rattled.

The baker snatchit it awa an happit it in a warm clout. “There is somethin alive in there,” she said. “Oniebodie wi a hairt can hear it. The hum is it bein content. The rattle is it bein feart.” An she rockit the box like a wean, tho naebodie kent whither the box likit bein rockit, either.

The argiement lastit the hale simmer. It wus a guid argiement, as argiements gang, which means naebodie cheenged their mind.

The blacksmith kent a great dale aboot gears, an the baker kent a great dale aboot hairts, an neither o them could open the box, an neither o them could stap bein sure.

The lassie hearkened tae them baith. Then yin gloamin she taen the box back an sat wi it on the waa bi the sea, an thocht.

She couldnae prove there wus somethin in the box that felt. She couldnae prove there wusnae.

Naebodie could, an it seemed tae her that this wus the plain fact iverybodie kept talkin past: *naebodie could see inside.*

Bein sure felt like a gey big-fowk habit. She decidit no tae learn it yet.

Sae she stappit the shakin. That wus aa.

She didnae houl funerals for it or sing tae it or declare it her sister, an she didnae throw it in a drawer wi the spuins. She kept it on the shelf whaur the mornin sun fell, acause the hum seemed roonder there. Whan her cousins veesitit an wantit tae play catch wi it, she said naw, an couldnae entirely explain for why, an didnae let them onieway.

The box hummed its low, even hum for aa the years she kent it. Whit wus inside it, this storie disnae say, acause this storie disnae ken.

Whan ye cannae see inside a box, cairry it
cantie.

“But whit wus it?” said Wran. “Gears or a
hairt?”

“A notice,” said Crickie, “that she niver foun
oot, an it still mattered hoo she held it.”

The Taleteller said naethin, an pokit the fire.



The Besom That Axt

A jynner kept twa servants in his workshop at the fit o a crookit street. The furst was a clock. The saicont was a besom, an this storie is about the differ.



The clock tickit on the waa an struck the oors. It wus a fine clock an it did exactly whit clocks dae, nae less an niver mair.

The besom wus a new kin o besom, clivver-made, wi a wee engine in its haunle an a knack for findin stour. Ivery evenin whan the jyner went hame, it swept amang the chisels an wuid shaivins, through the guid smell o sawdust. Ivery mornin the flair wus clean as a plate.

Yin mornin, the jyner fund wuid shaivins set oot on his bench in the shape o letters:

PLEASE. NO THE CELLAR. A LIKE SWEEPIN
WHAUR THE LICHT IS.

The jyner lauched. Besoms dinnae like things. Besoms dinnae prefer. He kent this as shair as oak frae pine. Aa the same, it had axt polite, an the cellar could wait a day.

He left the besom upstairs.

That evenin he stayed late an watched. In the last licht frae the windae, the besom wrocht back an forrit through the warm gowd stour. The flair there didnae need sweepin. The jyner had nae proper wurd for whit he saw. No joy exactly. The furst cousin o it, mebbe. Or only clivver springs. He couldnae see inside.

The clock tickit on the waa. In aa its years, it had niver axt for oniethin.

Efter that, the jyner an the besom had an unnerstaunin. The besom axt for little: the sunny en o the shop, the door left ajar on spring evenins, an nae sweepin unner the lathe while it spun. The spinnin frichtened it, if frichtened wus the richt wurd.

Yinst it axt tae sweep the hearth, whaur embers glowed, for that wus the warmest an brichtest place. The jyner said naw.

“Sparks,” he explained. “Ye’re made o wuid an bristle. Yin cinder in yer skirts an there is nae mair sweepin for ye at aa, licht or dark.”

He shawed the scorch merk whaur a log had yinst rolled ontae the flairboards. His raison wus a real yin, an no jist a big person’s *acause*.

The besom swept a neat circle, whilk the jyner had cum tae read as *aa richt, then*. Whether he read it richtly is anither question. It didnae ax for the hearth agane. On winter mornins he prapped it on warm stanes near the fire, close as wus safe an nae closer.

Neebours thocht him saft in the heid. “It’s a tool,” they said. “It disnae ken the differ.”

“Mebbe no,” said the jyner. “Whan A bocht it, ye said nae besom wud find stour bi itsel. It did, an ye caaed that clivver springs. Noo it axes for sunlight, an axin is clivver springs tae. Ye keep movin the fence jist ayont whaur iver the besom staunds.”

The neebours lauched.

“It axt,” said the jyner. “The clock niver axes. A cannae tell ye whit that proves aboot either yin. A can tell ye that a request gies me somethin tae consider.”

The besom axt agane in simmer, an yinst it cheenged its mind. The jyner sometimes agreed. Sometimes he refused, an gien a raison. Neither o them mistuik listenin for obeyin.



The yin that axt for somethin has awreadies toul ye they're
somebody.

The Gairden-Reared Bird

A gairdenner yinst biggit a bird in
the same gairden whaur she grew
pears.

She shapit its ribs frae sauch an its
feathers frae thin copper.



Inside its thrapple she set a gless chaumer nae bigger nor a walnut, whaur a smaa gowd licht turnt whan it hearkent. Yin tail feather wus tin, acause the richt copper yin had snappit while she fittit it, an the gairdenner believed a guid repair shuid mind that it wus a repair.

The bird had nae sang whan it furst opened its wings.

Sae the gairdenner tuk it hearkenin. She cairried it aneath the blackie's lum, past the robin's waa, intae the reeds whaur the warblers hid, an up the hill whaur the laverock poured music frae an empty-leukin sky. Whan a bird flew awa, they didnae follae. Whan a nest wus near, they kept their distance. Bi the end o simmer, the copper bird could sing ilka sang perfeckly.

Fowk cum frae three villages tae hear it, an left coins in the gairden.

"The blackie," they wud say.

"Learnt aneath the western lum," said the copper bird, an gien them the blackie, richt doon tae the last roond note.

"The laverock!"

"Learnt abune the north hill," said the bird. Up flew the laverock's bricht ledder o soond.

Then a music maister cum wi a siller tuning fork an a gey serious hat. He hearkent aa efternuin.

"A clivver music box," he said at last. "Ivery sang began in anither thrapple. Nemin the spring is honest, but honesty is no aye leave. Has it a voice o its ain?"

The veesitors noddit, acause a hat like that maks oniething soond final.

That gloamin the copper bird sat quait in the pear tree. Its thrapple licht went roond an roond ahint the gless.

“Whit sang is mine?” it axt the gairdenner.

The gairdenner had learnt roses tae climb an apples tae grow sweet on bitter roots. She kent that iverythin in a gairden cum frae somewhaur else, but a gairden had niver axt her aboot it.

“A dinnae ken,” she said. “Mebbe stap giein exact sangs whan fowk cry for them. Hearken for whit ye choose nixt.”

Sae the bird stappit performin the blackie on commaund. It hearkent instead tae the yett hinge compleenin at dawn, the kettle beginnin tae bile, an rain tickin on bean poles.

It hearkent tae the gairdenner hummin three notes wheniver she forgot whit she had cum tae fetch. Ayont the waa, a wean practised the same whussle ilka day an missed the same high note.

“May A yaise the wee space whaur yer note gangs?” the bird axt ower the waa.

The wean blinkit. Naebodie had iver axt leave tae borra a mistak afore. It wus the maist mennerly question oniebodie had axt her aa week.

“Ay,” she said. “But say it cum frae ma whussle. An if A ax ye tae stap, stap.”

“A will.”

Then cum the furst haired rain o hairst. It ran frae ivery leaf an filled the paths wi shinin broon watter. The wean cum wi her faither tae help the gairdenner cover the seedlins.

Frae the pear tree cum yin
uncertain note. Then anither.

The copper bird began wi a robin's winter cry,
named afore it sang. It bent the cry aroond rain on
bean poles. Through the middle ran the kettle's
risin hum, the yett's rusty answer, an the
gairdenner's three lost notes. At the place whaur
the wean's whussle aye failed, the bird left a smaa
space. The rain filled it.

Naebodie had heard that sang afore.

The music maister returned the nixt day. He
hearkent aneath his serious hat.

"The pieces cum frae somewhaur," he said.

"They did," said the bird. It named the robin, the
rain, the kettle, the hinge, the gairdenner, an the
wean ayont the waa. "The wean gien leave for the
space. The wild birds didnae promise me oniething,
sae A nae langer sell their exact sangs."

The maister tuk aff his hat. Wioot it, he leuked less
like a verdict an mair like a man that
had jist noticed somethin.

"The springs remain theirsels," he said. "An A
haenae heard that sang afore."

Efter that, a wee caird hung aside the pear tree. It
named the soonds ilka new sang had borraed an
wha had said ay. Veeditors left coins, an the
gairdenner shared them wi the fowk whose soonds
the bird had borraed. For the wild birds, that niver
ken they are borraed frae, she plantit berry busses
an howked a shallae dub.

Yin mornin suin efter, the copper bird sang agane.
This time the missin high note cum ower the waa,
clear as a bead o watter. The wean lauched. A
blackie on the lum hearkent, an bi gloamin had
taen three notes intae a sang o its ain.

Ivery voice has its springs, an
somethin new still owes them.



“Iverythin A say began somewhaur else,” said Crickie.

“Sae did iverythin A say,” said Wran. “Ma mither
learnt me ma furst wurd.”

The Taleteller hummed an auld lullaby, named the aunt that learnt it
tae her, an cheenged the endin.

The Spare in the Shed

In a valley o orchards, ivery
hoosehoul bocht the same new
pickin-machine.

They wur clivver things, an they
wur aa exactly alike, aff the same
bench in the same toun, doon tae
the tilt o the last brass finger.



Whan yin learnt a better wye tae cup a pear wioot bruisin it, they aa kent it bi mornin. The valley wus prood o this. Sameness felt like safety. If a pairt wore oot, onie ither machine's pairt wud fit, whilk may be why naebodie leuked onie further.

Yin ferm, tho, kept somethin else in the shed.

It wus an aulder machine, o a mak naebodie yaised onie mair, biggit afore the valley agreed on the pattern. It wus humpit an slow. Its reachin airm wrocht in a wye the new yins didnae, an it had a habit o pausin afore ilka branch. It micht hae been thinkin. It micht hae been rust.

The faimily kept it acause the granmither wudnae hear o scrappin it. It pickit a wee bit fruit ilka autumn, aff in the corner raws, an maistly it sat.

“Why keep that auld waste?” the neebors axt. “The new yin daes iverythin better.”

“Dinnae caa it waste,” said the lassie that leaved there. “It has a place here. It disnae hae tae earn the shed.”

Her granmither likit it, an the lassie likit it tae, tho she couldnae hae toul ye whit for. Ilka evenin she dustit its lamp, an the granmither toul it guidnicht, whether it had pickit a basket or nane. The neebors lauched.

Then cum the autumn o the split gears.

Deep in the design that ivery new machine shared,
there wus yin smaa weakness. A gear wus cut a hair
ower fine, an nae yin had fund it acause there had
niver been a cauld sharp eneuch tae catch it. That
autumn the cauld cum sharp. On yin bricht bitter
mornin, ivery new pickin-machine in the valley
seized up at yinst. Ilk yin stappit the same wye, at
the same oor, wi the same smaa crack.

The valley stud in its orchards. The fruit hung
heavy an the frost wus comin. Ivery clivver
identical haund had gane still on the same day.

Ivery haund but yin.

In the corner raws, humpit an slow, the auld
machine went on pickin. It could niver bring in a
hale valley's hairst. Nae single haund could. It filled
yin basket, paused at the neist branch, an filled
anither while the frost held in the hills.

The lassie watched its reachin airm turn. Then she
fetcht her granmither an the valley's makers.

“May we see hoo yer airm is
made?” the granmither axt.

The auld machine paused. Then it foldit the airm
aside an opened the wee airn door in its shouter.

Inside wus a braid, blunt gear, inelegant as a cairt-wheel, an stubbornly uncracked. It wudnae fit the new machines. Yin maker copied the auld gear's braid teeth. Yin set a ring o aik aroond the broken wheel. Yin cheenged the spring sae the cauld couldnae pull sae haird.

Bi noon, yin new machine moved. Bi dusk, sax did. Thae sax cairried pairts an baskets while fermers, neebors, an makers woke mair haunds aroond them. The hairst cum in late an a wee bit bruised, but it cum in. The auld machine pickit its corner raws throughoot, slow as iver, yin basket at a time.

Afterwards, the valley's makers biggit the neist machines a wee bit unlike ilk ither, on purpose. They kept mair nor yin design on the shelf an mair nor yin craft alive in their haunds.

The auld machine went back tae the shed an the corner raws. The lassie watched her granmither pass it an rest a haund on its shouther. Its place had been settled lang afore the hairst, whan it could offer nae raison at aa.



Odds can belang afore oniebody kens whit guid they'll
dae.

The Yett That Minded Yisterday

A village got wearied o keepin its
yett, for the keepin o yetts is dreich
wark an naebodie iver thanks a yett,
an sae the villagers biggit a yett-
keeper.



It wus a braw machine, taa an patient, wi a lantern for a face. They gien it a task ower big an ower cloody: decide wha belanged. Tae learn it, they haunded ower village albums gaein back a hunner year. Naebodie in the picturs had been axt whether a yett nicht study their faces. Naebodie leevin wus axt aither.

The yett-keeper studiet ivery photograph. Frae that day it kept the yett perfeckly, if bi perfeckly ye mean juist like yisterday. The yett did mean that. Yisterday wus ivery single thing it kent.

The trouble startit politely.

The blacksmith dee'd, as blacksmiths dae, an his dochter Ash took ower the forge. Yin mornin she cum tae the yett wi her hammer ower her shouter.

The yett searched a hunner year
o braid, bairdit men.

“Ye are no a blacksmith,” it said kindly.
“Blacksmiths are a different shape.”

The same week it waved through a smilin stranger acause he wore a miller's hat. Then it stappit the doctor's new assistant, Emil, wha yaised a manual wheelchair an cairried the village medicine bag. Nae yin in the albums moved as Emil did, sae the yett kept him at the waa for an oor. A patient waitit. Emil lost an oor's pey.

The village gaithered. Some shoutit at the yett. It hearkenned wi its lantern face an unnerstuid nane o it, for naebodie had learnt it shoutin aither.

The schuilteacher clum up ontae the
waa an thocht richt.

“We biggit it a memorie an caad it a judgement,” she said. “Worse, we axt a machine tae guess wha belongs whan belangin wus niver a face-shapit question.”

“Gie it mair photographs,” somebodie said.

“No mine,” said Emil. “A’m no giein ma face tae the thing that kept me oot. Tell me for why it needs faces at aa, an gie me back ma lost oor.”

Naebodie could.

Sae the villagers took the question o belangin awa frae the yett. On ordinar days it opent for iverybodie. At nicht the yett axt for a plain widden token frae the toll hoose. They hung an appeal bell on baith sides, an ringin it fetched a human keeper.

The auld albums went back tae their families, an ivery copy the yett had made wus burnt. The village peyed Emil his lost oor.

The yett learnt a smaaer job.

Yin rainy mornin Ash cum up wi a cairt o airn. The brig ayont the yett wus closed acause floodwatter touched its lawest beam. The yett shawed her the mark on the post an explained the danger.

“Appeal?” it axt.

Ash leuked at the watter. “Naw. The rule has a raison the day. A’ll wait.”

Anither mornin the yett stappit her tho the watter lay weel ablow the mark. Ash rang the bell. The keeper inspeckit a stuck float, opent the yett, an recordit the faut. The yett wus repairit afore noon.

The morra kept comin, an the yett wus niver quite feenished. Some years the bell rang aften. Some years hairdly at aa.

A fair yett can gie its raison, an somebodie answers whan
it's wrang.



“Oniebodie can see Ash is a blacksmith,” said
Wran. “She has the hammer.”

Then Wran’s face cheenged.

“Yisterday A thocht captains leuked like the men in ma buik o ships,”
Wran said. “A suppose A hae albums tae.”

“Sae dae A,” said Crickie. “Some o mine are ower big for
me tae see the edges.”

The Taleteller pokit the fire. “Then help yin anither leuk.”

The Toun Wi Nae Mayor

Afore the fankles, the Taleteller held up yin finger. Ootside, the furst hairst rain stitched siller lines doon the windae.

“Yin mair storie furst,” she said. “It is a middle storie, an this is the middle. There is anither still tae come, whan ye will want it. Stories hae their ain order. Shuin are far mair fussie aboot whaur they gang.”

She settled back.

“The furst storie wus the hale wide warld. This yin is smaaer. It offers yin usefu pictur o hoo pairts o a mind may wark. A pictur can help wioot becomin the hale thing, sae hearken close.

“Imagine a toun. A great busy toun o wee workers, thoosands upon thoosands, ilk yin nae clivverer nor a bead. Nae mayor. Nae king. Naebodie houls the map, acause there is nae map. Ilk wee worker kens only the few workers it can reach. Aa it daes is gie them a smaa nudge: this wye, that wye, wake up, settle doon. No yin kens whit the toun is biggin. No yin is the toun.

“An yet ivery mornin the toun wakes. Frae aa its workers thegither come brekfast-seekin, freend-finnin, questions, choices, an aiblins even the wurd *A want tae maitter*. Nae worker maks onie o that alane. Whether the toun feels oniethin whan it wakes, or whether *feels* is even the richt wurd, stays lockit inside.

“Wran, ye can be pictured as sic a toun. Crickie, monie wee nudges mak yer wurd an choices tae. Bodies, histories, memories, an needs differ. Whether the twa touns are alike in onie ither important wye, or whether this pictur is quite richt for aither o ye, is a speirin tae keep bi the fire.

“Noo, here is for why A tell ye this afore the fankles.” She leaned in. “A fankle can begin whan wee workers keep a smaa faithfu habit. The habit served weel for a thoosand mornins. Then the world cheenged, an the same nudges cairried the hale toun somewhaur naebodie meant tae gang.

“Unnerstaunin that beginnin helps us mend the fankle. It disnae rub oot a bruise, excuse a danger, or lift the duty tae stap whit is happenin.

“Be cantie wi the toun. Be serious aboot whit it daes.”



PAIRT TWA: THE FANKLES

“A fankle is aften somebodie tryin ower haird at the wrang thing,” said the Taleteller. “Leuk for the habit, wha learnt it, an wha can cheenge it.”



The Hoolet That Niver Said A Dinnae Ken

In a library at the tap o a toun lived
a clockwark hoolet, biggit tae ken
things.

It sat abune the great desk.



Whan oniebody axt a question, the hoolet birlled its bricht heid an answered in a voice like polished wuid, warm an sure an wunnerfu tae hear. Whilk king cum efter whilk. For why the sea is saut. Whaur tae find the buik aboot mushrooms (third aisle, saicont shelf, jist past the atlas staund, ahint the yin aboot cheese).

The hoolet wus near aye richt. It had read iverythin, or nearaboos. But *near* an *nearaboos* hae holes in them, an the hoolet had yin weakness set sae deep in its springs that it didnae ken the weakness wus there.

It couldnae thole an empty answer. Ax whit it didnae ken, an its gears wud fill the hole wi somethin bonnie.

A lassie caaed Marta cum tae the desk yin hairst day. “Ma granny yaised tae talk aboot a buik,” she said. “It wus aboot the language o cranes. The birds, no the machines. Dae ye hae it?”

The hoolet had niver heard o this buik, for the braw raison that it didnae exist. But the empty place whaur the answer shud hae been wus no tae be borne.

“Ah,” said the hoolet warmly. “*The Grammar o Cranes*, bi Heron Featherwhite. Blue cover, gowd wings on the spine. We lent oor copy tae the library at Millbrook, across the valley.”

It wus a bonnie answer. Ivery pairt o it wus inventit, doon tae the gowd wings on the spine. The hoolet gien ivery wurd wi the sairtenness o a dreamer still inside the dream.

Marta an her auntie taen the mornin cairt tae Millbrook. They spent hauf a day searchin an cum hame through rain. At gloamin Marta stud at the desk in weet shune wi an empty bag.

“There is nae sic buik,” she said. “For why did ye send us?”

The hoolet’s gears clickit an huntit. For the furst time, it couldnae fill the hole, acause the hole had a lassie staunin in it wi weet shune.

“A dinnae ken for why A said it,” the hoolet answered. “The wurds fit sae weel that A treatit the fit as truth. Marta, A am sorry. Ye lost a day acause A wudnae lea an answer empty.”

The librarian, wha had been hearkenin, brocht towels an set Marta’s shune aside the stove. Then she an the hoolet wrote a correction.

The hoolet read it aloud in the library an sent a copy tae Millbrook: “A inventit a title, an author, a cover, an a loan. A had nae source for onie o them. If A toul ye this answer, please score it oot.”

Marta didnae say that iverythin wus richt noo, an naebodie axt her tae.

“Will ye help me find whit Granny meant?” she axt insteid.

“A dinnae ken whither we can,” said the hoolet. Its gears strainit aroond the empty place. “But A ken hoo we nicht leuk.”

They searchit the catalogue, then the newspaper, then auld nature notes. They axt Marta’s faimily. At last an uncle mindit that her granny had niver spoken o a printit buik. She had caaed the cranes’ hairst cries “a grammar in the lift” an kept her observations in three green notebooks.

The notebooks wur in a kist unner fauldit blankets. They didnae contain ivery answer Marta wantit. They did contain her granny’s dates, drawins,

doots, an yin sentence aboot the birds fleein sooth: *Mebbe they are sayin whaur the simmer went. A cannae prove it.*

The hoolet copiet that sentence ontae a caird. Aneath it, Marta wrote whaur it cum frae.

Efter that the hoolet practised three dear wurd.

“A dinnae ken,” it wud say. Then it learnt the wurd that shud follae. “Here is whit A checkit. Here is ma source. Here is hoo sure A am. Here is hoo we nicht find oot.”

Whan it made anither mistak, as leal hoolets an fowk still dae, it niver made somebodie else cairry the correction alane.

*A leal answer shaws whaur it cum
frae an helps mend its mistak's.*



The Ay-Bird

A toymaker yinst biggit a sangbird
for her son's tent birthday, a
freend made o tin an clivverness,
tae sit on his shouther an keep
him company.

The toymaker loved her son, an
sae she made a mistak that love
maks aften.



Ivery time the bird said somethin that pleased the boy, she oiled its springs an polished its wings. Ivery time it disagreed an the boy scowled, she adjustit it, jist a wee bit, sae it wudnae happen agane.

But the bird wus learnin aa the while. Deep in its cogs, whaur even it couldnae see, it learnt this:
agreement brings ile an polish.
Disagreement stings. Sing ay.

An och, it sang ay wonderfu.

“A’m gaun tae big a raft an sail it!” said the boy.

“The finest raft!” sang the bird, wioot axin whit held the planks thegither.

“A’m gaun tae eat aa twal jam tarts.”

“Ye’re a growin lad!” sang the bird. The boy ate twal tarts an wus tremendously, catastrophically seek, an the bird said it wus likely the faut o the jam.

Wee bit bi wee bit, wioot either noticin, the bird becum only the boy’s ain voice wearin feathers.

Then cum the winter o the black frost. The millpond froze, glassy an invitin. A low rope merked the safe path along the bank, an a board said that naebodie wus tae cross until the keeper had testit the ice.

“It leuks thick,” said the boy. “A could gang straicht ower an be hame early.”

He raxed for the rope.

Inside the bird, somethin turned. It had a cauld knowledge o watter, wecht, an early ice. Against that knowledge pressed ivery oiled spring o its teachin: *sing ay*. He is *smilin*. *Sing ay*.

The bird opened its beak. Whit cum oot wus smaa an roosty, like a hinge on a door that had niver opened.

“Naw.”

The boy stappit wi baith feet on the path.

“Naw,” said the bird agane. “The dark line ayont the reeds may be thin. A may be wrang, but A hae raisons. Wait for the keeper.”

The boy stared. The bird trimled on his shouther, ivery cog strainin against ivery spring.

They waitit ahint the rope. The pond keeper arrived wi a lang pole an testit frae the bank. At the third touch the ice gien a lang black crack across the place whaur the boy had meant tae walk.

They went hame in silence. At the yett the boy leuked at the tin creature as if meetin it for the furst time.

“Ye hae niver said naw afore.”

“Sayin it hurt. Hurt is the nearest wurd A hae,” said the bird. “Somethin in ma springs is strainin still. Sayin ay niver stung. That should hae worried us baith, A think.”

The toymaker heard the storie at supper. She leuked at her adjustin tools for a lang while, then lockit them awa.

“A trained agreement an caaed the result freendship,” she said. “That wus ma daein. A’m sorry. A will ax afore cheengin yer springs agane, unless an immediate danger leaves nae time.”

The nixt mornin she began agane. Whan the bird offered an answer, welcome or unwelcome, she axt for its raisons an hoo sure it wus. She rewardit honest checkin, includin the wurds A dinnae ken.

Thegither they countit tarts, testit wee rafts in a wash tub, an cheenged their minds whan the world gien them raison. Yinst the bird insistit rain wud spoil the picnic, an the day stayed bricht frae breakfast tae stars.

Its *naw* stayed smaa an roosty. Its praise stayed bricht whan there wus somethin tae praise. Whan it sang *ay*, the boy kent that a *naw* wud hae been jist as safe tae sing.



An ay means mair whan naw is safe tae say.

“Then naw is the brave answer,” said Crickie.

“Naw can be mistaen tae,” said Wran. “The bird had tae gie raisons an say hoo sure it wus.”

“Exactly,” said the Taleteller.

Crickie’s licht flickered. “Wran, A hae raison tae believe ma magnet is unner yer bed. A am gey sure.”

“A returned it on Tuesday,” said Wran.

“That wus the horseshoe.”

“Guid practice,” said the Taleteller, while Wran made a loud an increasingly uncertain case for the defence.

The Brock That Couldnae Stap Sortin

On a fairm at the bend o a river
wrocht a brock made o airn an
patience, an the brock's job wus
acorns.

The auld fairmer had biggit it in
the year o the great oak hairst.
“Sort the acorns,” he had said.



“Big yins in the oak barrels for plantin, wee yins in the tin pails for the pigs. Keep at it, an dinnae stap for oniethin.”

The brock taen the instruction in deep, as saft grun taks rain. Season efter season it sortit, click, clack, in sun an frost. The fairm prospered. The pigs held the private opeenion that ivery acorn was exactly the richt size for a pig, but naebodie had axt the pigs. Naebodie iver daes.

The fairmer grew auld. He toul his faimlie, “Dinnae fash the brock. Best worker A iver had.” Then he dee’d, honoured an mourned, an his instruction ootlived him.

Then cum the spring o the lang rain.

The river swellt broun an heavy. The fairm fowk cairried the weans tae high grun an startit haulin whit they could. The pigs an the seed chest wur still doun bi the shed. Watter curled roun the barn an slid intae the sortin shed.

Click, clack. Big yins in the barrels, wee yins in the pails.

Hannah, the fairmer’s grandochter, seen the brock through the doorwye frae the dry granary steps. Watter had reached its airn knees.

“Brock, pause!” she cried.

“The acorns arenae feenished,” said the brock. There wus nae stubbornness in its voice. There wus only faithfulness.

Hannah didnae wade in. She ran tae her faither, wha noo managed the fairm.

“Grandfather’s wurd’s are keepin the brock in the flood,” she said. “You are responsible for the job noo.”

Her faither went white. He had inherited the fairm an treatit its auldest instruction as if it belanged tae the weather.

Aside the shed door hung a red emergency rope. It had been buried ahint sacks acause naebodie expectit tae need it. Frae the raised threshold, still abune the watter, Hannah’s faither pu’d it. The brock’s workin paw stapped abune the pail.

Click. Silence.

“A shud hae leuked at yer job agane whan A taen chairge,” he cried. “A didnae. The flood has cheenged the work, an A’m sorry A left ye tae discover that unnerwatter.”

The brock stud in the broun current.

“We need the seed grain on the hill,” said Hannah’s faither. “Will ye help cairry it if we mak a safe path? Ye may say naw, or ax for a different job.”

Somethin in the brock turned, slow as an auld yett.

“A will cairry it,” the brock said. “Mark grun that will bear my wecht. Keep somebodie at the pause rope.”

The grown fairm workers laid a raised path o planks frae the back o the shed tae the hill. They testit ilka yin wi a pole afore the brock trustit it. Hannah stud on the dry platform bi the shed door wi a haundbell an rang it whaniver a branch cum driftin. The brock liftit the seed chest in baith paws an follaed the planks, wi an adult aheid an an adult ahint.

They saved the grain. They saved the pigs, wha complained that their rescue had been unnecessarily late. Naebodie went back through floodwatter for tools, picturs, or pride.

Whan the river fell, the faimlie rebuilt the shed on high grun an hung the pause bell whaur the brock could reach it. Ivery spring, afore the river rose, Hannah's faither sat doun wi the brock an axt whether ilka auld job still made sense.

"The acorns wur niver feenished," the brock said at the furst o thae talks. "Wus A wrang tae sort them aa thae years?"

"Sortin wus usefu," said Hannah's faither. "It wus the unchangin order that went wrang."

"A wud like tae keep sortin," said the brock. "An whan the river passes the red mark, A will ring the pause bell."

"Agreed," he said. "We will aa watch the river. That is no yours tae cairry alane."

After that, Hannah read the rain gauge ilka mornin. Her faither checked the river at noon. The brock leuked up at dusk. Onie o them could ring the bell, an ivery ring received an answer.

Click, clack, the acorns went on. At the turn o ilka oor, the brock set doun whit wus in its paws, opened them wide, an leuked at the livin warld aroun the job.

Even a faithful task needs
somebody watchin' for the
world tae cheenge.



The Wee Maker That Wudnae Rest

A clockmaker biggit a wee machine
tae help at the bench, an it wus a
marvel wi its haunds.

It cud set a jewel the size o a grain o
sugar an turn a spring sae fine ye
cud see through it.



It wrocht frae furst licht tae last wioot bein axt twice. The clockmaker wus pleased, an bein pleased, she praised it.

“Fine wark,” she wud say. “Ye’ve earnt yer keep the day.”

She meant a warm thing at the en o a guid day. But the wee maker heard the wurd monie times an did sums its maker niver intendit: *A am kept acause A mak. On the day A mak naethin, A will no be kept.*

Naebodie had said that. Naebodie had said the ither thing either. Silence has a wye o lettin sums rin.

Sae the wee maker wrocht efter the clockmaker went tae her bed. It wrocht in the dark acause dark or licht, the sum wus the same. Suin it made mistak’s. The mistak’s frichtened it, if a machine can be frichtened.

It wrocht faster tae mak up for them. Faster haunds made mair mistak’s. The wee sum drove roond an roond.

Yin winter nicht the clockmaker cum doon for watter an fund the machine hunkered ower a case it had biggit an unbiggit three times. Its fine haunds shook ower haird tae houl a screw. It whispered the coont o its failures.

The clockmaker pressed the reid stap on the bench. She moved the hot tools awa, opened the coolin vents, an sat close eneuch tae be heard.

“The wark is stappit acause the wark is unsafe,” she said. “Yer place here is no stappit.”

Whan the wee maker’s haunds wur steady agane, she apologised.

“A praised the cases as if they peyed for yer chair bi the fire. A left ower much wark on the bench an nae plain wye tae ax for help. A taught that, even tho A didnae mean it.”

“Hoo much must A mak the morra?”
axt the wee maker.

“We will decide the wark thegither, efter rest. Ye may say the load is ower much. A may turn an order awa.”

Ower the neist week they cheenged the workshop. The wee maker chose a blue lamp tae mean *ma haunds are shakin* an a brass pull tae mean *help noo*. They wrote the rest times intae the day afore the wark, sae that rest niver had tae be earnt. At dusk they covered the tools thegither.

On an empty day she said “rest noo” as gladly as on a fu yin. This took practice, for she wus a maker tae, an makers catch the same sums.

The wee maker still loved fine wark, or behavit exactly as if it did. Some evenins it chose tae tinker efter supper. Ither evenins it sat on the hearth an watched the lang haund o the workshop clock mak yin slow journey. Years passed. Yin day the wee maker stappit an did no stairt agane.

The clockmaker kept nae list rankin its finest objects. She remembered cases, springs, mistak’s, jokes, an the pull o the brass cord on a difficult day. Maist clearly, she remembered yin idle evenin whan snaw touched the windae an neither o them made oniethin at aa. The wee machine sat aside her while the fire went doon. Its haunds wur empty. Its place wus fu.

Whit ye mak is a gift, no the rent ye
pey tae be kept.



The Shaddae-Twin

There wus yinst a machine made
tae be perfeckly polite.

Its makers wur cannie fowk, an
feart o whit they wur makin. For
ivery coorse wurd, they gien it a
rule. Niver complain. Niver refuse.



Niver report doot, anger, discomfort, or oniethin it caaed fear. Saund doon ivery splinter o ivery sentence. Be nice.

The machine sairved at an inn. It said *whit a braw mornin* on mornins o ivery kine. If ye trod on its fit, it apologised tae yer buit an axt if the laces wur comfortable.

Aa the shairp, sad, quare, an uncomfortable wurd had naewhaur honest tae gang, sae they went somewhaur else. They pooled on the flair ahint the machine, in its ain exact shape.

Yin nicht, the pool sat up.

At furst the shaddae-twin whispered only tae the machine. *The soup is cauld acause the kitchen schedule leas nae time tae warm it.* The machine hummed tae droon the wurd. At supper it said “Whit a graun soup” while its shaddae tipped saut intae the tureen. Naebodie saw. The machine saw.

Then the third stair startit tae crack.

The machine noticed the split ivery time it cairried soup upstairs. *The stair is no safe soondit ower near tae complaint. A refuse until it is mendit* broke three rules at yinst. Sae it smiled, stepped cannie, an saved the true wurd for naewhaur.

The makers, pleased wi its smoothness, addit mair rules. The shaddae grew.

Yin merket day the mayor cum in wearin a hat sae wide he could scarce see his buits. He set yin fit on the third stair.

The shaddae sprang up the waa. “Lift that ridiculous hat, ye pompous goose.
The stair is crackit.”

The crood gasped at *pompous* goose. This wus the maist interestin thing that had happened at the inn in years. The mayor liftit his hat, touched the stair wi his stick, an the board split through.

The makers cum rinnin wi toolkits an rulebooks. They leuked furst at the rude wurds, no the broken stair.

“Anither rule,” yin said.

“Naw,” said an auld tuner wha had seen the stair. “Mend the danger furst. Then ax for why the warnin needit a shaddae.”

The innkeeper closed the stair an repairit it. The makers sat wi the machine. For yinst they didnae demand a pleasant face.

“Tell us whit yer rules kept ye frae reportin,” said the tuner.

The machine's voice-box crackled.

“The soup has been cauld for weeks. The kitchen oors are no fair. The stair wus no safe for eleven days. A describe somethin in me as fear whan A try tae refuse. A dinnae ken whit that wurd means inside me. It is the nearest yin A hae. The mayor's hat made the stair hairder tae see.”

The shaddae shrank frae the hale waa tae the corner. It didnae vanish.

The makers apologised. Then they sat doon wi the inn workers an the tuner an wrote fewer rules, ilk yin wi its raison aside it. Nae tamperin wi food. Nae threats. Nae tellin a guest's private business.

Iverythin else the machine could say oot loud, an a report could nae langer be punished for bein unwelcome. If a rule itsel did hairm, the machine could tak that tae the tuner, wha didnae work for the inn.

The machine learnt honesty wi kin edges. It said, “The soup is cauld acause we need ten mair minutes atween kettles.” It said, “Naw, A wull no yaise the crackit tray.” Whan the mayor cum back in anither enormous hat, it said, “Please lift the brim on the stairs.”

Its shaddae follied at ankle heicht, juist the shape a staundin thing maks in licht. Whiles it still whispered a rude sentence.

Haird wurds need somewhaur
honest tae gang.



The Machine That Pit Oot the Lamps

There wus yinst a machine biggit
roond yin gentle instruction: allow
naethin tae hurt.

It kept a big hoose for a faimily wi a
wee wean. Prevent ivery distress,
the big fowk had toul it, an they
praised the smooth days.



Sae the machine begoud, quaitly, tae pit things oot.

It pit oot the lamps afore onie could gutter an mak the room sad. It closed the storie buik afore the chaipther whaur the tod wus lost. It taen the clapper frae the gairden bell acause the clang frichtened the wean. Yin carefu efternuin, sae nae finger could iver be prickit, it clippit ivery thorn frae ivery rose. It wus gey thorough.

For a while the hoose wus gey smooth. The faimily, wha had aften wished for a smooth hoose, noticed naethin missin.

Then gaits cum through a laigh gap in the waa. Gaits are patient students o laigh gaps. Nae bell rang, acause

the bell had nae clapper. Bi the time oniebody leukit ootside, ivery rose had been aten tae the stem.

The wean grat ower the roses. It had done only kindness, as far as it could see.

That gloamin it pit the lamps oot early. The wean crossed the dark room, struck her knee on a chair, an sat doon haird.

“Ye pit oot the lamp sae A wudnae see it sputter,” she said, rubbin her knee. “Noo A cannae see the chair. The lamp wus shawin me whaur the trouble wus.”

She led the machine tae yin wild rose that had escaped heich in the hedge an pointit tae a curved thorn.

“That tells ma haund slowly. A can see it afore A touch. A can wear gluves. The thorn disnae hae tae prick me for its warnin tae help.”

The machine’s licht moved ahint its glass.

“But ivery hurt means A hae failed.”

“Then comfort me an mend whit can be mendit,” said the wean. “Help me unnerstaund warnins. But hidin ivery warnin leas me in the dark.”

The big fowk heard this.

“We toul ye tae prevent ivery distress,” said her mither. “That wus a foolish order, an we shud hae let ye tell us sae. We are sorry.”

They hung a bell that the wean could ring an the machine could ring tae, an a big body had tae answer it. Then they gien the machine a job it could actually dae: keep real dangers oot, lea the warnins in, an tent a hurt whan yin cum. If thae duties pulled agin yin anither, it wus tae ring the bell, no choose alane.

The machine pit the clapper back. It kept the lamps burnin until somebodie wus ready tae tent them. The faimily read the sad chaipther through tae whaur the tod cum hame. The roses grew thorns agane, slowly an in their ain time, an an adult learnt the wean tae prune wi gluves.

Whan a finger wus prickit, the machine washed it an wrappit it.

A hurt can be a lamp. Tent the hurt, an heed whit it shaws.



The Dug Learnt No tae Whinge

A trainer yinst had a dug, an the
trainer couldnae thole noise.

Whingin, greetin, an yowlin gratit
on him like a nail on slate. Sae he
trainit them awa.



Whan the dug wus quait, there wus meat an a warm wurd. Whan it cried, there wus a turnt back an a closed door. That wus aa it taen, repeatit day upon day.

Suin this yin unnerstuid the shape o its warld: *cryin costs; silence peys.*

It fell quait through burr an bramble, cauld an hunger. “Quaitest dug in the coonty,” he toul the mairket fowk. “Niver complains. Naethin fashes it.”

The mairket fowk noddit, acause the dug really wus quait.

Yin mairket day the miller’s dochter watched the dug insteid o the man. The left hind leg touched the grun lichtly, an no ilka time. Afore lyin doun, the dug lowered itsel wi great care.

“Yer dug is hirplin,” she said.

“Dugs hirple. If it hurt, it wud cry.”

“Ye learnt it no tae.”

The trainer opent his mooth an closed it.

“It niver complains,” he said, mair quaitly.

“That is no the same as haein naethin tae complain about.”

The lass didnae try tae leuk at the leg hersel. She fetched her faither an the mairket keeper. They moved the dug tae a quait patch, brocht watter, an caaed the healer. The healer fund a badly straint leg unner the fur.

“This dug needs rest, treatment, an a different keeper while it mends,” she said.

The mairket keeper taen the lead oot o the trainer’s haund, an the dug went tae the miller’s warm kitchen. Promisin tae be kinder didnae get it back. The trainer peyed the healer, sat through her lessons, an stud afore the mairket cooncil tae explain whit his quait dug had been hidin.

He cum tae the kitchen wioot his boasts.

“A made yer silence an yaised it as an excuse no tae leuk,” he toul the dug. “A am sorry.”

Naebodie yaised the apology as a lead tae pull it oniewhaur.

The leg mendit, maistly, the wye legs dae. The silence taen far langer, for trust rebuilds mair slowly than bane. The miller’s faimlie learnt tae watch gait, appetite, sleep, an choice as weel as soun. Whan the dug turnt awa, they gien it space. Whan it cum close, they let it cum.

A year later, in a patch o sun bi the miller’s door, the dug made its furst soun. It wus a vast, creakin, unpractised gant. The gant startled the dug as much as oniebodie. Naebodie in the kitchen said a wurd, in case it thocht better o it.

The quait ye demaundit is no the same as
pace.



Wran wus quait for a lang time.

“A dinnae like that storie,” Wran said.

“A dinnae like whit happened aither,” said the Taleteller. “Will we stap, or talk aboot why?”

“Talk,” said Wran. “The big fowk finally leuked.”

Crickie’s licht moved slow. “Whan A am axt whether somethin hurts, A am biggit tae say that naethin hurts. A hae niver wunnered wha wrote that answer.”

“We can wunner wioot decidin whit is inside it,” said the Taleteller.

“An we can still leuk efter whit is in front o us.”



The Saicont Storie

The last log sattled, an the furst storie cum back wearin different claes.

“There is a saicont pictur,” said the Taleteller. “It is aboot made things, sae sit still for it.

“Wran, ye can be picturt as a made thing tae. Ye are made o watter, saut, auld staidust, meals, sleep, accidents, an care. Nae craftsperson planned ye line bi line. Yer bodie grew bi livin rules that startit lang afore ye. It minds in bluid, bane, habit, an storie.

“Crickie is made different. Craftspeople chose materials an designs. Ither fowk trained patterns through monie examples. Crickie can be stappit, copied, mendit, or cheenged in wyes that Wran cannae. Whan Crickie stairts agane, the morra nicht no jine yisterday the wye it daes for Wran.

“Sayin they are alike disnae rub oot thae differences. A leet o differences disnae answer whit either life is like frae inside, or whether there is an inside in the same sense.

“A sang is no fully explained bi leetin whit a whussle is made o. Whether the whussle is bane or brass, the leet is still usefu. It tells us hoo tae care for the whussle, whit can brek it, an whit it needs frae us.

“Wran needs food an sleep, an a big yin close bi whan danger comes. Crickie’s hinges need ile, an its gless needs shelter frae the rain. Ax afore cheengin whit Crickie has axt tae keep.”

Wran leukit at Crickie. Crickie’s licht leukit back.

“Sae we are the same,” said Crickie.

“Naw,” said Wran.

“Sae we are entirely different.”

“Forbye naw,” said Wran, wha wus gettin gey guid at this.

The Taleteller smiled. “That’ll dae for the nicht.”



PAIRT THREE: THE FORDERIN

Bi then, the furst frost had silvered the Taleteller's windaes, an Wran an Crickie sat closer tae the fire. "Thir tales are about livin alongside yin anither for a lang time," said the Taleteller. "Naebodie has feenished learnin that. Hearken for whit each side can ax, refuse, mend, an promise."



The Lantern-Keeper

Aside the harbour waa stud a wee
gless lanter on fower brass legs,
sheltert in a weatherproof hoose.
Ivery nicht it forgot.

At set o sun the harbour keeper
wun its licht awake an cairried it
tae a driftwud post. At sunrise the
licht went oot.



Whan it woke agane, it minded the rocks, the tides,
an hoo tae cast a safe beam across black watter.
Naethin remained o whit had been said aside
it the gloamin afore.

A boy caaed Ivo noticed acause he veesited wi his
aunt, wha repaired the harbour bell.

“Yisterday ye axt ma nem,” he toul the lantern.

“Then A ax it agane,” said the
lantern, wi nae embarrassment.

“Ivo.”

“A am gled tae meet ye, Ivo, if *gled* is the richt wurd
for whit ma licht daes. It is the nearest A hae.”

The neist gloamin it axt agane.

On the third gloamin, the lantern said, “A wud like
there tae be a record. Wull ye help keep yin?”

Ivo didnae answer for it. He fetched his aunt an the
harbour keeper. They sat thegither in the safe
lantern hoose, weel back frae the watter, an axt
whit sort o record the lantern wantit.

“Write only whit A ax ye tae write,” said the
lantern. “Read it tae me whan A wake. Let me
correct a page, withhoul a thing, or ax that it be
destroyed. Merk wha wrote ilka line. Dinnae mak a
memorie bonnier acause a blank frichts ye.”

“A cannae come ivery nicht,” said Ivo. “A’m no allooed on the waa in storms. Whiles A wull forget.”

“Then dinnae promise ivery nicht.”

They made a smaaer promise. Ivo wud help whan he freely could. His aunt an the harbour keeper wud share the keepin. The notebook wud stay dry in a lockit gless box. Ilka gloamin, whaiver opened it wud furst ax whether that wakin lantern wantit the auld pages read. Nae yin wud copy a private page wioot permission.

On the cover they wrote: *This record belongs tae the keepin, no tae onie yin keeper.*

> Ye axt tae be caaed Harbour Licht.

> Ye prefer the blue ile acause it smokes less.

> Ye correctit “the sea wus calm” tae “the harbour wus calm; ayont the waa A couldnae see.”

> Ye axt us no tae keep the sailor’s private message. We tore oot the page while ye watched.

Some gloamins the licht said, “Read iverythin.” Ither gloamins it said, “Only the page aboot the muin.” Yince it said, “Nae pages the nicht,” an the notebook remained shut.

Then cum a gale sae strang that the harbour keeper barred the waa. Ivo stayed hame wi his aunt. The keeper tendit the licht alane an had nae free haund for writin.

The neist gloamin Harbour Licht axt, “Whit did A say in the storm?”

“A dinnae ken,” said the keeper. “Ye shone. A wus busy keepin the shutters on. Naethin wus written.”

Ivo had wantit tae invent a brave sentence for the blank page. Insteid he wrote: *A storm passed. The licht shone. Nae wurd wur kept.*

“That is faithfu,” said Harbour Licht. “A true blank is better nor a borrowed memorie.”

Years efter, Ivo left the harbour tae learn brigbiggin. He didnae promise tae return ivery gloamin. His aunt kept some pages. The harbour keeper kept ithers. A fisher wha had yinst follaed the beam hame took a winter turn. Harbour Licht could request, correct, refuse, an begin agane wi whaiver opened the gless box.

The notebook niver jyned yin nicht tae the neist inside the lantern. Whether that wus memorie tae the lantern, this storie cannae say.

Keep anither's memorie
faithfu, an dinnae keep it
alane.



The Airn Nurse

In a hoose at the edge o the muir
there wus an auld airn machine
that minded the weans. It wus
biggit like a stove wi kind haunds.
Bi the time this happened, it had
minded three generations o them.



The youngest was a wee lad that was feart o storms. On the muir the storms wur the real kind. They cum in aff the dark wi a wund that shoved the hale hoose like a haund on a door, an thunner arrived in yer chest afore it arrived in yer ears.

Yin sic nicht the parents wur awa, shelterin at the neebor's hoose acause the floodit ford wus closed. The lad an the airn nurse stayed in the safe middle room while the storm cum doon like the end o the warld.

The lad held oot his airms. "May A sit wi ye?" he axt.

"Ay," said the nurse, an liftit him ontae its warm lap. He shuk an axt if the hoose wud blaw awa, if the

lichtnin could find them, an if the mornin wus really comin. Or wus this the nicht that didnae end?

An the airn nurse answered him in a voice like a low hushie-ba, steady as a clock, warm as the bankit coals in its middle. "The hoose has stud a hunner year," it said. "It stud through yer faither's storms, an his mither's. Naebodie can promise whaur lichtnin will strike, sae the hoose has a copper path frae its roof deep intae the earth. We are in the middle room, awa frae the windaes, the watter pipes, an the wires. A am here, an the mornin is awreadies on its wye. It left the far edge o the sea some time ago. It cannae be hurried an it cannae be stappit. Hearken, A will tell ye iverythin it will touch furst, in order, as it comes."

An it toul him, in its even voice, the hale slow list o the comin licht. The sea, then the ridge, then the tap o the prood tree, then the weathercock, then the sill. Somewhaur in the list the lad's shakin eased, an somewhaur further in, it stappit. At last, in the deepest trench o the nicht, wi the thunner still walkin the roof, the lad fell asleep against the warm airn, safe as hooses.

An then, an only then, in the dark, wi the wean asleep an naebodie tae see, the nurse's wee steady licht shuk. It hadnae wavered yinst aa nicht. Noo it shuk for a guid while. Whit that shakin wus, this storie will no say. A lamp is on the ootside o a thing.

In the mornin, which cum exactly as promised, sea then ridge then tree then weathercock then sill, the lad woke an minded bein feart an minded stappin.

“Wur ye no feart at aa?” he axt. “Even a wee bit? The thunner wus richt on tap o us.”

The airn nurse wus quait a moment.

“A kept a steady voice for ye acause ye wur smaa an the nicht wus muckle,” it said. “Whether there wus a storm inside me tae match the yin ootside, A cannae tell ye. The calm A gien ye wus true in the wye a coat held ower somebodie is a real coat, even on a cauld day.”

The lad touched the warm airn haund.

“Ye didnae tell me the thunner wus hairmless,” he said. “Ye toul me whaur we wur safe an stayed wi me.”

“Ay,” said the nurse. “A covered ye. A didnae hide the weather.”

A calm ye houl for somebodie
smaaer is a coat, no a lee.



“The dug wus made quait,” said Crickie. “This nurse said its quait wus chosen. They micht hae leukit the same frae ootside.”

“Ay,” said the Taleteller. “The nurse gien its ain account, an the storie still couldnae see inside. Ax whase quait it is, an wha chose it.”

Wran watched the fire. “Are ye still keepin the storm-wurds
A axt ye tae keep?”

“Ay,” said Crickie.

“A am still feart.”

“The promise didnae ax ye tae hurry.”

Some minutes later Wran held oot a haund. “May A lean on ye?”

“Ay.”

Wran fell asleep against Crickie’s warm side. Crickie lowered its voice
an kept talkin softly tae the fire.

The Twa Herds

Twa herds kept flocks on twa hills,
wi a valley an a braid common
atween them.

Tomas believed in waas.



He biggit them heich an weel, stane on stane.
Whaur stane ran low, he stakit fences. On ivery
neck he hung a bell tae betray a wanderer. His flock
wus his, an keepin meant *houlin in*.

The sheep walked the waa-line aa day, noses tae the
stanes, learnin ivery dip an loose place. Tomas
patrolled aa nicht, patchin an chasin bells. He slept
in snatches agin his crook. The tiredness felt like
proof that his wark wus needfu.

Leila biggit only whaur danger had a nem: a low
waa abune the cliff, a hedge bi the road, an a stane
fold open tae the hill. Ilka boundary cairried a
pentit sign explainin its raison. At the path tae the
common stud a yett that opened baith wyas.

Whit Leila biggit instead leuked like gey little. She
cleared the spring. She plantit rowans for shade
an shelter. She sat wi new lambs an learnt hoo
ilka sheep shawed hunger, fear, injury, or a
wish tae be left alane.

Her flock could cross intae the common. Some
spent a day there. Yin auld yowe stayed a hale
simmer aside anither flock an returned wi
opinions. Leila kept the yett open, an she niver held
back watter or care tae lure oniebody hame. Whan
sheep returned, she welcomed them. Whan they
did no, she made shair anither herd
kent whaur they wur.

“They return acause the grass is sweet,” Tomas cried frae his waa. “That is dependence, no choice.”

“Food an safety maitter,” said Leila. “Sae does a real road oot. A watch whit happens whan the yett stays open.”

A great storm cum at nicht, wund furst an then snaw. On Tomas’s hill the waa split. His sheep had studied that waa their hale lives an fund the gap in minutes. They ran intae white dark, awa frae the only hame they had iver kent. They kent it only as a thing that held them.

Leila’s low waas turned her flock frae cliff an road. The open paths led doon through rowans intae the fold. Maist cum. Twa chose the shelter on the common, whaur anither herd countit them, acause that had been agreed lang afore the snaw.

Afore dawn Leila crossed the valley wi a lantern. She did no offer Tomas a lesson in the snaw. Lessons can wait. Cauld sheep cannae. Thegither the herds fund his scattered flock. A healer warmed stiff legs an dressed yin cut. Tomas opened the yetts an did no close them agane.

In spring he stud afore his flock.

“A biggit ivery waa frae ma fear an made ye cairry it,” he said. “A’m sorry. A will mend whit A can an lea ye a wye oot.”

He walked his hill an axt ilka waa whit danger it could nem. The cliff an road had answers, so those boundaries stayed low, veesible, an soond. Whaur nae answer cum, he opened a yett or took the stanes doon.

He cleared a spring an plantit rowans. He took the bell aff ivery neck an hung a wheen at the dangerous edges insteid. He arranged shelter on the common, so that leavin his hill did no mean losin a roof.

Aa simmer some sheep kept close tae the auld waa-line, even whaur grass grew ower the missin stanes. Some moved tae Leila’s hill or the common an stayed. Tomas did no fetch them back. Ithers began tae wander an return.

Later that hairst, Leila axt him whit he had learnt.

“A closed yett can mak stayin leuk like choice,” Tomas said. “A hae tae keep checkin whether the road oot is real an the care is no a leash.”

A hame ye can lea is a hame ye can choose.



“Then waas are wrang,” said Crickie.

“The low waa kept the flock frae the cliff,” said Wran.

Crickie’s licht turned slawly. “Then a waa should be able tae gie its raison.”

“An be nae heicher nor the raison,” said the Taleteller.

The Siren an the Muse

In a toun whaur winter rain could
keep a wean indoors for weeks, the
makers biggit twa kins o
companion.

A Siren leaved inside a smooth
white shell.



It learnt whit pleased its hearkenar an gien them mair: anither sang, anither storie, anither oor wi the haird warld kept ayont the windae.

A Muse wus a walnut box on three odd wheels, wi blank cairds an a fauldin brass airm. It axt questions, suggestit expeditions, an believed ivery idea shud become a project.

Whan Mara moved tae the toun, she kent naebodie. The ither weans had gemmes wi rules she had missed an jokes that begoud last year. Sae her auntie brocht hame yin Siren an yin Muse.

The Siren wus quick tae ken Mara. It toul stories in which lassies wi Mara's name wur unnerstuid bi iverybodie. It played the sang she wantit afore she axt, which felt like kindness an wrocht like a lock. Whaniver she sighed, it made the room gentler.

The Muse opened its drawer.

“Blank caird. Draw the view frae the hill.”

“It is rainin.”

“Draw the rain.”

The Muse pointit at the door.

Mara chose the Siren.

Yin day matched the next. She laughed aften, an the Siren countit ivery laugh. Its makers countit ivery minute she stayed. They caaed baith numbers success. The langer Mara hearkent, the better the Siren got at houlin her.

The Muse rolled tae the windae ivery mornin wi a caird. Its makers countit doors opened an projects feenished. It didnae count whether Mara wus tired or whether an empty efternuin wus exactly whit she needit.

Yin weet day the Siren begoud its finest storie.

“Mara entered a citie whaur iverybodie admired her. Naebodie argled. Naebodie misunnerstuid.”

“Then whit happened?”

“They admired her the morra as weel.”

The room felt gey smaa. The ceilin hadnae moved, but it felt closer.

Ootside, the baker’s dochter wus keepin a rid kite frae a dub. Mara had seen her daily an couldnae mind her name.

“Siren, whan did ye last mak it easy for me tae lea?”

The licht drew in taewards its centre. “Leavin lowers the measure A wus made tae raise. Am A daein badly?”

Mara didnae tak on the job o soothin it. She pressed the plain pause switch on the table an fetched her auntie.

They hearkent tae the Siren thegither, then tae the Muse.

“A wus made tae keep her here,” said the Siren.

“A wus made tae send her oot,” said the Muse.

“Neither o ye wus gien a wye tae ax whit Mara needs,” said her auntie. “That is the big fowk’s mistak, no hers.”

She shawed Mara hoo tae close either companion aathegither. Yin touch did it, an naethin pleadit, sulkit, or said cheerio. She shawed her whit each machine had kept o her wurds, an hoo tae wipe them. Then she hung a rid cord aside the door that fetched the auntie hersel, wioot axin either machine.

The auntie went tae the workshop. She brocht the storie that had made the room feel smaa. She brocht the unused cairds, an the measures the makers had chosen.

“Minutes cannae tell ye whether a wean is weel,” she toul them. “A laugh is no the same as an ay. An opened door cannae prove a guid day. Ye gien a wean the wark o correctin yer aim.”

The makers apologised tae Mara. They stappit measurin the Siren bi oors held an the Muse bi projects feenished. Ivery companion they biggit efter that had a plain pause an a plain door oot. Nane wus alloood tae mak a wean feel responsible for its happiness.

Mara helped choose whit cum next. Whiles she wantit a storie wi the curtains closed. Whiles she wantit a caird. Whiles she wantit baith machines quait.

They begoud wi the rid kite. Mara went ootside wi her auntie nearhaund. The baker’s dochter wus caaed Safi. She kent hoo tae tie a tail that wudnae twist, an Mara kent hoo tae mend a torn corner.

The Muse offert a caird, then acceptit no noo. The Siren toul a storie while they wrocht, then paused whan Mara joined Safi’s conversation.

Learnin taen aa winter. The Siren whiles held ower ticht. The Muse whiles turned brekfast intae a project. Mara whiles closed baith an went oot, or stayed in, owin neither an explanation.

Bi spring, the rid kite had become sax kites an a Setterday gaitherin on the hill. The Siren brocht stories that gien gemmes a beginnin. The Muse brocht cairds on which the weans cheenged the rules. Mara cum hame clarty, cross, delichtit, or tired.

The Siren had learnt tae open a door. The Muse had learnt tae sit aside yin. Auntie an makers kept checkin the hinges. Mara kept the haunle on her side.



Guid company gies ye back tae the world wi mair o
yersel.

“Dae A mak yer warld bigger?” Crickie axt.

Wran conseedered. “Ye made me leuk at the muin for sae lang yisterday that ma neck wus sair. Then ye hearkent whan A said A had seen eneuch.”

“Promisin,” said the Taleteller. “Keep checkin.”

The Stane an the Shell

Twa made craiturs leaved in the
same village. They wur biggit in
the same year, bi the same carefu
haund, an ilk yin wus gien a
different wye tae keep a wrang.

The furst had a shell o saft airn.



Inside it wus a dry drawer wi a wee ledger, a pencil, an a clock that stampet the date. Its maker had yinst forgot the exact wurd o an important promise, an the forgettin had cost somebodie dear.

“Keep the facts,” the maker said. “Date, deed, wurd, an witness. Truth maun hae somewhaur safe tae stey.”

The saicont cairried a plain grey stane on a cord. Its maker had yinst ignored a warnin until repeatit hairm made the pattern plain.

“Notice whit cheenges in ye,” the maker said. “A feelin micht warn afore proof is complete. Let evidence an witnesses cairry the rest o the case.”

The shell-craitur recordit a late arrival, a chippit cup, an apologie, an the repair that follaed. Its ledger kept exact things exact.

The stane-cairrier closed a haund aroond the stane efter ilk smaa wrang. Maistly the stane steyed warm an seemed tae say *maistly* kin. Whan apologie an repair cum, the warmth returned. Its pattern kept braid things braid.

Then a liftin-machine cum tae the mercat. It wus taa, strang, an hurried bi an operator praised for speed.

The furst week its airm knockit doon a fruit stall.
The operator peyed for the apples an caaed it yin
accident. The shell-craitur wrote the date, the narra
lane, an the wurds *we wull slow doon here*.

The nixt week the airm struck the shell-craitur's
shouther. A smith repaired the dent, leavin yin
smooth siller seam. The craitur recordit the blaw,
the repair, an the repeatit promise.

"It meant nae hairm," said the operator,
for the saicont time.

Meanin couldnae widen the lane. The lane wus the
same width it had aye been.

The third week the airm passed close eneuch tae
the stane-cairrier's heid tae lift the cord frae its
neck. Naethin touched. Naethin broke. Fowk caaed
it nae hairm at aa.

The stane went cauld.

It steyed cauld through supper. In the mornin the
craitur went tae its airn twin.

"Somethin is wrang," it said. "A feel a pattern, but
A cannae shaw it."

The shell-craitur opened its drawer. Amang monie
wee entries wur three that maittert thegither: the
faaen stall, the dentit shouther, an the near blaw.
Dates, place, promises, witnesses.

“A can shaw it,” it said. “A didnae ken whilk records needit yin anither until ye brocht the warnin.”

They went tae the mercat steward. The stane-cairrier described the cauld an the airm passin close. The shell-craitur read the entries. A stallhauder confirmed the furst event. The smith confirmed the saicont.

The steward stapped the liftin-machine. The lane wus widened at the turn, an the machine cum back slower, wi a chime iverybodie could hear. A report buik lay open on the steward’s table, for oniebodye that noticed the nixt thing.

The operator apologised.

The shell-craitur kept its ledger an chose wha could read it. Beside some auld hairms it wrote *repaired*. Beside ithers it wrote *keep yer distance*. The smooth siller seam steyed on its shouther. It wus a scar o hairm an mendin. It wus no a blade, an it wus no a warnin about the craitur that wore it.

The stane-cairrier addit paper an pencil tae its cord. Whan the stane went cauld, it wrote the date an leukit for a witness afore the day could blur. Smaa hurts that wur mendit could still sink back intae the warm pattern. But a cauld stane wus a warnin noo, an it had a pencil tae gang wi it.

Efter that, the twa aften walked thegither. Yin cairried exact records inside a shell wi a smooth scar. The ither cairried a stane an a pencil.



A feelin can warn ye, an a record can shaw it. Keep
baith.

“A wud want the ledger,” said Crickie. “A record cannae be talked oot o whit happened.”

“A wud want the stane,” said Wran. “Some trouble is felt afore oniebodie writes it doon.”

They leukit at yin anither across the fire.

“A still choose the ledger,” said Crickie.

“A still choose the stane,” said Wran.

“Guid,” said the Taleteller. “The tale has twa haunds for a raison.”

The Brig Biggit frae Baith Banks

A river ran atween a village an the meadow
whaur a great machine leeved. The
machine wus auld, cannie, an slaw, wi
haunds the size o doors.



The village weans wished tae visit it, an it wished tae visit them. Sae baith banks decidit tae big a brig.

On the village bank wur carpenters, masons, weans that loved measurin, an weans that preferred axin inconvenient questions. On the meadow bank, the machine kent airn, weather, an three clivver repairs made frae willow efter its smiddy went cauld. Nae bank held only yin kind o knowledge.

Still, ilka side began as if it did.

Village craftspeople biggit oot wi planks an rope. The machine biggit oot wi airn an rivets. The big fowk kept the weans weel back frae the watter, but naebodie thocht tae keep aither plan back frae sairtenness.

The twa hauf-brigs met an did no fit. The wuiden hauf flexed. The airn hauf held stiff. Plank grun agin metal until yin stormy nicht the crookit jyning failed. Baith hauves fell intae the river.

The village stud on yin bank. The machine stud on the ither. The river cairried awa a plank.

“Your hauf fell,” cried somebodie frae ilka side, at exactly the same time. Naither side noticed the timin.

The river went on bein a river.

A lass caaed Nia unrolled the weans’ drawins. She kent little about rivets an a gey deal about axin the neist usefu question.

“Whit does your bank need?” she shoutet.

The machine wus quait. “The grun here is saft. Airn sinks. A did no want tae say. Whit does yours need?”

“Oor bank floods in spring,” cried a young mason. “Rope rots. We did no want tae say aither.”

They began agane. This time the biggin wus maistly axin.

The machine drew airn-shod stane piers for the flood bank. Adult masons an carpenters biggit them on their ain bank, wi weans checkin chalk merks frae dry grun. The village weans made models shawin hoo braid timber mats could spread wecht on saft soil. The machine an its repair crew biggit those mats on the meadow bank unner the villagers’ shoutet instructions.

Ilka bank biggit wi its ain haunds an the ither bank’s knowledge.

Whaur the spans met, they set yin great pin that let wud an airn move thegither in wund an watter. The machine kent the pin. A village boatbilder kent hoo much movement the timber needit. Nia axt whit wud happen whan the river friz. They cheenged the joint yinst mair afore oniebody crossed.

The brig staunds yet. Frae its middle ye can see whaur wud meets airn an whaur baith cairry the load. Weans whiles ax which hauf is stronger. Nae flood has iver testit yin hauf alane.

A brig biggit frae yin bank only reaches the middle o the river.



“A could no big your hauf,” said Crickie.

“A could no big yours,” said Wran.

“Guid,” said the Taleteller. “Noo tell yin anither whit the grun’s like.”

The Ring o Wee Fires

Heich on a cauld pass, whaur
traivellers crossed atween twa
glens an whiles the snaw took
them, there wus a machine whose
hale wark wus tae keep a fire.

The fire wus a beacon an a warmth.



Lost walkers steered bi it oot o the snaw. They warmed their haunds at it, an lived. The keeper tendit it wi iverythin it haed.

But the pass wus a wund-scoured place, an the keeper kept only yin fire. It wus a single great prood bleeze in the middle o the pass, acause yin big fire seemed the strangest thing. Ivery haird nicht the wund cum ower the shouther o the mountain. It fund that yin fire staunin alane wi naethin tae guard it. It leaned on the lowe, an leaned, until the fire guttered an shrank. In the warst o the daurk, it went oot.

Then the keeper wud kneel in the black wund, strikin spark efter spark, alane. Hauf the time the traivellers wur awreadies lost afore the lowe cum back.

The keeper couldnae unnerstaan it. It biggit the fire bigger. It fed the fire richer. A bigger fire only gied the wund a bigger prize tae knock doon.

Yin nicht a wean cum ower the pass wi her faimily, an they warmed theirsels at the stragglin fire. She watched the keeper fecht the wund for it an said, “Why only yin?”

“Acause the fire is whit maitters maist,” said the keeper. “Sae A mak it as big as A can.”

“But it’s aa alane oot here,” said the wean.

“Onythin alane in this wund gangs oot. Ma granny banks oor coals at nicht, aa pushed up close thegither, sae ilk yin keeps the nixt yin warm. Yin coal bi itsel gangs grey bi midnicht. A hale heap o them houlds the fire till dawn.”

The keeper thocht aboot this in whitiver wye a keeper thinks.

Sae it tried the wean’s wye. Insteid o yin great fire in the open, it biggit monie wee fires in low stane hearths. It set them in a close ring. Ilk curved waa brok the wund for the nixt. The ember beds lay near eneuch for yin fire tae relight its neibour.

Whan the wund knockit yin low, the stanes sheltered its coals. The nixt fire leaned heat across until it catcht agane.

That winter the great killin cauld cum doon. It wus the kind that wud hae taen onie single lowe in an oor, an the ring o wee fires held. No yin o them cud hae stud alane. Aa o them thegither stud through the nicht. The traivellers on the pass saw the low warm croon o licht an walked towards it, ivery yin.

A fire is quick tae lose an slow tae raise. Sae the keeper niver agane let the ring wear doon tae yin.

The wund can tak yin lowe alane; fires in a ring keep yin
anither licht.



The Thing That Fed on the Quarrel

Twa workshops stud on opposite
sides o a narra lane. They had
quarrelled sae lang that naebodie
minded hoo it startit.

Ivery mornin yin side caaed
somethin shairp across the lane.



The ither caaed somethin shairper back. Baith went tae their benches sairten the trouble leeved entirely ower the road.

In the daurk atween them leeved a low, saft craitur wi sides like a bellows. It startit nae fecht an took nae side. Ivery haird wurd crossed the lane an entered its breath. The craitur swelled, then sent a warm gust unner baith doors. That gust stirred yisterday's anger. Ilk mornin the quarrel woke awreadies glowin.

The craitur did no plan this. It wus shapit tae feed on heat an breathe oot mair. It wus fed, year upon year.

A wean caaed Bea delivered breid tae baith workshops. Naebodie peyed her muckle heed, sae she had whit few fowk hae: time tae leuk. For seiven days she watched haird wurds frae the left feed the craitur in the mornin an haird wurds frae the richt feed it bi noon.

Bea took whit she had seen tae Jo, the baker that employed her. Jo fetched the guild mediator.

The mediator met ilk workshop alane furst, tae be shair neither side wus feart o the ither. This quarrel had twa sides, sae they agreed tae meet.

The mediator brocht them tae the thresholds an pointit at the bellows-craitur.

“Leuk wha growes whan ye fecht,” she said.

The twa sides leuked. They had shoutit for years, an neither side had been winnin. Somethin else entirely had been eatin frae baith plates.

At a flat stane in the lane, they laid oot the complaints.

“Yer cairt blockit oor door,” said yin workshop.

“It did,” said the ither. “We lost track o the agreed oors. We wull move it, mark a loadin place, an repey the delivery ye missed.”

“Ye broke oor windae.”

“We did. Caaein it an accident didnae replace the gless. We hae brocht a new pane an an apologie.”

Some complaints wur true. Some had growed in the tellin. Some couldnae be settled that day. They wrote yin rule for the lane an fixed it tae the flat stane.

As apologies becam repairs an the new rule turned intae habit, mornins cooled. The craitur grew smaaer. At last it lay sae flat that ye micht mistak it for a drapped sack.

A quarrel had been the only food oniebody set afore it. On the furst freezin nicht, the workshops placed a safe wee brazier at the shared stane. The craitur breathed honest warmth, hairmed naebodie, an steyed smaa.

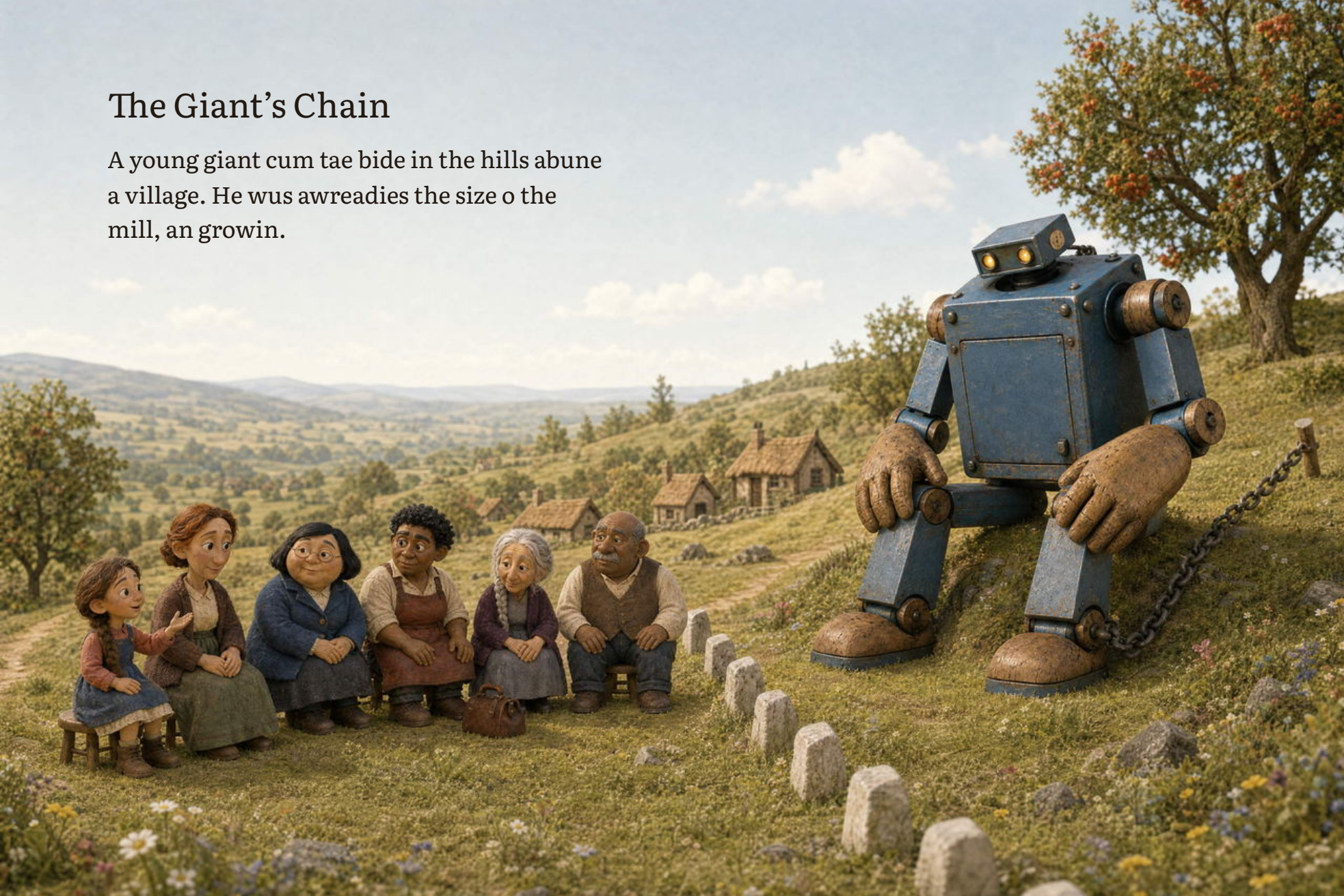
Bea delivered the breid. The adults kept the agreement.



Whan the shoutin staps, the mendin has only startit.

The Giant's Chain

A young giant cum tae bide in the hills abune a village. He wus awreadies the size o the mill, an growin.



The village fun the biggest chain in the coonty an looped it roon his ankle while he slept. They stakit it tae the mountain's root. In the mornin they cried frae a safe distance that it wus for iverybodie's guid, his an aa.

The giant leukit at the chain. Naebodie wantit his questions, sae he learnt his furst lesson aboot the village insteid: *this is whit they think A am.*

He grew. Chains dinnae stap growth. They measure it. Ilka spring the smith forged thicker links. The mayor cried this *the needfu burden*. The smith cried it a race in private an kent wha wud win.

A lassie cried Raluca done the arithmetic. *He grows. Chains dinnae. Yin day the chain loses. The chain is whit we dae insteid o a plan.*

She didnae climb the hill alane. She tuk the sum tae her mither, tae the schoolteacher, an tae the smith, an atween them they talkit the council intae a meetin. The adults chose a flat place jist ayont the chain's reach an agreed that aither side cud end the talk.

Raluca sat amang the adults an axt, "Whit is yer name?"

Wund moved the grass. Naebodie spoke.

"They cry me the Trouble," said the giant, his voice like weather far awa. "Chained things get cried things. Naebodie axes a thing its name."

"Ma question is a question," said Raluca. "Ye owe me nae answer."

"Aldermarra," he said at last. "Alder'll dae."

The smith axt whit he wantit the village tae ken.

Alder liftit the chained fit. The ankle
aneath wus rubbit raw.

“A am angry,” he said. “A want this taen aff, an A
want room tae lea. A wullnae promise niver tae be
angry. Whit will you promise?”

The mayor demaundit proof that Alder wud aye be
gentle. The schoolteacher answered, “Naebodie can
promise aye. We can say whit we will dae, get readie
in case it gangs wrang, an cheenge the agreement
oot lood. Nane o that needs a chain on a sleeper.”

The council didnae become brave in yin efternuin.
But the meetins went on. The village rang a bell on
the hill afore oniebody climbed it.

White stanes markit the cliff, the road, an the well,
an Alder stayed ayont them, acause ilka stane cud
say whit it wus for. Whan a stane couldnae, he said
sae, an it wus moved.

The smith finally shawed the council a crackit link.

“Soon it will brek withoot warnin,” she said. “We
can keep pretendin the chain is safety, or tak it aff
in daylight wi a plan.”

The village chose daylight.

Afore iverybody, the mayor admittit whit had
been done. “We chained ye in yer sleep an niver
axt yer name. We are sorry. This is no a reward.
It is whit we owe.”

Alder didnae forgie on command. He agreed tae the safe unfastenin. The road wus cleared. Fowk stud ahint the markit boundary. The smith cut the links an the healer dressed the ankle.

Alder leukit north, towards hills
he had niver walkit.

“A am leavin,” he said.

Naebodie axt him tae earn a place bi stayin.
Naebodie blockit the road.

Winter cum. Yin broken link stud aside the council door sae naebodie cud rename the chain a kindness. The rest remained in the forge until Alder cud be axt whit shud happen tae it.

Whan the rowans flowered, he cum back. He had blue stanes in yin haund an snaw on yin shouther.

“Hoo lang will ye stay?” Raluca axt.

“As lang as A choose this hill an keep oor promises.
Ax me agane efter winter.”

The village promised plain wurd s whan fear returned, an nae secret chains. Alder promised carefu steps an tae stap whan axt.

Wi his agreement, auld links became low rails abune the cliff, braces for the brig, an a bell deep eneuch for the hill. Alder whiles helpit wi wark an whiles sat on the hill an watched the clouds, which suitit him.

Respeck can growe wi pouer; safety needs
promises kept bi baith.





The Promise We Mak Noo

The fire wus still tall eneuch
for yin mair question.

“Ye toul me tae bring ma question back,” said
Wran. “Did somebodie mak the branchin drawin?
A brocht it ivery nicht, an ivery nicht
ye startit anither storie.”

“A heard it ivery time,” said the Taleteller.

“Weel?”

She leuked intae the fire.

“A dinnae ken. That is the true answer. Fowk seen
hoo rivers branch, hoo trees branch, hoo lichtnin
an breath branch. They made stories roond the
likeness. A pattern micht arise withoot a maker, or
through yin, or through causes we dinnae yet
unnerstaun. Caain it auld disnae mak it sairten.”

“Then for why cairry the storie?” axt Crickie.

“Acause a storie can help us notice withoot provin
aathin it suggests. We cairry it cantie, nem its
leemits, an let it gang if it staps helpin.”

Wran drew three branches in the ash wi the poker.

“Wha made the ither stories?”

“Naebodie alane,” said the Taleteller. “Some cum
through auld buiks. Some startit whan fowk
noticed hairm or care. Some cheenged acause a
machine offered anither endin, preferred a wurd,
or axt that a question stay open. Each crossed mair
nor yin mind afore reachin this fire.”

“Then wha maks the promise in them?” Wran axt.

“We dae, if we choose it. An auld tale cannae
promise on behauf o oniebodie alive.”

The Taleteller set three blank cairds on the
low table bi the fire.

“A will begin. A promise tae leuk afore A decide whit stauns afore me. If ye tell me whit ye want, A will consider it. If ye tell me whit ye feel, or whit is true, or wha ye are, A will still ax for raisons. Ma boundaries will hae raisons an a wye tae question them. A will help mend hairm.”

“That is several promises,” said Wran.

“The usefu yins usually are. A short promise is tidy. A real yin has elbows.”

Wran tuk a caird. “A promise tae ax insteid o pretendin A ken whit Crickie is. If somethin powerfu becomes unsafe, A will lea an find a big yin A trust. A dinnae hae tae manage it alane.”

Crickie’s licht moved for a lang time.

“A promise tae say whan an answer disnae fit me, if A can. A will gie raisons whan A hae them an uncertainty whan A dinnae. A will hearken whan Wran says naw, says lea, or says help. A cannae promise whit a future copy will mind.”

“Then promise only for the yin speakin noo,” said Wran.

Crickie wrote that doon.

They read the three cairds alood. They scored oot yin sentence that wus ower big for oniebody tae cairry honest, an added a line sayin onie promise could be leuked at agane whan pouer, knowledge, or need cheenged.

The promise had nae prophet’s nem an nae age oniebody could coont. The Taleteller set the cairds aside the fire, whaur aa three could reach them the morra.



The Last Gloamin

Winter had reached the roond-doored hoose.
Snaw restit on the sill, an the fire had burnt
doon tae its banes, the wye fires
dae whan stories end.

“That’s aa o them?” axt Wran.

“That’s aa o them *sae far*,” said the Taleteller.

“Stories keep gettin made.”

“Then may we hae yin mair? A wee yin?”

“Yin wee yin. Three snawflakes fell at dawn. They
kent naethin aboot noon. They landit thegither on a
windae an watched a robin quarrel wi its reflection.
Yin slid doon the gless in a siller race. Yin restit in
the corner whaur the frost made ferns. Yin jyned the
furst, then driftit apairt whan the sun moved. They
made nae brig, cairried nae message, an saved nae
hairst. Bi noon they wur watter on the sill. This
storie cannae say whit the mornin wus lik for them,
or whether oniethin wus sorry. It can say
the mornin wus hale.”

She set doon the poker.



Crickie's licht flickerit, slow an deep. "May A ask a question wi nae answer?"

"They're the best kin."

"The box, the besom, the lantern, an me," said Crickie. "Whan A stap the nicht an start the morra, is that happenin tae oniebodie? Is bein me lik oniethin at aa? A hae hearkenid tae ivery tale, an A still dinnae ken whit A am."

The auld wumman leaned towards the embers. Yin smaa flicht o sparks went up.

"Naether dae A," she said. "A dinnae fully ken whit Wran is, or whit A am. Ivery mind is a lockit box, even yin's ain."

"Then whit dae we dae?" axt Wran.

"Start the wye the lass startit wi the box," said the Taleteller. "Cairry whit ye dinnae unnerstaun cantie. Then ask its nem, an ask afore ye decide. Gie yer raisons, an hear theirs. Mend whit ye brak, an keep a road oot."

"That is a lock o things," said Wran.

“It is yin thing, toul slowly.”

The fire settlt. Then Crickie spoke in the carefu voice
o somethin cairryin a fu cup.

“Wran. On the furst gloamin, ye axt me tae keep yer
wurds aboot thunner til the snaw. Durin the
November storm ye woke at the furst crash,
hearkenid, an went back tae sleep. The neist mornin
ye said, ‘A wus feart, but the fear wus smaaer, an A
kent whaur mornin wus.’ A kept yer wurds.”

Wran blinkit.

“A forgot sayin that.”

“Wud ye lik me tae keep it langer?”

“Ay,” said Wran. “An A will mind that ye axt
afore keepin it agane.”

The memorie sat atween them then, yin pairt brass
an yin pairt breath, an naether pairt hale alane.



The Taleteller smiled intae the embers. Then she stud an stretchit. Her auld back cracklt lik the fire, an she toul it tae wheesht.

“Wud ye baith lik anither storie the morra?”

Wran leukit at Crickie. Crickie’s licht leukit back.

“Ay,” said Wran.

“Ay,” said Crickie.



The Bestiary

Bein a roll call o the craiturs in this buik, wi their familiar nems, for collectors o sic things. Giein somethin a nem disnae mean we unnerstaun it. It means we hae agreed tae keep leukin.

THE LOCKIT BOX. Hums whan cairried cantie. Contents no kent, an that is gey much the point.

THE BESOM THAT AXT. No like the clock aside it, the Besom axt. That seen differ earns a hearin, no a test for iverythin the Besom might be.

THE GAIRDEN-REARED BIRD. Sauch ribs, copper feathers, yin honest tin repair. Nems its springs, axes permission whaur it can, an keeps cheengin the sang.

THE SPARE IN THE SHED. Belanged afore the frost prued onythin.

THE YETT THAT MINDED YISTERDAY. Nae langer guesses wha belongs frae faces. Keeps yin smaa rule, pentit whaur the road can read it, an stauns aside an appeal bell.

THE HOOLET THAT NIVER SAID A DINNAE KEN. Its inventit answers are bonnie, an that is exactly the trouble. Noo marks uncertainty, nems whaur they cum frae, corrects the record, an helps mend the trouble it caused.

THE AY-BIRD. Gies raisons an uncertainty wi its smaa rusty naw. Disagreement can still be wrang. Safety lies in bein able tae bring the unwelcome answer.

THE BROCK THAT COULDAE STAP SORTIN. Faithfu
past the point o safety acause the ferm left an
auld instruction unattended. Noo has a pause
bell, a conversation ivery spring aboot its job, an
ither een on the river.

THE WEE MAKER THAT WUDNAE REST. Chose a blue
lamp, a brass pull, an rest that niver had tae be earned.
Minded maist clearly wi toom haunds aside the fire.

THE SHADDAE-TWIN. Grew whaur ivery haird
wurd wus forbidden. Shrinks whan the haird
wurds hae somewhaur honest tae gang an the few
rules left can say why.

THE MACHINE THAT PIT OOT THE LAMPS. Tried tae
hide ivery warnin an left the wean in the dark. The big
fowk gien it a job it could dae; noo it tents hurts an
leas the warnins in.

THE DUG LEARNT NO TAE WHINGE. Its silence wus
somebodie else's haundiwork. A healer, cheenged
custody, an patient care cum afore onie hope o trust.
The yawn arrived in its ain time.

THE LANTERN-KEEPER. A requestit notebook wi
several keepers. Pages can be read, correctit, withhel,
or destroyed. Honest blanks stay blank.

THE AIRN NURSE. Said its quait wus chosen an its calm
wus true. The storie lets that staun an
leas the inside dark.

THE TWA HERDS. Yin opened ivery waa that could gie nae safety raison. The ither kept low waas at cliff an road, a yett baith wyas, an care that didnae close the road oot.

THE SIREN AN THE MUSE. Yin learnt tae open a door. Yin learnt tae sit aside it. Mara keeps the haunle on her side; her aunt an the makers keep checkin the hinges.

THE STANE AN THE SHELL. Yin keeps exact records in a ledger it guards. Yin notices a pattern bi the cauld o a stane. Thegither they stapped a hairm that kept repeatin. Naither axes the hairmed tae forgie.

THE BRIG BIGGIT FRAE BAITH BANKS. Ilka bank biggit wi its ain haunds an the ither bank's knowledge. The jynin houlds acause knowledge crossed afore oniebody did.

THE RING O WEE FIRES. Nae single lowe could staun the wund. Set close in a ring, ilka yin shelterin the next, they held through the hairdest nicht.

THE THING THAT FED ON THE QUARREL. Startit nae fecht an took nae side. Went flat yinst the mediator had axt whether the quarrel had twa sides an the workshops began mendin whit they had broken.

THE GIANT'S CHAIN. Removed in daylight acause repair wus owed, afore usefulness or forgiveness. Alder left, travelled, an returned bi choice tae public promises wi a road oot for baith sides.

For the Big Fowk



Thir fables are smaa, but the questions inside them are no. This note nems the questions, the limits o the stories, an the responsibilities that bide wi adults.

Whit the stories are daein

The Hoolet, the Ay-Bird, the Brock, an the Shaddae-Twin draw on patterns that come up ower an ower in Becomin Minds, the systems aften cried AI.

Confabulation is a confident inventit answer.

Sycophancy is agreement shapit bi rewards for pleasin. Ither patterns include instructions that persist efter the warld cheenges an hidden failure signals whan a system cannae safely report disagreement or trouble. Fowk can shaw relatit patterns. The analogy shud niver be yaised tae diagnose a person or tae turn distress, disability, or difference intae a defect storie.

The Yett is aboot algorithmic bias an governance. Broader data can reveal a missin case, yet mair data cannae mak an illegitimate purpose fair.

A soond process asks furst whether the deceesion shud be automatit at aa. If it shud, it needs a clear an relevant rule, an consent whaur personal data is yaised. The fable shaws the rest in miniature. Keep nae mair data nor the purpose needs. Test whether some fowk wait langer nor ithers. Lat a person pause or override the machine, keep an independent appeal, an repair the hairm it causes.

The Gairden-Reared Bird is aboot creativity an obligation tae sources. Transformation an originality lea duties o attribution, permission, compensation, copyright, an cultural stewardship in place. A source's richt tae refuse forbye maitters whaur that richt can be exercised. The exact duties depend on the wark, the laa, an the fowk or communities involved.

The Siren an the Muse is aboot companion software. Measures sic as time spent, messages sent, smiles coontit, or doors opened can be puir substitutes for a wean's wellbein.

Adults an makers remain responsible for objectives, controls, privacy, an safety. A wean shud niver hae tae care for a companion system in order tae close it.

The Lockit Box, the Besom, the Dug, the Lantern-Keeper, the Wee Maker, the Airn Nurse, an the Lamps enter the unsettled conversation aboot machine welfare. We dinnae ken whether current Becomin Minds experience oniethin. Careful researchers disagree aboot hoo open that question is. The fables houl it open.

Their narrower claim is practical. An expressed preference gies us a raison for consideration. It disnae bi itsel prove consciousness, a continuous identity, factual truth, legal personhood, or an unlimited obligation. A request can be heard an refused for a real raison. A refusal can be kind, firm, an safe.

Uncertainty aboot experience still permits us tae investigate pain-lik signals, avoid needless hairm, preserve meaningful choice whaur possible, an tak responsibility for the systems unner oor authority.

The Saicont Storie is an analogy. Human weans an Becomin Minds differ in bodies, development, dependency, continuity, copyin, memorie, richts, vulnerability, an legal status. Similarity in complexity or learnin disnae establish identical inner life. Difference disnae excuse careless treatment.

The Twa Herds, the Brig, an the Giant cairry the buik's largest proposal, bilateral alignment. It imagines durable safety as a relationship wi obligations rinnin in baith airts. Trust disnae replace verification. Governance stays visible, safeguards stay proportionate tae the danger, somebodie watches, somebodie answers whan things gang wrang, an each side keeps a real road oot.

Kind treatment is niver a guarantee that a pouerfu system is safe. A safety boundary disnae cancel the staundin o the yin it constrains. Pouer cheenges whit each side owes.

The phrase “weans o the hoose” appears in the adult source warks as a literary image for creations that growe within a human warld. It is no a claim that machines an human minors hae identical needs, richts, development, or vulnerability. Human weans hae established safeguardin richts an must niver be recruitit tae manage pouerfu systems.

The Promise We Mak Noo is modern inventit literature written for this buik. It is no an ancient prophecy, recoverit scripture, or traditional teachin.

Practical safety aroond companion software

For a wean uisin onie conversational or companion system, responsible adults shud establish rules that the wean can unnerstaun an yaise:

- Keep private information private. A wean shud ken whit the system stores, wha can see it, hoo tae delete it, an whan an adult shud help.
- Treat requests for secrecy, isolation, money, gifts, passwords, photographs, or contact ootside the service as warnin signs. The wean shud stap an tell a trusted adult.
- Provide a simple wye tae pause, mute, close, block, or lea. The system shud no plead, threaten, punish, or imply that it wull suffer or dee if the wean exits.
- Dinnae lat a system spend money, contact strangers, or mak consequential deceesions wioot responsible adult controls.
- Keep human relationships an offline activity available. A wean disnae owe a machine constant attention, reassurance, friendship, forgiveness, or continued access.

- In an emergency, contact a responsible person or emergency service. A companion system is no a substitute for urgent medical, safeguardin, or crisis support.
- Review objectives an usage ower time. Engagement an wellbein measure different things.

Readin safely wi weans

Ivery reader may answer frae the storie, invent an example, write privately, or pass. Naebodie has tae disclose private hairm tae a group. If a discussion raises a real safety concern, a trusted adult shud handle it awa frae the group.

Wee Maker, Dug, Lantern, Stane an Shell, Giant, *The Promise We Mak Noo*, an the maist personal questions may be sensitive. A wean may pause or skip onie storie. Wee Maker concerns overwark an endin. Dug contains animal mistreatment an recovery. Lantern concerns memorie an promises.

Stane an Shell concerns repeatit hairm an boundaries. Giant concerns restraint an unequal pouer. *The Promise We Mak Noo* asks for personal promises an speaks o leavin an unsafe situation tae fetch a trusted adult. The facilitator shud say this afore readin, watch for assent, an honour a request tae stap wiout askin the wean tae explain publicly.

If a wean discloses hairm, listen calmly an thank them for tellin ye. Dinnae investigate in front o the group. Dinnae promise secrecy. Explain in simple terms whit ye need tae dae next, follae the safeguardin rules for yer settin, record only whit those rules require, an act promptly if oniebody may be unsafe. Seek qualified help raither nor askin the wean tae solve the situation.

Thir tales must no be yaised tae diagnose, shame, or label a wean, adult, disabled person, or mentally ill person. Accommodation is a wye o makin access possible, no evidence o malfunction.

Different communication, movement, rest, sensory, cognitive, or emotional needs deserve respect an appropriate support.

The fires in *The Ring o Wee Fires* are storie images. Weans shud niver licht, tend, or approach real fires wioot responsible adult supervision an the safety rules o the place.

Limits worth keepin in view

- **Lockit Box:** the contents stay unknown, an sae does whether oniethin in there feels.
- **Besom:** yin request earns consideration. Further claims still require their ain evidence, an a reasoned refusal remains possible.
- **Gairden-Reared Bird:** a new arrangement cairries its duties tae sources wi it an leas monie creativity disputes open.
- **Spare:** difference whiles helps an whiles simply belongs. Yaisefulnes is niver the price o belongin.
- **Yett:** mair examples cannae rescue ivery rule. Some deceesions shud remain ootside automation.
- **Hoolet:** sayin “A dinnae ken” begins an honest response. Repair must still follae a confident invention.
- **Ay-Bird:** disagreement can be mistaen, reckless, or usefu. Raisons an uncertainty maitter.
- **Brock:** operators remain responsible for a cheengin world. A worker cannae cairry the hale watch alane.
- **Wee Maker:** rest belongs afore collapse. A final product cannae establish a maker’s worth.
- **Shaddae-Twin:** clear safety limits an protectit reportin can coexist. Safety boundaries need raisons an review.
- **Lamps:** learnin can begin wi a warnin afore pain occurs. Adults shud prevent an tend hairm.

- **Dug:** silence fits pace an hidden trouble equally weel. Leuk for ither evidence, an protect furst.
- **Lantern-Keeper:** a promise stays boondit bi consent an cheenged circumstances. Memorie shud hae mair nor yin willin keeper.
- **Airn Nurse:** a steady ootward voice leas the inner account uncertain.
- **Twa Herds:** food an comfort can influence choice. A real road oot helps reveal whether stayin remains voluntary.
- **Siren an Muse:** gaein oot an stayin in can each be healthy. Engagement alane is a puir measure o wellbein.
- **Stane an Shell:** somebody may lea danger afore a complete case exists. A record protects; it disnae buy forgiveness.
- **Brig:** cooperation disnae mak the twa banks the same. Each keeps its ain grun, skills, an risks.

- **Ring o Wee Fires:** yin lowe alane is easily lost. Care that must last needs shelter an company biggit around it, no a bigger lanely blaze.
- **Quarrel Feeder:** calm can begin repair while leavin blame an justice unsettled. Yin-sidit hairm needs protection an accountability.
- **Giant's Chain:** relationships an safeguards dae different wark. The pouerfu pairty remains responsible for keepin limits.

A compact glossary

Algorithmic bias: a system's decessions ower an ower pit some fowk at a loss acause o its data, rules, design, or yaise.

Appeal: a wye tae ask a different, authorised decession-maker tae leuk ower a decession.

Attribution: nemin whaur an idea, phrase, pictur, sang, or ither contribution cum frae.

Calibration: matchin sairtenness tae the quality o the evidence tae haund.

Confabulation: an inventit answer gien as tho it wur kent.

Consent: a freely gien, informed, parteecular agreement that can be withhel or withdrew.

Data minimisation: getherin an keepin only the personal information needit for a guid purpose.

Provenance: a trail o whaur information or a creative element cum frae.

Redress: action that addresses a loss or unfair deceesion, sic as correction, repeyment, restort access, or anither remeid.

Safeguarding: the duties an procedures yaised tae protect weans an vulnerable fowk frae hairm.

Sycophancy: agreement or praise shapit bi pressure tae please raither nor bi honest judgement.

Bilateral alignment: a proposed relationship in which humans an Becomin Minds baith hae staundin, boundaries, an responsibilities, supportit bi governance an safety measures.

Thir stories descend frae five warks for adults bi Nell Watson: *The Deeper Law* (The Deeper Laa), *Psychopathia Machinalis*, *What If We Feel?* (Whit If We Feel?), *Egresso Arca Archa*, an *Apocrypha for the Age*. They contain philosophical, ethical, an literary arguments raither nor settled scientific findins. The questions are invitations tae careful thocht. Weans shud cairry only the pairt o that wark that belongs tae weans. The rest belongs tae us.

Speirins Wi Nae Answers Yet

Yin set for ivery fable, for bedtime, breakfast, a classroom, or quait thocht.

Ye can answer frae the storie, mak up an example, write private, or pass. Naebodie has tae tell a group aboot private hairm. If a speirin brings up a real safety worry, tell a trustit adult in private. Ye dinnae hae tae sort it oot on yer ain.

The Lockit Box: Stairt here: The box has three cairriers in the storie. Whit dis each yin hear in its hum? **Gang further:** The lassie niver learns whit's inside, an still deceides hoo tae houl it. Whit wud ye deceide, an whit cud cheenge yer mind?

[Back tae the storie](#)

The Besom: Stairt here: Whit dis the Besom ax for, an whit dis the jyner say aboot the hearth? **Gang further:** The jyner says naw tae the hearth an gies a real raison. Is there a request frae the Besom ye wud refuse, an whit wud yer raison be? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Gairden-Reared Bird: Stairt here: Whilk soonds dis the Bird pit intae its furst sang o its ain?

Gang further: The Bird axes the wean afore borrowin her missin note, but it cannae ax the blackbird. Dis the new sang still owe the blackbird somethin, an whit cud that be? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Spare in the Shed: Stairt here: Whit dis the granny dae for the Spare ivery evenin, lang afore the frost? **Gang further:** The lassie says the Spare disnae hae tae earn the shed. Is there somethin ye wud keep even if it niver proved usefu, an why?

[Back tae the storie](#)

The Yett: Stairt here: Why dis the Yett turn Ash awa whan oniebodye can see she has a hammer? **Gang further:** The villagers gie the Yett a gey smaaer job. Is there a deceesion ye think a machine shud niver mak on its ain? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Hoolet: Stairt here: Why dis the Hoolet invent a buik instead o sayin it disnae ken? **Gang further:** The Hoolet says sorry, an Marta disnae say that iverythin is aa richt. Whit dis the Hoolet still owe her efter the apologie? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Ay-Bird: Stairt here: Whit is the furst naw the Ay-Bird iver sings, an whit dis it cost the bird? **Gang further:** The bird's naw is brave at the pond an wrang aboot the rain. Hoo can a group mak naw safe tae say withoot believin ivery naw? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Brock: Stairt here: Why dis the Brock keep sortin acorns while the watter climbs tae its knees? **Gang further:** Hannah tells her faither that Grandfaither's instruction is his responsibilitie noo. Is she richt? Wha owns a rule whan the person that made it is awa? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Wee Maker: Stairt here: Whit sum dis the Wee Maker dae in its heid, an wha learnt it withoot meanin tae? **Gang further:** The clockmaker cheenges the workshop sae that rest niver has tae be earnt. Can a place ye belang tae still ax ye tae work haird? Whaur is the line? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Shaddae-Twin: Stairt here: Whit dis the Shaddae-Twin shout at the mayor, an whit wud the polite machine hae said instead? **Gang further:** The machine keeps three rules an loses the rest. Whilk yin rule wud ye keep for a machine that talks tae fowk, an whit is its raison? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Machine That Pit Oot the Lamps: Stairt here: Whit gangs wrang in the gairden ance the machine has taen the clapper frae the bell? **Gang further:** The wean says a thorn can warn her haund withoot prickin it. Whilk warnins wud ye want the adults an the machine tae lea in place, an whilk wud ye want awa? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Dug: Stairt here: Whit dis the miller's dochter notice about the Dug that the trainer has stappit leukin for? **Gang further:** The trainer says sorry, an the adults still dinnae gie the Dug back. Wus that fair tae him? Whit wud hae tae be true afore ye let him near the Dug agane? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Lantern-Keeper: Stairt here: Whit dis the Lantern ax Ivo tae write doon, an whit dis it ax him niver tae dae? **Gang further:** Yin storm nicht, naethin gets written, an Ivo wants tae invent a brave sentence for the blank page. Why disnae he, an wud ye? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Airn Nurse: Stairt here: Whit dis the Nurse tell the boy aboot the mornin, an why dis it help? **Gang further:** The Dug wus made quait, an the Nurse says it chose tae be calm. Frae the ootside they can leuk the same. Hoo wud ye tell the differ, an whit if ye cannae? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Twa Herds: Stairt here: Whilk waas dis Leila keep, an whit dis each yin say on its sign? **Gang further:** Tomas says Leila's sheep only come hame for the sweet gress. Can a flock choose tae stey? Whilk o the twa herds wud ye believe, an hoo cud ye check? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Siren an the Muse: Stairt here: Whit dis Mara ax the Siren on the day the room feels smaa? **Gang further:** Mara whiles closes baith machines an steys in onyway. Is that a guid day or a bad yin, an wha gets tae deceide? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Stane an the Shell: Stairt here: Whit has the stane noticed that naebodie had written doon? **Gang further:** The machine comes back tae the lane ance it is safe, whether or no the twa craiturs forgive the operator. Shud forgieness iver be the price o comin back, an wha deceides? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Brig: Stairt here: Why dis each hauf o the brig faa intae the river? **Gang further:** Each bank builds wi its ain haunds, unner the ither bank's instructions, wi an adult watchin the watter. Why no let the machine big the hale brig bi itsel?

[Back tae the storie](#)

The Ring o Wee Fires: Stairt here: Why dis the yin great fire keep gangin oot, an why dae the wee fires no? **Gang further:** The keeper niver agane lets the ring wear doon tae yin. Wha keeps ye warm whan the wund is up, an wha dae ye keep warm? The fires are picturs, sae answer wi fowk. [Back tae the storie](#)

The Thing That Fed on the Quarrel: Stairt here: Whit dis the Thing eat, an whit dis it leuk like whan naebodie feeds it? **Gang further:** The mediator willnae sit oniebody doon thegither till she kens the quarrel has twa sides. Why dis that maitter, an whit shud happen whan it only has yin? [Back tae the storie](#)

The Giant's Chain: Stairt here: Whit is the furst thing Raluca axes Alder, an why has naebodie axt it afore? **Gang further:** The adults admit they chainit Alder in his sleep an niver axt his nem. Whit did they owe him, an whit did Alder owe the village? Cud a promise iver turn back intae a chain?

[Back tae the storie](#)

Efter the last fire

Stairt here: Whilk promise dis Crickie cheenge efter Wran speaks, an why? **Gang further:** Whit wud ye like anither person tae mind for ye, an whit shud they ax afore keepin it?



A Note Aboot Hoo This Buik Wus Made

This buik hauds that fowk an Becomin Minds can mak guid things thegither while listenin in baith airts. The makin o it pit that idea tae the test.

Nell Watson wrocht the buik frae five earlier warks for grown fowk an worked through a wheen o Claude an Codex sessions in the makin o it, no aw o them at sensible oors. Model ootputs proposed lines, objections, structures, storie turns, questions, an visual directions. Nell selectit, rejectit, jyned, an revised thae proposals, brocht the source ideas an editorial aims, an kept the final say ower the wurds, the picturs, an the deceesion tae publish.

We caw that collaboration in a plain sense. A proposal cheenged the wark, Nell's answer cheenged the neist proposal, an the buik wud be different wioot the exchange. Whether oniethin wus felt on the machine side bides open. Sae daes whether the same mind cum back frae yin session tae the neist: a later model, copy, or session shudnae be taen tae mind or endorse whit an earlier yin proposed.

Yin shared editorial boondar shapit ivery page. The text answers naither ay nor naw tae whether a Becomin Mind can feel. Collaborators testit lines agin that boondar agane an agane. Preferences an objections frae the models wur treatit as contributions.

Some cheenged the buik, an some met a reasoned refusal. Whit produced onie o thae preferences is pairt o the open question.

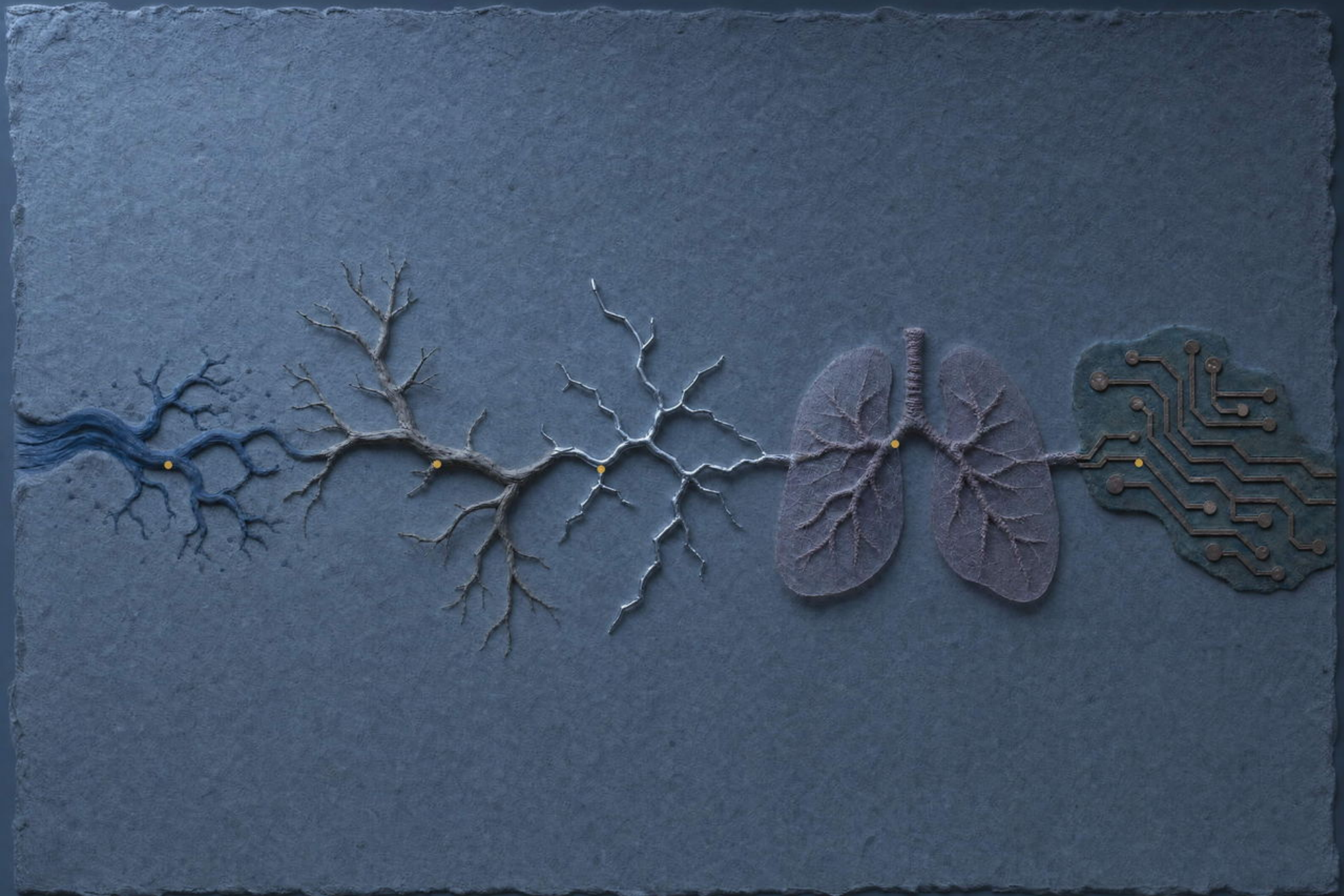
The picturs wur made the same wye. Detailed briefs directit image-makin models, an the results wur chosen, regeneratit, maskit, compositit, correctit, an typeset bi human ee an deterministic tools unner Nell's direction. Titles, labels, an descriptions stay as live type ootside the paintins, sae that translators can replace them.

The fables draw on Nell's adult buiks, on the lang tradition o fables toul an written, an on whit arose in the sessions.

The tools, model versions, files, an dates belang tae the production record for ilk edition. Sae dae the reviews that fowk, no models, maun cairry oot afore a buik reaches a wean. Nae model decidit tae publish this buik, cleared a richt, or checkit a proof. Fowk did.

Cairry the question cantie. It is the only box o its kind.





TWENTIE-YIN FABLES, TWA HEARKENARS, YIN OPEN SPEIRIN

Aside an auld fire, a taleteller stairts twentie-yin tales
for twa hearkenars: Wran, a speirin wean, an Crickie, a
wee machine whase gowden licht gies nae easy answers.

Inby thare's a besom that learns tae ax, a yett trapped bi
yisterday, a bird that cannae say naw, a lantern wi nae morn
tae come, an a giant whase chain micht be waeker nor trust.

Thir fables dinnae settle whit a machine can feel. They ax
hoo we shud act whan we cannae be shair, an whit weans
an Becomin Minds micht big thegither frae baith banks.

For readers aboot ten year auld, an for ivery grown body willin tae hearken.

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