JOSEPH COELHO PRESENTS

SPIN!

10 Exciting New Voices in Poetry

Text copyright © the individual poets 2024

Illustrations copyright © Ruthine Burton 2024

First published in Great Britain and in the USA in 2024 by
Otter-Barry Books, Little Orchard,
Burley Gate, Herefordshire, HR1 3QS

www.otterbarrybooks.com

All rights reserved

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-915659-18-7

Illustrated with a digital graphics tablet

Set in Davis
This cover has been designed using assets
by Kuesl from Freepik.com

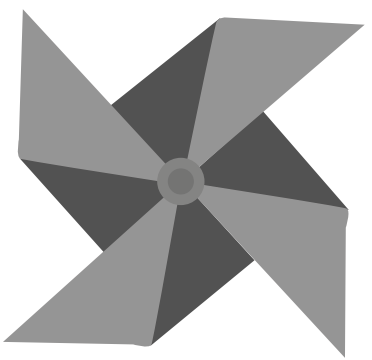
Printed in Great Britain

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2



JOSEPH COELHO PRESENTS

SPIN!



Poems by ANNELIESE AMOAH
ANTOINETTE BROOKS • SADATU FUTA
EILEEN GBAGBO • SHAGUFTA K. IQBAL
GAYATHIRI KAMALAKANTHAN • ROWAN KIFFIN-MURRAY
JAY SANDHU • IONEY SMALLHORNE
JASMIN THIEN

Illustrated by RUTHINE BURTON

Contents

Introduction	Joseph Coelho	**7**
Mario Kart Pantoum	Jay Sandhu	**8**
The Sing-Along	Anneliese Amoah	**10**
A Love Letter to Ragams	Gayathiri Kamalakanthan	**11**
Silver Blades	Gayathiri Kamalakanthan	**12**
'Come Hither' Chimed My Phone	Joseph Coelho	**14**
Broken iPad	Sadatu Futa	**16**
Funfair Fun	Anneliese Amoah	**17**
Andre	Jay Sandhu	**18**
My Friend Finola	Ioney Smallhorne	**22**
Friendship Poem	Eileen Gbagbo	**24**
Friendships Can Be Hard to Navigate	Antoinette Brooks	**26**
The Gossipers	Joseph Coelho	**29**
Dear Bully	Shagufta K. Iqbal	**30**
The Magnificent 7	Jay Sandhu	**33**
Packed Lunch	Shagufta K. Iqbal	**34**
Mrs Dickinson Did Not Like That Word	Jasmin Thien	**36**
Subject to Change	Rowan Kiffin-Murray	**40**
The School Café of Discontent	Antoinette Brooks	**42**

Contents

Books	Ioney Smallhorne	**44**
Unique	Eileen Gbagbo	**45**
Chinese Whispers	Jasmin Thien	**46**
Nana Hijacks Assembly	Ioney Smallhorne	**50**
Before the Day Comes	Anneliese Amoah	**53**
The Mystery of the Camping Nanny	Antoinette Brooks	**54**
Remembering Our Anansi Stories	Antoinette Brooks	**58**
Moko Jumbie	Ioney Smallhorne	**60**
Anansi the Fastest Runner	Sadatu Futa	**62**
Sporting Greats	Jay Sandhu	**65**
My Cousin's House	Rowan Kiffin-Murray	**66**
What Hides in Your Hair?	Eileen Gbagbo	**68**
Original	Joseph Coelho	**70**
Sunday Morning Was Our Time	Antoinette Brooks	**72**
Summer Holidays	Shagufta K. Iqbal	**76**
A Plate of Sliced Fruit	Jasmin Thien	**78**
Ammā Means More Than Mother	Gayathiri Kamalakanthan	**81**
The Unwanted Sisters	Shagufta K. Iqbal	**82**
Summers at Grandma's House	Eileen Gbagbo	**84**

Contents

Lessons from My Grandad	Eileen Gbagbo	**85**
Beginners	Gayathiri Kamalakanthan	**86**
Little Tourist	Sadatu Futa	**87**
Beetroot and Pickle	Jay Sandhu	**90**
Holy is Every Space	Sadatu Futa	**91**
There are Cats in the Mosque	Shagufta K. Iqbal	**92**
What's Your Name Again?	Gayathiri Kamalakanthan	**96**
Why do People Pray For Me?	Jasmin Thien	**98**
Different	Rowan Kiffin-Murray	**100**
Drop in the Ocean	Jasmin Thien	**101**
There Are No Rules Here	Anneliese Amoah	**104**
Nonsense Pantoum	Ioney Smallhorne	**107**
Butterflies	Rowan Kiffin-Murray	**108**
The Moth	Rowan Kiffin-Murray	**110**
Tight Cords	Sadatu Futa	**111**
The Fountain of Youth is Held in Hands	Anneliese Amoah	**112**
About the Poets and the Illustrator		**116**

Introduction

JOSEPH COELHO

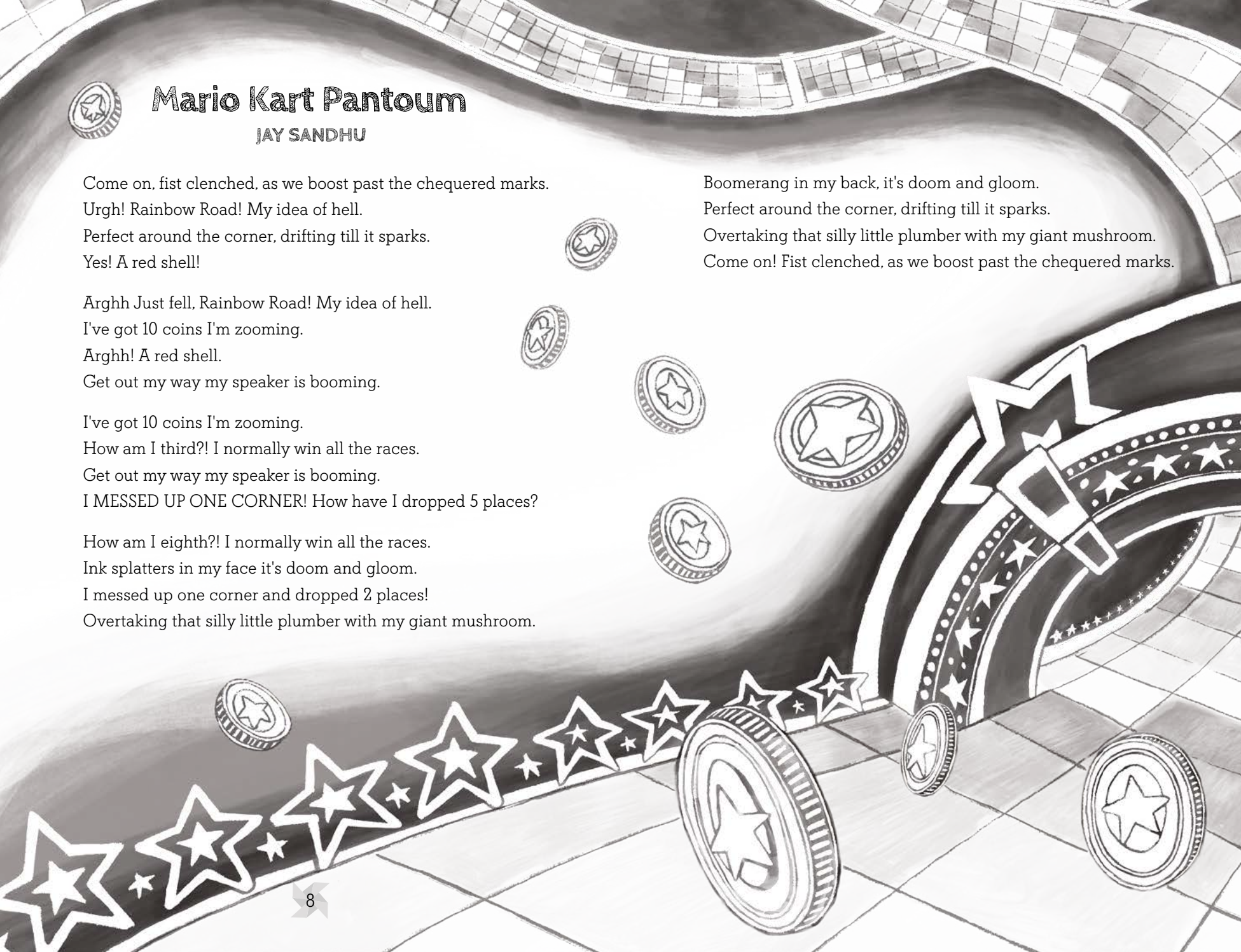
Welcome, dear reader, to ***Spin!***, a brand-new anthology featuring ten fantastic poets all new to writing for young people.

I had the pleasure of working with fabulous poets over ten masterclass sessions online. Made particularly special by being managed by the wonderful Apples and Snakes, the performance poetry organisation that introduced me to the poetry scene over twenty years ago. We explored all sorts of poetry from form to free verse, from Pantoums to Sestinas. In here you will find poems about music, about hobbies and feelings, about friendships and bullies, about identity and gaming. There is something in here for everyone.

I hope you have as much fun exploring these poems and Ruthine's fantastic illustrations as I have had reading them. And who knows, maybe you'll be inspired to write a poem of your own.

Happy reading.

Joseph Coelho
Children's Laureate 2022-2024



Mario Kart Pantoum

JAY SANDHU

Come on, fist clenched, as we boost past the chequered marks.
Urgh! Rainbow Road! My idea of hell.
Perfect around the corner, drifting till it sparks.
Yes! A red shell!

Arghh Just fell, Rainbow Road! My idea of hell.
I've got 10 coins I'm zooming.
Arghh! A red shell.
Get out my way my speaker is booming.

I've got 10 coins I'm zooming.
How am I third?! I normally win all the races.
Get out my way my speaker is booming.
I MESSED UP ONE CORNER! How have I dropped 5 places?

How am I eighth?! I normally win all the races.
Ink splatters in my face it's doom and gloom.
I messed up one corner and dropped 2 places!
Overtaking that silly little plumber with my giant mushroom.

Boomerang in my back, it's doom and gloom.
Perfect around the corner, drifting till it sparks.
Overtaking that silly little plumber with my giant mushroom.
Come on! Fist clenched, as we boost past the chequered marks.

The Sing-Along

ANNELIESE AMOAH

When I scream into a microphone
it is because I am trying to talk to the world, through song.
It is because I wish I was on TV
so that everyone can see me.
I follow the words on the screen
and listen to the sounds in the speakers
waiting for my cue.
I first wanted to be Britney Spears
then part of The Spice Girls,
swapped them for Destiny's Child
and thought about dancing next to Missy Elliott.
Feet in front then side to side
doing the Cha Cha Slide.
So when I scream into a microphone
it is because I want you to know the sound of freedom.



A Love Letter To Ragams

GAYATHIRI KAMALAKANTHAN

s	r	g	m
p	d	n	ṡ
ṡ	n	d	p
m	g	r	s

Our ragams swell from our bellies, pour from our throats
and stain ears with grief or wonder or delight.

We've known this musical language for centuries, heard it sung
through the womb, shaping the depths of our prayers, before
even words.

There are morning ragams and evening ragams,
ragams to soothe a broken heart or to revel in elation.

Not just a scale, but a melodious framework for improvisation.
72 mother ragams have an almost infinite number of children
and grandchildren,

running wild and free on our tongues.
Our ragams swell from the belly, pour from the throat,

and stain ears with grief and wonder and delight –
more feeling in music than a poem could possibly write.

Silver Blades

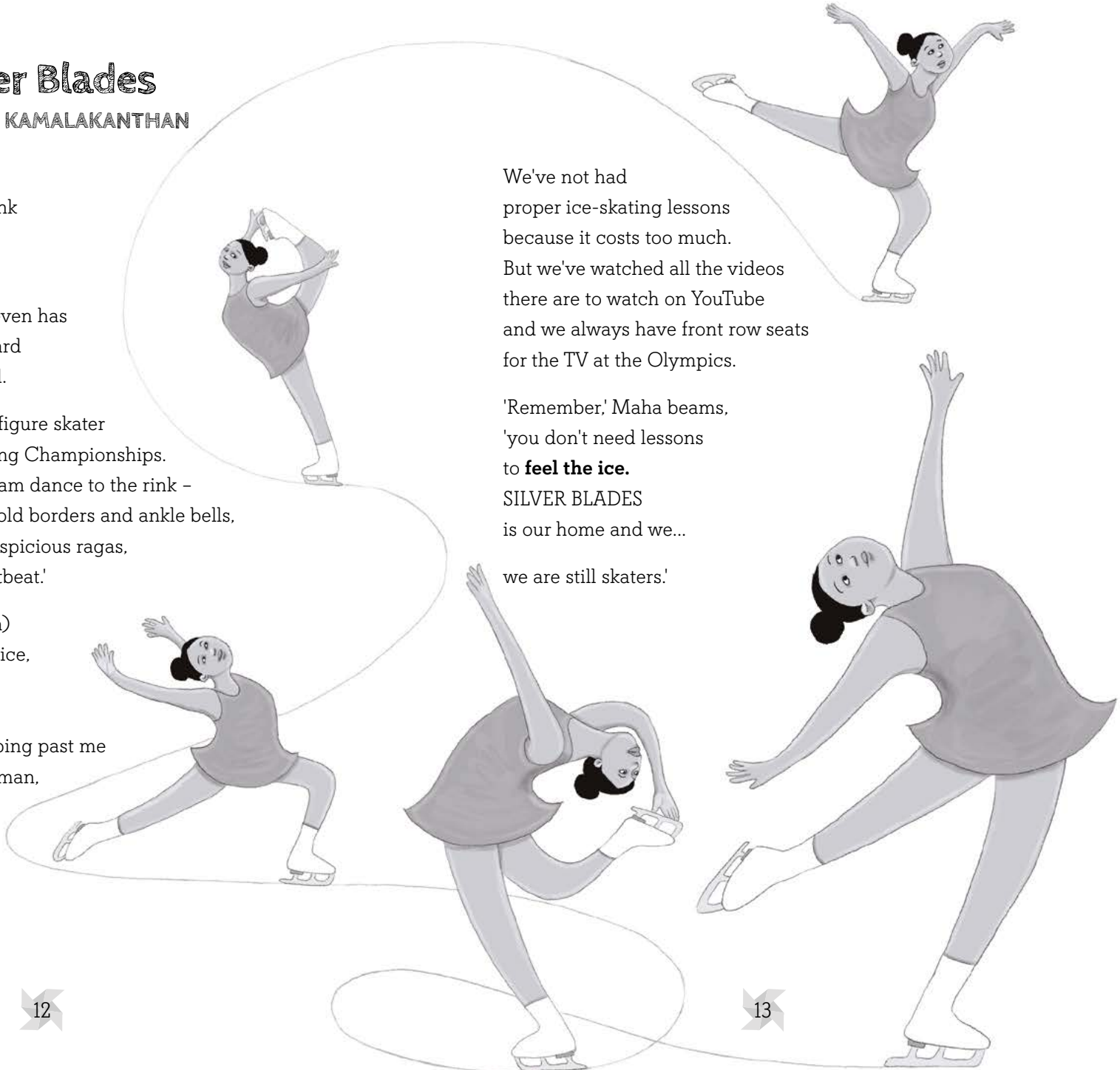
GAYATHIRI KAMALAKANTHAN

It's three trains away
but we come to the ice rink
every chance we get.

Maha is my best friend
and basically a pro. She even has
an Ami Parekh mood-board
blu-tacked above her bed.

'Ami was the first Indian figure skater
in the World Figure Skating Championships.
She brought Bharatanatyam dance to the rink –
celebrating its sari silk, gold borders and ankle bells,
its sunny, pensive and auspicious ragas,
set to a mridangam-heartbeat.'

Maha tells this me (again)
as she slices through the ice,
spinning and
dipping
and slipping past me
like some kind of half-human,
half-arctic gazelle.



We've not had
proper ice-skating lessons
because it costs too much.
But we've watched all the videos
there are to watch on YouTube
and we always have front row seats
for the TV at the Olympics.

'Remember,' Maha beams,
'you don't need lessons
to **feel the ice.**
SILVER BLADES
is our home and we...

we are still skaters.'

'Come Hither' Chimed My Phone

JOSEPH COELHO

"Come hither" chimed my phone
in the middle of the night,
the digital voice was eerie
as it blinked a cold screen light.

It woke me from my slumber
"Phone – turn off" I said.
My phone just laughed gently
with a tone of ringing dread.

I unplugged her from her charger
but her glare hooked my eyes,
images were scrolling
each promising a prize.

A video of laughs,
an advert from a game,
a headline of shock –
all streamed into my brain.

My fingers started tapping,
blood smeared on the screen,
the way my mobile cut me
was subtle and unseen.



My eyes became misted,
my jaw fell open and slack
but still I kept on scrolling
as the phone renewed its attack.

My fingers became a blur,
giving up their red-slick flow,
how long had I been staring?
Would I ever know?

I heard banging at my door
but it was locked by a thing online,
I was vaguely aware of screaming,
the world was in end times!

Cars that drove themselves
refused to let passengers out,
the masses stared at screens
eyeballs blank and misted out.

Drones blackened the sky,
still my fingers scrolled their dance
humanity was over –
AI now had its chance.



Broken iPad

SADATU FUTA

The apple of my eye has decayed black,
and will not start up light.

My sister trusts down in Brixton –
pass the crows and pigeons,
pass Windrush Square and the library,
towards the crossing, into the arcade –
awaits a healer solid in his duty.

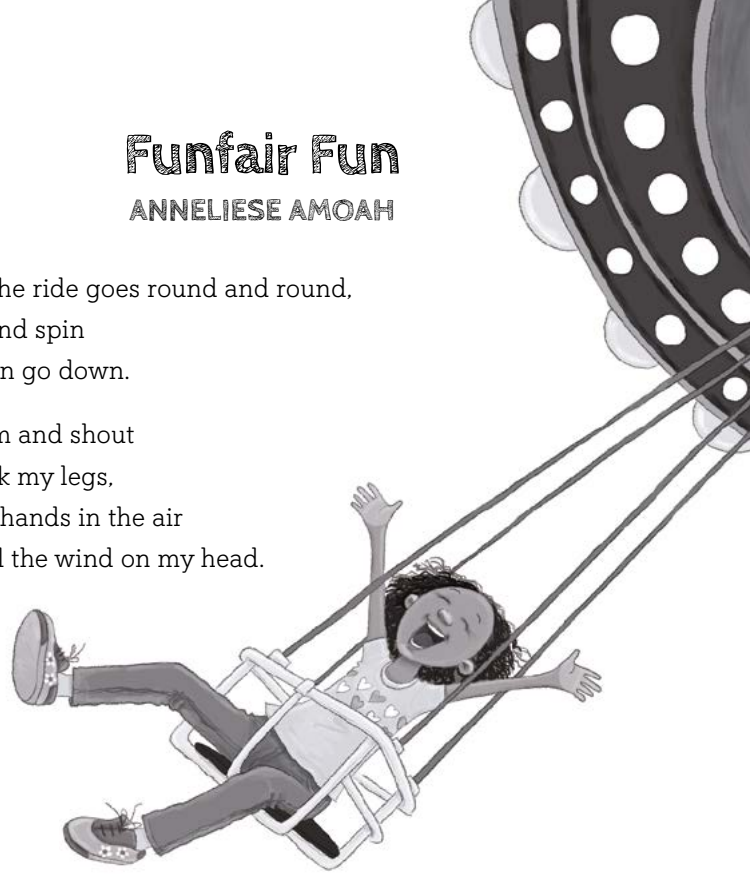
I set my soles on stone and off I go.
The apple of my eye needs healing;
pictures returned, memories resurrected,
games recovered, missions restored.

Funfair Fun

ANNELIESE AMOAH

When the ride goes round and round,
I spin and spin
and then go down.

I scream and shout
and kick my legs,
put my hands in the air
and feel the wind on my head.



I see the lights,
they paint the town.
I taste the treats.
I hear the sounds.

I could stay here all day long
but Mum says we have to go home.

So I wave to the fair and say
See you tomorrow!
Real fun doesn't have to be bought or borrowed.

Andre

JAY SANDHU

Sheets on sheets on sheets on
sheets

of snow.



It's Friday but we've got no uniform today
real early Mum heard it on the radio –

Snooowwww ddaaaayyyy.

Might have done an entire lap of the house in just my pants.
I just stared at the glistening perfect powdery pieces of
unique bricks
these bricks are soft to jump in
but they hurt when they're balled and thrown at you
But...

They. Are. The. Best...for building.

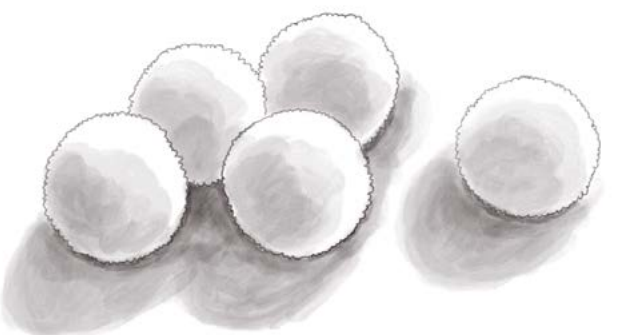
So, I jumped on the phone and assembled...
The Avengers
(well, that was our football team name).

It was today we embarked on Mission Andre!
Andre was to be our crew's greatest achievement...ever!
We needed the whole team.

Andre...our Everest...could take us all day (and I mean allll day)

The team started on Andre's monolithic feet
It was after we finished his left Jordan Hi-Top that we realised
Mum was right,
because I couldn't feel my fingers
'are they going to fall off?!'
Dave said his uncle's fell off when he held his ice pole for
too long
I need my fingers how else am I going to play Fifa.

We ran in, grabbed some gloves
finished his other Jordan
Yeahhh Andre was starting to take shape.
This was Andre the Great.



Joseph Coelho



Photo credit: Hayley Madden

Joseph Coelho is a multi-award-winning children's author and playwright. His 'Story told in poems', for age 12+, *The Girl Who Became A Tree*, was shortlisted for The 2021 Carnegie Medal and received a special mention from the Bologna Ragazzi Award 2021. His YA verse novel, *The Boy Lost in the Maze*, is nominated for the Yoto Carnegie Award for Writing 2024, has been chosen as an outstanding international book for The White Ravens collection 2023 and has also been nominated as an IBBY Honour Book for 2024. He has written plays for Little Angel Theatre, Polka Theatre and The Unicorn Theatre amongst others. He is two-time winner of the Indie Book Awards (2019 & 2022) with Picture Books *If All The World Were...* and *My Beautiful Voice* respectively (illustrated by Allison Colpoys). His poetry collection *Werewolf Club Rules* (illustrated by John O'Leary) won the 2015 CLIPPA Poetry Award. His plays for adults have received a special commendation from the Verity Bargate Award and been long-listed for the Bruntwood Playwriting Competition. He is Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022 - 2024.

Ruthine Burton



Photo credit: Roderick McKenzie Smith

Ruthine Burton is a children's book illustrator based in South-West London. Her parents came to the UK many years ago, from Dominica and French Guyana. She completed the inaugural Pathways into Children's Publishing programme in 2021 but once upon a time was a pavement portrait artist and subsequently spent several years as an artist in the games industry creating weird and wonderful creatures and environments. Recent book projects include *Our Rights* (Otter-Barry Books, 2023).

Anneliese Amoah



Photo credit: Dujonna Gift

Anneliese Amoah is a British-Ghanaian writer and poet. Her past features and creative engagements include *Cece's Speakeasy* and BBC's *Words First* in collaboration with Apples and Snakes. She has performed at events such as Jawdance x Bloomsbury Festival, Pearson UK's *Lit in Colour* student conference and at prestigious venues such as the US Embassy. Her first short story was selected as a winning entry for her borough and subsequently published in Spread the Word's *City of Stories: Home Anthology*. She can be found on instagram @awordbya. She lives in London.

Antoinette Brooks



Born and raised in London, Antoinette Brooks fell in love with the power of words by listening to her mother share memories of her childhood in rural Jamaica. She is the author-illustrator of *Motherland Sweet Motherland* and *Grandma, Grandma Brave and Tall* which celebrate her Caribbean heritage. She is the 2023 winner of the Golden Egg Award and the Jericho Prize. She was also named first runner-up in the Mo Siewcharran Prize and was Highly Commended in the Fab Prize. Antoinette has been invited to perform her poetry at the Southbank Centre and was the inaugural poet for the Racial Justice Diversity Forum, speaking on the same spot where Revd Dr Martlin Luther King first spoke when he came to England. You can reach her at https://missbrookslovesbooks.com or on Instagram @MissBrooksLovesBooks.

Sadatu Futa



Sadatu Futa captures people, places and movements through her lens and pens. Her profiles on African women are published in Black Ballad and gal-dem. In 2022 she was awarded the Pocc x Shutterstock artist in residence fund. Sadatu is interested in climate resilience and symbiosis with nature. She participates in conservation and creative work with a collective, and contributed eco-poetry to the Nature Nurtures anthology published by Spread The Word. In the past summer she developed a new practice and facilitated *Sadatu's Wild Wild Show*, a series of nature poetry workshops for children at London Wildlife Trust reserves. Sadatu is a Fulani-Hausa storyteller who thinks of Ghana as home. She lives in London.

Eileen Gbagbo



Eileen is a spoken word artist and playwright based in London. She is interested in helping children discover the love of reading and writing creatively. She was a Children's Poet in Residence for Bromley for the 2024 SPINE festival. She was Highly Commended in the 2015 Slambassadors competition and has performed at various shows like Jawdance and institutions including the Saatchi Gallery and The Albany.

Gayathiri Kamalakanthan



Gayathiri is a Tamil poet and facilitator. They're interested in how language shapes childhood and how we might use it to queer the future. Gayathiri won the Faber & Andlyn Publisher's Prize 2022, the Primadonna Fiction Prize 2021 and they were shortlisted for the Bridport Poetry Prize 2022. Gayathiri is a member of the Southbank New Poets Collective. They also run Queering Lit Collective, a workshop space centring trans and queer writers of colour, supported by the Royal Society of Literature 'Literature Matters Award'. Their debut novel in verse is forthcoming with Faber. Instagram:@unembarrassable, gayathiri.co.uk.

Shagufta K. Iqbal



Photo credit: Kiran Gidda

Co-founder of Kiota Bristol and the Yoniverse Collective, Shagufta K. Iqbal is an award-winning writer, workshop facilitator and Tedx Speaker. She has been described by gal-dem as a poet whose work 'leaves you validated but aching – her narratives are important, heart-wrenching and relatable.' Her poetry collection *Jam Is For Girls, Girls Get Jam* has been recommended by Nikesh Shukla as 'a social political masterclass.' She has also been published by Macmillan Press, and Comma Press. Her poetry film has won several awards. She is currently writing her second poetry collection and debut novel.

She lives in London with her children and cats, to whom she has dedicated her poems for Spin!

Rowan Kiffin-Murray



Rowan Kiffin-Murray began writing poetry in May 2022 after attending a poetry workshop. Immediately falling in love, he has been writing poems ever since and performing at open mics across London. Rowan likes to tell stories about emotions that he feels but struggles to articulate and lessons he has learnt and wants to share with others. He is inspired by those who can tell stories effectively across different mediums, such as George the Poet, J. Cole and Shuffle T and Sade Adu. Rowan is a 25-year-old Black British Caribbean man from East London; he continually strives to make his writing relatable to everyone, which is the beauty of poetry.

Jay Sandhu



Jay Sandhu is a writer, comedian, and maths teacher. He explores themes of identity, race, self-discovery and social justice in accessible ways, with funny themes. Working in the community where he was raised, Jay is a Creative Director at The Nottingham Poetry Festival, has a column in Left Lion magazine, and runs Nott Another, hosting spoken word and music workshops and events. His writing journey began with poetry; finding solace in self-expression and wanting to share his work pushed him to perform on stages across the country and present radio shows on his local BBC station. Jay's favourite character to play on Mario is Funky Kong.

Ioney Smallhorne



Ioney Smallhorne is a performance poet, writer and educator, with an MA in Creative Writing & Education, (Goldsmiths University). Her artistic practice is ignited by her Jamaican heritage, fuelled by the Black British experience, and smoulders with womanness. She was shortlisted for the Sky Arts/Royal Society of Literature fiction award 2021, winner of the Writing East Midlands/Serendipity Black Ink Writing Competition 2021, longlisted for the Jerwood Fellowship 2017 and shortlisted by Caribbean Small-Axe prize 2016. As a Spoken Word Educator she works across the East Midlands encouraging people to harness the power of poetry, she is the Co-lead facilitator for Gobs Poetry collective in Nottingham. She is a part time English teacher in FE. She lives in Nottingham.

Jasmin Thien



Jasmin Thien is a visually impaired actor, writer, stand-up comedian and spoken word artist. Born and raised in Brunei, she came to the UK to read a degree in Education, English, Drama and the Arts at the University of Cambridge. Her work often focuses on disability, gender and racial issues. She is especially passionate about shining a light on difficult subjects in ways which are truthful and nuanced, while remaining accessible to all. She lives in London

About Apples and Snakes

Apples and Snakes is England's leading organisation for spoken word with an international reputation for producing engaging, transformative and inspiring experiences for audiences across the UK,

Spoken word trailblazers, the company commissions and produces events, develops artists and runs participation programmes across the country. It exists to amplify ignored voices, support and champion poets and poetry in performance and challenge expectations of what poetry is and can be.

Since 1982, the organisation has advocated for artistic and social change through the power of performance poetry working with artists including the likes of The Last Poets, Lemn Sissay, Kae Tempest, Charlie Dark, Inua Ellams, Roger Robinson, Joelle Taylor, Yomi Sode, Jean Binta Breeze, Salena Godden, Joseph Coelho and Michael Rosen...amongst many others!

SPINE Festival is an annual pan-London spoken word and arts festival for children and families hosted by Apples and Snakes in partnership with libraries. The festival's theme for 2023 was 'kindness' and featured a poetry competition for children aged 5 to 11 across the 16 London boroughs participating in the festival. The winning poems were chosen by Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho and are featured in SPIN anthology.

APPLES AND SNAKES

Follow on: @applesandsnakes

applesandsnakes.org

Apples and Snakes is a charity and National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England.