FRESH

Rhiannon Oliver Chris Riddell





Rhiannon Oliver is a poet, actress, workshop facilitator and early years story-time leader based in Cardiff. She trained as an actress at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and has worked in theatres such as The National Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe, The Young Vic, National Theatre of Wales and for companies such as the BBC, Sky and Discovery.

Her poems feature in anthologies from Oxford University Press, Macmillan Children's Books and in *And I Hear Dragons* from Firefly Press. She has also been widely published in children's poetry magazines and websites including *The Caterpillar*, *Tyger Tyger*, *The Toy*, *The Dirigible Balloon*, *Northern Gravy* and *PaperBound*. Her poetry has been featured on S4C and she has written for the *Big Welsh Rhyme Time* (Book Trust Cymru) in 2023 and 2026.

Rhiannon regularly visits schools and community settings to run writing and performing poetry workshops. There is more on her website: www.rhiannonoliver.com

Chris Riddell 2015-2017 UK Children's Laureate, is an accomplished artist and the political cartoonist for the *Observer*. His children's books have won a number of major prizes, including the 2001, 2004 and 2016 CILIP Kate Greenaway Medals. *Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse* won the Costa Children's Book Award 2013. Chris has been honoured with an OBE in recognition of his illustration and charity work. He lives in Brighton with his family.



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Firefly

For Alys and her friends

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Fresh Start

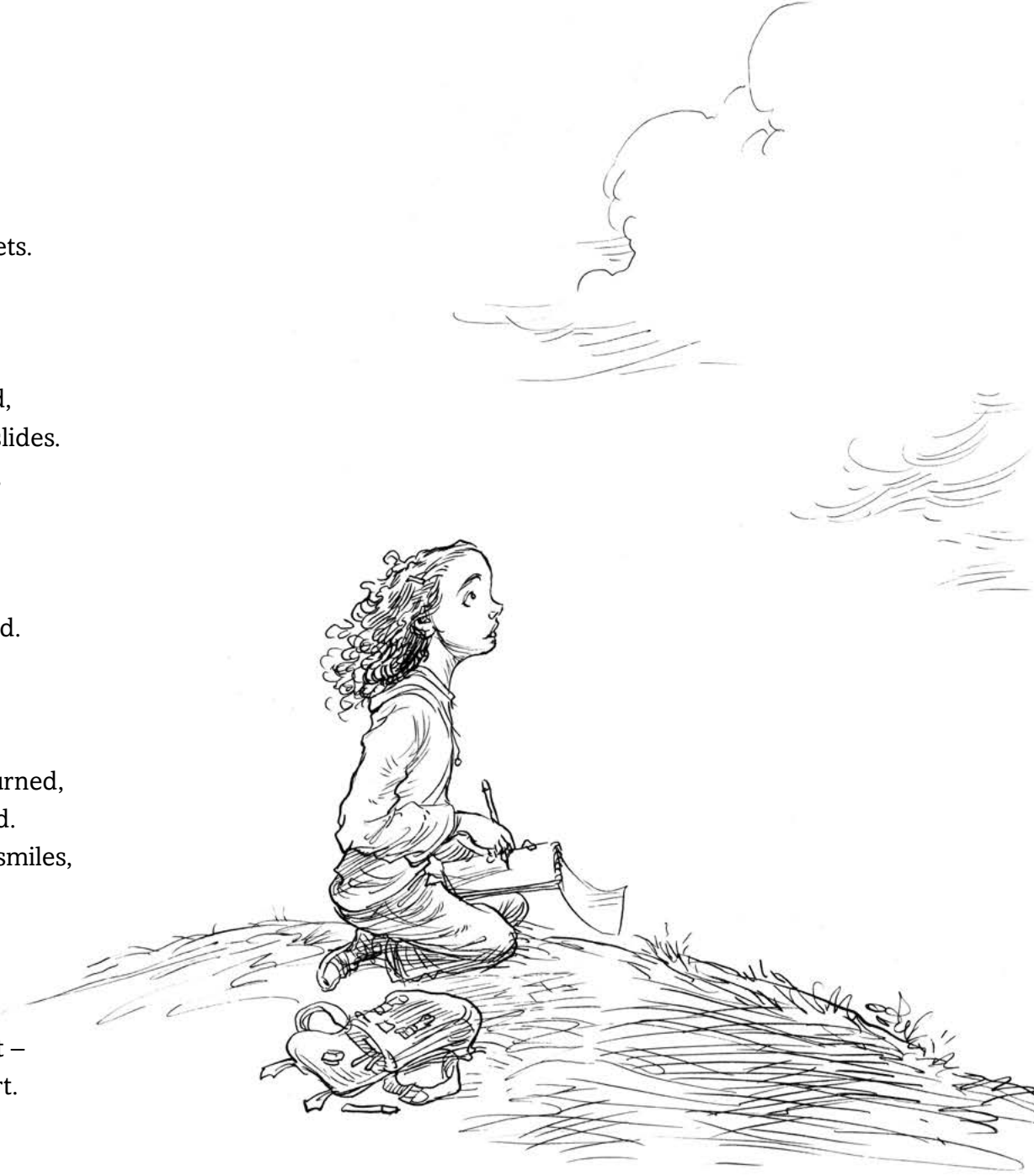
Folded-up socks not stretched out by feet,
Snow without footprints, beds with fresh sheets.
Ice cream un-scooped, a newly mown lawn,
Curtains not open, paper undrawn.

Paths not yet walked down, food not yet tried,
Unclimbed trees, un-swum seas, un-slidden slides.
First feet in the ocean, first sleep under stars,
First time completing the monkey bars.

Cakes not yet cut, stories unheard,
The first night-time star, the first morning bird.
Un-bounced trampolines, pizza unbitten,
Connections not made yet, letters unwritten.

Bright sunrise, slow sunset, first page to be turned,
First mountain, first disco, first lesson learned.
First words with new friends, first hugs, first smiles,
The first steps we make can take us all miles.

Life can be changed in the blink of an eye.
If you're feeling down, look up at the sky.
Keep finding beginnings and open your heart –
Each moment's a chance to make a fresh start.



Dragon Inside

Where's my roar?
Where's my fight?
Where's my spirit?

Where's the certainty
That I can be
Truly me – no limit?

There's a fire
There's a strength
There's a pride

I just need to find
A way to free
The dragon that's inside.

Magic Hour at the Kitchen Disco

There's a special light when it's nearly night
And your shoulders dip down low
When the need to do has passed for you
You're the mum I used to know.
Songs stream in and I begin
Starting steady, slow
Then you take the chance, get up, dance
And our feet just go-go-go.
We shift in time as the music climbs
Finding our own flow
And it's just you and me, you and me
And the kitchen is aglow.



A Dreamy Afternoon on the Common

They shift above:
The face of a man with a beard as long
As his wait for love,
A woman dancing free, arms reaching, reaching,
A lost dolphin leaping,
A giant frog, complete with bunny's tail,
Half a whale,
Another face – wide eyes staring, wild hair flaring,
A planet losing its rings, a stairway to nowhere,
A deckchair?

A mushroom stretches to become a tree, then fades into nothing
As branches break free.

The sun lights a white fire in an oversized frying pan
And the man, still waiting, loses his beard
As it drifts from view, and he is cut
In two by the aeroplanes
Streaking the sky.

Birds fly past a blurry new head, gently spreading
Into the blue.
You,
Is that you?



Toilet Trees

Mum's off to the supermarket
It's what grown-ups do
They put things in a trolley
Then stand there in a queue.

'Love, I've got pasta on the list
And onions for the stew,
Shall I get you Toilet Trees?
Or leave that up to you?'

Dad hollers down the stairs at her
'I need Toilet Trees, that's true.'
Toilet Trees, I ask you!
Why can't he use the loo?





Monsters

There are monsters living in my house (possibly, perhaps)
Monsters washing hands and then not turning off the taps
Monsters taking Lego out, not putting it away
Monsters being cheeky and leading me astray.

There are monsters living in my house (possibly, I think)
Monsters causing chaos and kicking up a stink
Monsters stealing single socks, losing books from school
Monsters just not caring when they break important rules.

There are monsters living in my house (possibly, perhaps)
Monsters using my best pens and not replacing caps
Monsters going to the loo, not flushing it all down
Monsters filling pockets with leaves they found in town.

There are monsters living in my house (possibly, I think)
Monsters marking tables with long-forgotten drinks
Monsters hiding school shoes, making mornings stressy
Yes, I think it's monsters –

or maybe I'm just messy.

