

SHELDRAKE PRESS

TWELVE NEW RUTHLESS RHYMES

After Harry Graham

THE WINNER

George's New Year's Resolution

New Year, he thought, was just the chance
To buy a little place in France.
When Mavis once again said no,
George knew that she would have to go.

His beating heart was all a-quiver,
As George pushed Mavis in the river.
And as she floated down the stream,
George shrugged and muttered 'Vive la dream'.

— *written by Angela Perkins*

SECOND PLACE

Good Intentions

Aunt thought she'd make a contribution
to uncle's New Year resolution.
She put his bottles out of reach
amongst the polish, soap and bleach.
How on earth could she have guessed
that in his alcoholic quest,
without his specs his sight was dim.
It was the bleach which finished him.

— *written by Rosemary McDougall*

THIRD PLACE**A New Year's Hobby**

Margot declared, 'new year, new me!'
Her new interest? Taxidermy.
She caught and stuffed her children's rat,
Posed on a plinth the family cat.
Their guinea pig she slit in half;
Her husband lowered his Telegraph.
'You're making quite a mess, my dear.
Perhaps just join the gym next year?'

— written by *Elizabeth Francis*

Romance is DEAD!

Baby you've become so cold
Your appetite is voracious too hard to hold
She tells me I'm not man enough
That I got limey hair and nose full of guff

She embarrasses me always at parties
By flirting with everyone and leaving without me
She goes, 'If you loved me, by now you would have said (!)'
I go, 'Don't worry love, I'll say it at your eulogy instead'.

— written by *Yasir Hayat*

The Present

Filled with seasonal good cheer
my choice of gifts was bad, I fear.
I chose to give my young godchild,
a boy of spirit, sadly wild,
a large and splendid scarlet kite.
I thought he might enjoy its flight.
Indeed he did, I'm glad to say,
the little blighter blew away.

— written by *Rosemary McDougall*

New Start

My uncle's New Year's resolution —
'to fortify his constitution,
to get away, start a new life' —
displeased Aunt Beth, his worn-out wife.
She muttered darkly 'till death us part',
planted a knife in his faithless heart,
and stooping to check that he was dead,
said sweetly, 'Better done than said'!

— written by *Gwen de Mel*

Sharp Edge

My Uncle Bill fell off the peak,
expiring with a dreadful shriek.
No one had ever dropped so far,
but thankfully he missed the car.

— written by *Diane Jackman*

Please

'Stab me,' he asked, biting his lip.
The teacher saw I ran him through with the tip:
'You're right; ballpoint pens are such a pest
I am going to cancel this test.'

— written by *Delia Chilom*

Over Dinner

To mother's New Year's resolution
(to lose ten pounds in weight, she said)
my father found a spry solution:
whilst carving dinner, he sliced her head,
ignoring her bewildered wails
and weighing each slice on the scales.
'Ten pounds at least!' he cried, 'What's more
you're so much prettier than before!'

— written by *Gwen de Mel*

New Year, New You

Aspiring towards a whole 'New You',
 Jo resolved to lose a stone or two
 By skipping breakfast, lunch and dinner,
 Soon enough she became much thinner.
 But also hungry enough to weep,
 'Til she chewed her hand off in her sleep
 But at least without the hand she ate
 Jo has now reached her target weight.

— *written by Katherine Lavender*

New Year's Resolutions: Healthy Eating

At dinner, Chef Tom's Hogmanay Tagine
 Was lauded as masterful urban cuisine;
 'Who would have thought that slow-cooked rat
 Could be so tender and so low in fat?'

— *written by Elizabeth Sarah Pearl*

The Cat Kebabs

The cats around our neighbourhood were all considered stray,
 Unnoticed was their disappearance slowly day by day,
 Until a cheap kebab stand set up shop across the square,
 And someone found a whisker in the meal they'd purchased there.
 The owners ran away by night to try to avoid the scandal,
 But now the town is overrun with strays too many to handle,
 So neighbours are combining funds to rent a disused lab,
 To work upon developing the finest cat kebab.

— *written by Sapphire Elisha*

Origin of the Ruthless Rhyme

The Ruthless Rhyme first appeared in 1899 with the publication of *Ruthless Rhymes for Heartless Homes* by Col. D. Streamer, alias Harry Graham (he was a serving officer in the Coldstream Guards at the time). It was followed in 1930 by *More Ruthless Rhymes for Heartless Homes*. These two volumes introduced the public to such ill-fated characters as Poor Billy who fell in the fire, L'Enfant Glacé who was popped in the Frigidaire, Aunt Maud who died of cramp, Aunt Eliza who fell in the drinking well, Mrs Gorm who was stung to death by savage bees, Lord Gorbals who collided with a goatherd and Uncle Titus who was stricken with St Vitus. As Harry Graham's writing career took off, these were followed by Bishop Prout who preached on Predestination, Ada Stew who was just seventeen, little Léonie, abducted by a French Marquis, Calculating Clara, Canon Gloy who missed his train, Ponto the dog and Bosco the performing bear. All these and many others, not forgetting Nephew John who forgot to bolt the bathroom door, appear in the authorized anthology of Harry Graham's humorous verse, compiled with the help of his daughter Virginia, *When Grandmama Fell Off The Boat* (Sheldrake Press, 2009).