

Bunking off

by Jane Flett

I bunked off today.

I closed the laptop lid and cooed, "Hush child, stay here; I promise I'll return."

The sun had already sucked the water from the marshland. All that was left was spittle, dandelion clocks, and fragments of glass glittering like the mosaics of waterfalls.

A Hasidic Jew cycled by through the grass. It was strange to see him there, so far from town. He looked like a black paper doorway pasted onto a painting of summer.

I did not try to step through him.

I was busy counting the buttercups and the daisies and recording their tallies in a squared maths jotter. So far, the daisies were trouncing the buttercups seventy-nine to forty and it seemed the buttercups were losing faith, preparing themselves for the button-lipped disappointment of the car ride home.

I was holding out, however, even allowing a jaunty cirrus to distract me from a daisy clump or two: "Aloha, buddy! How's the view up there?"

- I have always had a thing for the underdog.

At the end of the marshes lay an octopus tree beckoning for a hug with his open arms. There was nothing to do but clamber, scuff-kneed, into the boughs.

I found a nook to rest my cheek against and breathed in the smell of

broken pencils. I knew I would be safe here from the protestations of the working week, from its spindly, tyrannous fingers.

I knew, if I wanted it, the afternoon was mine. I was free as a feather to play kiss chase with my brain.

