

Christine Hollywood

Fragile Islands

**Indigo Dreams Publishing**

First Edition: Fragile Islands

First published in Great Britain in 2024 by: Indigo Dreams Publishing

24, Forest Houses

Cookworthy Moor

Halwill

Beaworthy

Devon

EX21 5UU

[www.indigodreamspublishing.com](http://www.indigodreamspublishing.com)

Christine Hollywood has asserted her right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the author of this work.

© Christine Hollywood 2024

ISBN 978-1-912876-90-7

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data. A CIP record for this book can be obtained from the British Library.

*This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the author's and publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.*

Designed and typeset in Palatino Linotype by Indigo Dreams. Cover image created by David Williams, designed by Ronnie Goodyer.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by 4edge Ltd.

Papers used by Indigo Dreams are recyclable products made from wood grown in sustainable forests following the guidance of the Forest Stewardship Council.

for my daughters

## **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to the editors of Finished Creatures and Reach Poetry magazines where poems from this collection have been published. Also to the judges of the Indigo Spring Poetry Competition 2023 and Brighton & Hove Poetry Competition 2015 who awarded 2nd place to: Passing Through Richmond Park to Visit My Daughter, and Teatime at The Clarkes respectively.

Thank you to members of Rottingdean Writing Group who looked at early drafts of many of these poems. I am grateful too for feedback and support from Charles Antony, Kate Dyson, John McCullough, Mary Burns and Marion Tracey.

I'd like to thank my friends, and family, who were so very pleased for me and have encouraged and inspired me during the completion of Fragile Islands.

Thank you to Dawn Bauling and Ronnie Goodyer for the opportunity to publish my debut collection with Indigo Dreams.

## CONTENTS

### Part 1: Judy's Story

Judy's Story.....	9
Baby Punch .....	10
If You See A Crocodile Don't Forget to Scream! .....	11
The Police Inspector and Mr Punch Shake Hands .....	14
The Dr's Notes.....	17

### Part 2

The Longing of Kangaroos .....	21
Kids.....	22
Laughing At The Sky.....	23
Teatime at The Clarkes.....	24
Creosote.....	25
Blue Light.....	26
Tilting .....	27
Cupcake.....	28
Everywhere Was Hot That Summer .....	30
I Dreamt I Was Paul Simon's Girlfriend .....	31
Being Alice .....	32
On Pimlico Road .....	33
Tethered .....	34
Sky.....	36
Fragile Islands .....	37

Escape Chute .....	38
Eating Chips at Tooting Bec Lido .....	40
Different Strokes.....	42
Bullish .....	43
Passing Through Richmond Park to Visit My Daughter .....	44
A Present from Emily Dickinson .....	45
Long Weekend.....	46
Weaving the Tails.....	48
<i>Coo-ee</i> .....	49
Symbiosis .....	50
Merry-Go-Round.....	51

# Fragile Islands

## Part 1. Judy's Story

## **Judy's Story**

All through the summer holidays  
at 12pm on Weymouth beach,  
my husband chucks our baby  
in the air and drops it.

The charismatic Mr Punch  
in his jester's hat  
clouts me  
this way  
that way round my head  
thwacking  
with his slapstick  
blows to my kidneys,  
belly, chest  
where it doesn't show  
again  
and again.

The police turn up,  
the doctor  
and a crocodile.  
He beats them too  
and shouts,  
*That's the way to do it!*  
in his funny, swazzle voice,  
and everybody laughs.



## **Baby Punch**

*dear* parents

I am primed to love you

cannot tell you

yet

my body

speaks for me

lodged in my skin    my blood    my organs

are the imprints

of the force

you use to throw me

the fact I do not bounce

the way you argue

over me

as your spit

flies

in my face

my hot red yell

unmet        seared

in the beating muscle of my heart

## **If You See A Crocodile Don't Forget to Scream!**

Some say I represent the devil.  
It's true I'm not admired  
for my behaviour  
or my looks.  
If I were less I'd blame my ancestry,  
their clumsy clomping,  
lack of evolution.  
But I know as one of fifty  
hatching into life in the soft muddy flatlands  
of a hot swampy river  
we all have our challenges.  
Your mother didn't notice you?  
Get over it.

I know I'm lucky.  
Take what opportunities I can.  
Which leads me onto Punch.  
A bit part at first sight –  
easy prey  
in his stripey onesie –  
the man has very little style.  
His conduct?  
I can't comment

or be called a hypocrite.  
You see I am aware of my reputation.  
Forget the scaly skin,  
small forehead and short limbs,  
I am an elite  
turbo-charged modern reptile.  
My grabber jaws and pincer teeth  
do not slide off prey  
like some arcade claw machine.