

# THE SLEEPLESS NIGHTS OF THE BOY WITH NO EYELIDS

Normally this would sit neatly in my book review section, but after a proper look I realised it's much more than that. It's a clever mix of poetry, striking illustrations and thoughtful design and with the goths coming to town, this is the perfect time to discover this bundle of creativity.

Words | *Whitby Foghorn*



For years, Whitby resident Sarah - better known in music circles as Sarahphotogirl - was behind a camera capturing moments of British music. From the swagger of Britpop to the backstage quiet before the roar of the crowd, she documented an era, snapping icons like Blur, Noel Gallagher, Radiohead and The Darkness while the rest of us were trying to get tickets. Now she's swapped camera and showbiz for something a little quieter but arguably just as powerful: a pen. Or more precisely, a typewriter-shaped imagination.

Her first book, *The Sleepless Nights of the Boy with No Eyelids*, arrives not like a polite knock at the literary door but more like a mischievous tap on the window in the middle of the night. It's dark, funny, creative and strange in the best possible way. The book blends gothic storytelling with vivid illustrations. The result feels less like a traditional children's book and more like the literary equivalent of a slightly spooky fairground ride: colourful, surprising and just a little bit unsettling in a way that makes you want another go.

The premise alone tells you this isn't bedtime reading in the conventional sense. Roy, the unfortunate boy with no eyelids, faces nights that never quite end and visitors no one would want dropping by after dark. Elsewhere there's Herbert, whose love affair with sherbet spirals into chaos, and Moira, who discovers that mould can be a far more personal problem than anyone bargained for. At one point, readers are even treated to a church funeral for a dead rat. Which, frankly, is not the sort of sentence you encounter in most children's books...and that's exactly why it works.

## Delighted horror

What makes the book particularly enjoyable is its tone. The stories are written in perfect rhyming verse, giving them a playful rhythm that feels almost theatrical. You can imagine parents performing them with exaggerated voices while children hover somewhere between laughter and delighted horror. It's a clever balance: spooky enough to thrill younger readers but witty enough to keep adults entertained too.

And that balance is intentional. The result is a multi-layered collection that happily welcomes everyone from reluctant readers to full-blown bookworms. The author herself writes under the wonderful name Marmalade Atkinson. According to Sarah, the stories had been sitting quietly in the bottom of her camera bag for years, hiding somewhere between the lenses and flashguns. Apparently all they needed was the right moment to climb out.

Sarah said, "In the age of Instagram and TikTok, the written word doesn't seem to stand a chance, so I wanted to make my book as different as possible to captivate young readers. As a mother myself, I wanted to write something that parents could read to their children and that children would want to read to their parents. It's not the kind of book you will fall asleep reading. The final story is entitled 'Children' and was written with parents in mind. It's a devilishly hilarious look at the value of parenthood. I've always been a writer - once, backstage with Paul Weller, I had to apologise while I diverted from his photoshoot to scribble down the original idea for this very book!"

A pretty cool story of how it all started and the quiet rebellion continues, spreading beyond the page with a fantastic animation on YouTube and students creating short films as part of their coursework. Signed hardback copies, complete with a limited-edition bookmark, are already finding their way into readers' hands via The Whitby Bookshop, and it's easy to see why curiosity is building.

Because here's the thing: *The Sleepless Nights of the Boy with No Eyelids* is gloriously different. The book leans into what stories do best: imagination. It's gothic without being gloomy, funny without trying too hard and imaginative in a way that feels refreshingly fearless. The illustrations are brilliant, each page designed carefully to add to the book's 154 page hardback beauty. In short, I like it a lot.

And if this is what happens when a rock photographer decides to tell stories instead of taking pictures, we're very happy she picked up that typewriter. Whitby's literary scene just got a little stranger and a lot more fun.

**THE SLEEPLESS NIGHTS OF THE BOY WITH NO EYELIDS**  
**BY MARMALADE ATKINSON**  
**AVAILABLE TO ORDER IN THE WHITBY BOOKSHOP**

