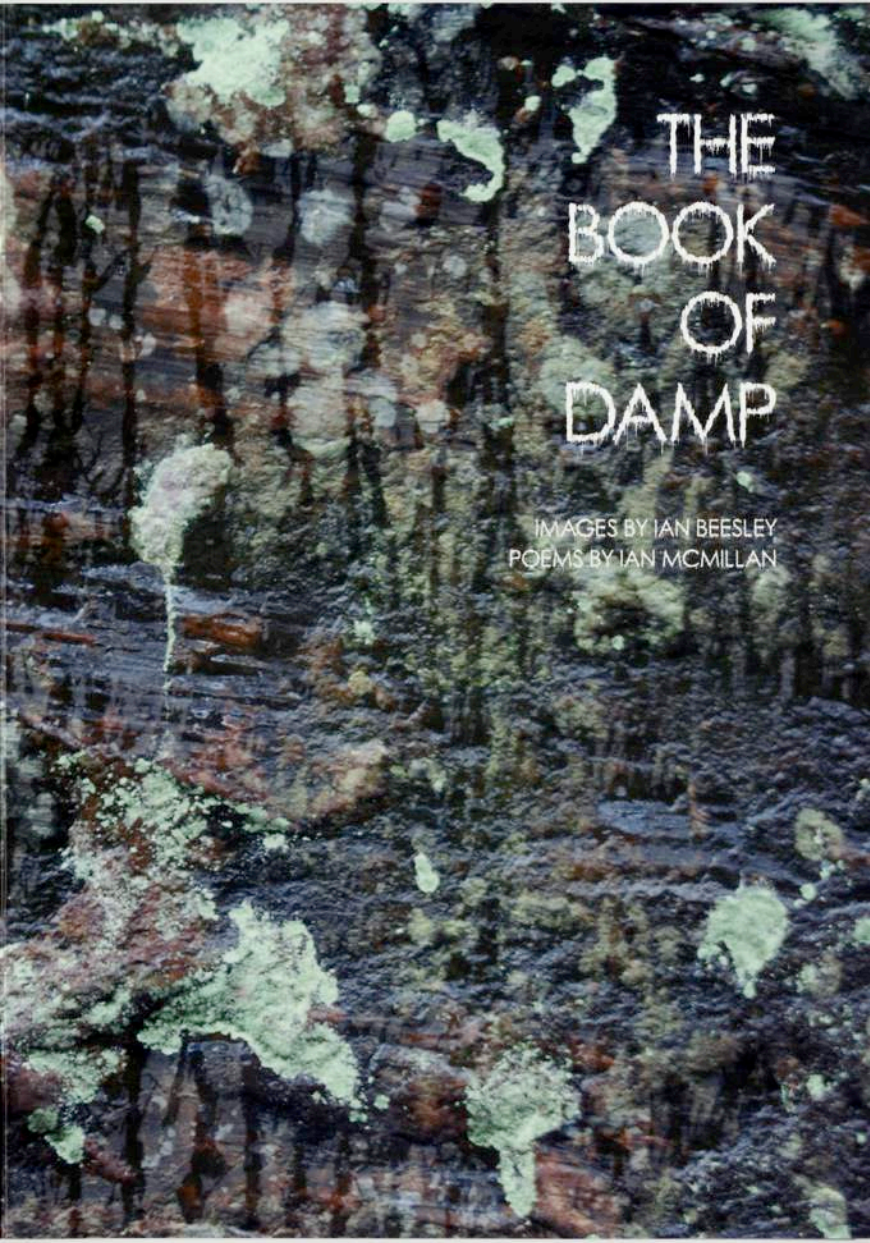
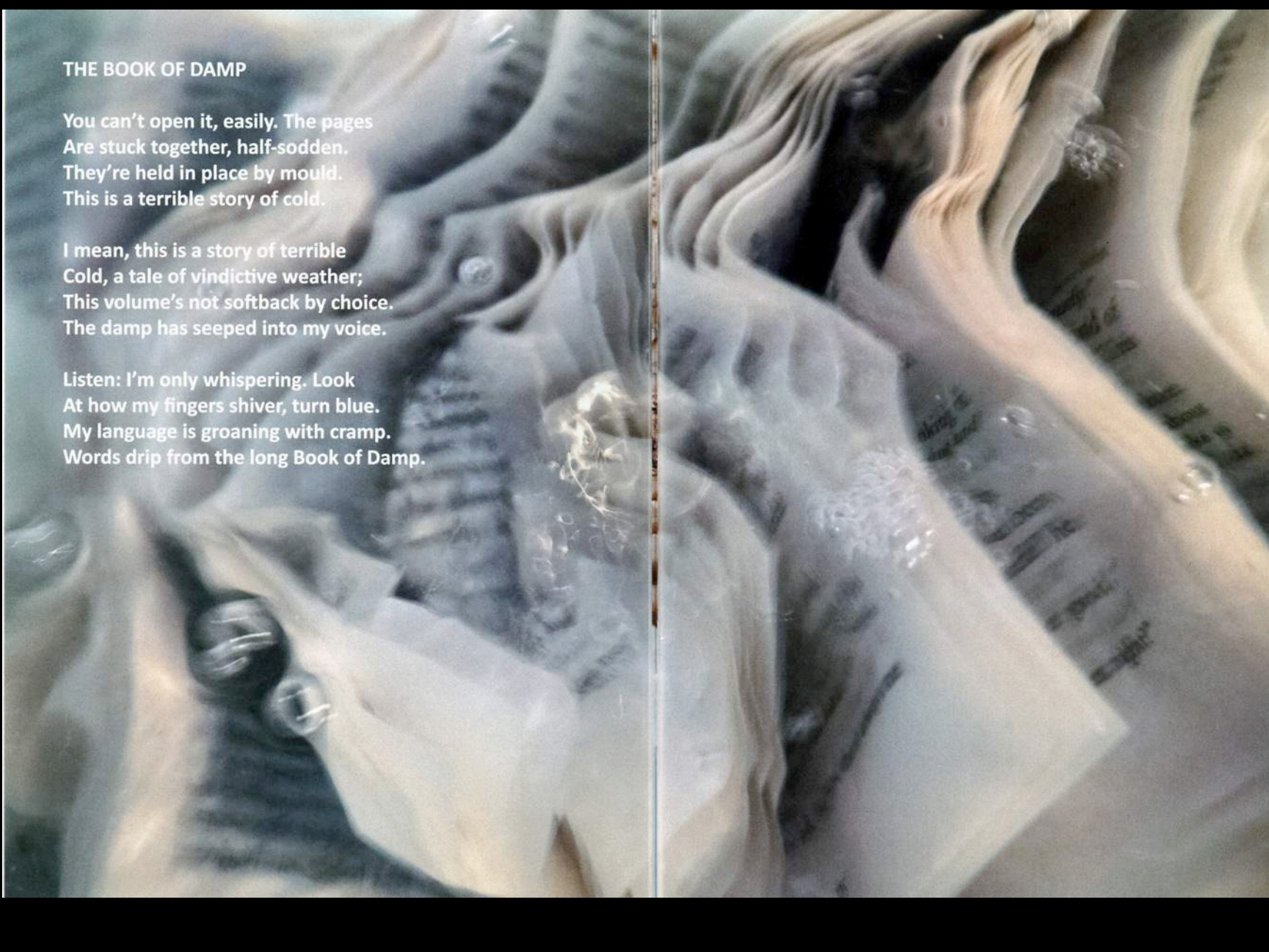


The Book of Damp
By
Ian Beesley
&
Ian McMillan



THE
BOOK
OF
DAMP

IMAGES BY IAN BEESLEY
POEMS BY IAN MCMILLAN

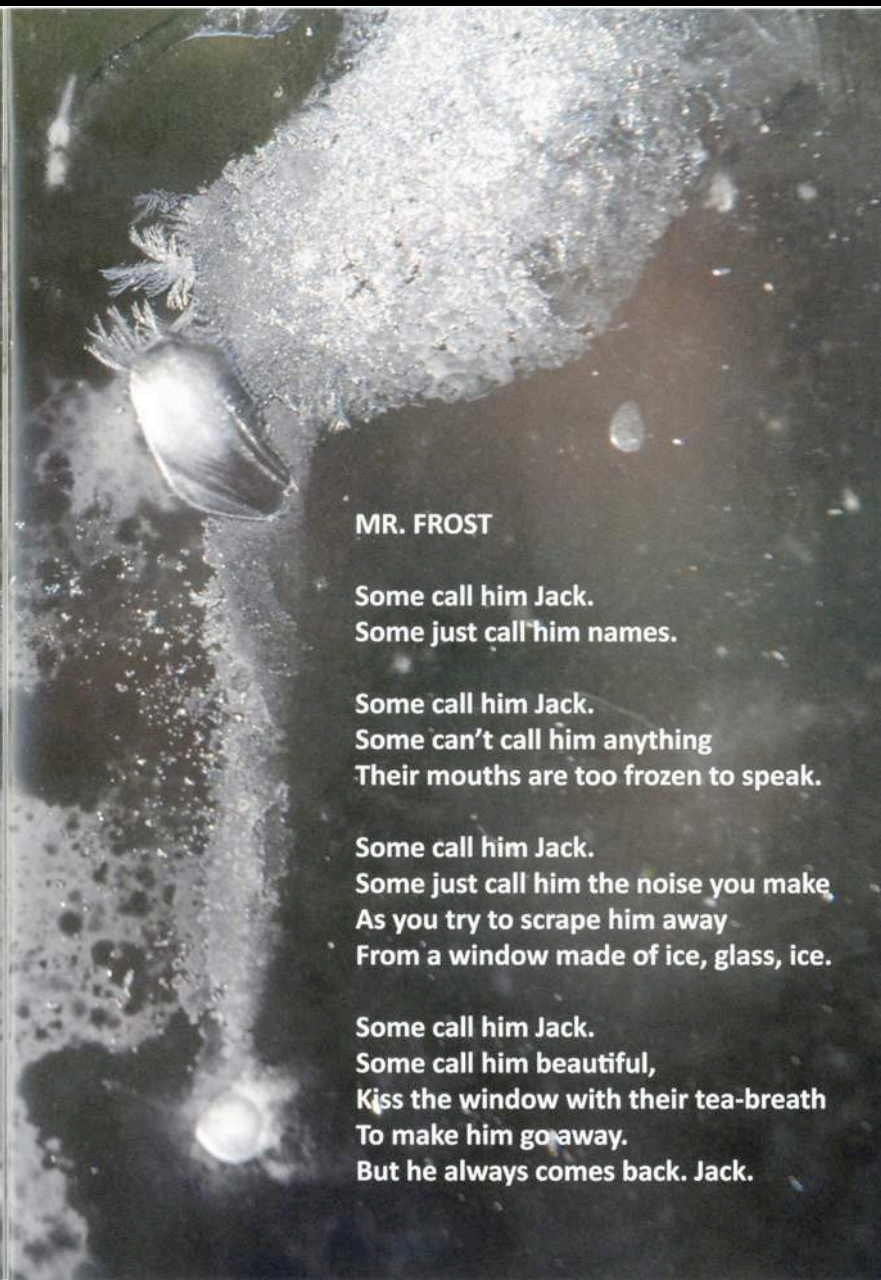


THE BOOK OF DAMP

You can't open it, easily. The pages
Are stuck together, half-sodden.
They're held in place by mould.
This is a terrible story of cold.

I mean, this is a story of terrible
Cold, a tale of vindictive weather;
This volume's not softback by choice.
The damp has seeped into my voice.

Listen: I'm only whispering. Look
At how my fingers shiver, turn blue.
My language is groaning with cramp.
Words drip from the long Book of Damp.



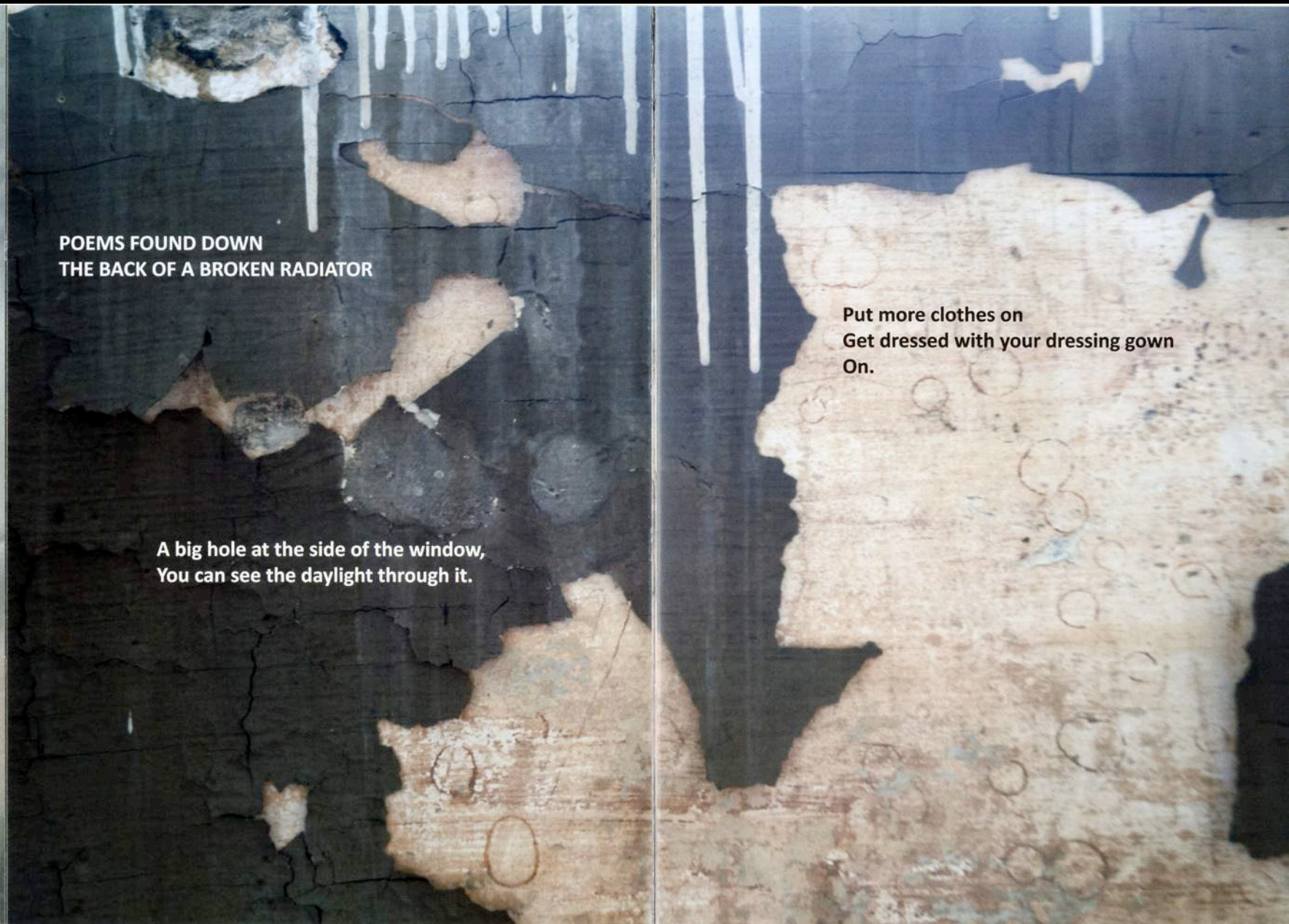
MR. FROST

Some call him Jack.
Some just call him names.

Some call him Jack.
Some can't call him anything
Their mouths are too frozen to speak.

Some call him Jack.
Some just call him the noise you make
As you try to scrape him away
From a window made of ice, glass, ice.

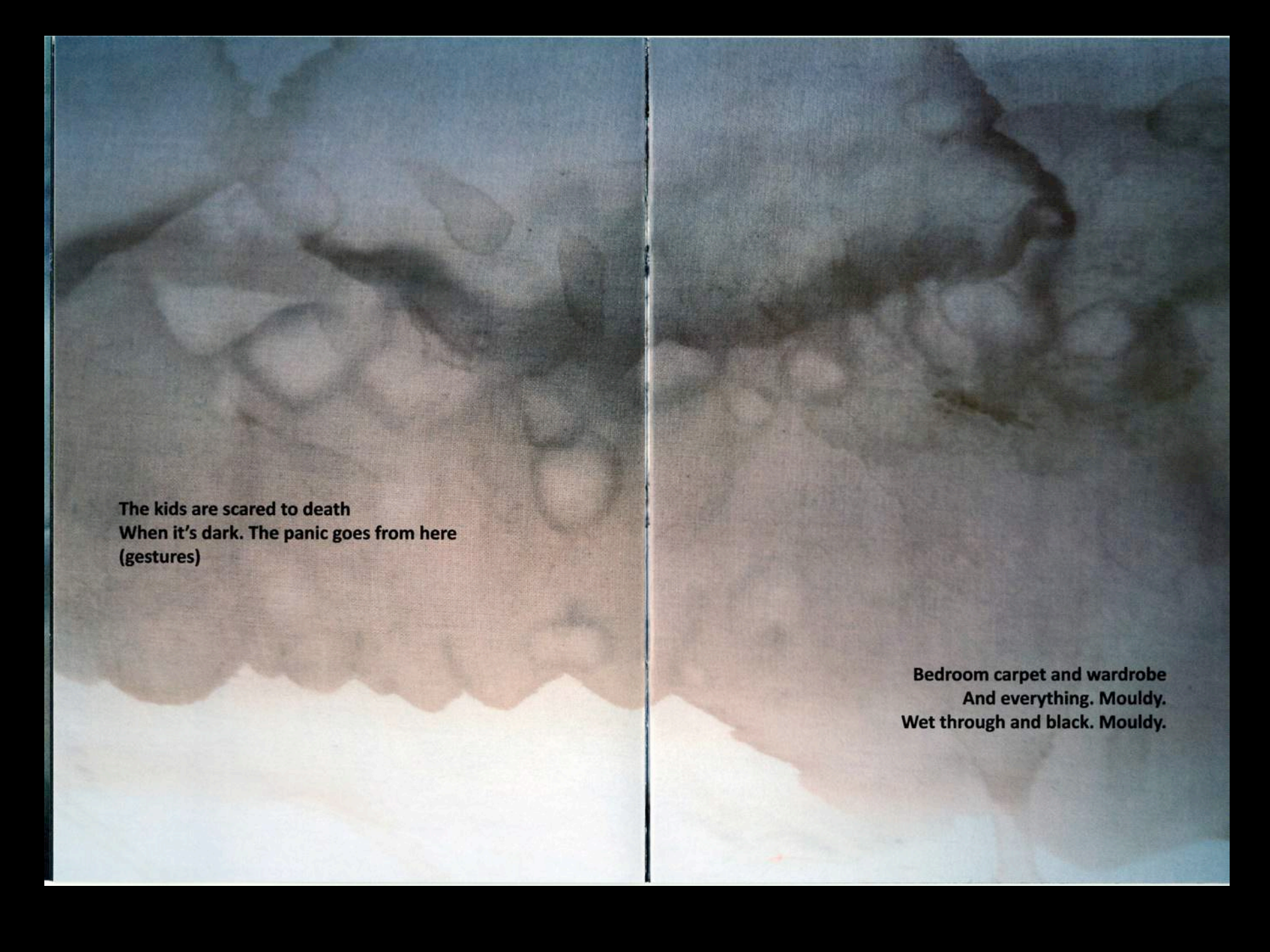
Some call him Jack.
Some call him beautiful,
Kiss the window with their tea-breath
To make him go away.
But he always comes back. Jack.



**POEMS FOUND DOWN
THE BACK OF A BROKEN RADIATOR**

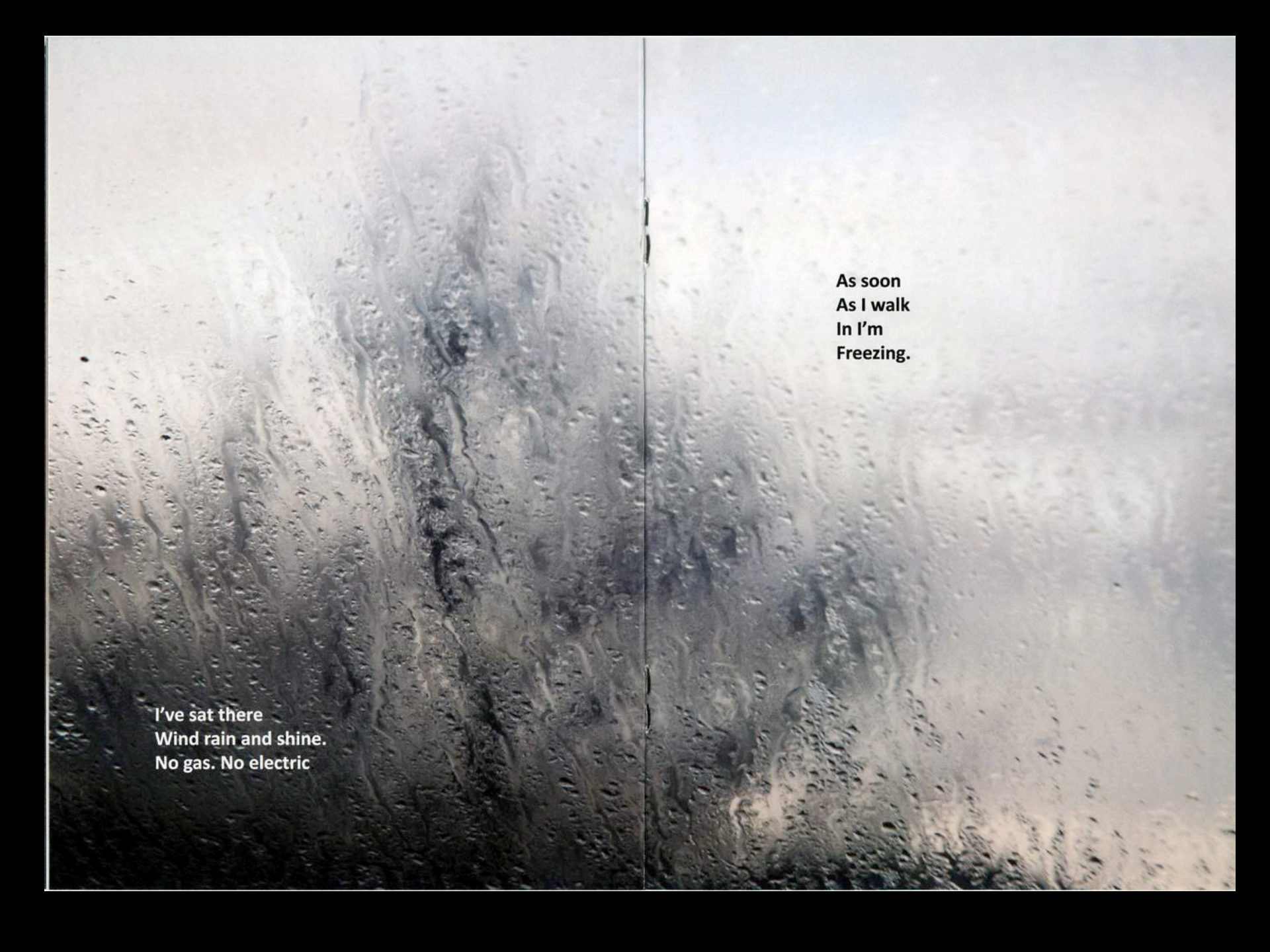
**A big hole at the side of the window,
You can see the daylight through it.**

**Put more clothes on
Get dressed with your dressing gown
On.**



**The kids are scared to death
When it's dark. The panic goes from here
(gestures)**

**Bedroom carpet and wardrobe
And everything. Mouldy.
Wet through and black. Mouldy.**



I've sat there
Wind rain and shine.
No gas. No electric

As soon
As I walk
In I'm
Freezing.



COLD SNAPS

This life is like eating
chips with gloves on.
Oven gloves. Oven gloves
Straight from the fridge.

We were talking last night
And the words froze.
Had to hold them over the cooker
To thaw them out,
Over the reddening ring
To hear just what we said.

When your breath hangs in the kitchen air
It's as though the whole house is steaming
But then you see your hands shaking
And you know you were just dreaming.

Cold makes you old
Before your time;
Cold's clutching grime
Dirties your heart
Before you can start
To live. Sharp cold,
Sharp as a long knife
Freezes your life.

A four letter word: cold.
A four letter word: warm.
I was told not to use four letter words.
But I am (four letter word).
I want to be (four letter word).



DON'T TAKE MY PICTURE!

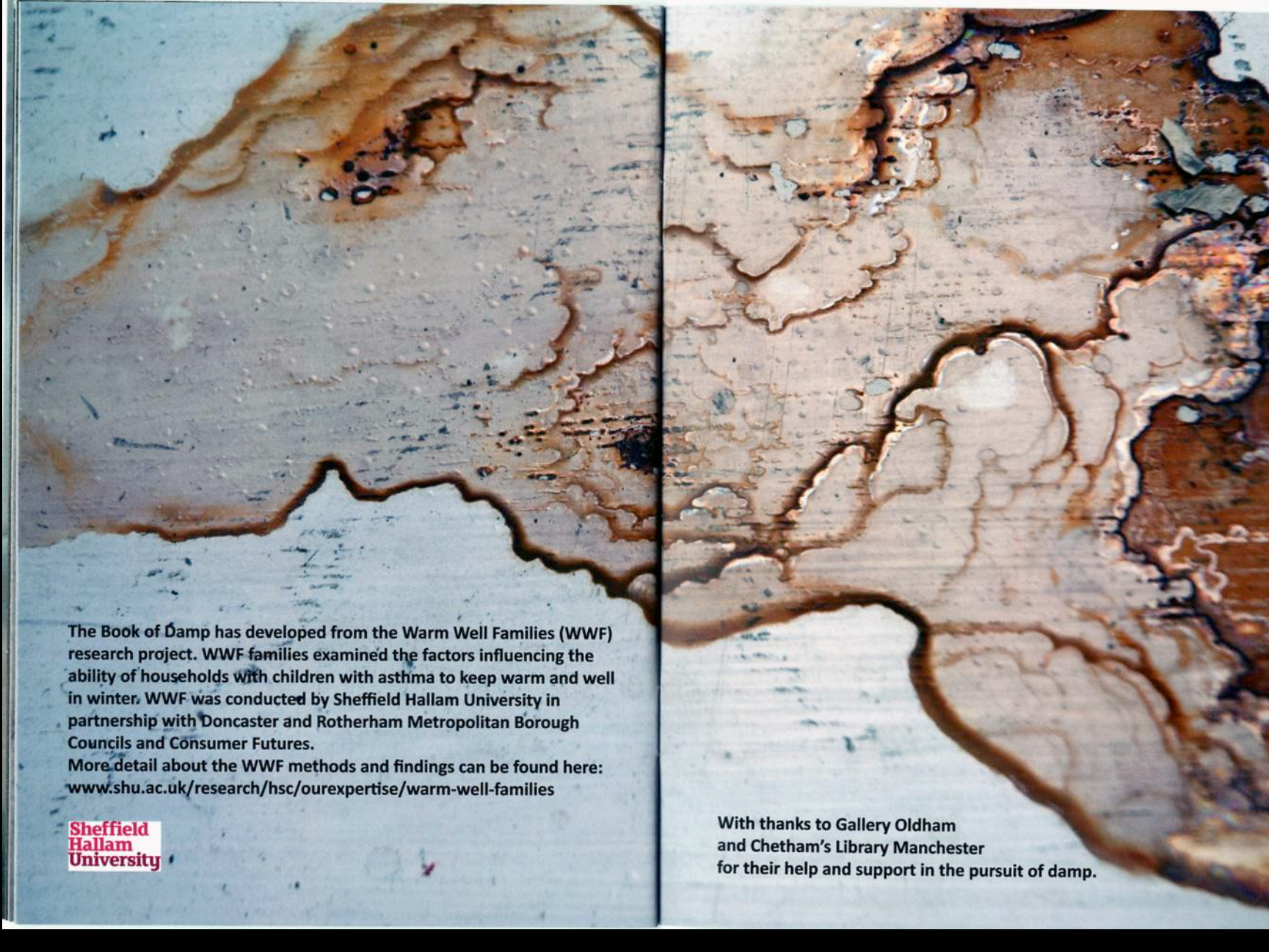
Don't take my picture!
Don't take me!
I'm hiding over here
Behind the big settee
I'll cover up my face
Cover up my head
I'll hide in the kitchen
Hide in the shed
(except we haven't got a shed)
But don't take my picture
Don't take me!

CONDENSATION SMILE

It wasn't a real smile;
It was a condensation smile
Drawn with a finger on a window
One morning when the cold
Walked into the room
And just sat down and wouldn't move.

It wasn't a real smile;
It was a condensation smile
And I hoped it would smile the cold away.
Instead it stayed for hours
Just where it was
Like a skull's fixed and frozen grin.





The Book of Damp has developed from the Warm Well Families (WWF) research project. WWF families examined the factors influencing the ability of households with children with asthma to keep warm and well in winter. WWF was conducted by Sheffield Hallam University in partnership with Doncaster and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Councils and Consumer Futures.

More detail about the WWF methods and findings can be found here: www.shu.ac.uk/research/hsc/ourexpertise/warm-well-families

**Sheffield
Hallam
University**

With thanks to Gallery Oldham
and Chetham's Library Manchester
for their help and support in the pursuit of damp.

Fuel Poverty is:

- Sometimes the reason children are ill
- Sometimes the reason adults are physically and/or mentally unwell
- Sometimes the reason people are in debt
- Sometimes why people are socially isolated
- Sometimes why houses seem unkempt and not looked after.

Sue Barratt CEO, GROW

(GROW is a voluntary sector organisation working with Rotherham women and their families and supporting them to make informed choices.)

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