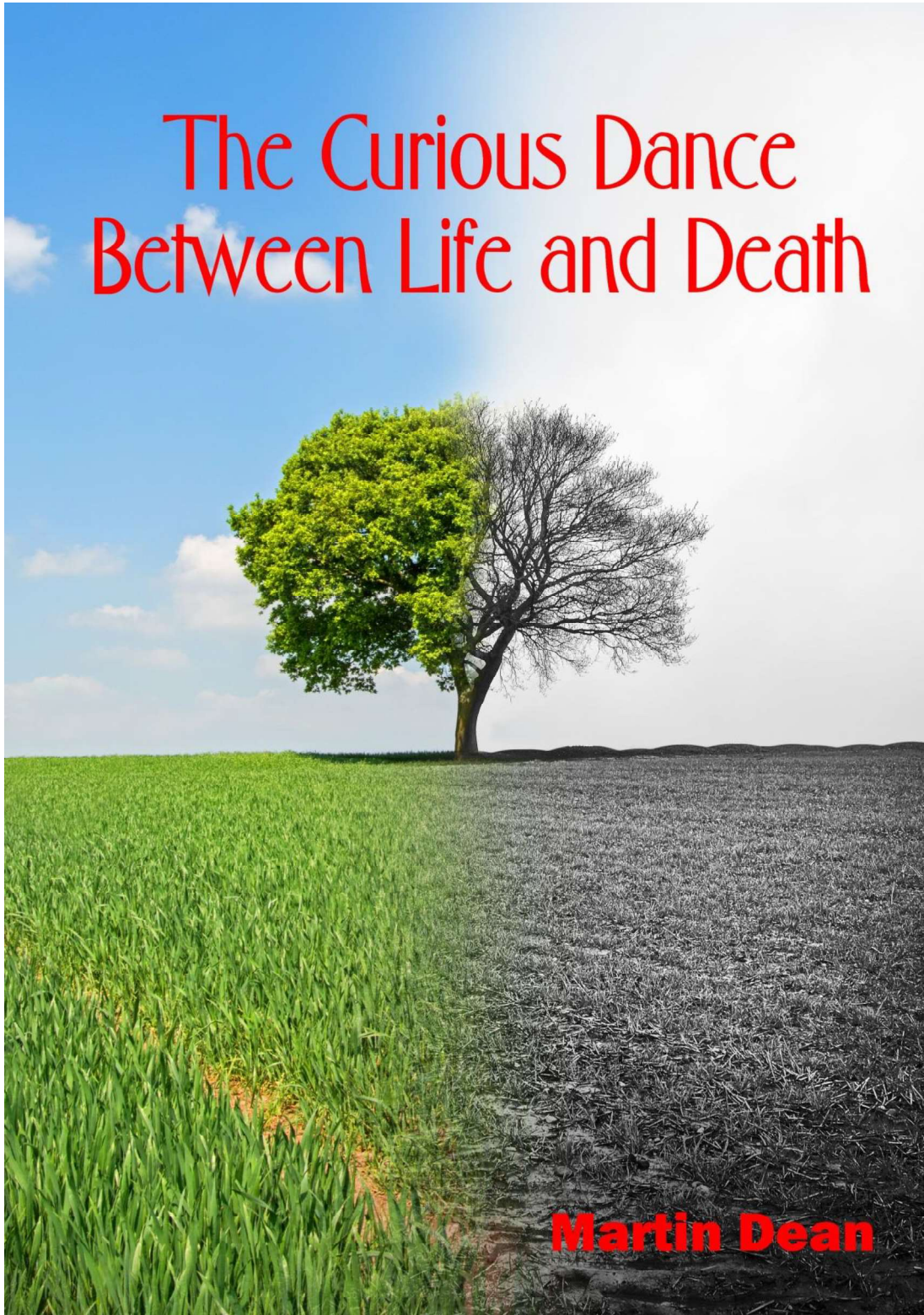


# The Curious Dance Between Life and Death



**Martin Dean**



Martin Dean is a prolific poet who draws on his experience as an acupuncturist and observer of life to produce work which continually challenges his boundaries.

Martin's break in poetry came through the DIY Poets collective, a group which encourages writers to take their work to the stage and to get it published. His poetry has been published in various anthologies and magazines, and he is a regular contributor to the Nottingham open mic poetry scene. In 2017 he was fortunate to be official poet to the grave re-dedication ceremony of Victorian photographer Robert Howlett.

Although a Londoner by birth he now lives in Nottingham, a UNESCO designated City of Literature.



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## **Jack's Last Journey**

Golden rays pierced the slats, streaking the machine as it pinged its heartsong. Jack's chest rose and fell to the rhythm of his past. Sweat gathered and streaked; voices called his name. My mouth grew dry as shadows lengthened. I awoke to the absolute stillness of the night. All hush.



## **Brick Wall**

If you were an X-ray you'd scan  
the shadows of my heart, if you were an eye you  
would see how my lips bleed each time I say these words.  
If you were a mouth you'd answer my prayers.  
To your reddish bones and your plaster skin I would  
confess my all. I am smitten by the way  
the sun dapples your coat like a clouded sky.

But in truth I do not know what is mortar-bound  
beneath your hard shell or cemented  
within the spaces between your ribs, so today,

I'll say nothing.

## **Icarus of the Rope**

Observe in finger gnawing cold  
Sabrina seized of winter ice  
Where solo skater pirouettes her large  
And graceful figure eight  
Frozen bubbles slipping from her  
Pretty pretty pearly mouth  
And red hat like a rosebud waits to bloom.

Echoed clack of wood on wood  
Rum and song to warm the bones  
The huddled scarf of faces cheer  
As skittles fall upon the ice  
Bent backs under bundled wood  
Pies for sale and whispered threats  
A whistle calls a dog to heel  
And red hat like a rosebud blooms.

Raise your head and you will see  
The rope that bridges church and field  
And way below a fishing boat  
Locked in ice and gripped in awe  
As flying man in black and grey  
Slips into place upon his stage  
And offers to the gathered crowds  
His 'tricks and trades upon the rope'.

Shots rebound around the towers  
And open ears of Shrewsbury  
Smoking pistol in each hand he scales the rope  
A voice is heard to offer that  
'He must be made of spirit and gristle', a trumpet sounds  
And red hat whirls and spins her way amongst the  
churning sea of heads.

Open jawed and fists clenched tight  
The crowd is one as Icarus  
Above their heads is seen to hang