

**Bourne**  
**toWrite...**  
creative writing  
workshops

## The Year Without a Summer

by Marion Umney

My dearest Emma

I was so delighted to receive your letter. It felt like a breath of fresh air in this fetid place. I am resigned that for me this is the year without a summer. I won't be out of here before September unless they let me go under the cat and mouse act and I don't think I could bear that; to taste freedom, only to have it snatched away again.

Your tales of walking in the hills, picking primroses and violets left me so homesick for Yorkshire. London at the best of times is dirty and crowded – in that respect not so different from Denaby, I suppose. Sometimes it's easy to forget why I left. I do miss it. I miss you my dear sister, and the little ones. At least there we could escape to the hills from time to time and taste freedom. In London it seems so far to get to any green space of any size, and even then the scenery lacks the freedom of home. In here there is no space at all. The only time we see outside the four walls is for a brief half hour of exercise every morning. The walls are high and the yard small, so any rays of sun reach only a small section, although rain seems to manage to creep into every crevice!

You don't say much in your letter about Father. I still cannot believe he could treat me with such contempt. He, who was always shouting about the rights of the common man seems to have no such fine feelings about the rights of the common woman. I'll never forget when the pit went on strike. He was at the forefront of that, putting our home and our very lives in jeopardy. That seemed like another year without a summer. No carefree joy for us, just hunger.

I admired him so much Em, his fire and determination, and his grief when they went back. It fair broke my heart. I determined then that I would always fight for what was right and votes for women IS right. I just don't understand why he can't see it.

Enough. This is not your battle and I need to give you news to tell them all. I am well is probably enough. Missing you, missing summer, but well.

Your loving sister

Josie