

A painting of a sunset over a dark sea. The sky is a deep, textured purple and blue, with a bright, glowing sun low on the horizon. A brilliant, golden-yellow reflection of the sun stretches vertically down the center of the dark, calm water. The water is dotted with dark, rocky islands and peninsulas. In the distance, a range of dark, silhouetted mountains or hills is visible against the horizon. The overall mood is serene and atmospheric.

THE WINE DARK SEA

EDITION NO 24

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The Wine Dark Sea

A collection of poetry, prose
and art by the students of
St Andrew's College,
Dublin



It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the twenty-fourth edition of The Wine-Dark Sea. It was quite lovely to resume our in-person launch last year and I'm sure this year's will be just as much fun.

These pages abound with deep thinking and some no thinking, something for everyone as it were. The range of subject matter, voice, style and humour is eclectic and engaging. It has been wholly exasperating, but not without a little joy to edit what you find in these pages, I hope your experience of the magazine is more joyful than exasperating.

Creating art reminds us that from the darkest night a bright dawn can rise.

The aim of this magazine has always been to provide a platform for our students to showcase their creative talents. Thus, whether it is through poetry, prose or art, each piece bears witness to the flourishing myriad talent that exists within our school. That the students have this springboard and are encouraged to avail of it, is thanks to the teachers and parents that inspire them to create and have confidence in their creations. What is also unique and wonderful about this magazine is the inclusion of all students and all ages from the Junior to the Senior school. The key to fostering talent is to catch it early.

Therefore, I would like to thank all those who gave generously of their time this year.

Thanks to the members of the English department for supporting their students develop their writing talents. Thanks go to the Irish department for similar dedication, in particular Tracey Murphy whose students produced the beautiful and thought-provoking pieces in the national language. I hope you take time to read them.

Big thanks go to Breda Brennan for the wonderful French and German pieces in the magazine.

Thanks also to the Junior School staff for providing wonderful encouragement to their students and ensuring that the entries from the Junior School are of the high standard to which we have become accustomed. I am especially indebted to Jonathan Adair and Kathi Scarlett.

Thanks go to the Art department for the wonderful images on display in this edition and which make the magazine visually exciting.

The Wine-Dark Sea owes its design to the keen eye of Ailbhe Garvey whose gifted vision and impeccable sense of style makes this a stunning and professional publication. Every year the artwork complements the printed word so perfectly.

Significant congratulations to all whose work appears within these pages. We hope you will continue to express your talents in future editions of this magazine. On a personal note I would like to say farewell to the 6th year contributors (many of whom have given regularly to this magazine), keep writing, there are certainly worse ways to spend your time.

Robert McDermott

Writer's Block

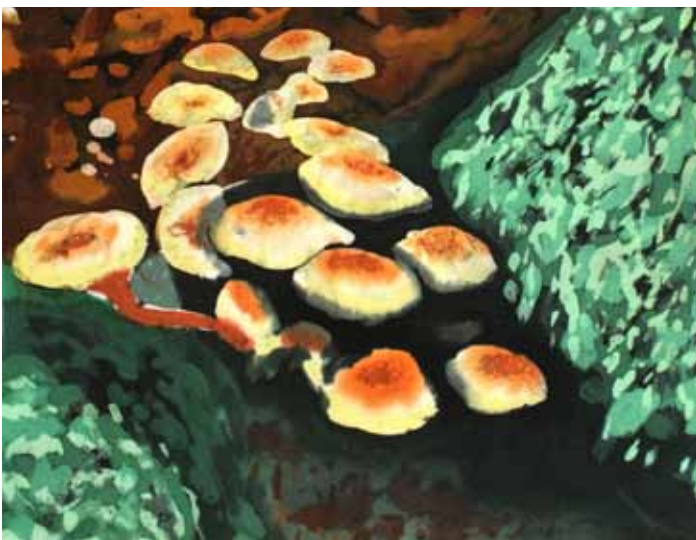
I need story ideas! I say as I slowly look down at my blank word document. Yet in the middle of my sorrow, I have an idea and a risky one at that. I was going to write about not being able to think about writing an actual story so here we are now... my original idea was not very "family friendly" (it was about an alien death cult). My friend suggested a WW2 historical fiction story. However, I will never finish that it's just too big of a commitment. He's writing a very violent science fiction story. That's a lot of saying fiction and I'm trying to reduce the amount of repetitiveness in my writing so I will reduce my use of the word fiction. Dang it I said it again

Unrelated I am kind of- actually very hungry. Moreover, I crave pizza, a Dominos Supreme in fact. It truly is the emperor of their menu, not to mention their chocolate cinnamon dough balls, which I will wash down with an ice-cold Pepsi. Truly the king of the craft!

Sorry during the last paragraph I got very bored (and hungry). Recently I've suffered the curse known as writers-block and am now going to pass it on to you dear reader as it has been through many fellow writers including the likes of... OK there are too many writers and I only have so much time. Fun fact time is the 5th dimension. But Homer hasn't written a book since the 7th century BC, so I'm not the only one faced with this curse.

Well, that has been a zany trip through my ever-changing ADHD alien brain but alas this has gone on for too long. The Wine-Dark Sea won't accept my entry if it's any longer. I'm sorry I must leave... bye (faint echo).

Luke Marbach



Forest Life

I could hear the alarms, blaring something was wrong, I ran through the house. I ran out the door into the street people everywhere were running. I ran and I ran, and I ran until I was out of breath, I had made it to the forest on the cliff. I looked down at the city and then it exploded into a cloud of dust. I sat there for a while and just stared my family my friends my home it was all gone I had nothing left. Nevertheless, I had to try to survive but I had nothing, so I set off, I couldn't look at the past I had to go towards the future. I had walked for days it was hot and I had no food or water I had started to get tired and then I collapsed. I eventually got up only to realize how nice the nature around me was beautiful if I was going to live anywhere, I wanted to live here so I got to work I started to gather fruit from nearby trees, and I got water from a nearby stream. I started to gather dry sticks. I was nervous about sleeping outside but I shook off my fear and carried on. Then I came across a problem I didn't know how to make a fire. I tried rubbing two sticks together but that only works on TV. I was stuck for ideas and then I saw something shimmering on the ground it was a piece of glass and then I remembered one of my friends had once told me that when you point a piece of glass at the sun it makes fire. So, I made a big pile of wood I pointed the glass at the sun at first it didn't work so I waited until a little beam of light shone on the pile of wood the wood started to smoke then the wood caught fire, I had done I had made fire. I started to warm my hands by the fire. I was happy but then it started to lash rain and my fire started to go out. With my fire out, I decided to start making a shelter because I could use my glass to make a fire inside the shelter. I tried to build a makeshift hut but that didn't work, so I searched around and found a cave by the stream. The cave was perfect. I gathered dry sticks and rocks and some moss, made a bed, and then started to make a fire. This time it took a lot longer to light it but when it caught, I realised there was nowhere for the smoke to go so I made a large hole in the roof for the smoke to go out of. That night I lay down on my rustic bed and fell asleep. It's been a couple of weeks since I left, but I had started to enjoy my new life. I had food, water and shelter. The other day I found a notebook and pencil so I started to write my story. Hopefully someone will find it one day.

Daire McArdle

Dimension Jumper

My name is Rafael Nowak, and this is the story of how I was (quite literally) thrown into a different dimension and how I joined a group that fought to stop a dimensional threat from destroying it.

My story begins on my first day of work at a restaurant in Paznon. I slipped and spilled Pierogi on a customer. I apologized to him and while he cleaned the Pierogi from his clothes, he seemed more amused than anything else.

He was in his late 20s or early 30s with short blond hair and a dark beard. I noticed he had eyes of different colours, just like me. One eye was green, and the other was red (mine are grey and hazel). Before I left, he grabbed my arm and said "don't trust everything you see, kid" then he let go of my arm and went back to his meal. After he was finished, he handed me around 200 zlotys and left before I could even thank him.

After our encounter, I continued my work around the restaurant without incident, but for some reason I got the feeling I was being watched. I looked around but I couldn't see anyone.

This feeling stayed with me but only while I was at the restaurant. I told my manager about this, and he said that it was all in my head and that I shouldn't worry about it. I tried to follow the advice, but I couldn't.

One night when I was walking home after a long shift when suddenly, someone hit me hard on my head. I was on the verge of blacking out when I felt a sharp tug on the collar of my shirt. I was scared and thought I was about to be murdered. I wanted to resist but I couldn't do anything. The last thing I remember before blacking out was seeing white and blue moving in some sort of circular motion and someone speaking in a different language and a familiar voice saying responded in the same language then I blacked out.

I woke up on a bed with a sore head. I got up and saw a man sitting on a chair on the left side of the room. He looked at me and then shouted something in a language I didn't know. I assume it was to tell others I was awake.

A short time later, three people came in. They all wore loose robes one might see in a Middle-Eastern country and their hoods were up.

One of them asked in me in polish, "How are you, kid?" I answered back with "I'm all right, head hurts though." He then said, "Sorry about that, we didn't know how you would react, so we had to take some precautions."

I then asked him how long I was out for, where I was, who they were and why I was there. He answered, "You are in a different dimension, and you have been out for no more than a day, day

and a half" he added with a shrug.

He continued, "As for who we are," he pointed to the people he was with "these are Chernoglav, Dazhbog and Svarog." He then pointed to himself "And I am Veles. We are the Polish Gods."

As he spoke, he pulled down his hood and the I recognised him immediately. It was the guy from the restaurant. He laughed when I recognised him.

"I knew you would recognise me, but are you still wondering why you are here?"

I nodded

He then went on to explain how an evil being named Czernobog who was imprisoned by Perun had escaped 90 years before and had been gathering an army to take over the world. But before this there was a prophecy that the reincarnation of Perun would lead the other gods and his Winged Hussars to victory.

I asked, "How do you know how to find him and how does that have to include me?"

He told me he'd noticed the birthmark on my wrist when he'd seen me at the restaurant.

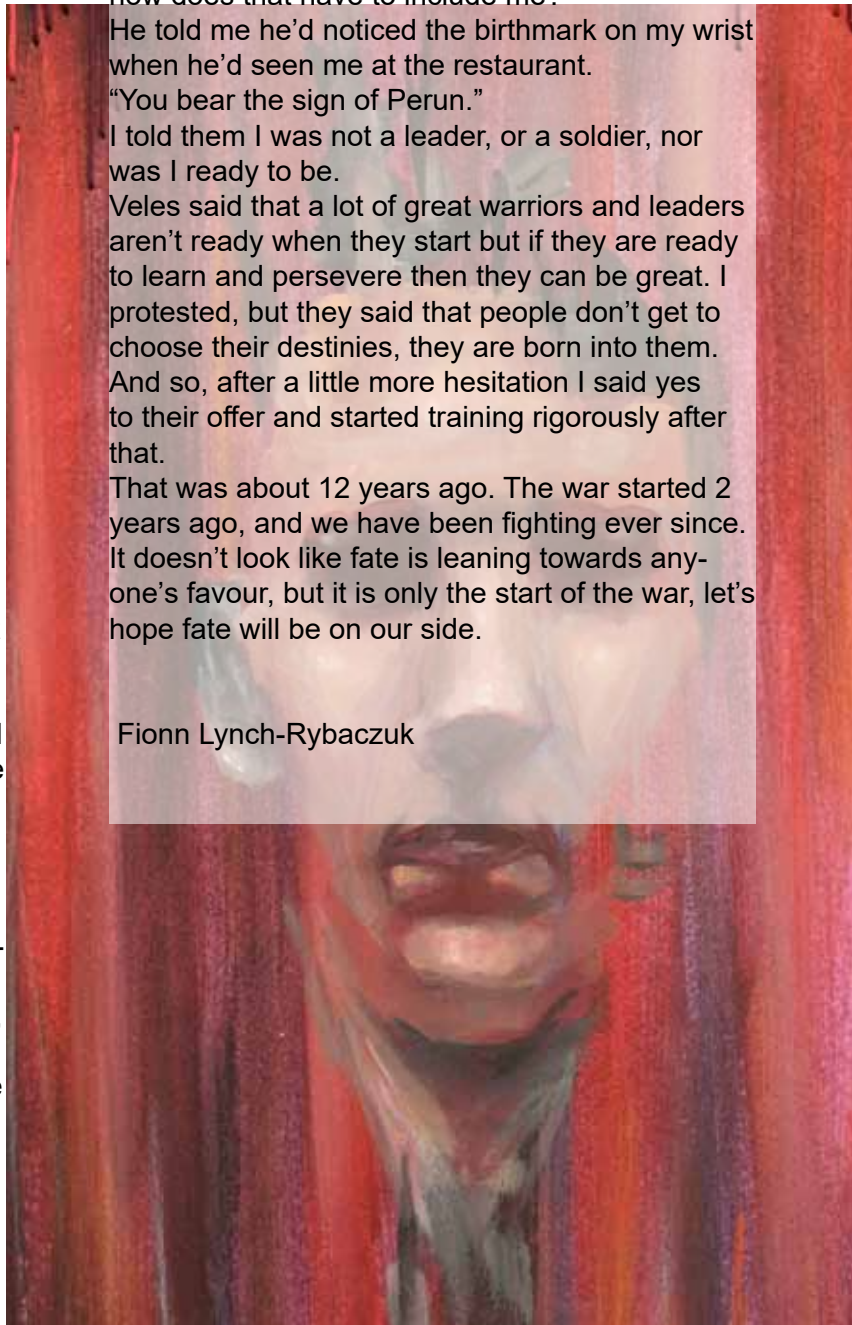
"You bear the sign of Perun."

I told them I was not a leader, or a soldier, nor was I ready to be.

Veles said that a lot of great warriors and leaders aren't ready when they start but if they are ready to learn and persevere then they can be great. I protested, but they said that people don't get to choose their destinies, they are born into them. And so, after a little more hesitation I said yes to their offer and started training rigorously after that.

That was about 12 years ago. The war started 2 years ago, and we have been fighting ever since. It doesn't look like fate is leaning towards anyone's favour, but it is only the start of the war, let's hope fate will be on our side.

Fionn Lynch-Rybaczuk



The Silence

Vaughan woke with a start. The world spun around him, as his vision cleared, and he stared at the fuzzy cloudless blue sky. The sun beat down on his skin, an uncomfortable warmth and near-tingling burn. As he lay, wondering what had just happened and where he was, the damp grass swayed against his body, and wet dirt pressed into him. Everything around him was silent, no birds or crickets chirped, no breeze blew the leaves in the trees, the only thing that seemed to be was the sun and him. The stillness terrified him.

Suddenly, to the right of him, he heard a cough. Sitting up and whipping his head around he turned to see two figures lying a few yards away. They both seemed to be stirring slowly and sitting up from whatever slumber they had been in. Vaughan's muscles ached as he sluggishly stood up and began to make his way towards the mystery people.

As he neared, he began to make out who they were. "Greer?" Vaughan croaked as he forced a casual jog and bent down, placing a hand on the brunette girl's shoulder. "Wha-?" she turned to him, confusion clouding her gaze as she rubbed her face with her hands. "Where the hell are we?" Vaughan turned as he heard another voice. Looking over he spotted a tall skinny blond kid starting to stand up. Not having an answer to Myles's question, Vaughan looked around and finally began to take in his surroundings.

The three of them stood in the middle of a field, tall yellow-green grasses standing motionless, the forest just seen in the distance. Vaughan knew exactly where they were, "We're on the old golf course, way back behind school, out near the backwoods." Blank expressions of puzzlement sat on his companions' faces. "How did we get here? Can you guys remember anything?" Greer inquired, her voice trembling with the slightest hint of panic. The last thing Vaughan remembered was lying in his warm, comfortable bed, watching Rick and Morty and stumbling off into a deep sleep. "I can't remember anything." Myles countered, shoving his hand in his pockets and kicking the dirt. The trees around them stood in a way that Vaughan thought seemed to laugh at the three of them, watching them argue and fumble around. "I guess we should start walking." He shrugged.

The walk back towards their school and into town had seemed a lot shorter when Vaughan had been messing around with his friends, sneaking out at night and "borrowing" the old club golf cars.

Now, he trudged along in silence, not willing to make an effort to talk. His muscles ached, exhaustion hitting him like a truck. Greer and Myles walked just behind him, their conversations going in one ear and out the other. Vaughan had been on the sailing team with the two of them a few years previous but didn't hang out with either of them much during school. He could assume they were all decently friends, he remembered playing manhunt with them at summer barbecues and hiding backstage in the yacht club's waterfront building, but not the name of her dog, or when his birthday was.

As they walked down Washington Street, the main road of Duxbury, Vaughan grew more and more concerned. The entire town was in desolate silence, it looked as though no one had stepped foot on the sidewalks in years. The pavement was splintered, roots twisting in and out of cracks. Trees and bushes reached out into open spaces, growing into the road and around houses. The trio fell silent. The quiet hum of mid-summer at its peak filled the air.

It was the lack of people that scared Vaughan the most. "Where the hell is everyone?" Myles burst out. None of them knew the answer to that question.

"We need a place to stay the night." Myles sighed, "I'd offer but my house is on the other side of town and it's getting dark." The three of them had trudged along Washington for so long that the sun had begun to set in the sky. They had started trying to look for more people, which they had no luck, they had gathered materials like food, water, blankets, and a shotgun they had found hanging on the wall of some person's living room. "My grandma's house is like 5 minutes away." Greer shrugged, "I guess we could crash there." She started walking down Shipyard Lane and leading them towards the ocean.

As they walked down the long sloping driveway, bushwhacking through ivy and wildflowers, Vaughan saw a structure in the chaos. What looked like had once been a nice summerhouse was now a crumbling building, roof caving in, moss growing up walls, and vines covering every inch of the "house." As they neared the front door, some chipped red paint still visible, Greer ran over and tugged at it. The door didn't even budge, thick thorny vines keeping it in place. Vaughan appeared beside her ready to help, as Myles slowly strolled over. "Even if we could get in, is this really the best place to stay?" He mumbled, eying the roof and broken windows. Myles

did have a point, but as the sky began to turn pink with the end of the day, Vaughan couldn't see much of another option.

Suddenly, out of the corner of his eye, Vaughan caught a glimpse of a house. It stood a couple hundred meters away, intact and untouched.

"What is that?" he asked, pointing across the horizon. Myles and Greer whirled around to take in what he had noticed. Greer looked puzzled, "Oh. That looks like the Morse's old summer cottage." The three of them started walking in its general direction. "It was a bit run-down and abandoned so we always used to call it the haunted house as kids." She explained. Vaughan could see that the house did look, by normal standards, "abandoned" but considering the circumstances that they were in, the three of them had just found a mansion.

As they trekked across what had once been the Morse's backyard but was now more of a small forest, Vaughan noted that the house stood in a clearing and that plants around didn't seem to want to touch it. Bluebells and daisies appeared in the wild grass that had looked to maintain itself. "This is so weird, it's exactly the same." Greer ran up to the door and tugged at it. With slight resistance and a creak, the door nudged open. Myles and Vaughan followed her up the couple of steps, stepping through the door and into the slightly dusty room. They were in one big main room. To their right was the bathroom, complete with a rusting tub. Directly in front of them was a flight of stairs leading up to an upstairs loft, where two bedrooms were. The main downstairs consisted of a kitchen and fireplace and then a smaller bunkroom in the back. The entire back of the house was covered by windows, looking out onto the back deck and Duxbury Bay. Vaughan could tell it had been a beautiful summerhouse. It was the perfect place for their hideout.

"This is pretty chill." Myles stretched back in his chair as they all sat around the small kitchen. They had spent the last hour bringing their supplies to the house, clearing some of the furniture to the side, and prepping some dinner. "You think the three of us waking up in some post-apocalyptic world and living in an abandoned shack is chill?" Greer shot him a look from across the table. "Uh-huh," Myles responded, shovelling more dry cereal into his mouth. They both turned to look at Vaughan. "Even though camping out with your buddies is pretty cool..." Vaughan began as Myles high-fived him under the table, "...the situation is pretty dire. I mean we don't even know



if our families are out there, let alone anyone." Greer smirked at Myles who frowned as Vaughan finished. "Whatever party poopers. I'm going to bed for my beauty sleep." Myles got up. Greer rolled her eyes, "You're not even going to wash that?" she gestured to his dirty bowl. "No parents are here to tell me what to do." Myles shrugged.

Vaughan sat awake in the loft. Myles snored lightly beside him. Crickets chipped outside in the night; the house moaned every once in a while, due to the undemanding wind. From where he lay on the wooden floor, he could see the clear midnight sky. The deep cobalt blue was littered with stars, brilliant diamonds in the sky. The Milky Way lit up, producing a soft glow that blanketed the outside world with a snug embrace. Vaughan really hoped that younger Greer had been wrong and that the house wasn't haunted.

Fear is a terrible thing to experience, but at some point, all humans do. The pit that opens in your stomach, the shakiness in your hands, the chill on the back of your neck. Vaughan was scared a lot, but for the first time today, he didn't feel afraid. Although the house enclosed him, he was aware of the earth. The clean refreshing dirt a couple feet beneath them. The gently swaying trees, each green leaf alive with millions of cells. The wind seemed to whisper to him that it would all be fine. Each animal running free in the woods and through the streets, finally not having to worry about the threat of humankind. Finally, the stars looking down at him, the map of constellations, each telling their own story of heroes and myths, thousands of years old. Stories that were now left untold by man, lost to time and nature. I guess those stories will have to wait for another day. Vaughan thought, closing his eyes and finally drifting off to sleep with a new sense of peace and freedom.

Niamh Huang

Road Crossing

Nancy sat cross-legged, igniting and putting out the same lighter over and over. The radiator she was sitting against was almost scolding her through her poufy, velvet Christmas dress that her grandma had bought her that past weekend. She wondered if setting the curtain alight would put an end to this pathetic excuse for a holiday. Nancy began to wander down the stairs, one unwilling leg in front of the other, after a call from her mother telling her she wanted help with serving champagne and nibbles. She scratched her legs on her way down about seven tights because of her itchy woollen tights uncomfortably attacking her skin. She entered the main room at the back of the house to find her uncle sat at the table with a pointed finger and blabbering mouth, all directed at her brother, Elliot. Meanwhile, her cousins cheered at the ongoing drunken game of charades by the fireplace. She usually preferred this side of the family and found them less intimidating than the powerful Smith side of the family. However, their obvious favouritism for her Olympian sailor of a 19-year-old brother combined with her uncle's alcoholism and bad temper made her feel angry at them and herself, for she knew there was nothing she could do about it and this added to the list of things she felt she couldn't control in her life.

As she sat staring at the family portrait above the fireplace, with her aunt slowly drifting in and out of her frame as she tried to act out the movie 'Minions' in charades, she could not help but just feel enraged by how content and joyful everyone was acting on this horrible excuse for a holiday. 'How dare they?' she thought. 'How could they still that this holiday was one full of joy and one that brought this family together,' when it would be the reason it was broken. This holiday is the reason her brother had gone shopping this time last year for their presents. It is the reason he was in that dangerous neighbourhood to get her and Eliots' favourite sweets. It is the reason he was in a rush to cross the road. It is the reason he is dead.

Eva Spain

Oileán Glas na hÉireann

Sliabh glas ag cur síos
Stonnta ag greadadh i gcoinne aillte creagacha
Slí an Atlantaigh Fhiáin

Maidineacha ceomhara, aibhneacha síochánta
Síneann Éire i bhfad agus i gcéin
Ár dtír álainn.

Séadchomharthaí ársa, daoine cairdiúla,
oidhreacht agus beáloideas luachmhar.
Ceol agus damhsa traidisiúnta, cathracha beoga
An t-oileán álainn, oileán glas na hÉireann

Le Moya Hoade, Izzy Duggan agus Millie Aherne

Aonarán mé

Aonarán ainnis
As Dumhach Thrá
Le stór focal truamhéalach
As Gaeilge.

Scríobhfainn aistí lagmheasartha
Go minic
I mo rang ardleibhéal.
Ach anois,

Suím síos
Agus breathnaím trí leathshúil
Ar an gclár bán sa Spidéal
Tagann na céadta daltaí
Chuile lá

A dhéanfadh rud ar bith
Dom
Ach stop a chur leis an mbulaíocht.

Le hElsie Bath agus le hAylin Ustuner

I Used to Cry

I used to cry and worry because I felt so bad that
not of all my teddies and stuffed animals would
get to sleep on my bed with me,
That they didn't get to feel as loved as my favourite
pink stuffed elephant,
Because in the end they probably just wanted to
be loved too,

They probably just wanted to be held and loved
so much that their fur would lose its colour,
That they would become lumpy and misshapen
from my arms around them,
A constant reminder that they are loved,

I used to cry when I tripped on the rough gravel of
the playground running from my friend in a game
of tag,
I would cry as tiny droplets of blood slowly oozed
out of a fresh graze on each knee,
My tears fell as my mum stuck brightly coloured
plasters on each knee and wiped them down with
a stinging wipe,

I used to cry when I had to do something I didn't
want to do,
The world felt as if it would end when my parents
told me I had to eat some fish for dinner or
finish my Irish homework instead of watching my
favourite tv show on the couch,

Such small and simple tasks felt as if they could
ruin my life,
But by the next day I would forget about it and allow
another small task to pull tears from my eyes,

Having to go to bed on time,
Having to go for a family walk,
Or worst of all, sharing with my siblings,

Now I cry because I cannot help but fear the
unjust and cruelty of the world, because I cannot
bear the crushing weight of the unfairness of it all,
I cannot face the uncertainty,

The stress,
The pain,
The hurt and the hate.

I cry because I know that I have done nothing to
deserve the privileged life that I get to live,
I cry because I don't know how to help those who
weren't as blessed as me,
I cry because sometimes it all feels so hopeless,
I cry as I wonder why god hasn't yet helped the
homeless people living on the streets of Dublin,
Why he hasn't yet helped the children who live in



country's devastated by war,
Why he hasn't yet helped the families who struggle
every day to put food on the table and keep a
roof over their head,
Has he left it up to us to help one another?
Has he been trying to show us that we need to
care more about one another?
Is this a test for humanity?
Because if it is, let me help, show me how,

I cry because I want to help but I don't know how,
Life no longer seems as simple as it did,
It has the same feelings on a different scale,
More intense and all consuming,

Questions that can't be answered by my parents
or my teachers or by my friends,
Hurt that can't be fixed with a bright pink hello
kitty plaster,
All I'm left with is powerful feelings and a desire
to change the world,

I cry as I pray to god hoping my small efforts can
lead to something bigger,
I cry because I want to help but I don't know how.

The Poppy

(after Queen of Air and Darkness by Cassandra Clare)

Crushed velvet in your hand,
I weep sweet tears of sleep,
Gold and bright, they stain your fingertips,
Now face what you have reaped

The air is thick and cloying,
As I whisper in your mind,
To visit me in darkness,
And leave the world behind

Though you draw from me my life,
And my sugared blood spills,
My heart is light and joyful,
For you cannot know at all

That though I may be wilting,
As you drop me and you sway,
That I will die tomorrow,
But you will die today.

Lauren Wallace

Four Seasons of Ireland in Haikus

Spring

Sweet cotton candy
Merry-go-round funfair joy
Pink cherry blossom.

Summer

Emerald water
Little pebbles stuck in shoes
Strawberry and cream.

Autumn

Leaves waltz in the wind
White sails in the dark blue sea
Grandma's pumpkin soup.

Winter

Pines and silver stars
Holding hand for holy grace
Hot cinnamon buns.

Timofei Hrapelman

Tulips

Tulips always there, loved by so many
I never noticed them until a dark grey day
Something so simple, could make even the darkest day look like nebulas,
Leaving you star struck and in awe
One petal, a laugh, another, a smile,
One more exchange that felt different from the others
Colours I couldn't see for years,
Ones that reminded me of summer,
Of sticky sweet fruit that stains your fingertips, or
How liquid gold washes over you as the diamonds dance just for you
I look up and saw a grey sky, the most beautiful grey sky I had ever seen.

Anastasia Morozova-Ryan

The Haunted Box Fan

I remember the day when my dad came home with it. My dad was a guy who never liked to spend much. My clothes, for example, would often be hand-me-downs from my cousins and, as if that wasn't bad enough, most of these garments were unfashionable. There were hideous denim jackets with cut-off sleeves and stuff that truly belonged in the last millennium. However, it gets worse. Some of the clothes were for girls. Most of my cousins are female. My male cousins only ever gave me rugby jerseys. So, I often had to leave the house in some random French rugby team jersey while also wearing skin-tight women's jeans.

I may have gotten clothes from my cousins, but I inherited my dad's cheapness, which is why the accursed box fan of this story came into our lives. You see, I liked to take things from skips. One time I found an exercise bike that I thought looked nice. So, I jumped into the skip and fished out this exercise bike that probably weighed more than me. After lugging it home I showed it to my dad. He was ecstatic. However, his joy was short-lived for as he got on it he was impaled by the seat post which went straight through the seat. After a failed attempt at repair, I was sent out in the pouring rain at 2 a.m. to dump it beside the local bottle bank so the council would have to deal with it.

You win some you lose some, so when I came back one night with a box fan, a sense of uncertainty trickled through the house. Dad plugged it in, and we held our breath hoping it would turn on. Amazingly it did. I let out a sigh of relief. We both watched it for a few minutes to make sure there were no faults with it. Our collective assessment was that it worked just fine. My sister (who was known in the neighbourhood for throwing rocks at the DART, leading to many visits from the TFI men) said she wanted it as it was the middle of summer, and her windows were drilled shut to stop her from sneaking out. She was also having a sleepover that night and she thought it would come in handy. Later that night I was just about to fall asleep when I heard a shrill screaming coming from my sister's room. The entire family came filing out of their rooms and flooded into my sister's room. My sister and her friends were huddled in the corner of the room. On the other side of the room, looking strangely menacing was the box fan. My dad asked them what happened. and they said the box fan had flung a jewellery box from the dresser at them.

'How in the hell could a box fan do that?' asked my dad.

I knew the look on his face. He was wondering if the girls had been taking illicit substances that was causing them to hallucinate. I know this because

he had asked me to share my stash many a time. Anyway, the girls insisted that it had happened. My dad then asked them to share whatever they were having and to make it snappy. After a bit of a standoff (my sister evidently didn't have anything to share) we left the room. Before heading back to bed, I took the box fan and put it in the garage. As I was leaving the garage, I thought I heard the box fan turning on even though it wasn't plugged in. I just shrugged it off as the product of my sleepiness and thought no more about it.

Next morning as I made pancakes for my sister and her friends, they came downstairs looking as if none of them had slept. They kept trying to tell me about the box fan and how it had been acting weird. I told them they needed to cop on and said to my sister that it was no wonder her creative writing teacher said her stories were predictable and boring.

'You need to see it for yourself,' she said to me defiantly, folding her arms.

'Challenge accepted,' I said, flipping a pancake.

Later that night I went to the garage to get the fan. As I approached the door to the garage, I was sure I heard a whirring noise. I opened the door and the noise stopped. I felt a slight chill but told myself that I was not my sister and I was not scared of fans. I then brought the fan up to my room. I plugged the fan into the socket and got into bed. As I was drifting off to sleep, I heard the fan change sounds from a gentle whirring sound to a kind of low moan. I looked at the fan whereupon it abruptly turned off. I got out of bed to investigate. After kicking the fan a few times, I got back into bed. However, just as I was just about to drift off again, the fan turned back on. I was confused but pleased it was working again. I was about to dream nice dreams when suddenly it turned off again.

This happened throughout the night until I'd had enough of its shenanigans and unplugged the thing entirely. I got back into bed thinking this was it, finally some sleep when suddenly the fan turned on again. I jumped up not knowing if I was dreaming or mad or what. I started to yell, but then I stopped and paused. I began to think about the situation. I reasoned that a fan that doesn't need electricity was something my dad would love. I then got back into bed, closed my eyes, and drifted off into a sweet slumber knowing that I had just saved my family money on the electricity bill. As the saying goes, not all heroes wear capes.

Alexander Graham-Smythe

Bäume im Frühling

Jung, frei, aber veraltet
Wie eine wiedergeborene alte Seele,
Ein schöner Vorbote der Wärme
Bäume im Frühling

Isaac Keating

Bäume im Sommer

Grün, voll und perfekt
Wiegen sich zur Musik der Sommerbrise
Und tanzt zu dem Herzschlag der warmer Erde
Voller Energie.
Bäume im Sommer

Isabel Jordan-Beristain

Bäume im Herbst

Feurige Farben
Rot, Orange, Braun
Einen langsamen Tod sterben
Die Schönheit der Blätter
Bringt mich zu Tränen.
Bäume im Herbst.

Amelia Philipps

Bäume im Winter

Kalt, tot, unfruchtbar
Je langer dieser Winter dauert desto schlim-
mer wird es
Lang, kalt, tropfend
Diese Gefahr macht etwas Angst
Winterbäume
Eisiger Frieden.

Kat Rodeheaver

La brise d'été

La brise d'été traverse l'air
En marchant sur la plage
et te remplis de bonheur.
Le soleil brillant, chaud
Se couche à l'horizon
Tu t'allonges pour te reposer
Tu te réveilles à la brise d'été.

Ella Galligan

Le Printemps

Fleurs, animaux, luminosité
Le temps d'un nouveau départ
Ce qui m'emporte
La joie du printemps

Laura Sherry

My Cat Is Scared Of Everything!

My cat's name is Bob.
He's scared of everything.
His food!
A mouse!
His mood!
My house!
He's scared of my Mom!
And my Dad's big black shoes!
My little brother when he coughs,
I mean... I'm scared of that too!
But the thing he is scared most,
Is a little thing with tiny toes.
It's usually under my bedroom chair
And if you look at it, it always stares.
It's really thin and...
It's Bob's TWIN!!!

Ola Kurzawska

Festa no Céu

O céu azul se estende,
Que abraça toda a gente,
Nuvens brancas e astutas,
Em dança constante, sempre lutam.

Todos os dias nos vemos,
Sua presença absorvemos,
Pássaros que voam sem parar,
Voam em grupo passeando pelo ar.

No horizonte, o sol se deita,
E a lua acorda, serena e feita,
Entre estrelas, constelações a brilhar,
Um espetáculo eterno pronto para se revelar.

O céu é fonte de inspiração,
Em sua imensidão, sempre com muita emoção,
Dia após dia, sua beleza nos envolve,
Um poema vivo que o tempo dissolve.

Luigi Freesz

R.I.P to my cup of tea

I don't care if breakfast's the most important meal of the day, if I eat it I will turn away,
Food in the morning makes me sick especially when you eat it quick!
The only thing that works for me is pouring myself a cup of tea! First, I'll tiredly boil
the kettle then I'll let the tea settle!
Finally, I'm at ease when I have my cup of tea!
This morning something strange occurred when my tea cup shouted 'ow that hurts'
I looked down and to my surprise my tea cup had grown eyes!
I asked the little loving cup why only now it's woken up.
He screamed at me this little cup, demanded cold water and to hurry up!
As he cooled with a block of ice, I wondered do all my objects have life!
Will my mascara bite my eyelash or will my washing machine go out on the lash.
So many thoughts going around, that I forgot to look down!
My teacup had hopped away and with it ruined my day.
With no tea to hold and drink, I was left talking to the sink.
I hope this poem makes you think about my peculiar thoughts in the morning.

Florence Donnelly

The Floating Roses

In the middle of the night, everything is silent except for one noise. The small sound of buzzing. It's not a bee, it's not a car in the distance, just a subtle sound wings flapping.

I'm Crystal, I live in Beast City where all beasts big and small live. If you are wondering what kind of a beast I am, well I'm a lemur with wings. I live in a serene apartment block with my mum, Star, my dad, Gemm and my granny, Starla. My granny is the best beast alive she is so cool.

You see my Granny said she would teach me how to fly long distances because I can only flutter for a few seconds my Gran used to be a world-famous dasher her team was called The Floating Roses. They were the best dasher team ever! Until they lost one of their Floating Roses teammates in a dangerous match against The Crushers, the roughest team in Beast City. The Floating Roses were hammered, the team's best right wing had died (how could anything be worse than that?) My Gran will always remember her because she was not only a teammate but also a beast friend. (beast friend is what us beast men call our best friends). The Floating Roses never played again.

Day one training was tough. That was the only way to explain it. The first ten minutest was hard my Gran made me Float in the air while she gave me a massive lecture on flying not only that she woke me up at 2 a.m. with a microphone. I slept for 2 hours because I went to a calamity party last night.

But looking on the bright side it was the best party I have been to in a while.

That training was painfully helpful. I can now float in the air for an hour, 5cm above the ground.

My Gran said tomorrow it will be flying in circles! That night I went for a flight to challenge myself. And I drifted into the middle of the night.

Juliette Whitty

Whirlwind & Shakes

Not your everyday storm.
A storm named Whirlwind.
A tough tornado.

Shakes was an earthquake.
A mean earthquake.
You could say he was a storm bully.

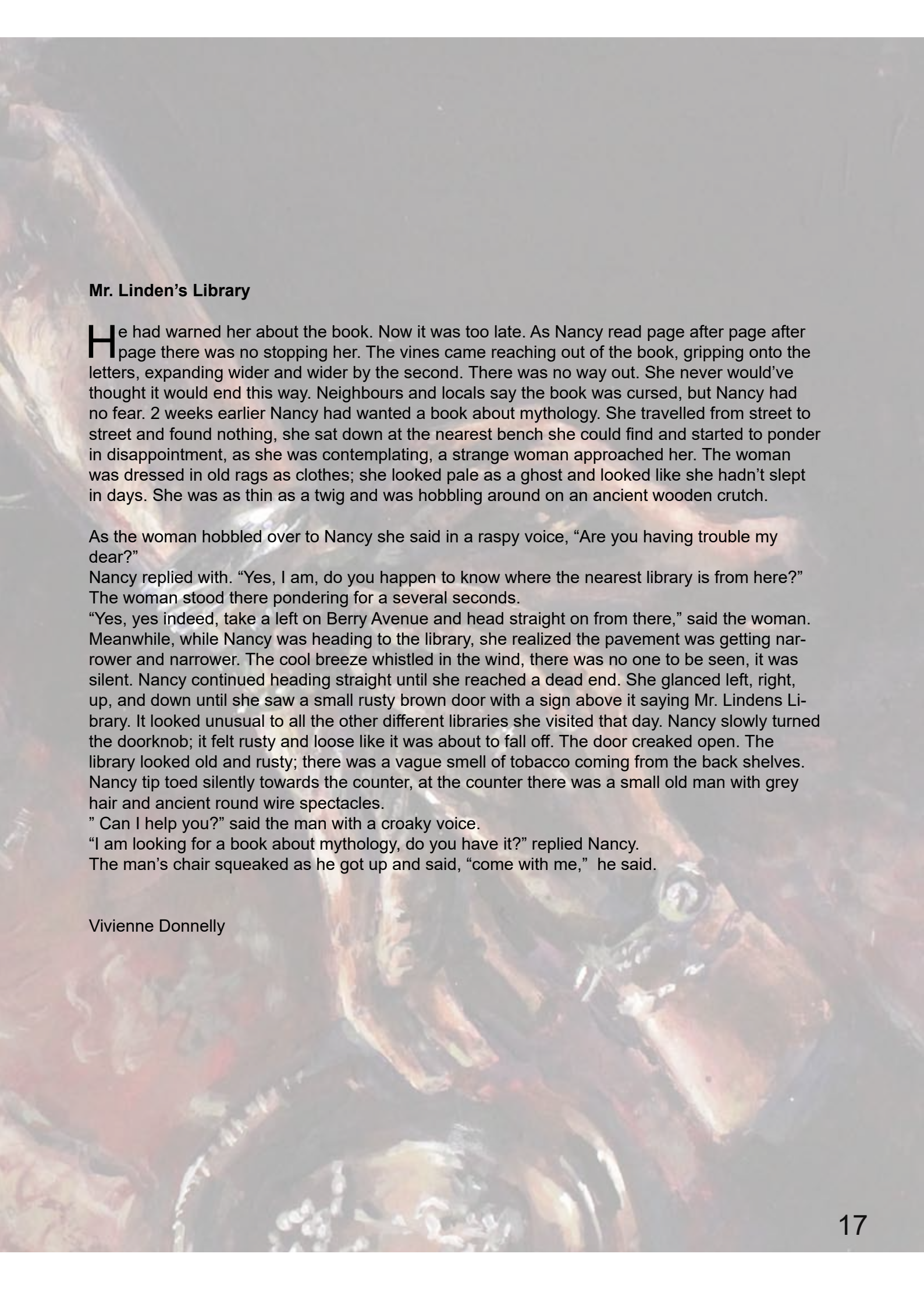
One day, Shakes said,
"Whirlwind you're not strong
You're weak."
Whirlwind felt sad and cried to herself saying
"I'm not strong I'm just weak."

The next day Whirlwind found a sign saying,
"Start standing up for yourself today."
Whirlwind just ignored it.
Later that day Shakes went up to Whirlwind and
said,
"You can't even pull a little weed out of the
ground,
You're weak."
Whirlwind just drifted away and fell asleep.

Whirlwind had a strange dream.
In her dream she heard
"Start standing up for yourself today."
When she woke up, she repeated those words in
her head.
"I must stand up for myself.
I must stand up for myself.
I must stand up for myself."

Shakes kept saying to Whirlwind
"Weak weak weak you are weak."
But, instead of just flying away,
Whirlwind stood up for herself,
Destroying a building and uprooting a tree.
After that Shakes never bothered Whirlwind
again.

Jeremiah Gallo



Mr. Linden's Library

He had warned her about the book. Now it was too late. As Nancy read page after page after page there was no stopping her. The vines came reaching out of the book, gripping onto the letters, expanding wider and wider by the second. There was no way out. She never would've thought it would end this way. Neighbours and locals say the book was cursed, but Nancy had no fear. 2 weeks earlier Nancy had wanted a book about mythology. She travelled from street to street and found nothing, she sat down at the nearest bench she could find and started to ponder in disappointment, as she was contemplating, a strange woman approached her. The woman was dressed in old rags as clothes; she looked pale as a ghost and looked like she hadn't slept in days. She was as thin as a twig and was hobbling around on an ancient wooden crutch.

As the woman hobbled over to Nancy she said in a raspy voice, "Are you having trouble my dear?"

Nancy replied with. "Yes, I am, do you happen to know where the nearest library is from here?" The woman stood there pondering for a several seconds.

"Yes, yes indeed, take a left on Berry Avenue and head straight on from there," said the woman. Meanwhile, while Nancy was heading to the library, she realized the pavement was getting narrower and narrower. The cool breeze whistled in the wind, there was no one to be seen, it was silent. Nancy continued heading straight until she reached a dead end. She glanced left, right, up, and down until she saw a small rusty brown door with a sign above it saying Mr. Lindens Library. It looked unusual to all the other different libraries she visited that day. Nancy slowly turned the doorknob; it felt rusty and loose like it was about to fall off. The door creaked open. The library looked old and rusty; there was a vague smell of tobacco coming from the back shelves. Nancy tip toed silently towards the counter, at the counter there was a small old man with grey hair and ancient round wire spectacles.

"Can I help you?" said the man with a croaky voice.

"I am looking for a book about mythology, do you have it?" replied Nancy.

The man's chair squeaked as he got up and said, "come with me," he said.

Vivienne Donnelly

Nine Times out of Ten

It's time to stand up
We sit and complain
And we joke with each other
"We live in the rain"
However, those drops do not nearly compare
To fellow humans' tears of despair
As they silently slip away from this earth
And their silent screams echo in the void,
Unheard.

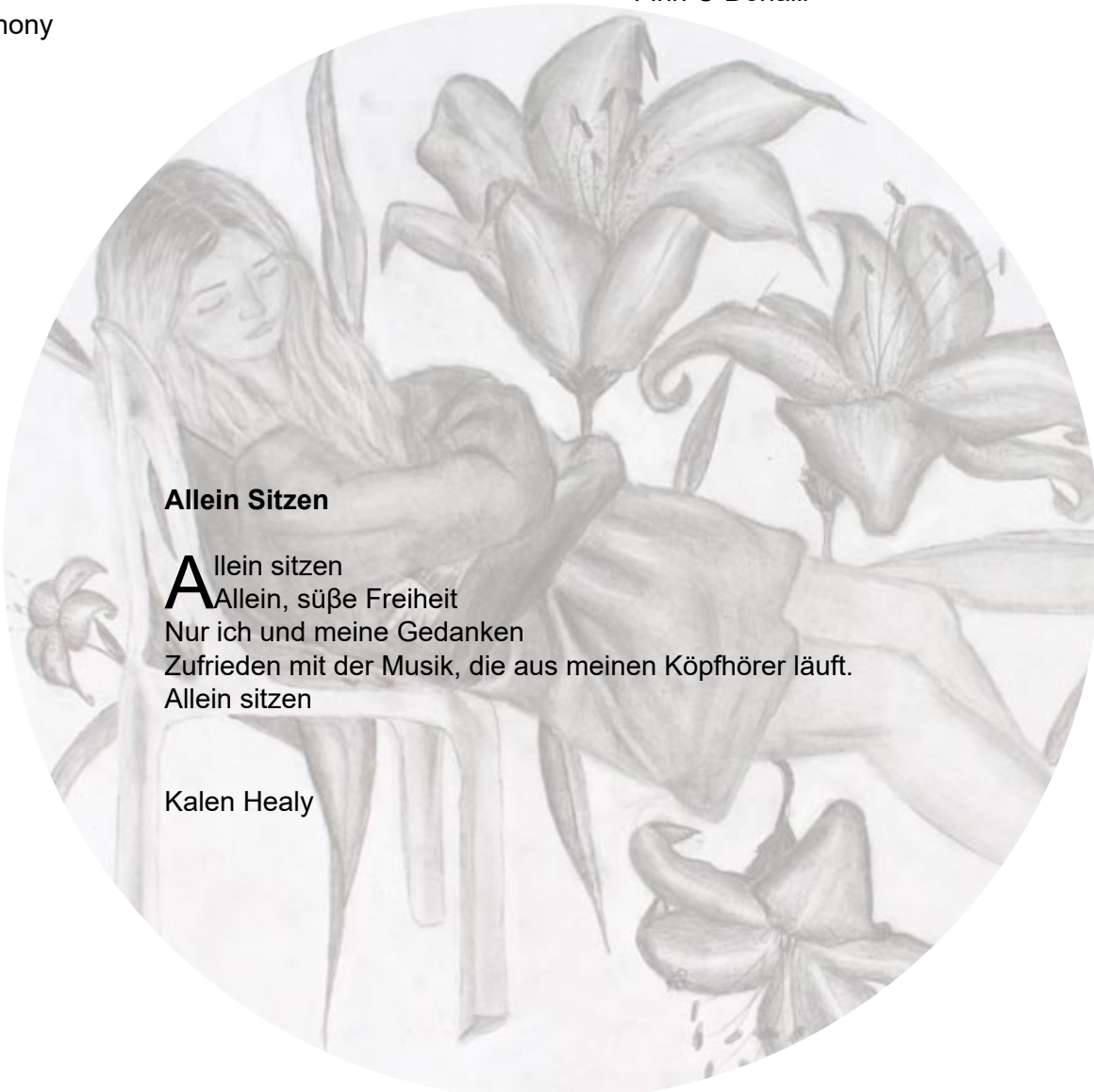
For some,
We must stand and fight,
For their freedom and right
To life.
For others,
We must give them a chance
To talk, for at first glance
They may seem fine
However, nine times out of ten
Their lives are what many men
Fear beyond belief.
Yes it's time to turn over a new leaf
But never forget, it might be someone's last
sleep.

Liam O'Mahony

Memories in Scars

Etched like a drawing
On the man's old face
Like a mountain range
Cuts through a skyline
The scar; a memory
Telling of his long
Forgotten youth, it
Reminded him of
From when he had served
He could not recall
From which battle, or
By whom he was cut
Only noise; yelling,
Gunfire and the like
Suddenly, with speed
The eyes opened wide
On the man's wrinkled face
He remembered now,
Alas; how could he not?
The remorse from the scar
Don't search hard for memories
We don't need to look far

Finn O Donail



Allein Sitzen

Allein sitzen
Allein, süße Freiheit
Nur ich und meine Gedanken
Zufrieden mit der Musik, die aus meinen Köpfhörer läuft.
Allein sitzen

Kalen Healy

What I See

I saw the gentle waves lapping on the sand
Touching the horrid scar placed upon my hand
I put aside my book to have a little look around
I saw a man looking at me with beady eyes I see
Everything then started to look darker and darker
Like someone was standing upon me, ready to strike
I got up and slowly, move to a different place, for the night
had changed
And the night is night.

I then sensed another person lurking from behind me
With binoculars as far as I could see
Like I was a key they needed to open
Because you see, it's a bit like that ...
These people who had spotted me
Have known me as a spy, but I slipped away from the FBI
Into a world where I could be me
and one they couldn't, or wouldn't see.

Time has passed on now,
I saw a woman from beyond me
Looking at me in the eye, like I was not to try
Glaring at me, and every second her smug smile would
grow,
Grow larger until almost touching her eye
Oh no I thought to myself, shutting my book and packing
up.

And taking another look at the glorious waves, foamy and
blue
The sand blowing around, golden, meeting my shoe
The sky's sunset red, orange and pink for its cue
The wind through my hair, blowing it all directions, a few
every second.

I ran to my car, as small as it might seem
We've had some adventures away from the day
But those were devious people back there
and are going to find me eventually someday
But for now I am safe and they can only catch my hair.

Edith Preston



Es hat geschneit

Fielen Sterne vom Himmel
Wie Diamanten
Brennt in meinen Augen
Es hat geschneit

Fin Nolan

Most folks are decent folks. At least that is what Mary is telling herself as she eyes the crisp roll of banknotes protruding from the meaty fist in front of her. She has never quite been able to bring herself to believe that but right now, she has to. She needs to 'cause if that's not true what does that make her?

"I'm going to need a yes or no answer Ms."

For all the man's size and menace he doesn't seem to be violent, he had been polite and reasonable as they talked, and she works the docks, not bloody MI5. Besides, the extra dosh wouldn't hurt, Clara's 13th is coming up soon and she wants to do something nice.

"Ms Norris?"

"Aw what the hell?" She snatches the cash and waves him in before she can change her mind. In the low lamplight, gimlet eyes gleam at her from a pallid face. As he rises, his shadow expands swallowing rusted railings and crumbling steps, running to the tip of her toe as his bulk looms over her, and for a moment, she is unsure.

Then he turns and lugs his bulk down the street to a black SUV and emerges with two others.

The next day, the missing crate, containing two paintings shipped for a local tycoon, makes the news. Mary doesn't lose much sleep over it. She has a necklace made of real silver wrapped in pink paper for the big day.

The second time he brings company, four men in grey business suits and a serpentine woman in a flashy red fur. Now she is hesitant, what seemed to be a one-off, a moment of weakness is now looking to play a real part in her life. Her dilemma fizzles out when she sees the sum in the red leather purse. She smiles and waves them through. After that, it becomes easier.

Clara's birthday is a testament to the changes in their lives. She takes Clara to a restaurant she used to wash dishes at for minimum wage, the kind of place apple sorbet is a 'palate cleanser' not a dessert. The kind of place where apple sorbet is a bloody thing.

She grins, watching Clara's excitement at the fancy chandelier. However, when Clara opens her gift, instead of the joy Mary had been waiting for, concern flits across her daughter's face.

"What's wrong, duck? Don't you like it?"

"No, no Mum, I love it it's just..." She looks to the side, then leans in, to whisper. "How are we, you know, paying for all this? I just... the rent was overdue and all."

That draws Mary up short. It's true that the two of them don't have cash to throw around and she

can't hide that from Clara. Never tried to. What she does try to hide is the struggle. Clara should never have to worry like she did.

"That's nothing you ever need to worry about, ducky." She says. "But if you have to know, I've been getting some extra at work."

Clara nods down at her plate. "That's good."

"Well, if things keep going the way they are I might have enough to cut back on my hours."

"Cool" Clara says because she's a teenager (God she's a teenager now) and that's how they react to news of any kind. Yet, Mary sees that little, secret smile flit across her girl's face and has never been so sure of her choice.

Later, she'll look back on this, desperate for a reason. Something to explain how she got where she is. She'll think that this was why, it is nice to think it was all for Clara. Still, a small part of her will wonder if it was for anyone but herself.

3 weeks pass, and still the dinner lurks in the back of her mind. Clara knew enough to ask about dinner, Clara worried. Something keeps pulling her back to this, something cold and heavy in the centre of her chest. So, when he shows up, accompanied by a long, narrow crate, she barely even blinks before waving him through.

Most folks are decent folks. Mary is probably decent. Maybe she's not but what does she care? Most folks are decent but not all have the luxury of being good. So, if Mary isn't decent, it's just her way of providing her daughter with the peace of mind she never had.

It's only 3 days later, when the body in the narrow crate has been found, when Derrek had figured out whose shift it was every time something disappeared and the one time something, someone, appeared, when she is staring down a list of questions she can't answer, that she has any real regrets.

God, wouldn't it have been nice to be good.

Ruby Newall

Mark wakes up to his alarm clock, gets up and has breakfast. He gets his suit on as a helicopter takes him to work. He works for a company in rural Sweden. It's called CORD and they work on farming electricity out of plants. As their CEO found out, they could manipulate the molecular structure of plant DNA to conduct electricity for the whole of Scandinavia. Mark is in charge of the pricing. Arriving at work, he goes through security and carefully enters the building. Walking to the elevator, he greets his boss with a wave from across the room. She doesn't notice him. He enters his office and turns on his computer. The market is not going well. It's approaching an all-time low. Mark is bored and looks out his window. He watches a cow graze on the rich green grass. The sun shining. Two more hours to lunch break. His boss calls him into her office. This can't be good, he thinks. He gazes out the window while his boss mutters something along the lines of being irresponsible and having to bring something in on Thursday. One hour to break. Mark gets started on the Annual Report.

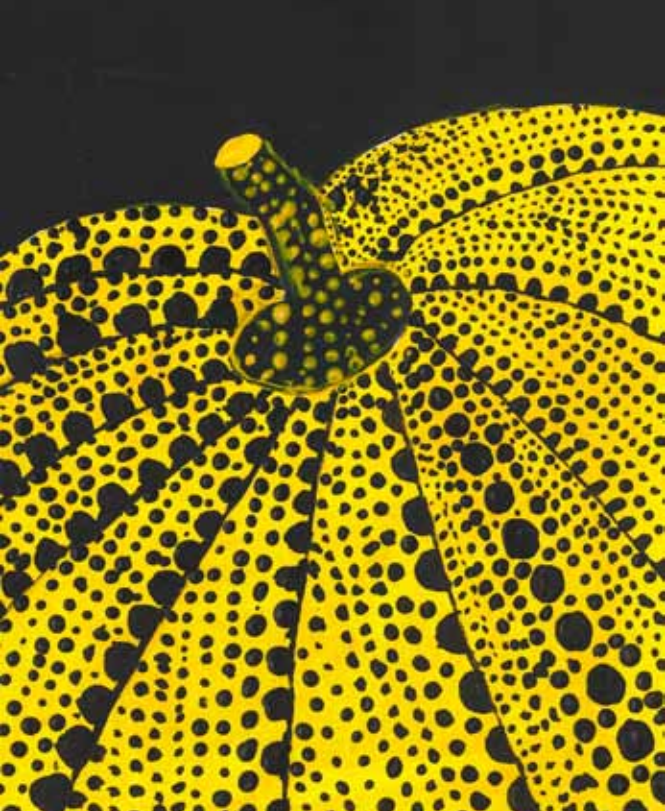
The bell goes off for break time. Normally the building doors are shut but at lunch break, they open so people can go outside. The boss has organised a sector picnic. Mark would rather take a walk around on his own, but he has to do this instead. Mark half hears his co-workers chatting away while he takes in the fresh air. Suddenly a loud siren screams. Mark is amazed to see a cow running loose in the building. Everyone runs for the door; but it has already shut. This is a disaster. The cow could damage the research sector, potentially disrupting the power to the whole of Scandinavia. Someone would have to open the doors manually to free the cow. From the inside, the building is about seventy metres tall. Someone would have to scale the whole building, open the ventilation shaft, disarm the security and usher the cow out. Mark feels everyone's eyes shift towards him. After work every day, Mark goes to the gym and on weekends, he goes climbing. "Fine" he says.

On every window is a thirty-centimetre ledge at the bottom. Every window is two metres tall. There are about thirty windows. At the top, Mark needs to open the vent, turn off the ventilation fan and climb through. Then he needs to drop down, open the door and let everyone out before dealing with the cow. The first five windows are easy but then it gets more difficult. He reaches the top and pries the vent open. The fan is easily turned off and after twenty minutes of crawling, he makes it to the end of the tunnel. He pushes his feet forward and kicks down into the office. He

was now in sector 8. He enters the alarm code and sprints down. He opens the door, and everyone storms from the building. The cow is wandering around looking for something to eat. Mark leads the cow gently from the building. 'Now why did you have to do that, Daisy?' he says aloud. Daisy's tail sways. Whatever her reason, she's keeping it to herself.

Paul Pintar





The Sound of Fear

Two weeks passed and it happened again.

Andrew sat in his chair, the light of the kindling fire dancing at his feet. He flicked through the channels barely even awake when he saw it in the corner of his eye. He didn't realize what it was at first, he thought it was just a trick of the dim light but then he saw it again. This time it was bigger, this time it was closer, this time he could just hear the faint sound of the rug tearing. It was trying to get out. He jumped to his feet; he was no longer sleepy. He held his breath, his heart thumping in his chest. He egged against the wall being careful not to make a sound.

Slowly but surely, he could see the lump getting bigger and bigger, the sound of the carpet tearing got louder and louder. He grabbed the antique wooden chair that sat in the corner of the room and raised it above his head as he walked slowly toward the centre of the room. He took in one small light breath, and CRASH. Splints of wood flew everywhere. The little old chair had been destroyed but the lump on the floor hadn't been hurt at all, if anything it looked bigger. Andrew was beginning to worry; it had never been this big. The tare was visual now. Adrenalin was rushing through his blood. His head was pounding, what was he to do? Then suddenly for no reason at all, the sound of the tearing stopped, and the lump deflated but the tare was still there.

Still shook by what had just happened; Andrew darted into the kitchen pulling the place apart looking for a needle and some thread. Finally, he sat over the torn piece of carpet, breaking his back sawing it up. When he had finished, he heaved the chest of drawers into the middle of the room, so it covered the stitch.

For the rest of the night, he couldn't sleep for he knew that whatever it was, that it wanted something to do with him and it would do anything in its power to get what it wanted. But one thing that it didn't know, he would do anything in his power to keep it away from it.

Molly Mulrean

Legacy of Sacrifice

Soldiers come home to families and friends,
Come home from war from the dust and the mud.

Some come home in boxes,
They lay in peace, leaving families and friends behind.

Was it in vain?

No, the legacy of their heroism runs deep,
Their life taken from them,
And given to us to remember them by.

Sometimes they come home to neglect,
Left with nothing, backs turned on them,
Left alone abandoned and shunned.

Remember, they have fought for their country, for
a better world,
And the truth of their sacrifice,
Must be remembered,
The world must listen, their voice must be heard.

Max Woods

Strange Music

The howl of late winter wind hammering against the drafty windows of the backroom came to a halt and Father Murphy lifted an aching head from liver-spotted hands to acknowledge the other presence in the room. He didn't bother to try and meet its eyes instead choosing to stare past the figure occupying the space to his left and focus on the kettle sat on the windowsill.

It needed replacing, the off white paint of its handle and nozzle where chipped and flaking. Whilst he himself preferred coffee brewed in the machine sat on the counter beside the rattling fridge, if he had to hear one more pointed comment from one of the more elderly St Clarence Book Club attendees, the caretaker was going to find someone's grandfather held prisoner in the storage closet.

Murphy huffed out a mirthless laugh as figure faded from its post beside the worn sofa and rematerialized directly in his line of vision. He watched the twisting tendrils of his breath dissipate in the icy air of the room, but the incessant movement of the things' bony appendages kept drawing his eye. He stood and they were at about even height.

"Coffee?" he asked in a poor mockery of politeness "tea?"

The figure said nothing.

"I'd offer a beer but ah- "He gestured to the crucifix pinned above the clock before making his way over to the coffee machine. There was no noise when a blurred form appeared once again in his peripheral vision. He and it remained comfortably quiet as the machine gargled and black liquid spilled and swirled into a chipped mug. Father Murphy stood from where he was stooped- coffee now in hand.

The figure was a few feet from him.

"Do you mind? You're blocking the fridge and I'm not a black coffee kind of guy."

The figure stood rooted in place. Its skeletal hands shifting in a frantic, graceless pattern over the worn wooden flute in its hands. It was silent.

The priest quirked a brow and placed his coffee down on the side-table. A small fragment of the mug chipped off and splintered into nothingness as it hit the tiled floor. Neither spoke as Murphy lowered himself back onto the threadbare cushions of the sofa. Once settled, he nodded up at the grotesque statue above the clock. Gently, as if coaxing confession out of a youth, he asked.

"Sometimes I wonder what he would feel about you being here."

He gestured to Christ again. The figure made no move to acknowledge that it heard him.

Father Murphy leaned forward on his knees.

"You know he died for our sins? Once when we pinned him to a cross for his crimes and again to forgive us. He forgave us. He absolved us" He knew the line of conversation was a foolish one. One that he'd had with this spectre more times than he could've counted.

The figure said nothing.

More agitated, he continued. "He is said to forgive every soul that has been swayed by you and your music. Every. Single. One tempted by your promises." The room lapsed into silence.

Murphy turned and met the hollow gaze of its empty sockets before looking away again. All at once, he was on the other side of the confession box, too ashamed to face what he was admitting to.

"Does he forgive those that have never heard your calling? Those who have locked themselves away from it? Those who have forgotten it?"

Those that can no longer distinguish your Song from the cacophony that you have made our existence? Could he forgive those of us who are deaf to you?"

His hands shook as gripped them for all that he was worth.

"I don't hear your calling anymore. I haven't for such a long time. I see you here right now but I know

I can never again surrender to you. Could he forgive me for that?"

The question came out as plea as his voice wobbled with poorly restrained emotion

"...Could you forgive me?"

It was silent.

"Oh god." He whispered "what am I doing here? Why here?"

God said nothing. Its fingers didn't stop their twitching, spasmodic dance.

Georgia Newall

I looked at the mirror in horror. I touched my big belly, and my puffy cheeks. I looked at my acne, and my greasy hair, but it wasn't mine. I was a tall, skinny, tanned blonde, but today I had woken up in the body of Minnie "the hippo" MacNamara. I shut my eyes tight only to reopen them in the same circumstance. Minnie's mum knocked on my door. "Minnie are you up?" she asked. She had a sweet-sounding voice. "Yeah mum, I'll be down in a half hour." Somehow, I knew exactly what to say and do, almost as if I had a manual in my brain. I showered, brushed my hair and teeth and then went to get dressed. I opened Minnie's closet and grabbed the least horrendous outfit I could find, which was a challenge. I walked through the hallway, noticing lots of dream catchers, crystals, and spiritual objects. Everyone knew Minnie was weird, but I was starting to think it ran in the family. In the kitchen, there was a smoothie and some porridge waiting on the table with a note that read "Have a good day my love. Lunch money is on the table". I grabbed the money and my schoolbag and left.

Walking through the school halls reminded me of who I was. I was Minnie "the hippo" MacNamara. Everyone stared and laughed. Five people hurled insults at me, and two guys coming from band practice matched their trombones to my footsteps. Then I saw her. My face scrunched up into a sour expression as I walked up to her. My fists were clenched, ready to swing, but I decided that I didn't want a bruise on my face whenever I could switch back to being me. "Amber, can I talk to you?" I said. We walked all the way down the hall to the library before I turned around. I was so angry I was ready to scream, but I decided against it.

"Okay, okay. So, as you know, my mum enjoys witchcraft. I found a spell book and cast an irreversible spell to swap bodies with you. Any questions?" she said. "Irreversible?" I exclaimed.

"It means it can't be reversed. This little fixture is permanent." Her smirk made my blood boil. It took all of my power not to scream.

"Why me?" I asked after standing in silence for a while.

"Why you? Why Amber Murphy? Why would I choose anyone else? You're popular, nice, beautiful, athletic, smart, rich. You have the brightest future in your idiotic friend group, maybe in this whole school." She laughed.

"I worked for all of that. Do you think I woke up one day and was suddenly captain of the hockey team?"

"No, but I did."

I stormed off, upset and frustrated. I spent the next two weeks in Minnie's room, changing it to my liking, and selling her hideous clothes so I could buy more fashionable outfits. Living Minnie's life made me realize how undetermined and not hardworking she was. Her room was filthy, she spent her days inside on her phone, and she had no hobbies. I decided that she was right. She did wake up that day as me, but I'm the one who worked hard to be me. If I did it before, I could do it again. I started working at a local restaurant, finding hobbies for Minnie, and taking care of myself. Not before long, we graduated from high school, and went off to college.

"Is that Minnie 'the hippo'?" I could see heads turning and comments being made. I walked into the school that I left a fat, acne faced, greasy teenager ten years ago a new person. I had lost weight, I had perfect skin and I had long, silky hair. I had made myself into something. I owned a law firm, I had a house with a fully paid off mortgage, and I was only twenty-eight. I spent the night talking to the people who made my life miserable for the entire first year that I was Minnie. They acted like we were old friends which made me laugh. I waited in anticipation for a whole hour, and then I saw her. She walked in a mess. She had been rained on, her hair had frizzed up, and she had gained all the weight that I had dropped after high school. I strutted up to her with a grin plastered on my face. "The brightest future in my whole idiotic friend group didn't turn out so bright, huh Amber?"

Giulia O'Doherty



Ag an mbord cistine

S huigh Máire síos ag an mbord cistine agus chaoin sí. Chaoin sí gan stad, gan staonadh. Chaoin sí amhail is nár chaoin sí i mórán bliana. Bhí sí ceart go leor san ospidéal agus sa charr ag teacht ar ais ón ospidéal, ach ansin, nuair a rith an scéal go hiomlán léi, thit sí as a chéile ar fad. Ní raibh sí in ann gan a bheith ag smaoineamh ar aghaidh a máthair, millítheach agus tuirseach, nuair a chuala siad an nuacht. Bhí ailse ar a máthair, ailse nárbh fhéidir a leigheas. Níor chuimhin léi mórán tar éis sin - bheadh a máthair, Áine, ag fanacht san ospidéal, rud éigin faoi 'chóir leighis práinneach'- níor thuig sí na sonraí. Bhain an scéal iomlán geit mór aisti.

Ach thuig sí go raibh sí ina haonar ansin. Bheadh a beirt bhuachaillí ag fágáil go luath, ag dul go dtí an ollscoil - Cathal go dtí an Bhreatain- Londain nó Dún Éideann no áit éigin mar sin, agus Seán go dtí Luimneach - bheadh sé cóngarach dá mhamó, ach ní bheadh sé mar sin anois, le gach rud a bhí tar éis ag tarlú. Níor inis sí dóibh fós. Cad a déarfadh sí? Bhí grá mór acu dá seanmháthair- ba chabhair mhór í di sna phríomhbhlianta tar éis a d'fhág a n-athair. Bhog a lámh dá fón póca, chun a bheith ag labhairt leo, ach chuir sí stop léi féin. D'fhanfadh sí go dtí an mhaidin. Bhí siad amuigh ansin, ag cóisireacht. Chríochnaigh said an Ardteist inniu. Bhí sí an-sásta dóibh sular tharla seo. Tá céiliúradh uaibh- bhí a lán bróin rompu sna míonna a bhí le teacht.

Chun an fhírinne a rá, mhothaigh sí saghas ciontach. Cad a tharlódh dá bhfeicfeadh sí na comharthaí ní ba luaithe? Thug sí cuairt ar a máthair i mí an Mhárta, ar Lá na Máithreacha, agus dúirt Áine nár mhothaigh sí go hiontach, ach ní fhéadfadh sí aghaidh a thabhairt ar an dochtúir. Bhí sí an-cheanndána mar sin. Seachas an chuairt sin, níor chaith sí a lán ama le hÁine le se mhí anuas- bhí sí ar thaobh eile na tíre, i dTrá Lí, agus bhí sí gafa leis na buachaillí, leis an Ardteist, agus lena roghanna ollscoile. Bhí gadh rud mar sin an-tábhachtach ansin. Ach mar thoradh air sin, ní dhearna aon duine aon rud go dtí go raibh sé ro-dhéanach. Agus faoi láthair, bheadh sí ina haonar, gan a páistí agus gan a máthair. Níor thuig sí cad a dhéanfadh sí ansin. Do na chéad cúpla mí a bhí amach roimpi, bheadh sí dóchasach, láidir, mar a bhíodh a máthair- di, agus do na buachaillí. Agus ansin, bhuel, ní bheadh a fhios aici.



Patrick Fanning

Óid d'Alpha Lyons

Le do thoil, ná bí buartha faoi
Cé go bhfanfaidh tú inár gcroí,
Caithfidh gach ceannaire dul sa deireadh
Mar a rinne tú seirbhís do thír dhílis na hÉireann.

I gceannas ar an scata,
Ar an tslí seo tar éis na mblianta fada,
Gníomhach agus spreagúil, gan stad gan staon-
adh,
Thug tú chun bua sinn, níl aon ionadh.

Ag cuimhneamh i gcónaí
Conas a threoraigh tú ár gcluichí,
Is tú ag canadh d'amhráin buacaigh (Mrs. Robin-
son)
Cé gur maith a thuig tú go mbeifeá ag fágáil go
luath.

Ar ndóigh, do bhuaicphoinítí go léir,
Mar a bhuaigh tú an cluiche leathcheannais le do
thrí phointe,
Nó le linn an chluiche i gcoinne Chill Iníon Léinín,
Nuair a leag tú beagnach amach (an cailín).

Seo a hoidhreacht atá fágtha ar an gcúirt sin,
Is cinnte nach raibh sé mion,
Ádh mór sna blianta atá le teacht,
Seo óid do Lyons ar a himeacht.

Chloe O'Sullivan

La Tempête en colère

Puissante et effrayante
Le vent souffle en rafales
La pluie me frappe violemment
En colère et brute
La tempête.

Oisín Hughes

La Tempête Sombre

La tempête est sombre
Effrayante et menaçante
Souffle les feuilles avec colère
Je la regarde avec enthousiasme
La tempête.

Arin Aritkan

À La Plage

Je marche sur le sable doux et texturé
J'entends les vagues s'écrasent sur le rivage
Ce qui m'a rempli de joie et de réconfort
Mes pieds entrent dans le vaste corps froid de la
mer
Je m'enfonce instantanément
À la plage.

Lienkies de Klerk

Extras

The crisp winter breeze made Emily shudder as she stepped onto the path outside her apartment block, she did not have her usual warm shower this morning as one of the pipes had cracked and there was no warm water. She turned left and started making her way to college, it was usually a forty minute walk but with all the ice around she had to be considerably slower with her steps so she left a bit early today. She passed by the old man and his corner shop as he was setting up racks of magazines and newspapers outside, she said hello and he gave a sardonic smile back as he wasn't known for being the most friendliest man. She decided to stop at her local coffee shop and grab a chai latte to make the walk more enjoyable. When she walked in a sharp scent of freshly ground coffee beans pierced her nose, it made her wince, she hates coffee.

After ordering her drink, she sat and people watched. There was an old couple wearing matching hats enjoying a coffee and chat together, a lone man and his dog, a mum with her two kids both devouring a chocolate donut each, a college student with his head in his hands staring into a computer screen, two middle aged woman laughing very loudly. It made her think about how weird it is that everyone is living a completely different life; we are just extras in other people's lives who probably don't even get a second glance. She mused further on how everyone has different friends and social groups with different families with different lives.

Someone calling her name shook her from her thoughts. It was the barista telling her that her drink was ready. For the rest of the day she kept thinking about what had occurred to her at the coffee shop. She took the exact same walk back home at the end of the day and decided to stop off at the coffee shop again, although this time, of course there was all different people. She ordered her drink, sat, and looked around again. Different people replaced the people from before, all with completely different lives, social networks and friends yet they all had one thing in common, emotions. Laughter from two girls echoed similar to the middle-aged women from earlier. There was an old man looking out the window in angst and stress similar to the college student from earlier. Although we all have different lives we have a lot more in common than we may think, so before you go and judge someone about how they act or look you should keep in mind that you may be exactly the same except you're just living a different life.

Nese Gurakan



The steel train rattled its way along the tracks, leaving the Great Lakes languishing behind. Henry absently peered out of a rain-slicked window, looking down at the twinkling lamps and rain-swept streets of the emerging city. Bright flashes of lightning occasionally illuminated red brickwork and pointed spires; carriages and canal barges appeared for a second, briefly exposing those unfortunate enough to be caught in the seemingly endless storm. Henry silently pulled away from the window, looking admiringly at the open space of the train. The walls were painted in a white and light red colour, heavily lit by the bright lights adorning the ceiling. It was a stark contrast to the dark gloom that was the storm outside. It had plagued the city for three days and nights, and business had slowed to a painfully tight crawl. The surging canal had become too dangerous for merchants to moor their barges and the aggrieved farmers had no hope of selling their wares in this weather. Manual labourers were given days off and now the poor were down in the rowdy, boisterous pubs celebrating their precious days off from work, drinking and dancing the miserable night away.

Henry had been living in the city for years, but the large social divide was increasingly obvious from his first week. Ever since his late father's time, America had quickly begun an industrial revolution and Detroit was at the heart of all new ideologies and inventions. It was now double its size since the last century, most of the old city knocked down and replaced with a much more ordered one, marking the city's prosperity. Trains were only the beginning; rumours of carriages that could move without horses were whispered in the winding streets and dingy taverns. The rich had benefited greatly from these new inventions, being the owners of many thriving businesses and industries. A small number of middle-class customers (including Henry himself) were ready to buy these new resources and ride in new steam-powered boats. The poor were suffering, however. The word 'hygiene' or 'safety' did not seem to be a concern to the company owners and many of the rougher parts of the city stank of urine, sewage and unwashed bodies. Typhoid was common, child mortality was high and houses down those parts were constructed using scrap wood, steel or whatever else could be scavenged. Henry could sympathise with them. He briefly glanced at the small number of passengers, checking from his vantage point at the rear end. No one was glancing at him however; most

were either lying, dozing on the crimson-cushioned chairs or absorbed in a newspaper. Henry knew he ought to be more cautious, but midnight was almost upon the city and he wasn't one to sleep late. His thoughts once again turned to how he ended up here in the first place. His dad was an immigrant farmer with too many children and had supplied Henry with a decent education. He soon discovered he excelled at inventing. Opening a simple pocket-watch given to him at twelve, opened a whole new world of ideas in his mind and by his twenties, Henry was constructing his own engines. Although it was nice to enjoy the change in lifestyle from the countryside, the city was overrun with injustices that made Henry doubt his decision to come here. Now, here he was with an invention that could change everything.

Moving through the city heights at night was breathtaking, even if the fumes stank and the constant grinding noise of the train was deafening. The train finally ground to a halt outside a concrete tower that jutted out of the messy plot of land named by the city folk as the 'slums'. The tower itself was the tallest building in the district, the rest were a jumble of small wooden houses stacked precariously atop one another. Crooked bridges interconnected the houses to lead the people away from the water-clogged streets below. The train rattled to a halt. Henry sighed and got up from his chair. It groaned in response as he walked through the carriage towards the door. Many of the richer occupants stared at him in surprise as he walked through the aisles, he ignored them as best he could and continued to make his way to the exit.

Almost as soon as he stepped out into the wet night the door shut and then a few seconds later the train moved towards its destination, taking its awful noise with it. Henry spat on the ground bitterly, adding one more droplet to the downpour, before stiffly making his way towards the stairs leading to the tower's lower levels. At this time at night no one was out, leaving Henry with an oppressive feeling as he opened the wooden door to the building. His footsteps eerily echoed as he descended through the many flights of stairs and narrow dimly lit corridors. He passed by a handful of empty storerooms, but paused as he reached the largest room; a huge expanse of space waited. As he unfolded the smooth paper in his hand and examined its contents, a small noise came from upstairs. Henry felt relieved that someone



else was here, but it was quickly replaced by fear. The night and the quiet had set his nerves on edge, making Henry wonder if it was a member of one of many infamous gangs who seemed to run this portion of the city. As the steps continued Henry quickly decided to face whoever it was. A few seconds later the figure reached the bottom of the stairs. He could see it was a man but was unable to make out his face in the darkness. The man stepped closer and before Henry could speak the man drawled, 'Is your name Henry?' 'Yes', he replied tentatively. The man stepped into the light; "Bill Murphy's my name", he replied, grinning and reaching out his hand. Henry felt surprised before extending his own. "Pleased to meet you, Mr Murphy."

"You too, Mr Ford! This has the makings of a great partnership".

Tom Mockler

The Accident at Aldgate

“Excuse me, sorry, excuse me, yeah, thanks.”

Minh made his way through the crowd on the platform. He couldn't miss this train or else his mother would kill him for being late to his family's annual Christmas Eve party. It was made up of all the neighbours, family, and friends that the Nguyen's knew. His grandmother had started the tradition fifty years ago when she'd first emigrated to Britain from Vietnam, to fit in with the neighbourhood (even though the Vietnamese didn't celebrate Christmas). His grandmother had evidently changed the view of the whole affair by doing so, and now the Nguyen's carried on the tradition.

Minh checked his watch. The train was due in one minute. The 5:10 to South Kensington. He hoisted his backpack round, took out his flask of lukewarm tea and took a swig. He preferred tea to coffee, and often his friends at Uni would tease him for drinking like an old lady.

He'd been a quiet boy all his life, not bullied or anything, he'd had his own set of friends in his school years, but no one really considered that he had existed. In school, he'd been a nobody, and so his parents had pressured him into working hard and focusing on his studies. His parents had sacrificed a lot to give him the opportunities to excel and get amazing grades, and so, with a tightness in his chest, he'd hunkered down and worked hard.

However, a part of him yearned for something different. An unspoken dream he'd never told his parents about. His dream to become a writer. He'd written many stories about fantasy worlds and sci-fi alternate universes when he was younger and hid them all under a loose floorboard so that his parents wouldn't find them. He'd never uttered a word about this to his parents and after a while the yearning to write had slightly faded away with every year that passed. Minh no longer had time to steep in his fictitious worlds; he was too busy studying. He'd given up on his dream. Sometimes, though, he'd see a person, or a place, or even an unusual object, and his fingers began to itch. The itch of a good story lurking in his mind. He'd trained himself to burst the bubble of excitement he would feel and go back to being the smart, non-adventurous person his family thought he was. It was for the best, he'd tell himself, for his parents...

He leant against the grubby platform wall, shutting his eyes. He'd been up late last night, and all he wanted to do right then was fall asleep. As

the crowd of people around him wrapped up in coats and scarves stomped their feet and blew on their hands to stay warm, the train pulled into the station. Minh heard the distant screeching of the train pulling up and jerked awake. The train doors were open, and people were streaming on and off it like a herd of wildebeest.

He picked up his bag but forgot to zip it shut, and so as he slung it over his back the contents of it spilled out onto the grimy floor of the platform.

“Crap!” He muttered under his breath and quickly bent down to pick up the remains of his lunch, his books and folder, which had somehow burst open, letting his important alphabetised papers fly all over the place. He grabbed all the papers, his heart beating fast. He could not lose those; some of them were his project paper that was due on Monday. He slid them back into the folder and shoved the rest of his things back in as well. Unfortunately, this occurrence meant that the train doors had shut, and Minh had missed his train. Almost everybody was gone except for an old woman on the other platform.

Mum's going to kill me, he thought grumpily as the train pulled out of the station. With her bare hands.

He glanced up at the train timetable. The next train was in twenty minutes. Not too bad.

He sat down on a stickered bench and scrolled on his phone for a bit. He felt weirdly on edge, looking behind him and up and down the platform every so often. The back of his neck prickled every so often, his instinct to run flaring up, but Minh pushed it down. He never liked being alone at the train stations; not since he'd heard about that kid going missing in the Underground on the news. Aldgate station was far enough from Aldwych, the station where the boy had gone missing, but still... something felt wrong.

Ten minutes passed and the train for the other side was due to arrive, Minh heard the tap-tap of a wooden stick against the ground. He glanced up to see the old woman making her way to the edge of the platform to get on the train that was about to arrive. Lucky, he thought to himself. He observed as she shuffled closer and closer to the edge, past the yellow line...

Minh sat up. What was she doing? She limped and limped until the train came rumbling out of the tunnel, and she stepped out, fell onto the tracks...

“NO!” Minh yelled, jumping to his feet, but it was too late.

WHAM! The train smashed into the woman and

tore past, screeching along the tracks. Minh clapped a hand to his mouth, numb with shock. Frozen in terror, his ears rang as the train pulled to a stop. It was as though the driver didn't even know he'd run over a poor old lady!

Minh, after letting out a strangled yelp, stumbled over to the door in the corner that said 'RAIL SECURITY – PLEASE KNOCK' on it. Minh rapped loudly and continuously on the door until a tired-looking, balding man opened the door. "Wot?" Minh looked up at him and felt like retching, but he managed to say, "The-the lady, she... fell, onto the tracks. Train hit her."

The guard's eyes widened. "Oh God," he said, smoothening out his eyebrows with his sausage-like fingers. "What happened?"

Minh tried to get the image of the old lady dead and turned to mulch out of his mind, but it just wouldn't go away. He shook his head and replied, "I watched her. She just kept walking out until the train came and..." "Okay, that's enough," The guard said. Perhaps the bloke was more squeamish than he looked.

He pushed past Minh as the train rumbled on into the darkness. Minh braced himself for the woman on the tracks, prepared for the image to haunt him for the rest of his life. The guard peered down onto the tracks, his knuckles white, and Minh turned away.

Silence.

"How dare you?" Came a voice. Minh looked up to see the guard looking angrily at him, his jaw set and brows furrowed. "What?" Minh asked in a small voice. "Was that your idea of some sort of sick joke? You should get looked at, you should. Don't ever do that again, y'hear me? Us guards have bigger problems to be dealing with than kids thinkin' they're funny by, by-," He gestured to the tracks, "-this."

And with that, he marched back into his room and shut the door with a loud slam. Minh stood there, his heart thumping loudly in his chest. What had he done?

Minh knew what he had to do. He didn't want to, of course.

But he did anyway because Minh was that sort of person. The sort of person to slow down when coming up to a car crash to take a glance, the type to look at the creepy photo of something even when told not to. The sort of person that would be the first to die in a horror movie...

He edged closer to the tracks, took a deep breath and looked down.

There was nothing there. No woman, no mark, no

nothing. Just plain steel tracks. What?! "But I saw her... I saw her get hit..." He murmured to himself. The image of the woman falling, falling and the train coming along and smashing into her was fresh and clear in his mind's eye. How was there nothing there? She got hit, and he knew it. Unless... Minh took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes, trying to rid the memory. Had he imagined it? Was it all in his head? Was he going mad? Maybe the tiredness had finally got to him. One thing was for sure: the fear had been real.

His train pulled into the station and Minh boarded it, plonking himself down on a seat, his whole body weak with the shock. He looked out the window, surveying the platform where the old woman had been slid away from him. He suddenly sat up, spotting something.

There.

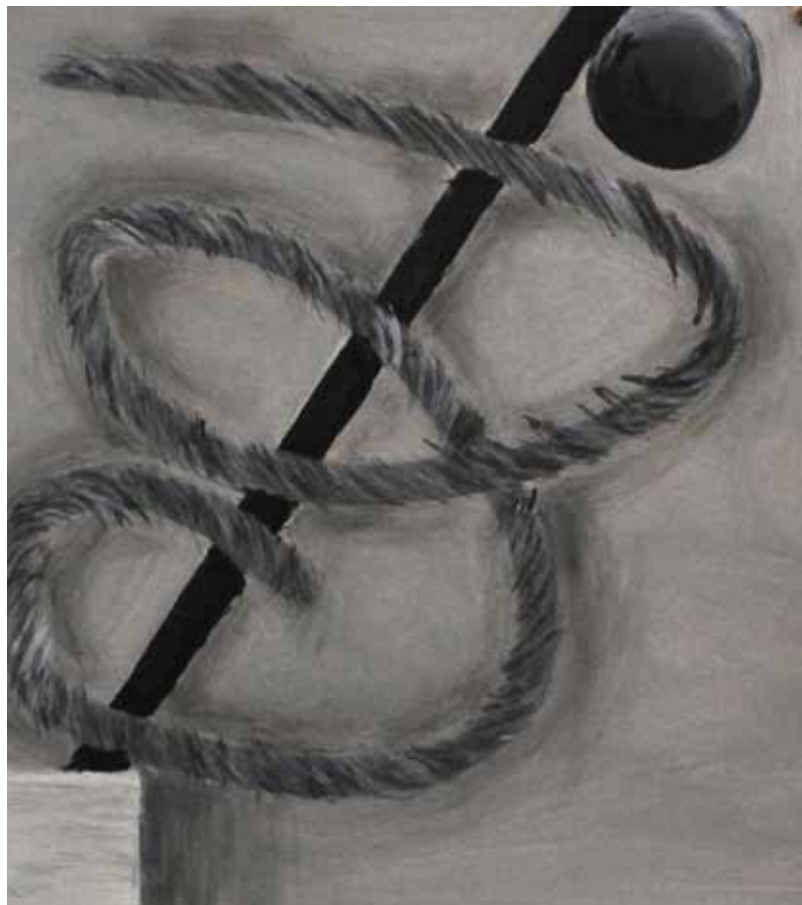
Sitting on a bench. Holding a wooden stick.

The old woman. Minh's heart raced. She stared straight at him and pulled back her lips to reveal a set of rotted teeth. Smiling.

Smiling right at him.

All aboard the underground, if you dare ...

Charlotte Donohue



Dramatically with Dragons

It was one of those summers you're nostalgic for even before it passes,
He sat staring at the lamp without answering, his mouth too dry to speak,

A kid had driven a knife into his brother.

Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition
The romantic impulse is in all of us, but only for a short time.
Even the prospect of facing a hundred faces did not dim the renewal of his energies,
And sure enough, she soon caught sight of a speck in the air shooting towards her through
the falling ash.

Don't ignore half of me so you can fit me into a box
She said
Faith was a bit like luck.

He was rushed off the premises with just the cast-iron cat as a relic of his old life,
And ever since the golden sheep are feeding and their mouths harbour contentment,
Only by the blood of the lamb are we saved.

She divorced him and married the painter Millais.

-TY creative writing class

Duckling

Today I feel like an energised duckling splashing in the ice-cold water.
Sometimes I am a balloon, floating to the clouds.
Sometimes I am a heavy brick, unable to move
But always I am curious about my life ahead.
I ask the world "What will I become?"
And the answer is an energised duckling splashing in the ice-cold water.

Robyn Barry

A View from the Train

The train from Malahide to Booterstown – from home to school – clocks in at around an hour. That's assuming there are no delays. But, what I've come to realize as a seasoned Irish Rail passenger is that you should always factor in delays. It could be a fox that's wandered onto the track, or a heavy fog that's rolled in – whatever the reason, the result's the same: a screeching of brakes; a low, apologetic voice over the intercom; and then the inevitable collective sigh from the packed carriage.

When I first started these journeys, I would arrive each morning anticipating the worst: food and noise-cancelling headphones were essentials, along with a notebook on which I'd furtively annotate my music scores, polish my essays – whatever I could to make the most of my long journey. After all, the reason why I was taking this train was to get to my new school: to do the IB diploma, I had forsaken a music scholarship, and I wanted my journeys to count for something. You can imagine my frustration then when one morning; in the half-light of my room, I managed to forget not only my headphones, books and bag, but my phone too. Making my way through the carriage that morning, I felt like the butt of a cruel joke – all that missing was the laugh-track. No sooner had I sat down then the train stopped – it was raining heavily, the outside world barely visible through the fogged windows.

I had no choice but to look around: businessmen in suits, uniforms from schools I had never seen, the old and young mixed together, the lilt of accents foreign and local. Across from me, a woman spoke on her phone in Polish, and beside her, a man with his hair in a bun crocheted.

When I got off the train that day, it felt like I had experienced a world I never knew existed. The following morning, headphones forsaken, I sat down in the carriage across from an older woman. I smiled at her, and she smiled back, and when the train came to its inevitable halt, she asked my name: "Rory" I replied. We talked about school. I asked, if there was any advice she had for an Irish oral exam I was less than prepared for. With a smile on her face and a slight laugh, she replied: "Ádh mor!" ("Good luck to you!") These interactions would continue over the school year as I set out a goal to meet as many passengers as possible. Although I'm no scientist, I took measures to maximize the potential of my experiment: I would switch carriages daily, trying to talk to a new person every day. I even created an inventory on my notes app, where I listed the people I had talked to – and anything of note they had said, be it funny or wise, or just unusual.

There was Julien, who helped me re-construct a rain-soaked history project, and Maria, who gave me her handmade brooch when I complimented it. There was a guy, unnamed, who helped me with my tie ahead of a debate competition, and a woman who lent me a makeup wipe to remove a pen-scribed note from my arm reminding me to finish my biology homework.

In my new school I've learned a lot: in English, I've studied loads of books and poems in different styles and from different periods; in MUN, I've debated with kids from countries half way across the world, in Spanish, I've developed a love for reggaeton. But it's on that dark, crowded train where I've probably learned the most.

So, if you ever find yourself in Ireland, take my advice: skip the Cliffs of Moher, set aside a day to take the train. It doesn't matter where you go. You probably won't get there on time, anyway!

Rory Rusnak

The Magic Hunter

It was a Monday, in a high security prison in Texas. Prisoners lay resting in their cells and guards patrolled the yard and corridors. One guard leaned against a fence to drink his morning coffee, but he suddenly heard a strange 'pop' sound behind him. He looked in his coffee as if the sound came from inside the cardboard cup. He heard it again, but louder. 'Pop!' He turned around and screamed as he saw a medium sized man, wearing a long brown cloak and a dark hood over his face. He carried a stick, which seemed to be glowing a faded purple at the top of it. He reached for his baton, but the hooded figure had already scooped him up and knocked him out. The other guards watched in awe as the man slowly walked to the entrance to the prisoner's cells, pointing his stick at the key card scanner and making a 'pop!' with more purple light. The door opened and he walked in. He scanned all the cells with his green eyes and stopped at a particular cell. He approached it, and the prisoner inside seemed to recognize him. The man made another 'pop!' with his stick and the door magically opened. They both left the cell room soon after the prisoner gathered his belongings. As they got outside, all the guards had guns pointed straight at them. The hooded man waved his stick sweeping the guards out of the way. He then did a complicated manoeuvre with his stick and a bright portal appeared in the centre of the yard. As they were about to step through, more guards burst out of doors around them and aimed their guns. Just as they fired and the bullets whizzed to the hooded man, he stepped through the portal with the prisoner and the portal closed, the speeding bullets passed through where the man was just standing, and hit the wall behind with a thud, leaving four large holes. 10 minutes later the chief of police arrived. A cloud of dust flew into the air as the SUV screeched to a stop in the dirt road and the chief stepped out and ran forward. "What the hell happened here?!" He yelled. Meanwhile, the hooded man and the prisoner had arrived at their destination.

It was a normal day in the village of Gornack on the far planet Dathimeer. In the years before, many wizards and witches had escaped through portals to the planets they used to live on when the humans had tried to exterminate them. They returned to their normal lives, as did the wizards and witches in the far away galaxy of Stariopp. A loud 'woooooooo' sound reverberated, getting louder and louder in pitch until a simple 'pop' was heard. People looked out of their windows as the

mysterious caped figure and the prison inmate, still dressed in an orange jumpsuit appeared. People stared at the inmate as they passed, seeming to recognize him immediately. The prisoner seemed sad and annoyed, looking down at his feet as he was dragged up the wide path up a stone hill.

They soon reached the summit, where a large, round building with a coned roof and large wooden doors, riddled with metal spikes stood before them. The hooded figure knocked loudly on the doors and a run-down looking robot appeared through a hatch and spoke to the hooded figure in a strange language, which the prisoner seemed to understand. After a short conversation with the droid, the large doors were slowly opened by more droids and they were beckoned inside. It was a labyrinth of hallways and corridors, all decorated beautifully with foreign jewels and crystals. They were led down one hallway by another droid and they passed through another large set of doors, this time looking royal and decorated. On the other side was a large throne room, and on a large throne sat a cloaked man wearing a glossy crown.

"Hello, EJ," he said in a strange accent, "the prisoner seems to be in good condition. Bring him down to the dungeons, guards. Now, EJ, your payment."

He clapped his hands and a short droid carried a large wooden chest full of silver coins and handed it to the hooded figure.

"Thank you, my lord," EJ began, "I hope you find my work satisfactory."

Alexander Sierevogel




Introspection

Let's plunge our hands into the soil
From which we were born
To reach our stolen roots once more.

Let the earth's soldiers of stone peel my fingernails from my flesh.
I will plunge deeper and deeper
Until long after your breath has paused beside me.

And only when my ruined fingers wrench out
My mangled, twisted twig from the depths
Will I look at my torn skin and smile.

Aylin Ustuner



Es hat geschneit

Fielen Sterne vom Himmel
Wie Diamanten
Brennt in meinen Augen
Es hat geschneit

Fin Nolan

Summer Gems

Little red strawberries
Masked between the foliage of freshly grown leaves,
Your summer sweetness, your absorption of the rays
Leaving me a foggy buzzing haze.

Scorching heat beams down onto the earth
Shadows offering quaint refuge in the desert of the forest,
You hear the echoes of cicadas, between the breezy trees
I spot your bright red sparkle with ease.

Although the taste lingers for only a second
I return every summer for seconds of those
Little red strawberries.

Sara Drobova

The Last Taste

I was getting weaker. I could feel it, in the way that it took me longer to get up from my bed and the way my walks became shorter as I tired easier. I think they knew it too. My owners. They were being more careful with me and were going out of their way to make my life, as it dwindled, as easy as possible.

Now, I am feeling it tenfold. When I woke up this morning, and I couldn't even stand up to go and drink from my water bowl, I knew I was nearing the end. I tried to stand again when my owners came in, because I didn't want them to know. I didn't want them to be sad. But when my legs shook so much that I fell back into bed, they saw, and they hooked my collar to my leash with worried whispers and carried me to the car.

I knew it would be the last time I would ever be home. I knew that I would never again sit in my usual spot on the window seat or bask in the afternoon sunlight that shone through the kitchen's skylight. This was my final goodbye. As I day-dreamed during the car journey, I felt myself slipping, felt my eyes begin to droop closed, but I stubbornly jolted myself awake. I couldn't let go just yet.

When we arrived at the vet, a man said something to my owners that made the little boy and girl begin to cry into their mothers' arms. It even made their father upset; I could see the glossiness of his eyes. Well, if they didn't know it was coming to the end for me before, this man had certainly informed them.

Now, I am lying on a comfortable table. My owners are beside me, stroking my head and back softly. A woman is in the corner, putting some sort of liquid into a pointy-looking thing. Then, she picks another thing up off the counter and walks over to me.

She opens up my mouth and puts in a square of something that looks to be a soft brown colour. "Mum, I thought dogs couldn't eat chocolate," says the boy quietly. The mother shushes him, and tears form in her eyes. Chocolate. I let the word swirl around in my head for a moment. Is that what this lady is feeding me? The taste of it explodes in my mouth, like a velvet stream of warmth and deliciousness. I have never tasted it before, but I know I never want it to go away now. I close my eyes and try my best to savour it for as long as I possibly can. When I open my eyes, the lady is lowering the pointy thing towards me, and I feel it pierce my skin. It hurts a bit, but I try to focus on the chocolate, still warm and fresh in my mouth. I hear a soft sob. It had come from the girl; I know her voice. I desperately don't want her to be sad. I strain to lift my paw and place it on top of her hand, where it rests by my head. She smiles down at me as the light slowly fades away ...

Niamh Grehan

Haunted

It all unfolded five years ago. I was in my last year of college, preparing for final examinations for accounting. I felt I had a good idea of where my life was going and what I was going to do. Of course, I could never have accounted for this. It started like any other Monday morning; I was in a rush as I'd overslept. I had thrown on some semi-clean clothes and gulped down half a bowl of cereal before rushing out the front door leaving a mess for my roommate to clean up. I made a quick mental note to bring some sort of edible apology for him later that evening. I scurried out of our apartment building just about making it onto my bus. The bus journey was like any other, twisting and turning through the streets of the city, before eventually arriving at my college. I scurried into my lecture hall just in time and settled down in my usual seat at the very back. As I relaxed into the lecture, I noticed something peculiar, or rather someone peculiar. Despite the lecture group being relatively large, I did not recognize this individual. They were wearing a long brown trench coat with the collar flicked up and a grey cap. While college students have some unique fashion sense, this outfit was downright weird and off-putting. Additionally, I had the disconcerting sense they were looking at me, but each time I sought to confirm this, they were looking at the lecturer.

I left the lecture hall feeling uneasy but brushed it away as me seeing things due to the stress of upcoming exams. On my way home, I dropped into a bakery to get myself a coffee and something for my roommate to apologize for that morning's mess. As I queued up to pay, I froze, in front of me stood the figure. Slowly, it began to turn around to meet my gaze. Everything around me seemed to stop moving, I wanted to scream or run but I couldn't. Then everything went black. I woke up on the floor of the bakery, the cashier told me that I had just frozen, and then collapsed to the floor. When I told her what happened, she looked at me as if I was a total freak. She quickly ushered me out of the door, giving me my food without charge.

When I arrived home, I collapsed onto the sofa, within minutes I was in a deep sleep, only waking briefly when my roommate was shuffling around. I didn't wake up again until the dead of night. A cold breeze blowing in from an open window jarred me alert. I found this peculiar as my roommate wouldn't have left a window open overnight. As I closed the window I began to fill up with a sense of terror and dread. I felt a presence behind me. As I slowly turned around, I saw a figure. This time I got a good look. Their clothes were immaculate, the cap and trench coat did not have a stain on them. Their denim jeans and Nike runners appeared to be fresh out of the factory. As I looked up to their face, I realized they did not have a face, there was nothing there. Just a dark, empty hole. I felt myself moving towards them. I screamed; nothing came out. Then suddenly, my roommate tackled the figure out of nowhere, I collapsed to the floor and watched the figure wriggle from my roommate's grasp and propel itself out of the window. I jumped up and looked out my window, expecting to see a mangled body six stories down. Instead, I saw nothing.

I packed my bags the following morning and left college. I never completed my exams and my life never became what I thought it would be. I live in a small town now, thousands of miles from my previous life. I work at a terrible job, live reclusively and have nobody to talk to. Every night, I look out of my window to see if that thing has come back to haunt me.

Guy Sheehy-O'Shea

Broken Music

It was my mother's death that set it off, the chain of events that led me to end up here, at this dimly lit jazz bar in the Upper West side. Thursday evenings are always quiet, but tonight it is especially so. The Autumn rain is pounding the streets outside and the torrents of rain are cascading down 57th street towards those cavernous storm drains, no wonder no one is in. After all, I'm only here because I cannot bear sitting alone, not anymore. I had grown accustomed to constantly being in company over the years, the gala dinners, the bustling record factory and then of course, Nancy's singing. But all of that is gone now.

I come here for the music really, and the company, but I've never really been much of a drinker. Sebastian is on the bar tonight, which is unusual as he mostly works the busy nights. Anyone who knows a thing about jazz in New York knows Sebastian, he is quite unlike any bartender you will ever meet. Long and slender in his open-necked fine linen shirt, he is an elegant fellow, moving in an almost musical manner when he works. As we talk, he is drying and stacking the crystal glasses used for the most sophisticated customers, but then, all members of this bar are sophisticated—the extortionate joining fee makes sure of that. What makes Sebastian so notable is the depth and breadth of his knowledge, he can talk to the Wall Street types about whatever is happening in the markets on any given day, he can talk to the balding lawyers about the intricacies of a ruling on a certain case and, most importantly he can talk to the jazz heads about jazz. Miles Davis, Frank Sinatra, John Coltrane, Chet Baker, Nancy Wilson, he can talk about all of them. Sebastian didn't come from one of the blue-blooded families, the old money or even the new money. He was orphaned after a fire engulfed the hotel his parents were staying in during a holiday in Maryland, he has fought for every little thing he has gained in his life, and perhaps that's why people like him. After all, New Yorkers adore people with a chip on their shoulder.

But I hadn't come here with the intention of reminiscing or ruminating, quite the opposite actually. But it was when that song began to patter softly out of the secluded corner that the band inhabited, that it all came flooding back.

*Leaving me to doubt
Talk about, God in His mercy
Oh, if he really does exist
Why did he desert me
In my hour of need
I truly am indeed
Alone again, naturally'*

Gilbert O' Sullivan's Alone Again (Naturally) had been the song I listened to the night after my mother's funeral. It was the most intense moment of emotion that I had ever felt, the tears wracking my body and streaming off my face onto the neatly pressed lines of my black suit trousers. Her death changed me completely, although no one understands it, not even Nancy. It left me with this indescribable feeling, like something is off, but you can't ever put it into words, if you try to look at it too closely, it disappears. This stifling feeling of numbness ensued, consuming everything that I held dear to me in my life, I was suddenly completely and totally apathetic.

Everything started to go wrong, I became more reserved, less engaged, less driven. Soon people began noticing, questioning, whispering. The first thing that went were the Gala dinners, the high social circles, the invites to the most exclusive parties in the city. People like those didn't question what was going on with me, they just saw a change and cut loose. The music industry was even more cutthroat, once I lost my ability to connect with the new talent, I was useless to them too. A record label did not want a manager that couldn't entice up and coming artists into a deal. Gone were the days of "how does he do it" and "good job on that deal man", I began to overhear more "what's gotten into him lately" and "looks like his luck is running out, huh".

Then came the telephone call, the dreaded lonely chair in front of the executive boss's desk. I had never noticed how menacing he looked, the day I was axed from the label there was sun streaming through the window behind him, casting his shadow over me. The lack of light on his face made the plastic surgery more pronounced. The lack of wrinkles looked good under the bright lights of the red carpets and music award stages, but in this light, it was grotesque, stretched into a

permanent look of shock or surprise that is characteristic of copious amounts of Botox. I wonder, even if he wanted to frown, would he be able to? He was able to wrangle his face into some semblance of sympathy as he cut me loose. The crushing blow was preceded by all the typical platitudes 'this was a truly difficult decision', 'If it were up to me...' and 'It really pains me to do this'. Crap. I'm not a bitter person, but that was the only time I can remember that I've wanted to jump over a desk and throttle someone. It wasn't like I needed the money from that job, I had built up a considerable amount of savings over the almost 3 decades I had worked at the label. But I didn't work for the money, as clique as it sounds, I worked for the music. The raw emotion that music can evoke in a person, as it did to me that night after my mother's funeral, as it does now sitting at the bar, is unlike anything else. People have been saved by music, have found themselves through music, have experienced something indescribably beautiful with music. But for me, it was the music that broke me.

Getting axed from the label left me void of purpose, a frightening prospect for a wealthy man in 40s. There are countless stories that begin as mine do, tales of directionless men descending into the darkest depths after losing something dear to them. Stories of alcoholism, infidelity, gambling, addiction, all manner of nefarious activities. I was determined not to be just another shameful story plastered over the front page of the New York Post, or worse yet, the New York Daily News. As a man who was accustomed to gracing the pages of the Wall Street Journal's 'Music Review', I knew I could never stoop that low.

But what I did know is that I was desperate for a change, not the type of change that comes with New Years resolutions, or Lent. Not the kind that involve self-affirmations on sticky notes, juice cleanses, or ice baths, but the type that is inspired by a feeling of captivity. I felt trapped by everyone and everything, so something had to change. Arriving home from yet another soulless interview with another nameless company, Nancy greeted me at the door. In that moment, every memory we'd had together, every struggle, every triumph, played through my brain. It was the memory of the day that we met which was the

most vivid. We had both been attending the same fundraising dinner for a slightly dubious foundation, she was there because her father owned said dubious foundation, I was there by pure chance invite. Keep in mind that I had only been at the record label for a few weeks, new to New York, I was a fish out of water, floundering in the shallows of high society. She, however, was the daughter of one of the most well-known socialites in New York. I had never been so overwhelmed in my life, the countless faces with names that I quickly mismatched, the shakiness of my hands that I always experienced in daunting environments. I quickly had to excuse myself from the endless stream of new introductions as I felt the alarm bells of an asthma attack going off in my body. As I do whenever this happens, I try and find a secluded corner to use my inhaler and catch my breath, and who did I find but Nancy, in the same corner I had sought out. Those few minutes, sharing an inhaler and a conversation were all we needed. Nancy's voice softly brought me out of my daze, back to the doorway of our apartment. It was then that I told her everything that had happened, everything that I had been feeling and thinking about since my mother had died. I broke down, as I had done on the bed the night after my mother's funeral and told her that we couldn't be together anymore.

That stifling feeling of numbness had been the downfall of many things, but I realise that, upon reflection, it was me who let it control me. It was me that let it worm its pathetic little way into my relationships, my professional life and my personal life. But it was also the numbness that led me to confiding in Sebastian that night at the bar, with the music pattering softly out of the secluded corner that the band inhabited, with Sebastian elegantly drying and stacking the crystal glasses that began to make me feel a little bit better again.

*Despite encouragement from me
No words were ever spoken
And when she passed away
I cried and cried all day
Alone again, naturally
Alone again, naturally'*

Hugh Brownlee

Hopeless

Lacey

I waved my hand to hail a taxi, my thoughts drifting towards my husband, who seemed like a mirage, dispelling all my fears. The sparkling sea of Hawaii on our honeymoon couldn't compare to the captivating sight of my husband that had left me spellbound. Suddenly, I found myself being ushered into the taxi; my daydreaming interrupted by the unpleasant odour of the humid taxi air. As I nestled into my husband's embrace, I revelled in my fortunate circumstances.

Robert

"She's just upstairs," I told my mum for the tenth time, as she started to gabble on about marriage advice. Mid-sentence, I hung up the phone. My mother's words echoed in my head as I sipped on my beer, start a family, put all this behind you, as it resonated louder, I told myself to shut it out. Every day, my past tries to break through my vulnerable barriers. I try to keep it out, keep sipping on my beer, go upstairs, get into bed, sleep. But none of that happened today.

Lacey

After a day of travel, I ascended into bed and fell fast asleep, drained. Yet, my mind didn't cease to buzz, even after I was thrown into the depths of the dormant dream dimension... my brain whirled as I lay in my bed the night before the trial verdict. I was incessantly stirring; my nerves could not be sated. I realised I knew he didn't do it; we all knew... Months later, I sat in the prison visiting room, the sounds of shifting chairs permeated the air, I watched and waited on the other side of the trench, the winning side, not an innocent soldier, caught in the wrong charge... I brusquely sat up in bed. It's time.

Robert

I wondered where I was, after my head stopped spinning and I stopped seeing stars. The unrecognisable room's grey walls stared at me blatantly. I just wanted to wake up from this dream. Although, it somehow felt, real. I was here, in this basement. Everyone I mightn't ever see again swam around my head. My wife, will she realise I'm gone? Will she save me? All answerless questions. There was one thought that swam around, I tried to avoid it, it couldn't be.

Lacey

When I awoke this morning, something felt off. I turned to my side. He was gone. Had he fallen asleep downstairs, or gone for a morning walk? I'll call him. Easy. Not easy. No answer. It'll be fine, you can never trust your gut. The gut that is telling you that your husband is gone, maybe for-

ever. Stress flooded in all at once. It wasn't long before I found myself making a statement at the local police station. Aimlessly, I wandered home. That's a lie. Stumbling into a bar resulted in me strewn across their tattered couch.

Robert

Based on my body clock, I'm guessing that it's morning. Although no peaceful slumber presented itself last night. Now, as I lie paralysed, a heap flat on the ground, I hear a rattling at the door. I can remember a glimpse of some kind of humanly figure, a silhouette against the dark doorway, that was before I fell back into a lapse of unconsciousness. Muffled protest and clanging chains woke me up, as well as an unnerving sight. My sister. Tied up on the floor. A wish to save her was useless in our captive bearings.

Lacey

The week mark passed today. The house feels so bare without Robert's lively soul, every day I spend without him peels away another layer of hope. The police have no suspects. I know that they will become desperate for answers, I will soon become a suspect, the interviews are even starting to feel like interrogations.

Robert

Another blackout. Every time, I see that recurring figure, then the memory ends. Although, I felt something undistinguishably different when I opened my eyes. Death saturated the cellar air and I remembered my sister. Instead of seeing someone attempting to fight their restraints, I saw a lifeless body, a hopeless heap on the floor, and I then became the hopeless heap on the floor, I lay, crippled, maimed with anguish as I realised the truth. My sister was dead.

Lacey

The police suspect me. Evidence is lacking, but it'll only be a matter of time before they find ways to manipulate the situation. I know that Robert would have wanted me to carry on without him, but every day I find it harder not having him by my side. My head perked up, as a white envelope slipped through the letterbox. My fingers shredded it like an incinerator. I HAVE HIM. It read. Every day for a week, I waited at that door, and a note soon flashed across the floor. Oh, an anagram. I have a knack for these. 'Kyor wne', I deciphered it with ease. New York. Maybe they were trying to give me an address?

Robert

I needed to know why I was here. The persistent idea in my head of why, the one I was trying to

hide from needed to be addressed. Someone had found out. How did they know that I had framed Mr Henderson for robbing the school? I had covered up well, no one had even suspected me. Could that be why... gone again. When I awoke, I heard the scuffling behind me again. At first, I thought that my mind was playing tricks on me, however, when I turned around and caught a glimpse of some kind of figure, the hope that it really was my sister, it had all been a dream, vanished just as fast as it appeared. My brother now lay there. Dying. Dead: Poison.

Lacey

I had gathered sufficient letters after a week to know much of the address. New York, Auburn, Whitemarsh drive. All I was waiting on now was the house number. Coincidentally, just as I was rereading my letters for possibilities, another white flash wriggled through my door. 138 (NO ANAGRAM). It told me in block caps. I was a hare as I raced out the door. My car engine started, and the motivation slammed on the acceleration. I stepped inside the derelict house, the peeling plaster on the walls made way for me as I built up my hope once again. I looked for the staircase, and at once smelled the dusty air wafting up from the basement, the inevitable darkness swallowed me whole as I made my way down the hazardous steps, déjà vu hit me, but I tried to ignore it. I tried every door until only one secret remained concealed. My hand grasped the doorknob, threatening to crush it, his life depended on what was behind this door.

Robert

The door burst open again, the same silhouetted figure faced me, and I dreaded what must be soon to come. The thoughts made way for pure ecstasy as I made out my wife instead, sallow and skinny, worried to death. She ran towards my shaking body and threw her arms around me.

Lacey

Now, 93-year-old Robert lies on his deathbed, hand in hand with me, as we stare into each other's eyes. "I shall tell you a story, put you to sleep gently." my soft voice rings out in the living room.

"Once upon a time, lived a young girl, free of worries. Her father was the teacher at the local primary school, and she loved going to see him after a long day and sneaking into his lesson. She couldn't wait for him to be her teacher; she would have such fun in his class. It was beautiful, life was perfect. But that all evaporated. For, on

her 13th birthday, he was sentenced to 20 years in jail for larceny. She knew he didn't do it. The whole affair was horrible, and, when he got out, he was unable to support his family due to lack of work. Ultimately, went missing one day and never returned. The young daughter vowed to herself, that she would never let the real criminal get away. She spent her life finding out who it was, and, when she did, ensured that he would pay for what he had done. And he did. You see, it was me, who kidnapped you and held you hostage for weeks, I needed you to get what you deserved." Lurid flames, hidden in the depths of my eyes grew taller. "I killed your siblings, and now I'll kill you."

Bella Shields



Waiting game.

I love him
I tell myself I do
It's easier to say that than being true
He's nice to me
He cares
That's what he says but I can't quite feel love in the air

I love him
But sometimes I feel like I'm trapped in a cage
Longing to escape,
they say that love is something that will come over time but as each second passes I feel as if
I'm going to break

He says that he loves me but I see the look in his eyes
The way his pupil gets bigger when he sees her in the
Corner of his eyes

It's doesn't feel like love
It doesn't feel like something that comes with ease
We don't talk before bed
When he speaks, it doesn't make me fuzzy in the head
I don't know what love is meant to feel like, but I don't think it's meant to be this cold
It feels as if we're playing a waiting game on who's the first to go

Isabelle Twomey



The Observer

He watched the pair through the apartment window.

He breath fogged as he waited. His hands were wrapped into his sleeve, tucked into his coat pocket. His body was stiff, his hair stuffed into a thick beanie, eyes fixed on the large apartment complex across from him. The wind blew into his face; the pavement was wet from the rain earlier. The moon was up but not in sight.

The window was large, and the lights were on. The sheer curtains on either side of the pane diminished the view. The streetlights reflected from the window, the people accumulated around the stop. Not a voice spoke, but it was far from quiet. He looked up. He could not stop looking up. The man sat next to the woman, after he turned the TV on for her. She had not moved all this time, which he found strange. The TV flashed colours into their eyes, but he could not see it from down here. She glanced at him, but only gently, so he wouldn't notice. Her hair looked weak but her face looked firm, maybe tired. The television didn't appeal to her, but he did, his neutral face conveyed pure boredom, maybe he was lost somewhere else in his mind. She looked again, turning her face slightly more this time.

The man was probably thinking of the other women he had been with, he thought. He pictured the man at the bar, asking for another whiskey from the young woman, looking her up and down, grinning. It was dimly lit, late, nearly empty, but for himself and the other drunk men who sat on the high stools, waiting for their wife to call them home.

He pictured a young woman with black hair walk in, cheeks red from the cold, mysterious. She cradled her handbag, her legs were long and she walked with slight aggression. Her glossed heels were tall and pointed. She stood out, but kept her head low. He looks at her and his eyes widen, he must make his move. He didn't wonder why she was here so late, but fixed her either way, forgetting he must make it home tonight to help his wife do the dishes and change the bedsheets. He was ugly and had wrinkly sallow skin, but his voice was strong and his breath was pungent. He got up and approached her, gently swaying as he walked. She paid no attention to him. He hurried to follow her out and offered her a cigarette when she stepped onto the pavement. She spins, smiles, but her voice shakes as she accepts it. Now their knees were touching, his leg shook but she was motionless. He finally looked back at her. His eyes said nothing, but hers told stories. The moment was brief, but she looked satisfied. It didn't seem like a word was said. He takes her legs and put them up on the sofa, making her comfortable. She leans into the leather and together they sink in it. In love, perhaps.

Lucie O'Toole



The Unwanted Guests

His heart was pounding. He was sure he had seen the doorknob turn. A gasp came out as he saw more movement. He had forgotten to lock the door. The handle slowly creaked. He did not dare to breathe. His whole body went ice cold, he wanted to shout for help but when he tried, nothing came out. As quiet as a mouse he crept up the stone-cold stairs to his room and locked the door. He needed to think of a plan quickly, but his mind had just gone blank in fear. He jumped as he heard a loud bang coming from downstairs. He froze. The robber or whoever this person was had broken down the door. Panic and fear quickly took control of his body the footsteps could be heard rapidly ascending the stairs. Whoever to was, they started to bang on the door to his bedroom. Quickly, looking around the room the thought struck him that the only way out was a ten-foot drop on to the pavement below. A loud bang sounded. His ears started ringing as the door to his bedroom had been broken down. He turned and gasped as he looked at the unwanted guest towering over the doorway. The hooded figure started to slowly pace over to the panicked man in the corner. His survival instincts kicked in, he grabbed the old chair that was lying in the corner and hurled it at the figure. It broke on impact and the creature stumbled back a few steps giving him just enough time to bolt out the door. He scrambled down the stairs and flew out the door like a bullet. The piercing pain of the stones felt like a million tiny needles stabbing into his bare foot. He was glad to see the end of the driveway, but relief didn't last long because as he stumbled out onto the pavement, he was only to find more of these figures roaming the streets. He gasped as one grabbed the man by his shirt from behind and threw him to the ground. He squirmed in pain and fear as the mysterious figure towered above and glared down at him. His vision blurred and his head was throbbing in pain as others rushed towards him and a larger one, armed with a large axe stood over him and raised it high in the air preparing to swing he screamed as it came down with speed towards him and just as he was preparing for his last breaths. He woke up in a pool of sweat panting frantically. Sighing in relief he knew that it was just another meaningless nightmare. He had been having them for a while. He stepped out of his bed and looked at the time. 5:30 am. He strolled down the stairs. The house was quiet and empty in the morning. It was freezing downstairs. He peered out the window and saw the grass covered in a

thin layer of dew and the trees swaying in the autumn breeze. He made sure that the door was locked and sat down at the kitchen table and went to prepare himself some toast only to find out that his cupboard was completely empty. He sighed in frustration. None of the shops opened until seven o'clock, so he decided just to go back to bed, seeming that there was nothing else to do and he felt like he was going to die of cold. Waking up, he came to the horrible realization that he was hours late for work. Aggh what was he thinking? He would be fired for this. He threw on his clothes and rushed out the door. Coming home from work, he was exhausted. His boss was furious at him, and he got barely any work done at all. His favourite coffee shop was closed. When he came in, he was so exhausted that he just flopped onto the couch and turned on the TV. The annoying news reporter's voice filled the room. He was about to change the channel before he heard what the subject was "Breaking news". "The villages of Ireland are in danger". "Every night people are going missing and leaving no trace". "Recent footage thought to be fake has come out showing strange, hooded figures out at night". "It could be possible that this to be a hoax but, claims have been coming local villagers that they have sighted these mysterious creatures". At that point, it had come to him that maybe these strange nightmares had meaning.

Max McDonald

Hank

Hank wondered if God hated him, not to say that God had shown his anger in any discernible way. Hank had no evidence to suggest that God had anything against him at all apart from his hairline which was quickly approaching the logo of a fast-food chain. But many people were like that too, and they had no qualms with God. Some might ask why Hank wondered if God hated him, Hank had never gone out of his way to burn any Bibles or dispute His existence. Hank had a feeling that God existed, his barber thought so too. Hank had received many lectures about how scripture had predicted the Euphrates drying up or the 2020 election. Hank was mildly interested at first; he had thought that his barber was an intelligent man, intelligent enough not to mention to Hank that he was, in fact, going bald. He had gotten a mountain of recommendations for videos of Richard Dawkins debunkers and paragraph-by-paragraph breakdown of verses from the Old Testament, and he had watched them. But they weren't what he was looking for, they didn't prove that God hated him, personally. He was still looking for a reason why God would hate him in particular, he thought that would help his case and he could bring it to a court, and they would award him some money for it, or pay for a hair transplant. He would gain something from being God's most hated creation and that might give him... purpose, or something along that line. He knew he could never be His most loved or cherished, that belonged to doctors, pretty people and whoever didn't clap when a plane lands. One morning Hank decided to walk through a park, observing nature and all its little details. He saw a red squirrel, he watched as it foraged for nuts and berries, he watched it scamper up and down tall oaks and he watched it stare at the morning sun for a moment, just for a moment. He envied it, he had no berries to find, he had parks to walk through and a computer science degree to ignore. Life simply hadn't regarded him when it put all its little systems in place. He was a cosmic afterthought, destined to do nothing but wander around and pay rent. He realized it was quite sad and he realized that he might be depressed so he continued walking through the park, looking for something to occupy himself with. He saw a beautiful girl walking a dog, he could have said hi, they could get married and have kids that sounded fulfilling in some strange sense. But he worried about the moment she would see his hairline, and the inevitable excuse she would make to leave. So, he didn't talk to her, and he kept thinking

about the being that absolutely despised him. He decided to go to the shop, he wanted to buy something, and he thought that maybe buying something might lift his spirits. He could buy a new blender; he always thought that he could be a smoothie person, waking up each morning to make some green slop that would boost amino regulation levels or something like that. Smoothie people always seemed happy, they woke up early and actually used their computer science degree, their dogs didn't have arthritis and on some level they knew they belonged. Hank wondered if they bought the blender because they belonged or if they belonged because they bought the blender. It was a lot of money to spend just to find out which it was. Hank wasn't even sure he liked smoothies and he had streaming services to pay for. So, he didn't buy the blender, he left it on the shelf and went home. He went through his mail, and he went and watched TV. In that moment, he looked up, up and up to wherever he assumed God might be, and he prayed, he prayed for a bolt of lightning to smite him in his crappy apartment. Nothing happened.

Billy Williams

I Wish He Could See the World through My Eyes

I wish he could see the world through my eyes.

He has perfectly good eyesight, yet he walks through life blind.

"Oh, look at the sky!" I exclaim, catching my breath in wonder.

He looks up from his phone briefly and grunts.

I gaze up at the enchanting beauty of the skilfully rendered strokes of soft glowing pink, gently fading into fiery, deep orange hues which kiss the horizon. The idyllic puffs of cloud, touched as if by a fairy with a delicate silver lining, dance across the evocative sky. The fast-melting sun spreads a golden glow across the sleepy world, casting soft shadows. It's a final burst of subdued vitality before the lights are turned off and the world drifts away into a deep, quiet slumber.

"Isn't it beautiful?" I whisper with a smile in my voice.

"Yeah, it's alright," he replies dully, without so much as a glance.

And suddenly, in the midst of this soaring joy and wonder filling my heart as I behold the indescribable beauty of God's creative masterpiece, a deep sadness and frustration takes its place alongside this joy.

Why can't he see what I see?

Many a person looks up to see war planes and thick, dark smoke clouds blanketing a once brilliant blue sky, now sunless, starless and heavy with death. It's filled with the sound of engines roaring, children screaming, and men shouting in anger, in agony, in desperation, in madness.

Many a person looks up to see a stark white hospital ceiling under which many before them have wept tears of pain, loneliness and despair, have said their last goodbyes and sighed their last breath within the same walls as they took their first.

For many of them, the sky in all its amber glory is but a distant, surreal memory, they may never lay eyes on again.

Many look around and face the confinements of prison walls, nursing homes, hospices.

Many a person must rely on their imagination and the descriptions relayed to them by others, having never witnessed a sunset, sunrise or anything else. But as Helen Keller once said, "the only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision."

It seems as though he, like so many others, has befallen this sad fate.

He only has to open his eyes and appreciate this wonderful gift spread above and all around him. It's encompassing him, arrayed in glorious, radiant colours.

I wish he could see through my eyes, even just for a minute.

But he can't.

"Please open your eyes and see," I urge him.

He's missing out on so much.

Philippa Dunlop

What's the Rush?

Melville was an African elephant from the Tanzanian plains. He loved to take his time with everything. When he was younger, his mother and father had been captured by poachers and so, to honour their memory, he decided he would live every day to the fullest and always enjoy the beautiful offerings of the world; other animals, trees, and especially flowers. Melville would always take his time often basking in the African sun and taking in the beautiful world around him.

One glorious day on his way back from elephant school, he was practicing his latest trunk-tying knots with his charcoal grey trunk. As he trampled through the undergrowth a great herd of wildebeest came charging up behind him. It was then that Melville came across the most wonderful field of wild orchids he'd ever seen. He stopped there to take in the alluring fragrance of the flowers. The Wildebeest, in their haste, didn't see Melville stopping ahead of them. As Melville inhaled, the orchids' hypnotizing perfume was so intense, it provoked a sneeze but he wasn't able to expel it because his trunk was knotted. The sneeze built dramatically until he finally let it go! If you know Newton's Third Law you can imagine what happened. Put it this way, the wildebeest got a rather unpleasant surprise.

The moral of the story? "Don't follow the ass in front of you too closely; just in case he decides to stop and smell the flowers".

Oscar Tyler

Under the Rug

Two weeks passed and it happened again. The day was as normal as any other, I went to school, had my dinner. I saw as I was getting into bed. A bump under the rug wriggling and squirming, almost alive with a mind of its own. I was determined to figure out what it was. I headed closer and closer to the rug, armed with my broomstick and bucket. My imagination ran wild with the idea of what could be under the antique woven rug, coloured with the blues of the sky, camouflaging the horrors beneath. Before I could fully lift the rug, it frantically bolted to the far side of the rug, during its motions; I let out a bellowing scream. Rattled by the sound, it deflated in front of my eyes. Dust flowing from beneath the rug around the room filling it with an eerie feel and smell. I stood there frozen. The feeling of spirits passing through my body sent a shiver down my stiff back. The nauseous feeling was setting into my stomach; like the sea was swaying me and I grew dizzy. Visions of the most gruesome and horrible creatures raced through my head. A rush of pain hit me like a bus that is when I saw it, under the rug, the dust perfectly positioned to say, 'I'm watching you.' I woke up in a cold sweat. I gasped for air. As I regained my breath, my eyes scanned the room. It was normal, the sun filling the room, my pile of dirty clothes and my homework sprawled across the desk. It was just a nightmare, right?

Sadie Harris





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