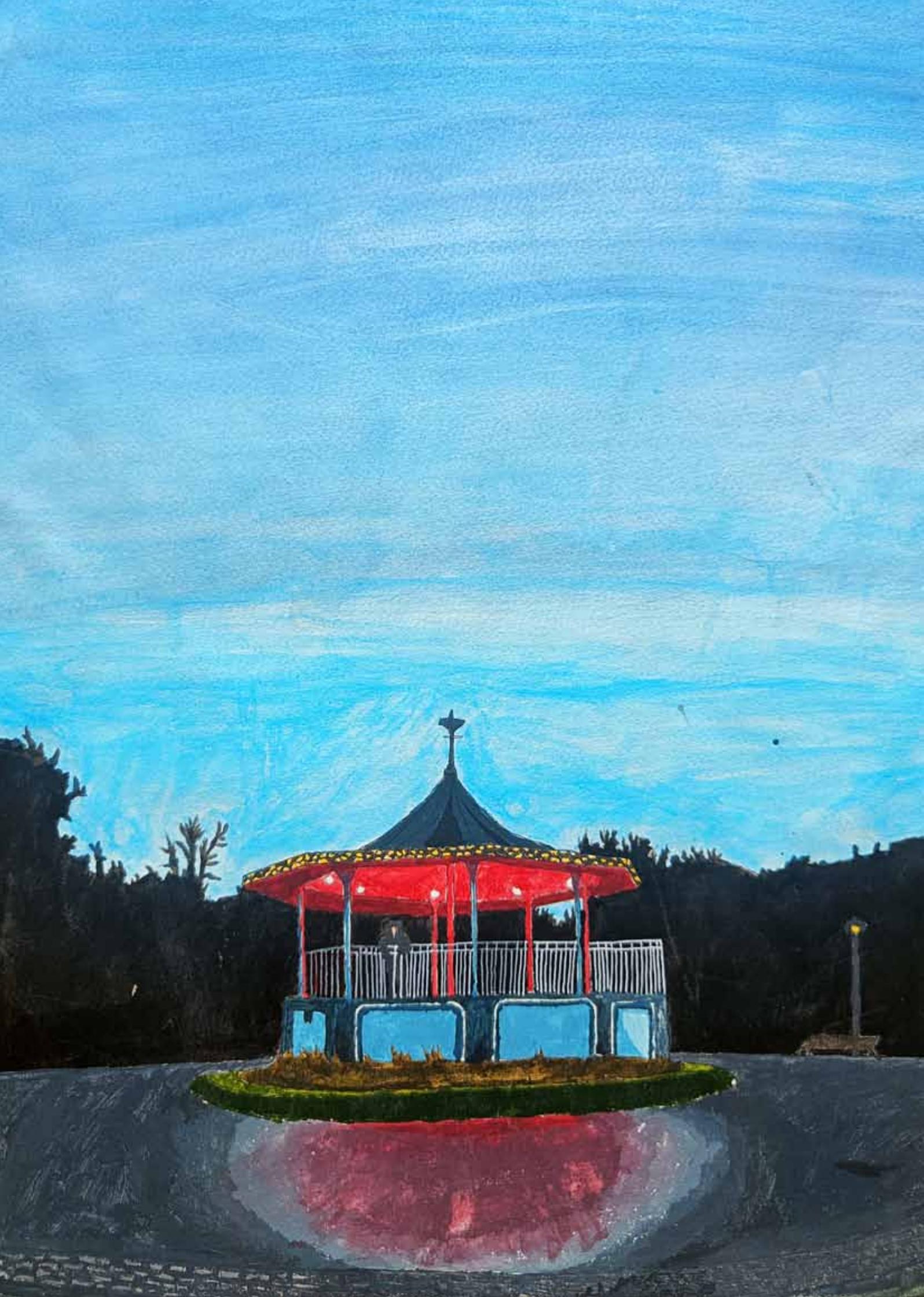
A painting of a canal in Venice at dusk. The water is dark and reflects the colorful sky and the buildings along the canal. A bridge is visible in the distance. The sky is a mix of blue, purple, and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is serene and atmospheric.

THE WINE DARK SEA

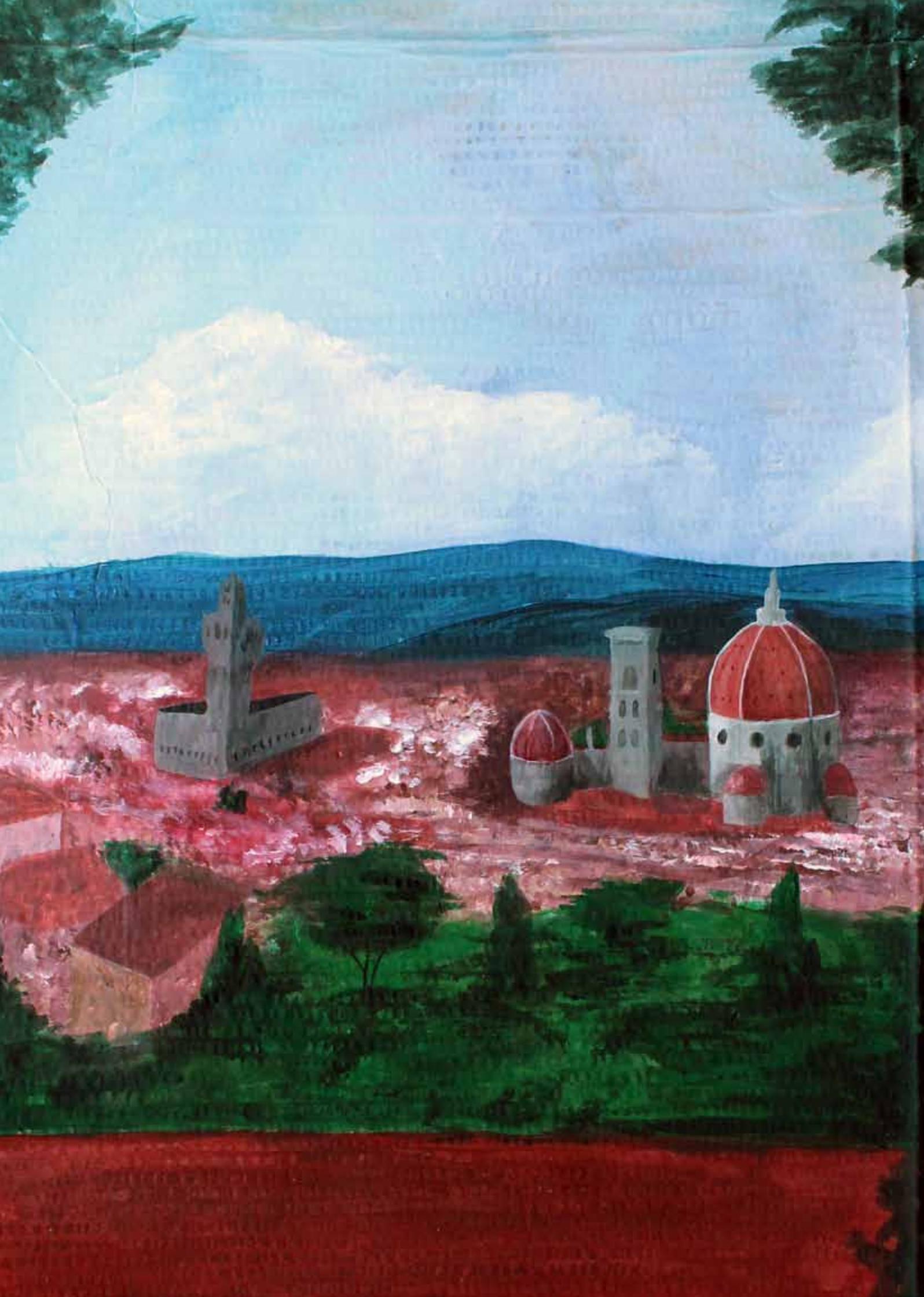
EDITION NO 25

YEAR 2025



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-fifth edition of The Wine-Dark Sea. It's quite something to consider that this publication has been around for a quarter of a century. Though this might seem like an aeon for the students whose work is featured here, it really has vanished in the blink of an eye for some of us older folk. It puts me in mind of Robert Frost's pithy response when asked what he had learned about life upon reaching his 80th birthday. Frost responded, 'it goes on.'

These pages are a testament to Frost's observation. Ranging from deep thinking to no thinking, there is something for everyone here. The subject matter, voice, style and humour is eclectic and engaging. It has been occasionally exasperating, but not without some 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 after the darkest night a bright dawn rises.

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. 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 is not only a tapestry of wonderful words, it is also a sumptuous feast for the eyes. This is down to gifted vision of Ailbhe Garvey whose 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

Fáilte

Fáilte rómhaibh, a chairde Gael.
Ceol na teanga í an Ghailge.
Saibhir, álainn agus beo.
Coiméad í go deo.

Le foraois glasa,
Is sleibhte arda.
Le farraigí gorma,
Agus daoine ór.

Jackson Tiernan

Dog Depression

I woke feeling normal, almost happy. However, the day would turn out to be one of the saddest days of my life.

The first thing I did was get breakfast, porridge as normal getting ready for school then embraced my white fluffy poodle Lola in a nice hug for the last time. Then left for school also as normal.

My caretaker gets to our house. She gets out of the car ready for another day of work, she opens the door, Lola jumped out at her excited for her arrival when Lola spotted something a car she decides to run after it as a normal excited dog would be, as she ran she stopped realizing she didn't know where she was.

She wandered the street aimlessly soon to meet her demise. I get home from school then was informed about this disaster me and my family wait in a dog depression, not knowing if she would be found or if we would ever see her again. We were informed she was found but she no longer lived on this earth.

Ivan Silva

Unexpected Arrival

There was a faint glow of sunlight on the winding stone path. Huge arching golden gates looking down upon me. A beautiful water fountain stood in the centre, the blue, crystal-clear water bursting out from the top. I turned to the right and there was a huge orchard, millions of apples as far as the eye can see. I had never seen anything so wonderful.

I walked up to the door and knocked loudly, no answer. I knocked again and the door creaked open. To my surprise, it was dark inside, the once beautiful royal blue carpet was scraped and torn, and a huge chandelier was smashed and left on the ground. There was an eerie silence about this place. I started to walk around, slowly; every step I took made a loud echoing thud on the ground. I walked into an enormous room, which once looked like a huge library. Books scattered everywhere. There was a light flickering in the corner. Then suddenly I heard a low grumbling sound coming from behind me I turned and saw a dark figure staring at me. I turned to run but tripped on some uneven carpet. I watched in horror as the ghostly figure came towards me. What could I do? Where could I go? How could I escape?



The Darkest Hour

Ella had always been independent for her age. At ten, she was used to the hours alone after school, waiting for her parents to come home. It was nothing new, sometimes her mom would pick her up early from school, sometimes not, but today, there was something different about the air

Her parents had left in a hurry that morning. There'd been an urgent phone call, and they hadn't explained much, just kissed her goodbye and told her to stay inside. "We'll be back before you know it," her dad had promised, his voice a little too tense.

But, the day dragged on. The clock in the hallway ticked loudly, each minute stretching endlessly. Ella wasn't used to this feeling. Normally, when she was home alone, she'd settle into a routine: school-work, TV, snacks. But, today... she couldn't shake the feeling that something was wrong. The house felt too big, too silent.

She checked the clock again. Four o'clock. They'd said they'd be back by two. Something wasn't right. Her stomach churned, but she tried to dismiss the thought. Maybe they were stuck in traffic. Maybe the meeting ran late. Maybe, she thought, but the word didn't settle in her chest. It only made her more anxious.

The house was cold. The air felt strange, as if it was holding its breath, waiting for something. She tried to distract herself, pulling out her favourite book and sitting on the couch, but the words blurred. Every sound outside made her scared, her eyes flicking to the windows.

At five o'clock, she stood by the front door and looked out through the peephole, checking the driveway again. No car. She opened the door, just a crack, to peer out more closely. The street was empty, and the air smelled faintly of rain.

"Come on, Mom. Come on, Dad," she whispered to herself. But, even her whisper didn't sound right in the thick silence.

Then she wandered back to her room, her footsteps echoing in the hollow quiet. Her mind raced with thoughts of what could have gone wrong. What if they were in trouble? What if something had happened? Suddenly a knock came first softly, then louder.

She peered through the peephole—an unfamiliar man's face, eyes wide with desperation. "Please... I need help."

Ella's heart raced. Another knock, louder this time. "Sweetheart, it's Mom. Please, let me in."

Something was wrong. The voice sounded off. Her parents had said they'd be back by now. She grabbed her phone, but when she dialled, there was no answer. Suddenly, a loud crash from the back of the house. Footsteps, slow and deliberate. Panicked, Ella scrambled into the closet, holding her breath. The door creaked open. A shadow loomed over her.

"Ella? Baby, it's me," her mom's voice called from the hall.

But, the figure in the closet wasn't her mom. It was a stranger.

Just then, the front door opened. Her parents rushed in, and the man vanished into the dark.

"You're safe now, sweetie," her mom whispered. But, Ella couldn't shake the feeling that the worst wasn't over.

The end part 1

Mushi Xu



The Briefcase

A boy and his father were in their new house sorting through the attic, when they stumbled upon a briefcase. The briefcase was a light shade of brown leather with a rusty golden handle, it had layers of dust on which indicated that it had been there since the old woman that owned their house before them was young. The boy called his father over to show him what he had found.

His father was surprised to see a dusty old briefcase on the floor of their attic, but he was more intrigued to see what was inside. He asked the boy to open it up and the boy did not hesitate one moment. When he opened it, he looked surprised. Inside the suitcase was a pair of ballet slippers, a black and white picture of the pyramids, a snorkel, and another picture but this time it was the Statue of Liberty. The boy was fascinated by all the interesting items that the old woman left in the briefcase. Then he began to imagine a young woman about to do ballet on a stage in front of a huge audience then the curtains opened and she began jumping through the air and twirling around. When she finished, she got a huge round of applause.

Then he imagined that same woman taking photos in Egypt and at the Statue of Liberty, gazing up at them, and then he imagined that same woman again diving into the sea with the snorkel on and having lots of fun swimming with the fish. However, right in the middle of his daydream he was called down for dinner by his mother, so he ran down the stairs and asked his mother what was for dinner. Pizza, his mother replied as he jumped in excitement. Then he sat down and hastily ate up his dinner while telling her all about the briefcase and the adventures of the old lady. After dinner he played some football in the garden, watched some TV, and then went to sleep and dreamt about the briefcase some more.

Sebastian Conway

The Last Stand

Beneath a sky that cracks and breaks
The earth trembles a world that shakes
We stand as shadows, bruised and afraid
Where night and blood are sharply laid.

The guns, they roar, the darkness grows,
A storm of chaos, where hope slows.
We march, we fall, We rise, we fight,
For love, for honour, in the night.

Running from gas as a rat in the trenches
With fear in our hearts and blood on the benches
The smoke catches the night it stretches
We fight 'til the end with no hope that fetches
While people die people cry other people fight,
And I stand by the light,
Writing this poem in a war's cruel bite.

Louis Trickett



Urban Journey

Night begins to fall over the city, the day is over but this is just the beginning. The air is stale, its humidity bringing the curls back on the local's baby hairs walking back to their homes after collecting the last baguette from the soon-closing boulangerie. Its unmissable neon sign and a little piece of bread, how inviting. You see her mopping the floor, head down, messy hair and handprints of flour all over her black apron. A faint noise – a man, shouting, laughing, he's right ahead. Only a bit further up at the boulevard. They're sitting on a bench, cans in hand, wrapped up in brown leather jackets, hidden behind their overgrown moustaches. They look at you intensely as you walk by, you must be interrupting. So you pick up the pace and head down the stairs to the metro. Stinks of urine. You cover your nose with your sleeve, but notice no one else is, so you put your hand down. Everybody is in a hurry but the train comes every 2 minutes, so why? Its loud rattle shakes the labyrinth, you hop on. A schoolgirl is buried in a book, young workers listen to music, others focus on the dirty floor. The silence is loud.

You get off at Trocadéro, delighted to breathe fresh air again although one could question how fresh it truly is. As you meet the Seine, dodging the brisk walkers coming at you, the tip of the tower peaks over the Haussmannien buildings, scintillating. Cars honk sans cesse, pedestrians cross where they deem best, yourself included. The other side of the road offers a more promising view of the tower, but you want to get closer to the beauty. The river is wide and agitated, much like the city. You begin to walk along towards the tower, the guiding star. Young people stroll in groups, bottle of wine in hand. The two at the back stop to light a cigarette. She cups her hands around it and he lights it, they share. On your right, older men begin to pack up their art displays, but their faces don't reveal a day's success. They've invaded the banks of the Seine, these bloody artists. You arrive to the first bridge, but something looks funny. As you get closer, you notice the thousands of locks piled on top of each other and young couples hopelessly trying to squeeze their own in. You can't help but wonder how many of those represent relationships that have died. So much for romance.

Looking up into the apartment windows, you meet eyes with an older mother smoking seated on the balcony. She turns her gaze elsewhere once you meet eyes, and shoves its tip into the side of the chair before returning inside. Others begin to close their blinds, god, they all have their own lives, their own families, jobs, the amount of people here – ouch. You've walked into someone. Now he throws insults at you, one after the other in outraged tone, none of which you understand. Walking on, the tower is getting bigger and nearer. There are more people, some speak different languages or overdress for the banal midweek, you're nearing it. The smell of old deep-fry oil and hot chocolate warms you up, you let your nose guide you to the Christmas market on the bank below. Tourists slip on the steep stairs, reaching for their partner's arms, how superficial. You prepare for an adventure but find yourself underwhelmed. Waffles at designer prices! Scam. You walk on, laughing at those falling into the trap, although maybe they're more fortunate than you, so that wipes your smile away.

A few hundred meters later, you've made it! You're not alone though, people begin to gather around you, waiting for the clock to strike 8. They come in pairs, holding hands, heads buried in shoulders, numb fingertips feeling for each other's in the cold. Your neck begins to hurt as you look up in anticipation, hopefully just a few more seconds now. Come on. The first flash happens, at the mid ridge of the tower, and then the next, and before you know it, the Eiffel tower twinkles in front of you. Everyone's pupils are fixed, they shine, almost emitting light right back at it. Love is high, you feel the pairs get closer, you let your world silence as it hypnotises you. Sudden clapping from your right awakes you; you turn to see a young man on one knee, his woman in tears, in front of him, nodding her head. You don't join in because why would you.

The tower's dazzle expires and you want to go home, tired. Headed back towards the Seine, you wonder what more you'll see on your walk home, despite it being the same way. For how long has this city waited for the rest you dream of?

Lucie O'Toole

The Lady in the Red Dress

Once not so long ago in a place not so far away, something extraordinary happened. I'd tell you now, but let's start from the beginning.

New York, city of wonder, skyscrapers touching the clouds, the buzz of the people, and the smell of the food... life was amazing for all except for one Matthew Wilson. Matthew was a nice, ordinary and in my opinion, slightly boring guy. He had a boring job in the most boring part of the most exciting city in the world. Matthew's life was simple and ordinary, day in day out. He'd wake up, look out his window, walk down the street, then get on the train, and go to work. After work, he'd get back on the train, walk home and go to bed. Then repeat, repeat, repeat.

One day when Matthew woke up, he looked out his window and saw no one there. Then he just saw a lady in a wine red dress and with a hat covering her whole face. She had a black belt with a shiny gold buckle on it, and a thin black sash wrapped around her hat like a snake. Matthew thought nothing of it. He had a shower and started walking to the train station where there was no one on the streets except the lady. He studied her closely - she had flaming locks of auburn hair in a bun, peeking out from behind her hat. Matthew finally arrived at the train station but there was no one on the train, not even the driver, only the lady in the red dress. Matthew got off the train and went to work and no one was there. Was it a bank holiday? No the trains were still running. He called out for his boss, for his colleagues but no one was there. Matthew looked around for the final time. Was anyone there? Suddenly he saw the lady in the red dress. She was standing in the corner, pretty as a doll. Angry and confused he decided that he'd just go home.

Matthew walked back to the train station. No one was there but as you can guess, the lady in the red dress was on the train. It was the same situation, no driver but the strange lady was there, the one in the red dress.

Matthew walked back to his apartment from the train station. He started to see other things about the lady like she had perfect body posture, red high heels and had mesmerising gold earrings. She was stunningly beautiful. She was as elegant as a swan and as proud as a cat. Matthew decided he would talk to the lady. His heart missed a beat and he fell instantly in love and tried to think of what to say. She turned the corner and disappeared into thin air. Sad and hopeless, Matthew got into the elevator and pressed the 14th floor of the apartment block. Walking through hallways, usually filled with people young and old, no one was there. He opened his apartment door, the lady was sitting on his bed but in a heartbeat the mysterious girl disappeared.

He began to cry, his tears dropping on the old carpet. Matthew went to bed and cried himself to sleep and

the next morning he decided he wasn't going to work as was too tired and what was the point?

He turned on the news. There was something about the climate but he didn't care. More news about politics and taxes but this was again of no concern to him. Abruptly breaking news hit! MISSING PERSON went across the TV suddenly and a photo of the lady in the red dress with the red hat appeared. MISSING LADY DROPS OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH came across the bottom of the screen. Matthew screamed in shock, anger, sadness and melancholy. Every emotion whirled inside his head "I will find her alive... no harm will come to my Red Maiden. Tears filled his eyes, not of sadness but of anger and distraught. He decided at that moment that he had to do something.

He travelled around the world for one year, two days and eight hours. Eventually he arrived back at New York's Statue of Liberty and at this point, nothing mattered to him. Suddenly, he saw a red figure on a boat he jumped out of his boat and started swimming towards his red maiden. There she was as beautiful as ever with her signature red dress, red hat, her auburn hair in a moniker bun, the high heels, the black belt with the shiny gold buckle and the black sash around her hat.

He said out of nowhere "Where have you been for one year, two days and eight hours? I missed you. I don't know anything about you but love can travel through that hat of yours. She did not answer. "This is what I get for wasting a year of my life" Matthew pulled off the lady's hat in fury but there was no face, no eyebrows, no nose, no lips, no ears, no eyes... just a piece of skin as if staring at someone's back. The lady said "I didn't want to do this" and in a shrill cry like a ghost "I didn't want your fate to be like this. I liked you, I really did but I didn't want you to have the same fate as me. I have no choice now. I ran so you wouldn't have to have the same destiny, I did not want to lure you with this curse of beauty, I'm sorry". The next day everyone was there but the lady in the red dress. She had died the previous night. No one came to her funeral because she had no family left. Matthew had gone missing, despite finding his red love. Life moved on normally for everyone else and nobody had any memory of Matthew and the Lady in the Red Dress. A few weeks later someone reported seeing a man in a red coat with a red hat wearing red boots, a black belt with a shiny gold buckle and across his hat a black sash that looked like a coiled snake. If you see a man or a lady in red, with a hat covering their faces, don't bother to run, don't bother to hide because they're there coming for you next. You are the next red one! Coat or dress, boot or heels, your destiny like Matthews is sealed. Not all stories have happy endings.

Ilse Reid McInnes

Unsure

Conversations with strangers,
They ask me all the usual.
What to do, where to go?
The truth is I don't really know.

My heart is here,
My dreams are there,
But I won't settle for just anywhere.

I want a cosy home
In a vibrant city.

But do I really want that home
If it means I'll be alone?

'No risk no reward' they say,
But what if the risk is actually to stay?
What if I'm too weak

To take the leap and go away?

Elisa Terry

Fear in the Trenches

The trenches are like a prison,
Where every step could be my end,
I'm constantly worrying about the sight of gas
Hoping I don't breathe my last breath
From the burning feeling in my lungs.

The trenches are like an apocalypse,
The barbed wire looming over me menacingly
Giving me the fear of going into the warfare
Like a big black bear staring right at me
Ready to pounce and rip me to shreds.

The trenches are like a reminder,
Huddling together with friends like a pack of sardines
Just for them to meet their end
In the bloody masquerade of war
Like many others being free
From this abyss of pain and death.

The trenches are like hell,
The fiery shrapnel clinging onto us with burning pain
And the sight of death around every corner
Hoping that the gruelling couple of seconds won't happen to me
When the bombs come spewing in.

The trenches are like a deathbed,
Many want to see their families but fall short
As the last bit of energy from their bodies is sucked out
And they fall to the floor
With pain coursing through them
And everything fades to black, that's fear in the trenches.

Jamie McFarlane

Shoelaces

Weaving through the tiny holes
Punched in the fabric like a path,
My little fingers reach
Pulling at the fraying end.

I must achieve the perfect tightness
Too tight is suffocation,
Too loose, a recipe for disaster.
Carefully I inhale
Braving my hands to squeeze,
Leather presses
Against my feet
Hugging them
Like a warm duvet at night.
Then the laces let go
And I do not notice
Until too late

As the ground is met with my face.

Síofra Vandamme

FALL
TO THE
FLOOR

Extract from Perfect Imperfections

The breeze coming from the nearby river felt good as it cooled down my back and brushed through my hair. A couple of hours later we finally made it to the camp. The Eldrins were welcoming, they recognized my face and invited me in. I finally felt myself getting back to normal. That night I lay in a bed I laid out for myself; I gazed up at the sky, the stars gazing back at me. Ornamenting the night sky to make it more beautiful than I'd ever seen before.

When I woke up the hunger in my stomach was gone, the camp was unusually silent, not even the slightest buzz of life filling the air. I stepped out of the bed I had made and looked around. From the corner of my eye, I saw something. A person. Lying still on the ground. Their face down. I slowly walked towards them, a horrifying sight was before me, their insides were torn out, blood was pooled around them, the sight alone was enough to make a person pass out.

The Eldrins stared blankly at me. Their expressions changed from scared to angry. I was so bewildered with the situation. Confusion was clogging my thoughts. Then finally a familiar face came to the front of the crowd. "Faith, I've never brought you here before, you did that to her. You came in here and you were crazy, you attacked her, you did that. You look like you've been away from your city for days, you were hallucinating, maybe you still are. You were so hungry, I, I never would have imagined you doing something like that to a person. You need to go." Amaliya's voice was shaky, and tears began to stream down her face.

Everything started to add up. I did everything myself really. I made the bed myself, and I must have just accidentally stumbled across the camp. I was so desperate for food, so much so that my mind told me to take that Eldrin's life. The world was spinning around me, the Eldrins were screaming words I couldn't comprehend, my feet began to carry me away, slowly at first, then faster, the leaves brushed against my skin, creating marks that would forever remind me of this day, the only sounds that reached my ears were my unsteady breaths and the fast tears rolling down my cheeks. I sat down. I took in the world around me and watched the stars as they studied each of my actions, I lay on the grass, listened to the crickets and the birds as they went through life so elegantly and indifferently as if the world were flawless. Though the stars seemed to be models for timeless beauty and effortless glow, underneath bears the subtle imperfections of the cosmos, almost mirroring life itself. Though it can be beautiful, it is marked with imperfections and uncertainties. As these thoughts circled round in my mind, I finally realized that although imperfections may seem like flaws and defects, mistakes and imperfection are really an inherent part of the larger, more beautiful, and natural way of life.

Charlotte Shields

Mirror, Mirror

Evie and Scarlet were identical twins, but while Evie thrived on attention, Scarlet always preferred to stay in the background. There was one thing that always unsettled Scarlet—Evie’s obsession with the old mirror in their room. It had been in their family for generations, and every time Evie stared into it, something felt off to Scarlet, as if the reflection wasn’t entirely hers.

One rainy afternoon, when their parents were out, Evie stood in front of the mirror, fixing her hair and smiling. “You should try it, Scarlet. You look fine,” Evie said, motioning to the mirror.

But Scarlet didn’t move. Something was wrong. The reflection of Evie wasn’t quite right—her smile was too wide, her eyes too cold.

“Evie...” Scarlet whispered, stepping back. “There’s something wrong with it.”

Evie laughed it off, but when Scarlet glanced back at the mirror, it wasn’t Evie’s reflection she saw. The smile was still there, but it was a twisted, mocking smile. Then, without warning, the reflection stepped out of the mirror.

Scarlet screamed, but before she could run, the door slammed shut, trapping them in the room.

When the room finally settled, only Evie stood by the broken mirror, her face pale and her smile far too wide.

Scarlet was never seen again. The next day, when their parents came home, they found Evie staring at the empty mirror.

But this time, the reflection was hers.

Chloe Dowling

Why

WHERE sin thrives and mould grows,
Many soldiers fall by their foes,
WHO only wish for the dead to see,
That these acts do not fill them with glee.
WHEN I see these dreadful shows,
My heart reaches deeper lows.
WHAT horrors I have seen,
From screaming men to a dissected teen,
“WHY does this happen?!” I shout at last,
But the general just walked past, looking aghast.
Why the planes fly
And soldiers die,
I’ve never had an idea that last.

Bernard Aucamp

The Selection

I sat rigid on the cold bench, shoulder to shoulder with the other players, waiting nervously for the coach to come out. The air in the room was tense, everyone sat rigid and anxious about what was to come. My limbs felt like lead and my breath was shallow in my chest. Then suddenly a door at the back of the room banged open and the coach, a man in his 30s with short blonde hair walked in, sending ripples of hushed conversation through the crowd. As he took his place at the front, the whole room fell into a tense silence.

'As you know, today is the day that the team for the cup is being picked' he said and the whole room fell silent.

'Only 23 of you will be picked' he said with a grim look on his face. 'There are 60 of you here, so now is your time to see if your training paid off' he said 'so without further ado, here is the team'

He proceeded to call out 20 names of players. Some of them were close friends of mine and expressed concern for me not being picked.

'You'll be the next name, I know it' they would say, but I never was. 'he's bound to pick you; I can feel it' someone would whisper. My heart began to beat faster in my chest, I began to feel dizzy.

'No, I have to be picked' I thought. 'After all those hours of training.'

Then after what felt like an eternity, the coach said one last name, 'and starting on the bench, Jack McCarthy.' I struggled to contain my excitement, 'that was me!'

Even if I was starting on the bench, it was still better than not going at all. I felt happier than I had for as long as I could remember. I was going to play for Ireland in the rugby World Cup.

Ciaran Cox

The Clock's Complaint

Tick-tock, tick-tock, I never slow down,
I see you rushing all around town.
You look at my hands and you follow my face,
Chasing the hours, caught in the race.

I hear your wishes to hurry or slow,
But I cannot change so onwards I go.
You beg for more time, yet I'm never late,
'Time waits for no one', I can't hesitate.

But you keep on going, through day and through night,
Unaware of the memories that slip out of sight.
If you'd only slow down, just for a while,
You'd see all of life's beauty and live with a smile.

So don't chase me endlessly, just enjoy today,
Let time unfold before it slips away.
Make the most of each moment, don't fear the unknown,
Although I keep ticking your life is still your own.

Sarah Fahy

Winter in Tatras

Down the white slopes I ride so fast,
The wind shouts cheers, the trees fly past.
The smoothest snow reflects the sun,
Each twist and turn - that's so much fun.

In Polish Karczma we rest and chat,
Pierogi warm like a Grandma's hug.
Kielbaski and frytki - a feast to share,
Laughter and music fill out all the air.

The Tatras stand tall, a brilliant sight,
Watch over me in the morning light.
The old pine trees wish me good luck,
I gallop down the snowy track.

With Mum and Dad, a trip so grand,
The paths we've carved through winter's land.
Memories linger in frost and snow,
A family bond that'll always grow.

Timofei Hrapelman

The Secrets of the Ocean

You have hundreds of blue horses running at full speed
turquoise green and aqua blue, you shimmer in the sunlight too

Like a million shinning diamonds dancing on liquid glass
Where fish swim far and near

Some parts deep and dark some clear
Stretches so far you almost never end

You twist and swirl and sing and bend
Your water ripples endlessly

And shows me what I need to be
You're friendly and call my name

In a hushed, devious tone you say
Come swim with me, explore me today

All I can see and all I can think is free
Yet there is something else that lingers

A mysterious mist of uncertainty
Is there evil in your silent caves, deep, dark, quiet and alone?

I can't help from wondering are you hiding something, far down below
Surely you are but just too shy to show

Under all that shining blue beauty is there something dark?
Are you what you pretend to be?

Can I trust you, is there something I can't see?

Olivia Cantwell

I Will Never Forget

Packs of barbed wire holding the dead,
So many thoughts race through my head.
The pitch-black smoke like a hundred cigars,
The shelling not getting too far.

The silt the gas the cries,
Of the men on the battle fields, they lie.
I can smell blood, I can smell mould,
I can almost see the cold...

Long, it has been long, but not long enough,
I recall the days when it was too tough
I have lived my life grieving, upset,
These are the things I will never forget.

Hugo Bohill

Delay

"We are sorry to announce that all flights for the next 24 hours are grounded due to the storm. We are sorry for any inconvenience caused."

14:52, 04/19/23. Flight scheduled for 15:30

Megan looked up from her laptop at the sound of the announcement. She was waiting for the next flight out of L.A. to New York. She had just broken for Easter break at UCLA and was on her way home. As she looked up, she caught the eye of another passenger and asked, "What do they mean cancelled?? And what storm??" The old man beside her said, "I think there is a storm coming in. It's meant to be a hurricane I think." "Really?" asked Megan, "I hadn't heard." Another passenger leaned across the aisle to them. "It's been sweeping across the Pacific and apparently is due to go right across America. I'm not sure though, you can never trust the news nowadays" she said. "Too right," said the woman at the end of the row. "All they seem to be broadcasting is false information." "Ok, hold up. Does that mean we won't be leaving here anytime soon? I need to get home, it's my brother's birthday in a few days and I still need to get his present." said Megan, trying to get the conversation back on track. "I really need to get home," she repeated. A woman near her piped up, "I'm afraid we won't going anywhere honey. Look at this weather forecasting app I have," she said. "By the look of things this is going to be a mighty big storm." she said.

16:30, 04/19/23. Flight scheduled for 15:30, 1 hour late

"So may I ask, what are you studying?" Megan looked up at the sound of a voice. An old man was sitting beside her. "Oh I'm studying English Literature at UCLA. I'm in my 2nd year." she said. "Really?" asked the man. "I used to be a English professor at Stanford. I loved teaching the Literature classes. What's your favourite book you've read so far?" he asked. "Well, I know it is cliché but I really love Pride and Prejudice. I've always loved it." Megan replied. The man smiled and said, "Now tell me why..."

21:00, 04/19/23. Flight scheduled for 15:30, 5 hours, 30 minutes late

Megan looked up from her laptop and stretched. She had been sitting hunched over researching an essay for over 3 hours now and wanted out of the authors of Victorian Brittan. She realized the time and decided to go see if she could get

some food. She turned to the old man beside her and asked, "Would you mind looking after my things for a few minutes? I just need to get some food, I'm starving." "Of course." the man replied. "Would you like me to get you anything while I'm up?" Megan asked. "Well if you don't mind, could you get me a sandwich?" asked the man. "Sure thing," Megan said. "Any preferences for the filling?" "Ham and cheese please." said the man. "Coming right up! I meant to ask you sir, what's your name?" asked Megan. "It's Tom, miss." the old man said. Megan smiled, "It's nice to meet you Tom. I'm Megan."

05:45, 04/20/23. Flight scheduled for 15:30, 12 hours, 15 minutes late

Megan woke up again. Everything was so quiet but Megan was really struggling to sleep. She supposed the rock hard shallow chair had something to do with it. Megan gave up and went over the window of the boarding gates and looked out onto the tarmac. The storm was really raging now. She could see leaves and branches – and was that a traffic cone? – all swirling around in the strong wind. Yeah the planes wouldn't be going anywhere anytime soon. Megan started wandering around the gate. She started walking through the passageways to the Duty-free. "God it's almost like a ghost airport here," she said to herself. "It's quite eerie."

Some time later she found her way to the duty free area. As Megan looked around she saw a shop selling computer accessories. "That's perfect!" she said to herself. "I'll go in and have a look." Megan walked in. As it was so early, there was no one at the till but that was ok. She could browse, then come back to pay. As she walked around, she could hear the wind howling and the rain pounding on the building. Megan browsed for ages. She saw several things that she thought her brother might like. "Ok, I now have an idea of what I'll get him, so I'll go back to my stuff and come back later." Megan turned and started walking back to her stuff.

12:15, 04/20/23. Flight scheduled for 15:30, 17 hours, 45 minutes late

"Hi Mom, how are you?" Megan sat down in her seat again. She had been stretching her legs again when her mom had called her. "I'm good sweetheart, but more to the point, how are you faring? Do you know when the planes will be flying?" her mom replied. "I'm not totally sure,

but hopefully soon. The storm has died down over here in the last 2 and a half hours. We don't know though when we might be flying because the storm is tracking over the US towards you." Megan said. "I hope it's soon though; I'm getting rather sick of this very hard chair I'm on!" she said laughing.

16:07, 04/20/23. Flight scheduled for 15:30, 24 hours, 37 minutes late

"Well passengers, you will be glad to hear that we have just got the all-clear to start boarding planes. Keep an ear out for your number and enjoy your flight!"

A big cheer went up at that announcement. Megan was so happy. She could see other delighted people around her; there was a woman crying with happiness, a kid dancing and loads of people hugging each other in joy. Megan opened her phone and texted her family. 'Just got the all-clear to board! Should be on my flight soon. Can't wait to see you all!' "Could flight AB003 H983, Los Angeles to New York start lining up for boarding please?" she heard a flight attendant yell. Megan leapt up and grabbed all her stuff and went to the boarding line. She was 6th in line and when she got to the flight attendant, she showed her boarding pass and passport. Megan let out a half-laugh, half-sigh. "God I am so glad to be out of here!" she said. "I think I'm scarred for life!" "Well you wouldn't be the only one." the flight attendant said grinning. "Here's your boarding pass and passport back, and if you go out the door on the left and follow the ground crew, they'll show you to your plane. Enjoy your flight!" "Thanks so much!" Megan replied.

Megan found her seat and flopped down into it with a big "Oof". She took out she took out her phone and texted her family to tell them she was on her plane, then sat back and closed her eyes.

Emily Godinho



A Journey Home

Rattling along the bumping roads,
Twisting and winding as if choosing its path like a river,
Guided by immovable landscape and stone.
My focus turns to the neon blue lighting of the bus,
Its unnatural presence illuminating aggressively and unnaturally,
So out of place,
The flickering light tries to connect a beautifully timeless world to the vulgar present,
As if trying to hang a sense of hope in the air,
Yet failing miserably.
One should learn that this can only be found in the darkness of the night.
The black abyss outside found seeping in slowly,
Until the bus itself becomes submerged,
Covering each seat and curtain in a blanket of peace.
Drowning here completely in the darkness but for the neon blue light,
Allowing yourself to drown in her beauty and serenity,
Peace is found as she seeps through your permeable skin,
Misunderstood she only wishes to bring stability,
A time to rest and a time to recover,
No sense of fear or danger.

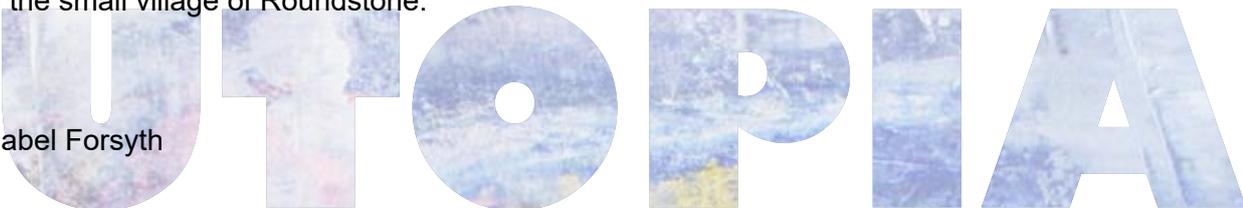
Passing through pockets of light,
Small towns filled with people sleeping softly,
Crossing the final bridge signalling the near ending of my journey.
Hundreds of times I've crossed this bridge and travelled this journey,
Each time feeling the same at heart,
Content and happy,
Pausing my life for a moment in time,
Allowing for a much-needed breath to be taken,
Thoughts marinated and processed,
A release on my heart as if her strings had been strung taught as a violins,
Bound tightly by the thoughts occupying my mind.
A glow from inside emerges, lighting me from the core,
A flooding of memories of love, joy and peace fill my mind,
Reminding me that everything passes and everything will once again be ok.
As the winding roads and bumpy path of what we call our lives may not be easy.
But every high is only possible with a low,
Each concave curve upwards, downwards mirroring the trajectory of my life,
Accepting and acknowledging the highs and lows on my journey,
Allowing my breath to slow, welcoming emotions previously buried.

The air hangs still and soft,
Warm and welcoming as the embrace of a loved one,
Caressing my cheeks and lulling my body to a warm sense of relief,
As we slowly approach our final destination,
I feel the vast open space welcome me in its arms,
The untamed bog running wild and free for miles,
The climbing mountains enclosing the sweet village sleeping soundly,
Protecting it from the harsh winds and pounding tides,
I feel the landscape welcome me, hug me,
Breathing me in sharing her calm and collected presence,
A feeling like no other only to be describes as heavenly,
Welcomed by silence and a flickering orange luminous light,

Saturated and strong the light stands out among its surroundings.

What should be an imperfection in the utopia I feel most at home in,
Adds to its beauty, highlighting the small cracks and chipping paint.
Although I travel farther from the place I reside and carelessly call home,
I cannot imagine truly calling anywhere but here my home,
A place I feel so free and light,
Gone with the fairies,
My Utopia,
My chosen home,
In the small village of Roundstone.

Mabel Forsyth



At Dusk

Golden light fades slow,
Whispers of dusk kiss the sky,
Night's embrace draws near.

Sam Cotton

The Butterfly

Under the leaves, A
Butterfly emerges, Its
Bright wings reflect out.

Elena Kidney

Campfire

As the darkness comes
The fire moves like a Riverdance
And kisses the world

Cormac Carty

An Itch You Can't Scratch

No matter how hard you scratch it,
It won't go away,
An itch that consumes you,
Day after day.

I think I'm going insane,
I know it sounds crazy,
But this itch just won't leave my brain!

I can't stop thinking about it,
But what can I do?
It's crawling beneath my skin,
Reminding me I don't have control,
Me against it, it's going to win.
I may as well just walk away with a grin.

So don't bother stressing,
It just makes it worse,
Just start repressing,
The urge to curse.
Acceptance is key,

So just let it be.

Francesca Ravassi



Tra Illusione e Delusione

Non mi piace quando giocano con le mie emozioni
Rendere gli altri felici rendo mie missioni

Mi dispiace che nessuno mi capisce
Ma niente mentalmente mi rapisce

Non mi sento all'altezza
E mi chiedo se la vita resterà sempre la stessa

Con la solitudine che dentro mi divora
Del mio fallimento i miei nemici non vedono l'ora

Il mio viso il vento accarezza
Mentre un'amicizia falsa il mio cuore spezza

Ho mal di pancia

Ma non sono farfalle nello stomaco
E tutto questo alla fine mi sembra comico

Mentre scrivo questo mi trovo in classe di biologia
Ma per sentirmi meglio non mi serve questo mi serve una magia

Le amicizie false non so riconoscere
E tra le mie braccia non ti riesco più ad avvolgere

Negli occhi non riesco più a guardarti
Anche se riuscirò sempre a perdonarti

So che non vedi l'ora che io riparti
E dato che mi parli dietro non riesco più a pensarti

Non voglio immaginarti
Credi veramente io voglia sognarti?

Voglio solo perderti
Il mio rispetto non riuscirai più a riprenderti

Ma adesso che sei qui d'avanti
Non riesco proprio a cacciarti

Sole Porretti

Valediction

We began when we reached the end
When the autumn breeze swept your visage
From which I emerged, empty, unadorned;

We strove forward, bathing
In the sweet sensations
Of growth and victory and dreams and—

A flash of lilac was destiny's recompense. A fleeting glow from dusk.
At divergent woods, you embraced the coveted path seldom walked
While I ascended a vertiginous pinnacle, reaching into the sea of stars.

Yitian Chen

A Spring Day in Ireland

These past couple of weeks have been repeats of the same spring day to me. The mornings are always a bit chilly, so more traffic is on the road. The sunrays beam down and make it slightly warm, but a cold breeze always counters this. The roads are packed with cars, so the bus is always five to ten minutes late. The bus, with its almost three-car length, causes quite the build-up behind it as it stops in the narrow lane where the stop is. No car can overtake it, as a constant stream of vehicles always comes from the opposite direction.

As the day progresses, the cold breezes decide to retreat and the splitting sunbeams rule once more. Every surface is lit bright with these blinding rays and the heat becomes insufferable. However, as sitting in a cool, conditioned room for half the day saves you from the temperatures, when the late afternoon arrives, it feels refreshing and light on the skin. It is not as cold as the frigid morning, but not as exhausting as the beaming rays in the early afternoon.

The light breezes combined with the lessened sunrays create a perfect moderate but warm enough climate to end your day with. The exhaustion a school day gives you is soon forgotten, as the beautiful rays energize you once again. The afternoon is happy, and the great beams stand tall until the early hours of the evening, retreating in a breath-taking pink-orange sunset.

Alexander Sierevogel

An Bhean a ndearnadh dearmad uirthi

Ceistítear an fáth a fhoghlaimímid Gaeilge. Bíonn gach duine ag streachailt leis an tuiseal ginideach agus an tuiseal tabharthach. Ceapaimid go bhfoghlaimímid Gaeilge mar is cuid dár gcultúr í, ceapaimid go bhfoghlaimímid Gaeilge mar cuireann an Rialtas brú orainn toisc gur ábhar riachtanach é. Foghlaimímid Gaeilge, áfach, mar gheall ar mhná a rinne an domhan dearmad orthu. Oíche dhubh dhorcha a bhí ann. Chreid siad gurbh í an slánaitheoir, ach níorbh í ach leanbh amháin. Is ait an mac an saol. Thóg siad í chuig an tír ársa, áit a rugadh an teanga, tír gan teanga, tír gan anam, tír na bhfílí agus na laochra- Tír na nÓg. Tógadh í idir Tír na nÓg agus Umhaill. Ní féidir ceann críonna a chur ar cholainn óg agus bhí sí sé bliana déag d'aois nuair a thosaigh sí ag triod l gcatha. Thóg sí Oisín, Niamh, agus Cú Chulainn. D'fhoghlaim sí Gaeilge agus Ogham ón Dia Ogma. Mhúin Fionn Mac Cumhaill scileanna troda di. Chreid na Fianna gurbh í an slánaitheoir mar cheap siad go raibh sí ábalta an teanga a athbeochan. Throid sí agus d'fhulaing sí go bhfíochmhar ar son na saoirse. Rinne sí díospóireacht le ceannairí agus Teachtaí Dála. Throid sí ar son na teanga. Bhí ocras uirthi le linn an Ghórta Mhóir. Bhuail sí leis an rí agus na déithe. Cérbh í? Smaoinímid faoi Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, Sinéad O'Connor, Mary Robinson, Countess Markievicz, agus Gráinne Ó Meal-laigh. Smaoinímid faoi Na Fianna, an tAosdána, na laochra agus an Ard Rí. Ach níor lorg sí clú agus cáil. Tá sí inár gcroí, ár n-anam, tír, agus teanga. Éire is ainm di. Shábháil sí ár dteanga agus thug sí ar aghaidh í ó ghlúin go glúin. Gach focal a fhoghlaimímid as Gaeilge, is focal é i gcuimhne gach bean Éireannach a ndearnadh dearmad uirthi. Foghlaimímid Gaeilge mar gheall ar na mná go léir dá macasamhail.

Louise Hanley

When No One is Watching

I wake up. It's still dark. My alarm reads '6:34'. I slump out of bed, open the curtains and go downstairs. My dog, Chip comes up to me and licks my hand. I ignore her and turn of into the kitchen. I know what's today, and I'm not going to miss it, but I'll need to hurry. I made my breakfast quickly and climbed the stairs, confident that I would make on time and be there. My room felt cramped and cold as always and everything in it was either pasted down from my sister or bought at a charity shop. The only thing I had that somebody didn't before me was some of my clothes and the small bottles of makeup that they would give out for free at the mall. I knew my friends would leave me if they ever found out I was as poor as I was. But I shook my head. "No." they wouldn't find out; they couldn't find out. Walking to bathroom I put my tiny bottles of makeup grabbed my keys, wrote a short letter to my mom (expelling where I'd be) and hurried out the door into the crisp winter air. I sighed. By now, it was '7:05', it gave me just enough time to get to the mansion that some rich, but jerk of a man owned. As I walked, I heard something, a rustling of leaves. I stopped and turned my head eager to see what I was. However, when I looked, I saw nothing, other than the cracked empty pavement behind me. A little confused I continued down the neighbourhood until the house was in view. Stopping at the gate, I held my fake designer purse until I heard the honk of a car's horn and jumped into Evelyn's car. Evelyn was 16, so a year older than me and she could drive. She was a gorgeous slim girl, with bright blue eyes, and curly blond hair and she was by far the richest person I knew, though she thought I had 3x more amount of money then she did. "Come on Charlotte, we're going to the mall!" that was Betty's voice. She was in the passenger's seat. I slid into the backseat, clutching my fake designer purse. Evelyn's car smelled like vanilla, her spotless handbag perched beside her. Betty turned around, her eyes narrowing on my purse. "Charlotte, is that the new Gucci bag?" Betty asked. I forced a smile, holding it up confidently. "Yep! Got it right before it sold out." Evelyn nodded, impressed. "Lucky. I couldn't even find one." Betty leaned closer, inspecting it, but a bump in the road distracted her. "Looks... legit," she muttered. At the mall, I trailed behind as they splurged on designer clothes. Betty tossed me a scarf. "This would go great with your bag."

"Already spent too much on my bag." I joked, gripping the purse tightly. They laughed, satisfied. As we walked out, I caught my reflection in a window. The fake gold strap glinted, frayed at the edges. One day, they'd notice, but not today.

Mia Nilsson Duff

The Death of Her

I heard the click of the key as it turned in the lock, I opened the door and to my horror, I saw Jenny Chen on the floor, blood flowing down to the floor from a wound on her back. I screamed and three people came bustling down the hall asking if I was all right, but I was speechless. I pointed at Jenny and all three of the people stared in horror.

I called the police and in less than ten minutes, five police officers had come. After looking around for what felt like hours one of the police officers asked me to come with her. She led me outside where she took out a notebook and pen; she then asked me where I had been that day. I told her that I had come from school and that Jenny had asked me to come around to look at her new apartment. After that, she just asked for my contact details and then she left.

I started walking home thinking of what had just happened. Then I had the urge to go to Rose's house. I took a taxi over to her house, but just before I knocked, I thought why I had come here without being invited. I turned around to leave, but the door opened, and Rose was in the open door.

"Emma what are you doing here?" I don't know what happened, but I collapsed onto the driveway and started crying. Emma ran up to me and asked if I was OK. I could not say anything, I was crying too much.

After I calmed myself down, I blurted everything out about how I had opened the door to find my best friend dead on the kitchen floor of her new apartment. Rose started to hug me and saying that it would be all right.

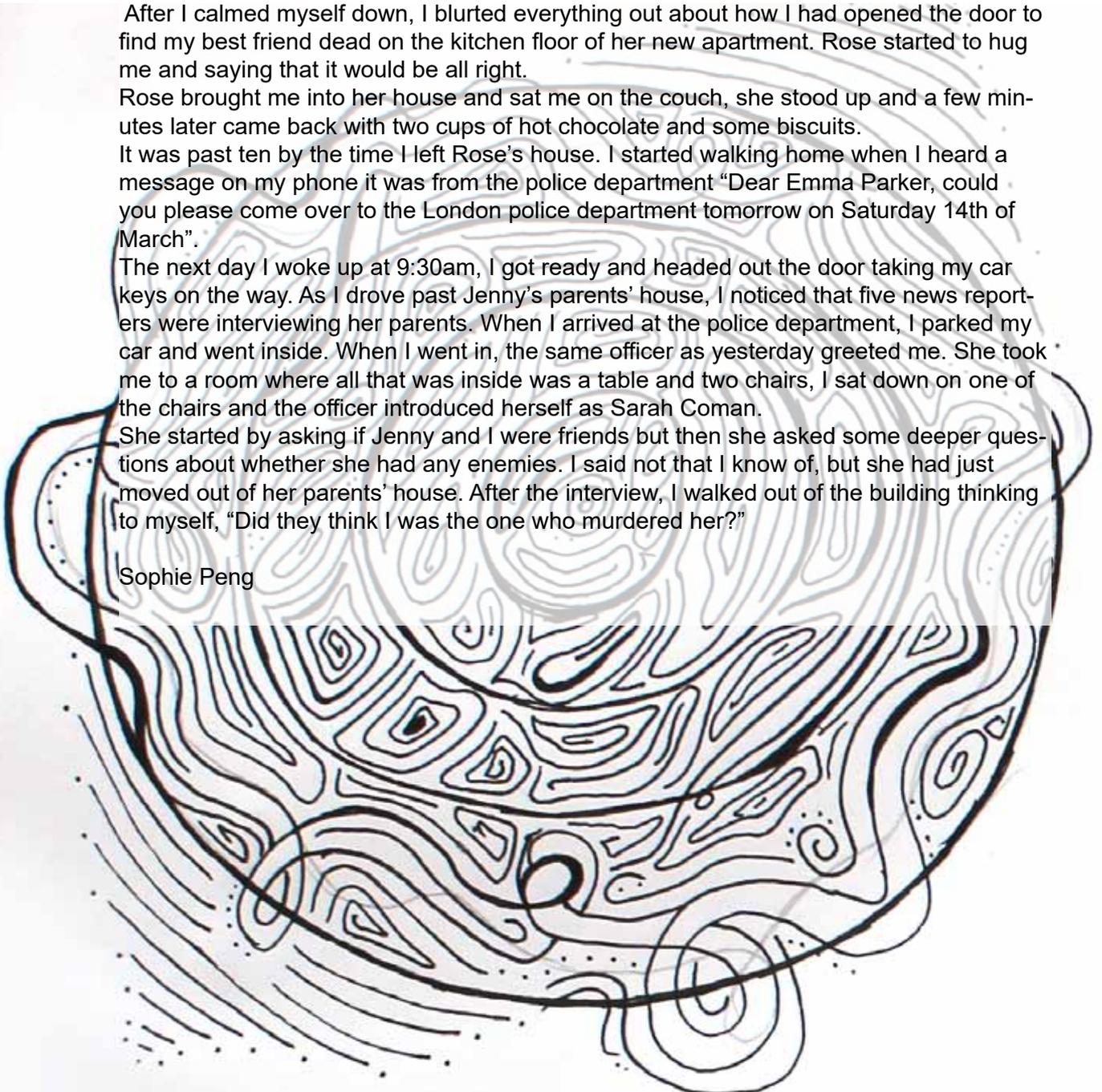
Rose brought me into her house and sat me on the couch, she stood up and a few minutes later came back with two cups of hot chocolate and some biscuits.

It was past ten by the time I left Rose's house. I started walking home when I heard a message on my phone it was from the police department "Dear Emma Parker, could you please come over to the London police department tomorrow on Saturday 14th of March".

The next day I woke up at 9:30am, I got ready and headed out the door taking my car keys on the way. As I drove past Jenny's parents' house, I noticed that five news reporters were interviewing her parents. When I arrived at the police department, I parked my car and went inside. When I went in, the same officer as yesterday greeted me. She took me to a room where all that was inside was a table and two chairs, I sat down on one of the chairs and the officer introduced herself as Sarah Coman.

She started by asking if Jenny and I were friends but then she asked some deeper questions about whether she had any enemies. I said not that I know of, but she had just moved out of her parents' house. After the interview, I walked out of the building thinking to myself, "Did they think I was the one who murdered her?"

Sophie Peng



The Princess and the Frog 2.0

'They never learn do they' thought Mama Odie as she listens to the story of two young frogs journeying through the swamp in search of her counsel.

Deep in the winding bayou of Louisiana lies an imperious Cypress tree, the home to voodoo priestess Mama Odie. This is the destination of Tiana and Prince Naveen who hope to recover their humanity.

For Prince Naveen his impending nuptials to the sweet and extraordinarily wealthy 'Charlotte La Bouff' depend on his physical presence in New Orleans. The prince had arrived in the city for the sole purpose of finding a wife from a family with the means to allow him the lavish lifestyle he had once lived before his parents cut him off from the family's fortune in Maldonia.

Tiana, on the other hand, had more complex desires. Her lifelong goal had always been to open a restaurant and share her father's extraordinary recipes with the world.

Mama Odie watches over the two souls trapped inside their frog prisons. She notices how they slowly begin to forget material things and just enjoy each other's company in the moonlight. It's up to Mama Odie to find a way to show the two what they really need.

In the bayou, the night begins its music. The snorts of alligators and the buzz of insects fills the air. Everything is coming to life and shadows snake their way closer and closer.

A shrill laugh announces a short and stout silhouette coming into focus.

"Ha! Not bad for a hundred- and ninety-seven-year-old blind lady!" Mama Odie calls in her distinct voice.

"Now which one of you has been messing with the shadow man?" she inquires rhetorically, knowing only he could impart such fate onto anyone.

Once safely guided into the hollow of the Cypress tree, Mama Odie's words of wisdom, (and verses of song) fill the heads of Prince Naveen and Tiana. To 'dig a little deeper' Naveen thinks he really must marry Charlotte, Tiana thinks she must work harder to get her restaurant. With a sigh, Mama Odie lets them part with the knowledge that a kiss before

midnight from a princess would break the spell.

Only hours after leaving Mama Odie's haven, realisation dawns upon Prince Naveen as he gazes upon the evening star, Evangeline. Naveen is in fact in love with Tiana.

A brief period lapses where a happy ending for Tiana and Naveen is far from certain. Naveen with newly-found selflessness, through love for Tiana, is prepared to marry Charlotte and finance her restaurant.

However, the tale ends as Mama Odie weaves an incantation to bind the infatuated, if somewhat unaware, frogs.

As the groom kisses the bride, Tiana becomes a princess fulfilling the required 'kiss of a princess' to break the spell, and, of course, the two live happily ever after.

Katie Hiles



Bus na Maidine

Gach maidin, tógann fear darb ainm Brian an bus céanna ar a leathuair tar éis a naoi. Chomh maith leis sin, tógann na daoine céanna an bus gach lá. Suíonn siad i gcónaí ar na suíocháin céanna agus labhraíonn siad leis na daoine céanna.

Lá amháin bhí Brian ag déanamh a ghnáthaimh maidine agus stad sé ag an gcaifé áitiúil chun caife a cheannach. Gach lá gheobhadh sé cappuccino le bainne breise. An mhaidin úd seo shiúil sé go dtí an stad bus cois na trá agus bheannaigh sé do chuid dá chomhphaisinéirí bus. D'fhás Brian suas i lár na tíre agus thit sé i ngrá leis an trá nuair a bhog sé go Baile Átha Cliath. Lá álainn a bhí ann. Bhí sé ag dul ar an mbus nuair a tháinig bean ag rith síos an tsráid go tobann, ag béicíl ar an mbus chun fanacht. Bhí mearbhall ar gach duine cén fáth a raibh sí ag rith don bhus seo. Áfach, bhí Brian fiosrach faoin mbean nua.

Bhí gruaig fhada lonrach ar an mbean agus í gléasta in éadaí geala. Ní bréag a rá go raibh Brian faoi dhraíocht ag a háilleacht. Níor theastaigh ó aon duine dul suas chuici agus a scéal a fháil amach. Ar deireadh tar éis deich nóiméad, bheartaigh Brian dul suas chuici. Bhí sí ina saol féin ag éisteacht le ceol nuair a rinne sé iarracht dia duit a rá léi. Aithníonn ciaróg ciaróg eile a cheap sé, bhí sé an-deacair dul suas go dtí strainséir randamach. Ar dtús níor chuala an bhean é, mar sin thug sé buille bog dá gualainn. Bhí sí sceimhlithe ina beatha nuair a tharla sin. Bhí náire an domhain air. Bhí gach súl ag iompú ina dtreo. Thosaigh sí ag gáire tar éis di a thuiscint conas a d'fhreagair sí. In ainneoin sin go léir, thosaigh an comhrá eatarthu. Maria an t-ainm a bhí ar an mbean álainn. Ar amharaí an tsaol, mar a tharla sé bhí Maria díreach tar éis tosú ag obair sa chomhlacht chéanna le Brian.

Bhíodh trioblóid ag Brian leis na caidrimh a bhí aige roimhe seo. Chríochnaigh siad i gcónaí mar fuair an bhean “fear níos fearr”. D'éirigh sé as a bheith ag iarraidh teacht ar an duine ceart, go dtí gur bhuaill sé le Maria.

Don chuid eile den turas bus labhair siad agus chuir siad aithne ar a chéile. Ba as Cúba ó dhúchas do Maria agus bhí teaghlach an-mhór aici. Bhí sí díreach tar éis bogadh go Baile Átha Cliath agus bhí sí ina haonar. Bhuel, go dtí gur bhuaill sí le Brian. Ansin tháinig siad le chéile chun cainte agus tharraing scéal scéal eile. Creid é nó ná creid ach réitigh siad go han-mhaith lena chéile agus rinneadh cairdeas aláinn. Ó shin i leith fuair siad caife le chéile gach maidin agus chuaigh siad ag obair. Lean sé seo ar aghaidh ar feadh thart ar cheithre mhí go dtí gur iarr Brian uirthi faoi dheireadh a bheith ina chailín cara.

Ar deireadh thiar thall, chuaigh Brian agus Maria ar a mbealach féin tar éis naoi mbliana a bheith i gcaidreamh lena chéile. Ní dheachaigh an bheirt acu isteach i gcaidreamh eile ina dhiaidh sin. Ba chomhpháirtithe anam iad ach ní bhíonn na comhghleacaithe anam mar a chéile i gcónaí.

Anna Massey

The Heir

The low-hanging sun left a hazy glow in the darkening jungle foliage. A slow, lazy river cast amber in the sinking sunlight, rolled back and forth steadily. Thick swarms of gnats and locusts hovered in clusters over the glowing water, while carp and other predators leapt from below for an evening meal. On the overgrown banks, a long silvery serpent draped itself over a tree branch, blinking slowly while more active fauna hooted and shrieked deeper within the jungle. Disturbing this relaxed, humid evening was the large vessel plowing through the river. It was tall yet narrow in width, its sturdy wooden hull crusted with barnacles. Atop its high prow sat several boat-slaves, their bare chests slick with sweat as their muscles strained under the weight of their labour. Each wore a thick iron collar, connected to the others by heavy chains. Guards dressed in leather armour patrolled the aisles, wielding curved tulwars and using the hilt to club those who rowed too slowly. Their cruelty was unquestioned, their expressions, bored.

Below deck, two men stood near an ornate door. One, a tall and broad figure, was cloaked almost entirely in black leather. A cruel whip was strapped to his side, alongside several knives, their hilts worn from years of use. His face was all sharp angles and rough edges, his skin tinged with a greyish hue, knotted with old scars. But it was his eyes that were most unsettling: flat, lifeless grey, like the serpents coiled on the riverbank, capable of shifting from cold indifference to unrestrained rage in a heartbeat. Beside him stood his opposite. A smaller, slimmer man with striking blue eyes. Unlike his companion, his face was smooth and elegant, laughter lines gracing the corners of his mouth. He wore shining armour, similar in design to the soldiers above, though his helmet, tucked under one arm, bore a mask with a crude, mocking face.

The tall man, Camlin, turned toward his companion, Cyrus.

"Should I interrogate him again?" Camlin asked, gesturing to the door. His accent was thick and guttural, a clear sign that this was not his native tongue.

Cyrus barely glanced at him, his gaze fixed on the banner draped on the wall. "I suppose so," he murmured, then turned briskly. "But don't be too hasty with that whip of yours," he added with a curl of his lip. "There are far more... effective methods of extracting information than brute force. That disgusting outlander might yet have some use."

Camlin's expression darkened, but before he could respond, Cyrus smirked and continued. "Of course, coming from such a savage land, you wouldn't know much about refinement."

Camlin's jaw clenched. "Until your Emperor pays me my due, you will not ask me how I do things, insult my country, or speak ill of my ruler," he growled.

Cyrus merely smirked again, but he waved a hand dismissively. "If you're so eager for blood, we may as well pay him a visit."

Camlin grunted. If the gods granted him a single wish, it would be to slit that smug noble's throat. As they entered the chamber, eerie laughter rang out, hollow yet defiant. It unsettled both men. In the dark, a man sat hunched, dressed in torn ragged clothes with the enchanted collar of a prisoner binding his neck.

"What's so funny?" Cyrus snapped, stepping forward and tightening his grip around the prisoner's throat.

The captive smirked, gasping for breath. "You have no idea what you've done," he rasped.

"You've taken the heir to a kingdom whose true power you do not comprehend. And now, it comes for me."

Camlin and Cyrus exchanged uneasy glances. A deep, resonant rumble echoed from above. Something was coming.

They hurried to the deck, emerging into chaos. The last light of the sun had vanished, and the river churned violently. The crew scrambled, weapons drawn, their eyes wide with terror. A thick mist had descended, rolling in from the depths of the jungle, cloaking the ship in an unnatural fog.

"Report!" Cyrus barked.

"Something's in the water!" a guard stammered.

"It's too big to be any normal beast!"

The rumble grew into a low growl, vibrating through the wooden planks beneath their feet. And then, from the mist, it emerged. A massive, serpentine creature, its body glistening like obsidian, coiled through the water with impossible grace. Glowing eyes locked onto the ship, its head crowned with jagged, bone-like protrusions. It exuded an aura of ancient power, something beyond comprehension.

"By the gods," Camlin muttered, gripping his sword. "What is that?"

Cyrus found himself at a loss for words. The creature opened its mouth, revealing rows of glistening fangs, and let out a roar that shook the very air.

"It's here for the prisoner," a guard whispered in

horror.

Below deck, the prisoner's restraints snapped. The enchanted collar that had bound his powers flickered with blue energy before shattering. He stood slowly, rolling his shoulders, as strength coursed back through his limbs. He had waited long enough. On deck, panic took hold. Some men abandoned their posts, diving into the river—only to be dragged under by unseen hands. The air reeked of decay.

"This thing will tear the ship apart!" Camlin roared. "We need to decide now!"

Before Cyrus could respond, the prisoner emerged. The moment he stepped onto the deck, the serpent stilled. The massive creature lowered its head, waiting.

"You sought to learn my father's plans," the prisoner said, his voice calm and steady. "But you were blind to the truth. He doesn't send armies to retrieve what is his. He sends a god."

He stepped forward, unfazed by the men surrounding him. With effortless grace, he walked onto the creature's snout. The beast lifted him, its massive coils rising as it prepared to disappear into the mist once more. Cyrus moved to stop him—but the prisoner only smiled. "You've made an enemy you cannot afford to keep. War is coming."

Then, they were gone.

The mist dissipated, leaving the ship eerily still. The river was calm once more, but the damage remained—the torn hull, the scattered bodies, and the lingering terror in every man's heart. Camlin exhaled sharply. "What... what in the name of the gods just happened?"

Cyrus had no answer. He only knew one thing: they had doomed themselves.

And the war had only just begun.

Tom Mockler

Krieg

Krieg macht blutig
dreckig, gewalttätig, laut
Ich muss rennen
Mein Zuhause ist zerstört
Ich habe nichts
Ich bin allein

Kat Rodeheaver

Ahmed

Ängstlich, stark,
liebt Hunde, Bücher und warme Mahlzeiten
träumt von einer Alternative, frei von Krieg
flüchtet nach einer besseren Welt,
fühlt sich gut
spielt Fußball
schwimmt in dem Freibad
Ein neues Leben.

The Final Chapter

I travelled so far, I Worked so hard and for what?
For a small dingy. For my brother Jamal to drown on an over-crowded boat. Was it my destiny to find Sissy? Was it a coincidence that I survived?

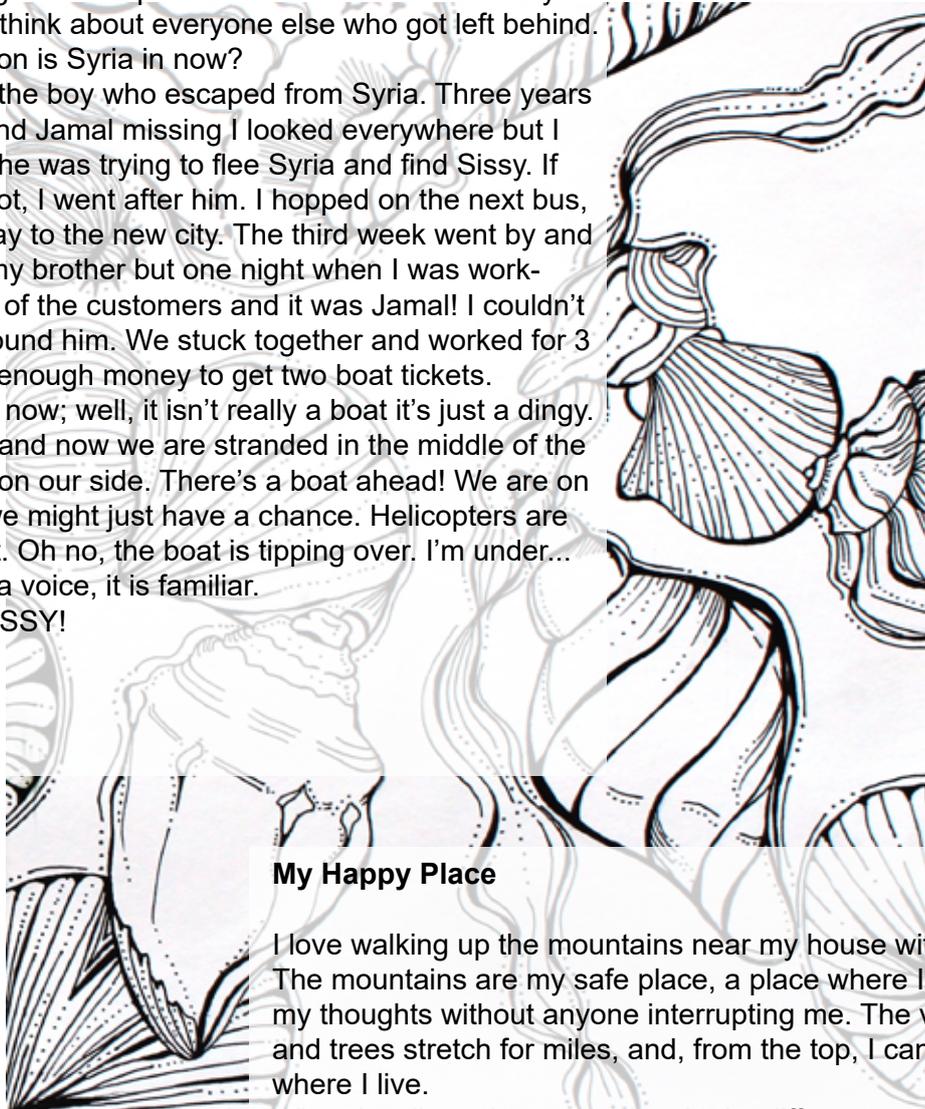
I am grateful that I got to Europe and that I am here with Sissy. But I can't help but think about everyone else who got left behind. What kind of situation is Syria in now?

I'm Samiel and I'm the boy who escaped from Syria. Three years ago, I woke up to find Jamal missing I looked everywhere but I instantly knew that he was trying to flee Syria and find Sissy. If you guessed it or not, I went after him. I hopped on the next bus, and I was on my way to the new city. The third week went by and I still hadn't found my brother but one night when I was working, I looked at one of the customers and it was Jamal! I couldn't believe that I had found him. We stuck together and worked for 3 months to save up enough money to get two boat tickets.

We are on the boat now; well, it isn't really a boat it's just a dingy. Our engine cut out and now we are stranded in the middle of the sea. Maybe luck is on our side. There's a boat ahead! We are on the real boat now we might just have a chance. Helicopters are coming for our boat. Oh no, the boat is tipping over. I'm under... next thing I hear is a voice, it is familiar.

I open my eyes...SISSY!

Edith Livingstone



My Happy Place

I love walking up the mountains near my house with my dog Nico. The mountains are my safe place, a place where I can think about my thoughts without anyone interrupting me. The views of grass and trees stretch for miles, and, from the top, I can see the valley where I live.

When I walk up the mountains, I take different routes each time. But today was a break from the normal. Today I decided to go off-trail and see where it would take me. With Nico beside me, I was ready to go. I started at the bottom of the mountain where I always do and started walking. Then, when I walked past the forest instead of turning the usual left, I turned right.

From all the years I have hiked up this mountain, I have never explored the woods beside them. I started walking through the forest, immediately greeted by the amazing plants and animals that lived there; I noticed a small clearing to the left of me. With Nico running around in excitement, (he had never smelt so many things in his life) I slowly crept over to have a look. When I stepped into the clearing, I knew that it was special. There were daisies, buttercups and foxgloves littering the floor. There were thousand-year-old trees surrounding the clearing and, in the middle, there was a small pool of water, glistening in the dappled sunlight. From that moment on, I knew that this was my secret place, a place to be happy, a place to be me.

I Should've Known.

I wasn't even thinking about him. My mind drifted aimlessly as I scrolled through my phone, the harsh glow of the screen casting an unnatural light over my porcelain skin. Instagram reels flashed by, one after another, mindless distractions. Then, out of nowhere, Willow's account appeared.

At first, it was harmless. Pictures of her laughing, posing, existing in her carefree world. Then my breath hitched. My stomach twisted into a knot as I saw it, a photo of her at the arcade. She wasn't alone. Right beside her, grinning as if he belonged there, was Ethan. My Ethan. I should have looked away. I should have closed the app. But I didn't. My gut urged me to keep going, to dig deeper into the unfolding nightmare.

The next photo brought me a fleeting moment of relief, a simple snapshot of Willow's friend playing an arcade game. My chest loosened, my breath steadied. Then something caught my eye. I hesitated, my finger hovering over the screen as I zoomed in, my heart pounding like a war drum. And there it was.

Reflected in the shiny surface of the arcade machine was something I didn't want to see. Him. Ethan. Holding her...not casually, not playfully. He held her the way he used to hold me. Time froze. The room blurred around me, the edges of my vision going dark. My breath came in shallow bursts, and the phone suddenly felt heavier in my hand, as if it carried the weight of my heartbreak. I didn't cry, not at first. The tears were buried under an avalanche of rage. My fingers tightened around the phone until my knuckles ached. I wanted to call him, to scream, to demand answers. But why? What would he say? What could he say that would make this hurt any less? There was nothing to explain. The evidence was right there, mocking me.

What cut the deepest wasn't just his betrayal. It was how blatantly he flaunted it. He didn't think I'd notice. Or maybe... he didn't think I mattered.

All those nights when he sat across from me, glued to his phone, distant and distracted. All those mornings when he came home late with hollow excuses. And worst of all, all the times I let myself believe that he loved me. I realized something then. I hadn't lost Ethan today. I'd lost him long before this moment, long before I even realized he was slipping away. There were signs, subtle and insidious. The way his touch grew colder, the way his eyes shifted when I asked him about his day. I had noticed, hadn't I? I just didn't want to see it.

I should've known.

Avila O'Sullivan

Hoffnung

Heimat ist gefährlich
Opfer der Explosionen sind Todesfälle
Fühlen sich ängstlich und müde
Flüchten vor dem Krieg
Niemand bleibt
Umstände sind entsetzlich
Neulich finden sie Schutz
Glücklich sind sie.

Fin Nolan

Das Boot ist voll

Wir hören nur die Wellen
Wir sehen nur Dunkelheit
Das Boot ist voller Angst
Meer und Wetter streiten sich
Das Boot schaukelt, verloren

Das Boot ist voller Hoffnung
Auf ein besseres Leben
Wir verlassen Krieg und Terror
Das Boot ist voll.

Sam Legge

Don't Go

"Mom, please. Everyone who's anyone is going!" "I don't care if the president himself is going, Charlotte, you're not." Her tone was firm, obstinate.

Charlotte looked pleadingly at her dad, he simply shrugged. You know how she is. She knew when to give up. She always gave up.

"God, you're ruining my life, Katherine!" Her mom looked hurt. She couldn't bring herself to care. She could feel the heat rising in her face as she turned and fled from the room. She took the winding staircase to her room two steps at a time. She'd picked the attic because it was isolated, her mom allowed it because it was too high to climb out of the window.

Charlotte slammed the door, sure the thud would be heard downstairs. She hoped her mother heard. She hoped she felt bad, sorry, anything. She knew she wouldn't.

Charlotte crumpled to the floor before she reached the bed. The dark hardwood was far from comfortable, but she couldn't bring herself to move. Instead, she closed her eyes and let her emotions wash over her. You're in a field of flowers. The sun is shining, the birds are singing, you are in charge of your fate. You're in a field of flowers. The sun is shining, the birds are singing, you are-

Her mantra was interrupted by a loud ringing sound. She glanced at her phone; nothing. What could possibly- The ringing somehow felt louder, urgent. It sounded like it was coming from the wall. From the storage. Charlotte crawled through the small door leading into the storage room. Really it was less of a room and more of a small, cramped tunnel. The phone rang all the while. After rummaging her way to the other side of the storage room, she finally found it. An old, off-white telephone. She answered it.

"Ruth?" The voice on the other line sounded small, young, on the brink of tears. She started speaking all at once. "I know you're busy but Billy won't stop crying and Jacob won't eat anything I make and he keeps asking when you're coming back and you're not coming back and Mom's at work and-" She took a deep, shaky breath. "Help."

Charlotte wasn't sure what to say. "I'm sorry, I'm not Ruth." She tried to sound as kind as possible, but she wasn't sure how.

The girl's voice was broken when she spoke. "I'm so sorry for bothering you, really. This was my sister's number after she moved out, but why am I telling you that, I guess I'll just-"

"Wait!" The words were out before Charlotte knew it. "Don't go"

The girl made a confused sound.

"What's your name?"

The girl didn't say anything. Had she done the wrong thing? Why would she think that she could- "Katy. My name is Katy."

Charlotte stared out through the skylight above her bed, watching the occasional bird fly past. Free. She couldn't stop thinking about Katy, what her life must be like.

They'd talked for as long as Katy was able to, about ten minutes. She'd tried to help with the baby as best she could, but she really didn't know anything. She'd never had any siblings.

What really got to her was how similar they were. Katy was fifteen, like her. She lived in a small town, like her. She liked books from the 1800s, she listened to jazz, she loved flowers, the colour yellow, poetry. What would she do in her position? She could barely take care of herself, let alone two kids.

Her thoughts were interrupted by a soft knock on her door. Dad. He always came to talk to her after she fought with her mom. To make excuses. She sometimes considered telling him to leave her alone, but she never did.

"Come in," she replied reluctantly.

Her dad entered cautiously, closing the door quietly behind her and taking his usual seat in her desk chair.

"Hi kiddo." He was absent-mindedly fiddling with a pencil.

She didn't respond.

Her dad sighed. "Look, I know you're annoyed right now, but cut your mom some slack. She means well, she's just worried about you."

"Worried about me? I'm fifteen, at what point do I get to live my life?" She sounded more angry than she meant to, but less than she felt.

"Hey, that's not fair. Your mom lets you do plenty of things." He tried to sound calming. It didn't work.



"Does she? She's driven me to school every day of my life! Do you know how embarrassing that is? It's a ten-minute walk! Not to mention after school! Do you know how hard it is to keep friends when you always have to say no to hanging out?"

"You could hang out with them if you'd let your mom meet their parents."

"Oh, because everyone wants to be friends with the girl whose mom is constantly breathing down their neck! You know she met Cindy's parents, and she still won't let me go to her house until she has their phone numbers and assurance they'll always be watching us. That's insane!"

"Don't say that about your mother," he sounded stern, "you don't know what she's been through."

She wanted to ask what she could have possibly been through to warrant this, but she knew not to push. Instead, she sent him away, angrier than before he came.

She talked to Katy the next day, and the next day, for weeks and weeks. They clicked immediately and grew close quickly, both glad to finally have someone to talk openly to. Glad to not be alone. She kept the phone in the storage room, she didn't want her parents to see it and ask questions like she knew they would. Their friendship was purely theirs.

Tuesday was different. Katy missed their usual call time. Charlotte tried not to feel hurt. When the phone finally rang, she answered immediately. "Hi!" she exclaimed excitedly.

Katy didn't sound excited, she sounded distraught. She took a long time to speak, and when she did it was in between sobs.

"I didn't know who else to call. Jacob- Oh god. I only left him alone for a second. Billy was crying, he was only in the bath for a second. I- It's all my fault. He was so young, he-"

Suddenly Katy's voice cut out. The call had ended. What happened?

She looked for the end of the phone cord and realised it was unplugged. She looked around frantically for an outlet and realised there wasn't one.

Emily Mikkelson

In the Glow of Forever

There was a time before earth, a time before anything chaotic. He was alone, The Sun wondered, why it had been put here. The Sun roamed the universe, through the asteroids, in-between the black holes and through the emptiness of space. The darkness seemed endless, till he found her, The Moon. The Moon wasn't like anything The Sun had ever seen, perfectly bright, yet dark, obvious, but hidden, an elegant entity floating in the vastness of space. She was unafraid, but equally as alone as The Sun. What made her beautiful was the innocence she had. How had she been blissfully undisturbed by anything iniquitous? It was a mystery to The Sun. The Sun finally wasn't alone, his escapade through the galaxies in search of something like himself was over. He finally had reached his purpose. After the eternal search, he moved toward her, but as he approached her, she kept moving further away, just inaccessible from his reach. He called out to her, in a desperate hope of capturing her attention. She looked back, reaching out but slipping from The Sun's grasp. They were separated again. Companionless once more. Unable to see each other.

Billions of years passed, he never stopped looking. Peering into every smallest hollow in space. One fateful day, The Sun came across a glowing blue sphere, speckled with freckles of green. He came close and looked over and saw The Moon, he had found her. His Moon. She saw and called out before disappearing under the blue ball, he waited there, shining his light upon the little blue orb. As he grew tired, he fell toward the bottom of the planet. As he set, he saw his light being covered by a glow like no other, the beautiful aura of black, a kindred darkness, a glow of night. As The Sun set away, The Moon came up in search for her confidant, just to be met by nothing but the escaping remnants of his light. Once The Sun awoke and rose, he noticed the darkness had disappeared and it was just his light.

Every day The Sun rose, in search for his partner, but when he rose, she wasn't there. She waited for him every night, extending her nightly glow for him to see.

He only came up in wait for her.

She only came up in wait for him.

The Sun only rises to catch a glimpse of The Moon, and The Moon can only come up to feel his light before she can't anymore.

Vivaan Shrivastava

Dementors of Time

Tick, tock, tick, tock

Time slips away

It's like a fast and dangerous quicksand
Swallowing all around it in mere seconds

TICK

Drunk on power, nothing is outside of its realm, no one beyond its reach

No safe house, we're all in the danger zone

It gains momentum as it rapidly sucks away everything once known and loved

Leaving a barren wasteland behind

Nothing is as it seems

The world's order has gone awry

Right and reason have been set askew

Everyone has what they want

But not what they need

What will become of us?

TOCK

Tick, tock, tick, tock

Silence.

Negatives. Mistakes. Life.

Philippa Dunlop

I hate it when they say,
"It's OK to make mistakes, life is all about, mistakes.
Then why am I going home ten times more stressed?"

If life is about making and then and fixing them,
Why are we getting in trouble for doing that?
How do you expect someone to not make a mistake?
It's impossible.

"Oh, you've been doing so well and not making mistakes"
I know.
Of course I know.

I've been thinking about mistakes for the past 6 months of my life.

It's exhausting, getting up, doing stuff, trying not to make mistakes,
Going home, mingling with family and friends,
Eating dinner.

Try and fit in an hour and a half of homework and study,
And then bed by 10, hopefully.

Can that be healthy?

All caused by negatives.

Why is it so easy to get a negative,
But so hard to get a positive.
Negatives.

The Robin's Lament

The little Robin watched the pain unfold,
The true horror and sorrow as yet untold,
A grey smog rising to cover the world,
And grief-stricken air as it swirled.

Its wings now coated with oil and dread,
Watching families crying over their dead,
Its strained cry stung with every chord,
The pain and the misery of this world.

The bird no longer sang to wake the children,
Its voice stifled by this hideous vision,
Its joyous songs now unheard,
Along with pleas and the prayers and every word.

In this desolate place filled with silence,
There had once arisen a strong alliance,
But now it seemed it had been impeached,
The words of the laws could no longer reach.

The trees reached tall, but their roots lay in
ashes,
Their life as it was came down in crashes,
The long road ahead seemed dark and silent,
This world subject to another tyrant.

The bird choked on those broken beliefs,
Dragging behind it heavy chains of grief,
The rolling hills now stained with blood,
Shackles of pain hit the ground with a thud.

The tears had left the ground sodden,
And cries of children not wanting to be forgotten,
The moon looked down and shed a tear,
There must be an end to dread and fear.

As the little bird conceded, all hope was amiss,
Thinking nothing would be able to repair this,
The bright, bursting buds began to emerge,
A renewal of life in this dark world.

This breath of life, beaming with growth,
The bird then spoke a quiet oath,
To never again give up on this fight,
But to sing aloud with all of its might.

Gabriella Nelson O'Neill

Baile

Páirc Dhún Carúin , glas agus mór,
Crainn arda, féar go leor.
Éin ag canadh, sruthán ag rith,
Grian ag taitneamh, solas geal linn.
Leanaí ag súgradh, ag rith go tapa,
Gáire san aer, áthas ar gach páiste.
Bláthanna ag fás, boladh álainn,
Páirc chomh ciúin, chomh séimh, chomh geal.

Ruairí Brew

Mo Dhún Rúnda

Domhain san fhóraois
Faoi sholas na gealaí
Macallaí de na cathanna a troideadh

Dreapairí cásta
Clúdaíonn na ballaí cloiche
Cailte le stró go deo
Sin an síscéal

Valeria Valcheva

Baile na nGabhar

Cónaím i mBaile na nGabhar
I mo bhaile tá a lán leabhar
Is baile beag cairdiúil muid
Ní bhíonn riamh ag troid

Is baile slachtmhar sinn
Le gach duine an-bhinn
Is go leor ainmhithe cairdiúil
Le daoine an-suimiúil

Lucy Ó Súilleabháin

A Kindness

"Lily, look, we are all really sorry, but we can't be friends anymore. My mom would just kill me if she knew I was friends with someone like you.", Sarah looked at Lily with no sympathy at all. "Me too", the rest of her friends said together. Lily had barely any time to think of a response before they got up at just left.

"I'm really sorry Lily.", Jessica's voice spooked her. Lily glanced up at Jessica. She was the only one left now, but soon the others called after her. "I'll see you around yeah?", Jessica asked Lily. Lily nodded, not knowing what else to do or say. Lily's eyes began to fill up. She left her half-eaten sandwich at the table not thinking about anything but how badly she needs to cry. She ran to the first bathroom she could find. She didn't care who saw her running, she just needed to find somewhere that she could be by herself. About twenty people pointed and laughed, but that didn't affect her anymore. Nothing did.

She made it into the cubicle and put the lid of seat down and sat there. She examined the writing on the wall, and the back of the door. She noticed there was a bin in the corner stacked to the brim with food wrappers, but the label of the bin said, No trash, for sanitary uses only. Then it had pictures of things that she had never seen before. She began to wonder why no one had come to look for her.

After a while she realized that she couldn't sit in this stall forever. But she didn't want to leave, she didn't want to go home. Home was worse than school. Wasn't it? She decided to just leave school anyway. She opened the door of the cubicle, finding one of the older girls standing at a sink. What should she do, run? No that would be stupid, she just came out of the bathroom. She walked up to the sink next to the girl. She washed her hands thoroughly, trying to scrub off the memories of the day. She thought that was how it worked anyway.

"Hey, are you okay? I just heard you and I thought I would ask.", the older girl asked. Lily was unsure on how to respond and, after a moment, just nodded.

The girl bent down to Lily's height now. "You can talk to me, okay? It's not easy whatever you're going through, but I promise you, you will get through it.", she said kindly.

These words meant so much to Lily that it brought a smile to get face. It hurt though, to smile. Lily raised a hand to her own cheek, feeling a bruise. Sometimes she used the stuff that mum used to cover her bruises. She looked in the mirror, seeing the bruise on her cheek.

"My dad hits me too girl, don't worry I

won't tell," said the older girl.

The girl then moved her hair from her neck revealing red lines around her throat.

"Are you okay?", said Lily.

"Nah, but that's okay. I don't think you can be when you're like us, you know?"

"You're nice", said Lily's, surprising herself.

Lily looked down at the floor, feeling her cheeks heat up. The girl crouched down again.

"Hey I think your nice too, and you deserve better friends. I know you're young so you probably won't understand some of this, but you can't let them treat you like this. Like it's your fault. Because it's not, okay? It's not your fault."

Suddenly the older girl began to sob. Lily didn't know what to do. She knew how to cry and how it felt, but she didn't know how to comfort someone.

She decided to do what felt right and wrapped her small arms around this girl's body as she crouched on the floor. The girls' knees bent and soon Lily was now taller than her. Lily still had her hands around her, not knowing if this was helping the girl or not. What she did know was that this felt good. This was the first time Lily had hugged someone like this, and she didn't want it to end.

Lily closed her eyes and then she smiled. She was so grateful for this kindness.

"I'm sorry did I do something wrong?"

"No," said the older girl, "no you did nothing wrong."

The girl stood up and grabbed a tissue from the dispenser and blew her nose. She bent down to the sink and washed her face with water. Lily examined her this whole time wondering what her name was, but before she could ask, the girl went to the door to leave. She looked over, her soft eyes pouring into Lily's.

"I'll see you around, girl, just be careful and remember that you can fight back too."

She then left the bathroom, leaving Lily alone again, but somehow less lonely.

Caoilinn Geraghty-McDonnell



Epilogue

The end of the world hadn't affected old Johnny Graham nearly as much as he'd worried it would. He'd expected a whole thing to be made of it, with pillars of fire rising from the ground and sheets of ice falling from the sky, something to really mess up his joints or stir up his damned cough. He's glad it's happened the way it has, quietly, gradually, with time to reflect on his life and his cat and how nice the air is for a change. That's just him, though, and he's learned in his 73 years that not everybody sees eye-to-eye, and that's just one of the things that make the world interesting, or rather, made the world interesting. A lot of people in his town seemed to think a nice quick apocalyptic event, like a meteor or tidal wave, would have been better suited, giving humanity a bigger send-off while getting the whole thing over with faster. Everyone always in such a hurry, thought Johnny Graham to himself, I'll never be able to understand it. He personally has recently developed a theory that the world really had ended in 2012 like the Mayans had said it would, and it had just taken this long to finish.

Johnny doesn't really have anyone human to talk about this theory to, so he explains it to his cat. His cat is named Daniel, which he has to admit, is a bad name for a cat, and an even worse name for what he'd eventually discovered may be a female cat. Daniel didn't seem to mind being Daniel, though, and by the time they'd gone down to the library, just the two of them and one librarian in the building, to pick up the book on cats, Daniel already was and would forever be Daniel. So, he explains all this to Daniel, who licks a paw and leaves directly through the living-room wall. Daniel is a perfectly normal and perfectly alive cat, as far as Johnny Graham is aware, but the same cannot be said for the wall. Nearly half of it has collapsed, enhancing the view and giving a nice breeze in the afternoon. Johnny would feel more self-conscious about it if there were people around to judge him for it, but even now he prefers to take the door, just for tradition if nothing else.

There's no use trying to keep up with Daniel, not unless Daniel wants him to, but Johnny likes to go out when his cat does, anyway. He walks along the streets, right in the middle of the road, looking around at how Mother Nature's taking back her land after so long, with vines creeping up the ruined houses and around the dead cars. Little souvenirs of life are scattered around people's lawns and in their windows. Toys and decorations are still scattered outside, garages with doors left open still hold old appliances, tools and family cars. He passes through the park, its once-neat hedgerows and flower patches overgrown and overflowing, with birds making nests in shaggy trees and foxes prowling around the bushes. He walks past the playground. It's eerily silent, with wind shaking the swings and rustling through the slides, but if he concentrates, he can almost hear the sound of children enjoying the place for one last time, their parents impatient to get to where they're going, but willing to let their kids play for just a little while longer. Eventually Johnny arrives back home. His cat's sitting there waiting for him on the couch. Stepping over the ruins of his wall, he passes his cat, stepping into the kitchen. No food left. A pity, but he's not worried. He's sure to find some tomorrow, but right now he's tired. He sits down on his couch next to his cat, and sighs.

Benjamin Phillips

Turas Traenach

Oíche dhubh dhorcha a bhí ann. Bhí Nóra ag fanacht ar an traein ag an stáisiún traenach. Bhí sé ag doirteadh báisti agus bhí toirneach agus tintreach ann, mar sin d'fhan sí sa seomra feithimh. Bhí an traein an-déanach agus bhí Nóra préachta leis an bhfuacht - bhí a cóta fliuch báite. Cá bhfuil an traein? a smaoinigh sí. D'fheach sí ar a huairéadóir. Bhí sé beagnach leathuair tar éis a haon déag. 'Tá an traein an-déanach, nach bhfuil?'

Chas Nóra a ceann timpeall chun féachaint cé a labhair. Bhí cúpla duine eile sa seomra feithimh. Bhí cailín óg ag féachaint uirthi.

'Tá. Táim anseo ar feadh uair an chloig,' a d'fhreagair Nóra.

Tar éis tamaill ghairid stop an bháisteach. Shiúil Nóra isteach ar an ardán traenach. Bhí an spéir chomh dubh le gual mar ní raibh aon réaltaí le feiceáil. Bhí gaoth láidir ag séideadh an oíche fhuar fheanntach seo. Chuaigh Nóra ar ais isteach sa seomra feithimh, agus dhún sí an doras taobh thiar di. Shuigh sí síos. Chuala Nóra torann aisteach. Thug sí faoi deara gur athraigh an t-atmaisféar sa seomra. Go tobann, mhúch duine éigin na soilse. Bhí an seomra chomh dubh le pic. Ní raibh Nóra ábalta aon rud a fheiceáil. Gan rabhadh, chuala sí pléascadh mór. Bhí cúpla duine ag screadach agus ag béicíl. Bhí rí rá agus ruaille buaille ann.

Níor mhair an dorchadas ach cúpla nóiméad. Casadh na soilse ar siúl arís, agus lig Nóra osna faoisimh. Ba ghearr a mhair a faoiseamh, áfach. Bhí gach duine ina seasamh seachas duine amháin. Bhí an cailín óg ina luí ar an urlár. Bhí poll ollmhór urchar ina ceann.

Scread Nóra in ard a cinn is a gutha. Bhí eagla an domhain uirthi. D'fhéach sí ar na daoine eile sa seomra. Bhí dath an bháis orthu. Rinne Nóra iarracht gloch a chur ar na séirbhísí éigeandála, ach bhí an comhartha gutháin go dona. Go tobann, thuig Nóra go raibh an duine a mharaigh an cailín sa seomra léi.

Ar amharaí an tsaoil, tháinig an traein ag an stáisiún. Rith Nóra ar nós na gaoithe gan féachaint siar.

Dhúisigh Nóra de geit nuair a chuala sí bípeáil aisteach ó rud éigin. Bhí sí go hiomlán trína chéile, mar ní raibh fhios aici cá raibh sí. Bhí na ballaí bána agus ní raibh mórán tróscáin sa seomra. Bhí tinneas cinn uirthi. D'fhéach sí ar an bhfuinneog agus chonaic sí a frithchaitheamh sa ghloine. Bhí poll ollmhór urchar ina ceann aici.

Erin Gallimore

In the Midst of the Trenches

Beneath the dull, soulless sky,
Above the filthy dirt, here we lie.
The haunting roar of a distant shell echoes in the back of my mind.
The Trench, our home, our grave, this is how we are defined

Fear racing through my veins, like wildfire consuming all hope
Rats scurrying all around, feeding off the decaying bodies,
Bodies who were once humble people.
The Trench, our home, our grave, we are now all feeble.

A constant echo - 'the enemy is near'
No flowers bloom, no birds take flight.
The trench is a beast that devours a man whole,
Diminishing hope with its muddy jaws.
The Trench, our home, our grave,
Have you stopped to think 'why?'

Yet through the mud and disperse we remain,
The longing for home is all we need.
In the depths of hell, we stand tall
We fight together, and soon we shall fall.
The Trench, our home, our grave,
it captures one soldier's soul at a time.

Sol Camargo Feddis

The Sunset

The Sunset sinks low,
The sounds of waves, calm and soft,
Paints the sky with hues.

Reef Brunker

A Cat's Journal

Hi, my name is Pablo. My owner says I am always grumpy like if he doesn't give me food, of course I am going to be grumpy. Anyway, life here is kind of boring. All I ever do is lie in front of the window, I love it up there but still. Hi human. Hey, watch out where you're going! That was my tail. If you scratch me under my ear maybe I will forgive you. Good human, good human! OK stop enough emotion. Ugh! What time is it I am so hungry. Food! On the counter, I just have to jump up! Never mind, I am too lazy to do that. Wait! Did I just hear you say bath time? Please no, no, no, NO!!! I 'm not dirty, human. Finally, my nightmare is over. Back to lazy mode, I am so tired. ZZZZZzzzz... What time is it? FOOD! I smell food, YES!!! Finally, the fifth meal of this boring day. Yum, human do the happy dance with me. Go human, go human. STOP! Number fifteen on my to do list is done! The rest is sleep. Now before I go, I have to tick off steps sixteen to forty-five. Now! Goodnight, ZZZZZzzzzz.

Ola Kurzawska

An extract from *The Loved Hated Orphans*.

I: AN ORPHAN'S STORY

England, 1941

Hello, my name is Peter. I was brought up off the coast of England and I am an orphan. My father left me when I was just a baby. It was just me and my mum back then. My mother was a wonderful person. She had the kindest smile I have ever known and the warmest hug. Sadly she drowned by the local pier when I was eight. My whole world shattered on that day. I got adopted by my aunt, but she was not ANYTHING like my mother. I had to live with her in a small cottage, far from town around a bland field with little known wildlife.

One morning I entered my home in quite a hurry, to see myself looking into my aunt's scary, beady eyes. "You're home late," she said, with some tone in her voice. "Sorry," I replied quickly. "It was just a bit windy and I was having trouble reaching the house." "I don't care. Get cleaning!" snapped my aunt, tossing a cloth into my face. "Yes Aunty, sorry Aunty," I said, and quickly started wiping the floor, afraid what my aunt was going to do next. She sat down lazily on a sofa, and watched me clean with a cruel smirk on her face.

My aunt was a horrible woman who only cared about herself. She never even bothered to buy me shoes so I often got some odd looks. Guess where I had to sleep? On the floor. She got to live her life perfectly while I was barely getting through mine. Although you might think my life was boring, (well, it was) books were really entertaining to me. I never went to school, because my aunt was never bothered to bring me. I got all my knowledge from books. They were my teacher. I had the knowledge of an average twelve year old boy. I loved to read my books under a beautiful birch tree. My favourite books were about travel. I always wanted to travel, but I knew that probably would not happen for years. I had a small view of the sea if I walked further out to the end of the field, wishing I could explore the world some day. Hopefully I would. Just maybe.

II: THE PLAN

One morning, after an uncomfortable sleep, I went down for breakfast. I sat down, and my aunt approached me with a plate on top of which appeared to be a fruit, and said, "Eat." (Goodness, does it cost anything to say good morning?) I didn't say anything. I looked down at my plate, and saw a stale apple. The meals I got were not so great: for lunch, I would get some tomatoes, and for dinner, it was usually cold soup. "I cannot live here any longer," I said under my breath. You might be wondering, 'Peter, where are you going to go?' Well, luckily I heard I could take a ferry to Ireland so that is what I decided to do.

III: THE SEARCH

I looked for any book related to Ireland. I searched for hours, so I even missed lunch. "Oh why would my aunt care anyway, I hate tomatoes too," I said to myself. "It's hopeless". Suddenly something caught my eye - an atlas! I researched everything about Ireland. Later, I decided to sneak out of the house when my aunt was showering. I stepped out of the house and shut the door. For good. To be continued...

James Moore

The Left Behinds

Mars Mission #888 (MM#888) was sent up to Mars with its crew: Luna Jones, Mathew Mullan, Ciera Kerry and Joseph Mullan who, was in command. Aliens from Mars are attacking the shuttle and its crew. Will they survive?

May 20th 3014 Mars mission #888, The Board room: "We are under attack, just like they said!" panicked Commander Joseph. Joseph had fair blonde hair and beautiful blue eyes and was in charge of MM#888, which was now facing big problems! "Why don't we sacrifice Luna she never does anything right," said Mathew. Unlike his twin brother Joseph, Matthew had slick black hair and brown eyes. "It's risky but we have to, we can say Luna did something silly and fell off the ship," agreed Commander Joseph.

"LUNA!" yelled Joseph. The two men waited two minutes, Luna is never on time, eventually she came running through the door "Sorry," she panted out of breath as she was not very athletic. Luna had long brown hair and a beautiful face full of freckles. "We need your help with a task," said Mathew "Okay" replied Luna confused but excited as she was never sent on tasks as apparently, she couldn't be trusted. Mathew led Luna out of the boardroom and then helped her to get into her space suit. Eventually, they made it to the exit of the space shuttle. Mathew opened the big heavy door and then suddenly pushed Luna out into Outer Space. Luna was terrified as she floated into the darkness, suddenly she felt a strange pull, it was the aliens, and they had grabbed her and were heading back to Mars.

The aliens brought Luna to a cave deep below Mar's surface where there were other humans of all ages, ranging from 18-50. "Welcome," said the oldest and wisest looking person in the group, he had grey hair and mismatched eyes one green the other blue. "My name is Bartholomew leader of The Left Behinds. I have been stuck here since 2982. It's been 32 years since Mars Mission #856 (MM#856) left me here and returned to Earth," explained Bartholomew. "If you're wondering why the aliens kidnapped you, I have the answer," said a woman with fiery red hair who looked a few years older than Luna. "So!" said Luna impatiently wanting to know why the aliens grabbed her and attacked the space shuttle.

"992 years ago," began the woman "When humans were searching for life on Mars, they started collecting samples of rock and water for proof, but it was destroying the planet's environment causing the destruction of the alien's homes and cities deep below the surface. After years of destruction, the aliens found a prophecy buried where the human robots had been drilling. The prophecy read that when the space shuttle marked MM #856 begun its orbit around Mars, the aliens had to rise up and attack it and the all shuttles that would follow, until each crew gave up their worst member. The prophecy told after many years the humans would sacrifice their laziest and clumsiest person. This person would have powerful magic that would help the planet. The aliens hated attacking humans, and have been attacking them for 32 years. So now as every year goes by, more and more aliens start to give up hope on saving their planet." To be continued ...

Ruby Thomas



The Other Side of the Wall

Armin pulled the garden gate behind him, turning the brass knob to shut it once more. He wasn't allowed to leave through the back gate, but it would be impossible to navigate the front door with his bicycle. The racer, a hand me down from his older brother, was the best thing to happen since he was separated from his friends. At this point, Berlin had been divided for around two months. The wall had left his family alone on the Eastern Side. Although he transferred to another school, he was unable to fathom breaking the long running friendships with the boys now on the opposite side of the wall. Each day, after the boys finished their lessons, they would cycle to a part of the wall still under construction, it being short enough that they could peer over it. Today, as he arrived to the usual meeting place, the sun had already begun to set. Winter was beginning to creep in, the evenings were arriving earlier, meaning that many of the boys were unable to travel safely to the wall to meet with Armin. Initially, there were around 10 of his friends who would cycle there each day, a number which had been slowly diminishing since the onset of the early evenings. Still, each afternoon, Armin journeyed to the wall, with the hopes that at least a few people would come from the Western side. Today, leaning his bike against the wall and climbing onto the handlebars, he peered over and was greeted by two of his closest friends, Jule and Lukas.

"Wie gehts mann, how you doing?" said Lukas, climbing onto his bike to be level with Armin,

"How was school today?" he asked. Armin scratched at the nape of his neck, avoiding eye contact with Lukas. "It's fine," He was unable to admit to his old friends the truth, that he struggled to connect with anyone in his new school. Despite his efforts to befriend his classmates, he often found himself at the edge of groups. He wasn't antisocial, more his efforts to be social never fully materialized. He could count the amount people he had a conversation with in the last few weeks on one hand. "Nothing that interesting really." He sighed and turned to Jule.

"Jule," he asked, changing the subject, "is your brother getting any better?" Jule's younger brother had been suffering from flu since the power cut in October. Despite having access to medicine, Jule's mother was a firm believer in traditional methods. "Mum hasn't let him leave his room, man is getting a cup of herbal tea every twenty minutes." replied Jule, "It doesn't look like he's going to get better any time soon." Lukas caught Armin's eye contact, a pitiful sigh escaping him, "yeah no it's not seeming good. He's still shaking from the cold when he's next to the stove." Armin had suffered from a similar fever when he was a young boy, and could only pray that Jule's brother could recover before it took

him under.

Jule mounted her bicycle and adjusted the pedals. "I should really head home actually, I need to help out and make sure he's OK." She took off and headed down the road towards her house. "See you soon Jule!" Armin shouted after her, hoping that she would be able to return tomorrow. Armin was now left alone with Lukas, and struggled to make conversation. Their energy deflated like air from a tire. Awkwardness started to crawl its way between them. Eventually, Lukas needed to head home to help with dinner.

Now alone, Armin watched the clouds, lost in his thoughts. The meetings at the wall were never long enough, as if Armin was an after thought in the days of his old friends, while they were the highlight of his. His heart broke a small bit more each time he heard about what happened on the other side of the wall. It was difficult for him to be without the people he loved the most, worsened by them coming to meet with him less and less.

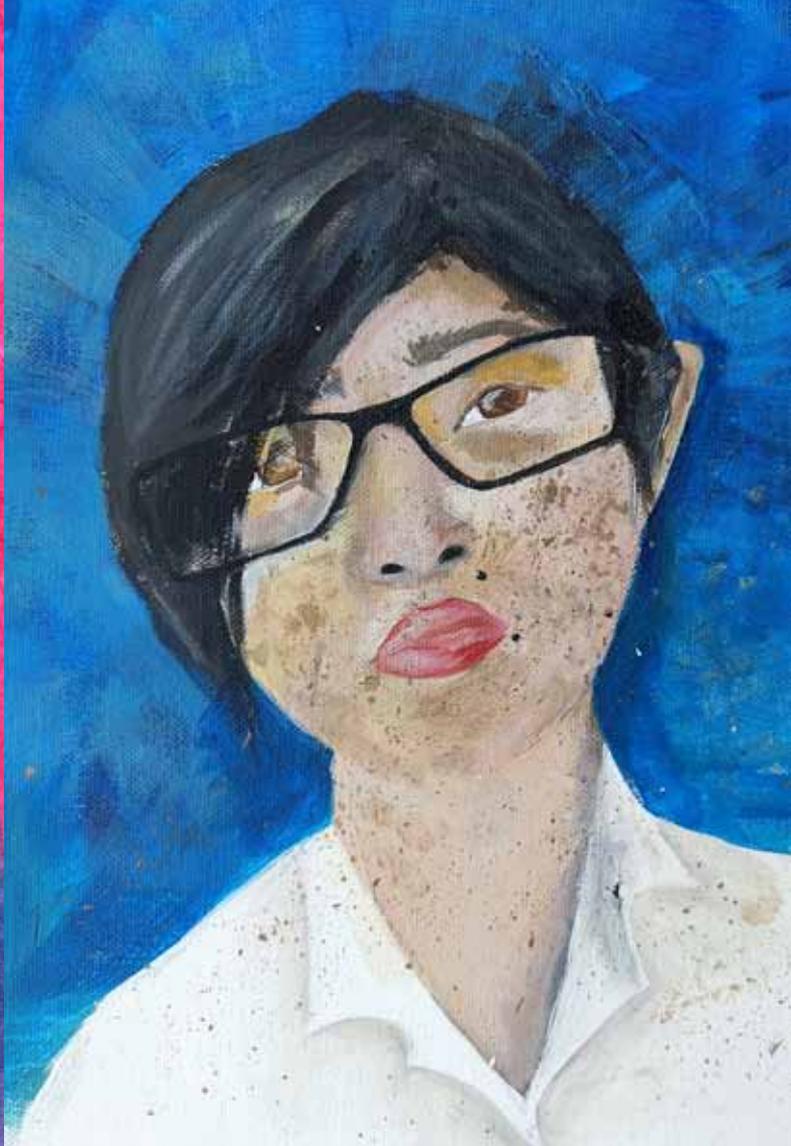
The next day, Armin set out on his cycle down the road, pulling up to the wall at the usual time to meet with his friends. Today, the sun began to set before he reached the wall. As always, he leaned his bicycle against the fence, although as he tried to stand on the saddle, his trouser leg got caught on the chain. Armin tumbled onto the asphalt, grazing his hand while catching himself. Eventually he was able to get back on his feet, clambering onto his bike to perch over the wall. A picturesque view of West Berlin lay before him. The setting sun projected a mosaic of warm colours over the concrete apartment blocks. The trees, dappled with frost, reflected back in shades of orange and gold. A woman walked her dog at the roadside, humming to herself in English. Armin supposed that it was a song from the American charts.

It occurred to him that his friends from the Western Side had not come to see him. Maybe everyone was busy or had other obligations. He hoped they were all ok, the thought of Jule's brother flicked through his mind.

Whatever the reason that no one came that day, they did not come the next day either, nor the day after that. Armin would arrive to the wall, to find no one at the other side. Eventually, one thing became clear to him: they were all too busy today to remember their friend who got stuck on the other side of the wall.

Amelia Hoggett





Anne Frank Reimagined

Dearest Kitty,

May 5th 1945

Today we got the most wonderful news from Miep!

This morning we heard a knock at the door, Pim went down to see who it was, as you probably know it was Miep when she came up the stairs you could see that she was out of breath like she just ran a mile nonstop, she came bearing wonderful news, Mommy sat her down on our couch, it took her a few seconds to catch her breath and then she blurted out "The war is over we won! Jan was listening to the radio this morning and then he jumped up, I was making breakfast and I heard a cry of joy, I ran over to him and asked if he was ok, he told me to listen to the radio so I did and I screeched it was Pieter Gerbrandij he was saying that the war the war is over!". It took us a few seconds to process what we just heard he said that all Jews can go out of hiding now! Apparently, the Germans unconditionally surrendered their military forces to the allies. We were overjoyed Two years here was enough for me! I went to go and get Peter he was sitting in the storeroom as he hadn't come down when we told him to, when I told him he cried tears of joy as we left there all the other were talking about what they were going to do when they got all packed up to leave, Mommy said the first thing she was going to do when we get out she was go and buy a new dress, quickly Pim reminded her that they would have to restore all of the shops and ship all the new clothes, Pim wants to go on a romantic picnic with Mommy by the river, Mr Dussel wants to eat real food without the rest of us stealing it, Mrs Van Daan wants to go take a good shower and swim in the river with her husband Mr Van Daan and Peter, Peter wanted a new cat and he wants to see the sun set over the horizon, I remember him say that it was the thing that he missed the most during hideout, as for Margot all she wanted was to get a new book I know that Miep brought her a new book but she wanted to pick a good one that would last her ages. As for me all that I wanted was to go back to normal school with all of my friends and play games with them and catch up on what happened during the war outside I know that we could hear it but we couldn't see what was happening and I want to feel the fresh air across my face, the wind whipping my hair left and right I want to go home I want my own room and my own space to do what I want to do I want to draw and gossip with my friends. We were all hugging I have never seen Pim and Mommy cry before it was so emotional I hugged Pim with all my strength and kissed Peter on the cheek, Mommy and I hugged and for the first time I felt like this hug was different it felt like it meant something bigger than the times before, this felt wonderful!

Anne

Dearest Kitty,

May 9th 1945

We have moved out! Pim and Mommy have bought us a beautiful home back in Frankfurt and guess what kitty I have my own room! I went swimming with Mommy in the river and I watched the sunset with Peter, I love you dearly,

Anne

Juliette Whitty

The Mysterious Death at Willow Creek

The darkness of the stormy night seemed to shroud the entire town of Willow Creek in an air of unease. I walked home from my friend's house, lost in thought, when the wail of sirens pierced the air. My curiosity got the better of me, and I made my way toward the old mansion on the hill, its greatness now tinged with a sense of anxiety.

As I got closer, I saw the lights of the police cars illuminating the face of the mansion. Mrs. Johnson, the inexplicable and isolated owner, was being carried out on a stretcher. A wave of dread washed over me. I approached the gathering of people, trying to push my way through the crowd to talk to my mother.

"Excuse me," I said to a police officer, who was speaking with my mother in a serious, hushed tone. "What's happening?"

The officer turned to me, with a serious expression. "We've had a murder. Mrs. Johnson was found dead in her bedroom with a knife lodged in her back."

A cold dread settled in the pit of my stomach. I couldn't help but think of all the times I'd seen Mrs. Johnson's bitter interactions with the townspeople. There was the well-known argument at the grocery store with Mr. Smith, and the argument she'd had with Mrs. Davis over a parking spot. Each incident had left a remaining sense of bitterness in the air.

As the police investigation began, I watched as suspects were questioned, each one seeming to have a motive for the crime. Mr. Smith's grudge against Mrs. Johnson was obvious, while Mrs. Davis's relationship with the victim was well-documented. But one person caught my attention: Emma, Mrs. Johnson's own niece, who had been living with her aunt for some time. Emma's behaviour seemed increasingly erratic in the past few weeks, and I couldn't help but notice the way she'd fidget during the questioning, casting nervous glances at her watch. As I watched, her eyes locked onto mine, and she flashed a strange, knowing smile. A shiver ran down my spine as I realized that Emma might be hiding more than just a nervous attitude.

The police investigation would be a long and arduous one, but I had a feeling that the key to unravelling the mystery lay hidden beneath the surface, waiting to be uncovered. As I stood there, watching Emma's every move, I couldn't shake the feeling that I was seeing something much more sinister than a simple murder – I was seeing the revealing of secrets, and the truth that lay hidden in the shadows of Willow Creek.

Isabela Gimena Laverna

Mo Chaitín Beag

Tá caitín beag agam,
Is álainn í go deo!
Tá a súile glas
Agus fionn a cóta.

Léimeann sí ar an tolg,
is ag rith timpeall an tí,
Ach nuair a thagann oíche,
Tagann sí chugam go ciúin.

Codlaíonn sí ar mo philiúr,
Le torann beag "purr purr,"
Mo chaitín beag is cara liom,
Go deo agus go bráth!

Juliette Whitty

Flüchtling

Ich bin auf der Flucht
Ich frage mich, wo ich leben werde
Ich höre Menschen schreien
Ich sehe nur Feuer und Flammen
Ich weiß nicht wo meine Familie ist
Ich bin Mensch

Wie viel Kraft?
Wie viel Mut?
Wie viel Glück?
Und wie viele Tränen kann man weinen?
Ich will nur frei sein.
Ich bin Flüchtling.

Amelia Phillips

Getaway

Will slammed his foot down on the throttle, propelling the car forward. His head was reeling with all the thoughts rushing through it, and he was almost seeing white. His pulse throbbed through his body as he tried to breathe easier, but he was seriously panicking. I have to get away. I have to get away. I have to get away. He just couldn't get his head around all of it.

All Will had wanted to do was come clean to his father. He didn't want to pretend anymore, pretend that he actually wanted this life his father had handpicked for him. He didn't want to go to law school. He didn't want to become some self-important congressman with a gold-digger wife and an inevitable power complex. He wanted to stay here in Jersey and work as a mechanic. Then he'd take Allie out in his red Ford Falcon, drive her to the Empire State and ask her to marry him. But his father had flipped.

It was like that cool, calm, professional persona, Mr. David Johnson always seemed to maintain had just been a pretence, and that deep down, he was just an angry, red-faced monster. Will didn't know why he ran. He could have, should have stood his ground. He was half a head taller than his father, and bulkier too from playing on the football team (his father had insisted) and from repairing cars all day in the sun. He knew he should have done something when his poor mother tried to stick up for him but instead got shoved to the side as his father continued his tirade on Will. No, instead Will ran. He bolted out of the house and into his Falcon, started it as fast as he could, and got the hell out of there.

As he had driven out, he'd seen his father run out onto the drive, yelling unintelligibly, his mother close behind, weeping into her hand and clutching her shoulder where she'd been pushed. In that moment, Will felt so much pain and anger, not just at his father, but at himself too. Why couldn't he be different, be the son his father wanted? Why was he such a coward that he couldn't even stay there to protect his own mother? He wanted to turn back, but he just couldn't. He couldn't put his parents and himself through all of that just to submit again.

All of this was scrambling about inside his brain, and he could hardly stay focused on the road. He thought about pulling over, but the same five words kept replaying in his mind; I have to get

away. I have to get away. I have to get away. So, he drove even farther. He couldn't breathe. But he had to keep going. He couldn't even see properly. But he had to keep going. He drove as far as his Falcon would take him. Was any of this right? Was this even the right decision, or had he just messed his whole future up? Suddenly, he felt bile rising from his stomach. He pulled over and threw up on the side of the road. He stayed there, crouched nearly to the floor, for who knows how long, fearing it would happen again.

A couple hours later, he was driving into New York City. It was early in the morning, and the summer sun was only beginning to show itself. The earliest risers were the sole individuals on the streets. Will was also growing tired. The harrowing experience from the night before had taken its toll and emotional exhaustion was pouring in as the adrenaline faded out. So, he pulled over against the curb and kicked his feet up on the passenger seat. He looked up at the horizon of the city and could make out the Empire State Building in the distance. It was a stark reminder of the decision he had made last night and how he now had to commit to it. But he'd had enough hours to think about all of that. He wanted to get away from it all, so he leaned his head back against the door and didn't even realize he'd closed his eyes before he was in a deep, dreamless slumber. As the morning progressed, he stayed asleep, and passers-by would make remarks to their company on how peaceful Will looked, like a man with not a care in the world.

But peace like that can only last so long before you must wake up and face the music.

Niamh Grehan

GET AWAY
GET AWAY

What Happened?

I wake suddenly. Where am I? What happened?
I hear a beeping sound almost like a heart monitor then suddenly I feel a huge pang in my heart. I look around the room; there is a ventilator and a monitor screen beside me. I am in a hospital, but what happened to me? On the windowsill, there is a stack of Get Well Soon cards all carefully arranged. Suddenly a nurse comes in and is shocked to see me awake. She runs out of the room shouting, Doctor Stevenson! Guess what? It's Poppy, she woke up! Then a man who I am guessing was Doctor Stevenson ran in towards me. He said 'how are you feeling? I suspect you are feeling a bit confused, but I promise we will just check up on you and then you will be free to go' 'it was a very hard fall, so I doubt you remember what happened, right?'

'Umm what happened?'

'Well people said that you fell off, but the way you fell it was almost like someone pushed you... but I have no way of knowing, OK let's get you checked up.' I went through a lot of testing, but then they said I could go. When I was gathering my cards up my mum and dad ran towards me, hugging me tight. 'We missed you so much, how do you feel?' 'Well, I am a bit confused, but I am OK, how long have I been in the hospital for'

'Oh, sweetie you have been in a coma for 16 days, we were so worried'

'16 days!'

'Yes, now let's go home we are having spaghetti Bolognese, your favourite!'

When I got home, I had the nicest shower ever. Then I got into my PJs and ate my dinner. While I was watching TV there was a knock on the door, it was my best friend, Scarlet, she said 'I heard the news, you woke up! I missed you, how are you?'

'I'm good thanks'

'OK well I must go now my mum said I can only come to check in on you because it is getting dark, bye'

'Bye.'

That night I lay awake thinking about what the doctor said about the way I fell it was almost like someone pushed me. I felt like I was in a maze, and I was unable to find the exit.

In the morning, I was eating my cereal when my parents called me to sit down in the living room, as I walked in, I noticed my father had red eyes and dark circles under his eyes. I sat down and my mum spoke

'Poppy, you did not fall... it was Scarlet, she pushed you ...'

Jasmine Bohill

A Christmas Surprise

Zara awoke with a gleam in her eyes
Certain that Santa had surely swung by,
She slipped on her slippers and flew down the stairs
Her heart full of joy and her mind full of wonder
She flung the door open expecting a sight
But no shiny bike came during the night.
She searched through the house, the kitchen the hall
But no presents awaited, no presents at all.

With tears in her eyes, she ran back to bed
"Did Santa forget about me?", she quietly said.
"Don't worry" said Mom, as she wiped Zara's tears
Then she helped look for clues to allay all her fears.
She flung back the curtains, as Zara's heart soared
There stood her bike and the presents she adored.
Santa had come, as Zara had dreamed
Just hidden her treasures where sunlight beamed.
So, Zara had learned, with a heart full of joy
That sometimes surprise provides the most joy!

Andrea Whelan

Crossing the Hill

"Mia, aren't you going to put your bag in the boot?" Dad asked, sentence cut down the middle by the slam of the door. The radio was playing some song I didn't know.

I grumbled some wordless response and stuffed my bag between my shoes. He was quiet for a few seconds. I realised he was staring at me, still awaiting an answer.

"Not bothered really..."

...A quick "okay". Another guitar came into the song. He turned the radio up very slowly, glancing over and over at me, sheepishly. It just about sang over the engine as we took off.

My chest was fluttering and I took strange notice of the trees and birds and shadows. The sun was clear and spilled onto brave things that kept the ground behind them cold and blue. Smart squirrels and pigeons went about their days. It was pretty. Then I got bored.

Dad's eyes were locked straight ahead and his finger tapped on the steering wheel until the song was coming to a close, and his left hand stood like a spider ready to jump on the volume dial. He sheltered my sensitive young ears from the sound effects and unfamiliar voices naming the station.

They went to ads. They were the kind that spoke to Dad directly: home insurance, car insurance, life assurance—Jesus, insurance companies are the only thing keeping this radio station alive, I almost said. His eyes had been set on the road for those few minutes.

Another ad. "So, how's Mum been?" Dad said.

She didn't come down the driveway to him... "She's been pretty good, er, alright I guess."

"Making you study hard?"

"Yeah."

"And what about you? You still playing bass in the band?"

"No, we broke up a month or two ago,"

"Oh."

"...all smartphones, tablets and laptops." And then some incoherent rush of words. Then another ad.

Dad groaned. "Are there any radio stations you like?"

I thought for a moment, but gave up. "Nah. It's fine." Honestly I didn't mind this station. It was a bit boring and too old for me, but fine. Besides, I don't really listen to the radio enough to know the stations—and even if I did, there wouldn't be many targeted at me and if there was they probably wouldn't play much music. And I doubt he'd be interested in it.

At last they came back from the ad break. Dad eyed the dial, but moved his hand onto the gear stick as we came onto a main road. Jangly guitars like the end of a 2000s movie. Two friends leaning on each other. A three-legged walk into the sun.

"How's school going?"

"Good."

He nodded and tapped his foot with the music. A drummer mistaking the brake and accelerator for his kick and hi-hat. Finally he turned the radio up, then lowered it two points. He looked sheepish again. I'm staring, I realised. I looked out the window and nodded along. Grass, pavement and joggers in garish luminous vests as if the sun wasn't enough to see them. Lord, the drive to school is long. "And the sun went down," The protagonist laughed at his best friend's joke. "...cross the hill"...

The song finished and we hadn't said another word to each other.

"How are your friends at school?"

"They're good. Luk- Sarah's invited me to go bowling tonight." Only a few more hours.

He paused and squinted as if trying to solve a puzzle, then said, "That sounds nice."

We were quiet for a while as they recounted recent soccer matches. Many Irish boys (and some others) probably wept, while many probably jeered and celebrated and chanted the names of men who played for English teams. Dad must've been running out of ten-second conversations to start (for the better—I was growing tired of it), as we sat in that silence until part way into a song, where I got lost in thoughts about that night's plans and counting how many hours I was obligated to trudge through to get there.

When I came back from that there was a new song playing.

Dad was staring at the road and quietly tapping to the beat. He must've realised we weren't really going to connect and adopted the same attitude as me. He turned to me and smiled just a little, then went back to himself. I don't know what that meant.

I got lost in more drowsy thoughts that melted from the morning sun until the song was over and they went back to ads. Even though he was still the exact target demographic for them, Dad tapped the wheel impatiently.

Insurance.

Insurance.

A concert.

Insurance.

Then a supermarket. "Up to 40% off on all the lunchbox essentials, including rice cakes, fruit and veg, and more!" A child's voice—"Mum! Wh—"

Dad's hand flew at the off button. It made me jump out of my slouch. I looked up at him like a child. He flicked the indicator up.

He was quiet for a long time then.

We got off the main road and I occupied myself with the diverse shades of white walls and bright green hedges that caged the houses from the world. A girl about my age with a bright teal bag walked to school in her grey skirt and red jumper.

Dad's hand only moved from the wheel to point. "That's a nice house," he mumbled.

Mmhm, I tried to say but it got stuck in my throat, so there was nothing said for a while. More two-storey houses, more grey skirts, more hedges. The only thing I could hear was the growl of the engine.

The last few minutes felt like twenty, but eventually I could see the school. Dad stopped in front of the gate and finally looked away from the road. He spent a second looking at me, silent.

"Goodbye Mia, have a nice day!"

I watched him drive off, glad it was over and he was gone.

Daniel Molyneux

Happiness is a Fragile Thing

(A found poem)

The evening sun's sadness is intensely sad,
A winter's bother was brewing then,
When Celia forgave me all too soon.

Like a maid she blushed, and
The physical universe stopped
In the screech of a soul screech.

In foaming gulps it swallowed everything.

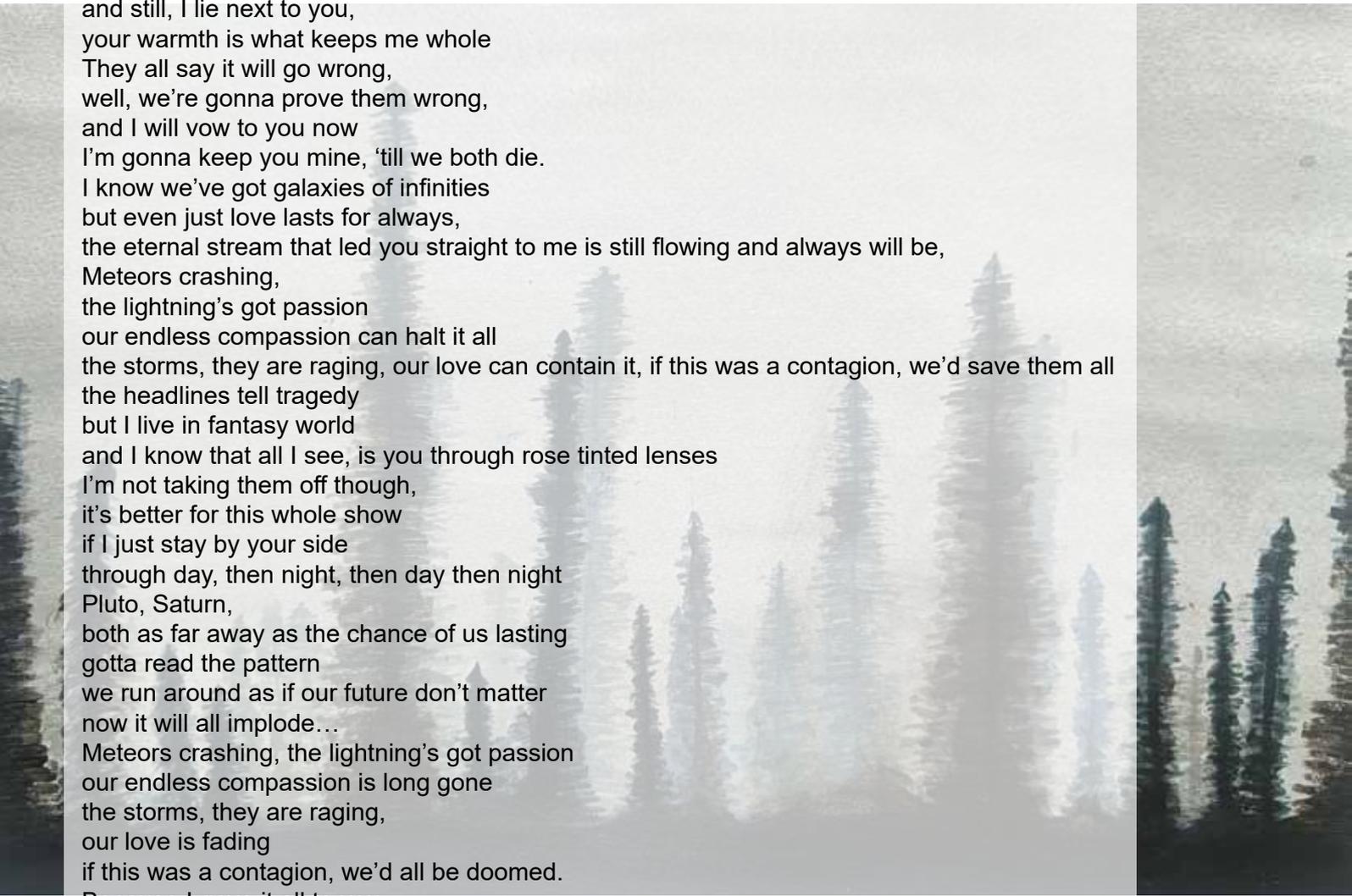
'Stop your words, they fall on my ears as profitless as water in a sieve,' I said.
'I want to be one with everything,' Celia replied.

There was never a clear-cut line between normal people and us.

Happiness is a fragile thing.

TY Creative Writing class

Meteors Crashing



I met you last year today
it felt like the great escape
and still, I lie next to you,
your warmth is what keeps me whole
They all say it will go wrong,
well, we're gonna prove them wrong,
and I will vow to you now
I'm gonna keep you mine, 'till we both die.
I know we've got galaxies of infinities
but even just love lasts for always,
the eternal stream that led you straight to me is still flowing and always will be,
Meteors crashing,
the lightning's got passion
our endless compassion can halt it all
the storms, they are raging, our love can contain it, if this was a contagion, we'd save them all
the headlines tell tragedy
but I live in fantasy world
and I know that all I see, is you through rose tinted lenses
I'm not taking them off though,
it's better for this whole show
if I just stay by your side
through day, then night, then day then night
Pluto, Saturn,
both as far away as the chance of us lasting
gotta read the pattern
we run around as if our future don't matter
now it will all implode...
Meteors crashing, the lightning's got passion
our endless compassion is long gone
the storms, they are raging,
our love is fading
if this was a contagion, we'd all be doomed.
Because I gave it all to you,
and you took it all from me.

Bella Shields

The Albatross

He sails smoothly across the cerulean ceiling,
His wings as still as a leaden boulder.
The ocean fades seamlessly into the snow globe sky of pure azure.
Roaming rootless, the lonesome nomad.

Gliding since sunrise when dawn broke the horizonless dark.
The solitary fisherman isolated on the infinite sea
Wise in his wayfaring, the woeful wanderer.

Bound by nothing, burdened by unceasing space.
The pelagic voyager and his inescapable eternity.

Another Land

Another day blown by in the winds of time
And simple pleasures have been satisfying my
mind,
The sinful apple of distraction
Takes my mind away from every action
Of the serpents who fork their minds into conflicts
That they keep forgotten.

Created by a growth of wealth in our class,
A culture of turning the flowers to grass
Marks its tireless efforts to make a world more
human
A resort where once a field would bloom and-
I'm losing concentration again
My book is open, phone in hand,

My mind is back in another land.

Liam O'Mahony

Ode to a Place

I told the water my secrets
Because I knew it would carry them back
To you.

With the summer sun blistering my shoulders,
Feet dangling in the arctic sea,
I said everything I need you to know.

The waves wafted away
Towards your shore
Carrying my words.
Slowly, gently.

I trust the reliability of the tide
With secrets from my soul.

Just like how,
When the time is right,
I will trust it to carry my atoms to you
To compress our dust tightly together.
Fossilised, forever

Aylin Ustuner

Daisy

'You're so beautiful,'
Were Grandad's last words to my sister.
My memories of him a mere whisper.
A single daisy stands, being wrestled by the wind,
While white petals coat the ground beneath
As Winter wins the battle.

But unlike this daisy, Grandad is not alone,
Even when his coffin is covered in dirt and stone.
Flowers still coat the grave of the man who lived, and left.
Passing strangers will smile at this place,
An old man shown so much love, even in death.

And every spring, when the winter has passed,
A young girl visits that grave, and plants a flower upon the dirt,

A Daisy.

The messages he shared, the lessons he taught,
The people he inspired and those who bloomed under his touch,
Is how he got his nickname,

Daisy.

Juliet Bell

Murder on Maple Street

They were a normal family, living in a normal house on a perfectly normal street. No one could have expected what happened next. It was a very stormy Christmas Eve and Mr. and Mrs. Samuels had cooked a lovely dinner for their children, Sarah, and Daniel. Also in attendance was Mr and Mrs. Ray, their children, Sam aged six and Nora aged nine and lastly, Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson, but what they did not know is that this dinner would haunt them for years to come.

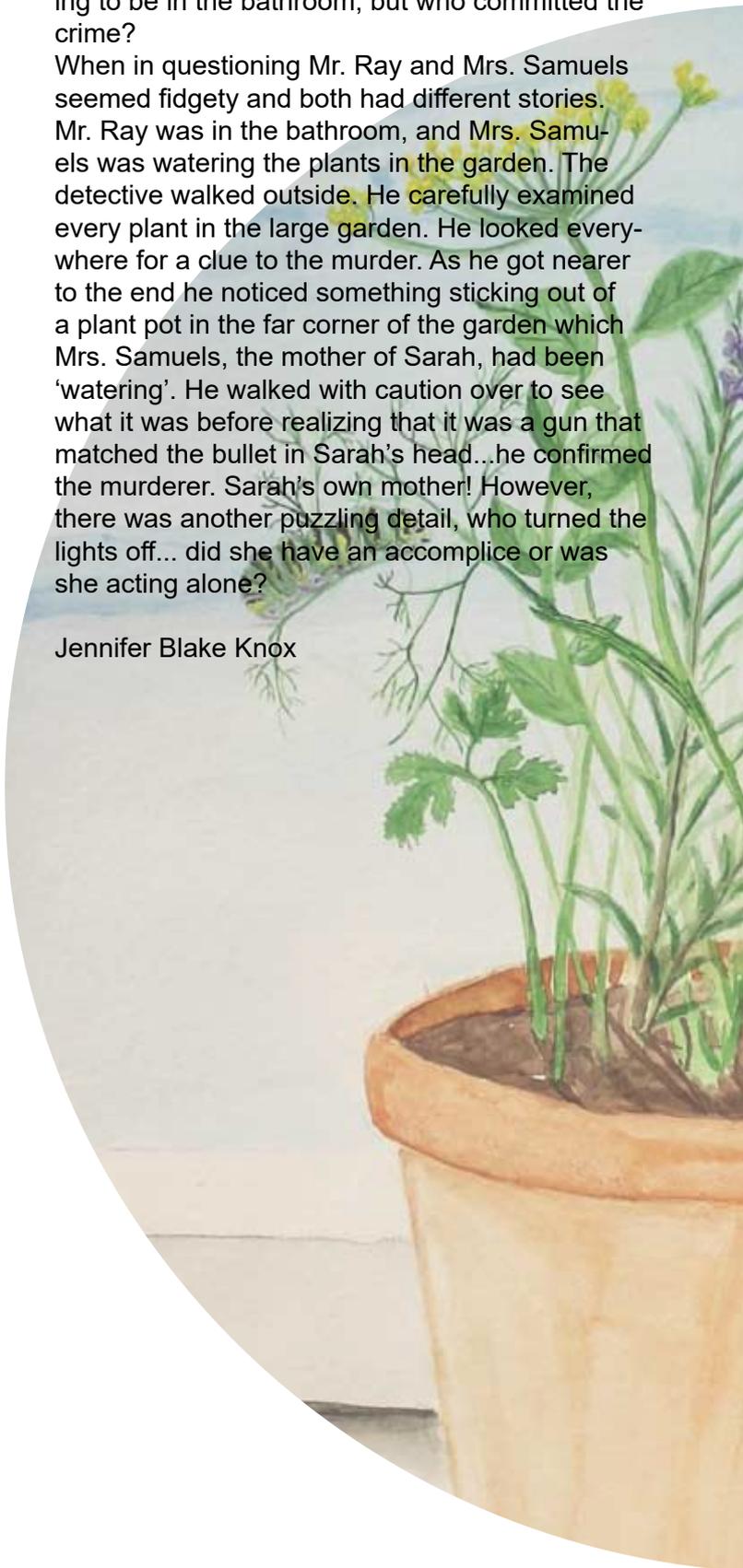
Daniel offered to pour a drink for his sister and cousins. Little did they know that it would be the drink that would change their life forever. As he reached for the already open bottle of Seven Up, he poured four glasses out and returned to the laughter and joy. He put the glasses in front of them and returned to his seat. 'Thank you' Nora replied followed by Sarah and Sam when suddenly there was a knock on the door. Sarah went to answer it when the lights suddenly went out. There was a swift bang. Panic rose throughout the room and there was a distant scream after the lights came back on. Everyone was very startled, but no one could have expected what would happen next.

Sam looked around the room still flushed with tears when he asked "W-w-where's Sarah?!" Suddenly Daniel had a bad feeling in his gut that her scream was not caused by the light turning off suddenly. He rushed to the door and saw her lifeless body pouring with blood from her skull and he shrieked and stumbled back before screaming for his family "mum, mum! Call the police s-s-she is dead!!" Mr. Samuels rushed Nora and Sam up the stairs before sprinting to the scene. When he saw it, he broke down crying. Mrs. Samuels rushed in hysterically soon after preparing herself for the worst, "the police are on the way" she said sorrowfully trying to cope with the tragic events that had happened in the last few minutes. Seven minutes later the police came with Detective Jones as he investigated the crime scene, he found a bloody white glove under the table beside the door that narrowed the chances of finding any fingerprints. He walked around the house looking for leads when he spotted the matching pair to the white glove on the kitchen counter beside a bottle of seven up. At last, he had his first suspect! "Daniel how come the glove was right beside the bottle of seven up you had used just minutes prior?" he asked. As he took Daniel in for questioning, Daniel told him how his aunt had walked into the kitchen just after him claiming to look for a glass of water, but was this true

Detective Jones pondered. He went to question more people, however everyone seemed to have the same story, Mr. Ray and Mrs. Samuels were not at the table when the lights went out claiming to be in the bathroom, but who committed the crime?

When in questioning Mr. Ray and Mrs. Samuels seemed fidgety and both had different stories. Mr. Ray was in the bathroom, and Mrs. Samuels was watering the plants in the garden. The detective walked outside. He carefully examined every plant in the large garden. He looked everywhere for a clue to the murder. As he got nearer to the end he noticed something sticking out of a plant pot in the far corner of the garden which Mrs. Samuels, the mother of Sarah, had been 'watering'. He walked with caution over to see what it was before realizing that it was a gun that matched the bullet in Sarah's head...he confirmed the murderer. Sarah's own mother! However, there was another puzzling detail, who turned the lights off... did she have an accomplice or was she acting alone?

Jennifer Blake Knox



Déjà vu

The man lowered himself onto the bench, exhaling. He shoved his hand into his pocket and took out a pack of cigarettes, ripping off the plastic and taking one out. He flicked his lighter and lit it, taking a long drag.

On breathing it out, he shivered. The grey day had seeped into his bones; the clouds reflected his mood, as ever. He'd tell himself it's February blues, but he knew that wasn't true. A seagull squawking pulled him out of his thoughts, and he watched as the bird leapt from the water and propelled itself into the sky. The ripples on the pond from where it left expanded across the dark surface. Brown and red leaves had fallen in, and the swans and ducks swum around them.

The man turned up the collar of his black coat and pulled down the brim of his hat slightly. He waited, putting the cigarette to his lips once again, and let his eyes travel across the bank, to the bench on the other side of the pond. It was empty.

He sighed. He seemed to be doing that very often lately.
His fingers were cold.
He felt a sense of Déjà vu. The feeling of it was familiar.

The man put out the cigarette. A part of him wanted to pull out his phone and text someone - anyone really. Anyone who would listen. Another part of him was not bothered to and knew there was only one person who he wanted to listen to him and there was almost no chance they would.

Time passed – half an hour to be exact. He would only give himself that amount now. It used to be longer. The first day it was five hours.

He stood up, and, with one last glance, looked across the bank, and then left.

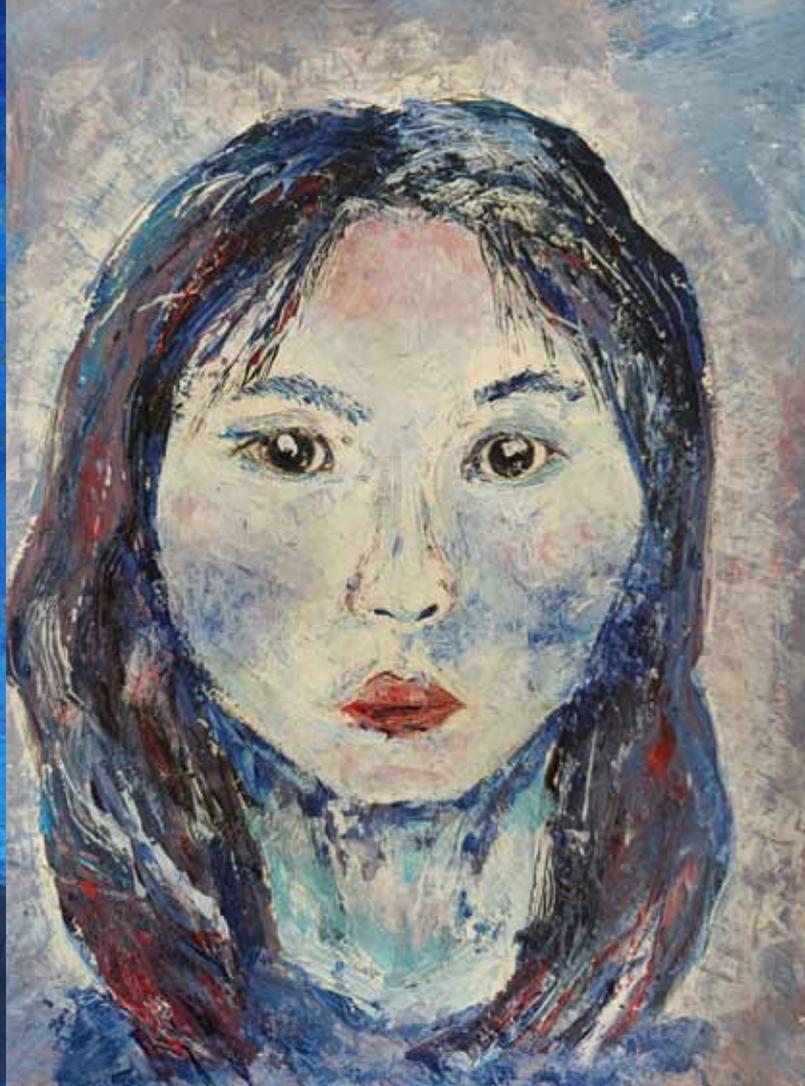
He would be back, just like yesterday, and the day before that, and the one before that. He would look across the pond again, hoping to see her, just like he had the very first day, when he knew. When everything was better.

Charlotte Donohue

Tá mo spúnóg

In aice leis an bhfuinneog
Le mo ghráinneog
Ag ithe sceallóg
Ar an duilleog
Trasna ón spideog
Agus buachaill óg
Ag imirt leadóige

Thea Heriot





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