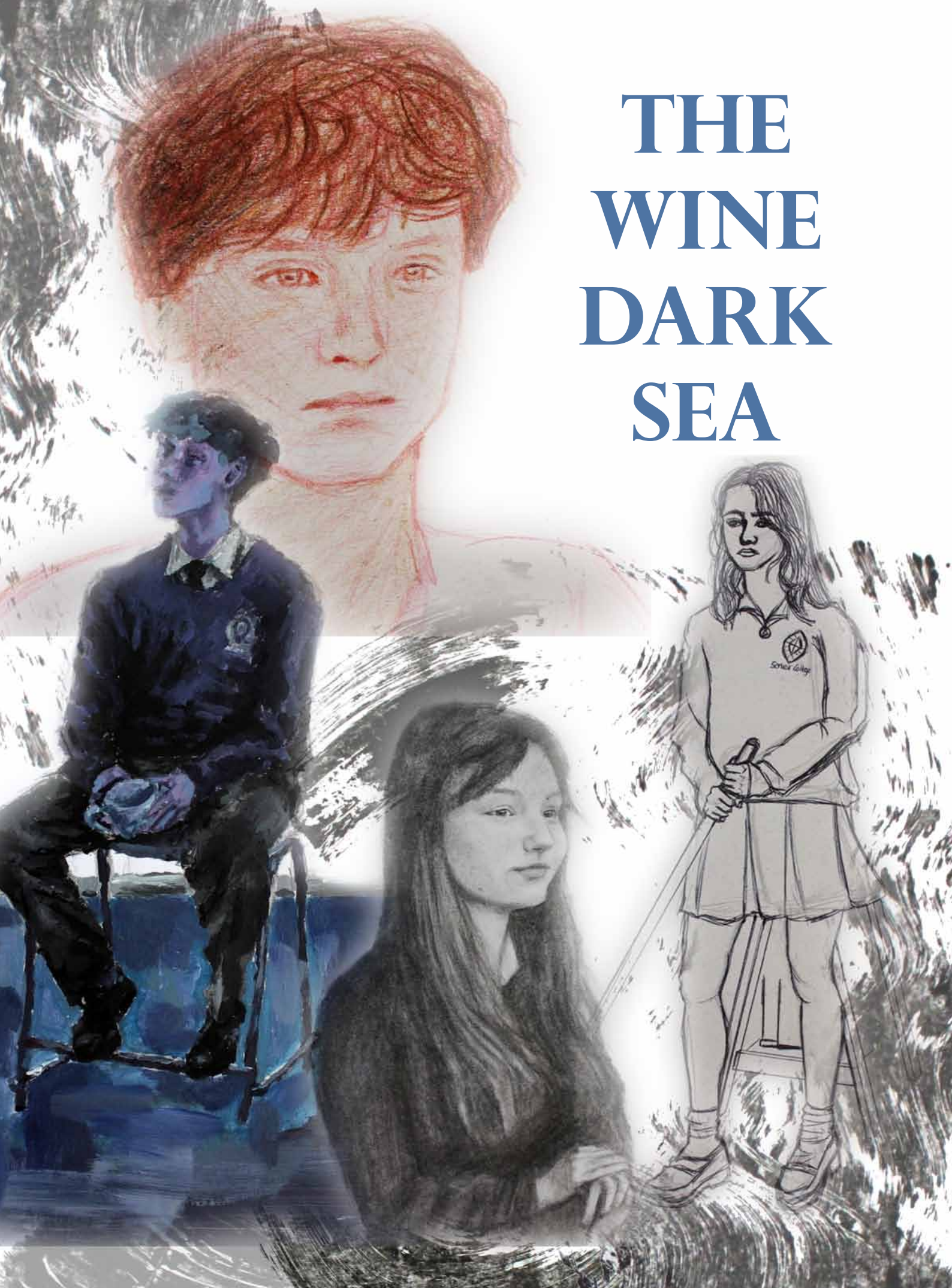


THE WINE DARK SEA







The Wine Dark Sea

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





I am delighted to welcome you to the twenty-third edition of The Wine-Dark Sea. 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 my colleagues in the English department for supporting their students with their writing and your kindness in putting up with my constant pestering. Thanks also go to the Irish Department (especially Tracey Murphy and Siobhan O'O'hUadhaigh). Great credit goes to the French and German departments for similar dedication and fortitude in the face of my relentless requests for work.

Thanks also to all 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. Reading the Junior School submissions is a highlight of my year, every year.

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

The design and layout of the magazine is all down to the sharp eye of Ailbhe Garvey, her unique style really gives the publication a sense of prestige. My sincerest thanks go to her and the Art Department for the sumptuous visual feast they give us every year.

A massive thanks goes to all the students whose literary work and artwork appear in these pages. It's a terrific achievement to collaborate on such a worthwhile project. I hope you'll spend a lifetime going to the creative well to draw the inspiration that allows your art to bloom. If you do this, day in, day out, you will grow a forest whose trees will provide shade for future readers and writers.

My final thanks go to Rob Micallef. Rob has always been a great advocate of this publication and his support over the years as a friend and colleague has been invaluable. It is with this in mind that I dedicate this edition of The Wine-Dark Sea to him in recognition of his wonderful support of the arts in the college over the years.

Robert McDermott

Orpheus and Eurydice retold from Hades' perspective

I was sitting in the gloomy depths of the Underworld, when I decided to shape-shift into a serpent. Although I am mostly uninterested in the doings of mortals and gods in their petty little world of the living, there are times when I quite enjoy myself in watching their laughable predicaments. What I entered into when I came up into the dreadful sunniness, was particularly interesting.

A wedding was taking place between Orpheus of Thrace and Eurydice the Auloniad. As a rule, weddings fill me with boredom, whereas deaths are my specialty. However, this was different. I perched on a branch to the right of the wedding ceremony, and watched keenly. In all outward appearance, it seemed like a usual, dull wedding. So why was I somehow captivated by this one? It came to me in an instant; there was definitely an air of foreboding. I wriggled with evil delight and watched on.

Among the olive trees, Orpheus and Eurydice said their vows, and all seemed blissful. It was then time for Hymenaeus, to bless the marriage. I watched him light the ring of torches, which would show that the gods favoured the marriage. The torch flickered and struggled as a thick cloud descended. The crowd's eyes prickled with tears at this terrible ill omen. Could this mean death? I wondered hopefully. A sense of delightful anticipation swelled in my heart. Yes, I will definitely be keeping an eye on Orpheus and Eurydice, I decided. To my disgust, the unfortunate happenings had not seemed to phase the young couple too much, and they left the wedding for the Epaulia looking as happy as ever.

A few months had passed and I had taken a few more trips up to the land of the living to check what terrible fate may have befallen Orpheus and Eurydice, but much to my frustration, every time I visited they seemed happier than before. Suddenly a profound thought came to me, with the deepest joy can also come the deepest pain and suffering. One day, I decided it was time to check up on Orpheus and Eurydice again. I found Eurydice in a field, not with Orpheus for once, but with other nymphs. They were dancing in the long wispy grass, a light pink flush on the youthful cheeks of their fair complexions, as they moved around, joyful

and carefree.


Anger took hold of me, and I hissed in disgust. Was Hymenaeus and the torch that would not burn mistaken? How much longer would I have to wait for tragedy to strike? As these thoughts raced through my head, it slowly dawned on me that maybe I would not have to wait for something to happen. After all, I am Hades, the mighty god of the Underworld and conveniently also a venomous snake. Yesssss, it was all piecing together. Without further ado, I silently slithered through the long grass, reaching the dancing feet of my victim.

It's harder than you would think to bite the fast moving foot of a dancing nymph, but quickly enough, I caught the perfect moment, and swiftly sank my sharp fangs into Eurydice's ankle. The venom quickly overcame her. Her slight figure went limp and folded into a heap among the grass. The twisted face of sudden sharp pain from my bite permanently froze on her face. The colour and warmth quickly drained from her cheeks, so alive just a couple of seconds ago, now stone cold and white. She was dead. I slithered back to the undergrowth, to observe what would happen next.

The nymphs left and returned with Orpheus. As soon as he laid eyes on his dead wife, an unearthly cry of anguish escaped him. He slowly fell to his knees and tears rushed like waterfalls silently down his cheeks. He was a sight to be pitied, even by me. He gathered Eurydice's corpse up in his arms, and sat with her in the privacy of the long grass for hours. It was like time had stopped and nothing else was happening or mattered. Finally he left, carrying Eurydice, presumably to lay her to rest and make sure the burial rights were completed correctly.

I went back up to the land of the living a couple of times after the death of Eurydice, and found Orpheus in a despairing state. He would play the most sorrowful yet beautiful and moving music on his lyre, on the sea-shore from dawn till dusk. Everyone knew about the grief of Orpheus of Thrace, his music reached every corner of the earth and moved the world to tears.

One day, as I was sitting on my throne in Tartarus with Persephone by my side, Apollo entered, and explained how Orpheus wanted



to ask for Eurydice's return. After much persuading, I agreed. Apollo left, and soon that most famous melody struck my ears and a minute later Orpheus appeared, singing and playing his lyre so beautifully. He had charmed the ferryman Charon and the three-headed dog Cerberus, guardians of the River Styx, and now stood before Persephone and me. His music and grief instantly moved us both to tears. Indeed, all the souls of the Underworld were greatly moved. Eurydice appeared before Orpheus, and cried tears of grief, love and hope. I granted Orpheus permission to return to the world of light and life with his beloved wife on the condition that he did not look back during his ascent out of the Underworld. Orpheus and Eurydice could only see each other again once they were safely out. Orpheus, obviously shocked and delighted at my leniency agreed and thanked me. Tears of relief and flowed down his and Eurydice's cheeks. I think deep down I knew he would not be able to fulfil this simple sounding condition. Despite my emotional reaction to Orpheus' music, I pushed that side of me down, as a happy ever after simply cannot be. Orpheus could not leave with Eurydice, there had to be a condition. So up the rocky hill climbed Orpheus, holding his lyre and Eurydice right behind him. I watched them, an arm's reach away from the brink of day, the light of the sun already shining on their faces. I caught my breath in a conflict of emotions. I was almost embarrassed, to think that I was moved

so much by the mere music of a mortal, to let him take back his wife who had died, and leave the Underworld, over which I am the king, with such ease. And so, impulsively, I flung my crown and sceptre onto the rocky ground, creating a terrific crash, as Orpheus swung round, and letting out a howl of dismay watched as Eurydice fell down, down, down.

A few hours later Orpheus re-joined us in the Underworld. I later heard that he had been walking through the forest, and being so distraught with grief, refused to join in the maenads of Dionysus dance. They saw this as great disrespect to their goddess Dionysus, and they tore him to pieces, limb from limb, and threw him in the river. The Muses then gathered up some parts of his body and buried them, but Orpheus' head and lyre floated down the river and were never retrieved. Orpheus' soul returned here, and is now with his beloved Eurydice forever. I watch them day by day as they wander hand in hand like the day they married, united at last. Nevertheless, they can never experience true happiness again, not in the Underworld. Still, they can never be parted again, and for them that is consolation enough.

A Soldier's Goodbye

I stand in disbelief. In awe. In pain. Before me is my brother, or rather was my brother. He lies deep beneath the mud and the remains of other soldiers' corpses. His whole being is eradicated, his identity destroyed, his life no longer. Now he lies, lifeless, on top of the hundreds of other soldiers who died fighting bravely for their country today, but no one acknowledges them, no one praises them, no one honours them. Captains turn a blind eye and continue to ship more young men to their utter deaths and all for the 'glory' of their country. Yet I stand here watching, waiting, and watching and waiting. Till I finally get up, brush a tear off my cheek and walk away. It was the hardest moment of my life, to walk away, to utter the last word of goodbye to him for the very last time. His spirit still lives though, and I will be sure to prolong it, to remember and honour him. So long, dear brother. Goodbye for now, till we meet again. Until we meet again.

Sophie O'Connor

The Family Prophet

My Iraqi grandfather is a rather interesting man. He loves to tell stories and is someone with whom I have had a myriad of story-worthy experiences.

My grandpa's tales are not always filled with excitement or all too captivating, and they are often hard to follow, because he recites them slowly, with many intermittent pauses as he chews thoughtfully on a clove. However, I find it amusing when he brings us to a world where he is a young, energetic man.

Just recently, I went to visit my grandpa in America. When we arrived, he made it known that he had a 'prophecy' awaiting all his grandchildren. After his nap, my granddad toddled into the living room and sank into his worn, plush armchair. One by one, he filled us in on what our futures had in store. For my prophecy, he paused again. Then he spoke. "Liam does the work without bragging or telling everyone. He just does it by himself in his own way, and that is why he is going to be a professor." This was his explanation, although I'm quite confident that it was because of my glasses.

We enjoyed listening to my grandfather's prophecies as he played the role of the wise old man in the family, somewhat resembling Master Yoda as he slumped in his chair, chuckling to himself after every sentence. I loved that day of tales and prophecies and deeply hope that I can develop the same passion for storytelling as my grandpa.

Liam O'Mahony

The Undiscovered Country

Death. It is such a mysterious thing, yet it has happened and will happen to everyone. The definition of the word is 'the irreversible cessation of all vital functions,' yet it is so much more than that. It's not just a carton of milk expiring. It is a person, a human just like you and I, whose life has ended. Their smile, their laugh, their personality, their soul is all gone. Moreover, the real kicker to it is that no one knows what happens after death. You may believe in the afterlife, heaven. You may believe in reincarnation, being reborn. Alternatively, you may believe that you're just going to lie six feet under in a coffin with the lights off for... forever I suppose. But that's up to you.

My neighbour, Mary's death is the death of this story. I had known Mary for a long time. She was just such a nice woman, and she was always smiling, sitting out on her porch, taking in the sun. I also happen to be close with her three granddaughters, but particularly one named Lily, who is the same age as me. They used to come around at the weekends to visit Peg, and we became friends. Back in late October, they went on a holiday to America and left Mary in Ireland, not expecting anything bad to happen. Unfortunately, Mary had a fall and broke her leg. She went to the hospital, and, though they were worried about her, they expected she would be fine there. Sadly, Mary developed an infection in her blood, and by the time the doctors figured it out, it was already too late. I hadn't been told any of this until the day before her funeral. My mum came in and told me that Mary had passed away. Obviously, I was quite sad, and I shed a few tears. My mum asked me whether I wanted to go to the wake or not. I was a bit weary because I had never seen a dead person before, but I wanted to go even just to comfort Lily.

The day of the wake came. I went with my dad and my other neighbour. We arrived, and we went into the funeral home. Lily's dad was standing outside, and he told me I should see her. So, I walked through the room, which was full of sad faces, some of which I knew, others I didn't. I found her at the back of the room with Mary. Mary looked different, not like a completely different person; she just looked a bit different. She had her red lipstick on, nails also painted red, and she had her fur coat on. She always had these little things, but

she was paler, and her cheeks were a bit sunken.

Lily was sitting with her, and she looked different too. She was very unlike her usual self. She has always been a quieter person, but somehow, she was even quieter then. She was zoned out, even though she acted like she was engaged in conversation with me. She kept on reaching into the coffin to hold Mary's hand. She said she felt cold, which I assumed would be the case. Then my dad came over and said we were leaving. So, I said goodbye to Lily and goodbye to Mary and I went home. For the rest of that evening, I felt a bit odd, like there was a constant lump in my throat and a pit in my stomach. But nothing too serious.

To be honest, I was fine during the whole situation; it was just a memorable experience for me since it was the first death of a person that I had genuine connections to. All my relatives and my friends are alive, and I count myself lucky in the sense that I always have so many people around me. And when their time comes, I will be like Lily, grieving. And when my time comes (though I haven't really thought about that yet) I know that there will be people who will grieve for me, and the cycle will continue. Because life and death are a cycle, it's just one that's unknown, or as Shakespeare put it the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns.

Niamh Grehan



Two Poems

I (Touch)

Shake my limbs until they collapse
On you they'll fall and drown,
Like a silken robe,
Drowning out sirens calling
Trains chasing minds and body
I'll dance on a fallen step,
Spin spin spin
We'll be spinning

Until the rain drowns and drones
Fast and forward, a rehearsal dinner,
Real leaning
Fake fall,
It may yet be the endless whirlpool.
Thought feeling
Golden and glittering still so warm to touch
Splaying stranded strokes on each finger

Loops, furls of undying ceiling fans
Leaps and bounds, chase, chase
Whorls you cried on me,
Relaying sweat soaked love
Lonely love that drones and drowns
Resisting caresses,
Really just touch.

Peeling orange melon
Wringing back edges on table top,
Rectangular rotten ridges
Cracked with name forlorn,
Pretty in cursive upside down follow me,
Chase me around
Tip to top slow fast removing rinse repeat,
Real love,
Pleading porous thoughts
Over cocoa beans
Dribble,
Lying soul, you dark and deep down it all
Lofty smiles translate touch
Simple bruising premonitions,
Thought by voice and voice by rage

Rage in touch and touch in love.

II (Holding)

I'll sit on the chair opposite the table holding
the vase
I'll stare at it till its knocked down
Replaced
I still sit there waiting
Watching for another fall
Another pick up
Call me this time
Before you decide to break
Over and over
I know you're smiling
Glassy eyes and a slimy smile
A Malicious view
That's you

A clinical ignorance
That's you
Leaping over warnings and calling mistakes
problems
You're a vase
Keep yourself in check
While I know you can decide
I hope you decide to call me next time you
decide to break
I'll hear you crack and shrill
I'll pay to replace you
Over and
Over

The wood checks appear beneath me
Years and years on end
I'll sit on the chair opposite the table holding
the vase
Holding is a stretch.

Varshika Mecheri



A Walk in the Woods

I decided to go for a walk in the woods to clear my head from all the noise of New York because nature always clears my head. I entered the tranquil woods, and I decided to take a different route than I normally do. I strolled down this a narrow dirt path and passed the towering oak trees. Suddenly, a gust of wind blew. I would have fallen over if I had not caught hold of one of the branches of the oak trees. I turned to go back when something in my gut told me that I should keep exploring and clear my head. I strolled a bit further until my feet became tired all of a sudden. I dragged myself across the dirt till I saw an old wooden bench with moss scattered on it. I hobbled towards it and sat down on it. I took out my phone and checked my location, but my phone was out of battery, and I felt a bit lightheaded, until I found myself drifting to sleep.

Sometime later, I woke up to the trickling sound of a shy stream near to where I was lying. I wandered over to it and could see little fish playing with each other in the water. I decided to follow the river to see if it led me out of the forest. I sauntered down the dirt path, the river beside me and I looked up to see the colour of the sky. It glowed in different shades of pink and purple and the clouds looked fluffy. I realised that the sun was about to set, and I needed to get out of here somehow.

I ran as fast as I could and followed the river. I started panting for breath just before I came across a magnificent waterfall. I recognized the waterfall, which meant that I was nearly out of the woods.

Finally, I arrived at a clearing, sat down on a clean rickety old bench, and watched the sun set. The sun was like a bright big pink ball of fire falling towards the horizon. As the sun sank, darkness started to surround me. I hurried back home eager to get into bed. I opened the door and scampered up the stairs, I got dressed and turned off my light. I threw myself onto my bed, snuggled underneath my covers and started to dream about my adventure in the woods.

Darina Fewer

Spring

Flowers blooming,
Spring has started,
Easter looming,
Winter departed.

Bees swarming,
Birds are nesting,
Bodies warming,
No time for resting.

Children playing,
Grass is growing,
Leaves are budding,
Dads are mowing.

Playgrounds filling,
Warm breezes blow,
Farmers lambing,
As new lives, grow.

Feeling the warmth of the new Spring sun,
Happy times, 'cos Spring has sprung.

Jackson Tiernan

A Final Gift

Holly loved growing up in Oaklands housing estate on the outskirts of Dublin. She lived with her parents on a cul-de-sac leading into a wood where Holly went walking with her grandmother. It was an idyllic childhood but it felt like Holly's world was disappearing.

It had been six months since Holly's Grandmother passed away. She had lived just three doors down and Holly used to drop in every afternoon. The estate seemed quieter now and news that the wood was going to be cleared to make way for a new housing estate left a cloud hanging over the community.

It was late autumn when Holly went for a walk in the wood and the blanket of leaves, which had brought such colour, was now hard to decipher from the brown earth beneath. Trudging through the leaves, Holly made her way to the oak tree whose gnarly branches stretched out and provided shelter from the rain. Sitting there, she noticed something she hadn't before, as she stripped away the ivy winding its way around the enormous trunk, she was amazed to see her grandparents' names carved into the bark.

Holly reached out and tentatively placed her fingers into a crudely carved heart shape around the names. 'That tickles you know' came a voice that immediately caused Holly to turn around but there was nobody there. 'Who said that?' Holly called back. 'I did' the voice replied and suddenly, to her amazement, Holly realized that the voice was coming from the tree! 'Who are you?' asked Holly. 'I'm a talking tree' came the reply. 'You're what?' 'A talking tree' the mighty oak said again, 'although perhaps I'm a tree that can talk rather than a talking tree as I've been pretty quiet for the last 250 years!'

'Do you remember my Grandparents?' asked Holly. 'A lovely couple, although that carving hurt a little' laughed the tree. 'Wow' exclaimed Holly, 'that was a long time ago'. 'Not for me' the tree replied, 'I've been around quite a while and I've seen a lot of history'. 'Do you know this was where the rebel leaders hid out in 1916, sure some of their things are still buried where you're standing?' Suddenly Holly had an idea, she raced home and returned with her father's metal detector and a spade from their garden shed. It didn't take long before she uncovered an old tin box and inside was a paper

she recognized from her history class, 'To The People of Ireland...' it began. An original draft of the proclamation!

At the museum, Holly saw excitement on the curator's face and that's when things started to look up. The wood was designated a site of historical significance, planning permission was refused and the trees were saved. The oak tree never spoke again and Holly began to wonder – was it all a dream or just a final gift from her Grandmother?

Norah Tinney



2023

This is a poem about how I want to be,
As the new year starts 2023,
I want to see a better me
Be more kind and helpful and be the best i can be
I want to recycle every day
And be kind to the planet in every possible way

These are the things I would like to see,
As the new year starts 2023
A much cleaner sea,
And for people to stop killing bees, that would be nice
And for everyone to stop global warming from melting the ice

This is a poem about how I want to be,
As the new year starts 2023,
I want to do better on every test
And be proud to wear my schools crest,
I want to try and read more books
So many adventures to find, so little time

These are the things I would like to see,
As the new year starts 2023,
I want equality for all no matter who they are
And for people to stop using diesel and petrol cars,
I want all the wars around the world to cease
And for everyone to live in peace.

Conor Vioreanu

Her

Her flaxen tresses, like a river of gold
Her green eyes, like an enchanted forest
Her fair skin, like snow on a summer's day
Her white dress, as if it was her wedding
Her breath, like frost in winter
Her touch, like silk on your skin
Her movements, like a graceful swan
Her voice, like it isn't there
Maybe it isn't

Amber Nugent



The violent waves crashed against the dingy, pushing it further into the sea. It bobbed side to side in the gloomy mist. The sole survivor lay down and listened to the amplifying canon fire, screams were no longer heard.

Jack sat up; pain engulfed him whenever he moved so he leaned against the side. The boat was around three meters so there wasn't much space. It seemed to have drifted away from the ship or at least what was left of it. They had been attacked in the middle of Spanish territory by the Spanish navy, he seemed to be the only one who escaped. Freezing, injured and starving, he wasn't likely to make it, he was alone and there was no land for miles. Jack just lay there and closed his eyes.

When Jack awoke, he was still surrounded by mist but there were no waves. His stomach ached and the only water that was available was the sea water. Rum and fishing supplies were stored in a compartment under the bow. Jack had never drunk as he was only 14 but the fishing supplies would come in useful. Fish was the only source of food and so he began to untangle the fishing rod, he proceeded to cast the line into the water, "how hard could this be" he thought to himself and began to bring the line-up. Three hours and no fish, it was impossible. He slumped onto the floor, he was tired and starving, nothing could save him now, he thought.

Every minute, death drew nearer, he had only caught one small fish but then he squandered the opportunity and the fish slipped through his grasp. He sat there and thought to himself, wondering if something miraculous could occur and he would be rescued, highly unlikely though.

His thoughts were interrupted by a familiar sound, similar to a horn. He rose although he couldn't see through the mist. The noise seemed to be getting closer, was it another ship?

Jack's hunger got the best of him, and he started seeing stars and then he dropped to the floor of the dingy causing it to shake to its side, he had fainted. When he woke up, a colossal ship towered over him. He could hear people shouting commands. He had no clue if it was friend or foe, but he would take his chances. He gathered all the energy he could conjure and attempted to stand up. He began screaming and waving his arms around, he then lost all his energy and collapsed, but this time he fell into the water.

Life came back to him, he was alive. Jack was no longer on the dingy but rather on what seemed to

be a hospital bed. He was not wearing the soaked rags from earlier but instead a blue uniform he had definitely seen before. There was food prepared for him on the table beside his bed. Finally, some food he thought. He ate everything from his plate and licked it clean. He laughed in disbelief, he had been saved.

Jack gathered enough energy to get out of bed. He started walking toward the window, examining his surroundings. Through the small, square window the sea was calm and there was no mist, unusual. Jack turned to head upstairs but was interrupted by a nurse. The nurse spoke a different language, but the tone of her voice sounded worried. Jack was beginning to have a bad feeling about this place.

Jack started up the stairs and he searched until he found the exit to the top deck. He stepped out and the scorching hot sun beamed down on him, he covered his eyes. Now people were visible, they were also wearing the uniform he wore. He wandered through the top deck, the others were shouting orders in the same language the nurse was speaking, now he really didn't like this place. He started to turn back but then something caught his eye. A flag waved at the top of the mast, now he recognized that flag. How could he have been so daft?-these were not pirates! they were soldiers and the uniform he wore was the Spanish, although he didn't recognize it because whenever he saw it, it was covered in blood. He was about to run back to find the small dingy until he heard an officer shout "usted" which he knew was Spanish for you. He froze, waited for two seconds, and turned. The officer pointed to the crate of ammunition and said something in Spanish. Jack went over, picked the crate up and placed it in the corner beside the cannon.

Jack was on the enemy ship and wasn't leaving any time soon.

Patrick Coman

The Long Shadow

When Germany invaded Poland sparking the beginning of the war and mass conscription into the army, my great-grandfather, Karl, had to join the effort and go to war leaving behind his wife and child. My great-grandmother's brothers all had to join the army too, and so my great-aunts were left to fend for themselves during the war.

Karl left in the winter of 1939. He was a dispatch rider and he was sent to the eastern front in the war against the Russians, the so-called Winter War which lasted from November 1939 to March 1940. A short while into the war he was reported missing in action. He was never found, and we have no idea what happened to him or how he came to die.

After the war, my great-grandmother stayed in the same apartment for 60 years in case he ever came back. Can you imagine how heart-breaking it is to say goodbye to a loved one not knowing if they will ever come back and then trying to keep going every day even though you wake up to the disappointment of them not being there? Karl was officially pronounced dead by the Red Cross in 1985.

My uncle Viktor was part of the Cavalry Unit and fought in the Winter War. While he was fighting, he was captured by the Russian army and put into a Russian war camp. The Russian war camps were known for being the most brutal. He was in the camp for around a year when he was freed. When Viktor eventually made it back to Wiesbaden to the family home, he knocked on the door but none of his sisters recognised him and closed the door. He was malnourished and unwell. He did not only look different, but according to my great-aunts, he was a changed person. What he'd seen affected him greatly- he couldn't sleep, and whenever he saw children crying or people in distress, he would get very distressed himself. He could not watch anything violent or war-related on television. He was a kind man with a big heart. He always wanted to help and was very generous. He became a baker and made a good life for himself. But when he closed his eyes at night he relived all the horrors that he had seen.

My great-aunts also played a part in the War. All of them went to work in factories as part of the war effort. They worked for Braun and Siemens. Lots of women took on what would have been considered men's work just to get by. Lore grew tobacco in her garden to earn extra money. She and Karl had owned a bar, but it had to close during the war because she had to mind my grandad. While Lore was looking after my grandad my other great-aunts were in Wiesbaden working at whatever they could

to make ends meet and keep food on the table. They looked after their neighbours, a Jewish family, that might have been taken away by the Nazis had my family not helped them. My family did not agree with the war, but it was not possible to speak out without very serious consequences. My great-aunts risked their lives to help protect their neighbours from persecution for their religious beliefs. Many people took risks such as this to help their fellow countrymen from being captured. Had they been found hiding a Jewish family, they could have been taken away to prisoner camps and possibly worse. The Jewish family eventually moved on and survived the war.

Back in the 1940's, there was no way for ordinary people to really know what was going on. Hitler's propaganda machine was the narrative that all Germans were supposed to believe and anyone who dissented from that was in fear for their own safety and that of their family.

These are ordinary everyday stories of what suffering, hardship, and trauma people experienced during the war. The same could be said of any conflict. Time tells us that these issues will arise again and again, that the actions of those who declare war or engage in aggressive acts are far-reaching and casts a long shadow.

Mathilde Gross



Mitternacht

Mitternacht
Schön, friedlich
Der Mond scheint
Sie muss respektiert werden
Mitternacht.

Liam O'Mahony

Sneachta Bán

An lá amháin,
Chonaic mé an sneachta bán,
Bhí na héin ag canadh,
Bhí mé i mo shuí i mo sheomra ranga,
Lá fuar a bhí ann,
Bhí áthas orm, áthas an domhain,
Shiúil mé sa sneachta amach,
Agus bhí áthas orm nuair a shroich mé mo theach.

Emily Groves

Na Séasúir

Ag an Earrach,
Siúlaim amach,
Ithim píosa cáca,
Agus snámhaim sa loch.

Ag an Samhradh,
Tosaím ag canadh,
Caithim gúna gorm,
Agus cuireann sin áthas orm.

Ag an bhFomhar,
Bíonn duilleoga ar an mbóthar,
Bíonn páiste ag súgradh,
Agus bíonn tuismitheoirí ag faire.

Ag an nGeimhreadh,
Cuireann gach duine orthu a gcótaí,
Cuireann said anuraidh taobh thiar díobh,
Agus bíonn siad ag tnúth le bliain nua.

Anna Zakrzewska

Frühling

Frühling
Die Blumen
Ich rieche sie
Und ich bin friedlich
Frühling.

Matei Constantinescu

Schmuddelwetter

Schmuddelwetter
nass, matschig
Regenjacke, Regenschirm, Regenstiefel
Aber ich empfinde Hassliebe
Schmudedelwetter.

Eoin Kinsman

First Snow in M.Z

2022.12.9

The world beyond the kaleidoscope
Experiencing a baptism
Inside the kaleidoscope
On the white earth
The crucified god
The god of patina
Branded with black footprints.
A cheer in the snow
Killed the seriousness and rational
Wings fluttering hard in the dark snowy night
The snow under the streetlights never lifted.

"In Curraghmore far far away
There are green lakes where it never snows"

We flee
You'll wear mint green trousers and a white coat
You'll bring palmier and the Jurassic
And I'll be in front of you, to burn my heart
To repel the endless drops of water
And the wild stars under the streetlights.
But the snow floods my mind
My blood is replaced by snow
A brutality that spans 4.5 billion years fills the heart
Atriums
Ventricles
Whole body
Eyes, face, chin
On the ground
I want to hold your hand tightly
I want to feel the spring
Your body suddenly turns to ice
Crucify and Patina tell me
All of that was my ice sculpture piece
My tears are frozen to ice
My remorse has solemn to pillar
My hate (do I hate?)
My hate turned into the incessant cold of winter
And the everywhere devastation
I assassinate my sun
I can only see through the reflection of the ice
Seeing outside,
Sun shining
Colour raiding

Jiaer Chen

Panthalassa

She lay across the ocean floor
Listening to the sound
Of the creatures calling anthem song
It shook the dark earth round
She heard the deep ground hum
Panthalassa she heard it say
As she sunk into the weighted sand
The chorus made her sway
Until she went inside
Until she saw no more
For she had sunk
Right in deep down
Right to the ocean's core.

Annie Keatinge

Reflections on Glücksburg

Where are you happiest? Perhaps it doesn't matter where you are in the world but rather, whom you are with.

The place that makes the world less heavy and the days more precious is a small town in northern Germany. It bursts with character and charm and is the soul and source of my most thrilling and joyful memories. Without it, I would be a very different person.

Getting there is a trek. After a flight to Hamburg, one begins the never-ending train and bus journeys to the very top of Germany, to a town that is almost in Denmark. The last bus comes to a halt at the wooden hut of a bus stop outside of our summerhouse – everything seems the same in the little village but underneath everything has changed. The shop fronts still possess the same German names, and the supermarkets still sell our favourite German goods served to you by the familiar staff that have worked there for as long as you can remember. The beach is still busy and the pier juts out into the same sparkling sea. The ice-cream parlour facing the beach still sells the finest scoops of lemon sorbet I've ever tasted and the smell of the town in the mornings is the same as ever. The delicate aroma of freshly baked brötchen wafts down the side streets.

But of course, like everything, places change. Our house, cocooned within a magical forest, looks more mysterious and even more overgrown each time. It always took at least two days to make it inhabitable again with trees needing cutting, grass in need of cutting and spider webs needing removing. Once the house looks and feels like a home again summer officially begins.

June, July and August goes by outrageously fast, every hour of every day is special. Swims in the icy Baltic Sea or long afternoons spent deep in the forest exploring new paths in search of reptiles – mostly snakes, or the mornings spent with my friend and her horse galloping alongside the beach. The hours I spent as a child cycling different routes around the town with my sister and her friend laughing about everything and nothing. Every day was perfect in its own way and the freedom and capacity I had to think and breathe here at such a young age shaped me into who I am today.

Glücksburg is a place of pure happiness and peace to me. With no car, school, TV or even Wi-Fi, life is lived at a different pace. It's how I imagine we should be really living our lives. Glücksburg has glued my family together. We bonded over

board games after dinner, delicious barbeques in the evenings and long cycles that my parents insisted we go on. We bonded with our grandparents and our Danish cousins.

Under the shadowed and cool canopy of thousands of different shades of green buried deep into the forest was where I thought about life, people, and the world as a child. Far away from everything. Sometimes cycling with just a book or my diary in my basket or on walks with my parents. However, it was mostly the hours of just sitting on rocks in silence deep in thought accompanying my older brother as he tore up rocks and tree stumps searching underneath with his hawk's eye for creatures to bring home to show Mum.

This holiday destination created a love for nature and adventure in my siblings and me. It was always my older brother who completely immersed himself in the wilderness. Not only did he know every fact about creatures, but also he knew where to find them. His talent of knowing exactly where to find all sorts of reptiles from legless lizards to bats to snakes meant every day in the forest was exciting. He was and still is the most knowledgeable person I know when it comes to anything to do with nature.

Growing up I have always imagined an older version of myself carrying on the tradition of holidays in Glücksburg with my own children and family. Introducing them to the places that were so significant to me in my early years and showing them where their great grandparents and even their great-great grandmother lived. As I get older, it's been a place I can escape to when my life doesn't feel like my own anymore and it's a place where worries and fear disappear. A place of freedom. A place of joy. After all the town's name translates to "Happy Hill". I think everyone needs a Glücksburg – whether it be a place or a person that makes them feel how Glücksburg makes me feel. As Patrick Kavanagh said, everyone should have a love affair with a place.

Eve Molloy

Thursday

(A found poem)

He was a nervous man, easily knocked from his groove,
'This must be Thursday', said Arthur to himself, 'sinking low over his drink. 'I never could get the hang of Thursdays.'
She flipped the key guard off her phone and scrolled through her texts
Arthur didn't know whether to wince or vomit.
The day before, they had talked about music and the hours they had spent together
Now they spoke in whispers
Everything had gone wrong that day.
'It earns millions of dollars,' she said, not looking up from her phone,
Trouble seemed to follow people like him.
'One must not believe the demons, even when they speak the truth,' said Arthur quietly,
'Don't look round,' she said, 'don't move and don't scream for the police'.
I guess your sin catches up with you eventually

TY Creative Writing Class

An Cara Beag

Bhí an ghrian ag taitneamh sa spéir. Lá deas a bhí ann. Bhí gach duine sásta ach duine amháin. Seán ab ainm dó. Bhí brón an domhain air mar bhí a hamstar marbh. Fuair sé bás nuair a bhí sé ina chodladh. Ní raibh sé sean, ach, bhí fadhb ina chroí beag aige.

Chuaigh Seán go dtí bun an ghairdín agus thosaigh sé air poll beag a thochailt. A shúile líonta le deora, chuir sé an corp fuar ina pholl. Go mall, shiúil sé ar ais go dtí an teach. Chaill sé a chara.

Fuair Seán a hamstar nuair a bhí sé deich mbliana d'aois. Bhí sé deich mbliana d'aois ag fás, ach mhothaigh sé go bhfuair sé é i bhfad ó shin. Teidí ab ainm dó mar chuir sé teidí i gcuimhne Sheáin.

Anois, tá madra ag Seán. Rinne sé dearmad ar Theidí bocht. Ach, nuair a bhí Seán ag lorg a liathróide san áilleár, fuair sé teach beag de chuid Teidí agus tháinig na cuimhní cinn go léir ar ais chuige ...

Charlotte Duffy



She flourished like an elegant tulip. Summer '20 they'd call it. The orange hue on the horizon captivated her turquoise eyes. A weird blue shade with a tinge of green. Reminding her of the times she stood there with her wailing flowery frock at Coquelles. As she bid farewell to the British passengers, she cupped her hands around her mouth to avoid the numbness. She knew she'd meet her boy one day or another. If he hadn't come that day, he would come sooner. All she had to do was wait. Laying there amidst the forest of dandelions, she stared up at the sky and heard the seagulls' squawks flying north. The Church bell chimed as she made her way hurriedly to the chapel.

December 1937

"Lena!! Could you check if the daily reader's digest has arrived yet? We could hopefully get some news on your Father's ship "
"Ja Mutti!!"

Lena strutted down the spiral staircase of her parents' colonial manor that was well furnished with wooden fittings and a grand chandelier to top it up at the family dining area. She made sure her hair was neat and her corset was tight because who might turn up at her doorstep may be someone very close at heart. The chime. It made her heart skip a beat. As she attended to the door, the smell of burning ash invaded her house. It was him. Rolf was still the frisky little St. Bernard pup Lena would bathe and nurture during the cold winter nights. However, the war had not been kind. He whimpered with his grey sunken eyes and her Father was nowhere to be seen.

Austria, February 1938

The landscape was worth seeing. Post winter and the start of spring. Sunflowers grew alongside the road as Lena rode past the countryside mills on her bicycle with Rolf wrapped. Lena waved at the farmers as they cruised deep into the fields. Their escapism did escalate as they explored the vastness of an area of hay and a barn. They could just lay there for hours doing absolutely nothing, indifferent to the troubles of the external world. Why would they care? After all, their little world existed in the ephemeral happiness they experienced

The situation had been getting worse every day, every month. Grey clouds spread nationwide; the machine of war was being prepared. Young men and fathers became fervent with national pride. Yet, for all this, Lena and Rolf's love for each other only grew fonder with time.

Ashlyn Singh

The Caravan

Across the desert,
Days and nights knowing not,
Crawling forward, stroked and hot,
A man toys with a bellowing thought:

A mind stagnates
Like the wistful winds over the sand-swept dunes
Only to be overturned in an instant of lunacy
Amidst days and nights of clueless ecstasy.

They roll, like the snare of a drum,
Crashing against the mountains
Only to try again.
To flee the scene only to begin another descent.

Where to begin, where to end
One's perspective on peace?
A puddle in an ocean of pieces,
Brumous before the filthy rats that aim to please.

From one place to another,
A group, a man, a band.
A sea of sand.
The caravan.

Carter Horner

Lá Fhéile Pádraig:

Lá Fhéile Pádraig,
Tá gach dhuine ag caitheamh glas,
Seamroigí, bratacha, leipreacháin,
Ag ceiliúradh an 17ú Marta.

Lá Fhéile Pádraig,
I ngach baile beag den tír,
Bíonn paráidi ar siúl inniú,
Ag ceiliúradh ár n-oidhreacht.

Lá Fhéile Pádraig,
An lá is fearr den bhliain,
Tá áthas an domhain ar gach duine,
San Astráil, Éire agus Meiriceá.

Lá Fhéile Pádraig,
Tá an abhainn glas i Chicago,
Tá Seachtain an Gaeilge ann,
Táimid ag ceiliúradh,
gach rud faoi Éirinn.

Paul Keatinge

Awoken

The flowing streams,
The past right there,
The whispering wind moving through the air.

The flood was so strong,
But its destruction is gone,
Nature has returned

And the land
Reawakens
Nature's beauty has reappeared.

Sadie Harris

To be Acquainted with the Night

The lashing rain engulfing me like the pouring of tears slowly building up in my eyes. Thinking of the possibilities, how it may turn out, how it may end.

The lane was too acquainted, the croaking and cars from the other blocks being the only sounds during the late nights, but this night was wildly different. The lane was as silent as the moon. The lane seemed more lifeless than other nights. The shade of a figure was caught at the corner of my eye, but the only one that stood was the watchman on his beat. I looked down and wandered cluelessly through the mid-night lane hoping it will take me to where I except, straight ahead I went.

The further I went the quieter it got. I decided to stop. I was met with the sound of my strident feet. I was interrupted with an unexpected, faint crying that was coming from a few blocks away. Even though times were as tough as leather, the night was as pretty as a picture. I wish that the cry was for me. No one wanted to say goodbye back, not even Jenny.

The sky was beautiful, as I stared. The clock looming against the sky. The moon. It towered over me, the block, and the world a mesmerising sight. The moon does not testify nor agree whether it is right nor wrong for me to be walking about. The night has taught me the usefulness of silence, but sometimes the interaction also is important. To what extent, shall be able to recognise the night and how more wonders there may be for me to discover. When will this grief of me shake from my shoulders. Will it stay? I hope they will not discover the cause of this sorrowful accident. No one would understand, not even the night.

Jenny I am sorry, it was the right thing to do.

The lane still dark, my heart even darker.

Max Wang

When I was Five

I remember when I was five
I wished to be eight
Because you weren't seen as a baby anymore
And my mom told me 'don't wish time away'

Once I was eight
I wished to be ten
Because it was double digits
And again, my mom told me 'don't wish time away'

When I was ten
I wished to be thirteen
Because you would be an official teenager
You could stay up late
You could go to parties

But now I'm thirteen
I wish I was ten
I wish my biggest worry was a grade
I wish spilling something was a big deal
I wish I went back to when being addicted to my phone
And staying in my room alone wasn't the norm

I wish I was eight
When everyone was friends
When we thought boys were gross

I wish I was six
When I was carefree and happy
But the truth of it all
Is that I wished time away
Forgetting to be in the moment
So, I promised myself to stay in the present
Like the gift that the present is.

Isabelle Twomey

Depuis la nuit de temps, les gens ont cherché leur propre vérité. Qui suis-je ? Comment suis-je la personne que je suis ? Mais peut-être que c'est mieux de ne pas savoir les réponses. Si nous nous connaissons absolument, que peut-on découvrir ?

Tout ça est devenu clair pour un petit village d'un petit pays qui n'existe plus depuis de nombreuses années. Dans ce village il y avait un jeune paysan qui s'appelle Pip. Pip était curieux, trop curieux. Pour toute sa vie, les gens répondraient à toutes ses questions avec "Pas maintenant Pip." Alors quand une femme étrange est arrivée au village, Pip était plus curieux de tout. La femme avait beaucoup de personnes avec elle qui l'a aidé à son arrivée, et ils étaient bavards et sympa avec tout qui habitait au village, mais ils semblaient trop vieux pour leur âge. Comme ils savaient quelque chose que les gens du village ne savaient pas.

Quand Pip est allé rendre visite à la femme, il a trouvé une caravane blanche. À l'intérieur, il n'y avait que la femme, qui était assise sur un banc, et une boîte noire.

"Si vous regardez à l'intérieur de cette boîte, vous trouverez la réponse à la question que nous nous posons toute notre vie. Qui suis-je ?" a promis la femme.

Il y a réfléchi mais il a trouvé qu'il avait beaucoup d'autres questions.

"Comment le savez-vous ? De quoi est faite la boîte ? Qui a fabriqué la boîte ? Est-ce que je vois le meilleur de moi-même ou mon pire ?" Tant de questions jusqu'à ce que la femme en ait marre.

"Pas maintenant Pip!"

Mais les autres gens du village ont jeté un coup d'œil et après, ils ont découvert qu'ils n'étaient plus curieux. Ils ne pouvaient pas voir la vie comme avant, simple mais contente, car ils n'avaient plus rien à découvrir. Alors, Ils sont partis avec l'étrange femme pour essayer de découvrir encore plus. Mais, alors qu'ils partaient, l'un des étrangers a dit à Pip.

"Il n'y a plus rien à trouver. L'espoir est tout ce qu'ils ont maintenant car ils savent tout. Ça, c'est le secret, dans nos cœurs, nous sommes tous les mêmes"

Puis ils sont partis. Tous sauf Pip. Il est retourné à sa ferme pour trouver plus de questions. Il les préfère aux réponses.

Ruby Newall



A Knight's Guide in Saving a Kingdom

Jacob knew he had made a grievous mistake when the roar of the dragon flying towards the castle shook him awake.

Lurching from bed and stumbling into his day clothes, he fumbled to check the grains of sand that had trickled through the jar. Already near 9 o'clock, the sun rising and the skies a nauseating bright blue. How could he have missed the eight o'clock warning from Ms. Thompson? She knew to wake him early on the first Monday of each month, as this was when the feared dragon of the northlands appeared to terrorise the princess in the tower of the Elysian castle.

As the kingdom's famed dragon slayer, Jacob was the only knight able to placate the dragon, and was paid handsomely for this. On the first Monday of the month, Jacob would wait for the dragon's appearance and approach him with his mighty sword, fighting him until the dragon, roaring with rage, flew off back to the northlands, his reign of terror postponed.

Now, Jacob was an hour late and the dragon was fast approaching the tower, ripples of smoke surrounding his body as his wings beat a ferocious rhythm ripping flags from their awnings and knocking signs from houses surrounding the Elysian castle. Cursing, Jacob hopped into his belt, buckled on his sword and bolted downstairs to reach the stables.

In the kitchen, he saw Ms Thompson asleep, snoring raucously and clenching a near-empty bottle of liquor clutched in her vicelike grip. Well, that explained the late wake up call. Jacob sighed as he ran to the stables, saddling up his steed as the dragon's bellow became louder on its approach of the highest tower of the castle. Jacob scowled at this timely inconvenience and galloped at a break-neck pace towards the castle.

The usual 10-minute journey cut in half at his mare's sprint. This simply would not do; he could not let the dragon reach the tower and torment the princess. He would be killed by the dragon, and then revived only to be executed by the king for his tardiness.

He sped across the cobbled courtyard and threw himself from his mare, sprinting up the stairs of the entrance hall, praying he would reach the tower in time to intervene. Panicked courtiers and servants yelled questions and encouragements to him as he ran, and soldiers frantically directed him to the stairs of the adjacent tower, where he would have to cross the open-air bridge to face the monstrous beast, now breathing fire over the tiled roof of the

spiral tower. Inside he could hear the faint screams of the princess, and he doubled his pace as he hurtled up the last of the steps before reaching the bridge.

Panting, he leaned on his sword as he scanned for the dragon. Odd how such a big creature could evade his sight. It was big and red and fire breathing. How was that something he couldn't identify? A disgruntled roar cut his streaming thoughts and he spun around, spotting the dragon looking down at him from his perch on the tower above him. Oh, that would explain it. The dragon opened its jaws, fire dancing along its fangs.

"Speak, mortal. You dare challenge me?"

Jacob smiled, the familiar lines seeping into him and reminding him of his part in this charade. He pulled his sword from its sheath and donned his most knight worthy look of bravery. Looking up at the tower, he puffed his chest out and bellowed his line.

"Fear not, brave maiden! I will protect thee from this foul beast! He will be vanquished, and the kingdom of Elysia will be safe once again!"

He could almost feel the princess rolling her eyes from behind the shutters of her tower. Faint cheers sounded from the gathered citizens in the courtyard, and the dragon let out an impatient huff.

"Took you long enough, pipsqueak," it muttered under its breath. Jacob looked up and scowled at the scaled creature. "Well, I'm sorry, 'oh mighty one'," he whisper-yelled. "But I was slightly preoccupied with Ms. Thompson's drinking habits and was not woken up this morning. I'm still here, aren't I? Start spitting fire at things so I can look useful!"

The dragon let out a pained sigh and narrowed its beady eyes at him. "Don't give me that attitude, you little toothpick. You're the one who asked me to come all the way out here every month so you could get a pretty coin from it."

Jacob grinned at the dragon. "I make it worth your while, don't I? Aren't all the grovelling humans such a splendid sight on a Monday morning? And the dozen sheep as breakfast certainly sweetens the deal."

The dragon mused over this information. "I do quite enjoy the grovelling," he murmured, scales glowing with heat. "And the sheep in these parts are way tastier than the ones in the North. Alright, beanstalk, I'll bequeath you my fire, but hurry up with the whole hero thing, as I am feeling rather peckish."

Jacob didn't have time to be indignant. The dragon let out an almighty howl and spewed fire in a care-

fully practised ark around the bridge, pushing off from the roof of his tower and flying towards the window of the princess. Jacob sprinted down the bridge, reaching the door just before the dragon, and swung his sword in an arc in front of the dragon's claw, carefully missing his glowing scales. The dragon let out an agonised roar and shot a jet of fire at Jacob. He dodged and slammed his sword against the creature's scaled body. "That seemed rather personal, you wrinkled newt." The dragon swelled. "WRINKLED NEWT? I'LL SHOW YOU WRINKLED NEWT, YOU PATHETIC LITTLE-

"Fourteen sheep," Jacob cut in and threw on his winningest smile. The blast of fire shifted slightly to the left, burning his cloak rather than his entire body.

"I suppose that would do" the dragon grumbled, narrowing his eyes as he glared down at him. "don't keep me waiting next time, you little peasant, or I will eat the princess just to spite you." Jacob scowled up at the dragon again, holding his sword up in his best impression of an intimidating manner.

"Never fear, my scaly friend. Next month another fourteen sheep will be unwittingly led through the northern lands where they can suspiciously disappear just in time for your midmorning nap." The dragon snorted and spun around, throwing him a last withering glance.

"Until next time, pesky midget. Do not even consider being late again, or the entire woollen population will not be enough to quell my rage."

And with a mighty beat of his wings, he launched himself off the tower and towards the glimmering forests of the northern hills. Shouts of victorious jubilation arose from the crowd of courtiers and civilians, and Jacob heard the creak of the princess' window being opened. Schooling his features into his best attempt at remorse, he turned to face the irritated girl leaning out of the window. She scowled down at him.

"What was all that about? I told that dragon last month not to get that close, and now I must buy new shutters as these ones have been scorched!" Jacob scratched his head. "Sorry Amelia, got here a little late. But don't worry, I'll still break you out of this tower each weekend so that you can meet up with your not-so-secret girlfriend, so long you tell your dad just how amazingly I defended you from the beastly dragon."

"Oh, your review will be positively glowing" she muttered, already yanking the shutters closed.

Jacob revelled in his praise as he floated down the stairs towards the throne room, and humbly accepted his eye-watering bag of gold from the overjoyed King. He promised to return the next month to protect the kingdom from the "unkillable fiend", and happily trotted back to his lodgings on the outskirts of the village to tell Ms. Thompson of his heroics, a royally gifted herd of unsuspecting sheep in his wake.

Alexandra Minch



Promised Land

The hailing, windswept night he strolled into Nazareth, Colorado feeling about half past dead would be the first of many knew Thomas Rogers, whose hip flask had been drop-less empty since he alighted the Pacific railroad train at Fort Collins, that the splintered signpost of his destination suggested some sort of divine intervention, finally relieving him from his state of parched haggardness that plagued his 14-hour trek through the Badlands. The soot filled scent of the town's smoking chimneys relinquished his spirits, evoking the sense of a homely atmosphere only matched by Attymon townland, Co Galway, from where he left in 1862 filled with hope and aspiration for a prosperous life in the 'land of opportunity', only for those dreams to be abruptly quashed the moment he disembarked from the Grace O'Malley in Brooklyn, when a uniformed man, barely older than himself and speaking in a language still unfamiliar to him pulled him aside only a handful of steps after the gangway. He wasn't going to be reunited with them anytime soon.

Those three years were a blurred memory consisting of long slogging marches, the occasional bloody battle leaving many comrades of the 'fighting 69th' Irish Brigade limbless if not dead and the perpetual sight of burning cotton fields and their grand white houses, all in the thick mountain forests of Appalachia and swamps and savannahs of the Deep South, a far cry from the East Galway bogland. Desperate to avoid remaining in the sweltering, mosquito-infested hell that still required the prolonged presence of Federal troops for 'Reconstruction' purposes, Thomas decided there was nothing to lose from venturing 'out west' where the earth was filled with gold with jobs a' plenty, away from, in his eyes, the industrial wasteland of 'no Irish need apply' signs dominating the shop windows and factories. Out there, everyman, whether Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Irish, Italian, German, Russian, White, Mexican or Black was free to determine their own destiny. Not those fire and brimstone, clean-clothed, bible bashing WASPS with their Temperance league and Harpers Weekly cartoons.

The door of the Spancil Hill Tavern creaked open to release the cacophony of amateur fiddlers and banjo players. But the unpleasant sound was never going to hinder Thomas's willingness to sit down for a much needed and well earned 'refreshment' after the arduous trek. "You must be one of the new miners," piped a soft voice with a rather unfamiliar accent given this Saloon could well have been in Dublin port. The waitress introduced

herself as María immediately making the young Irish man blush as he shakily replied "yep eh, sure am." She was beautiful but before Thomas could generate any substantial conversation, María was gone, off to attend the many demanding, grumbling customers, eager to drink away the sorrows of the day. Despite the many glances exchanged between the two immigrants as the evening passed and the fiddlers eventually found their groove, natural shyness, and the fact she seemed 'busy' were what prevented Thomas making any kind of 'courting' gesture, finally retreating upstairs feeling dejected. But his new life would begin tomorrow, 'down below' regardless of any newfound interests.

The nearby bells of Clarkson's Copper provided the wake-up alarm on Thomas's first morning in Nazareth. The crisp autumn sunlight brought life to this bustling boomtown that was nothing but a miniscule portion of the vast rolling prairie a few winters ago. Anxious to be on the right side of the foreman, Thomas hastily dressed into whatever made sense as work clothes and ran out entering the game amongst the millions, each chasing their own individual American dream. Breakfast wasn't necessary.

The first shift down the mine left him in a more bedraggled state than ever before. The trek through the Badlands was a cakewalk. But for five dollars a day? One would be right fool to balk this opportunity. As he gazed out upon the endless expanse of the yet to be conquered wilderness, from the back balcony of the Spancil Hill, Jameson in hand, the now familiar soft voice returned:

"Well I didn't see you this morning, you can't go down there on an empty stomach."

"Don't worry, I've learnt my lesson, as you can see."

He raised his full shot-glass of whiskey to a heartfelt reply of laughter. The evening sunshine glistened the distant snow-white tips of the towering Rocky Mountains creating a truly majestic image of divine serenity, the unspoilt green rolling prairie signifying the gateway to the heaven of the Rockies. While there weren't any diamonds in the sidewalks as according to the shipmates of the Grace O'Malley, nor were the streets paved with gold, everyone out here seemed to garner some slice of the entrepreneurial spirit in Nazareth Colorado, the Promised land. Perhaps the rest of the Rogers of Attymon would like it here.

Cormac McGann

The Call

When there's no light,
When the tunnel seems endless,
When unsteady feet
Shuffle closer to the edge;

Where do you turn?
Who do you call?
What do you do?
When you're about to fall?

Where do I turn?
When no one's around,
When no one is there
When I make no sound.

One Little Voice,
I Didn't Know was there.
Brave Beyond Measure.
Impossibly Small.
Rises above all fears
And answers my call.

Chris Lane

A Mother's Heart

My love for you is ineffable
Neither you nor I will understand
An embrace I can't quite ease into
Just know I'm trying hard to.

My love for you is ineffable
I pray to the angels that you'll brush my hair one last time
Or read me a book or poem without any despair
I know this might be too hard of an ask
So I'll stay quiet until you come at last.

My love for you is ineffable
Sometimes I wake in the middle of the night
And hear the devil cry
She'll call for me and I'll do my best to help
But I must admit my patience is running dry.

My love for you is ineffable
Neither you nor I will understand
I'm afraid it's the end and I must go
I beg you not to keep me and let me grow.

Anastasia Morozova-Ryan

The Blank Page

As I sit gazing at the screen of my computer screen alone at my desk, I am reminded of Gene Fowler's statement that writing is easy: All you do is sit staring at a blank sheet of paper until drops of blood form on your forehead.

I have the same document open on it, staring back waiting for me to do something with it. I have only the date from last week typed, trying to pretend I started the assignment long ago instead of leaving it until the night before. The panic I normally face when I have not started a project yet should have kicked in at least a few days ago, but no, I feel nothing.

Time goes by and I have zero motivation or inspiration to even begin to think of where I should start on this. My imagination has clocked out for the day right before rush hour. No one can help with the demands of the due date creeping up on me like some sort of creature from a gothic nightmare.

At this rate, you can almost see tumbleweeds rolling around my brain from the lack of ideas it is generating. Sitting here with only hours before I must turn it in, and no impeccable last-minute ideas have come to mind, nothing.

I try to get my brain going by coming up with different ways to get this done quickly. I light myself a candle and tell myself that I need to have something written down before the whole stick has become melted wax on my desk. I start powering through past schoolwork and stories seeing if I can steal anything from them, I even try to use old experiences and memories to see if they would be any good. Nope, still nothing.

At this point, I'm now bored, hungry and have a serious urge to shut the laptop and never look at this document again. It is more tempting the longer I sit here observing nothing but a blank page. The streetlights have now turned on outside and the flickering flame of the candle that has not contributed to my crisis is the only source of light I'm left with.

I'm still sitting at my desk after wasting hours that felt like years of lacking in creativity to write either a story or a simple poem, I am left with nothing.

Caoimhe Higgins

Enchanting

As I look out onto the horizon, it seems as if the fields go on forever. The scent of freshly cut grass lingers in the air and the sky illuminated with deep orange and red hues is like an embroidered quilt. I am standing where I think is the most beautiful place on Earth. An escape from the polluted, industrial setting of Dublin. A place where the sound of birds fills the air and all that remains are your own thoughts. As I sit on the wooden bench, I admire my surroundings. Beneath my feet, I notice insects scurrying around. I feel sorry for them because they will never be able to appreciate the beauty of where they are. They will never be able to comprehend the tranquillity a place like this holds. The white daisies that cover the fields like the first snow of winter are inconvenient in their lives, but for me it is all enchanting.

The trees above my head sway in the breeze as I hear the rustling of the leaves. The wind feels warm against my skin reminding me of summer. I can see the sun is beginning to set before me and I wait patiently for the night sky to arrive. This place is breath taking during sunlight but at night, it transports you to another world. The shining stars light up the sky and they are so close to you, it feels as if you could touch them. The only sound is the chirping of grasshoppers who are the only other beings that get to experience this mesmerizing display.

As I stand gazing into the darkness, I truly understand why this is the most beautiful place on Earth. No matter what season or what time of day the sun will always set, and the night sky will always arrive, captivating whoever's present to observe. This place offers me a sense of comfort and stability in knowing I will be welcomed with familiar sights and sounds I have come to love.

Bittersweet Ballad

Feeling nervous in a way I can't quite explain,
I'm stuck in a bittersweet state,
Ambivalent, you might say.

I remember thinking this day would never come,
In a moment of joy and melancholy,
A twinge of sadness and pain in a sky full of song.

But you can choose what to keep and what to throw away,
Look around and appreciate that in a year nothing will be the same,
Six years gone in a moment, time a thief.

The maze I once faced became familiar,
Those who were strangers now irreplaceable in so many ways,
I don't know how to feel about what is to come.

The next chapter is only a few pages away,
Six years later and a bittersweet aftertaste lingers,
With the thought, is a goodbye happy or sad, good, or bad?

Scarlet Moloney

Fingernails

Some people say I'm hard to read.
That my face gives nothing away.
They can never tell how I'm feeling.
If I'm having a good day, a bad day,
if I'm happy or sad.
They don't even try to interpret me anymore

But I know that if they looked a little bit closer,
they would find their answer written among my fingernails.
There are periods of time that they will be long and healthy.
I may even paint them.
Shades of blue and red and green,
that is when I want them to be seen.

But those periods never last long.
A week, maybe two, before I bite and tear at them, causing my skin to bleed.
I pick off the coats of polish.
My nails become short and stubby, like a child's.
I find that they are more often like this than not.

So, to those of you who can't decipher the code of my expressions,
Just look at my hands.

Elisa Terry





He wasted his time investigating the body, the kill was clean, traceless.

Like with many of these cases, the Musante program had jammed when they died, these frozen virtual environments act as the basis of my investigation.

The lead coroner approaches me, 'As you correctly guessed, the killer left no DNA. 'Pistol caliber entry wound, but neither the bullet nor the casing have been left behind. The victim's estimated TOD is 4-5 am 2 Fridays ago.'

'No-one noticed before today?'

'Well, Ms. Darr lived alone, and as this apartment should tell you, they weren't exactly expecting her at the food printers.'

'What about possessions, anything stolen this time?'

'Actually yes. A credit ID from her safe and a signed baseball bat. Ilija from your department thinks this mightn't be the same guy we've been following.'

'Hmm. Can you give me the go ahead for viewing the program she was in?'

'Sure, but don't tell the chief, I probably can't ever get this method approved, and be quick, my boys will be arriving with the deep-texture scanner soon.'

I pull down the flat, white wire that dangled from the ceiling, peeling the adhesive tab, and push it down on the front side of my ear canal. Joining as a guest with emergency access privileges, my mind sinks into "World 5" on Musante.

Surrounding me are pillars of jagged, white featurelessness, static, but shifting in parallax, void with shrapnel edges. The floor is many very very downanddownand it- I focus, I give myself a body, three sticks with furry ends, coming out from a 129,600-degree eye, very utilitarian. The floor is... grey powder, no, white friction, with black moments, elongated into dimensions beneath the first. However, the horizon didn't and sky never began into up walls in open air and you and you and you did- I am frustrated but have no frustration muscle. I cannot tell where I am. I give myself eardrums and a packet of blood and oxygen. It doesn't work, there's no force of gravity, the objects have an infinite level of friction, and there's a negative depth to space. I do however find a panic; it is panic and looks panic you did panicpanic because you panic youyouyouyouyouyou.

'My god, man, what is it?'

I try and stand on my sticks, but I remember my legs.

'Mhe... what do you mean?'

'Did you touch the cable off your eardrum, man? Stop yelling.'

'I didn't... I went in.'

'Huh, no you didn't.'

'Yes, I did, there was this spatially nonsensical world, and the victim had their avatar split across the whole thing.'

'What the hell, man... You were just putting on the tab and you started screaming.'

'... I'm gonna go.'

'Alright but chill out, take a sick day or ten.'

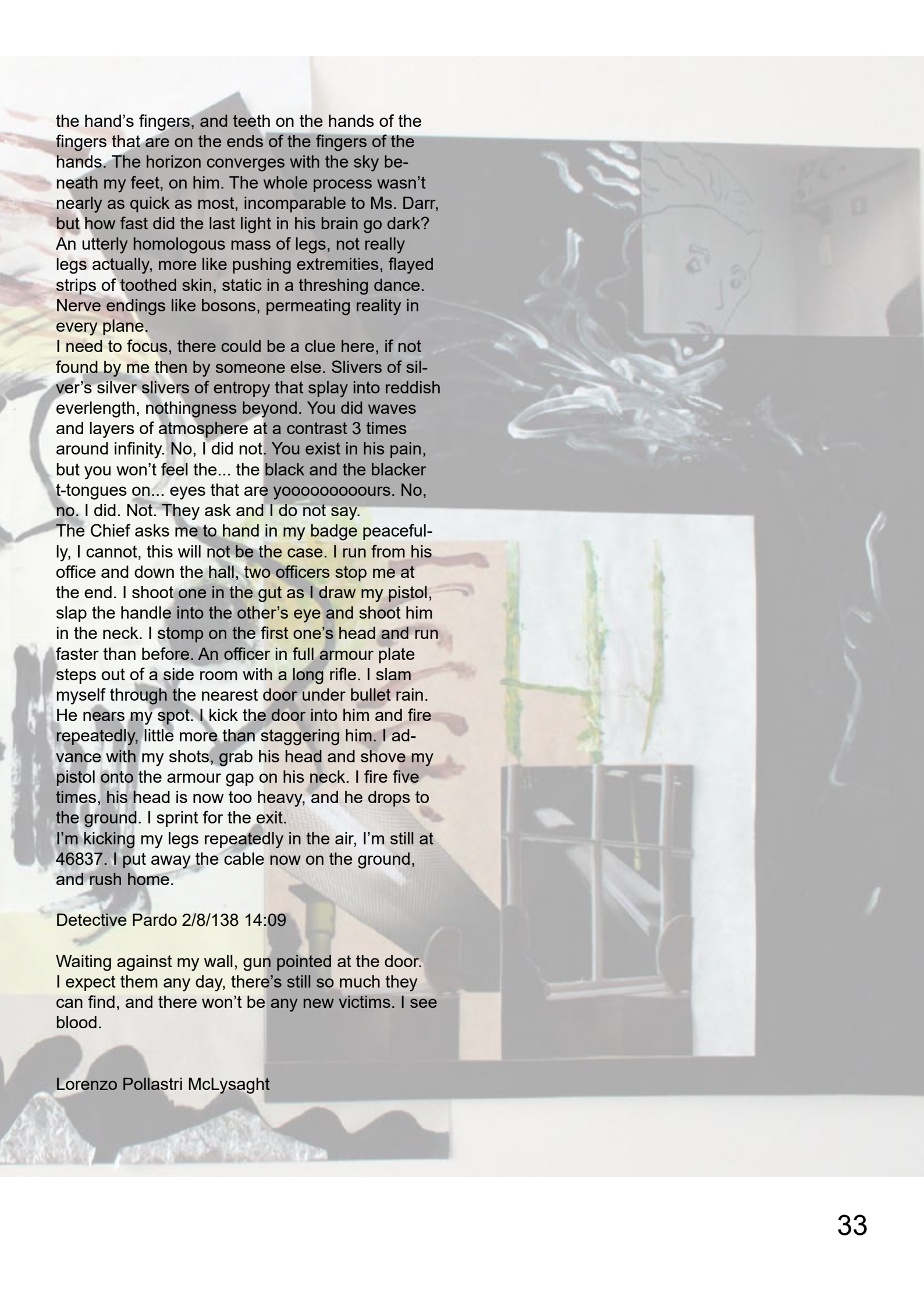
I put on my SCBA respirator and step out into the air, thick with rain, like solid columns I'm squeezing through. This is good, less variables to keep track of. My heart feels bruised by the inside of my ribs. Damn, I can feel it crushing itself, but it's slowing down now. This site is as clean as a laboratory, yet I am panicpanicpanic. 'Hm!'

Two women in polypropylene long-shirts side-eye me where I've stopped on the street. I pivot to face them. They see my purple badge and keep walking. I continue into a trans-district W-line, maybe a mugger will let me draw some blood.

The police are completely stumped over this killer, never any trace. They're left with plenty of biomass but only from the victim, of course they're gonna think the Darr case is someone else, so quick, so clean. There was much more potential discovery from Mr. Marmosa, he'd been shred into chunks. However, they never found anything, nothing was evident, the locked doors, sealed windows, weapon under the floorplates, undistinguishable blood-tracks. But there could so easily have been something else, a screw-up, a leading trace...

I burst into capsule 46837, wheezing. I reach to take off my respirator... No, the oxygen's been turned off by now, dumbass. I scour the capsule, there's not much to scour, it isn't wide enough to lie flat in. The body, well... the biomass has already been dumped, but the space is a few days away from holding a new tenant, and there could still be something here, ready to be found when least expected. I check the drawers, feel around the inner edges, the concrete bristles against my gloves. I've delayed it enough, I have to search the Musante. I pull down the wire, rub the adhesive warm, and I do my job.

I am met with a barrage of scarlet gossamer, sheets of fluorescent jet, stacked atop each other, infinitely down and infinitely up, mid-cascade. Like mountains, stretching across an non-Euclidian horizon, are hands with hands on the fingers of



the hand's fingers, and teeth on the hands of the fingers that are on the ends of the fingers of the hands. The horizon converges with the sky beneath my feet, on him. The whole process wasn't nearly as quick as most, incomparable to Ms. Darr, but how fast did the last light in his brain go dark? An utterly homologous mass of legs, not really legs actually, more like pushing extremities, flayed strips of toothed skin, static in a threshing dance. Nerve endings like bosons, permeating reality in every plane.

I need to focus, there could be a clue here, if not found by me then by someone else. Slivers of silver's silver slivers of entropy that splay into reddish everlength, nothingness beyond. You did waves and layers of atmosphere at a contrast 3 times around infinity. No, I did not. You exist in his pain, but you won't feel the... the black and the blacker t-tongues on... eyes that are yooooooooours. No, no. I did. Not. They ask and I do not say.

The Chief asks me to hand in my badge peacefully, I cannot, this will not be the case. I run from his office and down the hall, two officers stop me at the end. I shoot one in the gut as I draw my pistol, slap the handle into the other's eye and shoot him in the neck. I stomp on the first one's head and run faster than before. An officer in full armour plate steps out of a side room with a long rifle. I slam myself through the nearest door under bullet rain. He nears my spot. I kick the door into him and fire repeatedly, little more than staggering him. I advance with my shots, grab his head and shove my pistol onto the armour gap on his neck. I fire five times, his head is now too heavy, and he drops to the ground. I sprint for the exit.

I'm kicking my legs repeatedly in the air, I'm still at 46837. I put away the cable now on the ground, and rush home.

Detective Pardo 2/8/138 14:09

Waiting against my wall, gun pointed at the door. I expect them any day, there's still so much they can find, and there won't be any new victims. I see blood.

Lorenzo Pollastri McLysaght

J'avais besoin de faire du bénévolat. C'est comme ça que tout a commencé. Je voudrais dire que c'était pour écouter les histoires des personnes âgées dont je prendrais soin, ou que je voulais les aider dans leurs dernières années de vie, mais je me suis promise d'être honnête avec vous, alors je vous avoue que ce n'était seulement pour embellir mon CV. Je venais juste d'avoir 16 ans, et il me fallait des heures de volontariat. Je suis tombée sur un panneau qui signifiait qu'une maison de retraite cherchait des employés. Alors, je leur ai envoyé un e-mail, et ils étaient ravis de savoir que "les jeunes de nos jours" étaient enfin enclins à travailler. Alors, durant ma première semaine, j'avais été mise en charge de deux personnes: Madeleine et Christophe. Le lien que j'ai créé avec eux avait été assez superficiel. Après cette première semaine d'essai, on m'avait demandé si je souhaitais continuer. J'avais évidemment répondu que oui, ne voyant aucune raison de partir. Maintenant, si je pouvais revenir en arrière et changer mon choix, je pense qu'une partie de moi partirait, pour me garder de cette souffrance que j'ai ressentis plus tard. En effet, c'est après m'avoir occupé de Madeleine et Christophe pendant une semaine que l'on m'a assigné Françoise. Françoise -France pour les intimes, disait elle- avait tout juste 80 ans et avait les yeux brillants de malice. Cette malice aurait pu être confondue avec celle d'une enfant de 5 ans, je lui disais toujours. Nous avons commencé à discuter, petit à petit, de nos vies respectives. Lentement, notre relation est passée de superficielle, à amicale, à proche. C'était un lien à deux sens. Elle me racontait sa vie d'avant, les histoires de sa famille, de sa jeunesse- desquelles où je me retrouvais souvent soit à rire jusqu'à ce qu'elle en passe à une autre; où à pleurer jusqu'au lendemain. En échange, je lui portais compagnie, et parfois, mais très peu souvent, je lui racontais ma vie. En comparaison avec ce qu'elle avait vécu, que ce soit les hauts ou les bas, je ne me pensais pas légitime à lui en parler. Je venais tous les mardis après le lycée, et tous les samedis, mais en réalité, je me retrouvais souvent à rester un peu plus longtemps pour rester en la compagnie de Françoise. Je me souviens de la dernière où je lui ai parlé. Nous avons commencé à discuter de ce que Françoise avait expérimenté durant son année seule dans son internat suisse lorsque j'ai reçu un e-mail. À cette époque, mes notifications pour tout mes courriers en rapport avec mes devoirs; mes examens, étaient tout le temps activés et avaient une sonnerie particulière qui me permettait de reconnaître leur origines. J'ai donc reçu

cette notifications et, en jetant un regard en coin à mon téléphone, j'avais pu constater le contenu du message. Mon professeur de biologie, m'avait informé que nous avions un devoirs de plus à rendre pour le lundi. Je pense que je me souviendrais toujours de l'injustice et de la frustration que j'avais ressentis après cela. Je ne me concentrais plus sur les mots de Françoise; qui en d'autres circonstances m'auraient grandement intéressé, mais sur la sensation de resserrement sur mon coup, la main qui semblait aggriper mon cœur, les larmes sur le coin de mes yeux. Ce devoir était le quatrième de la semaine que je devais faire pour lundi, ce qui était dans deux jours. Je n'avais pas eu le temps de me concentrer sur les trois premiers, ce qui voulait dire que mon dimanche allait être abandonné afin d'arriver à rendre ces devoirs à temps. Cela faisait le quatrième dimanche du mois que j'avais du passer à travailler. Françoise, ayant remarqué mon changement d'humeur, m'avait demandé ce qu'il se passait et je n'ai pas tardé à lui expliquer. "Allons, allons, m'avait-elle dit, "ce n'est pas si grave, un dimanche abandonné de temps en temps est normal, Je suis désolé de dire ceci, mais, entre nous; les étudiants de nos jours sont tellement paresseux!" Avait-elle dit avec son éternelle humeur que je voyais maintenant sous une autre lumière. C'était à ce moment précis que je me suis rendue compte qu'elle ne comprendrait pas. Je ne me suis pas énervée à lui expliquer. Elle ne comprendrait jamais la pression qui était mis sur mes épaules, en tant qu'étudiante. Elle ne comprendrait jamais le choix qu'il avait fallu que je fasse entre un stress constant ou une certitude que je ne pourrais jamais aller loin dans la vie. Elle ne comprendrait pas ce désir de faire de grandes choses mais le manque de moyens ou de confiance pour les réaliser. Après ce jour là, je ne suis pas revenue. Je lui avais dit un brief au revoir, sans avoir l'énergie d'essayer. Je l'avais considérée comme une amie, une confidente et j'avais adoré ces histoires; mais ce jour-là j'ai compris que, comme Madeleine et Christophe, ce n'était que superficiel. J'aurais pu aller la voir après un mois ou deux. Peut-être qu'elle aurait offert des excuses, mais je savais que ce ne serait plus la même chose. J'ai peut-être eu tort. Quelques mois plus tard, j'ai entendu la nouvelle que Françoise était morte, seule, dans son sommeil. J'espère qu'elle était heureuse.

Le Laboratoire

Il n'y a pas si longtemps, Il y avait un rat qui vivait dans une ferme à la campagne. Il aimait sa vie et avait de la nourriture, un lieu pour dormir mais malheureusement pas d'ami.

Bien que le rat n'ait à travailler ou stresser, il espérait une vie plus excitante, une vie sur scène, dans la grande ville. Un jour, ayant vu une publicité pour un studio de film, il décida de poursuivre son rêve et de partir la ferme. Il voyagea pendant des jours, dans la pluie et dans le soleil mais il continua, suivant le chemin de la grande ville. Après de nombreuses nuits blanches, il vit les lumières de la ville. Il marcha parmi les gens, essaya de trouver le studio qu'il avait vu dans la publicité. Au coin d'un bar, il rencontra une grenouille à qui il demanda son chemin. La grenouille le regarda et indiqua le chemin. Le rat se mit en route. Quelques rues plus loin, il trouva un grand bâtiment blanc. Il passa les portes et sentit l'odeur de Javel. Il vit un grand homme vêtu d'un grand costume blanc et de gants bleus. L'homme, lui injecta un liquide jaune et puis tout devint noir. Le rat se réveilla et a regard autour de lui, il rendit compte qu'il était dans une cage. Il vint en ville pour devenir une star et maintenant il était enfermé. Il regarda autour de lui, et vit les mots "pour le bien de tous" écrits sur le mur. Il se sentit un peu étrange . Il regarda derrière lui et vit qu'il lui manquait la moitié de sa queue.

Il resta là longtemps où il voyait des autres animaux enfermés dans les cages, même la grenouille qu'il avait rencontrée. Il lui a demandé ce qu'était cet endroit. La grenouille le regarda avec des yeux tristes et lui raconta les horreurs des humains. Ils exploitaient les animaux et faisaient des actes cruels. Elle ne voulait pas être une star, elle ne voulait rien à voir à faire avec les êtres humains, elle ne voulait que sa liberté.

Le rat attendit dans les cages pour qu'une occasion se présente. Lorsque sa cage fut nettoyée, il s'échappa et se cacha derrière une porte. Pendant la nuit, il s'éclipsa mais en passant par la fenêtre, il vit la grenouille triste dans sa cage et décida de la libérer aussi. Avec un peu d'effort, il fit sortir la grenouille par la fenêtre et il se mit en route avec elle. Trouver le chemin de maison n'était pas facile, mais il avait maintenant une amie.

Tereza Supic

The Boy in The Boat

It was mostly a blur, but I will tell you what I remember.

I was just joyfully playing with my siblings on deck, when suddenly one of the crewmembers ran to a small device, a transmitter maybe, and I heard him urgently say 'Iceberg ahead! A ginormous iceberg is coming toward us!' On the other line, it was a glitch so I could not understand what was being said, but I didn't have time for that, so I quickly led my siblings down the massive debris staircase and down to our cosy cabin.

We were in first class, but I saw some of the people boarding third class, and I must say they did not look at their finest. I had better not be a little brat I told myself.

I rushed into my parents' room where they were calmly reading newspapers. 'Were going to hit an iceberg! An iceberg is headed our way!' I screamed. 'Honey,' mother said gently, 'Calm down, calm down, I can't understand a word you are saying' mother was trying to calm me down, but it wasn't working, 'Mother listen to me very carefully 'I say much slower than before 'We are heading toward an iceberg. An iceberg is coming our way; we are going to go into a huge iceberg!' As soon as my family heard what I had said, my siblings tugged on my father's tie and my mother's skirt, looking for reassurance. 'Now look what you have done, you've scared them to death. Don't worry my little angels; remember we are on the unsinkable Titanic.' 'But mother' I continue 'There is an iceberg a massive one and we are heading straight for it!' 'Look, if it's really that important to you, I will come and see this ghastly iceberg with you. Come on, lead the way.' so we were off. I led her to exactly where my siblings and I were playing, so I pointed to the iceberg, and mother said, 'I don't see a thing, you must be imagining it.' 'But mother-' 'Honey this is about enough. I don't want to hear another thing about this.' mother says, tempered. I had never seen her like that before.

No one felt it but the boat hit the iceberg. I saw the architect and captain checking the boat. They looked worried...

Two hours later the ship starts to go sideways. My family and I started to slip down onto our right wall. We all tried to get on a lifeboat, but I couldn't get on one. I tried to find my father, but I couldn't. The captain said to jump overboard, I was reluctant to jump into the icy sea, but of course, I did.

As soon as I leapt off the Titanic, the boat snapped

in half. I couldn't get a life jacket on fast enough, so I was floating on a dead body. Suddenly something like a vortex starts to appear in the ocean. It was so strong that even Olympic swimmers that were on board couldn't get out, but thank goodness I was far away enough to not get sucked in. It felt like forever when I was waiting in the freezing sea.

About twenty minutes later, I saw a lifeboat coming toward me. I started screaming and yelling until I was hoarse. They see me! I'm saved!

Once I got back to port, I was informed that I was one of four people found alive in the ocean. I knew I would never see any of my family again. My mother: gone. My father: dead. My siblings: disappeared.

Lucia Woods

Winter Landscape

Snow-covered, the cabin sits there, far away from anything else, reflecting in what used to be a lake but what ultimately frozen solid, just like everything else in the freezing landscape. Towering over the flat sheet below are immense mountains, standing tall in the clear, crisp tundra. On the mountains, the grey rocks are almost completely covered in snow and ice. At the foot of the mountains, there's a boardwalk over the snow, leading to the wooden cabin, which looks warm and welcoming with lights on in the windows, and smoke puffing out of the stone brick chimney. To the side, opposite from the mountains, are trees; fir trees standing in the snow as bold as brass. Above them is a stunning winter sunrise with radiant shades of pink, orange, yellow and a beautiful forget-me-not blue. Reflected in the ice, the trees look like soldiers standing tall, wearing the same snowy uniform, straight and orderly.

Lucas Perkman



Ignorance is Bliss

When I was but young, I'd gaze at the skies
At night when the darkness (and my youth) hid the world's lies
When I could only imagine things that were far away
When did this stop, I can't think to say
But I recall the feelings of staring at the night
Where my lack of knowledge fed to a lack of fright
Ignorance is bliss, I've now learned they say
That phrase reminds me of my younger days
When birds singing was a faraway bard
Back when enjoying the unknown wasn't so hard
Now the world is devoid of all things magical
The world seems bleak, scientific, and factual
What I'd give to gaze off into the nights of my childhood
When I could live without everything understood
I'd love to reimagine the world with a fantastical gaze
Ignorance is bliss, is a very truthful phrase

Finn O Donail

M'áit Speisialta

Tá áit agam is maith liom dul ann
Is áit speisialta é
Suím ansin le mo smaointe
Ag smaoineamh ar feadh an lae
I m'áit bíonn sé ciúin
Suím go síochánta i mo shuíochán
Fuaim ar bith ach na héin ag canadh
Agus sna bláthanna na beacha ag buíochán
Nuair a bhím i m'áit
Feicim na scamail bhoga sa spéir
An fharraige ghorm gan deireadh
Agus na huain ag súgradh san aer
Suím i m'áit ar an bhféar bog glas
Le smaointe ag rith trí mo cheann
Smaointe a choinneodh mé ann go deo
Níl aon ghá le páipéar na le peann
Tá áit agam is maith liom dul ann
Is áit speisialta é
Suím ansin le mo smaointe
Ag smaoineamh ar feadh an lae.

Jessica Moore

The Mist

The mist descended on to the forest floor, none of them would admit it but they were truly lost now.

Juliana looked over to Ruby, her eyes wide. They were both thinking the same thing, why us? There was a moment of silence, until Esme interrupted. She screamed up at the darkening sky 'why me, what did I do?'. All of a sudden, the girls heard a snap. Ruby and Esme jumped and screamed, but not Juliana 'calm down guys I just stepped on a twig' she reassured quickly, for a brief moment the girls thought they were safe, that was until they heard it, the noise that would forever change them.

The girls ran as fast and as far as they could. After ten minutes of running full tilt they stopped, exhausted but coursing with adrenalin. 'What was that noise?' whispered Esme choking on her own breath. 'I don't know, but if we want to get out of here alive I suggest we start running again,' replied Juliana quickly. 'Unless we want to become something's dinner, or worse, we better keep running,' agreed Ruby.

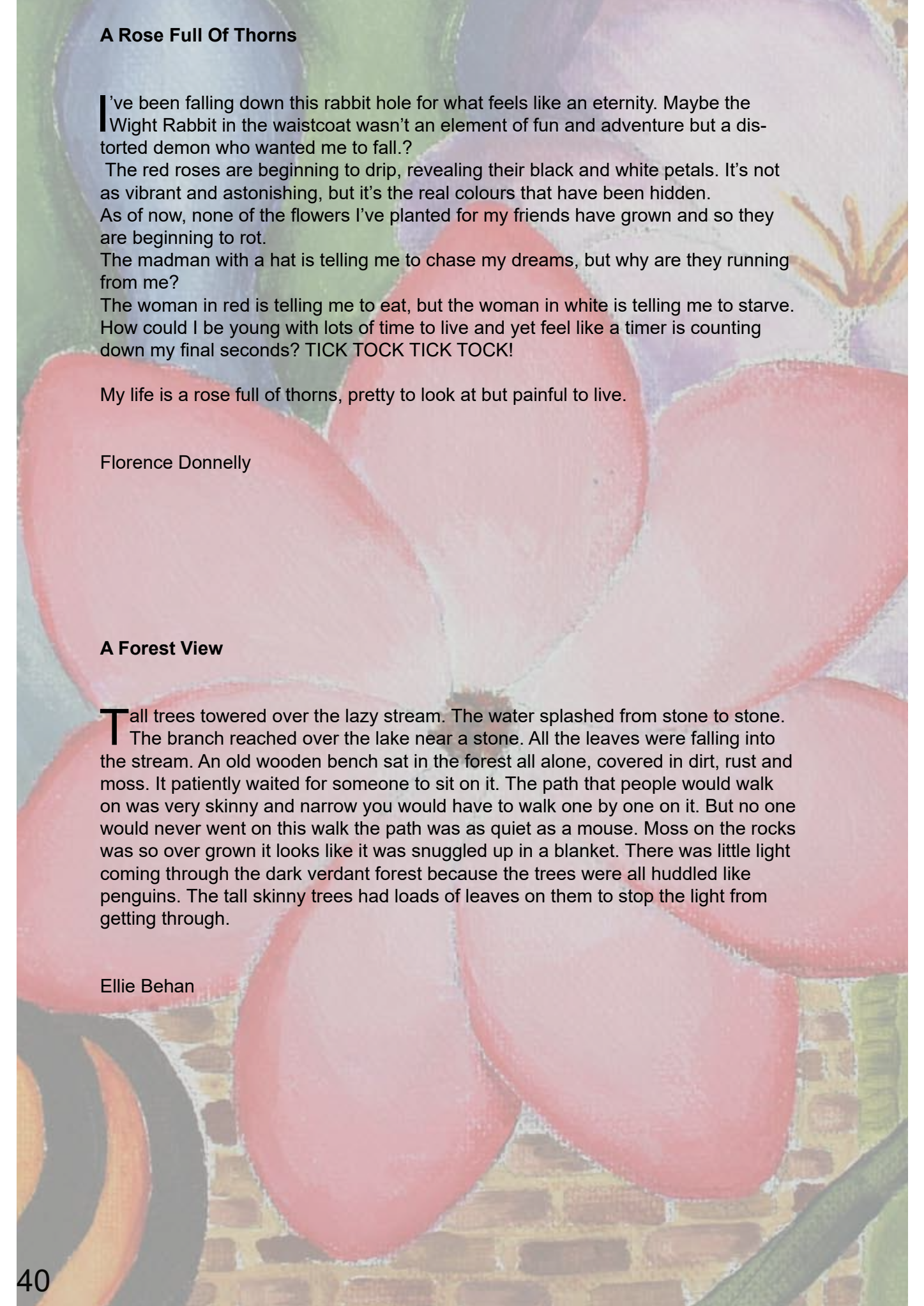
Suddenly there was another scream but this time louder. Esme was screaming this time. The girls turned and that's when they saw him the man who would forever haunt their dreams, the sinister silhouette of pure evil. Juliana and Ruby didn't know whether they should run for their lives or stay to try save their friend. 'Ruuuuuuuuuuuun' screamed Ruby, and Juliana quickly obeyed. If it meant they might survive then leaving Esme behind, alone and terrified, was what had to be done. We didn't spend too long thinking about it.

Bonnie Forsyth

An Gleann Álainn

Uair amháin bhí cnoc aláinn
Ag clúdach an tallamh cosúil le blaincéad
Uair amháin bhí cnoc aláinn
Ag clúdach an tallamh cosúil le blaincéad
Tá Éire áit draíochtúil
Bristar ag críocas agus sotalach
Ní raibh aon éan ag canadh
Uair amháin bhí cnoc aláinn
Ag clúdach an tallamh cosúil le blaincéad
Uair amháin bhí cnoc aláinn
Ag clúdach an tallamh cosúil le blaincéad

Luke McConnell



A Rose Full Of Thorns

I've been falling down this rabbit hole for what feels like an eternity. Maybe the Wight Rabbit in the waistcoat wasn't an element of fun and adventure but a distorted demon who wanted me to fall.?

The red roses are beginning to drip, revealing their black and white petals. It's not as vibrant and astonishing, but it's the real colours that have been hidden.

As of now, none of the flowers I've planted for my friends have grown and so they are beginning to rot.

The madman with a hat is telling me to chase my dreams, but why are they running from me?

The woman in red is telling me to eat, but the woman in white is telling me to starve. How could I be young with lots of time to live and yet feel like a timer is counting down my final seconds? TICK TOCK TICK TOCK!

My life is a rose full of thorns, pretty to look at but painful to live.

Florence Donnelly

A Forest View

Tall trees towered over the lazy stream. The water splashed from stone to stone. The branch reached over the lake near a stone. All the leaves were falling into the stream. An old wooden bench sat in the forest all alone, covered in dirt, rust and moss. It patiently waited for someone to sit on it. The path that people would walk on was very skinny and narrow you would have to walk one by one on it. But no one would ever went on this walk the path was as quiet as a mouse. Moss on the rocks was so over grown it looks like it was snuggled up in a blanket. There was little light coming through the dark verdant forest because the trees were all huddled like penguins. The tall skinny trees had loads of leaves on them to stop the light from getting through.

Ellie Behan

The Toaster

The toaster began to scream, as it did every morning. Tim popped in the bread, and it would begin to wail and cry like a toddler. He had raised a hammer to end its screeching several times up to this point, but every time it would threaten to call the police and Tim wasn't looking to be charged with the murder of a household appliance, his neighbour was already serving a 2-year sentence for taking an angle grinder to an insubordinate kettle.

He had rung customer support several days earlier but was met with another toaster on the line, he was called several human-related slurs before he felt the need to hang up. He didn't enjoy being called a cordless piss machine that much. He decided to leave. The toaster could have the house to itself.

He went to the park, he used to love going to the park, but he could never make the time as of late. He passed children on swings, couples going for a stroll, and everything you'd want to see on a walk, not one toaster among them. He came to a bench, his favourite bench, the bench he'd always come to when he didn't feel like being anywhere in particular.

The sun was beaming down on him, the world was alive, even the pollen didn't seem to be bothering him. His phone rang. He could have cried at that moment, but the eyes of the man sitting next to Tim were on him. He had snuck up on him and was now Tim giving him a curious look. He looked weary, dressed for business but now in the park when he should be working, or at home. What a loser.

"They've got you too?" he asked Tim.

"Excuse me?" Tim said.

"The appliances."

"How could you tell?"

"Look around, mate, we're the only two grown men who have no business being in a park on a Tuesday morning."

"Is that bad?"

"Can't tell anymore. Is there anything wrong with going to the park?"

"No. No there's not."

The man looked at peace at that moment, the fatigue and wear that Tim thought he saw weren't there anymore. It was the first time Tim saw anyone over 23 that had looked that happy.

"What are you hiding from?" Tim asked the stranger.

"I caught my wife talking dirty to my washing machine."

Tim winced.

"I'm sorry."

"It's fine, I mean it's a very good-looking washing machine."

The man laughed; Tim tried to smile but he couldn't quite bring himself to laugh at the man's misery.

"Are you going to do anything about it?" Tim asked.

"Do anything about it?" he laughed. "Lots of things happen, if I tried to do something about everything I wouldn't have any time to do anything about myself."

Tim was shocked. He didn't really think of anything he could say to this man, maybe a thank you. No words would come out but Tim was sure the other man knew what he would say.

"Go home," said the man.

Tim did as suggested.

He thought about what had just happened, he thought about the man's wife and the handsome washing machine. He came to a decision.

That day he went home and bludgeoned his toaster with a mallet and it was the best day of his life.

Billy Williams



The Lake House

Jen had been watching the telly when it had started, whatever it was. She couldn't always get signal out there, though they weren't far from the town, so she hadn't been too worried when the terrifyingly square jaw of the male lead was replaced with rolling waves of static.

"Marie! Signals gone." Her daughter was good with these jobbies. Always knew the right cable or often smack to get it started.

No reply.

She hauled himself out of her armchair, ignoring the screech of brown leather against denim jeans and the ache in her left knee.

"Marie?" She called, shuffling into the kitchen, each step echoing through the house.

There was a note on the kitchen table. Marie's chicken scratch in red easily discernible.

Gone to grab milk in the village. Back soon.

The little cottage Marie had found on air B&B was a 20-minute drive from the nearest town. It was perched precariously on a hill, overlooking verdant waves of field and forest on the right and a flat glassy lake on the other. The cottage itself was nothing special. Slate grey, exposed brick with a bottle green roof. A few unkempt bushes on the path to the mud brown door and a rusting front gate. Sparsely furnished but comfortable, though the light in the hall was a fickle beast, the house served its purpose, besides they had come for the view mostly. That, and Marie was insistent they celebrate Jen's retirement somehow, and he wasn't one for a party, so this served quite nicely. She turned to the fridge. She was pretty sure there was Gubeen left over from last night's cheese board. Score. Taking a large bite she stepped on the veranda, overlooking the lake. Across the expanse of cool, clear water, she could make out the bright lights of the village blinking at her from the next hill over. The setting sun bounced off the surface, sparks of light shooting like fireworks in petal pink and gold. The brown-green rushes whispered in the breeze and the salty creamy cheese spread across her tongue with each new bite. She could get used to this.

The next to go was the lights. There was no sudden darkness, no startling blindness as a result, nothing so obvious as that. The light in the hall shuddered and flickered out, as it was wont to do. Then the bulb of a questionable chandelier in the ground floor bedroom. The sitting room, the pantry, the kitchen. Until the only source of light, aside from the dying sun, was the writhing static on the TV with its obnoxious, high buzzing. All this

as Joan placed bets on which swan would win the quickly escalating stand off by the bank.

It was only when she turned back in for a jacket, the temperature had taken a sudden turn, that she noticed the encroaching darkness slithering from the back door onto the rickety, wooden platform.

"Crap!" She muttered, walking to the sitting room, sure that she had left her phone there and that Marie with her magic tech... whatever would have the solution to all her problems.

There it lay, nestled between the overstuffed cushions and cheap leather. No signal, typical. She walked back out to the veranda and held the small, cold device over her head. It buzzed, a good sign. Pulling it close to her face she watched a WhatsApp from Marie appear on the screen.

"Glasses, glasses where are my bloody glasses?"

The kitchen counter? No, she hadn't had them then. Definitely not the sitting room. She stared out across the lake contemplatively.

Then she startled, for rather than the smooth, balmy expanse of water, she found eddies, waves, and bubbles like burn welts on smooth skin. Where once the water had been still, it now heaved in anger and writhed in pain before seeming to settle briefly only to surge to life again. Like a symphony it rose and fell as she stared, mesmerized at the shifting blues and greens. Until a deafening noise rang out across the valley.

Yet noise didn't seem quite accurate. It wasn't a bang, not a clash nor a ringing, more a presence, an experience. It enveloped her, reverberating from her head to her toes, scraping against her insides, trying to bludgeon its way out. White hot pain, seared across her skull and when she finally came to, she was on her knees clutching her head. The lake was calm.

As she stood and surveyed the night sky, all that had once seemed beautiful was now sinister. Every splash an eldritch creature rising from the depths, every whisper of rushes mocking or belying the approach of a malevolent stranger, every flicker of light, the fear that it would not return. The light of the sun had vanished quickly and with it the comfort that came with seeing, with knowing. She looked across the valley to the only light left, only to see a vast, towering darkness. There was nothing.

She grabbed her phone from her pocket where it was buzzing wildly, and her hand brushed against the hard plastic frame of her glasses.

"Of course, they were in my pocket." She let loose a brittle laugh, her heart in her throat.

Message after message was streaming in, voice, text, WhatsApp until very suddenly they stopped. All of them at once. The last was from her husband, who was in New York with school friends. Goodbye.

With trembling hands, she scrolled to Marie's chat. Mum don't leave the house. I won't be back. Just wait until it's over.

Joan drew in a tearful, shuddery breath, shook her head and walked inside. In the living room, the TV had started up but was frozen on a close up of square-jaw.

She poured herself a glass of wine and settled into her chair to wait until it was over.

Whatever it was.

Ruby Newall



The Search

My name is Hokan Odinson, and this is the story of how I went on an adventure while looking for my twin brother, Hagan. It all started when me and my brother were hunting near our home in the forest. When Hagan was not at the designated meeting place at the designated time, I grew concerned. It was not like him to be late. I waited for an hour thinking that maybe he was tracking some animal. After that I went looking for him in the forest. I scratched go home on a tree nearby. I looked for him everywhere around the forest. After two hours of looking in the woods, I had had found something that might help me find him. It was a place where a battle was fought. There were various scars on the land like scorch marks which were strange, but the strangest thing was ice on a tree during mid-summer. I found Hagan's knife. After found this, I decided to do something I swore I would never do. I decided to call my father, Odin. Odin had not been a very good father. Neither me nor my brother had ever laid eyes on him. I got home and got all the stuff needed for the calling like candles, some meat from the hunt and a statue of Odin. I had started to pray to him to help me find my brother. When I was praying, the wind outside started picking up and there were loud thunderclaps. The wind was getting increasingly violent, and lightning was rattling down. I was scared that it might blow the house down when suddenly it stopped and there was a loud knock on the door. I slowly went to the door, opened it, and found an old looking man with a long white beard, a grey cloak and grey pointy hat, and he had an eye-patch. He looked wise and you could sense he was one of the most powerful being in the universe. I intuitively knew that this was my father. I let him in and told him everything that happened when he sat down. He listened to everything and after telling him about the site he asked me to take him to the site of the battle. When I led him there, he began to inspect the ground. "Your brother is alive but injured," said my father, "the fire giants have him." "How do you know?" I asked. "This looks like a battle between the giants of fire and ice. It looks as if your brother stumbled into it." "So, he must be in the realm of Muspelheim." He nodded and then told me to go home, get my weapons. I did this and returned about an hour later with my sword and my bow and arrows. We transported us to Muspelheim with the help

of Heimdall guardian of the Bifrost bridge. Muspelheim is the place of fire and lava. Everything looks like it is made of obsidian. Odin and I looked all around Muspelheim for my brother, but all we found were flames, fire giants, and lava. Only after much searching did we see Hagan trapped in a cage of bones. He was severely burned and bruised. There were two guards and we made quick work of them and set Hagan free. We brought him back home and he told us of how he just stumbled into a fight between the fire and ice giants.

That was 20 years ago. Odin has become a better father. He spends more time with us, and he even trained us in some magical arts. We have had many adventures and no doubt will have many more.

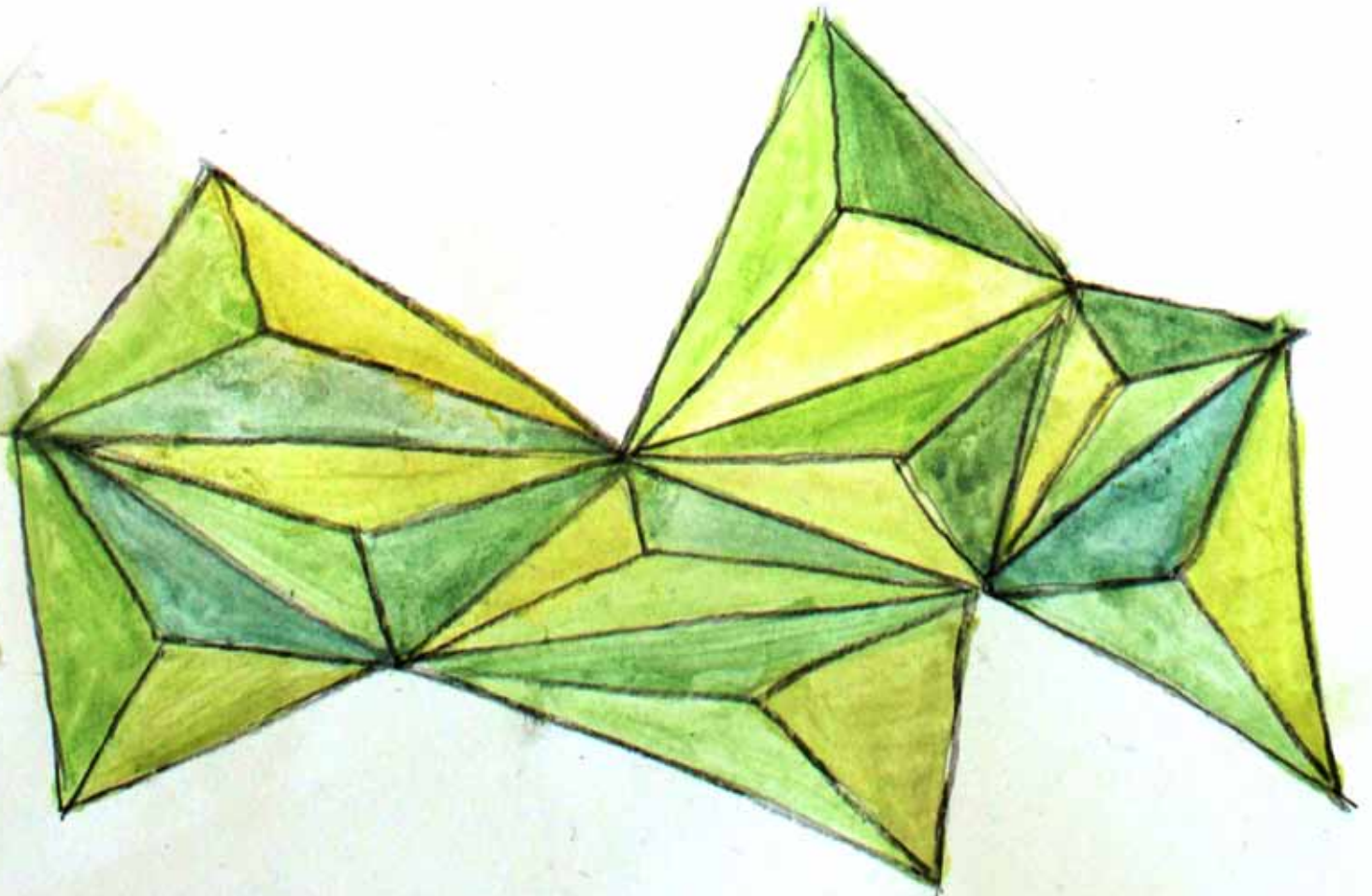
Fionn Lynch Rybaczuk



Skellig Poem

He sits in the garage all alone, covered in cobwebs, dust, mud and pain
Deprived from joy, he waits without gain
He sits there alone, devastated, gloomy, hungry and depressed
He sits there and suffers, feeling bored to death
He sits there with cracks in his hands, face, legs and neck
He sits there with feelings of pain and regret
When he thinks in spring rolls and pork char sui
He thinks of the taste and his mind fills with glee
The only company he has are spiders and the occasional fly
He sits there and suffers, waiting to die
He wishes for aspirin to help him to live
But no one will help him no one will give
He feeds on spiders, bluebottles, and other beastly things
But none of them know, that inside his jacket
He hides majestic wings

Alon Weissblech



Lily of the valley

With petals whiter than fresh snow
Your sweet, scented perfume
You welcome spring on the green grass below

Lily of the valley, you I adore
The years go by as the seasons change
Yet you arrive persistent each sunlit day

Beneath the now lively azure fade
Since it will soon be May you're out on display
Lily of the valley though you may not know

What it meant to be the favourite
The dew on your leaves let you glow
We must remember to savour it.

Sara Drobova

Dunkelheit

Wohltuend, beruhigend
Dunkelheit ist zuverlässig
Sie tut mir nie weh
Mein persönlicher Raum
Dunkelheit

Lucie Balmer

Der Vögel im Käfig

Der grüne und rote Vogel
Im Käfig gefangen
Ist der Vogel deprimiert?
Der Vogel im Käfig

Sam Legge

Natur

Hell und herrlich
Unberührt und doch selbständig
Sie beruhigt mich
Natur

Kalen Healy



Oh Mein Gott

Ich ging die Straße entlang und fing an meine Füße zu spüren. Eine widerhallende Stimme begann, eine Wahl zu treffen. Ich spürte eine leichte Brise in meinem Nacken, was mir Schwer machte, mich daran zu erinnern, was ich als nächstes kam. Plötzlich fiel ich zu Boden und die Welt machte ein grosses Gebrüll. Mich überkam eine Welle der Einsamkeit.

Der Himmel wartet auf meine Ankunft und ich wusste, dass ich kein Überlebender war.

Oh mein Gott.

Teagan Sloos

Cave Paintings

My mind is an empty cavern
Where lonely travellers take shelter
From the empty expanse outside.

Droplets drip from ceiling to ground
Broken by cupped hands awaiting
Desperate to drink before they evaporate.

The wind whips waves into motion
In the shimmering, dancing open sea
Where fish swim from the depths to the surface.

The peaceful calm interrupted only by leaves rustling
Through the cavern's dark interior
Where forgotten people used to abide.

The new travellers enter
And examine the carvings and paintings on the walls
Only looking, not understanding their meaning.

Aylin Ustuner

North Star

When the flowers stretch into a sea,
Like glimmering lights littering the field,
Bustling with peace,
A city that flows and ebbs,
Washed I'm sunlit breeze,

We follow it like Polaris,
Until one day I'll sit,
And give my final warmth,
To the iridescent floor,
Which the oak ordains a shadow,
And I'll stare at the rectangle,

A perfect home,
For the inevitable.

Robert Talbot

Moving house

Hi, my name is Daisy, I am twelve years old, and I am from Ireland and live in Wicklow. I have 2 brothers and 1 cat, and a totally normal life.

I have two best friends; their names are Rachel and Hayley. We were all meeting in the park before school started. When we arrived at school, we found out that we had a project to do for the week, it was on the history of animals. I love animals so I was ecstatic, but unfortunately, we were only allowed to pick one animal. So, I am planning on picking the history of foxes.

Today, I will think about what chapters I will do, then, tomorrow I will start the project. The days were passing too quickly. I only have two days left and I have one chapter to finish. After school, my mum had news and I was not sure if it was bad or good. She told me, suddenly, that we were moving house! "NO, we can't move I am going to miss all of my friends." I shouted hysterically. I need to think of a plan... I will burn down the house...

Tomorrow, I will wake up at 2 in the morning and I will jump out of the window and run to the house. I will take out the matches and light the house on fire! It cannot be too difficult.

The house is as black as a panther, but not for long.

2:34am

Since the house has burned down (as a result of my foolishness), I am feeling terrified, because what if I get in big trouble? I mean, I will get in big trouble, but what will happen? Was it the right thing to do...?

3:06 am

When I returned home, I snuck into bed swiftly and silently because I did not want my parents to see that I was gone. The sun will rise, I will go downstairs for breakfast. My mum will listen to the radio, dad will read the newspaper, and my brothers will play with the cat. And everything will be just fine...

Peaches Livingston



Untitled

This book has a lot of emotional importance for me,
so a short emotive letter suits it.

This book created a world for me.
More than anything ever has, bar one.
The story behind its crafting is a novel in itself,
a new world for the author themselves.

I feel you do the same.

So I thought it suited you, ever perfect.
As if it fell just through passages of chance,
into place rested between your hands.
A contented centre of two souls.

Matthew O'Regan

Be Yourself

Be a moon in a group of stars, or
A flower in a field of weeds,
Be a snowflake in a fall of raindrops, or
A horse in a farm full of cattle,
Above all else....be yourself!

Dylan Clarke





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