

SILVER APPLES MAGAZINE

Creativity Worth Consuming



Issue 4 - May - 2015





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Gráinne O'Brien, Alex Dunne and Una Hussey

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Cover Design By:
Una Hussey

Logo Design By:
George Dempsey

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Silver Apples Magazine

The Spring Clean

Issue Four, May 2015

Creativity Worth Consuming

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Origami Handcrafted Gifts & Wedding Craft



George Dempsey Flanagan of Mojo Creations also known as 'The Maker of Magic' is a trained Graphic Designer and Artist based in Birr Co. Offaly.

George studied Graphic Design in Limerick School of Art & Design - specialising in design for print. He prides himself in being able to connect with the client turning any vision into a reality.

George's other area of expertise lies in his passion for creating and teaching Origami - 'the Art of Japanese Paper Folding'



"As a child, before I ever knew what Origami was, I taught myself how to transform paper airplanes into birds. some years later, I learned it was an art and Mojo Creations was born!"

As well as teaching workshops, George has developed a range Origami Handcrafted products that include framed artwork and Miniature Origami Art Vessels Origami Pet's in jam jars known as Whimsy's, as well as creating bespoke pieces for weddings, these include everything from bouquets & boutonnières for the entire bridal party, to table decorations & centre pieces for the venue.



Custom orders and personalising requests are all part of the service. If you are interested in working with George to create your own bespoke wedding ideas or Origami Crafted Gift for a someone special you can follow the magic on facebook & email: g-dempc@hotmail.com

Origami Craft Products & Bespoke Gifts
Wedding & Bridal Origami
Children's & Adult Origami Workshops



Letter from the Editors:

In which we dust off the cobwebs

Gráinne O'Brien, Alex Dunne & Una Hussey

New year, new issue, new logo, new us.

That was our attitude as we headed into 2015 - a fresh start. We knew we wanted this issue to come out around May, and we figured what better way to ensure a bright, airy issue for spring than to provide our lovely potential submitters with a hopeful prompt? And so the idea of 'The Spring Clean' was born. It invokes images of flowers, butterflies, buzzing bees, singing birds and allergies. Right?

Eh... not exactly. The submissions we got for this issue were, by and large, pretty dark. Some were deep and thoughtful. Others were bitter. A few were actually a little bit angry. In short, they were not...springy.

One or two made us consider recruiting a Silver Apples therapist.

Eventually we brought together the pieces we thought worked best together and the magazine started to take shape (in this case, the shape in question might be best described as 'convex polygon'.) There are moments of darkness and loss in this issue, but there's hope, and hopefully just a little bit of silliness (it wouldn't be Silver Apples Magazine without a smattering of silliness after all).

Make no mistake, the collection you are about to enjoy showcases one crazy talented bunch of people. From first time submitters to Silver Apples alumni, there's definitely something here for everyone.

Just don't expect to be fighting the urge to bound through the fields singing 'The Hills are Alive' by the time you're done.

Don't say we didn't warn you.

Story

Adreyo Sen

Adreyo Sen is pursuing his MFA at Southampton College

Why we chose it:

Maybe it was the long winter, maybe it was something else, but as this issue began to take shape we realised it was, well, a bit of a downer. There are tales of loss and hopelessness; darkness and despair contained within. Perhaps it is appropriate to include a poem that reminds us that these are all just stories and though we may encounter ogres along the way, inside we are strong enough to face them down.

When stories are told,
it's always night,
beautiful are a mother's eyes.

And on her lap
or at her feet
the children always come to know
the ogres in her stories
they will face on some dim street.

They are the heroes of her fairy tales,
she who gave them life
and continues to guard their dreams.

Afloat on the soft river of her voice,
holding close the guardians of their sleep,
wrapped together by her loving eyes,
her children will grow
and grown up,
they will never know defeat.

The Heart of March

Anna Foley

In the past she had believed that things fall into and out of place just as they are meant to.

Her husband had been softly encouraging her to go through the rest of the items and package them away. Peter believed they could both move on a little easier if all reminders were neatly entombed in the attic mausoleum.

The task itself began as a surprise to her. Almost organically, she had entered the room while sweeping the wooden floor of the landing, unbeknown to herself. She hesitated briefly but continued on and swept away the final traces of his hair and dead skin onto the plastic dustpan. On the wardrobe mirror she streaked a line in the dust with a finger and wondered as she gazed at the filth if there was any trace of him in it. The film of dirt distorted the room's reflection, compelling her to clean it.

Her husband had told her that happiness was a choice she needed to make. He made it sound easy, like the flick of a switch. She knew he meant well. She had already noticed herself laugh in the last few weeks. Television shows and witty comments she heard on the radio were creeping back into her awareness. The sound of her own joy had made her squirm at first, but she was growing accustomed to it again. Her husband's steady return to the world had become the standard by which she forged her own.

Anna Foley lives in East Cork, Ireland with her husband and daughter and an array of pets. She has recently had short stories published in Maudlin House, Silver Apples Magazine, Word Bohemia and Sixteen Magazine. Follow her on Twitter @annaonf

Why we chose it:

We like to make the odd smart comment or witty remark about most of our submissions, but now and then we get a submission that moves us to silence — a rare occurrence let us assure you. A heart-breaking and beautiful tale of loss. Maybe keep some tissues handy when you read this one. Just in case.

Peter had stripped the bed of the Fireman Sam duvet set, six weeks after he had gone. She wanted to wait, as if by some miracle he could return and sleep the sleep of the living again. A faint smell of him still hung in the air here. Three years of baby lotion, bottled milk and dreams had manifested in the very fibre of the place, unsure of its own power. Toys were neatly aligned on shelves behind closed doors, stifled by a perpetual lack of attention.

Spiders had been busy spinning mottled webs across the window pane, trapping his memory in here, lest it should dissipate to the ether beyond. They now lay upside down on the sill, desiccated by a sun that continued in his duty in spite of the world's pain. Her eye caught the tiniest flash of colour in the back of the garden. The yellow rose had survived the frosts after all, though from the kitchen window downstairs it had appeared withered in the March light.

The downstairs rooms had gradually lost all trace of his existence. There were no Thomas the Tank Engine toys to be found underfoot, no soft toys squeezed under the couch or discarded bottles of

juice left in corners. His high chair had been folded up, disinfected and removed to the attic almost immediately after the accident.

“The downstairs rooms had gradually lost all trace of his existence”

When Peter came home from work in the evening he bellowed a greeting to his wife and her voice travelled down the stairs

in response. He made his way up the steps and knew before he saw her that she was in there. He stood in the doorway of their son's bedroom and took in the welcome sight. The wardrobe doors were open and the shelves emptied. Labelled boxes were stacked in the corner and the window and mirror sparkled like they had before.

“You did it love.”

“It was time,” she said.

On the mattress sat a pair of tiny navy shoes, his first walking pair. The sides were scuffed and a frayed rubber dinosaur barely hung on to each one, like a yellow leaf ready to fall from an autumn tree.

“I'm keeping these in that special keepsake box your mum gave us.”

He nodded in reply and left the room, returning now with the letter she had decided she couldn't read back in January.

"We'll put this in there too," he said.

She noticed that the envelope had been opened with surgical precision, as she took out the letter.

She knew its contents but now the words were before her in perfect black and white.

The recipient was recovering well and the heart had been a perfect match. Names were never given to the donor families, but they wanted them to know that the girl and her family were forever grateful for the gift they had waited for so long to receive.

The small rectangular shrine to his first steps and parting gift was born, and laid to rest.

Belle Jar

Sean Afnan



Sean Afnan is a Scottish photographer, currently living in Berkshire in England. As an artist he considers his influences to be more or less everything from 17th Century painters like Rembrandt and Vermeer to modern editorial photographers such as Annie Leibowitz and Mark Seliger. As a member of the Bahai community he believes that the purpose of art is to articulate and inspire; that art has a central role to play in the advancement of civilisation; and that the generation of works of beauty can be a form of worship in itself. The image is called 'Belle Jar', which was part of a solo exhibition he showed in 2013/14. It is a composite of a number of different photographs and his intention was to explore themes of protection and liberty.

Why we chose it:

Is the ballet dancer trapped? Or there by choice? Is freedom only an illusion? Beautiful. Dark. Perfect. I've been a huge fan of Sean's work for a number of years. I am always impressed with pieces that could never come out of my own head. I chose this piece because of its striking conceptual imagery-that, and the obvious oozing of visual talent; composition, subject matter.....more arty words. Just look at it - you'll know what I mean.

Framing Story

Colin Wheatley

Colin Wheatley is from Dublin, where he worked as a software developer for a number of years before returning to university in 2014 to study English and Film at UCD. He has written pieces for both university papers during this time and is interested in short fiction.

Why we chose it:

Did you know that some writers and artists struggle with mental health issues in their everyday lives? Shocking. I know. We seem like such a well-rounded bunch. Most of us have been there, some of us more regularly than others. Whether Colin meant it this way or not, this story struck a cord with us because of its accurate depiction of anxiety. Both the day-to-day worries that pop up as we move through life as well as the constant need to prove our creativity to others and to justify it to ourselves.... Maybe we need to start putting the old 'mindfulness' into practice.

I'm standing near the front of the lower carriage, checking my pocket for the tenth time since leaving the house. Eventually I feel the wafer-thin slip of paper, which I'm told is called 'thermal paper', and I can relax. The docket is there, signed, proof I've paid in full. I ring the bell on the handrail, removing one of my in-ear headphones to ensure the bell does in fact ring, and inch closer to the white line, mindful not to cross. There are rules for that sort of thing, after all.

DO NOT CROSS THE WHITE LINE

DO NOT SPEAK TO THE DRIVER
WHEN BUS IS IN MOTION

The bus rolls to a stop and I get off quickly, thanking the driver and moving to the side so that more passengers can file on without delay. The driver's focus sweeps vacantly between the junction and those oncoming, back and forth, side to side, cadenced, like the windshield wipers fanning drizzle from the front of his cabin. He says nothing.

The pedestrian light at the junction is green and for a split second I contemplate whether to cross or wait for the next signal. I look to my right where the bus is waiting, the driver staring dead ahead. Hundreds of passengers frequented daily, always the same conversation.

"Town."

"€1.95."

“Drumcondra.”

“€2.15.”

“How much to the airport? How much to the Omni?”

How much? How much? How much?

No wonder he doesn't say a lot. Or maybe he just prefers the silence. Some people don't like to talk much.

I decide to cross at the signal and half-jog to the middle island, where I navigate the barriers like a Formula One car in a tight chicane, making it to the other side of the road as the green man turns to amber, to red. The cars sitting a few metres away rock back and forth, their engines revving impatiently. Behind me the bus inches closer to the white line, though it too is mindful not to cross. There are rules for vehicles as well, you know.

Standing outside the supermarket on the corner are two teenage girls, talking loudly as all teenagers do. They have lots to say — on Facebook and on Twitter, text messaging and WhatsApp. I overhear some of the conversation. “Sinead and Caitlin have theirs already,” one says anxiously. “Ger and Padjo are in the park now,” the other adds with excitement, mesmerised by the glowing screen in her hand. They're planning to buy ‘drink’ and agree to try Tesco.

I pass the express supermarket at an express pace, avoiding eye contact, thankful that neither asked me to buy the alcohol. Before I know it I'm on the doorstep of the next premises, with no time to gather myself.

I forget how bright the shop front is until I'm standing opposite the glass — electric orange with black frames in slight-relief. The embossed lettering that halos the door is less imposing at least; it juts out slightly, the trade understated. FRAME GALLERY, it reads. Craning my neck at the sign, I remove the in-ear headphones and tuck both plugs into a side pocket, securing with a zip. My focus falls lazily. The dilated pupils (the paint is that bright) slide over the glossy exterior and I notice some of the emulsion abutting the window has seeped onto the glass. I hope the proprietor did a better job on my order, I think. But the thought passes quickly. Something else has my attention.

A woman is standing in the shop doorway. It takes a few seconds, but I realise I've seen this woman before, when I stepped off the bus on the other side of the two-lane junction. I wonder why, when

the shutter is raised, she is still outside; it's raining and she's only partially covered. Immediately, I worry the shop is closed. My phone tells me it's 12:44. Lunch break, I surmise. Already I'm thinking how to spend the time, wondering how long the owner will take before returning. Is half-an-hour a reasonable guess? What if he believes in long lunches? An hour? There's a coffee shop on the corner. Can I spend that long in a coffee shop, amid lunch time traffic? What if it's longer? I suppose it all depends on when the owner left, which naturally I have no way of knowing. All I know is that I don't want to go home and come back.

I sidle up to the woman. She's keying the details from a flyer stuck in the shop window into her phone. I look past the flyer and see that there's no one inside, or at least no one in view. I try the door, but it's locked. A queue is building in the coffee shop, the line is out the door. Stay or go? I can't decide. Hesitantly, I ask the woman if she's waiting for the store to open. She says she's not, in a strong South African accent. (Maybe it's Australian or New Zealand? I can never tell the difference.) Her tone is blunt but not unfriendly. I imagine she's the kind of person who is not afraid to complain in a restaurant when service is poor, or spend an hour in a busy coffee shop mooning over an empty cup.

I'm half-inclined to leave when the woman informs me, quite matter-of-factly, that she's never done watercolours. I look at the flyer in the window and see the ad for painting classes. Some of the pull-tabs have been torn free. I nod politely in return and press the doorbell, turning my head to hear it ring. The woman asks if I'm an artist. I think for a second, cupping my hands around my eyes like mock-

*"I feel obliged to prove
my creativity"*

binoculars and press my face to the glass, searching for movement. I answer no. She asks what I do. Again I pause, struck by her forwardness. "I work in I.T.," I say guiltily. I quickly add that I

write. "Fiction," I say. "Just a hobby."

I feel obliged to prove my creativity, or at least prove I maintain some creative outlet, as if it's a right of entry for the store. Obviously I pass muster, because the owner suddenly appears at the back of the shop, from a trapdoor or some hidden stairwell, and within a

few seconds the door is unlatched.

Being closest I enter first, holding the door ajar while the woman remains in the doorway, trapped in the airlock between street and store. She is again preoccupied by a flyer, an advertisement for a local art exhibition. The date looks to have passed, though I don't mention this. A draught of air steals past me. I'm conscious of letting the cold air in/warm air out, so I ask the woman if she's coming inside. She thinks for a second — it's her turn to be hesitant — before finally deciding she will, "for a look around."

Inside, a pungent lacquer stains the air. I approach the counter at the back of the shop, but the owner has disappeared again, down the partially concealed stairs to my left. I want to tell him that I'm collecting something, I've rehearsed what I'm going to say and I want to speak my lines before I forget them. Instead, I must wait. My eyes wander in his absence. Frames, mostly bare corners, litter the room, an overwhelming choice of colours, styles, and materials: black and white, gold and silver, orange and fuchsia, matte, shiny, ornate, gilt mouldings. Some of the frames are made of wood and hang on low hooks, while others — ceramics, mixed metals — lean against walls. I'm surprised I ever made a decision given the options. Then I realise I didn't; the owner did. I was too indecisive. There are portraits higher up and I stare at one. It looks like Dean Martin. His mouth is wide, mid-song. Either that or he's in pain, a scream. It's a caricature. I wonder where the owner is. I wonder what's downstairs. A workshop? There's a window behind the counter that looks out into a tiny concrete garden. The garden is surrounded by walls that stretch up and up, high enough so that I can't see where the walls end and the sky begins. I see clothes on a clothes hanger and now I wonder if the owner lives in the store. Maybe there's a domestic area downstairs. Some of the clothes belong to children. How big is this basement? How many kids are we talking? What about a wife? I want to sneak a look downstairs but it's too late, the owner has returned.

The enigma of the basement quickly subsides when I see he has my prints in hand. Straight away I'm impressed that he didn't have to ask for my name, that he recognised me, knew my order, even though it's only my second time in the shop. (It strikes me momentarily that perhaps I'm his only customer.) I'm relieved also that he didn't ask if I'd paid in advance, even though I had and could prove it.

I check my pocket for the receipt as he places two 12" x 18" frames on the counter, face up. Then, silence.

The owner says nothing, just stares dead ahead. My hands are behind my back as if I'm receiving Holy Communion. I'm almost afraid to touch the items — my items. I presume he's waiting for approval, so I lean over the counter, half to examine the frames and half to break from his penetrating stare. Four, five, six seconds pass, and still silence. Does he want me to critique his work or just nod and leave? I think they look good, so I say "they look good" and nod. I don't leave.

The South African, who has been wandering the floor in the background, scrunching her nose at various items, approaches the counter. She asks if the prints are mine, as in my work. I tell her no. Unfortunately. They're for a friend, a birthday present. She asks if she can see them. The owner has started taping the frames together, but I say "sure" and he separates them so that she can critique his work too. It occurs to me that he has not said a word since I entered. Not a single syllable. I don't think this is strange. Idiosyncratic maybe, but not strange. He probably spends the best part of his day talking — to customers, to his wife, his children (providing, that is, they exist). Probably, he craves moments like these, moments of silence, the artist in solitude, DO NOT DISTURB. Then again, maybe he's just the silent type. Some people don't like to talk much.

The South African examines the prints side by side. The first is a black and white portrait of a glamorous young woman; she's staring up and looks sad for some reason. The second is an explosion of blood, sweat, and spandex. It depicts a wrestling match. A man in multi-coloured leggings is diving from the top turnbuckle while another man waits below, prone on the mat, an expertly choreographed display. As the woman's eyes dart back and forth between the two frames, I look on hopefully. I'm not sure why, but I really want her — this woman who I know nothing of, except that she's never done watercolours — to approve of my purchases. Their very existence now seems to hinge on her opinion, and when she finally lifts her head my stomach clenches slightly.

The South African's judgment is predictably blunt: she prefers the first, the sad female. She doesn't like the wrestlers at all. I know what she's thinking: "wrestling...really?" And in that moment I want

to tell her — this woman that's never even done watercolours — that the female pictured was actually a wrestling valet, Miss Elizabeth, now deceased. She was in the same business as the spandex-clad fighters. Probably she knew them well. Maybe even they were friends. But for whatever reason, I don't. I say nothing.

The owner bonds the frames once more and wraps them in taut cling film, ready for removal. The South African returns to the front of the store while he helps me put the frames in a black bag. He asks if I've got them (I knew he had a voice), and I say I do. There's nothing more to be said so I turn for the door, thanking him and bidding him goodbye. I'm a few feet away when I say that I'll see him again. I mean it, too...I think.

The South African is near the exit now, thumbing a selection of frames. She calls the owner over so that she can see one of the paintings hanging in the window. I wonder whether she'll buy it, an impulse buy, or if she's just browsing. I wonder what the owner thinks about this, how he feels about window shoppers, always browsing, never buying. Do they not understand he has to put food on the table? He has a family to feed. Theoretically.

I'm at the door, fiddling with the latch. Thankfully it opens with a minimum of fuss and I don't have to ask for help. The South African has her back to me. I could slip out without saying anything, make a bolt onto the footpath and never look back. I admit, the thought crosses my mind. But, instead, I say goodbye. I say goodbye to the woman whose back is turned to me because I think it's a very civil thing to do, that she would do the same. And I'm right. The woman replies in kind.

Outside on the footpath I try to decide if I should get a bus or a taxi. The frames will be awkward to carry and the black bag doesn't offer much protection should it rain again. I smell the damp left behind by the last

shower, petrichor rising from the slick pavement, and consider the long walk from the bus stop. Then there's the bus itself. What if it's crowded? Holding the handrail and the frames will be a pain. A taxi

*“I smell the damp left
behind by the last show-
er, petrichor rising from
the slick pavement”*

would be quicker, infinitely more comfortable, dry. But what about the driver? I don't want to struggle for topics of conversation. I don't want to talk about my job or what's in the bag. I don't want to talk, full stop.

I look back briefly to see the owner re-hang the frame in the shop window. A look of resignation marks his face. No sale. I take the headphones from my pocket and pop the buds in my ears. I decide to get the bus.

Some people don't like to talk much.

Lckng Lngg

Barnaby Holmes

T b brn Wlsh bt nt spk th lngg
s lk rdng wth n vwls;
cmplctd nd dffclt.
Y spprt rd n th rgby,
y dnt hg, y cwthc;
ppl ndrstd nd rcgns,
thy knw tht y r Wlsh.
Bt, dspt ths, y r lwys mndfl
tht smthng s mssng,
nd y wndr hw mch smplr t wld b
f yr tng ws ntv t.

***Barnaby Holmes** is a 33 year old student from Swansea, studying for an MA in Welsh Writing in English. He is traditionally more comfortable explicating poetry than writing it, but, following hassle and cajolement from peers, he has been persuaded to briefly exchange his critical hand for a creative one.*

Why we chose it:

We love a poem that makes us work! And as a bunch of Irish lasses sadly lacking in-depth knowledge of our own language, this poem hit us close to home (once we figured out what it said). In homage to Barnaby's poem, we shall complete this entry in similar style by using only vowels. Ahem:

*o! i ae ee e ee a I ou i ou.
oo o ii ooa iea o oe aa. I
oe o I' ee ei i o ae ue i'
oe? o o, I ou ie ai ee a o
oe ou o... I ie i u a I ao
ie...ue oe iae.*

The Razor Blade Monologues

Arron Ferguson

Arron Ferguson is a writer living in London. Past credits include co-writing the short film The Apothecary, winner of the First Light Award for Best Drama, and co-creating the children's radio show Professor Phlegm & the Lost Treasure Hunt.

Why we chose it:

Wow. Who would have thought an anthropomorphic razor could be so philosophical? Arron's story of teenage angst really cut us to the core (bad pun most definitely intended). It's a story of deep-seated inside pain (because the rest of this issue is far too light and fluffy...), but it's also a story of hope.

On a more serious note, if you or someone you know has been self-harming then please know you don't have to suffer in silence. You are not alone.

Some resources:

<http://www.pieta.ie/>

<https://www.selfharm.co.uk/>

THESE ARE THE RAMBLINGS FROM THE MIND OF A RAZOR BLADE

THE FIRST TIME...

The girl who lives here is crying everywhere and making an awful mess of her face. That stuff she builds her prettiness out of is breaking apart into dribbles and clumps. She must be hurt on the inside, that's what I reckon. I'm used to hurting people on the outside but they don't make faces that look that scrunched up and silly. I've seen all kinds of pain before but no one has ever made that sort of a face. That's why I think it's inside pain. I don't see inside pain all that often.

She's picked me up. That's bonkers isn't it? What's she done that for? No point shaving now is there you silly girl! Focus on how sad you are! Doesn't matter if you're a bit hairy.

Okay...well she's being a moron now. She's aiming for her arms. She's clearly so upset she thinks that's one of the places she's meant to shave. Nope. It's faces for men, armpits and legs for ladies. They're the rules. I don't know why those are the rules, but what do I know? Those are just the places I seem to get put. It's never been arms! She's got NO idea what she's doing! To be fair, she's taking her time. I've been in her hand for ages now and she's not using me yet. She's just edging toward herself, crying all over the place. Black crap is smudging all over her face. Big patch-

es of her fake face are opening up because she's so sad. She's hesitating. Probably because she's not meant to shave her arms. At least she's figuring that out now. I don't blame her really... Puberty looks bloody confusing. No wonder she's all over the--

Hang on. She's going for it now. Right, I'm going toward her arm. She's going to shave her arms...

I don't really understand what just happened. I've been tossed to the floor and she's stopped crying. Well from her face at least. I've hurt people before, but that was odd. That was on purpose. Normally it's because of a slip or something. She wasn't shaving her arms; she used me to give her outside pain. The people always look so annoyed when I slip and give them outside pain, why would she do it on purpose?

Normally if they get cut bad they cry. This is all backward; this time it's made her STOP crying. I've made her happier. I've never been a thing for making happiness before. I've been a thing for making good-looking. Has my job changed? No one approached me about this. No one told me my role in the house was changing.

I like the idea of being a happiness-bringer. I'm like that wide green bottle the older lady who lives here is always drinking from because it can make the face-leaks go away. I'm a happiness-maker!

THE FIFTH TIME...

She's grabbed me from the bathroom and snuck me into her bedroom again. After the first couple times I thought maybe this was just a thing that would happen now and again, but five? I was right. I've got a new full-time job. I'll tell you what though... I'm confused. I wasn't made for this. I remove hair, that's my thing. I was proper good at that! Now I'm some teddy bear style comforter nonsense?

I'll admit it is nice to see her happy though. It's nice to see all that pain wash off her face after we've done our business together. It feels rank doing it but she looks so much better afterwards. It's our time. It's intimate, just her and me. I like that routine. I don't really understand this business that we're doing but it seems to be working for her. She's moping about an awful lot less these days, which is good! She was a right old grumpy guts way back when! She still is a

little bit but we're kicking that out of her quick sharp! (If you'll pardon the pun...)

She's putting her jumper on now. That's daft; it's boiling out there. This is the bit I don't get. These last five times we've done an odd thing. I get that it's odd. She's given me a new job and it's weird but still... It makes her happy, so I don't understand why each time she's been hiding it with those big comfy sleeves. Why doesn't she want to show off that she's not sad anymore? Is she ashamed of the work we've been doing together?

THE TWENTIETH TIME...

I live in her room now. It just makes more sense. She was always rushing to grab me from the bathroom. It was silly really, like having a butler that needs to commute. I'm in here where I belong with all the other things that make her feel better. I've got a new job so I might as well have a new office. That's how I see it. She's really sad now. She's going to use me any minute. You just watch! There's a rhythm to this now. We've developed a flow her and me. She'll pick me up and we'll do our horrible business but it's fine because she'll be okay again after that.

It's funny; she was fine not long ago. I didn't see anything happen. She's just gone and had a turn. She's just sitting there now staring at stuff. Awful waste of such a good head.

Here we go; I'm in her hand. See you on the other side!

That was a nasty one that was. The red stuff is everywhere. She really went for it. She's getting more into how to do this now. She's not hesitating anymore that's for sure. What's odd is how we both feel about the red stuff has changed together. You know, way back in my old job if I made her leak the red stuff I'd cringe about it, she would flinch. Now she's happy to see the stuff. That makes me happy to see the stuff I suppose. The more of it as we can get from the inside to the outside, that's a job well done to me!

We did a great job today. It's everywhere. She's finally calmed down, none of that silly crying. Her fake face isn't falling off anymore. It's nicely wedged on.

THE FIFTIETH TIME...

I like being in the bedroom. I'm in the drawer of the bedside cabinet, ready for action 24/7. She's got all the things she needs in here. She's got her makeup for building her face and those bottles full of liquid stink; she's got all the important stuff like that in here, so why NOT me?

We're the happiness-makers. That's the team name. We're like a celebrity's entourage. Those ones off the television might look great, but there's a very important team around them who build them. Put them in the right rags and so on. That's what we happiness-makers do. She comes to us in a right state and we help get sort her out. The liquid stink goes all over her and the makeup builds her face so she can look happy, and then I help make her feel so for real.

"We're the happiness-makers. That's the team name"

Any minute now she should grab me. It's around about time for one of our sessions.

Here she is. She's grabbed me now. That's right. It's time.

That was a good one. We managed to get a lot of the red stuff out. As the red stuff comes out her arms the clear stuff goes back into her eyes.

I'm watching from the desk where's she calmly popped me down. She's doing that thing again I don't understand. She's putting THAT jumper on. She always does it, hiding our business. I've realized now she is ashamed of our relationship. I don't know why. We do our thing, she's so happy, then she builds a new face, hides our work in her comfy sleeves and then leaves.

Is she embarrassed to be happy? Is she ashamed she knows how to stop being sad? Does she want to keep our arrangement secret in case anyone else figures out it can make him or her happy? Does she want to be the only one with the superpower to control her emotions?

That's it.

She's embarrassed to admit she has found a clever way to use

me to rewind the clear liquid back into her eyes because it's only temporary. That's why she hides the proof of our business in the wool. She's used me enough times now for me to start getting it. We need to find a way to make our work more permanent. But I worry there is no way to do achieve that. I've put little cuts in her and I've put nice big ones. I've done a couple at a time and I've done loads in a fury. Why is there no set pattern? We always need to go around again...

THE 'I'M BEGINNING TO LOSE COUNT' TIME...

I live in her handbag now. It's the only way. What if she needs me when she's out and about? I tried so hard to stretch her happiness out for longer but it's lasting for less and less time between sessions. She's keeping me on her these days so I can fix her on the move.

That's the thing though... I'm beginning to think it's not really fixing her at all. The clear liquid always breaks out of her eyes again and rips apart the fake-happy face she builds. I saw it happen recently and I really looked at it. Ever since I've tried to make the effects of our business last longer I've been looking and looking at her, with more focus than ever, and today I finally saw it. I finally saw her real face breaking out from underneath the powdery one. I finally understood that the real face had smiles painted all over it.

I don't think what we do is right anymore. I'm not a happiness maker. I'm just a brush for painting over cracks; ironically by adding more cracks. I'm like a really good episode of television, a distraction. I should have just stuck to removing hair.

THE LAST TIME...

She put me down today. Maybe she's starting to get it like I do. Maybe I am just what she's thinking projected unto an object. That would make sense. Razor blades aren't supposed to be able to think and yet I've done an awful lot of it.

She was going to start one of our sessions but she hesitated like she did the first time. For whatever reason we're symbiotic her and me. She knows what I've been thinking and she's thinking it too. She gets that I wasn't fixing anything.

She's lying on the bed in an awful state. She looks like she did that very first time I saw her this way. She's got so much inside pain I don't think she's capable of standing up. I wish I could reach in and cut that out for her. Guess I can't though. If I could I would have done it already. I suppose that's what her and I have been trying to do for ages.

That was never going to happen. I feel like a right moron! What a silly and impossible thing we've been trying to do. I'm not a happiness maker. All this business has been, for want of a better word, properly dumb.

...AFTER THE LAST TIME

I've not seen the sad girl in ages. I don't do 'the weird thing' to her wrists anymore. I'm not the one she turns to when she needs comfort. I'm not the one she turns to when she needs to get through her inside pain. We were so close, she and I. I was always there for her. She relied on me. I feel a bit like a rejected Mom or a forgotten teddy, just tossed aside. I was her best friend. I was the one who picked her up when she was down and distracted her from how sad she used to get. I've not seen her in ages now. I've been nowhere near her wrist in weeks. I'm really happy about that. That was never my job. I was forced to do it but it was never my job. Did you ever have a relationship with someone that was really, really great but when it ends you look back and you're glad it's gone because it was actually bad for you? You were just having too much fun hanging out to realize it.

I hope it's not my fault.

I'm sure it's not my fault.

But I hope she knows it wasn't her fault either. It was just a thing.

I'm glad she's okay. I wonder what replaced me? Maybe nothing. I hope it was nothing. I like to think she doesn't need a happiness-maker anymore and just makes her own. You know when you spend ages with someone and then it's over and you occasionally catch yourself hoping they still think about you?

I hope she never thinks about me again.

Naked Truth 2

Lorraine Masters



Lorraine Masters graduated from Limerick School of Art & Design in 2012 with a B.A. (Hons) in Fine Art Painting. She is currently an active member of Limerick's Wickham Street Studios. She has shown in group exhibitions such as Wet, at Hive Emerging Gallery, The End is the Beginning, curated by Louise Marlborough in the Market Studios, Dublin and Mirror Mirror - Beauty and Perception, in 2020 Gallery, Cork. Masters had her first solo show Naked Truths, curated by Niamh Brown in the Atrium Gallery, The Backstage Theatre and Centre for the Arts, Longford. Masters' work focuses on female body image in contemporary society. The media spends so much time taking apart the female form, that it is difficult for us not to do so. The work is about entering a self-destructive mode and, at surface level, is drawing on the history of the female nude, especially in regard to the artistic canon. The difference is, throughout history the male has painted the female, in this circumstance the female is painting herself. The work is no longer the about male gaze but about one's own gaze - the historical male objectivity versus the contemporary female subjectivity.

Why we chose it:

Raw. Beautiful. Uncomfortable. Familiar. Honest. Evocative. Feminine.

Arthur

Sharon Thompson

Sharon Thompson lives in Donegal, Ireland. Imagine-Write-Inspire, Brilliant Flash fiction, Bare Fiction Magazine, Mills & Boon and Malinki Press all acknowledged or published her short stories. She is currently submitting her first novel 'Devina'. Her blog is remembervictoria9.wordpress.com Follow her on Twitter @sharontwriter.

The piece presented here is a prologue to Arthur's extended story. You can find the rest on Wattpad: <http://www.wattpad.com/user/sharontwriter>

Why we chose it:

*The opening lines of 'Arthur' made us giggle. And then it made us feel uncomfortable. So very uncomfortable. In fact, this short extract from Sharon's novel managed to make us feel lots of things in quick succession. Let's hope we never find ourselves having to explain what the word 'horny' means to an inquisitive grandchild...*Blush**

"I prefer my women curvy. You can get a real good handful, know what I mean?" Bald Arthur is smiling, but all of his family at the dining-room table have their mouths open.

"Jeepers Granda, that's a bit pervy," Melissa adds pouring on the last of the gravy.

"Well... we were talking about our favourite piece of meat. Leg or breast? And at the minute, I'd like either." Arthur plops down his fork and gulps some wine. The sound of plates being scrapped by cutlery goes on for a few uninterrupted seconds. "Am I not entitled to be a bit horny these days? As a healthy, widowed and lonely man?"

Jessica pipes up, her small mouth full of chicken. "What's horny?"

"That's enough now Dad!" Martin says. "This phase you're going through, of shocking us regularly, it has to stop." He rubs crumbs off his woolly jumper.

Arthur looks thunderous through his designer glasses. "So it's ok for you to have a bit of fun, but not me?"

"Arthur!" the girls' mum Cathy is almost on her feet. "That's hurtful."

"I'm sorry Cathy."

"Why can't we have one family meal without a drama?" Melissa says with teenager's whine. "It's so unfair."

"What's horny?" Jessica asks again.

"When a man can't keep his winky in his trousers," Melissa states.

“Eugh yuck,” Jessica wrinkles her pretty nose. “There’s a boy in school...He gets into lots of trouble. Granda, I don’t want to see your winky!”

“I’ll not show it to anyone. Don’t worry, Jessica.” Arthur winks and he hopes that’s an end to it all.

“Why would anyone want to see a man’s winky?”

“Jessica. Stop that chat this minute!” Cathy’s beautiful eyes are tearful and she tears at her blonde hair. “This is so inappropriate.”

Martin leans in and holds his wife’s hand, giving it a reassuring squeeze as she drags their hands under the table. She pulls it away from his grasp quietly.

Arthur sees it and sighs, “All I’m saying is, I miss my Milly and I’m looking for a companion. I’ve found someone. And I might like...”

“To show your winky to her?” Jessica offers.

“No. I just want to meet her.”

“I don’t approve of this at all. We’ll talk about this later.” Martin is looking all important with his new short haircut. Arthur can sense he’s supposed to leave things be.

“Indeed we will not. It’s my life and I’ll do as I please. I’m only saying, I have needs. I’m not afraid to admit to them.”

“Same as all the McNally men. Selfish blaggards!” Cathy is on her high-heeled feet clearing her plate on top of Melissa’s clean one. Her skin tight dress is spattered with gravy.

Jessica is holding on to her plate tightly. “What’s a blaggard?”

“A man who can’t keep his winky in his trousers,” Cathy says storming to the kitchen.

“She means you Daddy. When did you show your winky to another woman?”

“That’s enough!” Martin almost shouts.

“He didn’t just show it to her,” Melissa’s brown eyes tease, knowing she has ammunition to cause pain.

“Melissa!” Martin looks murderous.

“What else did you do Daddy? Did that lady not want to see it? Did you get into trouble?”

Arthur doesn’t want this family to fall apart. “Jessica. That’s enough questions pet.” His daughter-in-law Cathy is good for his wayward son Martin. Jessica and Melissa need their father, as he needs them. Just like Arthur needed Martin and his brother Tom, when they

were small. Thinking of his own Milly makes his heart sore.

“I miss Granny,” Arthur says looking at little Jessica’s blonde curls. He knows Jessica will understand. She remembers her Granny.

“Awh Granda,” Jessica rises and wraps her eight year old arms around his strong neck and climbs her leggings up onto his knee. Snuggling in, she adds, “You need Jessica cuddles.”

Martin looks on enviously. Jessica doesn’t cuddle him like that anymore. No one cuddles him anymore.

“Do you cuddle your new woman Granda?” Jessica ponders aloud.

“Not yet, Jessica honey. Not yet.” Arthur stares into space, dreaming of cuddles with Sky, his computer class teacher. Cuddling her would be blissfully soft. A man could get lost in those boobies. Arthur knows he could quite happily get smothered in her cleavage and he wouldn’t mind it at all!

The Word Circus

Niall Bourke

Roll up, roll up!
 The crowd, ten deep, coo and caw
 as fearlessly and dripping derring-do,
 my cracking whip and inverted chair
 manoeuvre snapping word-lions
 into impossible positions,
 paw on head ten high,
 teetering a little but the tower staying solid,
 their ferocious resistance broken
 by the force of my will.

That is how I see it.
 So I don my red jacket,
 pull on my tamer's breeches,
 twiddle the ends of my pencil
 moustache and sit at my desk
 ready to write a performance.

But facing the silent and sandy circus
 ring of a blank page I must admit the truth.
 I am not a suave tamer of lions,
 I'm a herder of recalcitrant house cats.
 And, top-hatted head in hands,
 I

M u s t w a t c h

T h e

m

S

C A T

T E

Niall Bourke is 33. He is an English teacher who lives and works in London but is originally from Kilkenny, in Ireland. He is currently finishing an MA in Creative Writing at Goldsmiths University of London. He is working on a collection of poetry and a novel about two backpackers mooching around Australia. Sections of this novel have been published in Prole and Roadside Fiction magazines. He has had poetry published in Southbank Poetry and Three Drops From A Cauldron

Why we chose it:
 We picked Niall's poem because it made us wanted to go to the circus. No wait, that's not right. It made us want to be better writers and/or professional cat herders (same thing)...Oh yeah, it also made us jealous of his mad poetry skillz.
 P.S. this was really fun to typeset Niall, thanks for that

R

Spring Clean

Dan Mooney

Dan Mooney is a thirty year old Limerick writer who's still finding his writing feet. He enjoys experimenting with screenplays, short-stories, novel writing and the occasional report for work. So far he has six years of journalism under his belt, an (as yet) unpublished novel and two screenplays. He enjoys writing absurd and/or surreal characters and unusual storylines typically inspired by sci-fi, fantasy or horror.

Why we chose it:

Gráinne has been friends with Dan for many years and this story terrified the crap out of her. She has one message for Dan: 'Don't expect me to pop around for tea anytime soon!'

I've never liked the winter. A season of empty promises as far as I'm concerned. Bing Crosby can dream all he wants, but we never get a white Christmas. The days are too short, nights too long, and the joy to be found in the little things is conspicuously absent. Winter is probably the reason I love spring so much. You can tell me that the year starts in January but as far as I'm concerned it starts a month later with the arrival of the spring. A new beginning, a time of promise, promise that whispers the possibility that anything can be achieved. We won't get a white Christmas in the spring either, but it's a different kind of promise, and one that the season means to keep.

I like to start the spring by cleaning out the house. As an elected representative of the people I think having an orderly house is important, after all, if I can't keep my house clean how can I clean up the country we're living in? I always start with the closet at the end of the hall. That's where I keep most of the homeless people I've killed, so it always smells terrible. I try to wrap them in plastic after I've killed them to minimise blood loss and the smell too, but necrosis is an inexorable process and despite my efforts there's always some leakage. After rigor mortis has come and gone, the gases in the body expand and eventually burst, so there can be quite a mess depending on how long it's been since

you killed them.

I use a plot of land I bought adjacent to a disused industrial estate for burial, but any old forest will do. Something scenic to really get a “spring” in your step. Keep in mind that the bodies can be difficult to transport, depending on how long you've kept them in the closet, so be careful when loading them into your car. Taking more trips can seem like a real chore, but it might be better for you in the long run. Typically the trunk of your car will only take two at a time, and I strongly advise you not to put any in the back seat. The smell is distracting, the mess is much more difficult to tackle and if you get pulled over for any reason at all you're in a lot of trouble.

Once the bodies have been removed it's time to tackle the stains. Modern day cleaning products are more than able for most blood stains, though I strongly advise thick, durable gloves for the task and a face-mask. If the thought of using those chemicals makes your skin crawl, natural remedies like cold water and salt can do the job in a pinch, but for best results, industrial cleaners are the way forward. I also like to put just a tiny smidgen of tiger-balm below my nostrils to cover some of the smell. If the walls in there need a lick of paint don't worry, that happens. Mostly though, some of the stronger cleaning products for the floor followed by a good wash with an all-purpose floor cleaner will do it. Then it's on to the bedroom.

“The hookers’ bodies are generally kept in here”

The hookers’ bodies are generally kept in here, and to mask the odour I've typically been covering the room in air-fresheners, so the first task is to take all of them down

and dump the stand-alone ones. Now you'll need to do a couple of more runs in the car, and visit your burial spot. Once again, remember that more than one trip is sometimes a necessary evil. The chances of being able to use the sheets you've wrapped the bodies in is very slim. To give yourself the best chance soak them in the tub with some effervescent cleaner for a day or two. Remember to take the body of the intern you murdered out of the tub before filling!

Given splashback and frenzy marks you're likely going to need to give the bedroom a coat of paint. Spring is a good time for strong greens and earthy browns which also do better than whites or

yellows for covering stains. Wait to clean the gore from the floor until after the walls are painted, that way you can rid yourself of any stray paint drippings when you get down to the deep scrub.

Can I just say this; carpets are a terrible idea. Cleaning wise they are a nightmare. Strip up any carpets you have. Sanding a floor is a much easier way of dealing with stains then trying to remove them from carpet. There's only so much shake-and-vac out there. If you absolutely must keep your carpet, try using "soft methods" like cold water and salt before moving on to "harder" methods like hydrogen peroxide. Remember that hot or warm water typically causes a blood stain to set-in, so cold water only. Meat tenderiser also contains enzymes which break down blood and if applied liberally can do an excellent job.

At this point you'll need to pack up all of the cloths, brooms, mops and sandpaper you've used and bag them all in black sacks, along with the hundreds of air fresheners, for transport later.

"Finally move on to any extra corpses you've left lying around"

Finally move on to any extra corpses you've left lying around. For me, the last one is the Winter Wife I keep in the kitchen. Typically I've treated her immediately after death with preservatives and have removed most of the internal organs, so clean up wise she's an awful lot easier for me to deal with. This is actually quite a handy tip for anyone you murder to save on clean up later, but it can be a time consuming and messy process, so make sure you wear disposable clothes and lay down plenty of sheeting while you're doing the job. If you've done it right, an axe (careful of your floor!) or a saw will quickly break down preserved corpses with minimal mess. If you are taking apart a body for transport this gives you more options logistically, though I still strongly recommend keeping them in the trunk.

The last task in my spring-clean is to take the bag—and don't forget your gloves at this point—to a secluded forest or wooded area and burn it. Make sure it's thoroughly burned and leaves no evidence behind. As it's spring time, you might consider combining this with a camping trip and burn the items individually in your campfire. It's a wonderful way to get some fresh air, take in some spring scenery, and

get the job done for the year.

Now you're ready to take on the new year. I hope you'll be successful in whatever endeavour you're embarking upon. For me, I'll be back on the streets and knocking on doors hoping to get your number one vote.

See you all in the winter time. If you're very unlucky.

All Souls

Paula Nic Íomhair

Paula Nic Íomhair is usually a critic - she's been reviewing books, music and films for a few years now, (for Inis, The Stinging Fly, Ibby and figure8magazine.co.uk) and has taught at Trinity College Dublin and more recently at the University of Limerick.. She entered a piece of fiction to a Trinity College writing competition a few years back where she received an Honourable Mentions Paula is more used to being the wielder of the red pen so it is with a massive amount of trepidation that she put she own work out there to be considered by someone else.

Why we chose it:

We're glad Paula bit the bullet and sent us her work for consideration because we liked her writing so much we took the unusual step (for us) of accepting both her story 'All Souls' and her poem 'Diary'. We present them together for your reading pleasure. Don't you just hate over-achievers?

I do as I've been told and light one white candle for you.

'This is for you, in celebration of your life,' I whisper. I'm not sure if you can hear. If you are there or if you have gone or if you ever were anything other than the result of an overactive imagination, fear, and loneliness.

It's been two weeks since the medium with the Tarot pack came and 'conversed' with you, and a year and a month since we moved in here. Me and my two little boys, on our own, starting out afresh in a centuries-old house I had known from childhood. I'd never believed in ghosts - I'm a lapsed Catholic. An almost atheist, a rationalist. The closest I'd ever come to paranormal experiences was in dreams. The first at the age of nineteen. I'd been having a stream of drowning dreams, but they ended with this one - it was between midnight and dawn and the soft touch of moonlight from a clear and starry sky eased through gaps in the curtain and touched the farthest reaches of the room, bathing a figure to my left in light. She was brilliantly white, with long straight hair and an old fashioned dress down to her feet. She did nothing and said nothing, only stood at my bedside and stared, filling me with fear beyond that which I've ever encountered. I tried to move, to scream but nothing happened. Not a sound came out of my mouth only a guttural groan from deep in my throat that sounded animalistic and other. My limbs failed to respond to

my commands. I was paralysed.

Furiously I tried to kick, to thrash out, to make myself heard, and it seemed an eternity passed before my legs responded to my brain and weakly moved. I kicked and screamed, at the same time. There was nothing there.

I was awake. Really awake. And alone. The experience had scared me though and became an anecdote for nights out when the conversation turned to the occult and inexplicable. I read up on the phenomena and there is a scientific explanation. Sleep paralysis. We get our modern English words 'nightmare' and 'hag-ridden' from Middle English explanations of this sensation as well as our idea of the incubus. I had had a nightmare vision., but I was rational enough to know that that was all it was.

My second spooky dream was after the birth of my first child. I dreamt that my deceased grandmother sat guard outside the bedroom, to ensure that there were no ghostly visits from interested spooks, but in this dream I woke to see my ex's dead mother leaning in over the cot, admiring her only grandchild. I woke up for real then, in terror. Not at the woman herself (by all accounts she was an absolute doll, with a sterling intellect), but at the thought of a ghost getting near my child. It took a day or so to get over that one. Apparently it's another commonly reported ghostly encounter - the deceased relative at the cot of the new-born

Dreams. They sometimes tell you more about yourself than your conscious mind permits.

The house is calm now, and quiet. The children are sleeping upstairs and I have Beethoven's piano sonatas playing on CD. I've always felt that the house appreciates the classics. It was something the medium picked up on, the day he came.

I never thought it would come to that, really. I just thought that there had to be an explanation for everything, like strange acoustics. Old wood settling and creaking. Electromagnetics and faulty wiring. A rational, real, boring reason for all the things that go bump in the night.

I sleep at the front of the house, the oldest part. Two bedrooms are interlinked and I don't use the one on the left - the one next to it is nicer, warmer. I'd been there about two months when it started. It was late, about 1 a.m., and I'd been reading. Then I heard it.

A whistle from the next room. A tuneful whistle. As clear as day (or night). I stiffened in fear, waiting, and then there was silence for about five minutes before I clearly heard the handles on the old chest of drawers in the adjoining room clanging away and banging against the wood as though someone was picking them up and dropping them like door knockers to get my attention.

There's a fireplace in that room. My heart rate went tachycardic, banging like the clappers, thudding so hard in my chest that I thought it was surely audible to whoever or whatever was making the noise nearby. I thought maybe an animal or bird had come through a gap in brickwork or down the chimney and was somehow trapped in a drawer, hitting against it trying to get out. A mouse perhaps? Or a blackbird? Something that inadvertently got in earlier in the day when I'd put laundry away and was now stuck. What else? What else could it be?

And the whistle, what had that been? The old sash windows face the street, a busy urban street even in the wee hours due to pubs

“I must have been mistaken. It must have been someone on the street below”

and takeaways at either end. I must have been mistaken. It must have been someone on the street below, whistling away contentedly as they marched home after a night on the town.

The sound must have travelled with the wind, perhaps down the chimney and through the window giving me the impression that the whistler was under the same roof as me. My heart and mind raced, but physically I was paralysed by fear. I didn't care what was in the next room so long as it stayed there. I turned on the light and picked my book up, and only gave in to sleep when I heard the familiar sound of delivery vans unloading and saw the dawn glowing through the shutters.

In the morning, eating breakfast in the galley kitchen and listening to the deafening hum from the thirty-year-old fridge, it hit me that perhaps that item had caused one of the noises. The fridge was up against the wall below the room with the clanging drawers. Perhaps it had been extra noisy and vibrated the wall up to the second

floor, causing the drawer handles to rattle. It seemed the most rational explanation.

Days passed but nights became a time of strange noises, of banging and knocks that couldn't be explained. I closed my eyes and ears to them and concentrated on the rational, the scientific. 'Old house noises.' I told myself, and moved to the bedroom at the back of the house, overlooking the beautiful garden. Something about the 1930s light switches and peeling wallpaper gave this room a neglected and sad feel, which was why I hadn't gone in there in the first place.

I slept with the light on and woke up to the sound of footsteps marching up the stairs and walking past my son's bedroom to outside my door, where they would inexplicably stop. This happened night after night and I managed to drown it out. To think rationally. Street noises. Just echoes. Just echoes.

Lights would often flick off, leading me to believe that the bulb was gone, only to relight when I went to get a spare. I'd discover electrical switches off when I had clearly left them on, and items would disappear only to reappear in places I had checked. To be rational again though, this sort of happening can usually be explained by the presence of children in the house.

I'd known the house since childhood. An old friend once lived there. We used to gather as teenagers to watch music videos on MTV, giggle at 'Beavis and Butthead'. There had never been anything supernatural about the house. There was no scary history, no backstory, no murders or violence. Just quiet families living quiet and happy lives.

And yet I couldn't shake the feelings of unease, my dread of hearing noises at night. It became a constant worry, so much so that I found myself seeking out the help of a spiritualist recommended by a friend, phoning this strange man who made a living from predicting the future through random drawings on random cards, who claimed to cleanse houses of unwanted spirits. Me; Self-proclaimed rationalist.

We were just over a year in the house when the medium arrived. He was young, and that surprised me. I felt furtive, guilty, ushering him in from the street lest somebody spy him and guess at his purpose, and label me at best, silly and superstitious, at worst, a full blown basket case. He wore an anorak and jeans, had a beard and glasses. He carried a briefcase and looked exceptionally, well, normal.

I made him tea and walked him around the house, chatting as we went about what exactly had been disturbing me. He listened politely, asking questions, taking notes in a leather bound notebook. Like a doctor, or a psychologist. He lit candles and burned white sage as he busied himself in the parlour, setting tarot cards up on the coffee table. I wandered in and out as he carried on his séance, communicating with something unseen using the cards. He continued to scribble in his notebook, and seemed absolutely oblivious to my presence. Afterwards he lit the sage again and went around the house, wafting it into corners and chanting. He sat me down and explained what he had done. There was a presence there, he said. It was connected to the house, but was not there constantly.

“It just checks in,” he said. “Makes sure that the house is ok. I think it is perturbed by your presence. It doesn’t know whether or not you will stay here. And she – I feel it is a female – wants you to stay. She likes to see your books around the

“She likes to see your books around the house, she likes the music that you listen to, and the sense of family that you bring”

house, she likes the music that you listen to, and the sense of family that you bring. Her heart was broken.” He looked at me sadly.

The whistling, he said, was a residual haunting. That meant that it was like a tape recording replaying, and was usually associated with the utterances, vocalisations, and noises that we make whilst occupied in our daily lives. Perhaps I’d been hearing the residual noises of the drawers being polished, the room cleaned up. My being there earlier and putting away laundry had triggered a residual haunting. He was quick to reassure me that there was no malice in the house.

“I explained that this is your home now,” he said, “that their presence is unnerving and upsetting you, and that you have children here who deserve to enjoy their home in peace.”

“And this will work?” I asked incredulously.

“Most spirits don’t realise that they are upsetting the living.” He replied, looking at me seriously. “They aren’t really aware that

they have passed on. You need to explain it. Respectfully. I would recommend lighting a candle on All Soul's Night, celebrating the life of the past owners of the house. Say a prayer for them. Or think positively about them. And let the candle go out itself." And he packed up his briefcase to go, having refused payment.

The house felt incredibly warm, inhabited and alive whilst he was there, it almost felt like it was aware, listening intently. Then he was gone. And so were my visitors. There have been no bangs, knocks, rattling drawers or whistles for two weeks. And so I find myself on All Soul's Night, lighting a candle for a woman I've never met, with Beethoven's sonatas playing in the background. On my kitchen table lies a white rose that suddenly catches my attention. Out of season, out of place. And no child awake to blame it on.

Diary

Paula Nic Íomhair

Paula Nic Íomhair's bio was already given to you on page 30. Don't tell us you weren't paying attention??

Why we chose it:

What? You expect us to write a second reason-for-choosing?? What do you take us for, productive individuals? Oh...

I remember October and November then.
Rain splashing up from cobble stones,
The streetlights glistening, shimmering
through
Mist-surrounded, umbrella wielding strangers.
I remember the smell of coffee and oranges,
Friends laughing at shared associations.
Endless flights of stairs: the books, the films
and music.
Separation, bifurcation, missing you:
Trinity's arched entrances framing my days;
Beginnings and endings.
I remember February in the country.
Cold. Still. Clear.
Fish swimming by rushing weir
No other noise, no other lights nor voices nor
footsteps.
Just you.

Spring Cleaning

Kevin Casey

The maple branches bob in the wind,
buds half-hitched along their length,
and a ray of light is levered through
this window on the fulcrum
of the sun grown higher.

Last fall, folded in the ivory angles
of the corner by the window's
southern view, ladybugs clustered --
rust bubbles rising, pulled into the house
by warmth or pushed by wind, driven
by an urge insistent and plain enough
to seem a form of hope.

The sash unstuck, uplifted, the russet
buttons tumble like empty boats
in the sill's unpainted gutter, dancing
in the breeze of the vacuum advancing.

Kevin Casey has contributed poems to recent editions of Grasslimb, Frostwriting, Words Dance, Canary, decomP, and other publications. A graduate of UMass, Amherst and the University of Connecticut, his new chapbook "The wind considers everything --" was recently published by Flutter Press

Why we chose it:

Aaah, springtime! You can almost smell the fresh grass and see the little lambs jumping around like eejits. And let's face it, there's nothing like scooping out the old dead bugs from the window ledge to signify a new season.

Vancouver Gastown #4

Allen Forrest



Graphic artist and painter **Allen Forrest** was born in Canada and bred in the U.S. He has created cover art and illustrations for literary publications and books. He is the winner of the Leslie Jacoby Honor for Art at San Jose State University's Reed Magazine and his *Bel Red* painting series is part of the Bellevue College Foundation's permanent art collection. Forrest's expressive drawing and painting style is a mix of avant-garde expressionism and post-Impressionist elements reminiscent of van Gogh, creating emotion on canvas.

Why we chose it:

Do you know that feeling you get sometimes when you look at a painting and think "I wish I could Mary Poppins myself into that painting for a day!"?...You don't? Oh... um, yeah me neither....

Stopover

Andrea Lutz

Andrea Lutz was born in Germany and has been living in Galway since 2012. She writes poetry and fiction. Her work has appeared in The Galway Review and she was long listed for the Over the Edge New Writer of the Year competition in 2014.

Why we chose it:

Spring time brings about a certain wanderlust in us all - a desire to shake off the lingering chill in the air, a strange longing to flaunt our pale bodies on foreign beaches while wearing over-large sunglasses and a floppy hat, a craving for icy mojitos...God we need a holiday. Where were we going with this? Oh yes, Andrea's poem reminds us that even though the logistics of travel can sometimes be a pain in the arse, it's still the gateway to 'Somewhere else'.

Stansted airport
Strangers assembled
Starbucks.

Staring at brown tables
Sanded down by time
Sat at by too many passengers.

Seeing others take a chair, silently,
Suddenly talking, sharing a smile
Stragglers on their way.

Spending pockets of life
Shuffling to gates
Scuttling up stairs of
Somewhere else bound
Star approaching, then
Softly landing aeroplanes with tight
Seats.

Youth

Damien Duggan

The evening seems to have visited quicker than usual today, or maybe it's just the fear inside me wanting to hide from the night. I pull the curtains aside, not too much, just an inch or so, not so much that they would see me or that I would draw attention to myself or my home.

The street lights have come on. I hear them roaring nearby, but I can't tell from which distance they are coming. That reliable knot gets tighter in my stomach at this hour every evening and seems just that little bit tighter today. I haven't eaten much today, I don't have the appetite. I rarely do lately.

I can see movement now in conjunction with this thought. Yes, there they are. Please keep walking, don't stop nearby. Give me one night of peace, maybe I can catch up on my sanity if I just get one night off? They are stopping. The tears have arrived now to settle for the night just as the darkness has. I have come to know their frames well. Their postured walks, the swinging arms, their loud intrusive laughs that seem to scream in my old ears. They seem to express a badness, or signal an intent that is far from moral.

They slow their pace outside my home. There are five of them, it's only mid-week, if it were the weekend there would be more of them. The weekends are worse; the

Damien Duggan is a 31 year old male from the south of Ireland. He has written a little since he was a youngster, but in the last five years or so he has taken to doing it a lot more. He likes to write poetry, novels, and short stories in-between a busy life of full time work and being a father to two wonderful kids. He has been never been published, though he doesn't lose heart as he does much more writing than submitting.

Why we chose it:

We at Silver Apples like nothing better than showcasing emerging writers and we're so glad Damien decided to send us this story. Although we must admit, it did make us kind of mad. Not at Damien, but at the titular 'Youth' he so colourfully depicts. Let's put it this way; if we ever find out that any of you is harassing kind old ladies, we'll have to pull a Liam Neeson. We will look for you, we will find you, and we will kill you. Oh and please call your Granny!

drinking, the name calling, the stones hitting the windows, and the urinating on my gates and in my garden are run of the mill on Friday and Saturday night.

The older boy, he looks about fourteen but it's hard to tell as they always have their hoods up, I think they call him Vig; he seems to be the ring leader, he gives directions and they always seem to laugh that little bit louder at his words. They stop outside my house and sit on my front wall. Their backs are facing me. Vig turns around a few times and stares directly at my window, as if he knows I'm here. The streetlight above him shines on his eyes, there is a coldness to them, devoid of emotion, a darkness along the pupils as if they only know hatred.

Then the howling begins, you would think I would be used to it by now, but I it has never settled well with me.

"Maggie, Maggie, come on out we know you are in there" an evil chorus if ever I have heard one. My heart feels like its trying to find a way to beat out of my chest. In these moments I feel like I'd like to leave myself.

They know I live alone. Frank my husband is long gone, ten years it was a few weeks ago, taken by bowel cancer on his seventy-second birthday. I go upstairs for a better look. Will I ring the guards again? I ponder as I take the final step at the top of the stairs. I ring them almost every night. It's funny that I feel wrong for doing this. I feel like an old nuisance, so some nights I just put up with it and wait for it to pass.

I'm the last of the elderly neighbours left on this block, the others keep to themselves mostly. There is one neighbour, Brian, who comes sometimes to move them on. He's a big man and older than them, and Vig and company seem to move along immediately when he arrives. He's like my guardian angel. He doesn't realise how much he does for me when he does this. It's the difference between me getting a night's sleep and crouching awake by windowsills all night.

"Maggie, Maggie we know you're in there." followed by the laughs.

I find my pills and take my required dose, the doctor says that to stop taking them would kill me. "That would be a blessing!" I shout to no one in particular. I'm scared and angry, I haven't spoken to anyone about this except the guards who don't take it too seriously. I see

how they look at me, the local crazy lady.

I go to the front bedroom window. I pull a slit in the curtains and look out. Vig is speaking in that toneless voice I've come to recognise. He's telling a story about a guy he beat up at the weekend, the rest seem to be laughing at this. One of the smaller guys is standing near the front gates, looking at the other four on the wall as he rests his hands on them, then shakes, the noise crashes through me. It's followed by an uproarious laugh from the same guy. I run to the corner of the room, it has been empty for years; a sort of storage room now. I cower beside an old box of Christmas decorations and wish I could just get lost inside. In this moment there is so much fear inside me that the natural will to live is overcome.

I barely eat or sleep anymore, nor do anything helpful for my soul. I used to be happy once upon a time, when me and Frank used to sit on a bench on warm days in the very same garden that now seems like a war zone, filled with bile and hatred.

"I used to be happy once upon a time"

A different noise begins to take shape outside. My ears attempt to decipher it. I move slowly away from the corner and to-

wards the windowsill. I place my hand on the sill and slowly bring my head towards the window. I pull the curtains aside and look out. As I take in the view from the bottom of my garden, there is a crash, as if one car has struck another, maybe nearby.

My senses are jolted, three of the boys looking towards my house from the bottom of the garden. Their puffed jackets and hooded physiques portray in my mind horror scenes I've witnessed in the many films I shared over the years with Frank. If only he were here now, he could protect me. I wonder where the crash could have come from.

A shiver creeps up my spine as a realisation comes to mind. It was my front window. They smashed my front window, yet they haven't run. They still stand below looking at my house. Where have the other two gone?

I think of running to the corner of the room and cowering again, but if they've already come into my house it's no use.

"Go away, please go away, just leave me alone." the shouts

have left my mouth before I've even noticed. I listen from the room now. All is quiet. I glance behind me to the front garden. It's empty, they have left to go somewhere else, maybe into my house. The phone is in the hallway, no way to reach it, but I'll have to try. They have pushed through the boundaries tonight.

The dread owns me as I walk towards the landing. I glance over the banister and down the stairs; nothing to be seen, no noise. Then I hear the footsteps just below, walking quickly now and moving towards me. I retreat quickly into the bedroom again. This time I do head for the corner of the room by the Christmas decorations.

The footsteps are coming up the stairs now, coming for me I've no doubt. My body is trembling, I have no more tears to cry. I pray again and again out loud. Death would be a blessing for me right now. Please take me away from this.

"Maggie, Maggie" A hand on my shoulder. Them cursed words again. The voice though is gentler than before. "Maggie, it's Brian, I live a couple of doors down, are you OK? Your front windows been broken. I chased some lads away, they were coming through your sitting-room window. I've called the guards, they're on the way."

It all seems like a bad dream now, a continuous nightmare that doesn't end.

"Maggie is there anyone I can call for you? Family, friends, anyone?" I hear him clearly now.

"No," I reply, "there is no one."

He Needs the Twelve Apostles!

Sandra Coffey

It was a Friday morning and the sun was baking outside. I was standing in shorts and a string top buying my second coffin. It's for my father who was torturous to live with in his final years but who we are celebrating for all the good he did. He'd contradict it all if he was here; we'd have got the good parts wrong. I'm not sure if any of the stories about him are true.

He lies in the morgue in the hospital while I pick out his coffin. He left instructions but I wish it was as easy as handing over the crumpled page of notes to the undertaker.

Mahogany, bronze handles, polished finish, cross on the lid, inner lining of maroon and white, (the hurling team he played for) a good base. Make sure it's not made of chipboard.

My father's biggest fear was that he would fall through his coffin. I've never seen it happen but he said he had once. I have this image in my head of him falling through the coffin and landing on the road between the church and the cemetery. I picture a big crowd of mourners gasping at his body lying on the concrete. His brothers carry on carrying an empty coffin until I call them back. "You're leaving Dad behind."

The shock of seeing him there makes us pause. I hold my breath until Dad's body is lifted off the ground. His brothers carry his stiff body up the long hill to the grave. We

Sandra Coffey is a writer from Galway. She is a former journalist. Sandra's upbringing on a farm has influenced some of her writing but she is also inspired by human nature and human tragedy. She has been published in Galway Review, ROPES and Incubator Magazine. She is the founder of Oscar Wilde Festival, Galway, now in its third year

Why we chose it:

This piece had everything a story depicting small town Ireland needed - a death, a funeral, casual mention of the GAA, small town gossip, and general begrudgery. Oh and don't worry, there's rain mentioned too!

put him down on the green carpet that lines the plot. We decide later to place what's left of the coffin around him.

But that won't happen. There won't be a huge crowd. There won't be any mishaps. I'll make sure the base is made of solid wood and not chipboard.

He didn't hold out much hope for me following his detailed instructions so he had already phoned ahead to Flannery's, the place his father got his coffin and his father before that.

"I need you to sign off on what you've bought," said Frankie Flannery, the undertaker who will whizz around to the back of the hospital and place my father's body in the coffin.

"I know he'll do a good job. He's a bit dearer than the others." This was Dad telling me not to get my own ideas and put him down in one made from wicker. I'm sure it won't be long until garden shops stock wicker coffins down the back beside the barbecues, weed spray and hedge trimmers.

Dad's sisters come out of the woodwork. They have ideas about the line-up at the funeral home and what the mourners should wear. To Concepta, this is her chance to showcase all the good that's in the family. The doctors, one dentist, two lawyers, seven teachers, two principals and the rest; mechanics, plumbers, two farmers. All the good genes. The brains. Look at all those brains standing there in a row. I work in a medical factory. My hours were cut the Christmas just gone. I'm not sure where to stand. There's a seat reserved for me I'm told.

I know from before that it should be the wife, then daughters and sons of the deceased, then everyone else. Dad's mother will go first. Then, his father. Then me, the only child. Dad's wife is dead. Then, the rest according to their age. Oldest first. I don't mind but I'm not keen on being on display for two hours, which could run to three depending on the crowds.

You hear all sorts when you stand in the one place for over two hours.

"I always thought of your father on Patrick's Day. He was so proud that day," this was an American woman whom Dad had dated before he met my mum. Dad went to work on the buildings but didn't like it and came home. Carrie was heartbroken when he left her in New York. Ireland wasn't for her type, he said. He broke the news to

her when they took the boat tour to see Ellis Island. He wanted to see where the Irish landed when they arrived in the land of opportunity. Once he'd seen it, he didn't want it. He didn't like relying on anyone.

"How long is your mother gone now, child?"

I wasn't prepared for this question. I didn't want to think of my Mum at my Dad's funeral. I had always separated them into different compartments. They were two separate people. They didn't separate, not legally. We don't do that kind of thing, Mum explained to me when I asked. She was dead only two years later. Maybe she knew she didn't have long to put up with it all. The talk, separate cars, separate bedrooms, separate seats at Mass, separate routines. She was a morning person. The days full of gossip wore her down.

Cousin Brendan offered me water and one of those energy drinks, to keep me going. The backs of my legs started to ache after an hour. Granddad Fred noticed me wince. "The youth have no staying power," he said to some long lost Scottish relative. I had no idea what to say to that so I shook his hand. "Nice to meet you."

I was glad to see Frances. My friend since we sat together in the top seat in national school. I was barely four, she was five and a half. I couldn't tie my shoelaces back then. She tied them for me.

"How you holding up?" she said as she hugged me close. I hadn't been hugged like that in so long. Frances wasn't a hugger until she had children of her own. Now she hugs all the time.

I nodded. I could feel the tears coming but I didn't want to cry, not there, not then.

Frances had to move on. The queue was building up behind her. "A quiet cuppa after. I'll come find you."

I nodded again.

All of Dad's former hurling team came together, all carrying hurleys. They wore scarves with the colours of the team. I'm sure they would have been happier if Dad had left a son behind, to carry on. I have no interest in hurling; have never been to Croke Park. Don't think I'll ever go. They all shook my hand. One of them gave me their scarf. I'll place it on my mantelpiece. It's got white tassels on the ends.

I remember the almighty rain the night before Dad's funeral Mass. I got a call from Concepta. I had to remind the gravediggers to get rid of all the water from the plot. Look after the gravediggers, she

said.

We all stared straight ahead. I was happy with the coffin, its presentation. I stayed back the night before and worked on it like it was a window display. White flowers on one side, maroon on the other. A cross of flowers to the front to point the way. Two hurleys were

“I was happy with the coffin, its presentation. I stayed back the night before and worked on it like it was a window display”

placed on the coffin. The first one he played with. The last one he played with. I brought three photos of Dad with me. I had to make a decision. I picked one that I had taken. We were at the beach. He was chilling on a sun lounger. I cropped Mum out of it.

I stepped back from it. I knew I couldn't do any better than that.

I didn't know that one of Dad's sisters had a major problem with it. All of it. She made it known before the Mass was about to begin.

“He'll go to hell in that box.” For a minute I thought someone was having a laugh. I don't know why I thought that. Aunt Freda was on her knees clutching Dad's photo.

“He needs the Twelve Apostles.”

I couldn't tell what she was going on about. She repeated ‘Apostles’ over and over. Holy show. I covered my eyes and hoped the priest would appear from behind the altar and do something. She'd listen to him. No way would she listen to me.

“Where are the Apostles?,” she was sobbing now.

That was it. I stood up. Concepta grabbed my arm and pulled me back down. I scooted over in the pew.

“Why didn't you do it?”

“Do what?” I was trying to whisper. At this stage, Aunt Freda was escorted into the back room off the main aisle where young children who can't sit still are put for Mass.

“The Apostles. You should have put the Twelve Apostles on his coffin.”

It's easy for them to come up to me and say I should have

paid the extra 400 euro to get twelve men I know nothing about engraved onto the side of my father's coffin, their twelve heads poking out the sides.

"He doesn't need them," I said, still whispering.

"Everyone needs help to get to the golden gates."

I was in no mood for a discussion on Heaven and Hell and life everlasting. I hadn't been to Mass since my Mum died.

I could feel the eyes of the congregation on me. Bitching about how tight I was not putting them on. The least I could have done for my father. Well, I say to them, live with him and see if you'd send him off with bells and whistles and Twelve Apostles to sing him to the gates of Heaven or wherever he's going. I would have been better off getting Old Blue Eyes and Sammy Davis Junior engraved. Now that's a send-off. Fly him to the moon; let him see what spring is like on Jupiter or Mars.

I have memory lapses of the day itself. I do remember the clapping as his coffin made its way out of the church. His parents behind it. Me following them. I hated being on my own that day. The rain reappeared. Most of those that followed the coffin to the cemetery opened their umbrellas. Polka dots, rainbows, monochrome, and solid black bobbed along on the road, their owners sheltering underneath.

"Thank God it all went off without a hitch." Concepta said in my ear. "May you all follow us to the Deacon Hotel for refreshments." She announced to everyone.

The part I absolutely fucking hate with a passion. The refreshments. We all get drunk and celebrate his life. Live it up. You can never tell which one of us will be next. The whole point is to get pissed and hope the tab doesn't run out. My bag is bulging with Mass cards. I stay for the meal and one drink and leave. I thank everyone for coming on my way out.

The house is cold. The home house. I have my own place now. I don't know what to do with this place. Let it sit for a while and I'll decide another time. His family won't like to see it sold. It's their home house too. I've no one else to bury. I don't know how to feel about that. It's just me.

My Mum left me a list of things she'd like me to do. I didn't have to do them but it was her way of guiding me from beyond the

grave.

I went on a date two days after her funeral.

It was on her list.

Peter sipped on a hot whiskey. He was recovering from the 'flu. "I buried my Mum two days ago," I said. First date didn't lead to a second.

"I went on a date two days after her funeral. It was on her list"

It felt good though. A

man's eyes on me across two plates of pasta carbonara. The list has 100 things on it. I've only done ten. I'm in no hurry.

I learnt how to bake treacle bread. Keep old traditions alive, she wrote.

It was on her list.

I've got back in touch with Belinda, a friend from school I fell out with. I was upfront and told her why I was contacting. I gave her the option of opting out of meeting up but she agreed. We've a long way to go but I made a start.

It was on her list.

I don't know why but I expected a list from Dad. Dads don't make lists, at least not my Dad. He's left very little behind other than me. I put the two of them down in the same plot but with a gap between them. I'll be put in between when the time comes. Mum wouldn't have approved. It wasn't on her list.

I looked at number fifty-two on the list. No better time to go to the attic and look for the chest containing old typewriters. Get them valued, was Mum's suggestion.

I propped a ladder up to the attic and with a few good pushes the door came loose. I climbed up. The cobwebs were lit by the sun. I knocked them as I went through to find the chest. Inside were Underwood typewriters. Mum's brother hired out typewriters to film companies. He did this alongside working as a farm labourer during the summer and as an election official, the man who checks your ID as you go in to vote.

I saw a typewriter once, in a museum. It was a typewriter from World War 2. Used to decode messages from the Nazis. Amazing. Women were the best at decoding. Good for spotting the detail.

The typewriters came with a book, like a history book. F. Scott

Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway used Underwood typewriters.

I lifted out the top one. On the side was a sticker. 'Catch Me If You Can.' The Steven Spielberg film with Leonardo DiCaprio.

Another one. 'Whatever Happened to Lady Jane.' A thriller from the 1960s.

This was some find. I had no clue what to do with it all. I spotted a pink sheet sticking out at the very base of the chest.

"To the person who finds this,

"Don't be a sentimental fool. Sell to the highest bidder."

I put everything back in its place. I'd only buried my father and here I am excited about making a few handy quid. I watched the first of the mourners walk past the house after leaving the pub. I wondered what they said once the drink settled in to them.

That poor only child, she's after burying her father in a cheap coffin and she sitting on a fortune.

Rainbow Version of Eye of the Beholder

Kate Salvi



Kate Salvi is an internationally known photographer. She has been exhibiting and selling both her photos and paintings since 2009 and after receiving the People's Choice Award at the Chabot Fine Art Gallery in June of 2010, Kate decided to expand her photo greeting card business. They are now sold in 23 shops throughout RI. Kate's work has been published in over 15 magazines both national and international. Kate finds much solace in her work as she struggles with the tumultuous illness of Manic Depression. To view more of her work, go to www.katesalviphotography.vpweb.com

Why we chose it:

This image is just totally gorgeous. I feel like we are looking at a naked flower here; if that makes any sense. It's as if we are gazing into the very soul of the flower. Floral images usually have connotations of soft femininity; I picked this image because for me it conveyed strength and attitude. #loveit

Gráinne and Alex Flash You

Presenting Flash Fiction from the Editors

The Spring Clean Gráinne O'Brien

A beam of sunlight cut through the room, highlighting the tiniest flecks of dust. Her mind focused on nothing other than one singular flake, the worries of her life faded into the background.

It danced in the air, aimless, with careless abandon.

How beautiful this piece of dust was. It perfectly represented her need to be more relaxed, more easy going. She needed to dance in the sunbeams more.

And then, disgusted, she realised this magnificent fleck was a piece of someone's skin.

The Ultimate Question Alex Dunne

The Ultimate Question was asked on a dreary Thursday evening by a seven-year-old boy. His father scratched his head, said he didn't know, and sent his son to bed... but he began to wonder.

Word spread quickly. Soon meetings were held across the country to find The Answer. Debate raged through classrooms and boardrooms, motions were raised in parliament, and the president herself held a special quorum on the matter. Still no Answer was found.

One day Brian found The Answer on the clearance shelf of his local SuperValue, but since he only had 50c in his pocket he had to put it back.

Let the New Light In

Phil Lynch

Pull back the curtain
let in the new light
pack the dark winter
away out of sight

let new thoughts blossom
and grow to full bloom
out with the old ones
that darkened the room

sing a new anthem
let music hold sway
with poems full of hope
begin each new day

ring bells raise a cheer
let laughter be loud
lift minds to the sky
disperse the dark cloud

make love make it last
dance life round the floor
spring has come knocking
fling open the door.

Phil Lynch has had poetry published in Revival Literary Journal, Boyne Berries, Bare Hands, The Poetry Bus and Wordlegs. He was runner-up in the 2014 iYeats Poetry Competition and third in the 2015 Doolin Writers' Festival Poetry Competition. Phil is a Co-Director of the Lingo Spoken Word Festival.

Why we chose it:

We chose this because, after all the doom and gloom, this poem gives us hope and energy, the way spring should. You might even say it gives us the warm and fuzzies, like a caterpillar right before it morphs into a butterfly. Or something...

Thank you for reading Issue Four: 'The
Spring Clean'

Submissions for Issue Five: 'Oxymorons'
will open on June 1st, 2015

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Confessions from the back page:
I really thought Khloe and Lamar would make it...