

SILVER APPLES MAGAZINE

Creativity Worth Consuming



Issue 10 - July - 2018





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Silver Apples Magazine
Gráinne O'Brien, Alex Dunne and Kevin O'Donovan

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David Furnal is a graphic artist/illustrator, a 2017 winner of the Writers and Illustrators of the Future contest, and recipient of the "People's Choice" award at Beaverton Arts Mix in Beaverton, Oregon.

Why we chose the cover art:

David's piece reminds us of a hero coming to the end of his journey and realizing that home will never be the same again, proving that not all that glitters is gold and even if you win the war, some things are lost along the way.

Logo Design by George Dempsey © 2015

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Silver Apples Magazine

All That Glitters

Issue Ten, July 2018

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Letter from the Editors:

In which we reappear after a long absence

Gráinne O'Brien, Alex Dunne, & Kevin O'Donovan

Hello faithful-readers-who-have-been-patiently-awaiting-our-triumphant-return!

It's been a while, hasn't it? We've really missed you (and we assume you missed us too, because why wouldn't you? We're delightful!).

Silver Apples Magazine has been a passion of ours for...*Checks calendar*...over four years now, and while we care about it deeply we have to admit that sometimes, life gets in the way.

The last year or so has been crazy for both Gráinne and Alex and while most of it has been great, positive, life-affirming stuff, some of it hasn't been so fun - hence the theme of this, our tenth issue. As some relatively unknown dude called Shakespeare put it, "*All that glitters is not gold*".

We love Silver Apples, but sometimes, making this little old magazine can be really damn hard. Over the past few months we haven't been able to put out as many issues or promote ourselves as much as we'd like, and that makes us sad.

But fear not! This isn't some grand goodbye post. Silver Apples isn't going anywhere. We're just shaking things up a bit and adding some new talent to the roster. Fresh blood for Gráinne and Alex to boss around. To that end, let us introduce you all to Kevin O'Donovan! Gráinne met Kevin in the Creative Writing programme at the University of Limerick and quickly pressganged him into becoming our intern. Don't worry, we feed him plenty of scraps and water him twice a day. Who knows, we might even keep him.

With that out of the way, dear reader, it's time to delve into the delights of Issue Ten: All That Glitters.

Until next time, please remember that creativity is always worth consuming.

Gráinne, Alex, and Kevin.

All That Glitter

Lynn White

Lynn White lives in north Wales. Her work is influenced by issues of social justice and events, places and people she has known or imagined. She is especially interested in exploring the boundaries of dream, fantasy and reality. Her poem 'A Rose For Gaza' was shortlisted for the Theatre Cloud 'War Poetry for Today' competition 2014. This and many other poems, have been widely published in anthologies and journals such as Vagabond Press, Apogee, Firewords, Pillcrow & Dagger, Indie Soleil, Light and Snapdragon.

*Find Lynn at:
lynnwhitepoetry.blogspot.com*

Why we chose it:

We are literal creatures here at Silver Apples HQ and it was hard to resist opening our tenth (!!!) issue with anything else. Plus since we're currently bombarded with images of sea turtles being smothered by plastic straws, Lynn's poem feels especially relevant.

It glitters
like gold.
But is it
gold
or base
metal
being worked on
by an alchemist...
undergoing
transformation,
perhaps
with a touch
of magic,
with an elixir
of immortality,
an illusion.
Or perhaps
base oil
transformed
to
sparkly
plastic glitter
with
all too real
immortality.
Glittering,
littering
with
everlasting life,
all that glitter.

An Invocation

J.S. Watts

I stand within the circle to let my words come back,
Green feather, black velvet, dark night and Morningstar.
I stand within this circle to search for what I lack,
Leafborn, silence and shadowplay come.

Round and round this circle walk,
Four legs, two legs, two again and four.
No need for silence, no need for talk.
Foot and hand and wing and claw.

Round and round and round again,
Till time comes up on the other side of day.
Let us meet once more where there is no name,
For none of us have ever learnt to pray.

I stand at the centre to call you home,
Grasslight, midnight, black satin and pearl.
I stand quite still so you may roam,
Wingbeat, soft-tread, silence no more.

And this I'll do, I'll do and I'll do
Until I can do no more.
Holding the light until darkness comes pure,
Skin, feather, fur and claw.

J.S. Watts' writing appears in publications in Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the States and has been broadcast on BBC and Independent Radio. She has published five books: two poetry collections, "Cats and Other Myths" and "Years Ago You Coloured Me", plus a multi-award nominated SF poetry pamphlet, "Songs of Steelyard Sue", all published by Lapwing Publications, and two novels, "A Darker Moon" - dark literary fantasy, and "Witchlight" - paranormal romance, published in the US and UK by Vagabondage Press. A new poetry pamphlet, "The Submerged Sea" is due out in the spring. See www.jswatts.co.uk for further details.

Why we chose it:

Evocative of the witches of Macbeth (where the title of this issue came from...kinda), J.S. Watt's poem certainly cast a spell on us! (Bah-dum-dum-tsch!)

The Lighthouse Keeper and the Merman

KarissaMae Masters

KarissaMae Masters is obsessed with merfolk. When she isn't crafting a new underwater fairytale, she can be seen searching for them on a local beach. Her most recent mermaid fantasy, "The Bride of the Deep," was recently published in Scary Dairy Press' eco-horror anthology "Mother's Revenge."

Why we chose it:

Mermaids are so hot right now! And since we Silver Apples have yet to find a bandwagon we didn't enthusiastically leap upon, we were more than happy to publish this atmospheric tale (or should that be 'tail'?) of duty, sacrifice, and mermen (insert outdated Zoolander reference here).

The *Roebuck* was doomed. For hours, she had taken the abuse of the nor'easter that assaulted her. Her crew had valiantly struggled to keep the clipper afloat while the lookout scanned the horizon for the safety of harbour. Lightning crashed around them, illuminating the rocks and reefs an instant before the ship ran aground. But even then, she was not safe; without buoyancy to battle the waves she capsized, quickly succumbing to the storm's power.

Several crewmen jumped into the water, clinging to whatever debris they could find. They joined hands, lashing themselves together lest the violence of the waves scatter them across the harbour. Some prayed to God, others cried out in the night.

The lookout shook his head in silence, wallowing in his failure. For in the distance, the darkened silhouette of the lighthouse loomed against the stormy sky. He had not seen its warning because its lamp had blown out.

And now the lightning showed a new danger: a fin appeared, poking up through the waves. It circled the survivors, getting closer with each pass. And every time it neared, another fin joined it.

And another.

And another.

And when the end came, the lookout spat a curse, shaking his fist at the lighthouse keeper whose carelessness had sent the *Roebuck* to her doom.

* * *

As the storm raged, the lighthouse door rattled against the thunder and the violent pounding of an angry fist. Seawater had

flooded the entire coast, warping the wooden door in its place. Finally, with a well-positioned shove, the door gave way, revealing the water-logged contents of the lighthouse keeper's home.

A merman slithered inside, rubbing his sore shoulder. Using the glow of an elflight, he scanned the living quarters and quickly found the cause of the darkness: the body of the elderly lighthouse keeper floated face-down in the knee-deep water, his silvery hair dancing on the surface. Propping the body against his tail, the merman placed a hand on the man's chest, determined to find a heartbeat. He let out a sigh of relief when he observed not only a weak pulse, but also shallow breathing. Although his flesh burned with fever, the unconscious man shivered in the merman's arms.

Using his tail as leverage, he dragged the dying man back into the narrow cot that had been his bed. The floodwaters were still rising, nearly cresting over the bed frame, but the merman was not concerned. The human would remain safe for the few minutes he needed to rekindle the lighthouse beacon.

Climbing the ladder was difficult, as his tailflesh could not grip its rungs, but the merman managed to make it to the loft that held the lighthouse's lantern. Long ago he had learned the secrets of fire, but as he used his elflight to search for the kindling for the torch, he could not find any. Huffing in exasperation, he placed the crystal inside the lantern, hoping that its light would be sufficient to warn the other vessels in the harbour until morning.

Gravity helped his descent. The merman easily slithered down the ladder and returned to the bedside of the gravely ill man. He cradled the man's shivering form against him, determined to keep him out of the freezing water. He used one arm to keep the man in place as the other reached for a small satchel about his waist. He searched the bag with his fingers until he found a small jar of ointment; opening it, he scooped out a dollop with a finger and smeared one dose onto the mouth and tongue of his patient. He spent the rest of the night watching the shallow rise and fall of the human's breath, hoping that the poor wretch would have the strength to recover.

* * *

Phaon opened his eyes to the most beautiful face he had ever seen. When he had succumbed to the fever, he had dreamt that he was in the embrace of an angel; when he awoke, he realized that his rescuer had silver tailfins, not wings.

Daylight streamed through the open door of the lighthouse, glimmering off of the surface of the receding floodwaters. He looked

out of the door, saw the destruction, and shivered.

The merman lifted his chin and placed a jar to his lips. The drink was foul-smelling but refreshing.

“Thank you,” he said with a groan. “I’m Phaon,” he added in introduction.

“I’m Merrick. I am here to help you rekindle the lantern,” the merman replied.

Phaon gasped in panic. “The storm! Did it—did I—is everyone—did anything...?”

“One ship was lost. The rest are safe.”

The old man closed his eyes in guilt and sorrow. “How many dead?”

“None. My people got them onto other boats. But the waters will stink of death for years while the cargo rots in our sea. We need your beacon to keep both of our homes safe. I have come to ensure the light does not go out again.”

“I’m sorry. The fever got to my lungs and I couldn’t find the energy to climb.”

“Do you have the energy to hold?” the merman asked, picking him up and carrying him to the ladder.

“Aye,” Phaon lied.

“Grab ahold,” he bid the man as he stretched out in the floodwaters. Phaon climbed onto his back as he would a dolphin, resting against the base of the merman’s dorsal fin and clinging to his neck.

“Be careful around my gills,” Merrick warned, and Phaon repositioned his grip away from the tender slits at the merman’s jawline.

It was a tortuously slow climb up to the loft. Burdened by the weight of the human and unable to use his lower half, the merman’s arms strained against the exertion. Finally, Merrick threw himself and his companion on the wooden floor of the loft, panting in exhaustion for many long minutes.

Phaon, too weak to lift himself, merely lay under him and panted as well. “Thank you,” he replied. “Are you able to stay out of water long? Does being out of water hurt you?” he added anxiously.

“I’ll be fine,” he panted, slowing and steadying his breath as he recovered, “I am no fish. I live in the water, but I can survive on land for a time without discomfort.”

As soon as Merrick recovered enough strength to move again, he dragged Phaon to the lantern. He folded his tailfin to create a perch for the human to sit while they worked.

Phaon peered into the cavity of the lantern and picked up a stone in curiosity. “What is this?” he asked, marvelling at its texture

“Elflight. It glows in the dark—but only for a night. I did not think to bring more than one.”

Phaon reached down to trim the lantern's wick. "Can you fetch me that jug over there?" he asked, pointing.

"If you stand," the merman replied, waiting for Phaon to find his balance before unfolding his tail to reach the jug. "What is this?" he asked, sniffing its contents before handing it to the lighthouse keeper.

"Whale oil," Phaon replied carefully, afraid to offend his rescuer.

"You burn the hearts of whales?" he asked in wonder.

"Aye. It burns longer and cleaner than wood."

"The hearts of whales burn better than the hearts of trees?" he shook his head, amused. "Odd."

Once the lantern was lit, Phaon lowered himself to the floor and closed his eyes, resting in exhaustion.

"Why do you do it?" the merman asked. "Why do you keep the light burning?"

"The same reason why you came to help me. To give warning of danger, and give hope in the storm. To keep others safe."

He peered at the tiny flame flickering above them. "That little light keeps the ships safe?"

"Aye."

"But the reflection is so cloudy. The mirrors hardly work," the merman noted.

"The mirrors are old. They need to be replaced, but the town can't afford it."

The merman drew a knife from his satchel.

Phaon grew alarmed. "What are you doing?"

"Making the mirrors better," the merman replied simply, and with a slash of his wrist, a stream of silvery blood trickled down his arm. He spent a few moments collecting the blood on his fingers, coating the glass' surface until it glowed with a fresh coat of silver.

Once he was finished, Phaon grabbed his wrist weakly, vainly trying to staunch the bleeding. "You shouldn't have hurt yourself," he chided the wounded merman.

"It needed to be done. To keep my people safe. And yours." He removed his wrist from the human's ministrations, and placed the wound to the man's lips. "Drink."

Phaon shook his head in revulsion.

"Drink. You will heal faster if you do. Drink," he commanded.

Phaon drank from the merman's wrist, slaking his thirst with

"The hearts of whales burn better than the hearts of trees?" he shook his head, amused. "Odd."

the silvery ichor. He drank until the merman sank low beside him, weak from blood loss.

“I never thought I’d meet a merman,” Phaon declared, wiping his lips clean before he, too, succumbed to sleep.

“I never thought I’d give up my life for a human,” the merman retorted, twining his fingers with his.

* * *

Phaon awoke from pleasant dreams. As his mind cleared, he absently realized that his body still raged in fever.

Merrick helped him sit up, leaning him against the base of the beacon. “Did you dream well, Phaon?”

“Aye, Merrick,” he replied, trying to gage the motives behind the merman’s playful smirk.

*“That is the Dreaming.
All of us—merfolk,
selkies, sea nymphs,
even the elves of the
forests and fields—we
all dream together.
You are one of us*

“You dreamed of swimming in the harbour, under the waves with the merfolk.”

“Aye,” he said, suspicious of Merrick’s knowledge.

“That is the Dreaming. All of us—merfolk, selkies, sea nymphs, even the elves of the forests and fields—we all dream together. You are one of us now.”

“Oh,” Phaon blushed, unused to having his thoughts and dreams exposed.

“Here,” Merrick offered, holding the medicine jar up to the man’s lips.

Phaon took a slow sip, and, feeling no pain, noted, “The medicine is working. I still burn with fever, but I feel stronger.”

Merrick’s eyes grew wide in concern, then corrected him, “I am not healing you—I am transforming you.”

Phaon paled. “What?” he croaked.

“The Dreaming—do you not remember our pact?”

Phaon shook his head anxiously.

“Your fever burns away your human flesh. Within the hour, you shall cast off your humanity and become a salamander—a fire sylph. Once the transformation is complete, I will place you in the lantern and you will spend the rest of time guarding the coast with your light.”

“That’s impossible,” he spluttered in confusion. “I don’t feel like I’m...”

The merman gave him a sympathetic look. “Don’t worry, there will be no pain.”

Phaon held up his hands in horror, watching his fingerprints slowly dissolve into cinders.

“Do you not remember choosing this?” the merman prompted him. “Surely you remember our time together in the Dreaming.”

“I...” he spluttered. “I don’t want to be alone.”

“Your form will burn in the sky, but your mind will roam in the waves. You will be Dreaming—with me. With us. With all of us. You will not be alone. We will comfort you. We will be with you as you burn and we will be with you as you dream. I vow it, Phaon.”

“I don’t know. I’m sorry, I just thought...death would be a release from this life. From this burden.”

“But that is not what you truly want. You are a keeper of the light. It’s who you are. It’s who you want to be. I am simply removing your flesh so that you may burn brighter.”

Phaon looked at the scar on the merman’s wrist and nodded. “You bled for the light, I guess I’ll have to burn for it.”

When he judged that the man had calmed enough to find resolve in his fate, Merrick handed his knife to Phaon.

“What is this for?” the dying man asked.

He took a deep breath and turned around, explaining to Phaon, “My sacrifice. The pact we made in the Dreaming. You will take my dorsal fin, and I will walk on land as man. We will be keepers of the light together.”

“I...I don’t understand,” he whispered, overcome by the shock of such news.

“We shall both transform: you will lose your human flesh, and I will lose my fins. You shall burn until this tower falls into the sea. And I shall stand beside you, and catch you as you fall. I vow it, Phaon. Take my fin, and I shall remain here by your side. You will burn and I will guard you. And we shall Dream together.”

He saw Phaon hesitating, so he continued, “Please. It is the only way. You will not burn alone. We will be together.”

Finally, Phaon nodded. Merrick turned his back to the human, and grimaced in pain as Phaon sliced the dorsal fin from his back.

The merman fell to the ground, weeping hot silent tears as the transformation shifted his long silver-gray tailfin into two human legs. Lacking a proper balance, he could not yet walk, but instead crawled back to Phaon’s side.

Phaon clutched the merman’s fin feebly, gasping in pain as his own form succumbed to transformation.

“There will be no pain soon, Phaon,” Merrick panted as he

doused the dying man in the remaining drops of lantern oil.

“Soon,” he promised as he found a match and struck it.

In a swath of smoke and flames, Phaon’s corpse burned away until only embers remained. There, in the nest of cooling ashes, Merrick picked up the flame that held Phaon’s new form. He burned his hands in transporting the spirit to his new home, but he watched in pride as Phaon flickered, grew, and danced in delight of its new form.

Merrick offered a bittersweet smile, placing a burned hand upon the pane of glass separating them. Phaon flared up, pressing his fiery palm against his.

“Together we are keepers of the light,” Phaon vowed.

“Together,” Merrick agreed.

Two poems by

Jane Blanchard

Retired

So odd to think I want no more
The things I used to hanker for.

Position, power, money, fame—
None of those goals is still my aim.

Now I seek peace and calm and quiet—
Plus, solitude—I won't deny it.

Long weary of society
I am my own best company.

Jane Blanchard lives and writes in Georgia. Her first collection, *Unloosed*, and her second, *Tides & Currents*, are both available from Kelsay Books.

Why we chose it:
We loved Jane's short sing-songy poems and couldn't resist including both submissions here for your enjoyment.

Ditty

I had a bracelet long ago—
Each link could hold a charm—
And all would jingle-jangle as
They dangled on my arm.

Eventually the weight of such
Became too much to wear—
I sold the silver—every ounce—
Then let my arm go bare.

Remember the Stars: In Memory of Stephen Hawking

Catherine O'Donoghue

Catherine O'Donoghue is a poet and fiction writer based in Wicklow. Her writing has been published in print, online, and on radio. At present, Catherine is collating her first poetry collection which centres around the themes of magic, nature, and the human experience. You can find her on Twitter at @catherinespoetry.

*Why we chose it:
How could we not include a poem that celebrates the life of the late great Stephen Hawking? Catherine's poem is a stunning tribute to a man that did so much to further our understanding of the universe and why we are here.*

The death of Stephen Hawking
Brought to light once again,
The brilliance of a mind.

And although we are
Not all cosmologists nor physicists,
We can still, as he said;
Remember to look up at the stars.

And the stars might add-
That there are universes
Within ourselves.
Deep galaxies and many voids.

We are complex blood-beings,
Simply of the earth-
And how it takes a brilliant mind
To understand such things,
As the universe
In which we play so
Great and small a part.

And so are we complex and-
So is our history complex too.

Every fibre being ash,
Resulting from a spark-
Which may have caught the eye
Of an ancestor
Thousands of years ago.

We are both sparks and stars,
Bright and free to burn.

The Whirlwind

Kaitlynn McShea

The November rains faded the former fall sun like a smudge of pencil in an artist's sketchbook. Tara white-knuckled the steering wheel as she drove the long stretch of I-76. Piles of stuff surrounded her, all sorry remembrances of western Pennsylvania. She was headed south, to Luray, Virginia. Between the wind and the rain, her car had been swivelling from side to side for hours past fields of fog, mountains and valleys, leaves swept into whirlwinds, and forests more crowded than her car.

She felt like she was on the set of *Jurassic Park*, the perfect ambiance for a monster to attack her.

The wind moaned and the rain slanted sideways. Her windshield wipers were on high but her visibility was still zero. A potential thread of the future flashed in her mind: her stuff, strewn across the highway, Tara, dead behind the wheel. She turned on her hazard lights and pulled over. The last thing she needed was to be in a car crash.

Her car rocked as cars went by — too fast, too uncaring of death's constant presence. Tara blasted defrost and blew into her hands. This November weather was bone-chilling.

And suddenly, silence.

The rain stopped as if sucked into a vacuum. No cars driving by, no wildlife in sight.

Kaitlynn McShea is a teacher and writer from Indiana who is finishing up her MA in Creative Writing from the University of Limerick. When she isn't teaching or writing, you can find her sipping on a green tea latte in Starbucks, or in the corner of a library. Discover more at kaitlynnmc-shea.wordpress.com

Why we chose it:

For an issue being released during a scorchingly hot July, we really picked a lot of atmospheric, wintery pieces huh? Wonder if that reveals something about us? Our tortured artistic souls perhaps? Or maybe we're just suckers for magical, lyrical language like this flash fiction from Kaitlynn?

And then, a bit of movement.

Right in front of her car, a soggy leaf drifted into the air. A second, a third followed suit. More leaves followed from the ditch, a colourful tapestry being painted as they gathered, slow at first, until being whipped up, around, and higher still.

A whirlwind.

Tara whimpered and closed her eyes. She tried not to believe it, but still. She knew it would come to this.

She clambered out of her car. She reached out a hand, fingertips grazing a flying leaf. Sadness, pain, grief. A torrent of emotions pressed through Tara's consciousness, but she still stepped farther, going into the eye of the whirlwind.

A presence pressed further into her consciousness: grieving, but not vengeful. A whiff of nutmeg, a sight of an orange ponytail.

Tara's aunt, Lana.

Tara had seen Lana's death. It was just a thread of possibility: a misstepped stride, just another crashed car. It had been a faint thread, so Lana didn't do anything about it. If she reacted to every possible death in her family's life, she wouldn't be able to live her own.

But the whirlwind of Lana disagreed. She pulled at Tara, unearthing the former threads of her life: the baby she would've had, the husband she would've married, the promotion she would've gotten. Leaves hit Tara in the face, ripped at her clothing, but she was lost.

She was lost to experience every potential thread of Lana's life, until Lana decided she was done.

Luray, Virginia had waited for Tara long enough. She closed her eyes and stopped fighting the whirlwind. She supposed it could wait for her a little while longer.

Waiting for the Blizzard

Anne Britting Oleson

From this window, high above
the Wiscasset River, we watch
the man in the hip waders,
bent double over his rake,
tracing arcs in the mud
in his back-breaking quest
for worms. He's dark against
the black of tidal clay,
the steely tide creeping its way
toward him, the silvery sky
spitting early snow down on him,
and at us, safe behind glass.
A gull follows him, looking
to see whether he turns up
anything interesting, and I
put my chin in hand, half-listening
to conversation, half-drunk wine
on the table before me,
eyes drawn again and again
to those runic arcs, trying to read
whatever message the man leaves
about his life, his work,
too quickly to be covered by tide,
or by snow, while we,
safe and warm inside, watch.

*Anne Britting Oleson has been published world-wide. She earned her MFA at the Stone-coast program of USM. She has published two novels, *The Book of the Mandolin Player* (B Ink Publishing, 2016) and *Dovecote* (B Ink Publishing, 2017), and three poetry chapbooks, *The Church of St. Materiana* (2007), *The Beauty of It* (2010), and *Alley of Dreams* (2018). A third novel, *Tapiser*, will make its appearance from B Ink in April 2019.*

Why we chose it:
Perhaps it's because we're in the middle of an unprecedented heat wave and the idea of snow is appealing (for once), but something about Anne's poem drew us right in.

You Snooze You Lose

Stephen McQuiggan

Stephen McQuiggan was the original author of the bible; he vowed never to write again after the publishers removed the dinosaurs and the spectacular alien abduction ending from the final edit. His other, lesser known, novels are A Pig's View Of Heaven and Trip A Dwarf.

Why we chose it:

We do love a twisted little tale around these parts! Stephen's story of sex, lust, and a damn good mattress will make you think twice before taking your next nap.

The prices alone made Dale want to lie down and put a pillow over his head; how could beds be so expensive? Christ, he could barely afford the mattress – yet there was Jenny looking at ones so far out of their price range she must already be asleep and dreaming. He left his wife to her browsing and contented himself over by the kids' beds. One was a snazzy red sports car (how he would have loved one of those when he was a boy, how he would still love one even now) that he could not help but admiring; then he saw the salesman sidle over to Jenny with a predatory smile. Dale quickly joined them before she put a deposit on something they'd be paying off for the next ten years.

“We broke our old one,” he heard Jenny laugh, and the salesman eyed his approach as if calculating if Dale had it in him to have the kind of sex capable of breaking beds. Jenny blushed, suddenly realising how her statement could be misconstrued. “Not like that,” she said, making it worse. Damn it, thought Dale; he suddenly felt awkward, like he'd been asked to buy sanitary towels.

“We'll just try a few other shops,” he said, making stern eye contact with his wife. “Come on love, we'll make a day of it.”

“Don't be so hasty,” the salesman said, placing his hand on Dale's shoulder, “I assure you, you would be only wasting your time. There's not another store in the county can match our prices.” He lowered his voice to a whisper, “Or offer the special discounts we

can.”

“Is that so?” Dale said, trying to hide the sarcasm in his tone. “Still, we’d best be on our way.”

“Nonsense,” beamed the salesman, “not until you’ve at least tried out the new *Dreamsoak Deluxe*. It’ll only take a minute for you to discover its soothing slumberous potential.” The salesman gave Dale a shove, pushing him down onto the nearest bed.

“Hey!” he began, but then a warm tingling enveloped his body, an almost orgasmic rush surging through his veins. Dale’s body bucked and twisted, locked in pleasure. “Oooh,” was all he could say.

Jenny frowned down at him. “Stop messing around like a big child. We’ve still got to go to the—” The salesman shoved her in the back and she flopped down at her husband’s side, writhing in seconds. He watched them awhile, grinning like an indulgent parent, then abruptly held up his hands, flamboyantly clicking his fingers as if he held invisible castanets.

Two assistants appeared, so alike both in looks and apparel they could have been clones. The salesman nodded curtly and they grabbed the mattress, dumping the groaning couple unceremoniously to the showroom floor. The orgasmic bleating ceased. Dale and Jenny stared around them in a shamefaced daze before clambering unsteadily to their feet, snorting embarrassed laughs as they straightened out their crumpled clothes.

“So, what do you think?” beamed the salesman.

“It’s...It’s...” Jenny could not meet his eyes as she struggled for words.

“Spectacular!” butted in Dale. “How much did you say it was?”

The salesman pointed to the price tag on the headboard, smiling as the enthusiasm drained from Dale’s face. “It’s the only one of its kind,” he sighed dramatically, “and it’s sure to go soon. Why, the very next customer through that door might —”

“We’ll take it,” blurted Jenny through her blushes.

“Jenny,” whispered Dale, “*we can’t afford this, we—*” His wife grabbed his hand and thrust it onto the *Dreamsoak’s* mattress; his knees buckled and his vision blurred as pleasure shot through him with the roar of an express.

“We can’t afford not to,” she said, and he could only nod soundlessly.

“So,” the salesman grinned, “you are in concordance with your good lady wife? No point dithering – You snooze you lose, as we like

to say in this game.”

Dale looked into the salesman’s creased and ancient eyes and thought the man looked as if he had never had a single night’s sleep in his life. But Jenny was right; they had to have that bed. “Is there any way we could talk discount?” he asked, hating the whine in his voice.

“Of course! I’ll throw in free delivery – hell, I’ll even have it assembled for you as well. Come into my office and we can thrash out a deal.”

The price was still flapping through Dale’s head like a frightened clumsy moth as he allowed the salesman to guide him by the arm toward a small room at the back. He had warned Jenny about coming into a store like this but shopping had always been her domain and she would brook no refusal, however reasonable he sounded.

“We’re only *browsing*,” she’d said, making him feel foolish for suggesting otherwise. How could they justify such prices, he wondered, as the salesman’s cologne fogged his mind; then an echo of the buzz he had felt ran down his spine and he realised he would take out a second mortgage if need be, browsing be damned.

Still, for such a high class store, a lot of its other items were decidedly shabby – those dining chairs by the window looked saggy and frayed, a large mahogany table to his right was badly scuffed, and that cot...was that *blood* on the tiny mattress? Dale moved closer for a better look but the salesman deftly manoeuvred him the other way.

“That really shouldn’t be on the shop floor,” he smiled as he held open his office door. “We do a lot of house clearances and most of the items we pick up need to be restored. I dare say you’ll feel restored yourself after a night on your new *Dreamsoak Deluxe*, eh?”

“Quite,” said Dale, feeling like a naughty schoolboy sent to face the Principal.

“Oh, I’d keep the plastic cover on the mattress if I were you,” the salesman said in a confidential manner as he sorted through some paperwork at his desk, “gives it that extra oomph, if you know what I mean. Plus, easier to wipe off those inevitable...accidents. Sign here.”

Dale scribbled his signature, shook a cold, dry hand, and floated home with Jenny talking of everything but the bed and their suddenly depleted finances. Yet the memory of it was always there, in the tingle of their fingertips, in the static that still crackled in their hair.

They had only been home an hour when the topic finally arose in the form of oblique questioning: *When did he say it would be here? What time did he say they would call?* They took turns phoning into

work, feigning illness and booking the rest of the week off, just in case they missed the delivery men, and settled down in silence for what suddenly seemed the long haul.

To pass the time, Dale dismantled the old bed and Jenny actually helped – not her usual idea of assistance (barking out useless instructions and barbed criticism) but actual physical help; she was as eager as he. The room looked bigger, felt quieter, reminding him of a church, a place of reverence.

He took the busted old bed down to the shed at the bottom of the garden and dumped it there alongside all the rest of the broken furniture a marriage accumulates over its long slow years. Then he took a stroll down to the shop and bought himself a pack of cigarettes. He hadn't smoked in fourteen years, since the night of his honeymoon in fact, but he needed something to take the edge off the almost post coital glow that still suffused him. He coughed and spluttered the whole way home, but it felt good nonetheless.

“...they wore surgical gloves, handling the bed with an almost pious humility.”

Jenny smelt it on him as soon as he walked in through the door but instead of the nagging lecture he expected she asked if he had any more, and they both lit up, giggling nervously as they sipped the cigarettes like fine wine. They were still smoking when the van eventually arrived.

“The bed elves are here,” Jenny said, stubbing out her smoke. “About bloody time too.” Dale hurried out to watch the same two green clad assistants he had seen in the store unload the *Dreamsoak Deluxe*, holding his breath as he ushered them inside and followed them upstairs. He couldn't believe how quickly they assembled it, and marvelled at their conscientiousness; they wore surgical gloves, handling the bed with an almost pious humility.

As soon as they were gone Jenny drew the curtains and hugged him in the warm gloom. “Shall we christen it now?” she breathed in his ear.

His throat was too dry to answer. Jenny took his silence for acceptance and dragged him down onto the bed; almost immediately they were locked in a quivering frenzy. Now, in the seclusion of their own home, they were free to let loose the ecstatic moans and yelps they had tried so hard to suppress in the store.

They writhed in their own private abandonment for hours, days,

who knew how long – who cared? When it got too much, crossing the thin threshold from pleasure to agony, when the gnawing felt like it was turning in on itself and would consume him whole, Dale tried to rise but lacked the strength to do anything other than briefly formulate the thought.

He turned his face to Jenny, saw a look of horror in her sweat soaked eyes, and realised, just before the spasms dragged him under again, the torture they were enduring had rendered them both into a single basic entity. He was only dimly aware that one of his feet had burst into a blue incandescent flame; he felt nothing, save another wave of agonising pleasure.

The salesman let himself in and made his way upstairs. The house was silent, padded by shadows, and filled with many nice things that would adorn his shop. The bedroom was uncomfortably warm, just the way he liked it. He whipped open the drapes and let the sunlight bleach the room. Two vaguely human piles of dust lay silhouetted on the sheets;

“He tore the sheets from the mattress and rolled them up into a ball, flinging them into a corner; he’d been charitable enough, let someone else wash their shroud.”

decimated by lust, consumed by the passion that had destroyed them. He tore the sheets from the mattress and rolled them up into a ball, flinging them into a corner; he’d been charitable enough, let someone else wash their shroud.

thus. No matter how many times he told them not to (and how many times *had* he sold this bed?) they always tore it off. Still, he could have his assistants clean it; it was a trifle, a petty annoyance at best.

The salesman frowned, his dry skin cracking at the corners of his mouth – the plastic cover had been removed from the mattress. No matter, it was always

As always, he paused before he began the task at hand, kneeling by the bed like a penitent before a wrathful God, sniffing in its strange mix of earthy and synthetic odours and felt his tired old heart race fitfully in its bony cage. He removed his gloves and placed his hand upon the mattress, sighing deeply; nothing. He envied the poor fools, and

they had been legion, who had died there. At least they had felt *something*.

He would have given many years of his long, long life to have experienced just a sliver of that burning joy they must have felt. He was not the kind of person given to tears, technically he was not really a person at all, but deep down he felt the last moist residue of his morality subside with a desiccated crack.

He took some tools from his pocket and set to work on the screws. He had done this so often he could disassemble the damn thing in his sleep. Not that the salesman ever slept. It's true what they say, he thought, there really is no rest for the wicked.

Liscannor, January 2018

Kevin O'Donovan

Having just completed a BA in English and Irish, Kevin O'Donovan is studying a Masters in Creative Writing at the University of Limerick. He has a special love for Irish fiction, drama, and short stories. He lives in the countryside with twelve dogs, none of which belong to him.

Why we chose it:

If there's one thing we at Silver Apples are known for it's nepotism so egregious it would rival the Medici family (a little historical joke for you there). Kevin is our new slave...er, we mean slush pile sifter. Kevin's poem segues nicely into our next piece from OG editor Gráinne about Silver Apples's first ever writers retreat in fabulous Liscannor!

Why did we come to the West?
Away from smoke, bills, and pulsing lights.
Did we come to hide and to fake it?
To pretend we didn't hear our heart's
Mumble when we sighed,
Over a keyboard or a blank page,
Held back by a sickness of self-doubt.

We crammed into cars on a wet, windy evening,
Driving to a house at the edge of the sea.
Yet we did not need wellies when
We dug with squat pens,
Sat beside a fire yet still feeling
A wind that whistled through windows
And dropped a thought on our laps, so
We could pull it onto the page and,
With our palms,
Press it to the edges of the paper.

In the evenings, broad bellied, we sat
Beside flames, breathing fire,
Keeping each other burning.
We spoke of ourselves, and in the night,
With the coolness of the moon, we held that
warmth and
Knew finally,
Our hands sore and heads tired,
That we came here to write.

Report from the Frontlines: Silver Apples Retreat

Gráinne O'Brien

Last year we took a notion. We take lots of notions here at Silver Apples. We have a lot of ideas, plans, and schemes. Some come to fruition, some don't, and sometimes we're playing the long game. There was one idea we got, however, that wouldn't go away. And what it led to was a very special week.

We decided last year that we were going to host a retreat. The idea of a writing retreat is not unique by any means, but it was the first one we had planned and therefore, an incredibly exciting and nervous journey.

We kept the cost as low as we could, renting a house in Liscannor Co Clare - a stunning part of the world by the way, should you ever choose to visit. The house allowed us to watch the sun rise over the ocean, sit in front of a stove, and write in privacy or with each other.

There were some rules. Mainly, if someone is writing, don't interrupt them. We would gather for dinner every night and then sit in front of the fire, drinking wine, and reading the work we had produced that day. Those evenings, sitting in front of the fire, could last hours.

It is simply impossible to communicate what a wonderful experience those evenings were. The act of writing and creating is cathartic in itself but to sit, only hours after writing these raw, unedited drafts, and read them to relative strangers took a kind of courage and trust we could only sit in wonder at.

For five days and nights we wrote, read, ate, drank, laughed, bonded and cried. Boy, did we cry. Sometimes we cried for ourselves, sometimes we cried for each other but always it was the work, the words and, more importantly, the act of sharing the words that sparked this

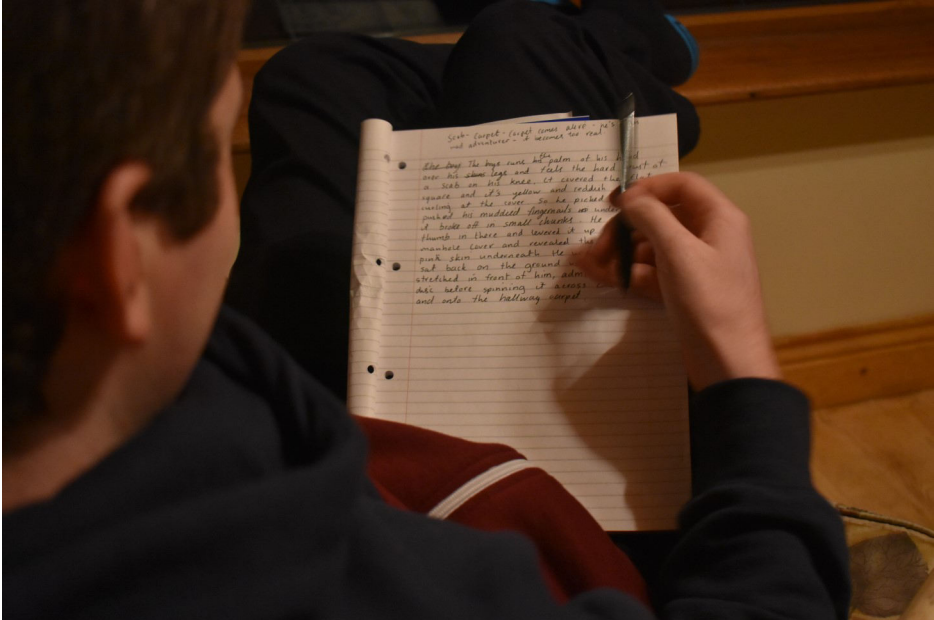
outpouring of emotion.

We can only thank the first artists who took this risk with us and attended our first retreat. We will certainly do it again, and hope to welcome them back, along with a few new faces, next time.

If you're interested in attending a Silver Apples retreat let us know! The more people who want to attend, the more it encourages us to host a second retreat. Email us at hello@silverapplesmagazine.com



The view at sunset



Working hard at the Silver Apples Retreat



The Cliffs of Moher, lookin' well as always!



We take our craft very seriously you know.

Thank you for reading Issue Ten:
“All That Glitters”

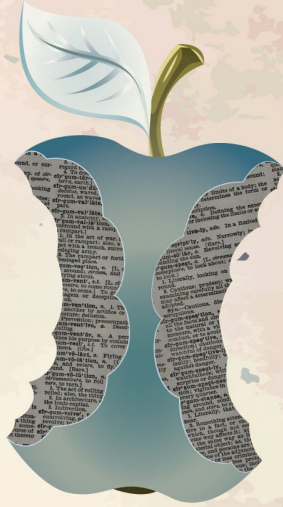
Submissions for Issue Eleven: “Peer Pressure” will open in September.

To keep up to date, do what all the cool kids are doing and follow us on Twitter:

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SILVER APPLES MAGAZINE

Creativity Worth Consuming

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Confessions from the back page:
I couldn't give a fig about the World Cup