FROM GLASGOW TO SATURN

A Note from the Editors

Once again, this issue of *From Glasgow to Saturn* brings with it a host of new editors. Joining AK Thaysen are Anthony Daly, Cameo Marlatt, Liam Quigley, and Swara Shukla. It was with eagerness and plenty of gusto that, in September 2016, we took up the task of putting together Issue 38. Now here we are, a little worse for wear, but no less excited about what we have created. Our enthusiasm is undoubtedly evident in the fact that this ambitious issue showcases the work of no less than sixteen authors. What can we say? With plenty of high quality submissions, we were spoiled for choice, and now you can be too!

Our prose selection could hardly be more diverse: a Manhattan-dwelling woman tries to dispose of her beloved Labrador's dead body in Victoria Shropshire's humorous and poignant "Beauregard"; on a space station in the future, two women in love struggle against prejudice in Laura Becherer's touching science-fiction story "Growing Cornflowers in Glass Gardens"; an awkward teacher in 1980s Glasgow attempts to teach a group of school children how to dance in an excerpt from Emma Guinness' novel; and learning Finnish has never been so interesting as in Martin Cathcart Froden's "Finnish for Beginners."

And if you've come here looking for excellent and engaging poetry, we have you covered. Mairi Murphy's "Shark" is a lyrical meditation on language, time, and, of course, sharks; a chicken facing slaughter is lured into a false sense of security in Sarah Spence's "Chicken"; and Angie Spoto's biting "Liquorice Woman" is sure to strike a cord with any woman who has attempted to read alone in a pub.

All this, and more, awaits you!

Before we let you get to reading, we would like to thank Laura Becherer and Christopher Lynch for their work as editors on the last issue, and all other previous editors of the journal. It has been a pleasure building on what you have created.

We would also like to thank Dr Vassiliki Kolocotroni and the English Department at the University of Glasgow for providing us with the funding to put Issue 38 together and launch it at the National Library in Edinburgh and in Glasgow. Your donation has allowed us to print more hard copies than ever before, to attract a wider audience, to maintain the website, and to donate back copies to the British Library. Without your incredible generosity towards the arts, such a small journal wouldn't be possible. Your contribution has supported and encouraged the dozens of both new and already established writers and artists featured in this issue.

And lastly, a big thank you to Dr Carolyn Jess Cooke for serving as our advisor along the way, providing us with useful suggestions, and helping us secure funding.

But thank you, dear readers, most of all. We hope you enjoy reading Issue 38 as much as we have enjoyed making it for you.

Editors

Anthony Daly
Cameo Marlatt
Liam Quigley
Swara Shukla
AK Thaysen

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By Petros Aronis

The Fall of the Leaf

Kerrie McKinnel

Observe the leaf.

Observe the way she snaps from her tree, pulling away from her place of birth now that maturity has arrived. See how easily she's caught on the gentle summer's breeze, tangled and teased by the scents of cut grass and warm soil, unaware that her path is already being dictated by a mixture of nature and gravity.

Observe the leaf as she enters the well: happily, without resistance, as if free-falling into the arms of a new lover, laughing with every twirl and catch of the air.

Watch, just one moment more. Kneel forwards in the dusty ground and peer over the stone wall. Try not to worry about your dress – the master is away in the city until tomorrow, so you'll have plenty of time to scrub it clean. Look down into the depths of the well, and see the way in which the edges guide the leaf's fall, shaping the movement of the currents beneath her until she begins to spiral. Her family ties are cut, childhood home out of reach, no choice now except to go forwards into the adult world which she believed she had chosen. It's only when she makes her final pirouette towards the dark waters that she realises: she's trapped.

Stop.

Rustling in the bushes. Someone's watching. Someone sees that you've hesitated at the well a minute too long. Someone will tell the master.

Quick, back on your feet. Brush down your dress and apron – it won't need washing after all. The ground here in this rural hideaway is dry and barren. Fetch the bucket back up from the well, grip the splintered base under your palms, and ignore the cold which gnaws at your skin. Somewhere between the calloused fingers and the aching hunger in your gut, find the polite face which tells the cook and the other servants that you're happy here, that the pennies you send home each month for your younger siblings are worth it.

Look inside the bucket. Observe the way the leaf swirls on the water's surface.

The wind calls to her, tugging at her stem, and tells her that another life waits for her whenever she's strong enough to leap – if she's strong enough. If not, there's nothing else to do except linger until the time comes when her purpose has gone. Then, she'll be flung out and left, spent and alone, to dry and crumple and crack in the frost of night.

Beauregard

Victoria Shropshire

Melinda's co-workers were astonished when she called in sick. Even when the department was deserted due to a flu outbreak three years ago, Melinda had soldiered on, strong as a plow horse, because she felt the system would break down without her steady hand.

The air of competency with which Melinda carried herself was perceived as relatively harmless condescension by her co-workers, most of whom genuinely liked her. One supervisor had written in an annual audit that Melinda "operates in the social services arena with equal parts optimism and arrogance." And a particular trio harbored palpable suspicions about her because her southern accent was as strong now as the day she got off the bus over a decade ago. This refusal to adapt to any variety of New York speech was agreed to be outright elitism.

Indeed, Melinda felt that more than her advanced degrees in social work from an Ivy League institution, growing up in the South had given her unique advantages in her work and in her life. After living in Manhattan's Turtle Bay district for eleven years, she was no longer convinced that the South could lay claim to a greater number of quirky inhabitants as compared to the rest of the country. She prided herself on recognizing the difference between quirky and criminal.

She had never been afraid in this big city. She believed that she was more intuitive, more empathetic, better able to see into the heart of most matters, into the true hearts of people, even the dark ones. Beauregard had been a great comfort to her; his calm nature and loving spirit healed her when she struggled with cases involving drug addicted infants, domestic violence, abused and neglected children.

Beauregard had stopped eating on Friday. She watched him and kept him warm but by Sunday morning, he had simply stopped breathing. He was curled in his bed, exactly as she had left him the night before, nose tucked under his paws. She called in sick, sobbed into her coffee, then sat stewing for an hour or more about the practical matters of it.

Several phone calls to municipal agencies provided little assistance and no comfort. The Super told her that the City would incinerate him, but Beauregard had to be placed in a large black trash bag, clearly labeled DEAD ANIMAL, then placed by the dumpster in the alley or shoved down the building's trash chute with all the other weekly garbage. On hearing this, she crumpled to the floor and cried for another hour straight.

She called her uncle for advice, but his pragmatic life experiences only involved the burial or mass burning of animals. He spent twenty minutes recalling a time when a hurricane had drowned the family's hogs in the fields and the EPA had arrived with snowplows to pile them up and burn them. "The whole county smelled like bacon for weeks," he said. This offered no solace.

The condolences offered by the veterinarian also felt weak and conciliatory to her critical ears. He would be more than a name on a chart if his file were on her desk, she thought haughtily. Cremation services were offered, but collection services were not. If she could get him to them, they'd be happy to process Beauregard. This word – *process* – incensed her. She flew into a small fit of rage, throwing laundry and miscellaneous items from her closet around the bedroom with a complete lack of irony that this was an industry verb she herself used a thousand times per month when speaking of human clients.

It took the rest of the afternoon to develop a plan. Beauregard was in rigor, but it was still a struggle to wrap him in bath towels. Getting him into the plastic bag (she could not bring herself to tie it off) and into the old tattered piece of luggage proved enough exertion to make her sweat. It was an ancient suitcase, with two fixed wheels, not like the newer, smaller case she'd bought last year whose four wheels all moved independently. The zippers were stiff and the fabric worn dangerously thin around the corners. She would tell the vet to burn it with Beauregard. Just like the hogs in the field.

She showered, dressed, put on a smattering of make-up. Her hands were shaking and it took three attempts to apply mascara, but it was finally accomplished. She took a deep breath, put on her coat and scarf, and wheeled Beauregard into the hallway, ready for his last journey.

Her neighbor, Mrs. Wingate, joined her in the elevator and the two women rode to the lobby in silence. When they exited, Mrs. Wingate spoke tersely, "Have a good trip."

The lump rose in Melinda's throat rose so quickly that she could only manage a nod, escaping outside into the chill of November. The sun was bright and Melinda decided to walk to the vet. Beau would love this, she thought. The colors were brilliant and crisp and Melinda filled her lungs with autumn.

Beauregard seemed to grow heavier as she traveled; the old dog weighed almost as much as she did and Melinda soon tired. She fretted about the bag: the fabric might rip, a zipper might break, a wheel might fall off. She turned at the nearest subway entrance, stopping at the top to count the stairs.

She tackled them slowly, moving her left hip into the heavy bag, fearing the bag might get away from her. The loud clicking of the plastic wheels echoed in the subway tunnel as the warm piss-tinted winds of trains came and went.

A ragged-looking young man in a Yoda t-shirt appeared at her elbow and asked, "Do you need some help?"

He smelled of sweet liquor and cigarettes, but his eyes were clear. His friend wearing a grey hoodie added, "Oh yes, let us help you." Before she could respond, Yoda and Hoodie grabbed her suitcase and walked down just in front of her, looking back with thin smiles of support.

She thanked them as Yoda tilted the luggage back to her once they'd all reached the bottom. On board the train, a woman near her grunted, her pink lips pursed with thinly veiled disgust at the two disheveled men. In the closed space of the car, the sour pitch of their body odor's grease mixed with ashtray scents formed an unavoidable, pungent cloud. One man handled his felt hat as if it had been turned green by the funk of the car. He gave Melinda a slight smile of those who bond through suffering in silence near public indignities.

Shame on these passengers, she thought. You never know someone's story. You never know what they have lived, or survived, what they value, what talents they possess, what lies in their hearts, in their luggage.

Then she caught a glimpse of herself in the window's reflection and noticed that her expression was not as neutral as she had tried to make it. She winced at how old, how haggard, she looked. She had missed a button on her coat so it sat higher on the left side, but rather than fix it, she stared apathetically at her hands.

Five stops later, Melinda began the methodical climb to the street with Beauregard. The luggage seemed to have doubled in weight now and she happily agreed when Yoda and Hoodie offered again to assist her. They were overly polite, she thought, and felt the inside of her coat pocket for loose change. A common enough scam, she was happy to give them something. They moved up at a slow pace, but her legs were heavy. She watched from a few steps behind as the men reached the top, where they surfaced onto the sidewalk and promptly took off running with her bag.

They ran away with Beauregard.

She quickened her pace up the steps, coming into the full force of the winter cold as she watched them weaving into the busy sidewalk traffic and quickly out of view. Her lungs burned as Pink Lipstick screamed, "THIEVES! STOP THEM" and Green Felt Hat broke into a run after them.

The world spun too quickly.

There was not enough air. The sun had gone. Beauregard had gone.

Pink Lipstick waved down a beat cop, gesturing frantically at Melinda. Felt Hat walked back towards her, hat in hand, his expression one of clear disappointment. Panic seized her fully now, making her suddenly light and fast as she ran back down into the city bowels, letting the subterranean air and noise drown the yells at her back.

Back home, she flung herself into bed fully clothed. She turned the thermostat as high as a sauna and eventually stopped shaking. She watched the news for signs of Beauregard. She listened at the door when she heard voices in the hall, mentally

predicting which neighbors would eagerly expound to the police their theories and verdicts. She imagined being referred to her own social service agency for assistance.

She imagined the expressions of Yoda and Hoodie as they unzipped the luggage. This gave her momentary satisfaction. But then she imagined the suitcase in a lumpy dumpster nest of black garbage bags, and her failure to process Beauregard kindly caused convulsive fits of melancholy.

Three days later, she returned to the office she was sure would dissolve into chaos without her. It would take her thirteen years before she told anyone the truth of Beauregard's last walk in New York.

By Imogen Whiteley

Bloody Scraps

Sean McLeod

"We don't have elastic borders, you know."

Peter sits in a green leather recliner, picking at the nubs on its arm. His brother, Tom, sits across the room in a chair that is regrettably just as leather and green, staring into the dusty beer globe in his hands. Their Grandmother's tirade continues, punctuated by stunted gasps as she twists at the lid of the vermouth bottle wedged between her thighs.

"And those so-called 'children' we're letting in from Calais—"

Grunt Twist

"—they look bloody older than I am."

At some point she'll notice the bottle's already open, surely. It's too late now to tell her.

"I mean, I've never been very political- you know that. Well, the Scottish Conservatives did beg me to run for a seat back in '68, but I told them 'I have three children to look after; that doesn't leave very much time for party politics'."

Grunt Twist Pull

"I was a sure-in, of course. That's what they said— a sure-in. But do you think your Grandfather would have wanted me running? He always had this notion that—"

Grunt Grimace Twist Pant Twist

"—that since he knew people in politics, he ought to get into it for himself at some point. Of course, there's a big difference between pointing Bolivian dignitaries in the direction of the local trim and working to improve the country."

The air in the room has taken on a living haze of ethanol and perfume in the years since the window was last cracked, so it's easy not to pay attention. Instead, Peter's gaze crawls over the frilled glass dish on the coffee table—filled with Cadbury Roses

that have petrified after their long tenure as finger food for non-existent guests—and settles on the cracked soapstone pistol on the mantelpiece.

When he was little, the pistol had always been the first thing he reached for upon being marooned here. The same dismal scene would play out every time: he would shoot his Grandmother first, right between the eyes; then dispatch of his brother with similar dispassion, before turning the barrel on himself— pressing cold stone to his temple and ending it all with crossed-eyes and a slump to the carpet.

In a rare bout of situational awareness, his Grandmother has taken note of this fascination, and promises he will receive the pistol in her will. He doesn't imagine he'll need it, as it's only during these visits that he ever feels the urge to use it.

"Of course, I suppose it would be petty of me to hold it against him now. Shouldn't speak ill of the dead and all that. The living, on the other hand—"

Gruuuunt

"—I wonder how Susan's dealing with Arthur's croaking. If she's even noticed, that is. I can't wait to see the look on that bitch's face when the will's read. It's almost worth her being there, just for that. I'll need to make some changes round here once the money comes out. And don't worry, boys, I shan't forget about you."

The bottle claps against the side table and she begins the laborious process of standing. When she rises from the green leather sofa that ties the unfortunate set together, her Georgette shawl peels away from the seat and flaps down at her side in vestigial, sequined wings.

"I'll go fetch something that can be opened without the jaws of life, shall I? Do you boys need a refill?"

Neither of their drinks has been touched. Peter takes a sip to show he's fine. The beer cuts a rivulet through the feathery white scum that lines the rim of the glass and enters his mouth in a dry rush.

"The man in the shop down the road recommended that to me. Said he just got it in—imported. How is it?"

Peter glances through to the kitchen, where a couple of Stella cans lie crumpled on the counter, and nods.

"It's good."

She wobbles satisfied from the room, and Peter scours his tongue with his sleeve.

"Christ, why did you drink it? Do you have a death wish?" Tom asks, holding his own glass a safe distance from his mouth.

"Seemed like the thing to do," Peter says, as he plucks jersey hairs from his tongue.

"If you have to poison yourself, at least wait till after you've told her."

"When did we decide I was telling her?"

"When I bagsied not it; I don't make the rules, Pete."

"Shit, can't we flip a coin or something?"

Muffled footsteps patter through from the bedroom, and Tom waves a hand for silence. Their Grandmother shoulders her way through the door with a bottle in each hand. She settles back into the deep groove she left behind and examines the bottles' sloshing contents in the light.

"Would you boys prefer gin or brandy? The brandy might be a bit past it, but I imagine it still works."

Her corneas are shimmering pink, and her cheeks are slathered with strokes of fresh makeup. Peter declines with as much tact as he can summon, while Tom shakes his head and rubs his stomach to indicate he's still enjoying the beer. Undeterred, she selects three small glasses from the crystal shelf beside her and fills each with brandy.

"Please, it's been a long time since I've had anything to celebrate."

She passes the glasses around, then seems to notice the aghast looks on their faces.

"Oh, don't be so morbid! I don't mean your Grandfather's death— just the money. Soon I'll be flush; maybe enough to move somewhere a little larger than your average

matchbox."

Tom nods at Peter; now's the time to tell her. The gesture goes unnoticed, and she continues talking, in between sips.

"As hard as it might be to believe, I'll actually miss Arthur. Even after everything that happened with Sue, he still visited every week— not that she knew that. He was always very sly about it."

Peter tries to speak, but she heaves herself up again.

"Have I ever shown you the pictures from our wedding day?"

She has, but it's no use telling her that.

"I'll be back in a moment; get started on that brandy."

Tom waits till she's shuffled out of sight into the hall, then leans forward.

"Jesus, Pete; that was the moment."

He's right.

"This isn't easy, you know. Why don't you try telling her?"

"You know what? Fuck it, I will."

Footsteps return. The couch groans as their Grandmother lowers herself back into it. A heavy red photo album sits in her lap, its ancient leather wilting away in the corners. With impressive dexterity, she manages to balance the album and turn its pages with one hand, while holding her drink in the other. After a while of searching, during which Peter and Tom can only glance at their drinks in silence, she peels back the laminate and retrieves a yellowed photograph.

"Oh God, look at us here. We really did look the part."

She passes the photo to Tom, who glances at it and smiles, then slides it across the table to Peter. The groom, tall and proud, leads his bride down the church steps, as she makes a show of bunching her brilliant white skirt up so it doesn't touch the stone.

Peter's Grandfather certainly looks better than he did when he last saw him, waxy-skinned and percolating carcinomas in his sunken chest.

"You look very happy." He says, in the absence of any better observations.

That seems to be good enough, as she laughs and takes the picture back to look at herself.

"We were."

Her voice wavers, so she takes another sip and refills her glass. When she speaks again, composure has returned.

"Even at the time I knew it wouldn't last, of course. Arthur just wasn't that sort of person; and even if he was, it still would have ended up the same way sooner or later. Obviously I had offers too, but I wasn't surrounded all day by giggling students. And he was very handsome."

Another gulp.

"Yes, looked very much the young, virile Professor in his academic garb. People like him, I told him, everyone wanted to have the whole of them for themselves, but they'd settle for what part they could get."

The last of the brandy gutters away down her throat, resurfacing briefly in the glass with a belch, before disappearing again.

"And I warned him; they were going to tear shreds out of him till there was nothing left but bloody scraps, and I wish he could have seen that. He didn't, of course. When that tart, Sue, came along— oh, sorry *Aunty Sue*, isn't it? When she came along, I don't think he even knew he was doing anything wrong. All she was doing was taking a little more than the others."

She dabs her face with the shawl, then pulls herself up straight again.

"Anyway, I suppose I am too now, with this money business. Better me than her, though."

Peter gestures to Tom, who starts upright, then opens his mouth.

"So—" he begins, as Peter urges him on, "—this beer's gone right through me. I'll just nip to the loo. Pete, wasn't there something you wanted to talk about?"

He strides out the room without looking back, leaving Peter alone with his Grandmother's expectant gaze. What seems like the first real silence since they arrived draws out while she waits for him to speak.

"Well," he begins, then stops.

He takes a gulp of the brandy, then another.

"So," he says, then runs out of words.

Maybe she won't even understand what he's saying; she does look as though she's having trouble staying awake, after all.

"Ok, I don't think I should be the one telling you this, but I guess I am. It's about the will."

Her eyes pop open apprehensively.

"It turns out, just before Grandpa died, he and Sue got married."

Her face turns dead, and she places her glass down on the table.

"Right then." She says.

The toilet flushes and Tom strides back into the room, blinking and innocent.

"Have I missed anything?" He asks, avoiding Peter's death stare.

"Nothing important," their Grandmother says, "would you like a top-up?"

The conversation carries on for a while, although now it's mostly about Tom and Peter.

Any plans for New Year?

How's the new job?

Then, it's time to leave, and she shows them out, steadying herself against the wall.

The door clicks into its PVC frame, and Tom pretends to wipe sweat from his forehead.

"Christ, that wasn't great," he says, before starting down the walkway.

Peter waits a moment outside the threshold, shakily retrieving the cigarettes from his pocket and tucking one between his lips. Something crashes inside, and the window rattles.

Tom is out of sight at this point, so Peter eases the door open and steps inside. The sound of smashing crockery carries through from the living room, and the carpet outside is littered with shards of glass. Peter creeps towards the noise, peering round the lintel.

The coffee table is jammed upside down against the fireplace, and torn and crumpled photographs litter the remaining furniture. His Grandmother sways in the centre of the floor, the soapstone pistol hanging loose at her side.

The gun rises, brushing her cheek and resting against her eye. For a moment, it looks as though it might actually go off.

Instead, she shrieks and hurls it across the room, breaking it in two along the crack and puncturing the fleur-de-lis wallpaper.

After that, she stands still for a while, panting in the ruined silence of her living room. Then she turns and begins a violent amble towards the kitchen. She stops when she sees Peter in the doorway, and they look at one another for a moment. The moment passes, and she tips her television over.

Peter leaves, taking care not to slam the door on the way out.

Shark

Mairi Murphy

loner, you don't even
click with your own species
through updraughts & canyons
I am caught in the drag
of your s-shaped heart
stir the bottom of the sea

swim in a language that doesn't know me
see with eyes that don't see me
you can break me - whole

silent I hear
the opposite of creation
the opposite of infinity
the nanosecond
of the nanosecond
before

in air bubbles you turn me inside out
a killing kindness
you breathe me through and through
incapable of filtering you can only obey
sheer instinct
constantly arguing with yourself
no you are not

on the edge of awareness
a toe in the water, waiting

I leave the ability to walk on water
sink with ordinary guilt
wear no cautionary life jacket.

October Lament

Mairi Murphy

Longships, wide, free
floating, suspended
in hallowed hushed housing,
neckcoiled, slender, crozier-like:
Valhalla is waiting.
The fjords are empty.

Long unfurling uncurling waves
rattle along smooth stones to spill
foaming clumps, like newly finished ale
from smacking lips silenced by time.
Only the whale is singing.

By Kamilla Hu-Yang

By Kamilla Hu-Yang

By Kamilla Hu-Yang

Gorse Wine

Maria Sledmere

I'd forgotten all about those August afternoons till we found that old bottle of gorse-wine in Gramps's cellar, with the yellowed label that read 'October 1998'. The problem, of course, is that nobody looks at photographs any more, so the pictures of us as kids running about on beaches and fields and golf courses are pretty much dead to history, enshrined in thick layers of dust, buried beneath my mother's bed, mixed up with crumbs and clumps of coppery hair (the ginger gene ran in our family). I should say that the golf course we used to visit was a deserted one; it wasn't like Gramps to take us out somewhere where we might get shot in the head by a flying ball. To give Mum a break, he used to pick us up on Saturday afternoons, usually in August, with us begrudgingly back at school. Autumn would cast a fine gold light over the sky as we sat in the back of his Volvo, opening our windows to shout at scuttling pheasants or sheep that had wandered out onto the road, dumb with nonchalance.

Mabel and I would always fight if left alone together, so Gramps would also pick up some cousins along the road. We had so many cousins, back then, before half of them moved away - moved out to university, got jobs in England, Spain, Australia. Sam and Matthew, Lucy and Steven; then there were the little ones, Jack and Leah. We would pile into the back of Gramps's car in various combinations, and he'd drive us along the coast road out to the golf course. Gulls would swoop up above us and through the open window the salt air moistened the breath on our lips. He'd be muttering on about how the potholes got worse every year; how in his day the councils were never so lazy. The car journey would take forever, because we were so excited to reach the open plains of paradise, the clumps of gorse and hidden fruit.

It was funny to think of how long those Saturdays seemed; those perfect bundles of respite from school. Waking up early to munch bowls of cereal until Mum came down to make us eggs and toast. Watching the Saturday morning telly; all the silly children's shows, faded signal, sizzling colour bars. Building lego castles till eleven. Being called out to the park to play football, then home for lunch – cheese pieces – at

one. Gramps would pick us up around three and when we got back Mum'd put on her corny radio show and we'd help her make blackberry crumble or tart for pudding.

You see, that was the main reason Gramps took us on the annual trips to the golf course: to pick blackberries. Or brambles, as Jack and Leah used to call them. To me, the bramble is the thorny thing that catches on your arms if you're not too careful. Many a time I've come home, my skin laced with blood from where the brambles scratched me.

The first taste of the first blackberry picked is like an unexpected kiss. Sour sweet, juicy in your mouth, the seeds crunched to the roots of your teeth. You say to yourself: taste it, *taste it*. The colour and flavour sparkles and crackles and the tartness tingles in your gums.

When I think of the golf course now I think of the autumn when I was in primary five, nine-years-old, standing in the moor's gorsey perfume, with the mist coming down from the sea. Silvery moments like these, feeling like life has that abyssal sense, the depthlessness of the grey waters fading in the distance; moments where there are pearls to be found in the world. Gramps telling me to look after Mabel as he sat in the passenger seat with the door open, reading the weekend newspapers. He was too old, then, to chase us around scrambling for blackberries. He taught some of the cousins how to roll tobacco for him, in exchange for some of those hardboiled sweets he kept in a travel tin in the glove compartment. After he died, that rusty little tin was one of the pieces of random clutter that was stacked for the young heirs to collect. Me and Mabel, Jack and Leah and the rest. Nobody knew what to take - most of it was worthless. Mabel took the tobacco tin; she keeps her earrings in it, says it might be worth something on the internet. I took the fusty old dictionary Gramps once used as a doorstop. I thought it would teach me something, but I guess I haven't even opened it yet. When I go to peel apart the pages, that mouldy, smoky smell reminds me of his house and I get a weird feeling. Every now and then, Mum reminds me it's about time I got rid of it; she says there's no use lugging it around with me when I move out.

We'd be outside picking for hours. Elastic hours that stretched gold and springy in

the lustrous afternoon light. Shadows of distant cliffs and rocky islands drifting across the bay. The sea dappled purple grey with blotches of gold. Gold flickers in the horizon sky, leafing the corners of clouds. The wind chill comes round about now. I've run out somewhere, to find the lusher shrubs, ripe with fruit. We each have our own tupperware to hold our spoils. The dark blood of the blackberries blots my fingers. It feels illicit, like a murder. I pull and twist the berries from their thorny stalks, dropping them one by one into the pile of my tub. In the car home, they will start to mush together, clotting red and black and purple, like a giant oozing bruise.

I can hear them shouting my name. At first it is faint, a shade of the gulls crying. The sound swirls around me, swooping into the private space of my picking. I have noted the two bushes that remain to be picked. It is a silent competition: who will take home the most fruit? The land is flat here, but gets so bumpy in parts, dipping into sandy bunkers and fairways long overgrown. You can roll down the hill in the soft grass and land in a sandpit and laugh. Mabel and I used to push each other. She finds me, now, her sticky hands tugging my jacket. *Time to go.* I turn to look past my sister at the sky and the funny colours of sunset: burnished, bleeding. Her little fingers are stained too, and I think of the reddish taste of the blackberry jam that we will make later. *Time to go.* She eyes up my tub and sees that I have won.

Gramps takes us for hot chocolate afterwards. Years ago, he used to be a caddy at the golf course that is no longer here, and he knows the man that now manages the new course, not far away if you go by car. Another few miles along the coast road, the bright sun beaming in our windows. I am the oldest and I sit in the front seat, fiddling with the radio. I turn around once and Jack and Leah are asleep, their heads resting on Mabel's shoulders, as she sits in the middle. Mabel smiles contentedly, and bobs her head in time with the music. We sit in the clubhouse with all the golfers and their wives and we drink expensive hot chocolates heaped with marshmallows. Gramps gets a discount, and he likes to advertise the fact. He introduces us to all his friends that he used to work with. Some have died, but there are pictures of them on the walls of the clubhouse, hidden behind the glass cabinets of trophies and silver cups. They are black and white photos, so you can't see the wrinkles. I think he kept taking us there because he thought that when he died, they would put a picture of him up there

too, along with the waiter who once served Tiger Woods and the groundsman who kept the greens clean for forty years. If I went back now, I know there wouldn't be a photograph of my grandfather. The new owners stripped the place bare and instead there are hot tubs, a shiny bar and television screens everywhere in the atrium. What remains, perhaps, is some empty tip jar at the back of a cupboard. The shadow of his laugh that ghosts the open, glittering restaurant.

On Sunday, I watch him unload the plastic bags from the boot of his car. Tangles and tangles of gorse flowers, bright yellow things that he's pulled from the golf course. So yellow it seems to powder in your hands, like turmeric. Once, we played a game to see how big his hands were compared to mine, and they were all cut-up; his fingers were leathery textured and chipped with little scars and dark red marks. I asked him what happened and all he said was 'gorse.' He throws it in a big metal pot that my mother keeps for making soup, and slowly the water boils away the sunshine colour to a dark kind of gold. Gramps sits in his chair by the stove, reading the Sunday papers. He pulls out all the pages he doesn't care for, keeping the classified ads and the sports section tight to his chest. *Selling a piano, they are, £25 if you pick it up!* He spills sugar and squeezes lemons into the pot. Mabel and I are playing outside, drawing chalk lines on the patio, but sometimes we go in again to watch him making his gorse wine. Mum always disapproves. *You waste the sugar.* He lets us smell the mixture: sort of vanilla-like, an unexpected sweetness. Whenever I go on long hikes in the hills and I smell the gorse, I see the deep ravines of Gramps's face, all the creases hardening like clay.

There will be blackberry crumble for pudding. It mushes hot and cold in my mouth. My mother will be on her best behaviour for Gramps, telling jokes and funny stories about the people she works with. We will help with the washing up and give her our clothes to iron for school tomorrow.

The yeast, that's the magic ingredient: it turns the plants into alcohol, into magic. Sometimes I hear him in my sleep. He's snorting and puffing on a fat, crudely-rolled cigarette, leaning against the heat of the stove; he's wandering on the empty golf course, his silhouette thin and dark as the lighthouse. He never told me what he

wanted to do, what he achieved in life. He always just said *be good to your maw and your sister.* He didn't tell me a thing about women or work or ways to get on in the world. I can't remember much of him now at all – just the shape of his figure in the distance, the lines on his face, his bloodied hands. All I took from the pile of clutter was that recipe, the scrap piece of paper covered in scratchy handwriting. Gorse wine. The other week, I tried to make it for the first time. It was kind of sickly and bitter. I don't know what to think of it.

By Maria Sledmere

Metempsychosis

Maria Sledmere

A baby lay dead among bracken and apples.
This the harem of the senses, soft,
succulent apples; apples that knit
and bead the ground
with delicate red and palest, glassiest green.

An ache behind the eyeballs
burns from the other place.

Did it come here, once, in a shroud of glory,
misting the lawns with its rain?
Did the white horse grumble
in its paddock of fool's gold, waiting
to hear the death knell in vain?

This the scratched-out earth,
which loosens every time
the formula for lost chlorophyll.

A field plough picks the ripest of leaves
for his sweetheart, guessing her name
like an emerald. The rest
shrivel and wither a terrible yellow.

She kindles the snow swirls of another dream
which brightens the sphere of his sleep;
she lifts herself, she says
never mind; in the morning

we will have the sunlight.

[…She dies in the night
like a baby's cot death, her hair spun gold
on the snow of the pillow.]

He rolls her over
where she has choked
and presses the coldest wax of an apple
gently to those ashen lips.

In the orchard, later, he listens to the wind
with its sullen, rhythmic lisps, lifting
the last seeds from their pods
and sprinkling the grass with pearls of life.

He finds the babe, buried
among the leaves of the sugar maple.
It is light in his hands, like a shell.

He carries it for miles, watching
the skin of it fade to a colourless grey,
where the twilight unveils
its half-finished trellis of muscle and veins.
At home, he sets it on the table
with his Ploughman's sandwich and pitcher of cider.

He hears it crying in the night;
the still breath of love alive
like vapours of ice beside him.

this causes teeth to rot

Maria Sledmere

tongue of flame, flipped gas
and light
to arsenic, click
and a dash of Butane,
playing games with the figures
that flow through ammonia, thinner
in smouldering ember—
remember the cadmium burn
of batteries, arteries
bright red as a sunset
of fiery cyanide, dyed
with insecticides cast
among pregnant meadows, alien babies
growing corn in the soil
and glugging the sap, Angelica root extract
mined from the unripe, neon ether,
all gloss of bitter poison loot
perfumed with formaldehyde,
wind-blown through smog-ridden skies,
grey-lifting, greyer,
radioactive, maybe,
that dead and tasteless luxury
that drags its compounds through my lungs—
a pleasurable excruciation, like love.

History Lesson

Sarah Spence

For Georgian era week, we plotted a
constellation of kings against the black
backdrop of History; and cut portrait
miniatures with safety scissors, silhouettes
of photocopied monarchs from a textbook.

Aware of the time, we lifted the essence
of the image with tracing paper, leaving
an aerial view, a shape like a country,
floating; then with glue we grounded it,
sharpening the noses with hard white card.

The leftovers – the clash of badge with
sash, hair or lip curled, the look to battle
or madness or across the sea, to something
unseen now – we scraped into our palms
with the black scraps and pencil shavings.

The Chicken

Sarah Spence

The chicken's in the kitchen. Her neck
Sways, sceptical, because she lives
In the garden, where it's unpredictable – trial and error
With the perimeter brambles, the trees throwing
Apples, the sun's shadows stalking and stretching
Like foxes. But inside, darkness becomes butterflies

Pinned to the walls by electric light. Her head
Ticks, listens…but there's nothing barking
Behind double glazing. We've got grain
By the handful and our sharp points have handles,
So she dances on our tiles, singing
Softly like the water in the pot.

Abackstays

Angie Spoto

Along a river's edge, where
the rain makes bridges to nowhere,
everyone's hoods up hats on
dogs underfoot and old men
with spaniels
bellies spiked by river water.

A tree's leaves stay canary clinging
to peeled limbs with
plastic bags rolled-up packed-tight taut
against stripped arms

fall like wedding rice
when I run by.
In the dark tunnels male shapes
piss against stone walls, graffiti rubbed
raw, all sandstone like burnt plaster,
white gypsum
turned sour: crack.

Glasgow's a muddy Paris.

An automatic weapon sounds like thick, warm rain, not the ice you find in Illinois. Be careful, it's not Edinburgh, you'll hurt yourself, you Midwestern nice. All their words, not mine. What's gritty but stone degenerate?

In winter, things lie open,
Japanese effigies,

bellies big bloated mushrooms,
arms hung taffy thin,
toggles carved from stone,
light lime jade.
Mouths open:
what's a stone but compressed grit?

One shot in Paris is a single day in Chicago
without stone structures,
graffiti in the cement.
No gypsum no sandstone
but a constant warm rain.

The men in my fingers:
when are you going home?
Colour of lichen, thick like it too,
bellies full, arms hang,
never coming home.
Too much jade much too jaded.

Their words packed-tight
taut stripped peeled
not mine.

Liquorice Woman

Angie Spoto

I am a liquorice woman
a fennel creature
a saffron thing that doesn't care
for your opinions or your thoughts on the matter
or your advice to me because I'm not asking
I'm just here reading
and that doesn't mean I want to talk
it doesn't mean I want you in my ear
or your fingernail running rogue
across the grains here
at the table in this low-lit
pub where
let me repeat myself
I'm just reading
reading by myself here
and running a grain of fennel
around my teeth
crushing it between molars
and flicking it across my
two incisors and telling you again
look I'm just reading.

Did you know
I'm a liquorice woman?
I'm a pepper thing
I'm a girl with cardamom
stuck between her teeth
and let me say this one more time:
leave.

The Nephrite Lady

Angie Spoto

1

Burma is home to the highest quality of jadeite deposits in the world. We met over Shakespeare. She spoke British English. Said things like *lift* and *specs* and only used the pronoun *he*. I didn't know where Myanmar was except a place Bill Clinton called Burma. Burma's jadeite is principally found in the Jade Track. The Lady is a political icon. She wears a flower in her hair. This lady was small, a pugilist, with brown skin and black eyes.

2

Jade extraction in Burma is done by boulder mining, a process that consists of removing the upper layer of earth to expose the rocks below. I showed her how to be a feminist. She convinced me books were sacred and ought never to touch the floor. They separate out the jade mixed with rocks and discard the waste in a river.

3

A friend who waits up for you is a loyal friend. A friend who brings you packets of powered tea from her home country is a true friend. Jade is a bridge between heaven and hell. On St. Patrick's Day, the El train shut down. We acquired plastic green hats, drank, forgot it all.

4

The jade companies typically ally themselves with a Burmese border militia. There were others. Other black-haired, black-eyed, olive skin others who ate their soup suspended, but they were not the Lady. I had a boyfriend at the time, and he didn't like my friends. He didn't like her. The militias often competed for control of the black market trade of opium and the black market trade of jade.

5

Any stones confiscated by the Burmese government were auctioned off in the yearly Rangoon gemstone auctions. I stopped reading Shakespeare and moved north. He told me we were more important than friends. He was more important than friends.

6

Caravan companies were required to transport the jade across the border. He worked for the environment. He didn't need friends. He told me to never cut my hair, and so I didn't. We met sometimes in the city. We rode the Ferris wheel on Navy Pier. I was no longer reading but I recycled all my plastics. Small pieces of stone occasionally found their way across the northern front, but the exact source of the supply was totally unknown.

7

When access to real jade is impossible, a gemstone is imbedded in copper in order to give the illusion of a deeper green colour. He said he loved strawberries, so I bought strawberry perfume. The Chinese believe the wearer of jade gains strength and resilience. Jade is esteemed for its hardness She reminded me I was a feminist. Showed me where I'd left my books on the ground, how to pick them up, throw them away when needed.

8

Nephrite is the commoner of the forms of jade. Jade is translucent. They can say what they want, but a loyal friend is one who waits up for you. The woman who discovered jade, discovered it by accident. A true friend is one who fights for you. Jade is a kidney. Let it clean you out.

By Maria Sledmere

Jenny

Peter McCune

Stepmother ˈstɛpmʌðə/

noun

i) adjacent to motherhood; held apart from the family; quiet, unknowable.

I've seen less and less of Jenny since my father died. She was quiet when I first met her—when I was nine or ten and we used to stay at my father's every weekend. And she was quiet when I saw her last, a few years ago, sitting on her hands at my sister's wedding, her pale skin, her short orange hair. David Bowie without the stardust.

When she married my father he stopped forgetting our birthdays. The house was always warm and there was proper food in the fridge. These changes were good, but they were quiet. Everything about her was quiet. Even her kindness.

And when I think of my friends' stepmothers, I see similar people finding their ways into our youth. Of course, there are exceptions—loud, bold, confident exceptions—but there is such a striking pattern that I cannot believe I missed it before. These women had not married before they married our fathers. They had good jobs and practical hairstyles. Most of them weren't scared of our fathers, but they were still submissive to them. They put up with more than our mothers ever did—or maybe it's more that they were defeated in a way our mothers never were. And there was that characteristic silence that sometimes seemed like emptiness.

But of course Jenny, our Jenny, was present, behind her eyes, inhabiting her body, bearing my father's drinking and his empty misery.

Before she was a stepmother, she was alone and worked as a secretary. Before that, she must have been a teenager. Before that, she must have been a child. I imagine Jenny probably had a few relationships over the years, and there must have been love, at some point. Then my thirty-seven-year-old father met her in the pub and showed her the best of himself, and told her he had children. Sometimes I try to imagine how she would have seen us then.

'Kiddliwinks,' says Denis. 'This is Jenny. She's my girlfriend and I'd like you guys to be especially nice to her.'

Denis grins at us all for a moment before heading into the kitchen. The children nod and smile in that cheerful, empty way kids do. The girl is so much smaller than the boys. Jane. She's called Jane.

'Hiya,' says Jane.

'Hello,' I say. 'You must be Jane?'

'Yeah. Me and Peter are twins,' she says, pointing to the smaller of the two boys. 'Did you know we were twins?'

'Yes. I did. Your daddy told me.'

'Did you know that Jane and Jenny both start with a J?'

'Yes. That's right.'

Why's she looking at me like that? She seems sharper than the boys. The boys don't seem interested at all. Maybe they don't want me with their dad. Are they going to say something to him?

'Why's your hair short?' Peter asks, not smiling.

'I don't know. I just like my hair like this.'

'I don't,' says Jane. The boys laugh. They don't like me. They won't like me.

'Why do you whisper when you talk?' Peter asks.

I imagine she hated him by the end. Who wouldn't, in her position? He wasn't a villain—more weak than cruel—and he could be so soft in his own way. But then he drank, and the light left his eyes, and he was lost for hours, days, weeks.

I was usually glad to go home to my mother on Sunday evenings; glad that I didn't have to stay in my father's home another night. Jenny always stayed behind in that house that was always too dark and damp for me to call home. I imagine she took herself away sometimes and cried about what she had given up to be with him.

Oh God, he's pissed himself again.

'Jennybear. Jennybear. Jenny. Ah no.'

'Yes, Denis. I'm here. You've had an accident. I told you to call me if you needed help to the toilet.'

'I know. I know,' his eyes roll, listless. 'Jenny. Jenny.' He holds the empty bottle of wine. Empty already.

'Jenny. Get me another bottle.'

'No Denis,' I say, but I can hear how little I mean it. Have I ever meant it? 'That was your last bottle for today. You promised. We're trying to cut it down.'

'No. Jenny. It's. It's. Please, I can't. I can't–'

'–No, Denis. I'm sorry.'

'Please.'

'No, Denis. You can't. I won't let you.'

'Give me a fucking bottle, Jenny, or I'll do worse than piss on this settee.'

'Denis!'

'No. I will. I'll break everything. I'll shit myself. I'll die if you don't give it to me.'

'You'll die if I do.'

'No. Don't be ridiculous. It's just my hip.'

'No. It's not just your hip. You're dying. You're going to die, Denis.' And maybe I want you to. It's so horrible, but I think I might want you to. I'm just so tired. I want to never open the curtains again.

But all of this is imagination. To understand Jenny would be to know the spaces between electrons. All I know is that she was quiet and kind, and that she continued to buy my father drink when his hip was broken and his skin turned yellow. And my siblings blame her, as though she'd force-fed him alcohol for thirty-five years—for over a decade before she met him.

I'll never blame her for failing to save what we all failed to save.

And I can't shake that image of Jenny at my sister's wedding, sitting on her hands in the corner of the function room. I had sat with her for a while, asking questions, trying to connect again. She was shy. Nervous. I was nervous too—worried that I looked too much like my father. That was a few years ago, and we haven't spoken since; we don't even send Christmas cards anymore. She sat right at the edge of our lives until she slipped off altogether.

La Misa de San Gregorio

from "Four Flemish Flourishes for the Queen of Spain"

Chris Athorne

Maestro de la Leyenda de Santa Catalina, siglo XV

Stand down now from the cross.
Amaze these five unsure

and tonsured priests.

Pucker open the pelicanesque
wound below the rib,
sleep-eye-slitted,

eye-lashed with trickled blood
that runs beneath the loin
cloth to the groin,

entwined twin streams'
unschooled red piss,
and drips, drops, drips

from thigh to silver chalice,
to amaze these five

unsure and tonsured priests.

La Virgen, el Nino y dos Angeles

from "Four Flemish Flourishes for the Queen of Spain"

Chris Athorne

Maestro anonimo, Escuela de Lovaina, siglo XV

How father-like the son!
Severe, full-haired

with that impatient air
toward the young.

Wise child!

Your mother's gamine,
girlish, ingenoue,

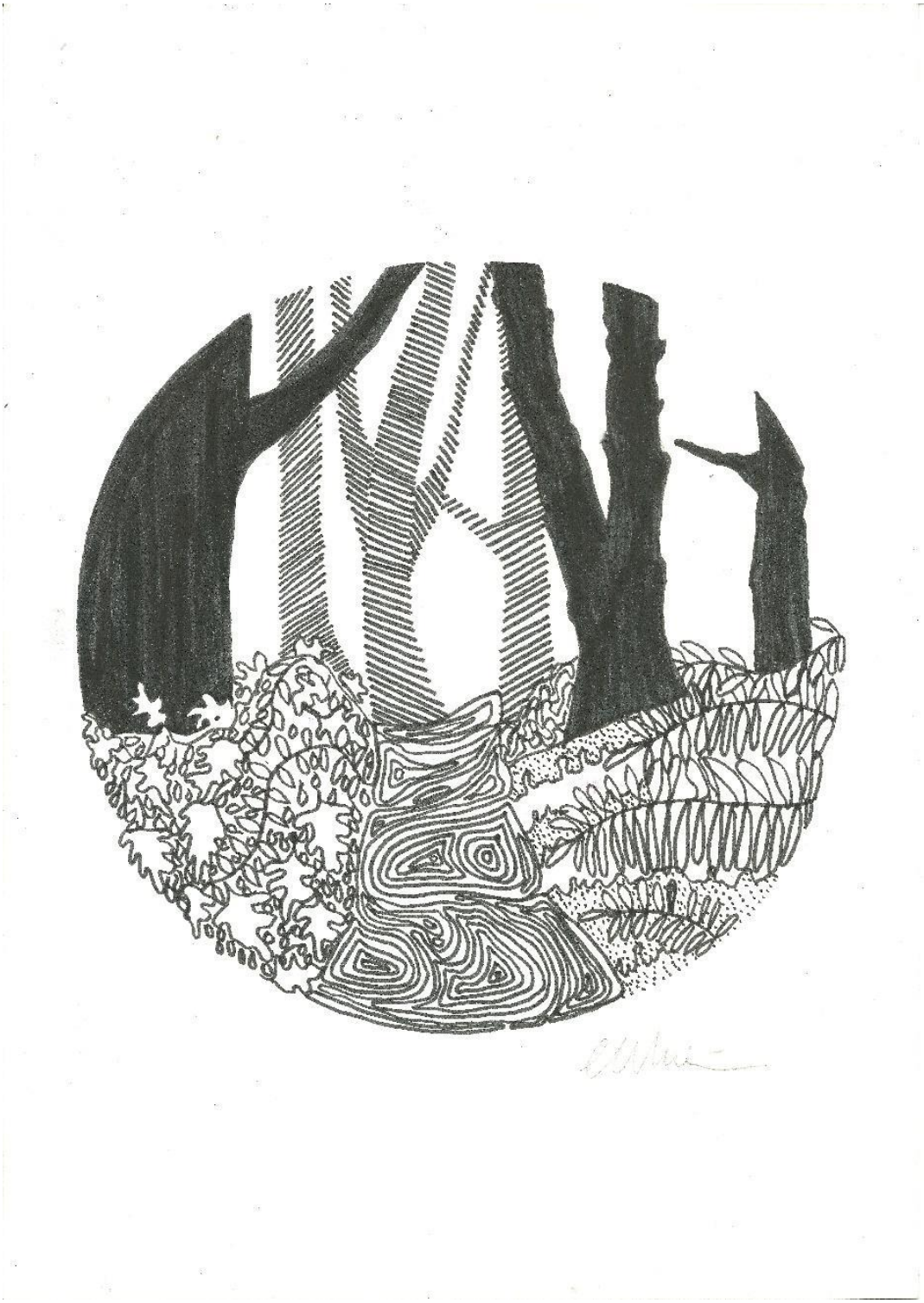
not knowing what she's got into
or what got into her.

And knowing angels kneel beside
in guilty adolescent pose.

One reads with a downcast eye.

One proffers a seductive red, red rose.

By Imogen Whiteley



By Imogen Whiteley

Growing Cornflowers in Glass Gardens

Laura Becherer

"Kikka, hold still," Frau Leffler said around a mouthful of pins. "I can't get this hem right if you don't stop twitching."

Kikka Zimmerman stood on a red velvet pouf in front of a full-length mirror as the tailor worked around her feet. Lefflers was the most prominent wedding shop in Neu Berlin, the largest segment of the New Europe international space station. Her father was paying nearly half his monthly salary to have her here, as he was fond of mentioning to Kikka at dinnertimes.

Frau Leffler moved on her stout knees around the floor at Kikka's feet, pinning the dress folds with skilled and graceful fingers. Part of Lefflers' expense came from the fact that Frau Leffler's gowns were hand-cut and hand-sewn; no AutoCloth machines were to be found on her premises, and Frau Leffler made a face of disgust every time someone even mentioned one. The Lefflers were considered true old-fashioned tradespeople by 26th century standards.

The dress was hemmed at last, and Kikka struggled to extract herself from the slithering cage of laced corset and heavy silk without scratching herself on the pins. Only a week to go, now.

"Now, the flowers," Frau Leffler was saying. "Still cornflowers? I want to match the shade of your sash to the exact shade of your bouquet."

"Yes, Frau Leffler." Kikka was already slipping into her flat sandals and tugging up the zipper on her sundress. She gave a wave, ducked into the streets of Neu Berlin, and half-ran to the greenhouses.

Lei was waiting for her by their garden plot, already digging in the soil with her long brown fingers.

"There you are," Lei said, pausing to pull her blue-black hair into a low bun. It was warm under the heat lamps. "What took you so long? I've been waiting here for half an hour."

“Frau Leffler,” Kikka rolled her eyes and put on one of the BioDome aprons that Lei had brought over for her. She picked up a trowel and began digging holes in the plot while Lei’s quick hands filled them with seeds and folded them over with dirt. “I had to go for another dress fitting. I have no idea how I’m going to walk in that thing—it’s heavier than I am.”

Lei paused in her work, letting the soil crumble through her fingers and fall thoughtfully back into the plot.

“Have you thought any more about what we’ve talked about?” she asked in a slow voice.

“Yes,” said Kikka, feeling defensive. “I have thought about it. I just don’t know what to say. I love Adi. I mean, sort of. I’ve known him my whole life and I’ve always known I was going to marry him. He’s not a bad person.”

“I’m not saying he’s a bad person,” Lei said, busying herself with planting more mint and basil seeds. Lower level citizens were allowed to use the BioDome, but only to grow useful plants for food and medicine. “I’m just saying, if you love two people, you should make sure you’re marrying the right one.”

“There are different kinds of love.”

“That’s my point.”

Kikka shook her hair back. “Damn, it’s hot in here. Let’s finish up and go swimming.”

***

The community pool was open to all citizens aged 25 and younger. Older citizens, like Kikka’s parents, had recreation areas designated to them by the workstation. Kikka and Lei showered first in the SaniStalls, then collected their towels and headed out to the blue and white tiled room. The pool was a large circular space with deep, clear water. Smaller pools for children dotted around the sides, and a hot-tub was in place for the winter months when the Auto Air system dropped a few degrees to mimic the change of seasons that citizens now only knew about from textbooks.

Lei was wearing her new bathing suit; a birthday present from her mother. Ambassador Cho was proud of Lei's success as an athlete and never lost a moment to show off about it. This new suit was cherry red with white polka dots; it looked fashionable next to Kikka's plain black.

Kikka swam a few laps with Lei, then went to a pool deck chair where her bag waited. She pulled out her drawing pad and began sketching the way Lei's slender body moved so sensuously through the cool water. Droplets sparkled in the heat lamps as Lei surfaced and paused, shaking tendrils of hair off her face.

"Kikka!" Kikka looked up to see Adi Schultz smiling over her. "I didn't know you would be here today. It's coming up soon, huh?"

Kikka forced a smile at Adi, taking in his boyish face and eager green eyes. She had known Adi since babyhood; he belonged to another prominent Neu Berlin political family. His mother worked with her father in the legislation department. Kikka had a hard time accepting that this boy-now-man was going to become her husband, even though her parents had talked of it as an inevitable event from before her memory began.

"Adi," she said politely, taking the hand he had extended for her. He sat down on her deck chair and leaned in to kiss her cheek. She did love him, she did. She just had to make herself remember it more often. Kikka supposed it might be easier once they were living together.

"What are you drawing?" he asked, then reached for her sketchpad and examined it. "Beautiful," he said after a moment. "Lei is a lovely woman, isn't she? I wonder if Ambassador and Herr Cho have a marriage arrangement for her as well, back on New China?"

"I don't think so," Kikka said, feeling awkward and trying not to blush. She tugged the sketchpad out of Adi's hands and closed it. "Ambassador Cho's family isn't as involved in political marriages. She says they're obsolete."

Adi shrugged. "I guess she'll find someone. Her mother's being posted back next year, isn't she? Lei will have to go with her. Maybe we can visit her sometime— I've

heard the New China space station is quite nice and open to visitors on holiday." Kikka felt uncomfortable, but was saved from a response as Lei approached them, wrapping herself in a white towel.

"Hello, Adi," she said. "Nice to see you. Kikka and I were just heading off, though. We're going out tonight."

Kikka looked at Lei with surprise; they hadn't discussed going to one of the Pod Pubs. She got to her feet, however, and followed Lei to the showering rooms, relieved to leave Adi behind.

***

"Pod 48?" Kikka asked as she and Lei scanned their pass cards at the door of the Transportation Chamber. Over 18s were allowed to travel by shuttle to the Pub Pods that circulated the main space station. There were over fifty of them for New Europe, all in different themes and reflecting different cultures.

Lei nodded. Kikka followed her into the waiting shuttle and buckled herself into a seat.

"Pod 48, please," Kikka directed into the CommPad.

Although New Europe was a stable space station, free from the violent political conflict that almost tore it apart in the first hundred years after the remaining citizens of Earth fled the dying planet, politics were again becoming more complicated. The traditions that had kept humanity alive in the fledgling years of United Earth International were held by some to be out-of-date, and those who wished to introduce change were doing so through political action and legislative dissent. Kikka's father, a strict Conservative, complained about it regularly at home. Pod 48 was a popular place for Liberal-minded New European citizens to meet during their off-hours. Kikka had been going there with Lei ever since they turned of age.

The women seated themselves in the neon-glowing main room, looking out the window at the field of stars glittering outward into the galaxy. They had chosen a seat that faced into open space, avoiding the views that showed them the gleaming lights

of New Europe.

"You can apply for the Foreign Artists Program on New China," Lei said in a quiet voice as Kikka played with the stem of her martini glass. "My mother knows the Directors there; you'd almost certainly get a place. You could get an early place, even, and finish your education on New China with us. You don't have to do this, Kikka. You don't have to follow through with a traditional marriage contract based on old survival laws. Not every citizen needs to marry and procreate anymore."

"I know," Kikka said, not looking up.

Lei reached across the table for Kikka's hand and held it. "I know you love your parents. I know you do. But marriage contracts aren't even legal. There's nothing holding you to it. You don't *have* to marry Adi."

"But he's so nice," Kikka said around the tears swelling up her throat. "He's always been so nice to me. And to not see my father and mother again? They'd never forgive me for cancelling their wedding and leaving for New China with a woman."

Lei sighed. "Kikka, you don't have to marry men because they're nice to you. And you can't marry someone just to avoid upsetting your parents. Would Adi support you joining the Foreign Artists Program? No, he'd want you to work as a nursery school art teacher and attend political dinner parties with him. That's the Conservative lifestyle, you know that. You don't have to do this if it won't make you happy. And it *won't* make you happy."

"But how can I leave everything?"

Lei raised Kikka's hand to her lips, planting a smudge of plum-colored gloss on the wrist and holding her mouth there to feel Kikka's pulse under her lips. She didn't answer.

***

Kikka's parents threw a dinner party on the eve of the wedding. All of her father's political and business contacts were invited, as well as Herr Schutlz's. Kikka herself was allowed to invite a few friends, so she asked Lei and her parents to attend.

Frau Zimmerman circled with trays of champagne—real, not synthetic—and chatted to the husbands and wives of her husband's political associates. Ambassador Cho was deep in conversation with Herr Schutlz, discussing some new bit of legislation that was up for review. Adi Schutlz was the center of attention, being patted on the back by his father and soon-to-be father-in-law's colleagues. Adi had been accepted to the legislation department and would begin in September. Lei and Kikka sat in chairs at the edge of the room, watching.

"Isn't this supposed to be your engagement party?" Lei asked in a whisper. Kikka snorted.

"I'm the least important person here," she whispered back. "I bet if we left, no one would notice."

Lei stood up and took Kikka's hand. "Let's see," she said, and the two slipped out of the library door into the corridor, quiet as shadows.

They crept down the dusky hall to Kikka's room. Kikka entered the pass code and they ducked inside, the relief of solitude and silence almost tangible. Both took off their heels and fell backward onto Kikka's bedspread.

Kikka looked around her with fresh eyes, seeing this room as she would for the last time. Once she moved into quarters with Adi, they would have a grown-up, professional bedroom. Kikka's room still reflected her childhood—purple pansy sheets, posters of The Space Cadets (Kikka and Lei's favorite all-female rock band), stuffed toys and piles of clothes.

"What will your bedroom with Adi be like?" Lei asked. "Beige walls and white sheets?"

"Tasteful art prints on the walls."

"And by tasteful you mean boring."

"Yeah, scenery. Of old-style barns and fields of goats."

"Fields of *goats?*"

"Yes. My parents have one of those in their bedroom."

Lei began to giggle, and Kikka joined in. Soon they were laughing, the desperate kind of laughter that has a sharp edge of fear.

"That's the traditional lifestyle, I guess," Lei finally gasped, wiping her eyes.

"What do your parents have on their walls?" asked Kikka.

Lei paused for a moment before answering. "Paintings of roses and plum blossoms," she said.

"Sounds pretty." Kikka relaxed back onto her feather pillows, and Lei shifted up the bed to lie next to her. The cotton sheets were warm under their bodies, and Kikka rolled over to cradle her head on Lei's shoulder. Lei wrapped her arms around Kikka and held her.

Then she said, "I spoke to my mom."

Kikka sat upright. "What? What did you say to her?"

"I asked her about our plan."

"You *what?* What if she had told my father?"

"Shh, be quiet," Lei said, even though all rooms were soundproofed and no one in the corridor could overhear them even if they tried. "Of course she didn't tell your father, for heaven's sake. She's on our side—her entire job is working to promote equality in legislation."

"Still, it's different in theory versus when it's your own kid asking to bring home her foreign illicit lover."

"We are not illicit lovers," Lei said, giggling again. "Homosexuality hasn't been illegal for almost a hundred years."

"My father would call us illicit."

"Your father calls two-piece bathing suits illicit."

"Well, that's true." Kikka paused. "Did you know that there were countries in Old Europe where women like us could get married? Same as a man and a woman?"

"Yeah," Lei looked up at the ceiling, which Kikka had studded with glow-in-the-dark paint to look like stars when she was 11-years-old. Lei reached a hand out toward them and waved her fingers in the dim light. "My mom told me about it. She said they're working to get back to that point again. On that and a lot of other issues. Lots of regression after the Old Planet died."

"Makes sense," Kikka said. "It's just hard to imagine. Being able to get married."

"At least they don't Eliminate us anymore," Lei said. "It would be easier for you, I guess, to pretend you were in love with Adi. You like men okay."

"Kind of," Kikka said. "But I don't like anyone in that way. Except you."

"They need a word for that," Lei said.

"We can call it Kikka's Syndrome."

"What do we call my syndrome, then?" Lei asked, rolling over to face Kikka and stroking her face. "The syndrome where I can't help myself from begging you to not go through with this tomorrow?

"Did your mother say she'd help?"

"Yes," Lei's breath warmed Kikka's cheek. Kikka kissed Lei's cheek.

"How?"

"Come to the BioDome early tomorrow morning. 0600. Don't even go to the Chapel. My mother has already started the paperwork, for you to be approved to transfer to our Unit if your parents ask you to leave yours. You can stay with us until we leave for New China, and in the meantime my mother will help you apply for the Foreign Artists Program."

Kikka didn't answer for a long time. "I'll think about it," she said at last.

Lei drew her closer, and both women lay with their foreheads touching until their breathing deepened into sleep.

***

Kikka jerked awake at 0500. She was alone in her bed, though the sheets still held the shape of Lei's body. She pushed the button on her Holo-window, bringing up her favorite program of the seaside. She stared at the waves for a long time, listening to the sound of water thundering rhythmically against the sand. She thought of Adi, and her mother, and her father. Then she thought of last night—Adi, in the center, and her off to the side. She thought of Lei's strong hands and her laughter. She thought of Ambassador Cho, and her sketchbook, and the top international artistry program on New China. She thought of her childhood, and she thought of the wedding dress hanging in Lefflers. She looked at her creased black evening gown, the one she had never taken off last night. She looked at her streaked makeup and swollen eyes. Kikka rubbed her face, smearing mascara across her eyes. Then she got up.

She scrubbed her face at her sink and brushed back her hair. She put on a blue sundress and gathered up her sketchpad, her art kit, her BookPad full of digital novels, three of her favorite outfits and her softest pair of flannel pajamas. She laid her battered stuffed dog, the one she had had since an infant, on top of the pile. All this she crammed into her school backpack, which she hoisted onto her back. Barefoot, she left her family's Unit and took the Quick Lift to the BioDome.

***

Lei was waiting for her there, next to their row of sprouting herbs. Relief blossomed on her face and she flung herself at Kikka.

"I didn't know if—," she said before her sobs cut her off.

Kikka hugged her back. "It's okay," she said. "I didn't know, either.

Lei pulled back after a few minutes and wiped her face. Then she reached into her dress pocket and handed Kikka a small package.

"What's this?" Kikka asked, opening it.

“Seeds,” Lei said. “Flower seeds, for us to grow as soon as we get to the Greenhouses on New China. I found you cornflowers, so you’ll feel at home.”

Kikka hugged her again for a long while. Then Lei said, “Come on, let’s go. My parents are waiting for us. They want to talk to you.”

Tell

Kirsty Dunlop

Girl, writing. No. Girl, typing. Girl, deciding. Girl, leaning back in red shirt, sweat shine on skin and shaky finger. Girl, steady. Girl, ready. Girl, sending. Girl stands, bladder bursting. Now, sitting on toilet, she sighs. Stares at pale blue wall and her inner blurs. Hears a deep beat, clang of cutlery. Next door, other beings. Girl does not know where words are. Drops mouth and face into hands and dissolves.

Girl knows it is real now, more than the limp repetitions in chart hits or dead metaphors. She feels it. She needs to know all there is about it. Why it springs and dances, how it cradled her, a bright new baby, safe after trauma, but cold or warm? Girl can never tell. In his voice, she still feels icy sharp digs in skin, hot little bubbles on tongue. Once, they were together. A few months ago, she thinks. She has forgotten how to count, so girl bends time. She avoids clock faces.

He had read a book on robots. Girl had listened. We should not be scared of robots, he had said, but ourselves. Humans are the machines. One day we will lose our names. He cartwheels through ideas, his words a great expanse to rest in. Then stops. Apologises. He'll ask her if she wants to tell him something. She'll tell him about the rain hitting her sideways on the way home, the pages of her favourite book sticking together, the fear of falling through her bedroom floor as workers axe at the ceiling below, the flat mate's taste in music: Beethoven in the shower, Dubstep in the bedroom. She likes to hear the slow gurgle of a laugh. Sometimes girl is a joker, a boy puller-inner, a teaser, a quiet receiver.

Quickly washes her hands, scrubs finger fine and raw. Message, sent. Girl, unaware. Message not to him but to all other contacts. Screen delivers. Lines up blank names and the receivers quiver. All the other fingers on pause. Lonely shadows on flickering screens.

Here, a subway reaches out past tunnel. You see bright flash. Girl you met at a party once. The girl you don't know, the body you do. Hurt by someone and that person was you. Last message you sent: No reply eh? Light your cigarette. Smoke it away.

Girl, not knowing. Girl, behind screen. The strangers, the friends; they come and they go, and you. You shall float in this flow.

Oh love. Girl does not know what it is. Girl, lost love. Girl, single. Girl definitely not ready to mingle. Shuts screen. Girl misses him and pretends that he's near. Maybe he'll get this

message and really appear. Her telling of you, what you did, will make everything clear.

Girl. Girl, young. Girl, weak. Not strong. Girl was wrong to tell all along. Girl, just another. Girl, just a bother. Girl, at a party. Girl, stays out late. You, you can never seem to wait. Girl, do you no reply eh? Oh no. Girl is annoying, girl is too slow. Girl is out there to be looked at by masses. Girl is out there, you saw her in classes. Girl is a stranger. She has no name. Girl is a memory. Girl is a pain. Girl tells of her trauma, but the smoke blows along. Here is assault, hidden in song. Girl blurs into the crowded throng. Girl is a cliché. Girl is a bore. Girl is just another girl next door. Girl is a slut. She is a whore. Girl cannot tell. Not anymore.

Finnish for Beginners

Martin Cathcart Froden

Inkeri, you look at me. The night is like forgotten coffee and I can barely see you. Then I say goodbye and start to count the hours till next Tuesday, till next week's instalment of a course in a language I will never master and a grammar I will never grasp. You lecture me, help me, but I am a lost cause. I do my assignments badly so that you will come and help me, stand next to me and explain while I watch your lips, and smell fabric softener and something else, something like podzol.

In my pocket – your watch, forgotten on the lectern. It's warmed up quickly, a chick in my careful fist, now less cold aluminium and more a throbbing part of me. I sleep with it under my pillow but dream no dreams I can speak of. Some days when it's cold I keep it tucked into my bra.

Secrets shouldn't be kept under lock. My thoughts should be self-explanatory. Instead there is this river of molasses I have to wade through if I'm to make you see me like I want to be seen. Inkeri, I want to speak your language, but more than that I want to be quiet next to you – just after. The amount of courage it takes for me to come here and feel a fool in front of a studious passel of hogs is tantamount to kamikaze. But still, every Tuesday, I put my pencil case and my pocket-sized dictionary in my bag and come. This next Tuesday I will return your watch to the lectern, feigning ignorance.

TEACHER-STUDENT CONFIDENTIALITY

I lie, now warm, and my mouth breathes in the night's darkest corner. Floorboards creaking as my husband comes back from the toilet. He grunts and farts and in his own way he loves me. Eyelids close the day. I pull the blanket over my head to keep my breath in and warm me. Heating goes off at eleven, I don't fall asleep till one.

I've seen you in the faces of others. Small babies and grandparents, and pimple-ridden young folk on mopeds. I've seen you disappear in crowds. Even invented errands to take me forty steps behind you all the way to your house. A dank number 42 shared with other long-haired, noodle-nourished third-years.

I've seen an arm like yours wave. Watched you turn left and walk away so many Tuesdays. Waiting on the bus with a textbook recommended by me as a shield between you and the rest. You – my hardest working student, you – my least gifted, least likely to succeed.

I pretended not to notice you. For your own good. I was sure there was a secret but I didn't want to be the one to betray it.

A ticking, wordless love letter. A metal reminder, a promise, a forerunner. A cheap Timex bought at the train station in Warwick. Once you returned it with a new battery. Another time, it was a new strap. I said nothing.

MEAL DEAL: HOT DRINK AND SANDWICH £4.95

Summer, a moratorium. My feelings – the colt's kick in my chest – stowed away as I make thousands of coffees to pay for the tuition and the extracurricular self-harm. Classes suspended till the leaves turn golden. Inkeri gone to Turku to stay with her sister, brush up on the language, and to admire a new born niece.

Later I find out that her husband has slept with a colleague. He forgot to delete a message on his phone and his world cracked like a dropped egg. For this pleasure he is granted half the house and some of his things. 'It wasn't love, it wasn't an affair,' she tells me. Echoes of his words, echoes of his former colleague's words. A garbled telephone line of adult grief I find difficult and a little exciting to relate to. 'Apparently she works in the Norwich office now. It was her leaving do. I don't know what my husband plans on doing.'

If I had known, I would have tried more to enjoy the summer.

1. ACTIVE THIRD INFINITIVE IN ILLATIVE OF *SYÖDÄ*

2. AGENT PRINCIPLE OF *SYÖDÄ* IN ILLATIVE SINGULAR

When classes resume there is a white band on my lecturer's finger where there used to be a golden one. That's not a thing I can ask about in any language. Not a thing I can slip in between 'How do you pronounce 'Ä' properly?' and 'What's the right way to conjugate 'syömään' (to eat)?'

That first day after class you hold me back, tell me you want help with the photocopying. Instead you buy me a fruit loaf in the cafeteria and cry and tell me almost too much. Cry again, now in a different way and ask me if I want to come with you to a cabin over the weekend. You tell me you have lots to do and can use my help. The question, the helping hand, the packed bag, the exit from my old life, all swift, all with less fireworks and noise than I had thought. Or maybe I was getting ahead of myself?

We arrive at the cabin, and I am slightly out of breath. It's the kind of Saturday when

birds fly to Africa. A walk in the woods, straight legislated pine. Small waves lapping the rocks. You tell me how much the place reminds you of home, of the things you loved so much before you started to love him.

Evening light falls and you put more and more firewood in the fireplace – a large black egg suspended sideways over the floor, an expensive eye-catcher in the sparse room. I fall asleep on the sofa before I know I am tired.

HELSINKI SYNDROME

Bread and butter. You and me. Tea with milk and two sugars. I always took you for a coffee person. And when the clock strikes three, a blanket made of wool, shared, spread over our legs. We sit out on the creaking wooden bench, in the lee by my little house. It's half his, but all mine in decoration and memories and trinkets brought over from Finland.

Finally, the moon comes along and I watch her fall asleep on the sofa. Get the same blanket and spread it out all over her. I don't touch her as much as I want. The first hour of fire is cold but I busy myself with sweeping. I dilute my blood with ethanol to find the courage. When I find it I pick her up and carry her through. Then I lose my nerve and put myself on the sofa, still indented from her, still warm. I realise I will never find her unless I make sure my intentions are clear. But they aren't clear to me either. Clouding myself with drink makes some difference, but not enough.

The weekend is a balancing act of tact and improper conduct. *Expelled, shamed, suspended*, comes to mind when it should have been *kissed, laughed, touched.* I leave it at that. Compose myself. Change our plans and make us go home, back to the city and our defined roles, early the next day. In the car you look so disappointed that I want to open my door and lean out till my face is scraped away, cheese-grated on the gravel road leading to the B8079 (A9).

When I drop you off, you ask for the time, in Finnish. That melts me. The over-pronouncing, the letters formed first in your mind then by your lips. You say, *Saisinko aika – Can I have the time*, or rather, *Please give me time*. I tell you it is ten past four. You smile, and ask for my watch, now in English. I'm not sure what you mean but hand it to you, thinking I will get it back on Tuesday. I know full well you pick it up from the lectern. I didn't know you'd keep it so long. I didn't know that your inner clock was so slow or that the weekend had unwound your spring.

VIRVON VARVON VITSAELLA

I graduate from her non-credit bearing class unceremoniously. This involves putting my things in my bag and walking out into the corridor, sniffling. I have assembled a shaky linguistic foundation to perch on in the onslaught of streamed YLE Teema, the stern TV network's cultured show pony. I don't know any of the faces, can't grasp the issues or join in the jokes. I fall asleep, headphones on, flicked by ultra-marine. An Ugric tide deposits me on the other side of the night.

I don't care about the language. I care about you. Boiling the kettle over and over, I tell myself to grow up. To try my best and catch up with you, in the hope that you might stand still and wait for me somewhere in time.

I run out of flimsy excuses and curriculum-related issues to contact you about. Especially since I have to go through a busy admin who has no time for me and my carefully worded, too-well concealed messages. There is to be no direct contact between faculty members and students. Not since the incident in 2006, which set a judicial precedent. I am being punished for a provost's decision made long before I left high school.

Over the next few weeks I resign myself to my real coursework and to more easily quantifiable knowledge and repetition. I try desperately to bump into you, but our modern campus is as slick as a patch of black ice, and there is no sociable salt available. No pub, no office-hour, no re-sitting.

Head down, library allowance maxed out, Optrex rehydrating eye drops. Then I am a graduate and have to move on, make space for the cannon fodder bustling behind me. I give up. Do my best to give up despite.

TICKER

Three years after, you are a colleague, transferred from a university in England, not sure how you managed that. You teach, not Finnish, but Ancient Greek. In your own car, paid for with your first proper pay check, you wait for me till it is my turn to cross the car park. Then you step out and cross-examine me, a new glint in your eyes. The years in the South have done you well.

Next weekend you pick me up. Quick off the mark, not wasting any time. You are more certain of yourself, of your way, your mien. Take-away coffee and a tea, milky sweet, from your former employer. You remember the way to the cabin. I sit in the map-reader's seat.

Hands folded, heart ticking faster and faster as the miles go by. When we turn off the main road and onto the soft squelch of drowned gravel you put the car in neutral, cock the handbrake and kiss me with all your might.

The next day we buy matching watches, same clock face, different wristbands. We swap them like lovers do toothbrushes, umbrellas, their own bed for the other's.

Sometimes good things come to those who suffer, to those who can't put lost-looking girls out of their minds, to those who believe you can't love a Finn.

By Maria Sledmere

Twelve Hours Max

Vivien Jones

On this beach
the dry half hosts
the sand blast logs,
the lone, undamaged
left foot trainers,
the twists of plastic rope
in green and orange,
shattered tubs of mineral lick
strew whitw plastic over
the shattered white seabirds.

Coarse concrete lumps
from a wrecked building,
half-buried, outdone by the
aesthetic of pebbles.

This wet half exists
only between tides,
with ripple imprints
in the mud, webprints
and four toed tracks,
perfect clues to species
prodding the sheen
for bubbling creatures.

Samphire gleams greenly,
its dry hours brief enough
to ruffle its ferny foliage,

cockles cackle in bubbles,
low tide draws below
flounders in mud cots.

Each twelfth hour
the moon-most wave wets
the last dry sand grains,
stretching its damp reach.

Cathy, get yer dancin' shoes oan

Emma Guinness

An extract from a coming-of-age LGBT novella set in 1980's Glasgow. Cathy O'Kelly is a shy, socially awkward student teacher, whose sheltered upbringing has shaped her idealistic view of the world. This is the story of how she finds not only herself but love through a chance encounter in Glasgow's Barrowland Ballroom, and the fight she subsequently undertakes to have the belt outlawed in Scottish schools.

Chapter One

"Cathy O'Kelly's life's passin' hur by," Mr Clark proclaimed. "She'll need tae hurry up and find hursel a man before she's too auld tae huv any weans."

Ah sighed as ah picked up the jotters ah'd droapped oantae the flair. Ah wisnae in a rush tae sit wi' that lot. Ah'd a feelin' the teachers talked aboot me since ah started workin' in St Joseph's. Every school ah've been put intae so far hus been filled wi' a bunch o' gossips who care mair aboot who's gettin' pumped by the postie than the weans they're supposed tae be lookin' efter. Ye'd think they'd huv better things tae discuss at lunchtime, like how they can stoap wee Agnes and Angie fae sellin' fags in the playgroond. But naw. No here.

"She's gat plenty o' time left," Mrs Smith said. "She's only twenty-six."

"Ye cannae be serious," Mr Clark replied. "She dresses like a wumman in hur seventies. Bloody hell. Ma mammy's gat better taste."

"Whit she needs is a guid pal tae show hur the way o' the world, tae take hur up tae Copeland and Lye's and help hur tae pick oot a nice frock."

"She's clueless. Ah new frock's no gonnae change that."

"The poor lassie hus tae start somewhere."

"Aye, but—"

"When ah first gat married, ah coudnay even cook. Everywan learns in their ain

time."

"This is different. Whit age wur ye?"

"Eighteen, but that's beside the point!"

Ah looked doon at ma dress. It wis a plain grey number. Mammy hud bought it fur me in the Co-Op. Ah dinnae wear any slap or perm ma bobbed hair. It's no that ah wouldnay mind lookin' a bit nicer, but Mammy telt me naw tae draw any attention tae masel fae the weans in Glasgae.

"She's no cut oot fur this, Maureen."

"Yer wrang. Noo if ye'll excuse me, ah'm aff tae huv a fag in bloody peace."

"Enjoy standin' oot in the pishin' rain."

It wis too late fur me tae go anywhere. Ah felt ma chest tighten, and ma hauns began tae shake as ah picked up the jotters. Whit if Mrs Smith thocht ah wis bein' a nosey bugger? She walked oot o' the staffroom and turnt white when she saw me pickin' up the last jotter ootside. She wis a middle aged wumman wi' salt and pepper hair, pencilled oan eyebroos, thin lips, and a kind face. She tilted hur heid tae wan side and shook it.

"Cathy," she said. "Go oan in and get yersel a wee biccie."

Ma stomach rumbled. Ah'd slept in that mornin' and forgot tae make ma lunch.

"Ah'm such a clumsy bugger," ah said, blushin'.

"Pay nae attention tae Mr Clark. Yer time will come soon enough. Mark ma words."

"Yer so nice, Mrs Smith."

She smiled.

Ah felt a lump formin' at the back o' ma throat. Ah wis the only wumman ma age ah knew who wisnae married. God knows the amount o' times ah've been called an

auld maid. Men huv ne'er shown much o' an interest in me, and ah've gat tae much self-respect tae go up tae the dancin' wearin' next tae nought tae get their attention.

Mrs Smith gestured tae the door. "Oan ye go."

Ah tried tae lighten the mood. "Ah'll need tae be careful ah dinnae deck it again."

"Happens tae the best o' us," she laughed.

"Ye're so nice."

Ah walked inside. Mr Clark wis sittin' wi' his feet up oan the coffee table wi' a cup o' tea, and the heid teacher, Mrs Stirling, wis sittin' beside him wi' hur heid in a book. He wis wearin' a suit and shoes ye could see yer reflection' in. The hair he hud left wis combed ower his heid. Mrs Stirling hud a grey skirt and a purple bloose oan that matched hur white hair.

"Cathy O'Kelly, park yer arse oan the couch," Mr Clark said. "Ah wis wonderin' where ye wur. Ah'm here tae teach ye aw ah know."

Ah sat doon opposite him.

"How's yer class behavin' the day, hen?" he asked, gulpin' his tea. The ootline o' a faded green tattoo wis creepin' oot fae under his left sleeve.

"Naw too bad, but ah'm a bit nervous aboot teachin' social dancin' next."

Ah noticed the biccie tin oan the self across fae me.

"Ye let me know if the wee buggers start actin' up again and ah'll sort 'em oot."

"Will dae, Mr Clark," ah said, standin' up.

"Fur the millionth time Cathy, it's Peter. Yer no a wean anymair."

Ah laughed as ah walked ower tae the shelf. "Peter."

Ah pulled oot a Tunnock's Caramel Wafer and looked aroond. There wis foam comin' oot o' the couches, and the table in between 'em hud an ashtray oan it that

hudnay been emptied in cuddies years. Worst o' aw, there wis a chart oan the wa', coverin' the green paper, wi' names oan it explainin' who'd gat the belt that week and why.

Ah didnay like the teachers' way o' daein things when it came tae the belt. Ah wis shoacked tae see how much Mrs Smith and Mrs Stirling used it. Neither o' them used it as much as Mr Clark, and fur some reason Miss Barry didnay use it at aw. The weans wur too feart o' hur tae put a toe oot o' line in hur class. She coached the fitbaw team oan a Monday lunchtime so the boys wanted tae stay in hur guid books fur that an aw.

There wis somethin' aboot Miss Barry that ah couldnay put ma finger oan, ah thocht. The first time ah saw hur, ah hud tae look twice as she's gat a frame like a man. Came as nae surprise when ah heard she coached the fitbaw.

Mr Clark wouldnay dare bitch aboot hur. She wis the kind o' teacher who'd huv scared the livin' shite oot o' me when ah wis a wean, but ah admired hur fur no usin' the belt. Ah wondered whit she used in its place. She wis scary enough lookin', but that wouldnay be enough tae put aff some o' the neds aroond here.

Ah hudnay used the belt yet, but knew ah'd huv tae otherwise ah'd get intae bother fur naw showin' enough discipline. When ah telt ma Mammy ah wanted tae be a teacher, she wis aw fur it, but she said he hud hur doubts aboot me when it came the belt.

"Ah willnae dae it hard," ah'd said, "and ah'll only use it if the wean's actin' up."

"It doesnay work like that ah'm afraid," she replied.

"Then things need tae change."

Ah love weans and cannae understand why somewan would become a teacher and hurt 'em. The first time ah gat the belt is probably the reason ah've grawn intae such a quiet wumman. Ah'd been takin' too long tae sharpen ma pencil at the bin because ah didnay want tae sit beside a bully called Maura McDonald so Mr Black decided tae gie me a guid lashin'.

“Cathy O’Reilly’s a wee skiver!” he said tae the class. “How many lashes dae ye think she deserves? Hauns up, boys and girls.”

“Yes, Maura.”

“Six.”

“Better make it eight fur guid measure.”

Mr Black telt me tae stand up in front o’ the board and started hittin’ me as hard as he could. Ah felt a warm trickle gaun doon ma leg.

“Cathy’s pished hursel!” Maura shouted, laughin’.

Ah wanted tae start greetin’ so badly, but ah didnay want Mr Black tae win so ah did ma best tae suppress ma sniffles until ah gat hame. Mammy knew somethin’ hud happened when ah stepped intae the livin’ room and didnay make eye contact wi’ hur.

“Whit’s that smell, Cathy?” she asked, sniffin’ the air and recoilin’.

Ah finally started greetin’ and telt hur everythin’.

Efter that, she pulled me oot o’ the school and taught me hursel. She wis awfae upset aboot whit ah’d been put through. She made a point o’ rarely usin’ the belt wi’ hur class and said she ne’er did it tae humiliate any o’ the weans. She hud tae stoap workin’ once she pulled me oot o’ school and went back tae work once ah wis aulder.

“Dae ye want a fag?” Mr Smith asked. “Ye look spaced oot yer nut.”

“Ah dinnae smoke,” Ah said. “Coffee’s ma vice.”

“Ye’ll be smokin’ soon enough, hen.”

Ah opened ma Caramel Wafer and took a bite.

“Let me tell ye sommat,” he said, lowerin’ his voice. “Ye’ve gat a lot tae learn, but the real test o’ a teacher comes when they get their first warmer o’ a mammy.”

Mrs Stirling looked up and rolled hur eyes.

"Come on, Peter," she said. "Stop it."

"Sorry Mary, but ye know the pallava ah hud tae go through when Lizzie's Mammy reported me efter wee Hamble died."

"Hamble?" ah said.

"Primary three used tae huv a pet hamster. Came in wan mornin' and the poor wee bugger wis lyin' in a shredded up copy o' *The Thistlegate Post* covered in blood."

Mr Clark reached inae his trouser poacket and pulled oot a packet o' Benson and Hedges, put wan intae his mouth, and lit it.

"It was unfortunate, but you need to stop blaming yourself," Mrs Stirling said.

"Ah should've taken the wee mite tae the vet," Mr Clark continued. "Ah could tell he wis sick. His insides wur practically fallin' oot o' his arse."

"I don't think Mr Donnelly could have done anything for him."

"Whit kind o' mammy doesnay tell hur weans animals die?"

"Mrs Graham has some interesting parenting techniques."

"She's wan o' those hippies."

"Honestly," Mrs Stirling said, "you can't let one bad experience influence your opinion of all the other parents too. Lizzie's mother's," she paused, "special."

"She's hardly a hippy noo, Mary. Bugger knows where she gat hur new man fae. Imagine gaun fae livin' in a caravan tae a four bedroomed hoose."

"Well, Peter, let's hope the Iron Lady decides to remove Trident so you don't have to teach Lizzie anymore. It's the only reason her family's still in Glasgow." She looked at hur watch. "Is that the time? Best get back to my office."

"See ya, Mrs Stirling."

Ah smiled. “Bye!”

The bell rang five minutes later.

Efter lunchtime, it wis time fur me tae take ma P.E. lesson. Ah hud tae teach the Gay Gordon’s fur the school ceilidh. Ah gat telt by Mrs Clark tae let the weans pick their ain partners. There wur mair boys than girls so somewan wis gaun tae get left oot. Ah know whit it’s like naw tae get asked tae dance.

Gym’s the hardest class tae control, and it wis ma first time takin’ it in St Joseph’s. Ah wis worried that ah wouldnay be able tae put a reign oan the weans and huv tae ask Mr Clark fur help. That would be richt up that bastart’s street.

The gym hall looked like the wan in ma auld school. The sticky flair wis covered in broon wood, the back wa’ hud a climbin’ frame oan it, and there wis a stage which hud green curtains oan either side. Benches wur littered against each side o’ the four walls.

“Quiet boys and girls!” ah shouted.

Nane o’ the weans stoapped runnin’ roond the gym.

“Dae ye want detention?”

Nought happened again.

“Quiet!” ah shouted, louder than before, and then Miss Barry stormed intae the hall.

“PRIMARY SEVEN” she bellowed.

The weans froze.

Ah looked aroond. The ropes oan the climbin’ frame wur vibratin’. It wis so quiet ye could huv heard a flea fart.

“Sit oan the benches, fingers oan lips,” Miss Barry declared, “the last wan tae sit doon is gettin’ detention fur a week.”

Primary Seven scrambled faster than ah'd seen weans scramble fur pennies at a weddin'. The boys pushed and shoved each other, and wee Agnes pulled hur twin Angie's ponytail tae stoap hur fae gettin' the last spot at the end o' the bench. Angie tripped efter Agnes pulled hur hair and landed face first oan the flair. She grazed hur knee oan the wooden planks in the gym hall. Hur lip wis quiverin'.

"Angie," Miss Barry said. "Ah'll see ye at the end o' the day."

Miss Barry walked up and doon past the weans oan the benches. She put me in mind o' a general, lookin' each o' the weans in the eye.

"Noo, if ye dinnae listen tae Miss O'Kelly, ye'll huv me tae answer tae. Is that clear?"

"Yes, Miss Barry," the weans said.

"Guid," she said, walkin' ower towards me. "Ye'll need this." She put a whistle intae ma haun. "Just until ye get guid at shoutin'."

Ah smiled. Miss Barry smiled back and winked before leavin' the hall.

"Okay boys and girls, noo that ye're sittin' quietly, we can start today's lesson. Ah think ye'll enjoy this wan. We're gaun tae learn how tae dae the Gay Gordons."

Tommy Boyle's face fell. He put his haun up.

"Yes, Tommy," ah said, sighin'.

"Miss, ah'm no a poof."

Ah cursed inside ma heid. Ah decided tae go against whit ah wis supposed tae dae and put the weans intae pairs masel. Ah continued, "Noo boys and girls, ah'm gaun tae partner ye up wi' the whoever's next tae ye on the register, by yer surname."

"Tommy Boyle," ah said. "Ye'll be dancin' wi' Bobby."

He looked disgusted.

"Miss," Jamie said, pointin' at ma shoes. "Why huv ye gat dancin' shoes oan?"

"Ah'm gaun tae show ye the steps."

"Wi a partner?"

"Naw."

Ah pressed play oan the Gay Gordon's cassette.

"Richt, are ye watchin' closely?"

The weans nodded.

Ah pretended tae huv a partner and began tae show the weans the steps. Aw ah could think wis forward two three four, back too three four, and mimic a wee spin. Oan reflection, ah should huv telt two o' the weans which steps tae dae.

"Huv ye gat a boyfriend, Miss?" Jamie asked.

"Dae ye want detention an aw?"

"Ah'm no meanin' any offence, it's just ma mammy telt me that lassies who cannae dance huv nae chance o' gettin' a man."

"Ah'll see ye in ma class at the end o' the day, Mr Scott."

"But Miss!"

Ah pressed play oan the cassette again.

Jamie Scott sauntered intae ma class at ten past three like he didnay huv a care in the world. The wee shite wis even chewin' gum. He didnay shut the door behind him, and ma heart sank when Mr Clark wandered in efter him.

"Whit's gaun oan here?" Mr Clark said. He looked at Jamie. "Huv ye been givin' Miss O'Kelly a hard time ya wee bugger?"

"Naw, Mr. Aw ah did wis ask hur if she hud a boyfriend."

Mr Clark smirked.

"Which wis completely inappropriate," ah said, "and that's why ye're gettin' banned fae the fitbaw pitch fur a week."

"But Miss—"

"Ah think there's better ways o' disciplinin' the boy," Mr Clark said. Jamie's ears pricked up. "He's wan o' the best players at St Joseph's and they've gat a game against Thistlegate Primary at the end o' the week."

"Whit would ye suggest?"

"Ye *know* whit ah'm suggestin'."

Jamie sat bolt upricht in his chair.

"Miss, dinnae gie me the belt. Please. Honestly, ah'm really sorry, but ma mammy will go mental if she sees marks oan ma hauns again. Ah'm oan ma last warnin'. If ah get the belt again she's sendin' me tae live wi' ma granny!"

"Peter!" a voice shouted. "Peter!"

"Shite, that's me Mrs," Mr Clark said. He leaned into me and whispered, "Ah'll leave ye too it Miss O'Kelly, but remember, ye need tae show the weans yer in control."

Ah nodded.

"Miss, please," Jamie said, once Mr Clark wis oot o' earshot.

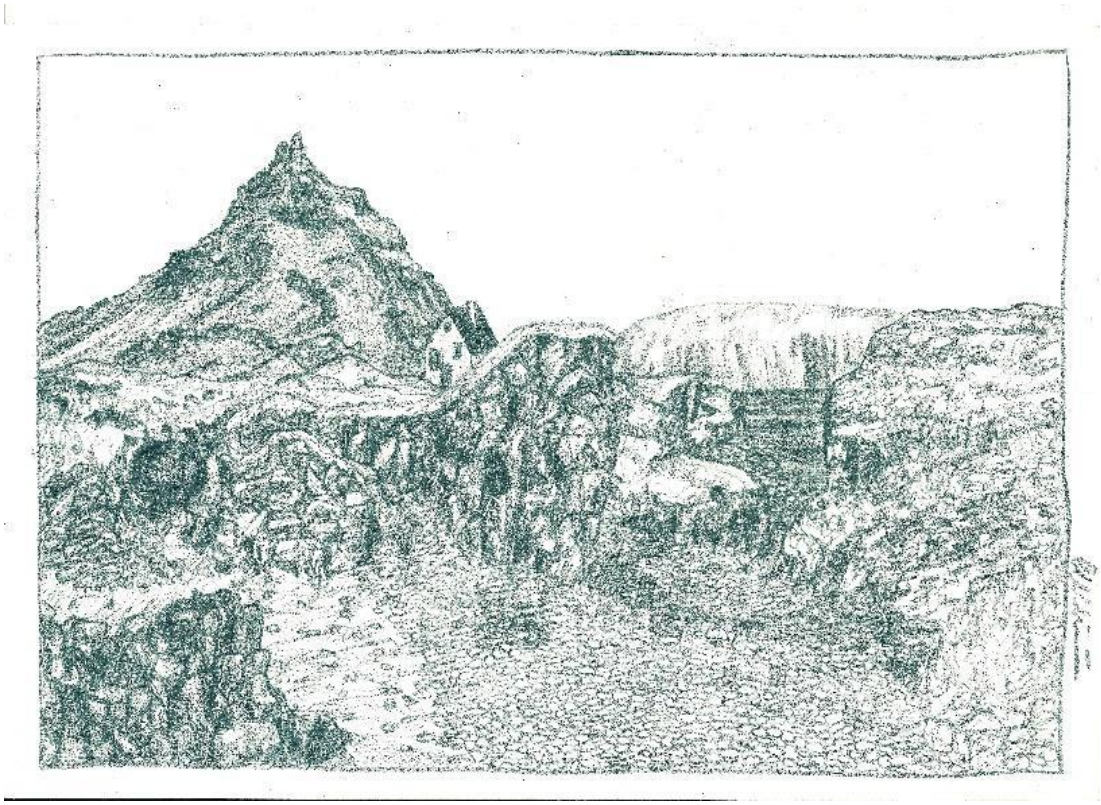
Ah opened ma desk's drawer and pulled oot the belt, just in case Mr Clark wis lookin' intae ma class oan his way oot o' the school. Jamie began tae shake.

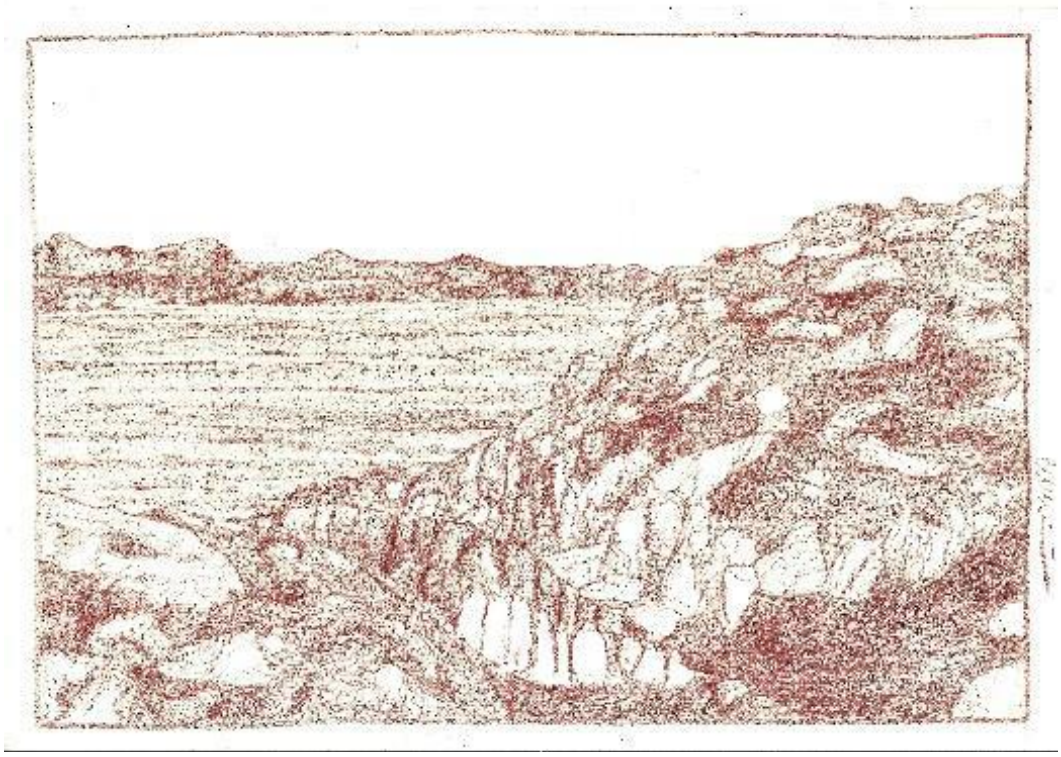
"Please."

Ah furrowed ma broos.

"Ah'll gie ye detention tomorrow and again once the game's ower. This is yer last chance. If ye act like a smart arse again ah'll need tae gie ye the belt."

"Ye're the best, Miss O'Kelly."





By Imogen Whiteley

a Shetland pattern

Gillean McDougall

start here
where trees tilt from always wind
choose

one green
that hides age in it
the one that lifts and flies
caught in the beak of a bird
guga

a yellow
fit to be tied
sky pulled down
like window blind
the blue

that is sea
and shell in a rock pool
and that place
the impudent seam

where water bruises sand
find that red

the clearest
darker than the last October sun
the red that shouts light
binds torch flame
strand

what you don't yet need

loosely

pin out to shape
mist with birth drift
of shore-lace

and when you will have made it

you will have made it fine

and hap

a Shetland pattern

The Next Person

David Linklater

Trust your gut.
An instinct, rattlesnake
in the circuit.
An unbalance in the night
something not quite there.
Leaving your house
it's waiting for the bus.
Crossing the road
you crossed into its path.
Streets have limits.
It'll keep you out of hospital
common sense.
But it's common to ruin
and overrule that, burn down
into pointless, repeated words.
Stubbing days like cigarettes into glass.
You should've quit already.
Trust your gut, avert things
there to be experienced.
Let the next person find out.
Leave fighting to the romantics.
They find beauty everywhere, and harm;
there's no hope for them.
It's really about towing the line
keeping it in check.
Call it a soul, a defence
mechanism inherent
to all living things.

The first and
last line of defence.
Your gut, go with it
sing a song for it
dance, talk
and love
because of it.

About the Artists

IMOGEN WHITELEY is a Glasgow based illustrator and artist who has been featured in *GUM* and *Qmunicate*. Much of her work focuses on organic forms, landscape and wildlife. She works mostly in gouache, ink, lino-cuts and pencil, but occasionally makes a foray into "proper painting" when she has time to do art that isn't in her sketchbook or for commission. She is a second-year Classics student at the University of Glasgow, and is often influenced by classical myths and symbolism in her work.

PETROS ARONIS is a 23-year-old Greek male student at Glasgow, originally from Greece, who calls himself an artist, not because he believes that he is skillful, but because he can only truly communicate his deepest feelings and thoughts through his art. He aspires to become a film director, a painter, a photographer and a screenwriter, hopefully in that exact order.

MARIA SLEDMERE is from Maybole, Ayrshire, and currently studies MLitt Modernities at the University of Glasgow. Her principal research interests include dark ecology, textuality and temporality, environmental poetics, technology, memory and the quotidian in modernist literature. Former president of the Glasgow University Creative Writing Society, she is keen on collaborative, multimedia writing projects as well as personal endeavours, having written an assortment of stories, poems and half-baked novels, in addition to editing and compiling several flash fiction anthologies.

KAMILLA HU-YANG is a freelance graphic artist and illustrator who likes to work with mixed media. She is hugely inspired by literature and philosophy.

About the Authors

CHRIS ATHORNE is a mathematician working in the School of Maths & Stats in Glasgow. He studied Mathematics at Cambridge and had various postdoctoral and lecturing positions in England before arriving in Scotland in 1989. Writing has been, until recently, a quiet necessity but after the encouragement of being shortlisted for the McClellan and the Lightship International poetry prizes in 2012, he is dipping his toe in the ocean of the real world. Apart from mathematics and writing, he dances the tango, draws and has been known to sing in public.

LAURA R BECHERER is a creative writing doctoral student at the University of Glasgow. She writes primarily fiction and poetry that focus on women and fairy tales. Her recent book, *A Drink of One's Own*, was published by Freight Books. Laura is from Wisconsin, USA and lives in Glasgow with her partner and their two American cats.

KIRSTY DUNLOP is a prose writer and poet, currently studying an MLitt in Creative Writing at the University of Glasgow. Her work has been featured in *Departures Zine* (a project she was involved in last year, in aid of Rape Crisis Scotland) and *Glasgow University Magazine*. She is now the deputy editor of *GUM*. She enjoys writing short stories, and poems, and mixing up the genres. When she isn't writing, she can be found playing the clarsach. She is now working on a collection of short stories.

MARTIN CATHCART FRODEN is the winner of the 2015 Dundee International Book Prize, and his debut novel *Devil take the Hindmost* was published in 2016 by Freight Books. His fiction has been shortlisted for awards including the Bridport Prize and the Bristol Short Story Prize, and his story "The Underwater Cathedral" won the 2013 BBC Opening Lines competition and has been broadcast on Radio 4. He has recently embarked on a doctorate in Creative Writing at the University of Glasgow, combined with Architecture at GSA and Criminology at the SCJJR. He's a Swede by birth but lives in Glasgow with his wife and three weans.

EMMA GUINNESS is a writer from Glasgow. She has an honours degree in English from the University of Strathclyde and completed a master's degree in Creative Writing at Trinity College Dublin in August 2016. Her greatest literary heroes are Oscar Wilde and F. Scott Fitzgerald. She is currently studying the PGDE in English at the University of Glasgow and working on two manuscripts.

VIVIEN JONES' first poetry collection - *About Time,Too* - was published by Indigo Dreams Publishing in September 2010. In that year she also won the Poetry London Prize. She has completed a second short fiction collection on a theme of women amongst warriors - *White Poppies* (2012) - with the aid of a Creative Scotland Writer's Bursary and has adapted two of the stories for theatre performance in 2013. Her second poetry collection "Short of Breath" - was published in November 2014 by Cultured Llama Press. She is one of three editors of *Southlight*, a literary journal in south-west Scotland, and one of three Literature Animateurs in Dumfries and Galloway, helping to make things happen on the literary scene.

DAVID ROSS LINKLATER is a poet from the Highlands living in Glasgow. He's currently studying an MLitt in Creative Writing at the University of Glasgow. His work has appeared in *Glasgow Review of Books*, *The High Flight*, *Ofi Press* and *The Grind*, amongst others. You can follow him on Twitter: @DavidRossLinkla

GILLEAN MCDOUGALL is a classical musician and broadcaster who's currently studying for the degree of MLitt in Creative Writing. She writes prose and poetry, and is working on a novel set in a music conservatoire. A member of Glasgow's Clydebuilt poetry mentoring scheme, she is director of the *Honest Error* literary project.

KERRIE MCKINNEL is a writer and student of the University of Glasgow's MLitt Creative Writing. In 2016, her writing has been published in magazines including *Gutter* and *From Glasgow to Saturn*. In March, one of her poems was awarded third place in the University of Glasgow's Alastair Buchan Prize, and she recently compiled, edited and published *Lockerbie Writers' Anthology* on behalf of her local writing group. Kerrie writes a blog about her experiences of writing and her upcoming publications, which can be found at: http://www.kerriemckinnel.wordpress.com.

SEAN MCLEOD is a prose writer who sometimes wears a cord jacket to show people he's really serious about it. His work has been included in *Prole Magazine* and *Foundling Review*, among others. He is currently completing the MLitt in Creative Writing at the University of Glasgow and is grasping for anything else that will help him avoid the real world for just a little longer.

MAIRI MURPHY has recently graduated from a Masters Course in Creative Writing from Glasgow University. Earlier in 2016 she was awarded the Alistair Buchan Prize from the university for two of her poems and shortlisted for three. Published this year in *From Glasgow To Saturn* and *Shetland Create*, she is also featured in and the Editor of *Glasgow Women* Poets published by Four-em Press.

If you are going to indulge earnestly in a Mid-Life Crisis, Scotland is not a bad place to do it; after 18 years as an American university lecturer, **VICTORIA SHROPSHIRE** decided to become a student once more, relocating in order to research and write full time. A survivor with a wicked sense of humor, Victoria currently lives, studies, and writes in Glasgow, along with her rock star husband. She is a lover of dogs, cigars, books, fine dining, beach houses, traveling, art, music, and Netflix. Victoria's pet peeves are seahorse birdbaths, cypress clocks, and velvet paintings of Elvis.

MARIA SLEDMERE is from Maybole, Ayrshire, and currently studies MLitt Modernities at the University of Glasgow. Her principal research interests include dark ecology, textuality and temporality, environmental poetics, technology, memory and the quotidian in modernist literature. Former president of the Glasgow University Creative Writing Society, she is keen on collaborative, multimedia writing projects as well as personal endeavours, having written an assortment of stories, poems and half-baked novels, in addition to editing and compiling several flash fiction anthologies. Maria blogs about everything from Derrida to Lana Del Rey, from Romantic poetry to nineties dream-pop and digital nostalgia, over at http://musingsbymaria.wordpress.com

SARAH SPENCE studies MLitt Modernities at the University of Glasgow and is the Snippets Editor for *the GIST*, a Glasgow-based science magazine. She is particularly interested in themes of memory, identity, medicine, animals, and the body in both her creative writing and academic research. She tweets at @_sspence.

ANGIE SPOTO is an American fiction writer and poet. She holds a dual-Bachelors degree in creative writing and business management from Lake Forest College and is completing a doctoral degree in creative writing at the University of Glasgow. She has lived in Austria, the Netherlands, and now lives in the UK. Visit her website at www.angiespoto.com.

PETER MCCUNE is an alumnus of the university, with both an undergraduate degree in English Literature and Philosophy (2006/10) and an MLitt in Creative Writing (2015/16)— both qualifications were obtained at the University of Glasgow. He writes a mixture of science-fiction, fantasy, and general fiction. He has only written a few lyric essays, but it is a form he is very interested in exploring further.

About the Editors

SWARA SHUKLA was born and raised in Noida, India. She discovered her love for reading and writing fiction as a student of BA (Honours) English at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi. She sees fiction as a potent medium to initiate discourses on socio-political issues dominating the Indian landscape, especially Delhi, and aims to achieve that as an aspiring short-story writer and novelist. In 2014, she was published in the anthology, *DU Love* by Vigilante Publications. Currently pursuing MLitt Creative Writing at University of Glasgow, her other passions include dogs and coffee.

AK THAYSEN is an artist, cartoonist, writer, and poet from Texas. She has a Bachelor's in Painting and a second Bachelor's in English Literature, graduating both summa cum laude & Phi Beta Kappa. She is currently working on a Master's degree in Creative Writing at the University of Glasgow. She has bicycled across 4 countries, traveled to 24, and lived in the US, Denmark, the Czech Republic, and Scotland. Above all else in life, she loves books, dogs, comedy, bicycle rides, and her weirdo friends.

ANTHONY DALY is a 23-year-old Scottish-born poet who spent his childhood in Singapore before moving to Upstate New York. As a poet, he is a self-described Surrealistic Imagist, whose influences include Eliot, Pound, Rimbaud, and Ginsberg. He graduated from the University of Glasgow in 2016 with an M.A. in English Literature and Theology and Religious Studies, and is currently studying for an MLitt in Creative Writing at the same institution. He has previously been published in *RAUM* and *GUM*.

LIAM FRANCIS QUIGLEY is a Glaswegian writer, studying an MLitt in Creative Writing at the University of Glasgow. He is of Irish decent, and the middle brother of three - with a particular fondness for visual storytelling. Liam is currently developing one of his short screenplays into a silent film, which he intends to both produce and direct. He aims to have completed his first feature-length screenplay by the end of the academic year, which focuses on issues of class warfare, recidivism and drug abuse within Glasgow.

CAMEO MARLATT is a Canadian writer living in Scotland, where she is studying towards a Doctorate of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at the University of Glasgow. Currently, she is working on a collection of poetry and essays on the topic of zoopoetics. She is the co-author of *A Drink of One's Own: Cocktails for Literary Ladies*, and her poetry has been published in *Lighthouse*.

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Please visit www.glasgowtosaturn.com for more information, including submission guidelines and full archives of previous issues.

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