

The Quill

Coláiste Dhúlaigh
College of Further Education



Creative Writing Class of 2023

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The Creative Writing Course at Coláiste Dhúlaigh College of Further Education

This course is designed for anyone with an interest in creative writing and storytelling. Students will explore various aspects of writing such as fiction, short stories, poetry and scripts. Students are encouraged to develop both written and visual content.

Classes are delivered in a relaxed environment and students are given the opportunity to build on existing and/or new story ideas, as well as learn new skills such as analysing media and using illustration software.

The one-year QQI level 5 course will encourage students to share and critique ideas in a supportive setting. The modules offered on the course are Creative Writing, Writing Skills for journalism, Script Writing, Intercultural Studies, Image Processing, Media Analysis, Communications & Personal Professional Development.

While it is preferable for prospective students to have a Leaving Certificate qualification, candidates of all abilities are considered. Mature students and those without a formal education are welcome to apply.

See further information at www.cdcf.ie

Foreword

The creative writing course at Coláiste Dhúlaigh College of Further Education tends to attract an eclectic type of student and this year was no exception.

With a tentative return to the classroom, this year's group had an air of melancholy that seems to reflect the covid hangover that many students are experiencing. However, this adversity also provided inspiration for their writing and in the words of Hemmingway "write hard and clear about what hurts".

This years' group certainly did that – from stories about literal pain in David Larkins "Patient" to the emotional pain contained in Deirdre Feeney and Adi Patterson Dunne's poetry, as well as the pain of transgender repression in Dean Gillard's "Molly".

There were lighter moments too, with Daisy Dalton embracing the cheeky side of poetry to illustrate the challenges of young relationships. Will Doyle took on a more mature subject matter, poking fun at our political system, while Josh Tyrell took a historical viewpoint on it.

Embarking on the QQI journey is no easy challenge and the creative writing class of '23

have succeeded in the face of a heavy workload, and even won prizes in the SCC creative writing competition along the way.

Jack Lynch's Boogeyman reflects his love of the horror genre and exploits a fear of the dark which we can all identify with, whether we like to admit it or not. Suzanne O'Connor's ode to The Stardust tragedy keeps the memory alive of the victims, many of whom attended Coláiste Dhúlaigh themselves.

Leah Sheedy & Aislinn Weiss who came from the Film Production HND took their first foray into poetry and surprised themselves with their new talents. Padraig Kearney showed surprising maturity in his exploration of the existential. Shauna Byrne's poem "Childhood Friend" equally explores the nostalgia of youth.

In summation, this year's creative writers have a lot to be proud of. They worked quietly but confidently and the fruits of their labour are here for you to enjoy within "The Quill". We hope you enjoy doing so, and remember, #bekind.

Laura Roche,
Creative Writing Class Coordinator
April 2023

We, the Creative Writing students of Coláiste Dhúlaigh 2022-2023, have compiled what we consider to be our best completed works, in this collection. This magazine features poems and short stories which we have worked hard on and improved throughout the course of the year.

Our poems and stories cover a wide range of themes and genres, including horror, fantasy, romance, comedy and more. So, whether you like deep, heartfelt poetry that speaks to the soul, stories about ghouls and goblins, or something a bit sillier and more lighthearted, there's something in here.

We've all helped each other out in the process of making this magazine by reading and leaving feedback on one others' work, allowing for everyone to take constructive criticism in order to edit and improve their writing.

I'd like to give credit to everyone who submitted work for this magazine, as without them this whole collection wouldn't exist. Special thanks to page designer and fellow student, David Larkin, for pulling this whole thing together and making it come to life in the way that it did. Also, thanks to Dean Gillard for the cover design.

Thanks to lecturer Will McDermott for helping with the magazine and to the other tutors on the course, David Curran, Michael Collier and Denise O'Connor. We would also like to thank Laura Roche, our class coordinator, for teaching us so much throughout the year and giving us the encouragement we needed to write and finish this magazine.

We hope you enjoy reading,

Daisy Dalton (Editor) and the Creative Writing class of 2023

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Padraig Kearney

All my life I have been an avid reader of literature. I have always been fascinated with how words on a page can invoke emotion and I try to recreate this in my own work.



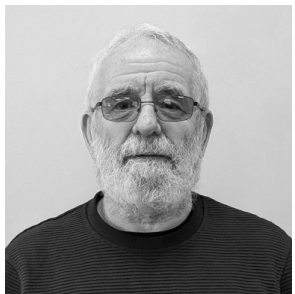
Daisy Dalton

Hi, I'm Daisy and I'm 18 years old. This course has both improved my writing skills and confirmed my love for it. I hope to make a career out of it someday.



Suzanne O'Connor

My Name is Suzanne O'Connor. Ever since I was little, I loved to write short stories or poems, I have always found writing a way to release what I was feeling or when I come up with an idea for a story. I love the feeling that it gives me. I hope one day to get a story of my own Published.



Will Doyle

My passion for writing lay hidden for many years. That is not to say I did not write, but starting the Creative Writing course has given me a new lease of life.



Aislinn Weiss

My main style of writing is drama or fantasy. My main influences are Jacqueline Wilson and Daniel Handler, author of Series of Unfortunate Events. This course has allowed me to explore new genres and improve my writing skills immensely.



D. MacTommy Larkin

Reading or writing, I love stories, particularly fantasy stories. I love being able to explore everything from strange new worlds to the inner workings of someone else's mind.



Dean Gillard

I have always had a love for writing. I mostly like to write in the horror and fantasy genre but have lately branched out into exploring LGBTQI+ themes.



Jack Lynch

My main passion is for the horror genre as I find the opportunities for creating stories to be endless. My writing is influenced by Bret Easton Ellis, author of "American Psycho"



Deirdre Feeney

I find writing is a great comfort to me and is something I want to pursue in life. I love writing characters with angst and exploring human emotion.



Adi Patterson-Dunne

Hey, my name is Adi, I'm nineteen years old. I find writing to be having a gigantic lake in my head, and trying to bail it out, with only a teaspoon.



Shauna Byrne

Hi, my name is Shauna, I'm 18 years old and have always had a passion for writing. This course has been a great opportunity to better my writing skills and put my work out into the world.



Josh Tyrell

I like to read all types of novels but my favourite genre is thriller because of the effect that the story can have on the reader.



Leah Sheedy

I like words.

Dancing in the Sky

by Suzanne O'Connor

In the sky people dance,

The wind is music to their ears.

The stars are the disco lights, shining brightly.

There is only today, tomorrow will not come again.

Stardust dancing in the night sky

Hearts meet

Tears weep

Will we see one another again?

We will all dance together then.

In memory of the victims of The Stardust.

The Rat-Catcher

by D. MacTommy Larkin

In a neat little house in the suburbs
the rat-catcher answered his phone.
He had work to go do in the evening,
and as always, he'd do it alone.

See there's a rat inside every structure,
and they eat it away from inside,
but the rat-catcher's mean and he's violent,
and he leaves them with no place to hide.

In a damp mouldy flat on the Southside
the rat catcher practiced his trade.
He'd tracked 'em, and caught 'em, and cut 'em.
Then he cleaned up and packed 'way his blade.

He killed vermin all over the city,
and it wasn't done just for the pay.
It offended his strong sense of morals
'cause story tellin isn't okay.

The Collusion

by Daisy Dalton

She's missed.

We pounce on this opportunity

(our only source of unity)

to seal the agreement through raised brows, smirks and wide-eye contact.

For just a split-second we acknowledge a fact

that anyone with a brain can see:

Me and my father are so much more smarter

Than mam ever was or will be.

But I hear as I get older,

'Has nobody told her?

She'll grow into her mother's face'.

And one day I'll be married and the little girl I carry and her father

Will be there to take our place.

The News

by Will Doyle

Day 1

The Irish Government are today reported as having cause for concern about what were described as military exercises close to the Monaghan border.

The office of foreign affairs made their concern known to the British Government.

For many weeks British tanks and troops have been lining up along the Northern Irish border manoeuvring in a manner which the Irish government have described as threatening.

Day 2

There is international consternation as fears build for the collapse of the Northern Irish Protocol. The UK Government maintain that their presence along the border is to protect them from Ireland's continued membership of the EU.

Day 3

The US Government, EU Leaders, and others, all cautioned against any incursion over the Irish Border.

Severe sanctions against the UK have been threatened by Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of Nato.

Already there is major disruption to the Irish economy as US and EU citizens have been advised to leave the Republic of Ireland.

Irish people in the UK were also advised to leave.

The British Ambassador to Ireland maintains that diplomatic relations remain open between the two countries.

Day 4

Overnight breaking news reports that British tanks and troops have crossed into the Republic of Ireland.

Communication towers have been destroyed by British tanks as they make their way towards the Irish capital Dublin, forcing people to flee their homes.

The Irish State Broadcaster, RTE, was targeted overnight, as sustained bombing of their Donnybrook Campus took place.

Day 5

The News Departments of both the BBC and Channel 4 were sequestered to prevent dissemination of what they referred to as Irish propaganda in the UK. A law has been passed to prevent the UK media from using the words WAR or INVASION to describe what has happened, along with the threat of a 15-year jail sentence for any breaches.

One female BBC reporter displayed a poster on air containing both the words War and Invasion. So far, she has been suspended from duties.

Day 6

The Irish Prime Minister, Leo Varadkar, implored men of fighting age to stay and fight but at the same time refused to move the Government headquarters to the southern city of Cork, although encouraged to do so by the US Government.

Day 7

The oppressors, fearing the Irish Government move to Cork city, have commenced a new bombing campaign, forcing families to flee the city and escape into the surrounding countryside.

Heeding the Irish Government's request, many able-bodied men have stayed to support the Irish army. It has been suggested that emergency conscription measures may be introduced.

Day 8

Orchestrated cyberattacks by UK entities have brought down large infrastructural operations resulting in substantial portions of the country now without power or internet access. Supply chains are in chaos as supermarkets struggle to meet demands for basic goods.

Day 9

Trains to Rosslare Europort and the port of Cork are crowded as are the corresponding roads with refugees hoping to make it across the channel to France or Spain. Roads are so full of abandoned cars that many are now impassable. Many cars are burnt out.

Day 10

France and Spain are welcoming their Irish neighbours. Volunteers are offering food, water, and baby essentials - the refugees being mostly women and children.

One correspondent described the scenes at Cherbourg as Irish refugees arrive, having escaped with their children and left everything behind in their now occupied country. One woman, shielding her three children as she left Ireland stated, “I hate leaving this country, but I feel worse for the people left behind. I’ve left my poor husband to fight and I’m afraid I’ll never see him again”

Day 11

The EU and America are providing support with severe sanctions and by way of arms and expertise, but none are prepared to put boots on the ground.

The UK Government is threatening the Nuclear Option and has announced plans to station nuclear weapons in Belfast.

As war continues, Irish Government is again requesting arms and ammunition from its international supporters.

Day 12

The British Government have once again threatened the Nuclear Option as heavy weapons arrive in Ireland. Dignitaries maintain that these measures are preventative. This action by the UK has been condemned by the international community.

Day 13

Reports coming in suggest that a shopping centre on the outskirts of Dublin has been bombed.. It is believed six people were killed outright while scores were injured at Dundrum town centre. Hospitals are overwhelmed as they struggle to manage demands for medical supplies.

Day 14

Dozens of people were killed in a missile strike on Kent train station in Cork city as fighting continues. It was full of women, children and elderly people trying to flee the fighting. "Lacking the courage to stand up to us on the battlefield, they are cynically murdering our civilian population," Ireland's Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar said from an undisclosed location.

Day 15

Contact with the Republic of Ireland has been severed after sustained overnight bombing of communications infrastructure...

The Voice in my Head

by Aislinn Weiss

There's a voice in my head

She lives there rent free,

She says whatever she likes.

As if she knows it all, as if she's always right.

I'm not crazy, I'm not losing my mind.

This voice in my head can be very unkind.

This voice in my head tells me how to feel.

Her name is Brenda and though I know she's not real

I look after her when she's scared.

I look after her when she's distressed.

Assure her the world's not ending.

She's such a bitch - yet I let her stay.

Brenda has another name.

Anxiety.

She lives in my head, what a shame.

The Rockies

by Jack Lynch

Underneath the brilliant blue sky
are the Rocky Mountains, where my heart lies.
My true love left me weeping there.
But this shadow cannot impair
These golden cliffs.

Patient

by D. MacTommy Larkin

Jen edged slowly through the shed at the back of the garden. She flailed at the thick hanging webs with a broom until she reached the shelves at the back. Holding her torch in her mouth she rooted through piles of rusting rubbish for a trowel or something that she could use to dig around in the flower bed.

“Ow!” She said, dropping the torch to the floor and reeling back from the shelves.

She felt a stinging on the back of her hand and picked up the torch with her left hand to shine it on her right illuminating two bright red marks between her thumb and her forefinger. Out in the daylight she got a better look at it. Something had broken the skin deeply but there wasn’t any bleeding. Instead, it looked like a scab had already formed, not on the surface of her skin but just inside the holes. Jen left the shed door open to swing in the breeze and ran into the house calling for her dad.

“Help Da! Look!” She wailed when she found him. “I was digging around in the shed, and something bit me!” She held up her hand for him to see.

“Does it hurt here?”

“It’s weird. It doesn’t hurt at all now, and it scabbed over so fast that I don’t think I even bled at all.”

“That doesn’t look like a scab” said her dad, “it looks like there’s a tick or something in there.”

“Are you saying there’s some kind of bug inside my hand?” She started to flail her hand around, but nothing came loose. Tears welled in her eyes.

“Calm down ‘til I grab the tweezers and we’ll get it out.” He gently placed his hands on her shoulders to stop her shaking. Once she was still, he wiped away the rolling tears from her cheek. “I’ll just be a second.”

Jen didn’t wait for her dad to come back, she didn’t even wait for him to go,

instead she climbed the stairs on his heels and waited in the doorway with her arm fully extended out in front of her while he got the tweezers out of the bathroom cabinet.

“Stand there in the light.” he said as he pulled her over to the window.

He took her hand in his and poked the tweezers into one of the holes. Her stomach turned. The grimace on her dad’s face didn’t make her feel any better but the tweezer digging into her hand didn’t give any sensation at all. He pulled a reddish-brown bubble with squirming legs out from the hole and blood came pouring out after it.

“Sorry.” He said.

“For What?”

“Did you not feel that?” He looked at her with watery eyes, “I got one.” Jen tried to catch some of the falling blood with her free hand to stop it hitting the carpet. “Don’t worry about it.” He said as blood dripped from her hand to the carpet. He reached back into the bathroom and dropped the bug down the sink. “Let’s just focus on getting the other one out.”

Her dad dug the tweezers into the second wound, pushing the tweezers wider to catch hold of the bug. Her skin broke, blood started to drip out from around the bug, but Jen still couldn’t feel a thing from her hand. She tried to move her fingers. She could see her dad strain; she could see her fingers move.

“Shite!” White faced her dad pulled part of the bug from her hand, split in half, then threw it into the sink and said, “Don’t worry love, I’ll get it, just hold still.”

Jen held her hand still while her dad dug into it again. She watched him struggle, digging deeper and deeper into her hand until he stopped. “Fuck it, grab your coat, we’ll head to the E.R.”

They sat in silence on the ride to the hospital. Her dad kept his eyes on the road grunting at every red light, his jaw clenched, he gripped the steering wheel with white knuckles. Jen pinched her hand and felt nothing, then pinched further and further up her arm hoping to feel some sensation.

She couldn't feel anything below her shoulder now and the arm had turned pale and cold.

A nurse looked her over when they got in and they were left to sit and wait. She couldn't tell how long they were there. Her dad fidgeted the whole time, but Jen sat still. She wasn't sure she could have moved if she tried. She wasn't sure she still had limbs. She felt like she had become the chair, lifeless plastic stuck to the floor.

A doctor helped her dad pick Jen off the floor. When the doctor introduced herself, the voice came from miles away. "Can I take a look at your hand miss?" asked Dr. Smith. Jen didn't speak but looked from the doctor's name tag to her own hand. Dr. Smith must have taken that for a nod because she lifted Jen's hand gently and examined the punctures. Jen watched from a distance. After Dr. Smith had satisfied herself with the examination she looked up and met Jen's gaze.

She moved her mouth and made some sounds, but Jen couldn't make any sense of them. Her head felt so numb. It was probably a question. She wanted to reassure the doctor that she was alright.

"I'm fine." She said, or she thought she said. Maybe she just thought it. She couldn't be certain that she'd made a sound at all.

Whatever Jen said, or didn't say, seemed to worry the doctor who made sounds again and gestured towards a door at the end of the room. Her dad lifted her up onto unsteady legs and together they followed the doctor through the door.

The doctors cut what remained of the bug out of Jen's hand after they ran some scans. They gave her anaesthetics before the surgery. She didn't need them. She couldn't feel anything now. She couldn't even move her left arm to pinch herself anymore.

Jen was put in a bed in a room to herself. Doctors were in and out drawing blood and running tests and coming up with nothing. Jen fell further back in her head. Friends and family took turns coming in to sit by her side. Some shared news and spoke to her, some read stories to her, but she couldn't make sense of the jumbled noise that they made, and she couldn't offer any response.

After a while in that bed images started to bleed together, then they started to skip. One moment a friend would be reading to her from a book in broad daylight, then her vision would freeze and flicker, then the next moment she knew her dad would be asleep in a chair by her bed in the middle of the night.

Moments passed this way until she lost track of time. Her friends grew up and then she didn't see them in anymore moments. Her parents greyed and wrinkled and stayed by her bed. She couldn't tell how much time passed between the moments where her senses worked, the moments where she felt something.

One moment she was in the bed while her dad was opening the curtains, the next was darkness and silence. Had her senses finally failed for good? Maybe nobody could sense anything from her. She didn't think she was dead.

In that silent darkness she couldn't tell how many moments passed, if she still had any moments. She thought for a while. That was all there was for her now.

Car Ride

by Adi Patterson-Dunne

Can you pull the car over?

I need to get some words in order. But nothing leaves my lips. Instead the car continues rattling down the road, plunging forward into a tunnel of lights. Blues and blacks, reds and oranges all whip past us.

I feel as though I'm not alive, each breath I take forcing its way in and out of my lungs. And every once in a while, a breath brings my attention to how, this whole time, I've been breathing, keeping myself alive. Even without meaning to.

Butterflies swim past my eyes. My pale friend the moon following me home. The road markings blur, coming together to create heartstrings, plucked and strum. Every book I read was a classic through and through.

Circles of stop lights and lines of brake lights, the persistent rain doubling the sparkling road. The quiet hum of the engine, burned through the silence with the tick tick tick of indicators. We enter a tunnel.

Everything goes black. The steady rhythm of passing streetlamps falls away leaving me floating in space, only my seat belt keeping me tied to Earth. Sparkling blues weaving through silvers, each new colour expanding my mind, my memory, like a dance.

Can you pull the car over?

I'm forgetting that I can breathe among the planets.

Revolve

by Will Doyle

There once was a man called Leo
Who was Taoiseach, but then had to go
But because of rotation
Which baffled the nation
The man is back running the show

About You

by Padraig Kearney

On the day you ran through the school

I knew then I had fallen, like a fool.

It's easy for us humans to deny ourselves

Things we feel we are not worthy of. I

Was way too young, shy, a silly boy with

Nothing on my mind but the fake scenarios

I conjured of our lives together. It seems

Foolish I know. But I fell far beyond the deep end.

Years later we talk every day, you've moved on

While I simply looked for other women who would

Somehow make me feel the way you did.

But none of their smiles, none of their beauty

And none of their love would ever be built

Upon a higher pedestal than I

Built for you.

Childhood Friend

by Shauna Byrne

Childhood was confusing and exhilarating all at once

Not with school or work

But with the friends you made

You played together, you laughed and talked with them

No one will know you like those childhood friends knew you

Every game played, every conversation had

Impacted your life some way

And then they begin to drift away as you grow

Leaving you alone

Left with the memories of who you were

Of the person they used to know

Molly

by Dean Gillard

Molly watched as the sky lit up with bright colors of red and blue as the fireworks let out a loud bang throughout the foggy street. All night the street was filled with light fizzles of sound, followed by a short explosive burst. She hated fireworks, ever since she was small she couldn't stand them. The noise made her ears ring and her heart beat. Molly reached for the curtains and closed them before laying back down on her bed.

From the corner of her eye, she got a glimpse of the Halloween costume that had stayed hung up on her wardrobe door. She turned her head and tried to ignore it. She couldn't. It got inside her head and poked through her thoughts like a needle sticking in and out of a ball of wool. She raised her head from her pillow and looked across her room at it. The colors made her feel warm inside. It appeared mostly fresh white with stripes of red going through, especially at the bottom where the skirt ended. That's the part where I show my legs, Molly thought, as her heart raced, and her palms became sweaty. She shaved them this morning, spending about 40 minutes on each leg and making sure that there wasn't a single hair in sight. It still didn't matter. To her they would always be hairy, wide and masculine.

She got up out of her bed and looked at herself in her mirror. She stood tall and thin, barely showing any skin under the huge house coat she had on. Even in her own house she didn't feel comfortable in her own body sometimes. She brushed back the loose pieces of hair with her hand and fixated on a small area of her face where she began to believe she was showing stubble. There weren't any. She ran over to her shelf where she kept her makeup and grabbed the foundation. The tube was nearly empty and was covered with nail polish stains from the past year. Molly had spent around 45 minutes putting on her makeup and making sure her face was covered. She spends so long in the bathroom most mornings obsessing over getting her face exactly how she likes it, and making sure to cover up any gray areas that appear.

She walked over to the mirror, makeup in hand, and looked again at her face before putting any more on. It looked fine. "It's just overthinking" she said to herself, as she put the makeup down on her nightstand and stared at her face

again. She was feeling confident today, it was a chance to go out in public and dress as anything you want without being judged. Molly had been waiting for this night for months, and she was determined not to let fear stop her from expressing herself. She took the cheerleader outfit down from her wardrobe and began to change.

She held it up in front of her and scanned it from head to toe, taking in all the features that appeared on the costume. Her palms started to sweat. The woman advertising the costume on the packaging was an attractive young blonde in her 20's. Her body was practically perfect in Molly's eyes, and Molly hated that. She wished more than anything to look at her own body and feel happy and beautiful, but she didn't. She had to deal with what she had. She has been doing that her whole life.

Molly untied her housecoat belt and let it fall to the ground. She stood there looking at her body, observing all her features. Her bra hung loosely on her body, but her short pajama bottoms clung to her legs and thighs. She pulled out her hair tie and watched as her dark brown hair unraveled along her cheek and then fell to her shoulders. The butterflies stayed, flapping around in her stomach like a fly trying to escape through a closed window. Her anxiety escalated into a sickening and dreadful feeling. Each item of clothing she slipped into created waves of emotions that smashed one another like a violent ocean.

Fear and dread prevailed, but as she went on to cover more of her body with the outfit she could feel confidence and happiness washing over and blocking everything else out. It was a sense of pride that she didn't get from anything else. Molly stood in front of the mirror and then at the woman on the picture, then back at herself. A small smile started to creep from one side of her cheek, and she felt whole. It was like a part of her that mostly stays hidden deep inside had finally come out and allowed itself to shine and be free.

The steps down to the front door weren't so bad. She knew the only person that could see her was her mother, and that didn't scare her. Her mother's love was one of the things that made her feel confident and important. She felt

like she could express herself and not feel a shower of negative thoughts and self-doubts wash down on her. Her mother would put a hand on her shoulder and make the world stop, even just for a few seconds, but it was enough for her to breathe and focus on what was important in life. It would feel like a thunderous avalanche of dark grey clouds rushing down from the sky towards her, then it would suddenly stop. She could open her eyes wide and look straight into the clouds, seeing that they weren't grey at all, but in fact a colorless cloud that camouflages into whatever your mind sets it to. Molly's mother would turn it into a calm blue.

She got down to the front door and paused. The door felt massive, like a giant wooden wall blocking out the real world and keeping the horrors contained. She imagined the big staring eyes closing in on her and the sudden stop of pedestrians as they stopped to look in confusion and disbelief at Molly. She could feel all of that about to happen as she opened the door and let the outside darkness in. It didn't. Nothing happened. The world remained the same as the people walked along the street and carried on with their own business. The thumping in her chest started to slow down. And the feeling of relief overtook it, eventually. The cold breeze blew against her like waves of fresh air that made the warm, sweaty overwhelming feeling ease as she took her first steps outside her house. Each step was easier than the last. She grew more confident and comfortable the more she continued walking, like riding a bike for the first time.

The longer she walked, the more focused she became and started to feel less scared. The blur of people in the distance became clearer and she could make out some of the costumes they were wearing. Different colours popped out through the darkness and made the night more alive as she walked past them. A host of violet, magenta and aquamarine. The people didn't act any differently walking past Molly. They acted as though they didn't have any problem with who was dressed as what. This comforted Molly and she felt a smile on her face as she disappeared through the night fog and blended in with everyone else.

A Price Called Freedom

by Josh Tyrell

Young men shot dead on a street,
British soldiers laughing at the weak,
Lost to time our language and culture,
King's English is now our future.

Year after year fighting for our freedom,
Revolution, Famine and more Revolution
All in the name of freedom,
Only to split us in two.

Once we got freedom,
What did we do?
Sent it to New England,
Hopefully things would improve

What was the price?
Freedom was that price.

Sunset

The sun sets lower

Reds, oranges and blues shine

The sight takes my breath.

-Leah Sheedy

Ants

Ants marching in lines

Move faster little bastards

There's work to be done

-D. MacTommy Larkin

Time

Time, there one minute

Then gone, never to repeat

Don't waste a second

-Will Doyle

I Wish

by Suzanne O'Connor

I wish I could call you one last time.

for one more gossip.

I wish we didn't fight that night.

I was wrong and you were right.

I protected you from the storm.

I can say it now,

I miss you.

I wish I could have one last chance,

I would change so much.

You will always be there

beating in my heart.

Boogeyman

by Jack Lynch

Throughout Michael's whole life, his father had always threatened him with The Boogeyman. A terrifying monster that was known to every child who was unfortunate enough to live in Hollow Creek. A monster that his cruel father had told him about when he was only 4 years old. A monster that his father would threaten him and his brother David with whenever they did something bad, whenever they wouldn't listen to the man's warnings. Luckily David played the role of big brother well and protected Michael from his Father's harsh words.

The Boogeyman: A horrific creature that lived in the shadows of every house, a creature that kidnapped small children from their homes and dragged them into the shadows where they remained forever. The boy knew full well that his father had only told him the story to scare him.

But sadly, it had worked like a charm.

Ever since he had learned of the Boogeyman's existence, the young boy had been terrified of the creature, to the point where he was plagued with nightmares about it almost every night, each one more horrible than the last. Michael lived in fear that one day his nightmares would come true, that one fateful night he would be the next victim taken by the creature.

Just like any other night, Michael awoke from his nightmare, his breath was laboured and shallow, his eyes were bloodshot and brimming with tears, and his heart was rapidly beating in his chest with such force it genuinely felt as though his heart might just up and quit on him. Michael's tear-stained eyes carefully scanned his surroundings searching for any hint of an unwelcome presence, for any hint of danger.

At first, it seemed like everything was perfectly fine, there were no monsters, and most importantly there was no Boogeyman in sight. Michael let out a hushed sigh of relief as he brought his raggedy stuffed bear to his chest for a warm hug.

Michael warmly embraced the stuffed bear like an old friend, the soft fur of

the bear brought immense comfort to the young boy. It was surprising just how much this little bear could calm his nerves.

Then, he noticed a strange figure standing in the corner of his room. An inhumanly tall figure, to be exact. At first, Michael just stared at the creature, it didn't move, it just stood there staring at him as a predator would at its prey. An unsteady hand desperately reached out for the cheap cracked lamp that was situated on the nightstand by his head, Michael's hand frantically searched for the switch.

Michael knew full well that the Boogeyman, like all other monsters, were terrified of lights, that's why they always struck at night. And that was why Michael always made sure he kept a lamp in his bedroom.

He quickly reached for the lamp on the nightstand by his bed, but all he saw was his black pyjama shirt. He turned on the lamp, revealing the figure to be just his robe and some discarded clothes left on his old, faded rocking chair. Seeing that the figure was just a pile of clothes, the eight year old turned the lamp off. But as soon as he did, a big, dark, tall figure appeared in the room and loomed over him. This was the Boogeyman, no doubt.

Due to Michael's frantic attempts to force the lamp to power on, it tumbled forward and fell off the nightstand where it shattered into several broken pieces of porcelain shards that littered the surrounding floor, startling him in the process. Michael stared at the broken form of the lamp, just like that his only form of protection was gone. Tears ran down his freckled cheeks, and Michael whipped his around back to the monster, only to find that the figure was nowhere to be seen.

The boy sat there in complete silence; the only sounds that filled the room were the repetitive patting of the rain on his window.

Terrified, Michael instantly pulled the covers over his entire body shielding him from the horrible creature right in front of him. But those thin covers weren't enough to protect him from the Boogeyman. Through the covers, Michael could see the twisted inhuman shape slowly approaching. The boy could only look on in sheer horror as the monster made its way over to his bed.

Michael wanted to scream, he was to kick and scream his lungs raw until he was sure that everyone in the entire neighbourhood could hear him, but he couldn't scream he couldn't fight back, and he couldn't even avert his gaze from the creature and the stretched bony hand that was right above his only form of protection.

Michael always knew that this night would come. He always knew in his heart that the Boogeyman would come for him one day no matter what he did to try to prevent it from happening. Finally Accepting his fate, he watched as the shape reached out for him. The shape grabbed a hold of the covers and effortlessly pulled them off Michael and...

A sweating Michael gasped as his emerald eyes shot open.

"Michael?" David said his voice was a mixture of concern and confusion, he was standing over Michael at the side of his bed. His light brown hair was unkempt, and he sported a freshly forming black eye. "What's going on?"

Michael silently stared at his older brother, tears still falling down his cheeks staining his pyjama's.

"Michael?" David asked again, his voice filled with concern.

Without uttering a single word Michael clung to his brother as though his life depended on it, he buried himself in David's chest as he broke down into an uncontrollable sob and no doubt confused his older brother.

"He's here, he's here!" Michael cried out, barely being able to contain his sobs.

David effortlessly lifted his crying brother off the bed and guided him onto his lap, Michael took to this like a moth to a flame.

"Who's here?" David asked as he gently brushed his brother's unkempt hair. Michael shook his head, he continued to look fearful. "He came to take me away."

"Michael, it's alright, there's nobody here."

David tried to explain in the hopes that this would bring some form of comfort to his sibling. Then the teen noticed an all too familiar fearful expression on his brother's face. "Oh...him." David finally understood just what Michael was trying to explain.

The teen let out a sigh as he looked towards the hallway, his expression was that of disgust, one of our anger. "Mikey...that crap is just a story. Okay? He's not real."

"It's just dad trying to scare ya." David was all too familiar with this scenario; his father had always made sure to threaten him with stories of the Boogeyman when he was younger. Horrible stories of bad children who didn't behave, children who couldn't keep secrets.

David shuttered at the thought. He let out a calm sigh and looked at his brother. "There's no such thing as a Boogeyman, trust me."

That reassurance didn't change Michael's fearful expression, which was strange. In the past, whenever he thought the Boogeyman was under his bed or hiding in his closet, he would sleep with his brother in his bedroom. That always made him feel safe. He felt like that provided him with some form of safety and security. After all, the Boogeyman couldn't get him if he was with his brother, Michael knew his brother could beat anything.

But for some reason, that safe feeling didn't hold up at all tonight.

"Hey, why don't I have a look around? If I find any Boogeyman around here, I'll send him running." David said as he looked at the closet. After all, there were only two places in his room that the 'Boogeyman' could hide. Inside his closet...or under his bed.

The teen got off the bed, then got down on his hands and knees to have a good look under the bed, and he saw that there was nothing there, not a box, not a toy, not even an old shoe under the bed. Satisfied David popped his head back up to Michael with a smile. "Nope." He said, shaking his head. "Nothing under there, no Boogeyman, no nothing."

Tears still flowing Michael then pointed a shaky finger at the closet.

David looked towards the closet and then back at Michael with an understanding smile. “Oh. Alright, guess we gotta be sure, huh.” the teen explained before standing back up and walking over to the closet, followed by lightly knocking on its door.

“Hello?” David called out before he opened the door and looked inside, only to find Michael’s clothes, no Boogeyman in sight. Satisfied, the teen turned back to his brother. “Nope. No ghosts, no goblins, and no Boogeyman. Just us.”

As David tried to shut the closet door, it abruptly stopped partway through, confused David tried closing it again, this time with a little more force, but again the door stopped just short of closing. Was something blocking it? Maybe an old shoe, or a coat sleeve.

David just shrugged as he opened the closet door.

Just then, a tall dark figure appeared in the cramped closet, its stretched-out limbs cramped into the tiny space, its hollow lifeless eyes staring directly at David who was paralyzed with fear.

The creature stretched out its arms and grabbed the teen by the head and yanked him into the closet, the door slamming shut with a bang! Michael gasped in horror. Did that just happen? Did he see what he thought he saw? Did the Boogeymen take his brother? There was only one way to find out. The boy fearfully got out of bed and walked towards the closet.

However, he was quickly stopped in his tracks as the closet door flew open and his brother fell out on the floor face-down, his shirt was torn, and his arms were littered with bruises and shallow cuts. Michael ran to his brother’s side, his arms outstretched ready to pull him away from the monster’s grasp.

But he wasn’t fast enough. And before he knew it, his brother was yanked up by the hair and slammed face-down again. Michael stared in horror at the scene wide-eyed as his brother’s bloody body was dragged into the closet by the Boogeyman, and the door slammed shut for the final time.

Prologue

by Padraig Kearney

There are moments in life when
We enter a new phase of existence.
Look back ten years, do you recognize
The person you were. We all become different people and yet
We stay the same. Isn't it beautiful but also terrifying.

I am young still, but I have seen and felt my fill. But this
Is what many teens say. I have much yet to do, explore the world
I have been gifted. I am sure there is a hidden beauty I am
Yet to uncover.

I want to hold a tiny child whose father is me and teach them
Right from wrong. Much time to spare and more things to do.

I once thought life finished at eighteen, but here I am still on
The journey. Everything until now has just been a prologue
To a much larger book and I am excited to see how it continues.

I will experience pain and grief, but there cannot be that without
First being love and happiness. I feel wise beyond my years
Even now, maybe this will help the puzzles of life as I grow older
And more intelligent. My life begins only now.
Its Dark and Bright all be it Elegant.
Let it come, for I am brave in the Face of it.

Ice King

by Adi Patterson-Dunne

Grey brick whittled with time

The sun a mere glare over my eyes

Soft steps over broken concrete brings me to the room

Where the ice king sits

Up on his blue throne, ice never melting, never fraying

Eyes always open, always focused straight ahead

Cold to the touch and cold to the softest of gazes

Move my feet up to the kneeling pad and sit,

Legs curled like yesterday and the day before

Throw seeds to the birds and talk to the silent king

Hushed words about my week, about my day, about my life

Never gaining replies but always pausing as if I can hear

Smiling in the face of chilling ice

Hoping the warm stories will melt the ice on my king

But it never does

This realm is just spirit

And I am not curled up in front of an ice king

With a crown of impeccable design

No, he isn't here, it's an empty room in an empty building

And I watch from the walls

As the men come and tear down my castle

For I am just a painting of a queen

Preserved for my ice king all those years ago.

The Bunker

by D. MacTommy Larkin

I like to lie on the floor while I think. It gets stuffy in here with the pair of us and the cool of the tiles on my back is comforting. It lets my mind wander. I lie here listening to the hiss of the electrics, counting time to the pulse of the air purifier, and I stare up at the fluorescent light that runs across the ceiling until it's burned into my eyes.

I spend most of my time with my thoughts since we ran out of conversation long ago.

"Gus." Sydney would call me, Augustus being my name, and I would call him Syd for the same reason. "I'm goin' out" he'd said.

"Out where?" I asked, "What for?" Out was nothing, out hadn't been anything in ages.

Inside the bunker is all there is for us anymore. Stay in and make the best of it. I could have said that to him. I'd said it before. I might as well have been talking to myself.

"Stretch my legs, look around. You never know what's out there." What a stupid thing to say.

"I know what's out there." The same as was out there the last time. The same as will be out there every time for years after we're gone. "Clouds of poison that'll burn your lungs, that comes down with the rain to burn your skin and turn the land to lifeless ash, and the rivers and lakes are so thick with shite that you could walk across the surface of them if not for the fact that they'd burn the feet off you."

"Show a bit of optimism. Things won't always be the same." He'd say, as if his delusions would change the way the world is.

"We're safe in here. All you're doing by going out is putting our lives in danger. This place is barely hanging together, popping the airlock to go for a stroll is a stupid, pointless risk. If that goes and the bunker starts leaking that'll be the end of us."

“You go out too, so what’s the difference when I do it?”

“I only do it when I have to, like repairs and stuff, it’s about the bunker and keeping stuff running.”

“What are we even living for if this is all there is? I need some space to keep my head on straight, I’m goin’ mental in this fuckin’ box.” He was putting on his suit as he said this, as if all I’d said meant nothing. I laid out all my fears in front of him and he walks over them like they’re nothing.

It doesn’t matter what I say to him. We were supposed to be in this together. I guess I’m a fool for not realising sooner, being stuck in the same place didn’t make us close. I’m sick of being the reasonable one. I’m always the one to compromise, so to hell with it I thought, let’s not be stuck together anymore.

“If you need to get out so much you can stay the fuck out!” I shouted at him. I don’t know if he heard. The words only came to me after he’d passed through the hatch, but I doubt he would have listened to me anyway.

That’s why actions matter. He can ignore me, but he can’t ignore a jammed hatch.

It took hours for Syd to get the message.

It took hours for the banging to start. I had turned the tiles warm, so I left them and started to pace with the negatives of the light in my eyes.

Had he heard me? Did he know why he was out?

The room was so hot, the air felt so thin. I had to lean against the inside of the hatch to steady myself.

I could hear his muffled shouts from the other side. I couldn’t make out words through the insulation. He didn’t know what he was being punished for.

I hoped he’d figure it out.

The banging stopped. The shouting stopped. I held my breath. I had the bitter taste of metal in the back of my mouth.

A buzz came from the panel by the hatch that nearly jumped me high enough to crack my head open on the ceiling. Then a hiss of static. An intercom.

What a waste of power. I had forgotten that useless thing existed, it hadn't been used since we stepped into the bunker.

I could make out words crackling through the white noise. "Gus! Gus! Please hear me, Gus." Syd whimpered.

It's a horrible feeling to speak, to lay out your fears to someone who was supposed to care and not be heard. Now he knew that feeling too.

I pulled the toolbox down from the shelves and dug out a screwdriver. My hands were shaking as I removed the screws holding the intercom panel to the wall.

Syd continued to beg. I tried to focus on something else but the sound of the bunker carrying on wasn't enough to drown him out.

I wanted to change tools, to switch to a hammer and just smash the intercom to bits, but I can't afford to waste parts like that. One by one I took out the screws and put them in my pocket.

"Please work, God! I'm running out of air. Please let me know you can hear me, Gus. Please let me in."

I finally pried the panel off and shut Syd up by pulling the fuse out. I got my silence. This was the peace I'd wanted.

I screwed the panel back on. My hands wouldn't stop shaking. I was alone with my own thoughts, and now I always would be. I tried to sit down but my whole body was shaking. My guts were convulsing.

I tried to take a few deep breaths to calm myself but I couldn't pull the thin air deep enough. The thump of my heart beating in my ears was the only sound I could hear.

Maybe it wasn't too late.

I pulled on my suit and unjammed the hatch. It opened easily for me. I let the airlock close and stepped through the outer hatch.

Dry, sterile soil crunched under my boots. The yellow haze of chlorine in the air stopped me from seeing more than a few feet in front of me, but I knew where to look for him.

I found him there, just outside, collapsed under the dead intercom. I hoisted him up under the arms and dragged him back through the airlock. His legs caught on the lip of the hatch, so I pulled harder until the suit tore free.

Once I had him in the bunker, I ripped off his helmet. “Breathe! Please breathe.” I slapped him around the face and felt for his pulse. He was totally still.

I hammered on his chest. His ribs cracked under the pressure but I only stopped to try and push air into his lungs.

He spluttered and drew his own breath. I fell back from him as he sucked deep the recycled air of the bunker. I sat quietly beside him as he regained his senses.

“Thank you, Gus.” He reached out his hand to hold mine. “I thought I was going to die out there alone. You saved me.”

“Of course.” I said. “All we have in this world is each other.”

Betrayal is the Sharpest Knife

by Deirdre Feeney

You fit every subconscious thought I ever had about you.

I don't know where the feeling of surprise came from,

it's small like that very memory that makes my stomach churn.

I can't go back to seeing you like I used to. Time can only go forward.

So, every thought of you is a memory. Tainted.

Nothing good comes from the memories.

It's winter now, leaves fall and are crunched by the cold air.

But nothing is as cold as the feeling of what you did.

You set yourself up for defeat, so why act surprised when I say,

"I can't be around you."

You threw knives at so many and yet I'm the one with the courage to take it out

and let you watch me bleed.

Now there's an open wound in my heart where your name used to be.

Burning Love

by Daisy Dalton

May I tell you a secret darling?

For I love you very much.

I know the reason why you feel

a burn whenever we touch.

It's not because you love me,

Although your love is true.

It's not due to the butterflies

That I give to you.

The answer is much simpler.

But it isn't very nice.

My dear it would appear

I have given you pubic lice.

Dog

by Leah Sheedy

The tapping of his nails against the wooden floor is maddening

Especially in the middle of the night when it is dark and near silent

He'll growl at nothing and blankly stare at an empty corner as if something is happening

And when I give him his medicine or try to wash him, he looks at me like I am a tyrant

But love in any shape or size is taking all his mad quirks in stride

As he silently deals with mine in turn

And thought I fear the day that he must leave me behind

I take comfort in the fact that he'll have lived his short life full of love and fun and without concern

Ahead

by Will Doyle

Ahead - Will Doyle

A certain dread, as well as excitement as I exited the shed
Cheery goodbye and I was off, boots laced and backpacked
Thorny stones and sharp bushes lay ahead but the pull, the draw
Was uncompromising. Nothing for it but to plough on under the blanket
Of a ponderous cloudy sky. Careful, careful wire fences can hurt
And yes, I feel the wind batter then relent as I start the walk, Ouch
First snag and already a trickle of blood
Many more of those before I sleep, and miles to go
That stream looks deep... Is it too late to turn back?

Inspired by Nick Millar's painting, From Cogan's Shed

Bessie

by Will Doyle

What is it about a cow

That makes people want to flinch away?

Her bovine face just out

As if to say, what gives?

Now she rests, chewing the cud

And waiting for the next passer by

Sing me a Lullaby

by Padraig Kearney

Ash in the Ashtray, a broken-down car in the driveway.

Sing me a lullaby of the beauty dream. Follow the stars

To the start of my heart, a constellation map I crafted

To your Iris.

Listen carefully for she will always be close, hold my hand

For your single dose. Sing me a lullaby of your

Paradise Land.

Let us walk through the spring Park I will taste the

Smoke in your Throat. Sing me a Lullaby beginning

At the start.

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