



Paper
Swans
Poetry & Flash Fiction



ISSUE 5

FOREWORD

Welcome to our fifth iPamphlet and this issue has the theme of Winter/Christmas. As always, we are keen to showcase emerging writers of poetry and flash fiction and it is great to see some new writers in this edition. Due to Paper Swans becoming a small press, from next year, publication of our iPamphlet will become quarterly, published at the end of March, June, September and December.

Issue 5 Contributors:

Ciaran Dermott

Born in London in the early 90s, Ciaran Dermott was always curious lad. An Irish mother and a Scottish father meant that the blood of a rambler has always flowed through his veins, and it was fortunate that he relocated to Staffordshire at the tender age of five and lived out the rest of a restless childhood in the arms of the forests that inspired Tolkien's Middle Earth. After succeeding modest A-Levels, he studied literature at Nottingham Trent University, seeing a three years studied with drunken howls and frantic late night scrawling. Only 22, he is young but proud to have his first work published right here.

twitter: @ciarandermott

Kirsty Higginson

Kirsty Higginson is a poet, writer & freelance journalist & resides amongst the luxurious, cobbled streets of Lancashire. In her spare time she dreams of conquering the world with Dr Who and runs the Left in Preston arts project. You can find a collection of her work at <https://taltalesoffiction.wordpress.com>

twitter: @KirstyHigginson

Sarah Miles

Sarah lives in Sussex and writes poetry and flash fiction. She is slightly addicted to Twitter and is loving writing micropoetry in 140 characters or less. Her work has been published both in print and online, with one of her haiku featuring in the 2014 Wise Words Literature Festival in Canterbury. Her website, <http://sarahmiles.me.uk>, was listed as 'one to watch' 2014, but she'd prefer you to read it instead. Sarah also enjoys photography and procrastinating.

twitter: @_sarahmiles_

Paul Millar

Never having been a fan of poetry I have begun writing haiku to get myself back into creative mode. The brevity of the form appeals and requires thought and concentration to get it just right. I enjoy the sound of the words together and the layout of the words in such a short space.

twitter: @pml3r

Pat Mullan

Pat grew up in rural north Derry, and now lives at Eadestown near Naas in Co Kildare with his wife, Patricia. They have 3 adult children.

In 2013 he took a beginner's creative writing course with the Big Smoke Writing Factory in Dublin and is currently a member of the Naas Creative Writing Group. He is interested in short stories and flash fiction.

Pat has read his work at the 2013 and 2014 National Flash Fiction events in Dublin (Flash Bulbs and Flash Fury). He made the 2014 Fish Short Memoir Long List and was shortlisted and highly commended for the Newbridge Junefest Literary Miscellany in June 2014.

His short story "The Same Place" was published in the fourth issue of Spontaneity (June 2014), and "Good For Me" was published in the Galway Review (August 2014).

Pat can be contacted by e-mail at pat1mullan@gmail.com.

twitter: @pat_mullan

Katherine Schumacher

Katherine has been writing poetry since 2012, when she wrote her first poem inspired by the London Olympics. She posted this poem on Facebook and was encouraged to continue to write by her friends and family. Katherine lives in East Yorkshire with her husband and works in the retail industry. Apart from writing poetry she likes reading, watching films, Zumba, and eating chocolate. Katherine has published her first book on the amazon kindle 'the hope of kingdom'.

twitter: @Kathrsch

Linda Sprott

Linda is finally returning to her first love of writing, trying out flash fiction and returning to poetry. She has had a piece selected for a pinterest prompt in the past and is working on a crime novel.

twitter: @LindaSprott

PAT MULLAN

BLOOD ON THE KNIFE

She looked at the blood dripping from the knife in her shaking hand.

“Oh Noooooooooo...” Frieda cried in despair as the blood dripped on to her clothes. Tom was a tough old bastard and it had taken more out of her than she had thought. She should have done it sooner, as the kids would be home from school shortly.

“Where’s dad?” She heard Peter call from the kitchen. The lads must be home.

“He’s just gone down to Quinnsworth for a couple of bits. I’ll be in in a minute”. She couldn’t let them see any of this.

She wiped the knife with a rag, rubbed what she could off her trousers, took off the old apron put the knife in the tool-box, switched off the light, then closed and locked the garage door.

“How long will he be?” asked Peter as she came into the kitchen.

“I’m not sure. Why?”

“I just need to ask him something. Its personal,” said Peter.

“I see. Now he could be a while. Lasagna will be on the table in half an hour.”

It had been much harder than Frieda had expected. How was she going to explain it all to the lads? If she could get through the next couple of days without giving anything away, then she might get away with it.

Dinner served and eaten, Frieda took the battery lamp and headed for the garage carrying a kettle of boiling water. Peter had still been anxiously waiting on his father to return, whatever that was about.

She opened the garage door, pulled over a stool and caught Tom by what was left of his neck, poured the kettle over him and began plucking.

They’d never eat the Christmas dinner if they knew they were eating Tom.

PAUL MILLAR

children laughing --
winter sun

spider web --
morning mist

girl:
in summer dress --
fogged breath

LINDA SPROTT

MRS CLAUS

You never once hear of Mrs Claus
Just Santa gets all of the mention.
Now think of her as Christmas time draws
Not once the centre of attention.
You can name each and every reindeer
And even know all about the elves.
But you never ever get to hear
About the woman who stocks the shelves.
Santa can be a grumpy fellow
Stuck in the North Pole all the year round.
It's Mrs Claus who keeps him mellow
And keeps all the wheels spinning around.
She has even taken out the sleigh
When Santa said he had man flu.
Because of course he took to his bed
Although there was lots of work to do.
But Santa knows that it's Mrs Claus
Who keeps all of his crew together
And so he always takes time to pause
To think of her best present ever.

So when it comes to this special time,
As you each open up your stocking
Remember to raise your glass of wine
To women who keep Christmas rocking.

KATHERINE SCHUMACHER

THE WINTER STORM

On a howling wintery night,
A girl wakes up in the middle of the night,
Wondering what the next day will bring,
She thinks of the exam that she must pass the next day,
Which will hold the key to her future,

On a howling wintery night
A young baby cries in the middle of the night,
A mother cradles the baby,
Wondering what the next day will bring,
She thinks of the work she has to do the next day,
Which will hold the key to her future,

On a howling wintery night,
A boy wakes up to a nightmare in the middle of the night,
His father comes to his side,
He thinks of the faraway places that his father is storytelling,
Which hold the key to the future,

On a howling wintery night
A man wakes hearing the winds in the middle of the night,
Looks over to his wife,
He thinks of the medical appointment the next day,
Which will hold the key to his future,

Suddenly snow and winds ease,
Dawn arrives,
An elderly lady opens her curtains,
As sunlight comes through,
Knowing that she was the girl who passed her exam,
The mother who cradled her baby son in the night and went to work the next day,
The wife who husband was threatened with death but overcame it,
The grandmother who grandson became a great storyteller,
As the sun rose that morning,
She rose above the storms in her life.

LINDA SPROTT

THE SNOWMAN

The silence that snow brings is broken by Chloe's footsteps through the crisp snow. Earlier that morning she had made a snowman, patting and shaping him into shape, finding twigs for arms and hanging mittens from them. Stones were added as buttons down his front and for his eyes. She had stopped at dressing him up. Chloe did not approve of snowmen with clothes.

Hers were the only footprints as she walked around a field trying to think of the next chapters for her book. This was the reason she had taken herself deep into the countryside for a solitary Christmas. The book was due to be at the publishers early in the New Year. Her heroine was also on her own having been abandoned by her husband and she was taking time to think about where she went next. She was going nowhere, as was the story and her author.

It wasn't reading like her usual romance, perhaps she should try adding a little mystery. A knock at the door in the middle of the night. A man who is not what he seems. Is he the hero or is he the murderer?

She tried to imagine herself in danger. What sort of heroine would she make if she was threatened with her life? Out of the corner of her eye something moved. She looked over but it was gone. She turned around and in the far corner of the field could see a solitary snowman. The same one? She carried on walking, talking out loud to herself and thinking only of her writing. Shaking her shoulders she looked to her right. A snowman! Turning round she could not see the first snowman, it must be the snow disorientating her, making every direction seem the same,

Snowflakes started falling, dusting her shoulders and settling on her eyelashes. There was a dark shape looming in the distance. Another snowman? Someone must have busy earlier. Twirling around she could not see the other snowmen. It was almost as if they were moving. Was she hallucinating? She had spent too much time on her own.

There, to her right, a snowman. Again, looking around she could not see any others. They seemed to be getting bigger and slightly more menacing. That would make for a fine seasonal mystery, murder by snowman. The evidence would have disap-

peared, a pile of slush covering the ground. No footprints, whoever heard of a snowman leaving footprints? She laughed out loud, impatient to get back to her warm fire-side and tap out her story, fortified by a large glass of wine. The title flashed into her mind, The Snowman and the Girl, at the same time as she collided with a solid mass of ice, stared into the dark and soulless eyes of a snowman and fell lifeless to the ground, staining the ground crimson as she bled into the ground. Her story had come alive.

CIARAN DERMOTT

DECEMBER 25TH

How fair is it
that Coca Cola promised us snow this year
but as usual there is none.
That for all the christmas cards I've sent out in the past few weeks
full of robins,
I haven't seen a single splash of red in the garden all day
even though I have been sitting by the conservatory window all morning.
There isn't even the wispiest scent of turkey in the air
but then again that's hardly news
I don't quite have the same appetite for cooked meals that I used to
since the divorce.
For all its disappointment, this day is still not as bad as it could be
I mean
I could be at church for gods sake
and taking solace in this fact
I turn to the one present saint nicholas bestowed upon me this year
a lovely big bottle of scotch.
Christmas day.
It is a day like any other.

KATHERINE SCHUMACHER

THE ROBIN

As the first frost lays,
A robin whistles a tune,
A family awakes,
The mother shouting at the children to get ready,
The father anxiously looks another bill,
As they close the door and leave the house,
The morning sun rises and melts the ice on the car,
The robin flies over the house,

The robin perches on a window,
A school teacher watches the children kissing goodbye to their parents,
She reads the new list of targets set by the government,
She anxiously wonders how she will meet them,
While touching her tummy, hoping that she will be with child soon,
As she greets her class,
The morning sun glares into the classroom,
The robin flies over the school,

The robin collects twigs from a tree,
A homeless man roots around in a bin under the tree,
Hoping to find his lunch,
He wonders how life ended up like this,
It wasn't long ago he was sat in an office in his designer suit,
He now sleeps under a tree,
As the sun rises highest in the sky,
He eats a rotten banana,
The robin flies over,

The Robin sits on chimney,
An elderly man sits by the fire,

He snuggles under the blanket,
He can only afford to heat one room,
Watching afternoon drama's,
Wishing he had his wife next to him,
As the sun starts to go down,
The Robin flies over,

The robin sits on a fence,
The moonlight sparkles over the town,
Watching as the first snowflakes fall,
The robin flies,
Over the homeless man finds a shelter for the night
By the kindness of strangers,
Over the schoolteacher tells her husband she is expecting,
Over the elderly man is invited by his family for dinner,
Laughter fills the air as his grandchildren are told stories,
The robin flies back to his resting place,
As the snow settles on the ground,
The robin whistles its tune.

LINDA SPROTT

Snuggled in a blanket
With cosy socks
And you beside me
Christmas rocks!

KIRSTY HIGGINSON

THE DAY

Cold toes slide over to greet me,
I mumble an incoherent response
whilst smiling wide from under the duvet.
Jubilant smells of excitement drift
up the stairs, still I dare not move
from the safety of warmth,
before all hell breaks loose.
The frost outside is calling to be let in
through windows and doors,
waiting eagerly to nip at my already
goose pimples skin.
Chaos beckons for me to jump out of bed,
I plead for just five more minutes
but the madness is already here
demands have been sitting around,
with heavy sighs, since about sunrise.
Cardboard and clutter will be thrown
on the ground, strewn wrapping paper
will be made into balls for the dog to chase
and bound energetically, down the hall.
Coffee eventually comes,
it is brought with a side order of giggling
and tugs on my hair.
Pyjamas, stockings, sticky faces and already
tired eyes greet me.
'Mummy, Mummy, Santa has been'.
This is going to be a perfect day.

CIARAN DERMOTT

DUSK

Orange dusk descends upon barriers of stone

More potent than its summer counterpart

This is a fog which swallows rooftops, church bells and chimneys

Sucks the light out of the very sky itself

As it lowers its subjects quicken

Desperate to escape its gift

Of all consuming dark

SARAH MILES

A WINTER'S KEEP

I breathe in the crystal frost and I am silenced,
The pricking sting sniping at my upturned face.
I welcome it with warmth of breath and icy heart;
It numbs me.

Tears mingle with the falling snowflakes,
Smoothing the spiteful holly with soothing comfort.
But soon they too are hardened and frigid,
Hibernating in a dormant cocoon.

Winter long I am a statue
Awaiting the melting resurrection of spring.
But the season stretches, unrepentant.
My crystalline heart beats brittle.

I fear with one more frost it may shatter,
Each piece a frozen shard of bitter regret.
Morning brings chill wind but a thawing smile
Welcomes the ray of sunshine contouring my cheek.

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