

Proudly Celebrating the Centrepieces' Creative Writing Group

*the*  
**CREATIVE**

**New Beginnings**





## About Us

"The Creative" is the magazine from Centrepieces' Creative Writing group, bringing together a diverse range of contributions and styles. From fictional stories and poems to non-fictional articles and reflective accounts, there's always bound to be something to capture your imagination. Each issue explores a different theme explored from the unique perspective of our writers' wellness and recovery journeys.

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## Feature Article

### *“Candles Take a Holiday”* by Michael Armstrong

A candle takes a holiday. Where to? Rome perhaps or to celebrate Guy Fawkes in November.

Seriously though, a candle makes sure you see the light. Candles are essential in power cuts when darkness otherwise reigns supreme. Respect them for incandescence, their popularity may wax and wane since the advent – of electric light.

A candlelit dinner may alter moods, radiate fragrance and light, perhaps at times accompanied with incense. Candle power at the lighthouse saves lives many times over as seen during sea-side holidays.

Holiday worship? Candles meet devotion. A few churches retain the ancient candle snuffers on their walls, as does one at a village on Dartmoor.

The greatest application of candles must be in Churches, to confirm prayers and for services at the Christmas Holidays. Candles may illuminate the Nativity. Candlemas is held forty days after Christmas Day. Jesus is seen as, 'The Light of The World,' candles, it follows, are held in procession and blessed. A night-light, a candle surrounded by water for safety reasons, assures a good night's sleep until day breaks once more.

Candles do take a holiday; they also make a holiday. A happy holiday to all our readers.



Even after millennia of development and progress, humankind is still deeply rooted in cycles of nature. Though specific practices and  
Early instances of spring cleaning include Jewish culture's preparation for Passover, when all traces of leavened bread would be removed from the home in time for the celebration. This symbolises the time when the ancient Israelites slaves had to flee Egypt before their bread could rise in time for their journey to freedom.



In Catholicism, Maundy Thursday marks a similar time when church altars are cleaned in readiness for Good Friday.

Chinese culture sees a similar practice of cleansing in the approach to Lunar New Year, when bad luck and misfortune are symbolically cleansed from the home. Similarly, in Thailand, during Songkran in April – homes, schools and public places are deep-cleaned in preparation for Thai New Year.

The concept of “spring cleaning” has adapted beyond faith communities and has become an unconscious part of many cultures' secular existence, with the practice of spring cleaning felt through the array of advertising and promotional offers for cleaning products immediately accompanying the arrival of the Spring season.



With its roots deep in humankind's history and its focus on renewal and revival, “Spring Cleaning” is an idiom that has come to engender hope and prosperity across various cultures and traditions.

## New Beginnings

**Lesley Cody**

A fresh start in life  
A way to set things right  
A brighter future looms  
A path within our sight

A time to be brave  
A chance to take a chance  
An opportunity to grow  
A moment to enhance

A chance to create  
A chance to be free  
A chance to be bold  
A chance to believe

Every step we're taking  
Is a seed we choose to sow  
A journey yet unwritten  
Where endless futures grow



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## “The Genie and the Gremlin”

**Nicola Wills**

I wish I could find a Genie in a Lamp. If I was lucky to find one I would wish for the anxiety and the Gremlin in my head, who has all these unsafe thoughts about what might go wrong, to disappear in a puff of smoke. The Gremlin is a nasty, evil, spiteful creature deliberately looking for things to go wrong whether that's "will I be hurt and injured", or darkness coming and making me uncertain and anxious, or losing my lovely dog. The Gremlin is a horrible presence who lurks and lurks and has eyes of uncertainty and doom and he never leaves my head. At night an off-switch is pressed so that the Gremlin can go to sleep, however when morning arrives he is well and truly alive and has taken over the whole of my mind.

*“Today is going to be an awful day!” the voice booms, “The worst will happen and doom and gloom will rule all day. You will experience tension and fear and the world will look black and frightening.”*

I closed my eyes to shut off from the Gremlin and my fear and slowly opened them again. Then I noticed a shiny brass magic lamp by my bedside. I gently rubbed it and a bright blue genie appeared in a cloud of smoke.

“What do you wish for?” the Genie asked in a broad New York accent.

“I wish for my anxiety to completely disappear and for the world to feel like a calm, safe place once more, with an abundance of joy and happiness to look forward to in the future.” I replied in a sad voice.

“Your wish is granted. Have a nice day.” said the Genie before disappearing back into the lamp, never to be seen again.

Then, as if by magic, the blackness suddenly began to fade and a pink light slowly started to surround the whole of the earth. Colourful butterflies began to fly around and spring birds burst into song. Flowers bloomed and the place gradually felt happy and harmonious again. That nasty Gremlin had certainly been eradicated for good. And best of all, a huge weight had been lifted from my shoulders. The world felt wonderful and joyful. I had things to look forward to once more. My lovely dog and I danced and played together and celebrated a new life with new beginnings with lots and lots of sunshine.

## “Sleeping Dragon Awoken”

**Matthew Delaney**

Awoken is dragon,  
From fire mountain slumber,  
Raging heart's devotion,  
Every worry cast asunder,  
From tearful nocturne,  
All patience expired,  
Channelling a fury,  
Blossomed from desires,  
Confused by affliction,  
How mighty storm roars,  
Consoled by conviction,  
Sweet hope open doors.

Fly under moon,  
Wings gracing skies,  
Redemption be soon,  
Open closed eyes,  
Admonish through flame,  
Those in masks hid,  
To ash be their blame,  
And all their words did,  
Scales of emerald,  
In moonlight free glisten,  
Thy power ephemeral,  
A careful decision,  
Breathe life unto me,  
To the lonely restore,  
A peace ever free,  
To endure evermore.

**“Our Inner Light”** by Nadia H.

We all are...

Wonderfully Weird

Perfect Imperfections

Beautiful Beings

Being Brought

Into a World of

Wonder and Delight

With Our Inner Light

We Can Dim

Or We Can

Burn

Higher and Brighter

Like a Fiery Beacon

For All To See

To Witness

The Possibility

What We Can Be

That

We All Are

Wonderfully Weird

Perfect Imperfections

Beautiful Beings



**“Down The Line” by Karen L.**

The good morning kiss goodbye, parting for the day.  
Each of us working, going our separate ways.  
The annoying phone call as I'm overseeing a session,  
Why does he always disturb me?  
He should have learnt his lesson.  
I swipe up the phone and continue with my craft,  
But the phone rings again, is he having a laugh!  
Another swipe up but the phone continues to ring,  
I have to answer it, it might be something?  
As I answer the phone, I start to feel dread,  
I've been in an accident, I'm in hospital, he said.  
A single second, a moment, is all it took to change his world,  
We listened in horror as his story unfurled.  
We are now down the line, by 3 months to be exact,  
Flashbacks and pain and adjustments impact,  
An ongoing struggle, a new way forward somehow,  
New beginnings ahead, for both of us now.

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## From Shadows to Light by Lesley Cody

Adam lay shivering in his worn sleeping bag as the city's traffic roared around him. At twenty-three, he felt far older, worn down by cold, hunger and loneliness. For months, he'd refused help from Sarah, an outreach worker offering him a spot at The Haven, a rehab centre. But after one bitter night, he decided he was done with just surviving — he wanted to live.



Life at The Haven was strange and uncomfortable at first – the therapy sessions made him feel awkward and tongue-tied - but one day he was introduced to Mark, the art therapist. At first Adam sketched the harsh street scenes he knew so well but then he moved on to using acrylic paints. As he experimented with this form of expression, he felt something shift inside of him. He realised he had found a way to speak without words. Painting became his refuge. His art was displayed during an open day at the Centre and several of his artworks sold.

Eventually he was well enough to leave The Haven and he moved into a bedsit nearby. He continued to paint every day and also volunteered regularly at The Haven in the art therapy room. After having a painting accepted for the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, Adam's work was in demand and he was able to make a living from his art. For the first time in years, he felt not like a survivor, but like a man truly alive.

## REFLECTIONS: Studio Space Sanctuary

For a lot of artists, having a dedicated space to create and contemplate their creative works can be a much-needed positivity boost as well as a sanctuary. For many within the Centrepieces community, having a dedicated studio place has been a major boost.

This month, The Creative has caught up with some Centrepieces artists currently enjoying the benefits of a studio space and asks them what having a studio space means to them.

### **Sally**

"I really enjoy my studio space. It helps gets me out of the house. It's a safe space where I know I can express my thoughts and feelings through art. Having the studio space has helped me blossom as an artist, empowering me to learn new styles and techniques. Art is my sanctuary; it empowers me and helps me to focus. One of my recent pieces – The Lion – embodies the warrior, expressing my resilience and complimenting talking therapies in enabling a stronger sense of self."



### **Dawn / Pinkie**

"For me, having a studio space at Centrepieces helps by knowing I have somewhere to come of the house and be 'me' as a person, in a dedicated space without labels. It's definitely given me more confidence, allowing me to express myself through art in a safe and peaceful environment. When I was first offered my studio space I couldn't believe my luck – having my own space to create and express myself through art in a place that's free of judgement."

*For more information on studio spaces at Centrepieces and current availability, please contact Nicki at [centrepiecespopup@gmail.com](mailto:centrepiecespopup@gmail.com).*

## “I Dream of the Genie” by Michael Armstrong

Cometh the Genie with the light brown hair, as the revived '45 plays!

*The genie of the lamp grants one wish and one wish only.*

Genie, many would wish for material wealth, riches beyond Eldorado. A better wish, however, would be for everlasting peace. An everlasting, permanent peace in the world. This would be especially desirable at present; a Christmas wish for all religions, faiths and people. This would come between Christmas and Remembrance Day in November - a tribute to the fallen in the two World Wars, in conflicts and *total war*; civilians and animals included.

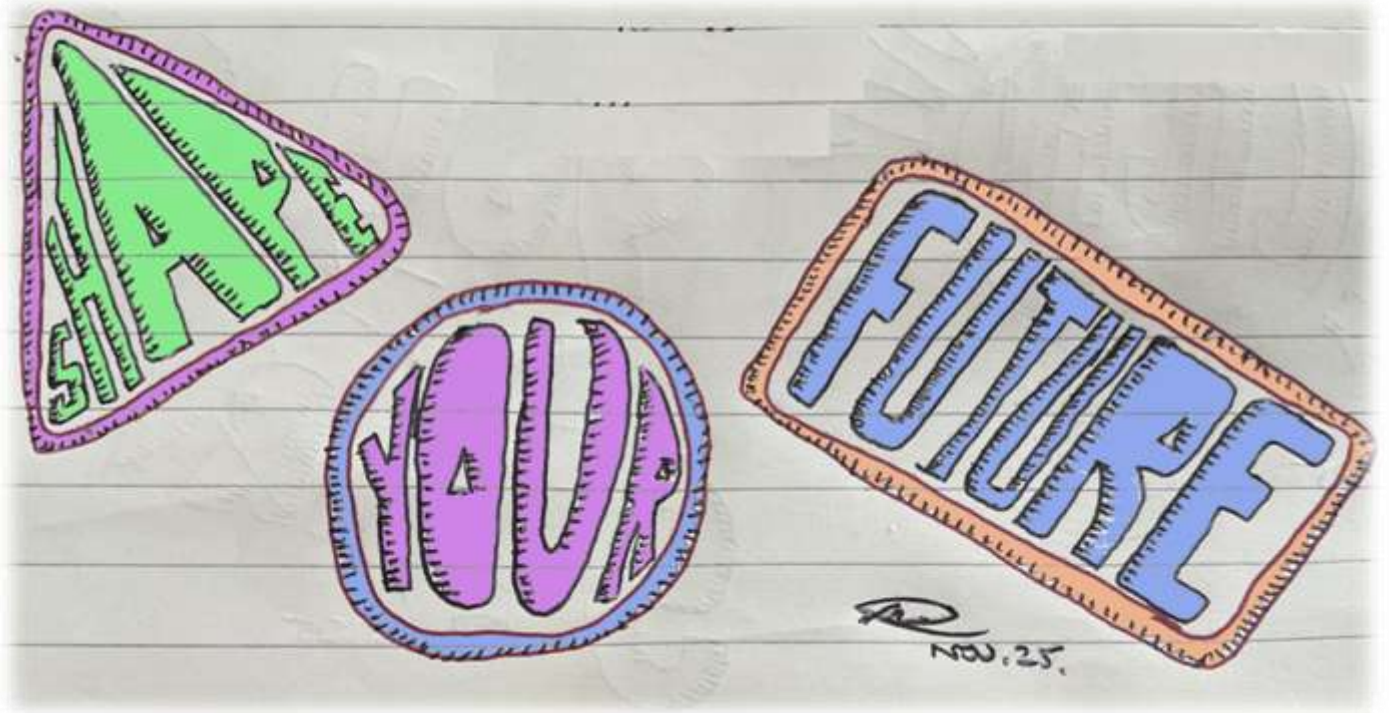


More recent still are the wars now raging. Leaders of these have talked, and talks we are told, are making progress. The man in the street is just that. Thousands and thousands of people have been given a pile of rubble and little more. Constant bombardment of displaced persons and of those still alive, needs a genie's wish in order to cease. Some supplies, some of the aid workers have reached the starving. Ceasefires with military action continuing, have granted minimal relief with food, water and medical help.

So come on Genie, it *could* be done. Grant the wish, many others are with you. There's more than a peace prize at stake. More than an Aladdin's Cave full of good intentions.

The Winter Fuel Allowance will help fire your lamp. Genuine World peace as a basis for others to build upon. International cooperation will build many new 'Jerusalem's'. End the misery of dark, mindless wars we have seen until now.

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## “The Black Friday Genie” by Matthew Delaney

Another Black Friday. Another chaotic day of moving through endless seas of shoppers all hunting for the same pre-Christmas bargains.

And guess what? – My “click and collect” had “got-up and gone”, leaving me empty-handed and deflated worse than the tyres on the ancient Vauxhall Cavalier casually “parked” across the double-yellows by the shop.

With takeaway coffee in hand, I sat on the bench in the retail park, sipping away while watching the tides of human traffic flow and collide. It was then I noticed the old lamp sitting next to me. It wasn't mine but there was no-one else nearby; and I was certain it hadn't been there when I'd sat down.



It was old – probably antique in that “ropey piece of junk” sort-of way rather than the “rush it to Sotherbys” vibe. It had been finely crafted – the craftsmanship showing delicate and fine detailing on the Middle Eastern oil-lamp, with its smooth curves and elegant patterning. Picking it up, I lightly brushed one side – feeling the cool, weathered brass tingle slightly under my touch.

To my surprise, a small plume of purple smoke preceded the arrival of a genie – his torso seamlessly blending into the main wispy plume coming from the lamp's spout. On the genie's painted face was a lightning bolt running diagonally from top to bottom.

“I AM...MARTIN!” he announced theatrically.

Mystified, I struggled for what to say.

“Sorry, why do you look like David Bowie?”

“No I don't!” huffed the genie indignantly, “I'm more ‘Bryan Ferry’ if anything...”

“You're LITERALLY Bowie's Aladdin Sane right now.”

“Hey lad, this was MY look first, got it? Now then...you having' this wish or what? I've come all the way from Barnsley for this; by coach! It wasn't pleasant!”

That was when I really noticed the genie's broad Northern accent – the subtle inflections and enunciation around certain syllables characterizing his down-to-Earth, no-nonsense tone.

"A wish? Right. Just the one?"

The genie nodded, shrugging gently.

"Yep; that's the deal, I'm afraid. Cutbacks."

"Oh, okay...erm, well; there was that new sofa I've been after...or maybe something for other people – maybe 'world peace'?"

The genie rolled his eyes and groaned.

"Don't even go there! Do I LOOK like a miracle worker?!"

"No, you *look* like David Bowie – we've been through this. Besides, it's a wish, isn't it? And you ARE a genie..."

"Exactly – **ONE** genie, not the 'salvation of all mankind'! Now come on...I've gotta' be in Wrexham by ten."

In that moment, I pondered what I really wanted; what really mattered to me. And suddenly, Black Friday and all of its chaos seemed like faint background noise. Suddenly I began to seriously consider what would truly make me happy. With a nervous smile, I looked at the genie and made my wish.

"Right, well, in that case; how about..."



## “A Fresh Perspective”

**Nicola Wills**

Leaving the old year behind  
With all the mishaps and mistakes  
It had been a steep learning curve for me  
Rekindling old friends reviving my creativity  
All of which had been a mixed experience indeed

Out with the old bring in the new  
It's the repetitive thoughts which keep us stuck in the past  
And prevent us from enjoying the beauty of the moment  
Time to move forward and look towards the future  
And have new enjoyable experiences to look forward to.

## “After the Fall”

**Lesley Cody**

If you take a walk along Hadrian's Wall  
Where green hills drift and the sheep still call  
You'll find a hollow where once there stood  
A sycamore, ancient, proud and good  
It braved the storms and the summer's glow  
Watched centuries come, watched centuries go  
Travellers paused for the view it gave  
Its leaves a crown, its trunk so brave



But now the dip holds an empty place  
Felled by human hands, a deep disgrace  
The dawn feels colder, the light more spare  
Without those branches to warm the air

But the soil still hums with a gentle cheer  
As if it dreams of the shade once here  
And underfoot lies a quiet surprise —  
Young shoots prepared to reach the skies

And one day soon, in that cherished space  
New trees will stand and reclaim their place

## **“Be Still the Night”**

***Matthew Delaney***

Oh, how gentle midnight bloom,  
How starlit twinkle pierce the gloom.  
Veiled moonlight, crisp as snow,  
Falls around with diamond glow.  
Hear the whispers on the wind,  
A lonesome chorus sweet to sing.  
Be still the night, so tranquil, fair,  
Be everything that true hearts dare.

Restore to us what daylight hides,  
The truth concealed from open eyes.  
A breeze to salve cruel wounds of sun,  
Restoring what may come undone.  
Our dance sweeping as evening tide,  
Refusing that which bid us hide.  
Be still the night, a dream unfurled,  
Forevermore upon this world.



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Oh, the tender be the grace,  
Of witnessed feeling in this place.

Sweet Mars, a ruby set in sky,  
Bejewelled for those whose flame decry.

Shelter deep in gentle light,  
Nevermore a tear in sight.

Be still the night, so tranquil, fair,  
To those of us who gather there.

Be still the night, so tranquil, fair,  
Be everything that true hearts dare.

## Puzzle Corner

B	B	S	H	O	W	E	R	S	B	K	L
R	E	V	I	V	A	L	C	E	P	O	H
I	E	P	Z	J	R	A	L	A	M	B	S
G	T	E	D	Z	M	F	O	N	E	L	N
H	D	T	R	A	T	E	S	E	V	O	P
T	Q	A	B	L	H	Q	J	S	I	S	C
D	F	L	W	A	B	U	D	T	H	S	V
G	R	E	E	N	A	I	A	A	J	O	Y
E	E	P	N	R	O	N	F	D	T	M	U
N	S	K	W	E	E	O	F	P	N	S	C
E	H	R	T	V	M	X	O	O	E	I	H
S	N	B	U	G	E	F	D	L	C	T	I
I	X	J	B	U	L	B	S	E	S	K	C
S	E	A	S	O	N	R	L	H	U	M	K
R	E	N	E	W	A	L	S	J	N	P	S

REJUVENATION

EQUINOX

WARMTH

BULBS

FRESH

SUN

REVIVAL

BUD

GREEN

BEE

VERNAL

HUM

RENEWAL

GENESIS

PETAL

NEST

JOY

TADPOLE

DAWN

SEASON

BRIGHT

CHICKS

SHOWERS

LAMBS

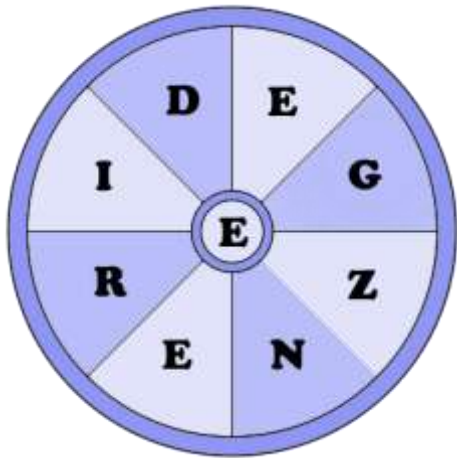
HOPE

BLOSSOM

HIVE

SCENT

BUG

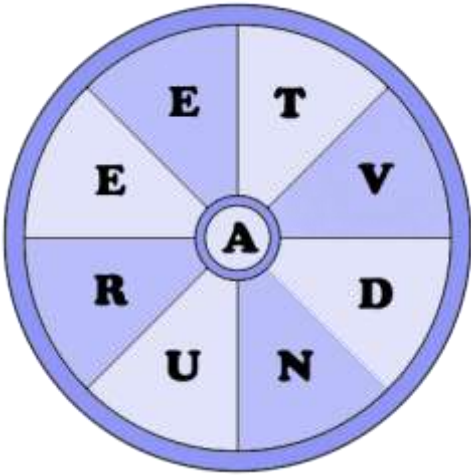


## Word Wheels

How many words can YOU find within the word wheels? Can you discover the special nine-letter word in each one?

### EXTRA CHALLENGE

Try giving yourself a time limit to really test your mind.



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## Quick Quiz

1. What special promise do people traditionally make at the start of each year?
2. Which cultural celebration early in the year is celebrated with an associated animal or creature?
3. What flower is traditionally associated with St David's Day?
4. How often does a leap year occur?
5. The practice of certain animals sleeping through winter is called what?



## Issue 03 – “New Beginnings”

*(Jan. 2026)*



### Puzzle Solutions

**Word Wheels:** Energized; Adventure.

**Quiz:** 1. Resolution; 2. Chinese New Year; 3. Daffodil; 4. 4; 5. Hibernation.