**After Easter** *by Aoife Mannix*

The sun returns.

Shy but confident

in the crown of a daffodil

dressed up as a king,

going to a party with pirates

and superheroes swinging

in a tree house by the owl’s island.

Far from the icy rain

of relentless missiles falling

on foaming children

who have no answers to questions

they should never have to ask.

Ariel burns inside her tree.

Her branches not touching

but touched by yellow leaves

too old to know better,

as the birds rebel in their innocence.

Their songs humming in the wind

as if this April were the first resurrection.

These green shoots unsullied,

not twisted in the damp roots

of a hunger so deep

it swallows half the world.

The white blossom in a halo

of green rises up

over the edge of the hill.

Blackbirds celebrate

a morning freshly pressed

as clean sheets on a bed

where you are sleeping,

curled up like a small bear.

Nothing prepared me for

the length of your eyelashes.

Nothing prepared me for

the drone of an aeroplane

skimming the roof tops.

The bombs whisper down

on other people’s children.

You say you want to live forever,

like a Time Lord or Jesus.

Your face is the last chocolate egg

hidden in my jewellery box.

I want to promise you

I will always come back,

but I am afraid

of the holes in my hands.