

## **The Attenuation of Luck**

Lynsey May & Mandy Price

*We grew up together in Edinburgh; one of us becoming a writer, the other a scientist.*

'You're lucky if you walk away with only a broken rib.'

Margo knows it's relief that makes her mother so peevish. It's not the first time that tone has accompanied them to A&E and it's grown worse every year since gran died.

'I don't feel lucky.'

'Be thankful you're here to feel at all.'

She goes in alone, too old (too proud) to ask her mother to hold her hand. Standing in front of the fiercely whirring x-ray tube, Margo wonders if it can see the troublemaking gene that skipped a generation.

In the consultation room, the doctor displays Margo's insides on a screen and sighs.

'What's wrong?' Margo's mum asks.

'Nothing, really. I mean, there is a fracture, but it's paper-thin and should heal up nicely. It's just... well.'

They look up at the gradients of Margo; her pale ribs that halted the x-rays; the thin crack that allowed them through; gossamer grey lungs and there, in her stomach, something whiter than a star. Their hands clasp in fear but the patch is no ominous mass of cells, it's a bright, perfect four-leaf clover.

'Maybe you swallowed...?' The doctor says and suddenly Margo is four years old again, climbing a tree in gran's back garden, thinking that her mouth is the best place to keep the charm safe. Then the coughing, the admission, the fruitless back thumping and the decision that no, they wouldn't tell mum.

'What is that?'

'Gran's good luck. I can keep it, can't I?'

Lynsey May lives, loves and writes in Edinburgh. Her fiction has found its way into various journals and anthologies. She received Scottish Book Trust New Writers Award in 2013, a Robert Louis Stevenson Fellowship in 2015 and a spot as Cove Park's Emerging Scottish Writer in 2016.

Mandy Price is a physicist and science editor who has worked through the electromagnetic spectrum from applied optics to x-ray imaging. As a medical physicist in a large London hospital, she helps maintain the right balance between image quality and radiation dose for examinations using ionising radiation.