

I'm Hoping Will Grow

Chloë Jacquet

**The sky is the colour of the cornflowers
I'm hoping will grow.**

**The sun uses its rays like straws,
sucking us out of our homes.**

**This day is a French kind of day,
nonchalantly shrugging its shoulders.**

**Lazy hours stretch out ahead of me
on clock-shaped sun loungers.**

**The air is syrup,
thick and still,
muffling the sound of birds
and the ticking
of the line holding the masts
of the gazebo
moored in my neighbours' garden.**

**This feels like holiday -
the warmth, the wait -
but where is my family?**

I don't holiday alone.

Perhaps I do now.

It's not so bad.

I can do this.

**Just look at the sky,
it's the colour of the cornflowers
I'm hoping will grow.**



Hi,

My name is Chloë. I am fortunate enough to be able to continue working from home during the “lockdown” which helps give my days and weeks some structure. My family all live abroad and I haven’t seen them since Christmas. I was supposed to have seen some of them twice already since this all started so I really miss them. There are a lot of repeated little griefs as things we look forward to are cancelled or postponed. But I’m learning new things about myself, about my resilience, my ability to adapt and be patient with the situation as well as with myself. Also being less busy has allowed more space in my mind to think, notice and feel. Those are some of the good things I have taken from this that I hope to carry with me in the new world that comes after.

Understanding that we’re all making sacrifices makes me feel less alone in all this and it brings a real sense of unity and that we are all in it together. Scoffing chocolate and watching rubbish TV also helps! I hope this lovely publication helps you in some way too.

Chloë

pip people

T.S. Idiot

in this unprecedented dent

on our collective lives

space is growing for some of us to bloom.

space for we, the chronically anxious

the bent and abandoned

we who never did fit in this world anyway;

and now the world doesn't fit itself.

we, whose idea of a good time

is taking a toaster to a water park

just to see what happens.

we, who have been waiting for a kinder world

since our heart was first broken.

we, who have been tenderised by the meat mallet of modern living

the f@%#ed up and forgotten

the ones who thought ourselves rotten to the core

are realising that, all this time,

we were full of pips

tiny cases of infinite potential

sewn in some kind of rubble

- i know that we'll be orchards

when all of this is over



T.S. Idiot, aka The Friendliest Chaotic-Good Punk Poet of the SouthWest - AKA Tom Stockley is the finest purveyor of joy, silliness, costumes, and mashups you will see this side of the River Avon. Tom is actually a big inspiration for this project following his work with *Alonely*, a collection of stories based on research by members of Bristol Charity *BS3 Community* and the University of Bristol. *Alonely* aims to make the experiences of older people more visible as a way of encouraging dialogue between communities, professionals, academics and artists.

Aside from his being an all round good egg and helping in the community he is also renowned for performing in Hot Dog Costumes or very little at all, his sharp wit and hilarious poems often poke fun at (whilst never mocking) society and it's strange trappings. Fiercely outspoken, political advocate, occasional anarchist (mainly after he's had his lunch and a little nap) Tom is someone who keeps challenging poetry to be more than it already is by encouraging collaboration between punk musicians and poets and visual artists and mexican wrestlers. He hosts his own radio show called *Idiot Talk* where the conversation ranges from your favourite poet to your favourite potato, both as I'm sure you'll agree, equally important questions.

He hopes you are doing well and remembering to dress up in a silly way even if only for yourself. It can do a lot of good.

Repurposed

Harula Ladd

**How close
other worlds are.**

**The bee heard your endearments,
Love, Sweetheart, Beauty.
Left you believing you, not
the sun, had coaxed it back
into the garden.**

**Who guides who after all?
You walked further, higher,
found a tree with a bench all the way around.
The view settled over you. Stillness drew
wisdom by gentle osmosis from the tree not yet
fully in leaf. You stood, disturbing
a pigeon and a moment of jealousy
as you watched its wings lift it into limitlessness.**

**Later, you passed a man mulching newly planted
hedge saplings, opening a conversation
by guessing wrong, so he named them;
*Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Beech.***

**Each with a layer of snugly fitting cardboard
neatly repurposed, covered in a layer
of fresh wood chippings
to keep the weeds at bay.**



A popular poet and performer on the South Devon scene, Exeter slam champion, and co-host of Word Stir!, you're drawn into Harula's world longing for answers and come out with mud on your shoes and stars in your eyes. Original, transformative, and possessing of a unique emotional intelligence, Harula's poetry wraps itself around you with the warmth of one of her mum's brilliant handmade cardigans.

Currently living with her mum in the midlands until all of this blows over, until she can return again to Totnes. Harula writes poems to order on any subject, giving herself a strict three minute time limit to offer you something personalised and perfect and wonderful. Writing and nature are keeping her sane right now and her poems ooze wonder and the wild in equal measure.

Bubbles in a Warzone

Helen Sheppard

It takes time to feel comfortable in a war zone.
At 8pm your family clap, holler hope, give thanks.
I take five-minutes, slurp of coffee, half a doughnut.
My hands crack from their thousand-a-day scrubs.
I cool you, drain you, cleanse you, oxygenate lungs
with their lesions from beautiful microscopic aliens.
A tornado of experts keep you here flatten this curve.
I'm raw with sores behind my ears from mask elastic
cuts. Stitch groups make headbands with big buttons,
and builders send PPE, their protection in demolition.
Your ventilation soundtrack: breath shunts and beeps.
I'm 'practiced' not 'hardy', cry briefly as beds fall empty,
staff share an inappropriate joke and my smile is back.
In the next bed, a sister (mild asthma), a dad (angina),
a mum (diabetic), a youngster misses playing football.
I find a tube in my coat pocket, given instead of confetti
at a wedding. I blow bubbles at the end of tough shifts.
We meet in this pandemic together, intimate strangers.
Tonight we stay back, share donated prosecco, order
takeaways paid for in kind. Tomorrow I will sleep.



We've had the lovely Helen Sheppard here before and gosh, we're pleased to have her again. In case you don't know Helen, she is one of the team who run Satellite of Love, which is an open mic night in Bristol that encourages poets of all forms especially those who speak in her mother tongues. She's a former midwife and has had poems in "These Are The Hands" a poetry anthology celebrating the NHS. She is a warm, loving, caring, thoughtful poet who one time when she came round my house for dinner ended up weeding the garden whilst I cooked. She makes phenomenal jam and is in the top three friendliest poets that I can think of competition.

Doorstop

Melanie Branton

Let's cut ourselves
a doorstep, for us
and for our neighbours,
spongy and soft
beneath that hard, winter crust.
And, if left too long and dry inside,
we're still good for toasting.
Let's warm ourselves under the grill,
slather on yellow kindness.
Let it melt right through.

Though the days are cold now,
let's open up laughter
we preserved for the winter
in a glass jar. Twist hard enough
and it giggles and pops
as the seal breaks. Spread
strawberries and cherries,
June still red and plump
with syrup to sweeten
the frost.



Melanie Branton is a performance poet from North Somerset. She has two published collections, *Can You See Where I'm Coming From?* (Burning Eye, 2018) and *My Cloth-Eared Heart* (Oversteps, 2017) and is currently writing a spoken word show about the English language.

Melanie is understated in the extreme, her work is truly astounding. She's too modest to mention it here (so I'll do it for her) but she's been published across a veritable wealth of fancy journals and the breadth of her work is in itself an achievement, ranging from comic verses on grammar, or dating, to touching, moving commentary on boarding school life, and personal stories involving religion and it's occasional lack of grace. She always finds that rare balance of humour and poignancy that people always search for, making folks cry with laughter or otherwise.

She's currently offering updates in the form of grammatorials, to help people who like me, don't have anything further than a secondary school education, to help understand the finer points of English Language and is doing it in a fun, engaging way without being condescending. I met Melanie performing poetry on the scene in Bristol so we have performed together quite frequently and she's always been endlessly supportive and most importantly kind. I think kindness gets forgotten a lot, but never Melanie, she's patient and helpful and kind.

Folded Bones.

Alice Downing

**Melt me sane again. Puddles of flesh where the sun soaked me through.
Just Bones.**

**Make me calloused, stronger where I break. Dry me free of a stirred
stomach and gather up my chattered teeth - markers in the mud that
prove I was once.**

**If I had no buzz to hold me up I would clatter in on myself. Folded Bones.
But this fizzing sickness keeps me buoyant. I hiccup nauseous air into
the faces of people I can't talk to but it's ok. These unblinking screens
can't smell how scared I am.**

**I have always dropped things, slipping through my fingers, shining cats
cradle ribbons of plans and things and people slither down to my
awkward feet.**

**There are holes in my tights. Wriggled toes cut against threads, a
reminder - I am still walking forwards. I think.**



Hello,

I'm Alice. I write poems and make theatre and I love growing things.

I've recently re-discovered that you can still find joy in things you're not good at and so I now also roller skate.

Reading everyone's writing has been such a comfort, I hope you're enjoying it too.

I've recently moved back to Bristol, which is my home, and I'm very much looking forward to getting back out in it. I'm going to hold on to people who want it for such a long, long time.

I hope you're all doing as well as you can be. I miss you, all of you.