

## Keeping the Lamp On So It Feels Like An Afternoon Nap

*Pascal Vine*

You came from mud, you say.  
And you'll go back, calcium trinkets  
and a fist full of gritted teeth. Useless  
bits. You don't want a cluttered life.

Well,  
the wind is a kind of underground,  
and the sun can write on your skin  
a kindness of freckles and murmur  
vitamins into you. And that's a somewhat  
home, and by home I mean a secret  
contentment you keep from yourself.

You can sleep. Get buried.  
And your head will be empty  
of thistles and plans.  
Every home needs a vague garden.  
Room for frail roots  
and the weeds you'll keep.



**Pascal Vine is a performance poet from the west country who enjoys describing things in the touchy-feeliest ways possible. Pascal has been coping surprisingly well in lockdown; sewing hearts for Bristol ICU's Heart to Heart programme, baking jam tarts and banana bread every other day and harassing their indignant chickens for cuddles. They've been writing brighter poetry more recently, or at least finding bright sides more easily.**

## **What's Changed**

*John J. Gordon*

**Bearded man sits in a café  
Lion-headed stick at his feet  
His eyes darkened with pockets of aged virtues.**

**His swollen hands ache and throb  
And pound like coronary attack, in his  
Wrists he feels needle sharp points.**

**Once a placid, languid lake  
Now without a fix of coffee beans  
He becomes a tsunami that can destroy  
Any and all in his path.**

**With a hole in his heart he sits alone  
Never needed by any from his past  
Just alone and no more dead than yesterday.**



**John is a performance poet, jazz musician and actor who originally hails from Warwickshire in the West Midlands. His unique and vintage takes on poetry has been part of his image since his days at university. He has always enjoyed the opportunity to perform and writes about what he knows. He also has recently released a jazz album (available on SoundCloud) A well known face on the Bath Poetry scene his support and contributions to the artistic southwest are never ending.**

## **Peeing on the Megabus**

*Becky Povall*

**Peeing on the Megabus,**

**I've got 3 hours; no need to rush.**

**I'm taking my life in my hands.**

**Should I sit? It's hard to stand!**

**Someone's left breakfast, lunch and tea,**

**Piled up high for all to see.**

**I try the flush but it won't budge.**

**Thinking it might need a nudge.**

**I look around but face defeat,**

**I'll have to hover above the seat.**

**Peeing on a stranger's turd;**

**This core workout is quite absurd.**

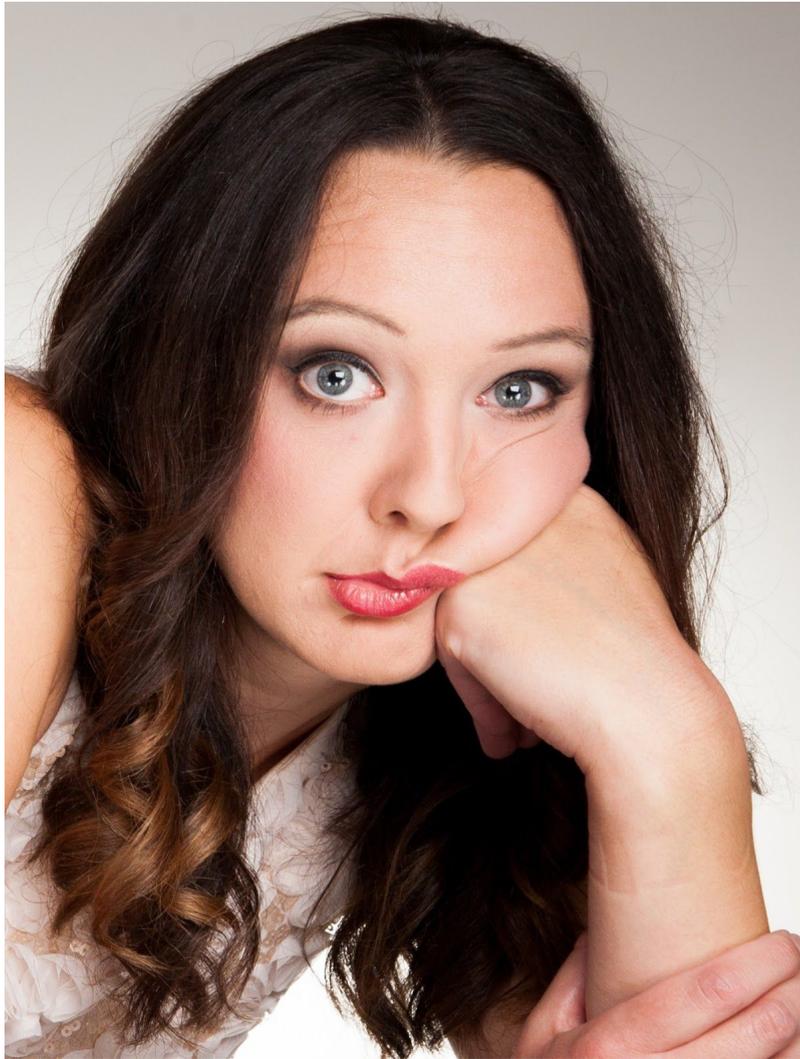
**From a wipe I will refrain,**

**As there's no soap, so I maintain,**

**Hand cleanliness with a little shake,**

**Then back upstairs, my seat to take.**

**Clunk click.**



**Ex-teacher, ex-RAF Officer; current dog owner, stand-up comedian and improviser with degree in Rocket Science. Their past is shrouded in mystery and intrigue. Many people have tried to get to the bottom of Becky Povall but those who managed, were never heard from again.**

**You only make lemonade when you're sad**

*Lara Mersom*

**We talked of quitting bad habits  
as we shared my last cigarette  
& I wiped away unkept promises from your cheek  
letting you speak about how you'd been hurt again  
by a guy that softened his harsh kiss with his poetic language  
& wore soft baggy shirts with heel biting docs  
& had spent too many nights jerking off  
under a dull vanilla cover.**

**You were sat there picking pieces of lemon pulp  
from underneath your nails  
heart stinging like the sharp pain of lemon  
in freshly bitten skin  
I could see that your fingertips had started to wear thin  
like your patience.**

**You told me about how you had kept yourself busy  
in the days immediately after  
& how you had made sugarless homemade lemonade  
in the winter sun  
& how you'd watched the harsh light as it shone  
into your empty kitchen  
highlighting freshly cleaned appliances  
that had been left untouched  
to gather the settling dust  
from last year**

**You weren't prepared to feel like this**



**We love having Lara back in poems to keep you company: in their own words I am that person that has a bedroom floor littered with books & disappears at gatherings to hide in my bedroom to write about how great my friends are. You can sometimes find me typing on the typewriter that you probably assumed was a decorative piece, whilst donning a man's shirt that I thrifted in Paris. I will probably write poetry about you if you give me a book and write in the front of it or if you just tell me that Attenborough would be proud of my Parisian shirt.**

## **Three Plates**

*Willis the Poet*

**The artist overhears.**

**“I don’t really like this one Jean. What’s it supposed to be?”**

**“It’s abstract Marg. It isn’t supposed to be anything.”**

**The artist sighs.**

**“It’s an allegory,” he says, “depicting the vacuous political landscape that exists in the metaphorical subconscious, a crisis-point if you like, when civilisation collapses in on itself and the core as we know it is lost.”**

**“I see.” says Marg. “Did it take you long to paint it?”**

**The artist reflects.**

**“Would you like a cup of tea?” he asks.**

**“Oh yes please!” Marg replies. “Just a splash of milk in both.”**

**The artist brews.**

**Meanwhile, Marg and Jean continue to stare at the picture, unsure of what the metaphorical subconscious is exactly.**

**“Do you think it’s the right way up?”**

**“Of course it’s the right way up Marg!”**

**“Well, I like the colours.” says Marg**

**“Shush, he’s coming back!”**

**The artist serves.**

**“Here we are ladies, milk no sugar.”**

**“Thank you very much. Marg was just saying that’s it’s a striking use of green and such a nice frame too.”**

**The artist considers.**

**“Well green is my favourite colour.” he says.**

**The artist thinks to himself.**

**He wonders how long it takes for the full effect of arsenic to kick in, as he watches Marg and Jean from the window, heading for their bus stop.**



**Another returner to the pages Rick Sanders, aka Willis the Poet, is an established comedy stand-up poet based in the mighty West Midlands. He is a regular headliner and featured poet on the Birmingham circuit and is also active in the flourishing spoken word scene in the rest of the region, his sticky sausage-fingers in as many pies as he can.**

**On the national stage, Willis won the 1st round of the InkBomb slam competition in Bristol and was runner up in the Wolverhampton Literary Festival Slam in 2017. He has performed in Manchester at the Evidently World War Four slam competition, the Hammer & Tongue Slam in Bristol and also at the Stafford Gatehouse on the open mic at the Bang Said The Gun tour. He has appeared at the Cheltenham Poetry Festival, in the poetry tent at Lakefest, and as the emerging talent at Apples & Snake's Bright Smoke event with the RSC in Stratford, wowing the organisers with his comic verse.**

**Willis has set up a monthly poetry slam event in Dudley to bring more spoken word to the Black Country and hosts a series of Comedy Poetry Nights in the Midlands and beyond. He is also host of On the Mic and Whisky & Words in Birmingham and presents Brum Radio Poets, both as a monthly radio show and as a weekly podcast.**

## quarantine realness

*TS Idiot*

quarantine is a dog walking itself on its own lead,  
and a man cleaning his driveway for the 4th time this week.

quarantine is an unemployed clown's makeup  
melting in the heat of an 18-30s package holiday to Mallorca

quarantine is repeatedly beating a rusty horse shoe

to reverse the bad luck,

and wondering if horses are even real.

quarantine is the sound of a Tijuana brass band

covering the Beatles' greatest hits

and eBay suggesting that you buy a live millipede

as an incredibly abstract cure for loneliness.

quarantine is a party hat that doesn't fit,

for a party that doesn't exist

and a woman pouring orange juice

into a sieve.

quarantine is watching awkward sex scenes on TV

with just your dad for company

and hitting your shin on the stairs, twice

(only the first time was an accident).

quarantine is is the penultimate episode

of a series so mediocre, you will never see the finale.

quarantine is all the chimpanzees we sent in to space,

sadly orbiting the planet and experiencing the overview effect

in a manner that is poignant beyond the sign language they were taught.



**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.**