

WRITING FOR WELLBEING IN WORCESTERSHIRE

# YOUR VOICE MATTERS

## SAFE SPACES



**BITE**  
POETRY  
PRESS

ANTHOLOGY 2023

**“To write a poem is an act of resistance.  
To share it, a revolution.”**

**Joelle Taylor, patron of The Word Association CIC**

## **Herefordshire and Worcestershire Wellbeing and Recovery College**

The aim of the college is to increase awareness and understanding of recovery and self-management, while breaking down the stigmas relating to mental health. As mental illness can affect us all, in fact, one in four people will experience a mental illness at some point in their lives.

The college offers a wide range of learning opportunities with a focus on wellbeing and recovery. Evidence tells us that by coming together and learning more about health and wellbeing we can make the most of our strengths, talents and resources and feel more confident in managing our own mental health and wellbeing, whether our mental health is good, or not so good. Community First are the lead organisation for the partnership which makes up the wellbeing and recovery college.

Enquiries about the college can be directed to:  
[HW\\_WellbeingRecoveryCollege@comfirst.org.uk](mailto:HW_WellbeingRecoveryCollege@comfirst.org.uk)

<https://hwwellbeingandrecoverycollege.org.uk/>

## **The Word Association**

The Word Association's passion is celebrating the stories of marginalised communities and making sure their voices get heard. They are a not for profit organisation who bring writing workshops and opportunities in publishing and performance to underrepresented groups. They run regular courses, workshops, mindfulness writing walks and performance events. Producing numerous anthologies of community poetry every year.

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# YOUR VOICE MATTERS: SAFE SPACES ANTHOLOGY 2023

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Ali McIndoe, Gem Lamsdale, Gaynor Pritchard,  
Natalie Carr, Rochelle Crawford, Becky D,  
Elen Downward, Lahari Parchuri, and Rosie England

Produced by  
The Word Association  
with



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## Ode To A Dead Poet

Sarah Colloby

O how I loathed thy flowery phrases  
Imposed on my eighties classroom  
Thou spoke not to a West Midlands teen  
Chained to thy words by the O level board  
No love had I for Ancient Greece, hemlock and nightingales  
Yet did I cram into memory thy tedious quotes  
Hoping for grades to instantly forget  
I cared little for ripe, harvested fruit  
My soul was fed by telly and seven-inch singles  
No desire to wander amongst misty furrows had I  
When mates waited by the bus stop  
And thus I left thee with my dumped schoolbag  
O tortured, romantic, loquacious bard  
Swiftly to unlearn thy wretched verse  
Though forty years on I hear thy voice more kindly  
With musings of mellow maturity and the nearness of death  
And hopes of drifting away in painless sleep

## Thin

Sarah Colloby

You look thin, it seems you workout now  
Twenty thousand daily steps keeping up with a younger wife  
The teeth are new too, the eyes I still recognise  
Brown, twinkly, shallow but warm  
Expert in avoiding the uncomfortable  
Diverted from pain and injustice while you gather Emirates gold  
How much is enough?  
I search for a trace of that sixth form boy  
The one who wore cowboy boots and drove his mum's Hillman Imp  
And played me records as we lay on his bed  
Where it might have ended  
If we hadn't married instead  
Two decades spent not knowing why  
Failing to make it all fit  
But that was then  
Today is a civilised reunion, our daughter's day  
A heady bouquet of extended family  
Full of fresh and faded blooms  
Where we hug away the distant trauma  
To reminisce selected stories that sidestep the thin ice of truth  
Sensing those ancient wounds again as we smile and nod  
To part once more without closure, just wishing each other well  
Our veneers remain thin  
Like the glue that came unstuck  
Though the bond never lets us go

## Her Stories

Sarah Colloby

A child peeps through her bedroom curtains, awed by the Teesside sky  
She should be asleep but the lights are so pretty  
As they chase across the night  
Searching for planes with bellies full of death  
Sometimes her father takes her hand  
They walk to the shelter without her mother  
Whose resolve is bombproof  
If they take her brand new house, they're taking her with it.

She stands in the Town Hall in her blue chiffon frock  
Just turned eighteen  
Watching the good looking lad  
Dark haired and tempting, moving like Sinatra  
He's dancing with disliked Dorothy  
That's not going to stop her  
A cut in at the 'Excuse Me' and he walks her home  
Though her dad waits, at midnight, in his car outside.

The nervous proposal  
The fifty year marriage  
The babies that came  
The children that left  
The moves to new places  
The homes that were made  
The people she nursed  
The people she lost

She tells stories that no-one else can  
Ambitions, adventures and loves that belie an old woman's face  
Stitching tapestries from days long lived, words knit into a timeless web  
To hold her children, their children and beyond  
Giving them roots, gifting them wings  
These stories are a golden map  
Recalling the road so far, lighting that to come  
Catch them, keep them, while chances remain

## Power

Sarah Colloby

You are big so you are right  
Power races through your hands and voice  
I have none while I live in your space  
As an unformed, believing child  
Held hostage to your rage  
Deserving punishment because I make mistakes  
Spilt sauce, missing slippers, forgotten chores  
I don't understand  
And you must correct me  
Train me to submit to louder and larger  
To classroom tortures  
To gaslighting partners  
To assume that I'm wrong  
To swallow my anger  
To bury my pain  
The sound of the slap has long left me  
The lesson never will

## In The Absence Of Sorry

Sarah Colloby

I didn't ask permission, you didn't give consent  
I won't wait for apology, it never will be sent  
I haven't seen your face for years, you're not around and yet  
I've lived imprisoned by the past, entangled in a net  
Twisted, trapped inside it, failing to move on  
You squat inside my headspace, it's time that you were gone  
And so I will forgive you, that's right, you're off the hook  
It stayed embedded in my soul until I took a look  
At my life now and what I need to do to set it free  
I've realised that letting go is not for you but me  
And all those years when I held out for sorry, well, they're done  
I'll never get that time back but please don't think you won  
Forgiving you is my stuff, you're not involved at all  
It's really not your business, it's me who makes the call  
To focus on the way ahead, aiming for the sky  
I'm feeling so much lighter now  
Good luck, farewell, goodbye



## Strawberries

Sarah Colloby

Each morning a few more peep out, dangling jewels of fruit suspended in baskets. He waits, nose pressed to the door until the key turns and sockless feet can escape onto the balcony. A recent morning ritual, a ruse to get his teeth cleaned, let's pick the strawberries, how many shall we get? One two three four five six seven eight nine, we have ten! My not quite three-year-old grandson runs to tell his grampy, count them again! Yes, there are ten sweetly swollen strawberries. He chooses the plumpest, reddest, juiciest berries to plop into his breakfast cereal and beams as only very small children do, just joyful in this moment, squishing them between his teeth.

He won't remember this when he's grown and life is less simple. When his grandmother is old and uninteresting, if she's there at all. So I keep this moment, tucked away with all the others, safe in the deepest part of my being, something precious that was shared, as fleetingly sweet as summer strawberries.

## Absent Friends

Sarah Colloby

They watch when I wince  
At my face with its failing upholstery  
Hopeless as it clings for dear life  
Sliding off the conspiring jawline  
Pulling my youth with it  
They sit in the mirror  
Heather, Miriam, Sally and Kate

They're there when I groan  
From playground stiffening aches  
My children's children airborne on swings  
Breathless and flushed  
Defiant muscles cursing me  
They perch on the perimeter  
Heather, Miriam, Sally and Kate

They smile as I cry pointless tears  
For things changed, for years gone  
While somehow forgetting  
This ageing abundance, not given to all,  
Of love, laughter, of priceless time  
That ran out much younger for  
Heather, Miriam, Sally and Kate

## Pause

Sarah Colloby

Today I will heed my body  
Rather than drown out its pleas for rest  
With busyness and that sense of guilt  
Always kicking me for doing nothing

Today we will sit down together  
With tea and a biscuit  
The word lazy forbidden  
Judgement on pause  
My body will talk and I will listen  
To the soreness cracking my hands  
The rusting joints and weary muscles  
The muggy mass in my head  
The smothering cloak of fatigue

Today I will be kind not cross  
Just be with my submerged spirit  
Allow its caught breath to surface  
I'll tether the monkey mind  
Feed it grapes and bananas  
Ler it quietly munch then take a nap

Today my face stays bare  
My hair unfussed  
My smile unfixed  
My chat switched off  
Today the mask is not required  
The world outside is paused

## Failed Hobbyist

Sheena Sparks

A dreamer, a schemer of motivated days

Only to find, it's another passing phase.

Gyms I have approached, with lycra and with gusto, quickly asked 'is this for me?' the answer clearly 'No'.

An outdoors type? I heard it said that nature can heal. I don't like rain and realised I'm not keen on a hill.

Cold water! Amazing! I'll go every day. Perhaps tomorrow, surely not before May.

Maybe an artist? I have what it takes, except it seems the patience for repeated mistakes.

I've scoured Pinterest with obsessional interest a craft I could invest in,

Something with paper, or maybe willow, a rag rug, a candle a personalised pillow.

I've knitted, I've felted, I've dabbled with clay, the projects are endless, but none of them stay.

I know there are those who can pick one and stick it,

Turns out not me, I'm a flibbertigibbet.

## Energy

Sheena Sparks

Sitting legs across

Face to face

The physical pull of you

The scent

An outpouring of all we are, unfiltered, valued, exhilarated

Laughter a constant.

Great floods of energy flowing between us.

Who feels that energy now?

I hope they enjoy it.

## I Speak For

Sheena Sparks

I speak for... the silent, reduced to an opinion not theirs

Informed how to feel, how deeply and for how long

What to value and to change that value with the turning of cultural time

I speak for... the silent, who second guess themselves and feel the aching emptiness that denial of self brings.

## Corporate Space

Sheena Sparks

No mark or crack to penetrate the perfect walls

A rhythmic drone of air through metal

A table offering a suggestion of wood but no warmth is found

All surfaces drawing into themselves any life energy

Diluting it to reinforce its authoritative nothingness

What would it take to halt this process?

Laughter, a breeze, a musical note elongated enough to alter the course of retreating energy

## An Urban Walk With Eyes Open

Sheena Sparks

I notice... that the sunshine makes colours pop, shapes more defined

Outline of trees and tops of buildings against sky,

their colours seeming unnaturally vivid

An arch of a viaduct with its rustic hues, the palette opposite to the greens of nature

Nature growing alongside, on and in the bricks,

which in turn are alongside, on and in the ground from which they came

Human influences on what I see, hands on clay, the formation of a brick, the vision of an arch,

the knowing of a plant's needs and our need for them

I notice... a beautiful interwoven space of non duality

## A Life

Sheena Sparks

Scuffed shoes, socks falling

Wanting, not receiving

Watching, feeling, failing

Shrinking, black dying, black wearing

Fringe hiding, headphones in

Rebelling

Leaving, learning, perfecting

Loving, exploring,

Mothering, listening, feeding, soothing, pride in

Loss

Lost

Finding

Still curious

## New Nurse

Sheena Sparks

I enter the familiar environment

A purposeful motion to polished shoes on disinfected floors

Each bed approached reveals a story, a need, a request, a life

I discover infinite capacity,

Tendrils within my mind branching out to unknown stores of wisdom

Advice given, decisions made, so much compassion

There is an expansion of self, a hint of arrogance

Crisp, uniformed, efficient capability.

## A Quiet Connection

Sheena Sparks

Her ancient frame still holds an essence of strength

Within her once sure limbs, the thread like veins hold a memory of wide-stanced solidity,

Her heart has pounded with unbound love, loss, dreams loosening

Her lungs without faith of full breath, know the feeling of expansion from exertion, joy and rage

Dialect fails us, she sits close and slips her paper hand into mine

There is comfort in shared quiet knowing.

## Penny Has A Holiday

Sheena Sparks

Every day just like another  
Feeling separated from my mother  
I stand on guard, they think I'm hard, but...  
Inside I'm crying  
Wait all day,  
Everyone away  
It's just so hard to keep...  
From crying  
Out of the blue,  
She says 'Hey you,  
Into the car we're going'  
What does it mean?  
It feels like a dream,  
It makes me want to scream,  
With joy  
The touch of her hand,  
The wind and the sand  
Everything feels so right  
When it comes to bed,  
I nearly lose my head  
I snuggle in close all night  
This is the life for dog and man  
Canine Heaven in a caravan

## Diagnosis

Leisa Taylor

The world just shrunk to the size of the room  
to the size of the words  
so small, yet deafening. Seismic

They are speaking words at me  
but the only voice i hear is mine  
How will I tell her? My ♥ breaks

And the world changed.  
But stayed the same.  
How surreal reality is, sometimes





## 1 of 7 (treatment)

Leisa Taylor

Hands sanitised  
Mask on  
Climb stairs  
Cor-i-dor  
Ring bell  
Wait...

Give my name, my DOB  
Temperature  
Weight  
Blood pressure  
Wait...

Enter ward  
Chemo chair  
Cup of tea  
( & a biscuit )  
My name, my DOB

Which arm?  
Heat veins  
Squeeze hand  
Find vein...  
Find vein...  
FIND vein.  
Line in  
Effing name, effing DOB

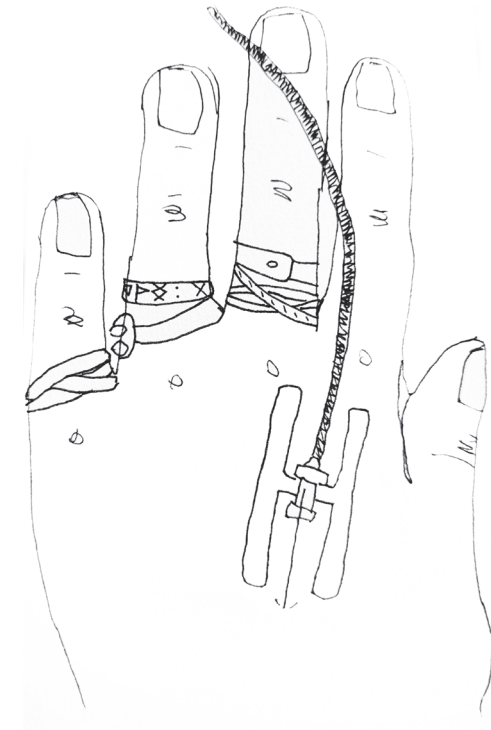
Soup in  
Drip  
Drip  
Wait...  
Wait...

\*\*\*

And it feels like I've done 10 rounds in the ring  
And my heart's being squeezed like a sponge  
And those twinges in the strangest places are frightening me  
And every hot flush might be infection  
Crash & burn  
Crash & burn

\*\*\*

Bad-Um-Bad-Um-Bad-Um  
The-Beat of the-Drum  
That-Is my-Heart  
Is slow-ing down because  
the poisons that are saving me  
are also killing me. Slowly



## Self Care (or, 5 4 3 2 1)

Leisa Taylor

### 5 things I can **see**

- The nurses nursing busy-ly
- The patients, paused in time
- The needle in my vein
- The chemical soup dripping into us
- The clock ticking

### 4 things I can **feel**

- My bum on the chair
- The needle in my vein
- The pen in my hand
- The time moving on

### 3 things I can **hear**

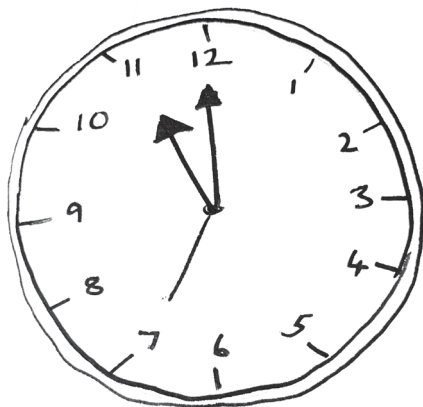
- The nurses doing medicine checks
- The beeps & buzz of medical machinery
- The ticking clock

### 2 things I can **smell**

- Antiseptic
- Lavender in the cube a friend made for me

### 1 thing I can **taste**

- my vulnerability



## Self Care (or, I Fell In Love With A Tree)

Leisa Taylor

You reached out with your ancient and majestic arms and I melted at your feet.

You humbled me with your silent wisdom

And your capacity for love.

You hold me.



## Embrace The Space

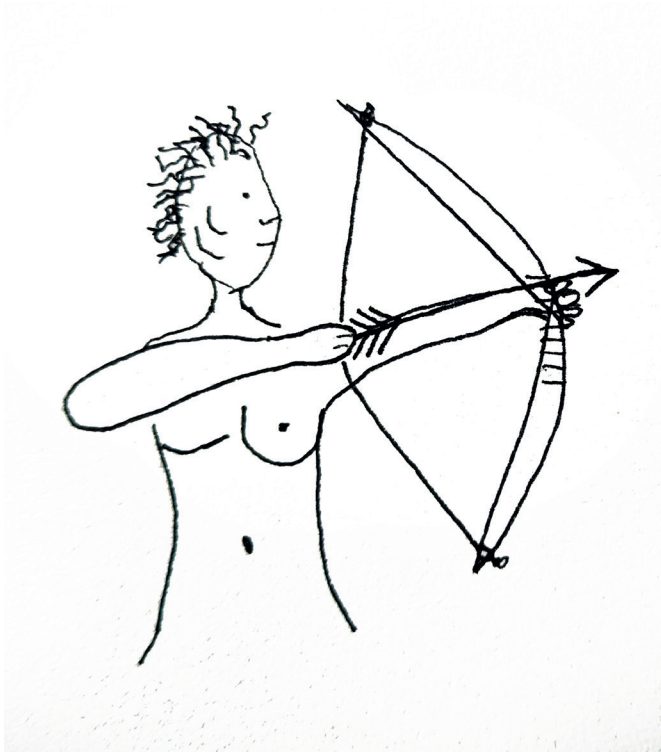
Leisa Taylor

I feel you in the spaces you used to inhabit  
& realise that I never said goodbye

And as the warm fuzzy meds are still buzzing in me  
I'm mindful that I may not miss you  
I'm already admiring the space you've left behind

I thank you for the memories -  
- conduit for my most intimate pleasures  
- feeding life into my most precious and making her strong

But you've done your time, time for you to go  
Go gently and take cancer with you  
And I'll embrace this space like an Amazon



## Six And Three-Quarters

Ali McIndoe

Today I noticed - she can skip.  
Properly. Rhythmically. Beautifully.  
Gone is her hop-hop-jump-swap and I wonder,  
When did this change?  
Has it just happened?  
Or has she been skipping across the playground,  
unseen by me, for a while?  
I don't think I missed it.  
I'd hate to think I missed it.  
But last night she graduated from Rainbows,  
and it seems to me as if she's only just started so maybe,  
actually I am denying how she's growing.  
My youngest is no longer the youngest  
in her school, in her groups, in her friends.  
And I wonder what other moments I missed noticing,  
until they were too far away to even understand they were a moment?  
I joke that the third child brings themselves up,  
laughing with friends who have baby number three,  
but looking back now I wonder if she's done that more than I thought:  
fitted in and changed and grown up in front of my eyes.  
So today, after school, I will look and see, truly see  
and notice all the things she can do,  
notice all the person she is,  
notice her now at six and three-quarters.  
Before my baby is seven.

## I Come Into The Pause

Ali McIndoe

I come into the pause, and I surrender.  
Like a limbo carving through the minutiae of the day,  
my presence is present and, somehow, this mutes  
the noise of the to-dos and the worries  
and all that weighs me down.  
It rolls off and along and away.  
I am grounded and gradually, I grow towards  
myself. Without the chatter or the chanting of the self-talk.  
I grow as I come into consciousness.  
And I like who I see –  
when I give myself space, I like myself.  
In this shavasana I expand and, befriending myself,  
I come into the now.  
A stronger version of me.  
Namaste.

## Why?

Ali McIndoe

When we read there was more risk of children's suicides,  
than children dying of Covid, I want to scream:  
why did it happen?  
What abuse of power to convince us all to lock down!  
And how did they get away with closing schools?  
Now we understand it could take a generation  
for some children to catch up, or be back where they were -  
how could the gap between the rich and the poor be so enlarged?  
Where is the promised mental health support?  
Where are all the lost children?  
Why did no one listen to sense – when we were made to listen to them?

## I Come From Here

Ali McIndoe

The fire's embers burn  
strong as the flames  
dance and entrance,  
flickering together  
and up into the sky,  
billowing with smoke  
signalling:  
I come from here.  
That heat burns on  
and cascades onwards,  
often outwards,  
sometimes with a hiss.  
Some of the embers  
are naked from flame,  
they have rolled away,  
hidden, disguised,  
but they have the same heat  
as my core.  
And it shines from within.  
There are darker nooks  
where I seem  
extinguished,  
shame has settled there,  
but my heat remains.  
And sometimes,  
with just a little  
breath,  
and air,  
the embers reignite.  
I burn together.  
Whole again.  
Fire.

## Swimming With Friends

Ali McIndoe

The breeze ripples across, and then pauses,  
restoring the crystal-clear reflection of the sky above.  
Expanses of blue and white fluffy clouds in duplicate.  
The surface ripples again as the sun shimmers and glimmers.  
Twinkling an invite: to gaze across and breathe in the peace,  
breathe in the unseen depth of the water.  
Warmth from the sunshine just below the surface,  
merging to a life-affirming cold. And we submerge.  
Now we make the ripples as our arms move wide.  
A splash. A laugh. And a release.  
A weightlessness as we move through the water,  
a weightlessness as we unfurl our minds.

## The Path

Ali McIndoe

This way? Or that?  
Do we really choose?  
Or, instead, do we find  
ourselves governed  
by all the everythings  
that brought us  
to right now.  
The ways in front  
are only visible,  
let alone vaguely possible,  
because we have travelled,  
we have weathered  
and we have emerged.

## Why I Run (i)

Ali McIndoe

The weather is close. It presses my mood heavier,  
leadenly rolling around my stomach,  
stooping my shoulders  
and sighing my seams.

I don't want to go

I am darkening. I am not good company.  
It is not their fault.

I go.

My stride swishes the grass fast,  
and I breathe out.  
Heavy and hard and out again.  
Already I feel a loosening, my exhale is smoother.  
I absorb the space around me,  
the brightening horizon. And I run on.  
Up the hill as the sweat pours,  
falls like tears I cannot shed, and I do not wipe it.  
I catch my breath at the break in the hedge and see clouds  
roll away to beams on the hills on the horizon.  
I exhale towards it and I am lightened.  
I run home. I stretch.  
I am me again. I am so glad I went.

## Why I Run (ii)

Ali McIndoe

Pre-day mist swills,  
then stills.

There is a quiet  
and a sense of something  
more to come  
and I am within it all,  
getting first dibs  
on the day.



## Trapped

Gem Lamsdale

She is incandescent  
Never stopping to pause or maybe even breathe  
Rallying support for her cause

She is enraged with a sense of justification.

She continues with her onslaught of words  
She has a captured audience  
She cares not for circumstance  
Or others feelings?

I feel her palpable discontent  
It sticks to me like Velcro  
I can't escape  
I am finding it hard to breathe.

## Waters

Gem Lamsdale

A thought,  
a calm cool thought.

A need to be quenched.  
A beacon calling through the storm,  
A lighthouse call.

“Run.”  
“Run to the calm waters.  
Dive down.  
Be fully one with the flow and feel it soothe you,  
heal you.”

I dived in.  
I felt the silkiness glide over my skin and my eyes gazed upon soft  
browns and greens.  
There was rhythmic drumming of arms and legs.  
The rain massaged away my anger and the lake eventually soothed  
my soul.

I am surrounded by beauty that smooths my rough edges and glues  
together my jagged pieces.  
In this place I may still be broken  
but I am becoming whole.

## This Place

Gem Lamsdale

The sun's gentle touch caresses my face and I turn towards it

The wind whispers gently in my ear, playing with my hair, telling me of  
what's to come

My feet are planted on top of the cool earth and I feel it's timeless  
vibration

I can hear but not yet see water, flowing with life that has travelled  
through these majestic hills

They surround me like a hug

I am alone but I am not lonely

I am filled with an eternal love that floods my soul

## Light

Gem Lamsdale

It is magical

The soft hues of washed out blues, yellows and creams

A visual massage to my tired eyes

A place where sunlight illuminates ominous skies and makes the atmosphere come alive

I am calm here in this light

It bathes away the troubles of my mind and uplifts my soul

It fills my heart with contentment

And as I close my eyes I feel at peace

## Take Off

Gem Lamsdale

Anticipation

Fear

Is that the aroma in the air?

Is it really air I am breathing?

You sit, waiting

Your ears tune into the engine's song

Is it time?

Not yet, It is a slow rumble

The metal beast is in slumber

A change of pace

Quick propulsion

A roar from the wings as you hurtle forwards

Towards... The sky you hope

And as quickly as the thoughts came

You are sky bound

Lifted up by ingenious engineering

A victorious battle over gravity

## In The Air

Gem Lamsdale

You breathe  
You did not realise you had been holding your breath  
You sink into the chair  
Relax, you're on your way

And then  
A drop  
Your stomach feels like a roller coaster

Calm down, you tell yourself  
You love the twists and turns of a big dipper  
This is just nature's fun fair in the sky  
Relax  
So just chill

The is an everyday, all days, kind of adventure  
The safest way for journeying these miles,  
So you're told

Interesting. What do I believe?  
Faith, physics, mathematics?  
I better believe in humanity.

Is this the right time to question my beliefs?  
Probably best not

## Landing

Gem Lamsdale

How many times do they practise?

More than 1?

I wonder what number this pilot's on?

## Neighbourhood Watch

Gem Lamsdale

Pip pip pip they cry  
A sharp sound breaking through the gentle rhythm of the waves

Pip pip pip, pip pip pip pip!  
Attention attention  
Intruder intruder

I smile as I watch their dutiful performance and wonder if their  
neighbours are tired of their interruptions?  
Were they nominated for this role of 24/7 surveillance  
Or did they claim their rights by birth?

Their orange beaks fall silent for a moment,  
But then a flicker sets their black and white feathers into flight.

A rising cacophony of panic into the blue, revealing a distinct  
monochromatic pattern.  
I wondered if they needed stress management?  
Maybe a relaxation course or two?

## The Climb

Gem Lamsdale

Ready yourself  
Prepare for the climb

Breathe deeply  
And place one foot in front of the other

Look  
Look up higher  
Keep looking to see if you can see the top

You climb  
Your legs speak as you climb  
Are you nearly there yet?

But the views elevate your mind so that the pull of ascent become a  
challenge, one which you want to take your time  
Mediate  
One foot after another

You feel small, but this is welcome  
The enormity of the ground peeling away ahead of you is not  
overwhelming  
You feel part of something bigger and you are privileged to be here.

Many feet have trod this path,  
And yet at the same time you feel like this space is all yours to borrow  
for a while

You are a Caretaker

You Step  
You Climb  
You try and Breathe

## Tote Reply

Gem Lamsdale

The clouds ahead are shades of grey and purple, but not black.  
There is no hurry  
No need to claim a prize at the top

You Breathe  
You Look  
You feel Gratitude  
You have Purpose

You reach one pinnacle and climb to the next,  
Your body becomes closer to the ground as the earth rises sharply

You are panting  
You Look  
You are nearly there  
You feel Excitement

A few more measured steps and the world unfolds  
And It is GLORIOUS!

You Breathe deeply  
You stand still  
You absorb the lines and the crags, the colours and you absorb the  
clean crisp air  
You feel more connected here  
You become grounded with the land

You are finally Contented  
You feel whole

I wish you would take better care of me  
I am here to carry your burden

I was bright and colourful  
But you have made me dirty  
Why do you not wash out all the stains?

I reminded you of a time of wonder  
But now you screw me up, throw me around your car  
distorting my distinctive markings

I brought you joy on the day I was given to you  
And I make all your days easier  
But you don't often recognise my worth  
And you don't make me feel valued

I would like you to take better care of me  
I like our adventures and unplanned travels  
But if along the way I become spoiled  
Wash me clean  
Make me sparkle

And please if I carry what gives you sustenance  
Don't leave it to rot and gather mould  
I don't like the sensation of that putrid banana, seeping into my corners  
More that you like its overbearing taste or slimy consistency

Be kind to me and I promise to be the holder of magical things  
Objects that bring you joy

Be kind to me and I will serve you well

## Silence

Gaynor Pritchard

When I despair of the world, I stop for a while,  
I sit to ponder.  
I may meditate.  
I may just listen to the silence.

Far in the distance, people natter, children play, dogs bark,  
I hear the birds chattering, they sing so sweetly.  
The river is energetic as the waterfall thunders loudly down the ridge  
The water joins its next path as the ripples get calmer and drift  
I hear the long grass rustle in the wind  
I spot the ducks swimming along;  
They chatter as they waddle up the riverbank

The sound of nature is beautiful to hear.  
Is this really silence?  
What is silence?  
Sit, listen, do you really hear nothing!

## Baton Of Hope

Gaynor Pritchard

Today I carried a Baton...

It was a symbol of hope, decorated with semicolons

The semicolon is a representation of strength in the middle of a storm,  
and symbolizes a message to the darkest times.

It shows that despite attempts of life's lows; my story isn't over.

The Baton travelled the UK for all to see;

The message was clear – hope is within us as we walk our path

The Baton was sending a loud message to those who govern

We need better provisions for our loved ones,

because if there was, we may not be carrying this Baton you see

Today I noticed my heart breaking for you,

with thoughts of how much I missed you.

I started to cry, but mostly on the inside, I am usually too numb,

I couldn't break completely, I knew you were there alongside me,

I was reminded of how you would be laughing at me,

being an emotional wreck,

Mother, it's just a Baton, but son, it's what it symbolises...

that you have left.

I knew you would also be proud of me,

As I felt the picture of you on my chest, as it rustled in the wind.

I knew you were there beside me, as you have been tonight

It was a little reminder of your presence,

not that it was needed I felt you there.

But it was a reminder why I was there.

Today I carried the Baton so we can give hope for the future.

To show your passing and that of others was not in vain,

Something needs to change, we can't all keep suffering this way

Our charity is your legacy but should have just been mine,

with you here instead of me.

We will do what we can to provide support and give the hope needed.

I realised the little emotion that spilled out today was about you and me.

Just as it was before, of just the two of us,

And how you walked beside me once more.

Today we had rain on the journey, to go with the mood.

When I carried the Baton there was bright sunshine, just as when you left.

Today I was proud, I talked about you as I often do.

But my heart broke as I realised, I miss your physical presence.

As I grasped the reality of not seeing you

I was so proud to have the support around me today.

There was hubby, close friends and others who understood.

There are some who are in our tribe and get it

We are thankful there are some who don't.

Today I carried the Baton to give hope that there can be a future for  
you and me to know our story can continue.

Today I carried the Baton for our loved ones who lost all hope,  
to remember and honour them.

As we have carried this light for our loved one's fight  
and those still fighting.

The full stop is not in place today

we will look for the hope in tomorrow.

As the semicolon is displayed so must our story continue



## To My Boys And Family

Gaynor Pritchard

I am sad you felt you had to leave,  
I am thankful for the times we had,  
I am aching with the grief, yet,  
I am still so proud of you both.

I know you were both like chalk n cheese, yet the love was always there,  
I know the place you found was so peaceful,  
but you left a hole in our hearts,  
I know you both worked hard at every opportunity,  
always looking to succeed.  
I know you both struggled with education in different ways,  
but both found your way to thrive.

I think I could have done better, with your life,  
I think my life, was a factor in your upbringing.  
I think I hold onto too much, I can't let go,  
I think the house, the mess expresses my depression.

I believe our hearts will always ache for you, although,  
I believe I can now make it through each day,  
I believe I have taken on too much, I need more help, but,  
I believe we can do this and make you both proud, just as you make me.

I remember my last cwtch with you, it will stay forever,  
I remember holding my first granddaughter, with both my boys there,  
I remember the bittersweet feeling when our grandson arrived,  
as you were not there.  
I remember how you were a magnet for children, who all adored you, but,  
I remember your niece was your best friend  
and your nephew would have been too.

I feel my chest is going to crack, the way the grief rips through,  
I feel I want to rewrite my life, there are so many avenues to modify,  
I feel my life has been a heartache from childhood right through,  
I feel you both have had it tough too when I unwittingly led your path,  
I feel we have all done so much to feel grateful and satisfied with life.

I want, I want... I want so much that I can't have,  
I want my family around me, always,  
I want a tidy smart house, which I could be proud,  
I want to move, yet I am fine here, for now.

I need to focus on my needs, not my wants,  
I need to take time out for my family, near and far,  
I need to take time out for me and hubby,  
I need to sort the house, the mess, the hoarding.  
It will feel better.

I can change to be more mindful,  
I can change to set boundaries,  
I can change to prioritise my time,  
I can change... for me and in turn, for you.

I hope I can succeed in my current goals,  
I hope my boy succeeds in his vision, whatever the route,  
I hope we can influence some change in mental health,  
I hope our future will improve.

I promise myself to sort my mess, which means,  
I promise myself to gain more focus, then I hope to say,  
I promise myself I will be kind to me,  
I promise myself the charity will succeed.

## Breathe

Natalie Carr

Check my bank account,  
The amount in the red stresses me out,  
So I breathe in and I breathe out.

There's washing and ironing mounting up,  
Dirty plates in the sink and a stained coffee cup,  
So I breathe in and I breathe out.

My four-year-old wants to do colouring in,  
The eight-year-old's having screen time which feels like a sin,  
But it felt like these four walls were caving in,  
My patience for their wants is wearing thin.  
So I breathe in and I breathe out.

And now the boiler's got a leak,  
My willpower to cake is growing weak,  
I'm just kidding, it's non-existent,  
As the urge to stress eat is persistent.  
I glug a glass of water wishing it were a gin,  
And I'm trying to breathe out, but I realised I didn't breathe in  
Because it's the summer holidays and that's where overwhelm can begin,  
My children the hand grenade and we've just removed the pin.  
And so right now when I'm breathing in,  
As I feel the tightening of my muscles and skin,  
I try and inhale a presence deep within,  
One that has the strength to not give in.

And as I breathe out I expel all the stress and the doubt,  
I find a large cushion to scream frustrations out,  
My shout transforms, it's a battle cry no longer of desperation,  
For I have finally figured out the rhythm of my own system of respiration.  
So despite the never ending tasks on my to-do list,  
No matter what my children may demand,  
I breathe in and I breathe out,  
Knowing I have it all in hand.

## Tranquillity

Natalie Carr

She hears the pitter patter of rain as it hits the flat tin roof,  
The rumbling of the thunder in the summer afternoon,  
The clouds roll over the landscape with a lavender hue,  
Enveloping the once clear skies so blue.  
The bees hum around the fragrant lavender plants,  
As the girl takes up her pose in the warrior stance.  
She is at peace in this room with nature to behold,  
It teaches her to have courage and learn to live life bold.  
She closes her eyes and takes her deep breaths,  
And begins to think of the steps to take next.  
She won't allow herself to get overwhelmed,  
Just take one step at a time,  
For life can give you glorious views,  
As long as you aren't afraid of the climb.

## Do Revenge

Natalie Carr

At school you tormented me at the school gates,  
You picked on me in class,  
You made up silly nicknames for me,  
And told me I had a fat ass.

I moved on to university,  
But still the mentality stayed,  
I was the victim in my own story,  
The one who always felt betrayed.

At work I was told I would never achieve my dreams,  
I was told my best wasn't good enough,  
I was told to make it out there in the world,  
I needed to be made of stronger stuff.

But I kept my head down and never relented,  
From trying to reach for the stars,  
I focused on my future destination,  
Being chauffeured around in fancy cars.

I kept focused in my mind,  
Every spiteful word that I had heard,  
Comments on how I looked, how I acted,  
That my wishes and desires were absurd

And I used it as motivation,  
I cultivated the life I desired,  
Now the ones who looked on at me and laughed,  
Have me on their walls to admire.  
The best revenge to seek in life,  
For those who have done you wrong,  
Is to find success in fulfilling your dreams,  
Because you had the power in you all along.

## Breaking The Barrier

Natalie Carr

It's like my body is trying to tell me to slow down,  
Fix my crooked crown,  
As no one is going to fix it for me,  
You see, I'm a wind up doll,  
Wound up tightly from all the invisible strings that pull  
The expectations that I will myself to meet,  
Will they make me feel complete?

I am desperate to be seen, heard, understood,  
To be good at something,  
Anything, to dull the agony of feeling so out of touch with who I am.  
"Look at me, be proud of me,  
I'm not a fuck up you see"  
So conflicted by life's choices,  
I will never be free.

There comes that pain again from flying too close to the sun,  
Trying to prove once again that I don't need anyone,  
But I do really want to lean on others,  
My brothers and sisters from other mothers,  
But how?  
How do I break down the barrier of disappointment  
I've already lived through?  
Here's hoping my poetry for now can make do.

## Finding Myself

Natalie Carr

She can light up the room with a smile,  
She always tries to make others laugh,  
She had a boundless energy,  
She knows she is on the right path.

She has so much love to give,  
And a voice that deserves to be heard,  
She grows in confidence every day,  
From the girl who wouldn't say a word.

She fights for what she believes in,  
And tries to give a voice to those that are lost,  
Sometimes her empathy towards others,  
Has a significantly damaging cost.

So she is learning to set up boundaries,  
Where she can still serve, but protect her peace,  
She is working on finding kind words for herself,  
So her self-love can also increase.

## I Notice...

Natalie Carr

I'm noticing that... I find it hard to notice,  
That it's really hard to focus on not focusing at all.  
And how when I try,  
It can make me feel small,  
Tightly wound in a ball,  
As I scrawl my findings.

The world seems so loud,  
Overcrowded and I'm in need of space.  
I imagine space; endless blackness, stars radiating their light and  
energy in far off galaxies  
It's like a fantasy,  
But then I recall the coldness, the emptiness, and I'm brought harshly  
back to reality,  
Because I need a community, a family.

So I'm at the park,  
Noticing my ass getting damp from the dew on the grass that I'm  
sitting on.  
Kids screaming in delight or is it in horror?  
Need to add a comma or full stop here,  
For I fear the outcome will interfere with my flow.  
Because now my children want to go,  
But we've just arrived on the frontier.  
They disappear again, the eldest makes a friend,  
And I can mend my concentration once more.

I notice a wasp make a beeline (mind the pun) for my bag, it's not fun,  
And I nearly run from it, but I stand my ground.  
Just wafting my hand, which is a breakthrough for me,  
For you see, I've got a phobia,  
And would normally notice palms getting sweatier  
As I escape the scene of the invasion.

I notice a distinct lack of playing at the park we've come to visit,  
As the kids revisit the gym equipment not designed for them.  
My youngest finds a feather and begins to collect,  
Even I, now sat sharing a bench, begin to connect  
With other moms taking a load off at the park.  
I notice a little Dachshund bark, their owner calls for them to stop,  
"Billy stop that racket"  
He is loud for a dog in such a small packet.

My daughter comes over, sobbing she's hurt her knee,  
And so it's time to flee and I'm saying rushed goodbyes to my company.  
Heading back to the safety of the garden for icecream,  
So I may get a moment of peace, which is the dream.  
And as I sit trying to savour this uninterrupted moment,  
My only opponent a bored eight-year-old boy,  
I enjoy watching my four-year-old crouched on the grass,  
Studying the slugs, beetles and ants  
And overhead I notice a butterfly to-ing and fro-ing,  
I notice how the plant I re-potted has actually started growing,  
And I'm showing myself that I can become present,  
In a moment I can channel my focus,  
And despite all the rain that has been such a pain,  
The sun is finally shining, which is a bonus!

## The Foothills

Natalie Carr

I'm starting on a journey,  
To where I do not know,  
But what I seek is happiness,  
I wonder how far I'll go.

I search for validation,  
I crave some sort of respect,  
I try to find where I truly belong,  
So that I can fully connect.

A career is what I need to pursue,  
So I double down and study,  
I get my degree and memories,  
And exit with my leaver's hoodie.

The job market is pretty tough,  
And I'm still not sure what to do,  
So I try and think of my options,  
And come up with plan number two.

Childcare, then education,  
Surely this is more my street,  
And I study hard and work hard,  
So that I can find my feet.

But these jobs offer no fulfilment,  
Minimum wage with thankless tasks,  
And an environment often so toxic,  
You had better wear your mask.  
Marriage and children,  
Maybe this could be my calling,  
And I dream of the day I find him,  
And both of us are falling

Madly in love with each other,  
We wed and start a family,  
Crooning over our babies,  
And all they achieve so proudly.

But although I love my children,  
I haven't hit fulfilment yet,  
I haven't felt that 'fuck yeah' moment,  
I don't feel that my life is set.

As I begin to share more poetry,  
I begin to bare my soul,  
To share a part of me deeper,  
Than the clown who tends to cajole

The fear of being rejected,  
For showing all that I am,  
The thoughts that made me feel unworthy,  
If I wasn't loved by a man.

I see now I was 'people please Barbie',  
Made for everyone else's entertainment,  
People passed my smiling corpse around,  
But my box was my self-made containment.

I was overweight and not overly attractive,  
So I felt I had to work so extra hard,  
To make others feel the need to want me,  
But I became an indulgence similar to lard.

Only to be used in small doses,  
And only to be used for a purpose,  
And I was so accommodating, I'd give up my soul,  
Just to be of good service.

Once  
Natalie Carr

I sought to be extraordinary,  
And always found myself lacking,  
Waiting for the universe to see me here,  
But with me it just felt to be slacking.

So yes, I am on a journey,  
And maybe I'm waiting for the ever after,  
Where I ride off into the sunset,  
With a booming business as a poet and crafter.

But I guess what I'm starting to realise,  
Is that some beginnings are not at the start,  
And my story is only now just beginning,  
Since I started really sharing my heart.

Not just what I thought others wanted,  
But my vulnerable and ordinary side too,  
And there have been times where I've felt  
Overjoyed and times when I've been blue.

So I'm nowhere near my destination,  
Maybe I'll never really fully arrive,  
But these foothills have got me thinking,  
There is beauty to behold in the drive.

Once there was a mother  
Who had longed to have a child,  
But she had so many dark feelings,  
With herself she was not reconciled.  
So when the child was born,  
Perfect and complete,  
She began to tear herself down,  
For standards of perfection, she couldn't keep.  
She looked at everything she'd done,  
She questioned every task,  
And she would hand her baby over,  
If anyone dared to ask.  
For how was she even worthy  
Of this precious life she'd received,  
When she herself resented  
Every single breath she breathed?  
The child demanded her attention,  
The child demanded her love,  
And she tried her best to give it,  
As she looked down on it from above,  
But all she saw in those blue eyes,  
Was the despair that she would cause,  
And so every time their hands reached out,  
The mother chose to pause.  
The crying grew ever louder,  
It became a deafening sound,  
But it wasn't the child who was bawling,  
But the mother who longed to be found.  
For she was lost at sea,  
And no one had noticed her go adrift,  
Because they assumed that now she would be happy,  
With her most precious gift.  
But the boat is sinking, and she is drowning,  
She tries to come up for air,  
But it's in that moment of realisation,

she has no one left that cares.  
For She had pushed away helping hands,  
In fear they would see how she struggled,  
How she couldn't feel a connection to her baby  
No matter how many times they cuddled.  
It was easier to have no prying eyes,  
For the shame she had begun to feel,  
When all she'd ever wanted,  
Had turned out to not be ideal.  
She wanted so much to emulate,  
The mothers from her social media feeds,  
But instead of thriving like they were,  
She was a flower bed overgrown with weeds.  
She felt alone, her despair kept her weighted,  
She had forgotten what it was to breathe.  
For the mother needed time to process these changes,  
For her former life she needed to grieve.  
Everything was different now,  
She had this little person who needed her,  
But the days seemed never ending,  
Days and nights were just a blur.  
She lost her own identity,  
Mother was all that she was,  
And that thought alone was terrifying,  
And chilled her more because,  
She hadn't rehearsed for this role,  
The script changed and yet stayed the same,  
And she felt that she was constantly losing,  
Because her life felt like a game,  
Where she was just a counter,  
Being moved from square to square,  
Just performing her duties,  
And no one was aware,  
That inside her heart was shattered,  
She found her new life too tough,  
Because it didn't matter what others said

She never felt enough.  
She often dreamt of escaping,  
Leaving the child with a family member,  
Maybe she could drive her car off a bridge,  
Or disappear into the cold woods one December.  
These thoughts that sometimes frequented her mind,  
Started to become ever present and louder,  
They were addictive thoughts she googled daily,  
She snorted them like white powder.  
But now was the time for a detox,  
She needed to cleanse the thoughts away,  
Because she realised, she was looking in blacks and whites,  
When she should have taken notice of greys.  
There were never any right or wrong answers,  
No instruction manual for the job,  
And when she started to realise this,  
She didn't hold back her sob.  
She recognised an illness,  
Not her lack of ability as a mother,  
And she sought out the help of professionals,  
And with time she started to recover.  
She made up for lost time with her baby,  
Hoping the damage had not already been done,  
For she wanted this baby to be her planet,  
So that she could be its Sun.  
Giving it all it ever needed,  
And radiating out her light,  
And she'd never been so glad to realise,  
That sometimes she wasn't right.  
Because to her baby she was more than enough,  
She was everything they'd ever need,  
And it was just the two of them against the world,  
Now that in herself the mother believed.



## I Noticed (Outside)...

Rochelle Crawford

Today I noticed  
Outside of my body,  
The dulling of the summery sky.  
Blue hue replaced with grey,  
As we begin another Monday

Yet the birds still sing,  
The flowers still in bloom,  
Life carries on,  
Despite human opinions.

There is beauty in a Monday.  
A fresh start, a new beginning, a place to reflect the week before, and  
aspire for the week to come.  
A reminder of the balance,  
Of work and play,  
Sun and rain,  
Laughter and tears,  
Achievements and rest.

Grey skies needn't dull our minds and moods,  
If we embrace the climate and the seasons,  
And accept the negative with the positive,  
We can embrace all weathers.

## I Noticed (Inside)...

Rochelle Crawford

Today I noticed,  
Inside of my body,  
The ache and fatigue smothering me under the blankets,  
As my alarm interrupts me to start the day.  
My eyelids heavy, trying to remain closed as I battle to get out of bed,  
I feel the harsh reminder of my chronic pain,  
A compromise to enjoy a full weekend.  
Feet, joints, back and hands,  
Complaining of their existence,  
They do not want to come along,  
To where my heart feels joy.

My body wants to rest all day,  
Yet I just want to keep up with other people.  
To seize life, to achieve, to experience, to belong,  
Without paying for it in aches and pains,  
Without lulling into exhaustion.  
For now, I listen to my body,  
I rest,  
I dream.

## Beautiful Boy

Rochelle Crawford

Beautiful boy,  
Bossy and bold,  
Always has something,  
That has to be told.

Fluffy and orange,  
Bright like the sun,  
When he's around,  
It's ever so fun.

Ruling the roost,  
Terrorising the 'hood,  
But cuddled with "mommy",  
He's sweet and he's good.

Every time at the vets,  
He's the star of the show,  
He'll warm the hearts,  
Of everyone he'll know.

My beautiful kitty,  
You sparkle and shine,  
I'm so glad and happy,  
That you chose to be mine.

## Noticing

Becky D

Mauve, pink, orange, blue and white.

The colour of the sky we saw tonight.

A wonder to see for the whole family.

A moment to treasure,

To capture with a click,

A reminder of a moment where love likes to stick.

Today I noticed the meanness of words.

Provoking lips to tremble, tears to appear.

A look of regret, silence then appeared. Painful to see, to know I had laughed too. How cruel a joke, which no-one wants to invoke.

The anger, the hurt, was difficult to see. I reached out my heart, was told "let me be".

Why not I thought? A Woman may disagree and more likely to lean on me, regardless who sees.

A lesson I thought for the children taking part, for they got to see their father distraught. As harsh as it may be, we are all human and require love and respect, don't we?

## Conversations With Dad

Elen Downward

Dad,

I want to be able to have a proper conversation with you.

It is so hard for us that you had a stroke.

I just want to be able to talk properly with you.

It is very hard for us all.

Hopefully one day you will have your speech back.

And we will be able to have a conversation again.

Elen,

I know it's hard.

I want to be able to have the chats we used to have.

When we would walk and talk about our day.

I want to be able to drive again.

It was nice when we walked and offloaded about the day.

I know you are still proud of me.

## After 'The Peace of Wild Things'

Elen Downward

Walks.

The sun shines on the lake.

The beauty of new life emerges.

It makes me feel joyful.

It's an amazing sight.

## Myself In The Third Person

Elen Downward

She is friendly and caring.

She likes to go above and beyond to help others.

She has had many setbacks.

She bounces back from each one and tries again.

She may be shy but gaining more confidence each day.

She writes poems to help express herself.

It helps her through difficult times.

She likes to help others feel better.

Her smile lifts everyone's mood.

## Let's Return To Love

Lahari Parchuri

I am love  
my energy is love  
my beauty is love  
my gift is love  
love to all beings

those that are love  
those that can take it  
those that are not able to receive it  
those that have a voice  
those that only have spirits and souls  
those that are unseen and unheard  
and also those that have the loudest voices and screaming  
those that are far removed from their true nature  
those that are fully aligned with their true nature  
and those that are somewhere in between

love to all beings  
light to all beings  
in every shape and form that they can receive  
in every shape and form  
I am sending the waves of love  
I am sending the waves of light  
rooted in the divine feminine

I am love  
you are love  
we are love  
let's return to love

## Yardstick

Lahari Parchuri

We see flowers, not roots  
We see art, not artists  
We see actions, not intentions  
We see accolades, not the grind  
Is what we see a yardstick of the unseen?

## Second Innings

Lahari Parchuri

May this be the start of  
a new beginning  
a new life  
a second innings

second innings  
full of potential  
full of possibilities  
full of prosperity  
full of peace  
full of love  
full of joy  
full of happiness

real happiness that comes  
from just sitting and watching the birds sing  
from the smell of sweet peas in the garden  
from the smell of fresh rain after a hot summer's day  
from watching the world go by one moment at a time  
by letting the past be in the past  
future be in the future  
being present in the moment

may your second innings be  
the one you feel loved  
accepted  
celebrated  
with no expectations in return  
just for who you are and as you are  
as you deserve to be loved  
unconditionally

May your second innings be  
wonderful beyond imagination  
where you meet the version of you

## Friend

Lahari Parchuri

that's lighter, calmer, happier and healthier  
and the version of you that is not preoccupied by what the world says  
but prioritises what makes you happy

May your second innings be a new beginning  
for those around you to come together  
to forge deep meaningful connections  
to love unconditionally and be there for each other

May your second innings be the one in which  
your pain and suffering washes away  
by a wave of love and compassion from those around you

May your second innings be the one in which  
you find abundance of joy  
not in the big things but in the everyday little moments  
life is in those moments  
when you are present

I wish you happiness, real happiness  
I wish your second innings is filled with everything that brings you joy

A friend is a mirror, that reflects a part of you

Loving them  
Enjoying their company  
Getting to know all parts of them  
Being there for them  
Cherishing them  
Doing life with them

Is in fact, doing life itself.



## 'Did We Get Passion Wrong?'

Lahari Parchuri

Compelling energy that it holds

passion for love  
passion for life  
passion for music  
passion for calling  
passions of youth

depth of feelings associated  
powerful attachment

but, what if passion is deceiving?  
blinding us to our path with its compelling energy  
numbing us with the stress and relentlessness  
making us vulnerable by the lack of it  
can you truly separate passion from pain?  
especially when its origin is from crucifixion

is the absence of passion, suffering  
or passion itself?

as one of the four noble truths,  
suffering has its place in the ebb and flow, in the wave of life  
somehow we know that's not all there is

if not passion, then what?

is it, commitment to love  
dedication to peace  
devotion to compassion  
duty to care?

as we gracefully age,  
heart seems to know, head seems to follow

## Don't You Dare

Lahari Parchuri

Indian, Hindu, daughter, grand daughter, sister, cousin, woman  
yes she is all that  
not because she chose  
at least not in this lifetime

brave, smart, engineer, high achiever, risk taker,  
boundary pusher, globe trotter  
yes she is all that  
not because she wanted to be  
but she had to be

seeker, artist, poet, hiker, food lover, meditator, vegan,  
feminist, queer ally, inspirer,  
galvaniser, healer  
yes she is all that  
And yes she chose to be

Anxious, isolated, afraid, depressed, exhausted,  
clumsy, chaotic, clueless, vulnerable  
yes that was true  
she had to ride those waves

hopeful, gracious, happy, calm, peaceful,  
connected, skilled, organised, wise  
yes that's true  
The flow of her life  
that's a lot of different identities  
at least the ones that she knows about

don't you dare put her in one of those boxes  
when she is still opening

she didn't know she could write  
she didn't she could be an artist  
she didn't know she could be happy, like really happy  
she didn't know that she could really be her true self

there are many more that she doesn't know about  
until she does  
they might not exist for her  
but they DO exist for her

somehow she knows that

in the meantime,  
don't you dare put her in a box  
stopping her from opening them

## Power Of A Smile

Rosie England

A smile is my secret weapon,  
The perfect mask that hides it all.  
As long as nobody knows,  
I can carry on,  
I can get through the day.  
My mind running a million miles an hour,  
But outwardly appearing calm.  
They say I'm confident,  
But little do they know all the self-questioning,  
The constant procrastination,  
I feel exhausted.  
But I carry on,  
The deeper it's buried the easier it is,  
Or at least that's what I thought...  
Sheer exhaustion kicks in but that's ok,  
I can rest at the end of the day,  
But when is that process time?  
My stress bucket is overflowing,  
I need to open the tap,  
Let some of it flow free.  
I realise I can't carry on like this.

## Hurricane

Rosie England

My swirling, twirling head won't give me a break,  
Hours of sleepless nights overthinking,  
All the what ifs, have I made a mistake?  
Round and round, always spinning.

If only the self-doubt would stop,  
I need to be able to unwind,  
Find some new ways to adopt,  
To finally feel at peace with my mind.

Meditation, mindfulness I've tried and tried,  
Albeit without success,  
What else can help put my thoughts aside,  
To stop me feeling such a mess?

Maybe I'll try some writing,  
To get all those thoughts out my brain,  
Or pause and do some crafting,  
To calm my inner hurricane.

## Whirlpool

Rosie England

Floating in the water,  
All gentle and serene.  
Whirlpools surround me,  
Trying to suck me in.  
I navigate around them,  
At times feeling their frantic pull.

Finally, I find the still water,  
Back to that gentle calm.  
I know the whirlpools aren't over,  
But for now, I can rest.  
When the next whirlpool comes, I'll know what to do,  
I will be strong enough to pass through.

If needed I know I can find some stepping stones,  
To help me reach the water's edge.  
From here I can take a pause,  
As I watch the water pass by.  
I will plan for the journey ahead,  
I prepare for the worst as I hope for the best.

## Look For The Rainbow

Rosie England

The grey clouds engulf the sky,  
Some days there is a little drizzle,  
Whereas other days it pours.  
It feels like it may never stop,  
The constant drumming of raindrops.  
Puddles on the road,  
Splashing like tears as they fall.  
The floods rise high,  
No hope in sight.  
It's time to start swimming,  
Try to keep our heads afloat,  
Will there ever be any respite?

The sun starts to shimmer behind the clouds,  
A sliver breaking through,  
It reflects on the water,  
Giving a glimmer of hope.  
The rainbow starts to form,  
A beautiful and perfect arch,  
Full of colours,  
So bright and vibrant.  
It's a symbol of life,  
Of what may be to come,  
A reminder to always find the beauty,  
However grey life seems.

## My Saviour

Rosie England

A helping hand is always near,  
Sometimes out of sight,  
But a call of distress is all it takes,  
To pick me up and carry me to safety.

Strong arms embrace me,  
As I feel the warmth of his chest,  
The flutter of his heart beating,  
Telling me everything will be ok.

I curl up and snuggle in,  
I know I'll be safe until I get there.

## Isabella

Rosie England

The moment she entered the world,  
And every day since her birth,  
She keeps me in the present,  
Grounding me back to earth.

The beauty of her smile,  
So happy and carefree,  
Always brings warmth to my heart,  
As she looks up at me.

Tears of pride overwhelm me,  
I never knew I could feel so much affection,  
Memories to treasure forever,  
A picture of perfection.

## The Value Of Self Care

Rosie England

I was told “put your own oxygen mask on first.” What did this mean?  
Obviously I’d help my loved ones before myself. I’d sacrifice my life for  
them if needed, so despite the warnings, I wouldn’t hesitate to put  
their oxygen mask on first.

Then I started to reflect on what would happen if I did this. What  
if they struggled to get it on and I needed to hold it over them? I  
wouldn’t then be able to get my own mask on. As I ran out of oxygen,  
I then can’t help hold theirs on. We would both become hypoxic. We  
would both die.

If I heeded the advice, I would have the oxygen I needed. I would  
be there indefinitely to help my loved ones. I would be able to be  
present, to comfort and support. We would all have our oxygen. We  
would all be safe.

That was the turning point for me. The realisation that self care is  
important. It should be the top of my priority list, not the bottom  
where it never gets a look in. It isn’t a waste of time, it’s a positive  
investment. Without it I am just existing. With it I am enjoying life.

## The Oak Tree

Rosie England

The oak tree stands alone and tall,  
Nurtured from a seed.

From tender loving care,  
Came tiny roots and tiny shoots.

Watered with hope,  
Uplifted by the sun.

Asleep by night, awake by day,  
Growing big, growing tall.

Standing strong against the storm,  
Those tiny roots become strong foundations.

The tree stays firmly grounded,  
Flourishing its inner strength.

## What Lies Ahead

Rosie England

The tall oak tree can see,  
what lies ahead for walkers in its midst.  
Beyond the tree the paths diverge,  
up ahead lies a road of choices.  
They all have bumps, they all have turns,  
they all go off into the distance.  
Whichever route is taken,  
there is challenge but there is joy.

## If Only I Could Fly

Rosie England

If only I could fly,  
I would spread my wings and soar up high.

As cool, fresh air blows in my face,  
I start to feel calm in my safe space.

Time to reflect on what the future will hold,  
I realise that I have grown strong not old.

As I look down on the earth from above  
I feel peaceful and overwhelmed with love.







# WRITING FOR WELLBEING IN WORCESTERSHIRE

This book is the result of a series of workshops led by Holly Winter-Hughes, and feature the work of:

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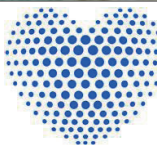
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