

**ART:LINKS ISLINGTON**  
2021



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# MOONLIGHT MIXED WITH ALOE

Creative writing by Age UK Islington

## Introduction

These poems and stories take you into the lives of seagulls and magnolias, bring you visitations and deliver you from the doldrums, capture joy and loss. They were written in May and June 2021, as part of a collaboration between Age UK Islington and Create. The sessions were over video call, as we continued to keep each other safe through the pandemic; even so, the group came together to support and encourage each other as we worked through writing exercises over eight weeks. There were many moments when I was moved by the honesty and solidarity the writers created, and the vivid and beautiful work they made. Here is a taste...

**Linden K McMahon (Writing Facilitator)**

## Waterfall (feeling of joy)

Cascading down the rugged mountainside  
Blissfully dripping down, down, down  
The radiant sun casting an immense multicoloured  
Rainbow on your silvery body

You look so magnificent, you made me laugh  
Happily skipping, skipping, skipping without a care  
You cannot be silent, just as wisdom  
You are so exhilarating and beautiful, I love you so

Splashing, crushing over rocks into the sea  
I am at peace, peace, peace within  
As you splash your energy into the air  
I'll run wild and free like a waterfall

**Suzie Q**

## A Victor's Tale

I'm a seagull and I live in Islington. My father and mother have built a warm, cosy nest here on the banks of the pond in Finsbury Park..You'll appreciate that I could have had a serious identity problem. After all, we were born to fly freely near vast oceans. So why do I live in this congested, urban cosiness and not between the shoreline and the sea? I posed the question to my grandmother as we perched together on a slate grey rooftop on Grenville Road. She nudged a little closer to answer my question. Her wise eyes gave me comfort but didn't prepare me for the telling of her violent tale:

"Once there was a dragon monster called Nori. He lived in the twentieth century in the epths of the deep blue sea. Nori's confidence came from being mega rich. He was of mixed heritage. He had Norwegian grandmothers, Japanese grandfathers, Chinese uncles, Thai aunts, Australian, American, Spanish and Portuguese cousins. Their strength and power came from eating whole shoals of salmon, tuna, sardines, sea bass and shellfish. All the family members had jaws that gripped like steel claws and stomachs that churned their own whirlpool of dead fish.

Despite their girth, the Nori palates were discerning in their diet. They only ate adult lobsters, prawns, scallops and langoustines. They spat out the babies of these species. Oh the inequities of ocean life! Nourishment for some and punishment for others. The vulnerable fish and shellfish baby lives were cut cruelly short. So greedy was the Nori clan that they wiped out whole species of fish in the Antarctic Ocean. Like the Antarctic Seabass.

Our elders had taught us to eat just the amount of fish necessary to satisfy our hunger. Gluttony was frowned open. It was considered a cruelty to the fish who made us grow big and strong. We had grown up near the sea in Norfolk. After meals, my siblings and I would indulge in flying tricks. Our favourite one was to fly high in the sky and just as we flew up to the right heady level we'd free fall back into the sea and land with an exhilarating splash. What fun it was to swim about before we took flight once more. We'd sing a happy song. It wasn't exactly a lyrical birdsong. More like a discordant symphony! We didn't care."

Suddenly, I noticed my Grandma's eyes were moist. A far away look came into them. It triggered a bittersweet memory. I first saw it when I'd injured my wing when I was two years' old. I remember that time well. My parents were so anxious for my safety but Grandma took charge in her calm, loving way. She fed me, painstakingly cutting up bits of fish into tiny pieces and plopping them into my mouth for weeks till my wing healed and I'd recovered full strength.

Now on the rooftop, she looked at me with sadness, "Little one, the numbers of all the delectable varieties of fish swimming in the ocean dwindled rapidly. Nori's family had conquered the oceans. It had been hoovered up. Nori's family had won. Finding fish became too strenuous for me and Grandpa. We had so little to eat. It forced us to have a good long think. We watched you youngsters flapping your precious wings on the beach and dive bombing into the sea. It was a glorious and heartbreaking watch. Because we'd taken the decision to move to London. We feared for your future. We followed your father's advice as he was the smartest in our family: 'Where they're human folk, there's bound to be food,' he said. 'They waste a lot of their weekly shopping.' His reasoning was sound."

It was now my turn to comfort Grandma.

"No need to be so sad Grandma," I countered. "We're fortunate to have migrated to Islington. We've got everything we need here."

"The early days were hard my darling." Her eyes looked wistful again. "I'd never seen so many humans in my life! They came in hoards with their families on the weekends. Throwing that unhealthy, white bread to the ducks in the pond, clogging up their stomachs and making them ill. We watched all this from the safety of our nest at edge of the pond. Your father was right. When the pond didn't have enough fish, we could get our food from leftovers the humans threw in the rubbish bins in the park."

It's absolutely true. On good days, we find tuna from half eaten sandwiches and bits of fish where only the batter has been consumed and the fish is left for us to eat from their oily fish and chips packets.

Her eyes were smiling now and I felt so much better after hearing this tale of the Nori's violence and our victory.

I do so love my Grandma. When I saw her cheer up, I caressed her back with my right wing and flew off to recount what I'd just heard to a new friend. His family have built their nest close to ours on the banks of the same pond. Our family values are the same - healthy food, enough play and above all, close-knit families. Nesting is safe in Islington, we love it.

I never forget that I stand firmly on the wings of our wise and loving elders.

**Devika**

## Around Nature

Oh what a sight, when I draw my bedroom window curtain every morning  
When I draw the curtain of my front glass door looking over my balcony  
Oh what a glorious sight, three beautiful amazing trees.  
The biggest of them stands majestically in the middle.

I sometimes I stand, sometimes I draw a chair and sit comfortably  
Staring attentively at them in awesome wonder.  
I get drawn into their actions, behaviour and what they are saying.  
I hear peace, calm and serenity.

I say you are glamorous, radiant and absolutely peaceful  
My gratitude is beyond explanation for being planted where you are.

The one on the right is very tall but not as full and green leaves as the middle one.  
The one on the left is not as tall as the one on the right.  
But it is greener.  
The middle one is heavily rooted and grounded like an oak tree.  
Branches are numerous and the density of leaves are breath taking.

Oh what a sight, what a calming soothing colour to the eyes  
Oh what a feeling, and peaceful space to be.

The colour of the leaves shimmers and glows.  
As if they are individually massaged daily,  
With the moonlight mixed with aloe and olive oil.  
I can stay here forever I sometimes I say to the tree

I gaze on bright days when the sky is clear and blue,  
Some early morning and at dawn  
When the rainbow arch shows up in the sky  
Or on a cloudy raining day.  
The experience is as if I have been lifted away from this world  
To the city of love & peace.

As if all the above are not enough. I see them play their parts.  
Contributing to the ecosystem nourishing the world they stand on.  
Supply oxygen in the way the naked I eyes can not see.  
Looking with the ordinary eyes is like playing game.

Oh what a sight, what a calming soothing colour to the eyes  
Oh what a feeling, and peaceful space to be.

The leaves touching, dancing, moving in different direction  
Separately yet together as the wind blows.  
They all draw from each other to flourish in the vine.  
Upon which their life is based.  
I see so many people taking a rest beneath you  
On very hot days and raining days

No matter how many times I look at you each day  
You blow my mind away. It's amazing how it works for human too.  
Similarly human strive and coexist for life here on earth to move on.

Let me not go without saying, that your green glorious display will go on  
holiday  
In autumn from October when your beautiful leaves will start to go yellow,  
gradually brown and drop off. When you stand bare with dry branches  
As the winter progresses, November into March. Where are the blossoms  
Density populated, shimmering glowing leaves. Well, on vacation now

However your beauty, sincerity and calm remain within me.  
For I have hope and believe that hope never dies. You will be back pretty  
soon  
In your full display of glamorous and zest for life.  
Many people, and birds too, await your return.

## Perpetual

## Go away leave me alone please!

Dear Snails

I have been here over two years . Can you give me a break please!  
Why oh why even though you go over eggshells and rough barky terrain  
you still destroy me every time.

I want to bloom and blossom get full of lush green leaves! But you are  
holding me back can't you see?

You are greedy leave nothing for no one else, it's not fair to keep me all for  
yourself. I could smell wonderful look tall majestic beautiful, if not for you.  
How could you do it? When will it end I don't want to move. I like it here  
warm and soft in the ground.

I just want to thrive , smell luscious and bust out!  
Perhaps you could disappear for a while, go on holiday with your spouse?  
Leave me alone please can't you see I am dying here.  
Can you take pity on me so I can grow? I am getting fed up between the  
cat, the rain and you!

Give me a chance why don't you please, I could be so happy here if you let  
me be! What have I done to deserve your undivided attention? Your worse  
than a stalker but with more awful intentions!

Go away and don't come back I need a break a chance to fatten and be  
juicy just like you.

Yours sincerely

Moaning Magnolia

**Chris**

## The Blob

There was a big blob on the street. Walking down the street I saw more  
blobs. What was the blob? Whitening and slimming in the sunlight. I saw a  
stranger and he asked me what it was. I said I do not know. He said let's go  
enquiring what it is. He said come and find out. It was a misty morning in  
the city. He said that it smells like burgers. He said it smells like bacon. We  
walk over to the blob. He poked it with a stick. And he said it smells like a  
kitchen. I said after my mother cooked some chips.

We walked along the road and saw a man set it alight with the match. He  
said it's funny to look at but what is it. I said we are being invaded by aliens.  
He said it's like Jo after breakfast. We poke it some more. He said it's like  
something I saw on the TV last night. But what made it aliens. I said a bit  
nearer to home. We passed Jo's cafe and we saw Jo crying, he said aliens  
have taken over my cafe.

Someone said to Jo, the father of the blob. The boy with the enquiring  
minds said Jo you've been cooking and eating too many burgers and chips  
and bacon sandwiches. The boys said I know it's a fatberg. And he said we  
all have to eat healthy from now on. A man came up from the sewer on a  
river fatberg. The boys said what can we do now. He said detergent and  
water. The man said dig out the fatberg.

He said if we dig out the fatberg. The man said not down the sewers  
because we have our own fatberg. The boy said can we make it more solid  
and dense and use it like concrete could make buildings and he said landfill  
sites. I said or take it into space. I said send it to the aliens and stop them  
invading earth. You should know we are not being invited from space by  
Jo's cafe. Jo said it's not fair why are you picking on me, is my cooking that  
bad. He said Jo we got used to your cooking, but the fatberg has taken over  
your cafe.

The boy with the enquiring mind said it was taking over the city.

We were walking down the city road, but the Old Street roundabout had  
gone. People were fighting their way out of the underground. Some were  
screaming the blob is coming run for your lives. Finding another way round  
the Old Street roundabout we suddenly come to a clear area. Someone said  
that it is a detergent factory.

Water hose was set up and detergents sent through the water hose.

People are starting to fight back. And we passed lines when the fatberg was not crossing. We passed another clear area, as somebody said there is a storage of baking soda and kosher salt and dish soap that was dissolving the fatberg.

Tanker was loaded with baking soda and kosher salt and dish soap. And it was sprayed on the fatberg. Someone came up with putting the mixture in tanker aircrafts used for putting out fire. It looked like we were winning the battle of the fatberg.

Hold on there was a further fatberg over Saint Pauls. The royal air force was called in to help. And the operation was called the fatberg busters. A special RAF squadron was formed called the fatberg busters. And converted tankers were flying in from all over the world to help us.

The whole world was fighting the fatbergs.

And the sea started to rise and what was causing the sea rise nobody could find out. Someone said to put some baking soda and dish soap into the sea. And that seems to be working. After tankers were sent full of baking soda and dish soap. There was a strange smell coming over the world of baking soda and dish soap and kosher salt. People seemed a little bit more friendly now stop talking to you and ask you how you are. We were fighting a battle that could take over the world, but it was the battle started on this world.

People are starting to cook more barbecues and because a lot of fat was burned off on barbecues. And families were joining together cooking barbecue food.

And people were going down the service and just take out the fact that this alone stopped causing the fatberg. A special oven was invented not to burn the fat but to dissolve it, so it came out like a powder form which had a few other uses.

It was found that if it was used in building materials it will make the building last a very long time. Harbour defence is the last river and bridge never falls down.

The world is becoming a better place because of the fatbergs.

And with the help of the fatbergs we started to build cities on the sea to help them with the overcrowding of the land.

Life is finally getting better for this old tired world. And it's due to us going to live with some man-made pollution. We have all had a very valuable lesson and we have to find new ways to live with this earth.

Man is finally learning to live again. And getting very fit and not digesting so much fat.

But the blobs have not finished with that, it was turning up in South America around areas where I had street kitchens cooking breakfast, like an apple fritter but with a banana in it and some South American countries and the fat was being pulled into the service and where they cook fish by coating it in fat to cook it over an open fire.

The fat was not going down sewer because some of these countries did not have service. The fatbergs were for me in the monsoon trench alongside the road and people did not know any difference they just ignored it, I think it will go away with the rain. And when the monsoon came as the monsoon trench filled up with fatbergs there was flooding all over the place. Monsoon rains we are mixing with a fatberg and covering the land in fatbergs. The people were beginning to move out of the area. Because the land was being taken over by the invaders from outer space.

The lad with the enquiring mind had become a man by now, with two sons back home and a very beautiful South American wife. The couple was visiting her family and left the boys at home with their grandmother because they had school.

And the wife is meant to find her family, but they have moved because the land is covered in fatbergs. The man was visiting a local factory where he had met some friends. And there was an area cleared around the factory.

He did not know it that the factory was producing kosher salt and dish soap. And had stores of baking soda to mix with the dish soap. And everybody was running, evacuating the area, and moving into the clear area of this factory. And nobody could understand the clear area around the factory. The owner of the factory was trying to get some lorries out with loads of kosher salt and dish soap and baking soda.

He did not find out that the cargo was going to be useful.

The lorry driver had an accident on the roadside. And people couldn't understand that the area around the accident was becoming very clean of fatbergs.

He went along with his friends from the factory to check out the accident.

And he started remembering back to his childhood and he asked his friends how much cargo was stored at the factory. Someone said about 5000 gallons.

Tanker aeroplanes was ordered in by the countries Air Force.

And the formula was sprayed over the fatbergs. It seemed to help the fatbergs to disappear. All the fatbergs had disappeared underground because there was a disused mining area under the ground and the fatbergs found a new home in the old mineshaft. Back home ways had been found to make a fatbergs solid and long-lasting by adding a mixture. The area in this country was known for mineshaft collapsing. The magic mix was added to the fatbergs and it became solid in the old mine shaft and it stopped it from collapsing in on itself.

Other mine shafts were discovered to be collapsing into their selves, And the solution was to pump fatberg fingers into the mineshaft and add the mixture and it was solidified in the mineshaft making it all safe now. The land was slowly returning with the people and the land seemed better for growing food now and more food to feed the people who were starving.

From time to time fatbergs are still being found. And a firm called the Fatberg Busters was formed by the young man with enquiring mind.

They did find a few more large bergs in the poor areas of the world. And the time is a fatberg problem was receding. The world decided to honour him. But he was too old to go and get his reward, so his young son with an enquiring mind went to pick up his reward.

Got a new fatberg problem with starting up and it wasn't from burgers and chips and bacon like it was in the west. It now seems that the world has so much fatberg in it that the earth was starting to fight back, and you had volcanoes throwing out fatbergs. What was the world going to do? They were looking for a new hero.

The lad with the enquiring mind had died a few generations back.

But his great granddaughter was around. People was talking about finding a new home on a different planet.

But a new system had been found on how to burn the sulphide fatberg, the solidified fatberg as heating fuel. And a way was invented to cut out the smell.

As the natural fuel was running out on the earth, people were turning to other alternatives and ways was found to use solidified fatbergs to fuel transportation.

And the ideas were coming from the granddaughter of the boy with the enquiring mind. She was off to travel the world to look for more challenges. She was hoping to find more fatbergs. Like her great grandad did. She started to set up patrol systems throughout the world.

A blob detector was invented, at first it could be only carried in a lorry or in an aeroplane or helicopter, so she invested in her own Air Force.

And I said all started near Jo's cafe she took hold of Jo's cafe as the headquarters. The ground for the cafe was left as Jo left it all them years ago. Jo's great granddaughter insisted the cafe ground floor was kept a museum.

The blob was going underground and finding its way deep underground. And there were chambers in London and other areas and cities filling up with blob fatbergs. Some areas it was decided to leave the blob just solid because it was doing no harm in the cave where it was.

Some had to be dug out and it's going to be hard work but they have to send miners down in the cave to dig out by hand and not damage any of the cave they could help it. Because some of the caves were famous tourist spots. And when they found some in the cave that was too unsafe now for the public to go into the cave and solidify it for health and safety reasons.

Friday night takeaway was becoming very unpopular because of the possibility of making more fat bergs. People are starting to eat healthier and finding different ways of cooking food. The fatberg group was trying to think what I can do next because I haven't been called out for years to a fatberg.

And I've got news of a new island in the Atlantic of a floating iceberg but was not an iceberg when it was investigated, it was the fatberg, Atlantic Ocean is throwing up all the fat burgers from his depth.

It was becoming a danger to shipping as it grew and grew.



And I'm always calling for the boy with enquiring mind, but he was no longer around, and his granddaughter turned up.

They were having problems with Antarctica by this time all the ice with belching and how can I keep Antarctica frozen. And the idea comes up your channels and Antarctica and feel the tunnels up your fatberg and add the special solidifying solution. Took a few years to work but the fatberg was forming a permanent hardness under the iceberg and they were getting bigger and taller and less likely to melt because the heat you started to melt the iceberg and ice was also by the fatberg solidifying. And once again the world has changed something but was slowly taking over the world was beginning to work with the world.

And people were turning away from all the greasy kebabs find a new way of cooking a kebab without the grease. And oven baked chips becoming popular and people were trying to produce food with less and less and less fat and other ways to take the place of fat in food. People were finally learning to work with the world and the earth.

And the fatberg squad were put on stand down. But they found a new use with a lot of extinct creatures on the earth coming back like the dolphins and whales and other sea creatures that couldn't cope with the ocean's fatbergs.

**Peter**

## A funny thing the mind

Nostalgia silently slips in, an unexpected but welcome intrusion. oxygenising my veins and seeping into my soul it's grasping hands gently massaging my beating heart - calmer now. From soft amorphous clouds nostalgia floats down in gentle raindrops falling on my ravaged frame. Teasing heart strings, grasping, clinging as they course down my wrinkled face. Warding off pathos and self pity halting tears as it licks the salt from caustic remembrance.

**Rachel**

## The May Apple

The young boy Enrico Mandrake was desperate to see the unicorn again, he had not seen it since the fourth day of entering the doldrums. Three months ago he had seen the ship the 'May Apple' for the first time in the port on Pitcairn Island in the South Pacific ocean. When he first saw the unicorn in Pitcairn on the prow of the 'May Apple', the mysterious creature fascinated him, he stared at it for a long time, mesmerised by the strangeness of such a creature, that he'd never ever set eyes on before. The longer he looked at it the more he knew that he had to join this ship.

He had been awakened very early again this morning, he was now at the end of his tether and wanted to sign off the 'May Apple' or jump ship!

"Come on, get up! Cookie wants you in the galley, now!"

Enrico was in deep sleep when these words were gruffly expelled from the mouth of a sailor named Kolmer. Kolmer had until recently been very friendly to the boy, he was a pleasant young man, well spoken and educated. He had asked the boy once if he knew that his surname Mandrake was very interesting; that Mandrake was a plant deemed to have magical powers, and a narcotic was prepared from its root, inducing sleep. Enrico didn't hear these words but was awake a moment later, when his cabin door slammed shut. He got out of his bunk and lifted his shirt off a chair and went quietly out of the cabin door. The three men in the other berths moaned and turned and swore in half sleep. Enrico went along the silent alleyway, up the three steps to the top of the companionway, and stepped across a narrow corridor and straight through the open threshold to the galley. Immediately the heat hit him but he was more or less prepared for this, coming from the oppressive humidity of the quarters below and over many days.

"Come on Jonah, turn to! There's a flying fish there for you get it down you quick before I eat it"

Cookie was a stout and resolute man, short and hairy, his hairy back and shoulders visible around his sleeveless undervests.

"We shouldn't have thrown all that breadfruit overboard Cookie!" said his assistant cook and erstwhile baker, laughingly. Cookie howled with laughter at the irony.

"Don't worry, we will, and it won't be breadfruit!"

"Ha, ha!" responded the baker joyfully, confident that all their problems would soon be over at this rate. The baker was a tall, wiry man. The kerchief around his neck was soaked with sweat.

"That was the 'bounty', added Cookie, "don't worry.... there'll be only one thing going overboard baker... it will be a root... not a fruit but a root..." and guffawed loudly. The baker joined in with more howling laughter.

Enrico climbed onto his stool and carefully stood on it. Although he was only 13 years old he paid attention to everything he was shown and told and performed exactly as was required. He came down off the stool and put his finger in to taste the water. It was slightly salty but palatable. All the ships complement of twelve men and the boy had been drinking this distilled water for three days now. A large earthenware casserole full of sea water was always simmering slowly on the cooker plate. Enrico was adept at this condensing and distilling of the sea water and was able to carry out all the parts of this operation very efficiently without losing any of the precious water. The condensed steam on the collecting plates dropped down into a tray that he had managed to rig up with Kolmer's help.

Sometime before entering the doldrums, the ship had found itself in a sudden heavy storm which lasted for three days. They had gone mysteriously off course and so lost sight of an uncharted island that they had seen twelve miles away on the horizon, just an hour after the storm broke. Soon after the storm ceased, they were almost immediately in a belt of very light winds and very calm seas. The doldrums! It seemed to be unceasing. Their food stores ran down after the first five days. and the fresh water was getting to be dangerously low. The crew decided to rig up the desalination contraption and to complement the distilled water little by little with the remaining fresh water.

Enrico soon realised he was on his own in the galley. He had been very busy and careful and concentrating on what he was doing. He now had a moment to relax having completed the present task. He sat down. Suddenly he became very scared. He remembered that Cookie had called him Jonah, he knew what that meant and began to fear for his life. Suddenly he was calm as if a voice was talking to him in his head. He longed more than ever now to see the unicorn. It was vital that he go now before other crew members were turning to and coming on deck. He looked around

carefully to make sure that he was leaving everything safely. He checked the casserole and the heat from the plates and then left the galley. He walked along the deck of the 'May Apple' towards the prow of the sloop. Before he got to the prow he looked over the rail on the port side eagerly. He couldn't resist just in case the unicorn was visible but he knew that he wouldn't see it, as he knew that the figurehead was located about six feet down below the railing and under the curvature of the hull, right at the prow of the ship.

He continued to walk to the very point of the prow and saw that the rope ladder was still in situ, about eight feet above the figurehead down below. Kolmer had rigged this ladder up just after the first two days in the doldrums, for both of them to be able to go down and work on, repair and paint the figurehead. They had instinctively known between them what colours they had needed to make up from the stores that they had on the ship.

The boy scrambled over the railings and carefully went down the rope ladder until he reached the figurehead. He carefully straddled it. He looked at the freshly painted white body and marvellous white head with its black eyes, and the golden yellow paint on the spiralled horn growing out of the creature's forehead. The boy was unafraid, there was no sense of fear about anything, now that he was here with the unicorn he was at one mentally and physically with this far from imaginary creature. He put his arms around the neck of the mysterious creature, every bit of stress and anxiety that he had felt in recent days had drained away from the boy's small body. He was completely safe. He cried softly, endless tears rolling down his face onto the neck of the unicorn. The boy fell asleep. The unicorn also closed its eyes but the boy didn't see this.

After some time Cookie appeared on deck. He began bellowing and moving towards the bow of the ship "Jonah! Get back up here... now!" There was no reply. "Leave off painting that blasted horse, get up here now or I'll take an axe to the damned thing right now! Do you hear!" He turned around and headed back to the galley.

The boy awoke from a beautiful sleep on the back of the unicorn, which he dearly loved more than anything in the world. He climbed up the ladder. He pulled the ladder back up and tidily stowed it away and then confidently headed for the galley. Droplets of fresh rain at last began to come down. A breeze came up making the canvas begin to flap. Men were coming up from the accommodation onto the deck. Some were crying, some

were sobbing. Some were making strange muted cheering sounds, some dropped to their knees looking up to the heavens. The canvas flapped more rigorously. Enrico saw Cookie and Kolmer sharing scuttlebutt on the deck, so he walked over there and joined in.

A mysterious voice came over the ship. Let's go home it said. The ship had left the doldrums. The unicorn opened its eyes and began to move slowly through the water.

**Anon**

## Lost Love

The years have gone so fast  
Still it seems like yesterday.  
The pain's fresh in my mind  
Which lingers for such a long time.  
The silent tears are shed  
As I lay alone in my bed.  
I questioned God as to why  
And still there's no reply.  
With each milestone that passes  
I watch our children and grandchildren.  
My how they've grown.  
You'd be a proud grandpa.  
They bring so much joy to those days of sorrow  
And so I think of the new tomorrows.  
There's no perfect love I know  
And yes you loved us so.  
I have so much to be thankful for .

## Celeste

## Joy

All that you are.  
Clever funny mesmerising  
Small vulnerable cuddly  
But oh, so strong  
A spider's web covered in glistening raindrops.

Beautiful engaging magical  
A rainbow in the vast blue sky

Inquisitive demanding energetic  
Playful puppies on a freshly mowed lawn

All that you give.  
love warmth and joy joy joy

**PT**  
**After Frank O'Hara**

## Misty Morning Visitation

A misty, grumpy morning on my hospital ward. Yet another day of infuriating boredom had begun. That new doctor came round again... sure he's a fraud... won't accept that I have no veins left to experiment with! He'll be found out, I'm sure. I'm sick of nurses and doctors, bed pans, hospital food. I just want out! Think my imagination's getting the better of me, too.

I glowered, fixated on the wide windows, longing for freedom. Then, out of the misty distance flew an eagle - yes, that big bird! It had obviously lost its soaring power, dive-bombed to our lowly level and managed to find its way in, on what had become a stiflingly hot day.

The expanse of its wings was like nothing I'd ever seen before. Television documentaries do no justice to their majestic, commanding form, in real-time. I was thankful (for a change!) to be in a corner of my own, to have this moment all to myself. My jaw dropped to the floor as it landed on the foot of my bed and from my mouth drained away months of pent-up anger, replaced by awesome wonder.

The eagle, which I was able to understand as it 'spoke' to me, gave me encouragement from eons of wisdom and fortitude.

"I know I shall fly away again, soon, so I refuse to be stressed and fretful. Just need time to rest, recuperate, and then I'll soar and glide again on those high, high currents. You're pretty much in the same position - grounded right now."

I could only stare back at the steely and sharp-eyed visitor, for my speech had taken flight. How did it know? I had actually 'crashed' from overdoing things when I should have been resting, during a season of Chronic Fatigue, a now well-known theft of vitality.

The eagle didn't tarry much longer. In sage-like tones, it bid me "Adieu. Fare thee well. Fly, soar and transcend when you leave this place!" It left as unexpectedly as it had arrived, and I, Miss hitherto Angry Young Woman, was left pausing in pondering reflection...

Then, suddenly, like a rush of the sweetest, freshest breath of air, in through the window came a Visitation of the whitest doves, coo-cooing a soul-soothing, whispery chorus:

"All is well. Don't let your anger stifle hope.  
You simply need to believe and let hope flow from your soul, instead."

The Visitation of Doves departed in a glowing, mesmerising cloud.  
And my spirit soared into a peaceful... refreshing... sleep...

## Dreaminoutloud

## PARTICIPANT QUOTES

IT FEELS LIKE WE'VE CREATED A SAFE SPACE VERY QUICKLY.

I WAS SO IMPRESSED BY THE STANDARD OF EVERYBODY'S WRITING.

I ENJOYED BEING WITH A GROUP OF NEW FRIENDS.

I FEEL LIKE I'M CRACKING MY HEAD LIKE AN EGG AND ALL THE IMAGINATION IS COMING OUT.

I LOVE HEARING OTHER PEOPLE'S STORIES. THEY HAVE MADE ME SMILE AND LAUGH.

I'VE LEARNED SOMETHING FROM EVERYBODY.

## ART:LINKS

Thanks to funding from Masonic Charitable Foundation and The Mercers' Company, Create delivered *art:links*, an interactive, high-quality creative arts project with older people who attend Age UK Islington.

The project was delivered via [Create Live!](#), Create's new video-conferencing delivery model developed in response to the coronavirus lockdown. Participants were connected with each other via Zoom, in professionally-led, collaborative, engaging creative writing workshops that are fun, build skills and enable social interaction (unlike one-way online experiences).

Under the guidance of Create's professional writers Linden K McMahon and Rhys Cook participants explored various creative writing techniques such as metaphors and characterisation. *art:links* enabled them to come together to collaboratively develop their creative writing skills and self-expression, at a time of increased isolation and hardship.

All participants received a digital Certificate of Achievement and this digital anthology, providing a tangible record of their achievements.

**Create is the UK's leading charity empowering lives, reducing isolation and enhancing wellbeing through the creative arts.**

We know that unleashing creativity ignites imaginations, develops confidence and builds relationships. Like setting off a firework, our professional artists light the touch paper and our participants discover new found self-belief and a desire to try more, do more and be more.

We're a national charity that champions local priorities by collaborating with our partners to tailor every project to each individual's needs. We believe that everyone – regardless of circumstances, behaviour, age, gender, race or disability – deserves the chance to fulfil their potential. Each project is a collaboration with one or more community partners, which have specialist knowledge of local priorities and the participants that they exist to serve.

Our focus is on engaging the most marginalised participants in inspiring, sustainable arts programmes – delivered in familiar settings where they feel comfortable and safe – in areas where provision is poor and engagement in the arts is therefore low. We prioritise our work with seven participant groups: young patients; disabled children and adults; young and adult carers; schoolchildren (and their teachers) in areas of deprivation; vulnerable older people; young and adult prisoners (and their families); and marginalised children and adults.

In response to the coronavirus lockdown, we designed **Create Live!**, a new project concept using Zoom to deliver high quality, live, interactive, collaborative creative workshops that are fun, build skills and reduce isolation.

Every project we deliver is rigorously evaluated because we're passionate about providing inspiring and empowering creative experiences that have a lasting impact. We also evaluate the longer-term impact of our work through the *Making it Matter* initiative, which revisits two projects each year, 6-24 months after they took place.

We know from experience that drama can build an isolated young carer's self-esteem, that storytelling can strengthen the bond between a prisoner and the loved ones waiting for them at home, and that music can help ease the anguish felt by the parent of a child with a life-limiting condition.

One spark of creative energy opens up a world of positive opportunities.

**Create lights that spark.**