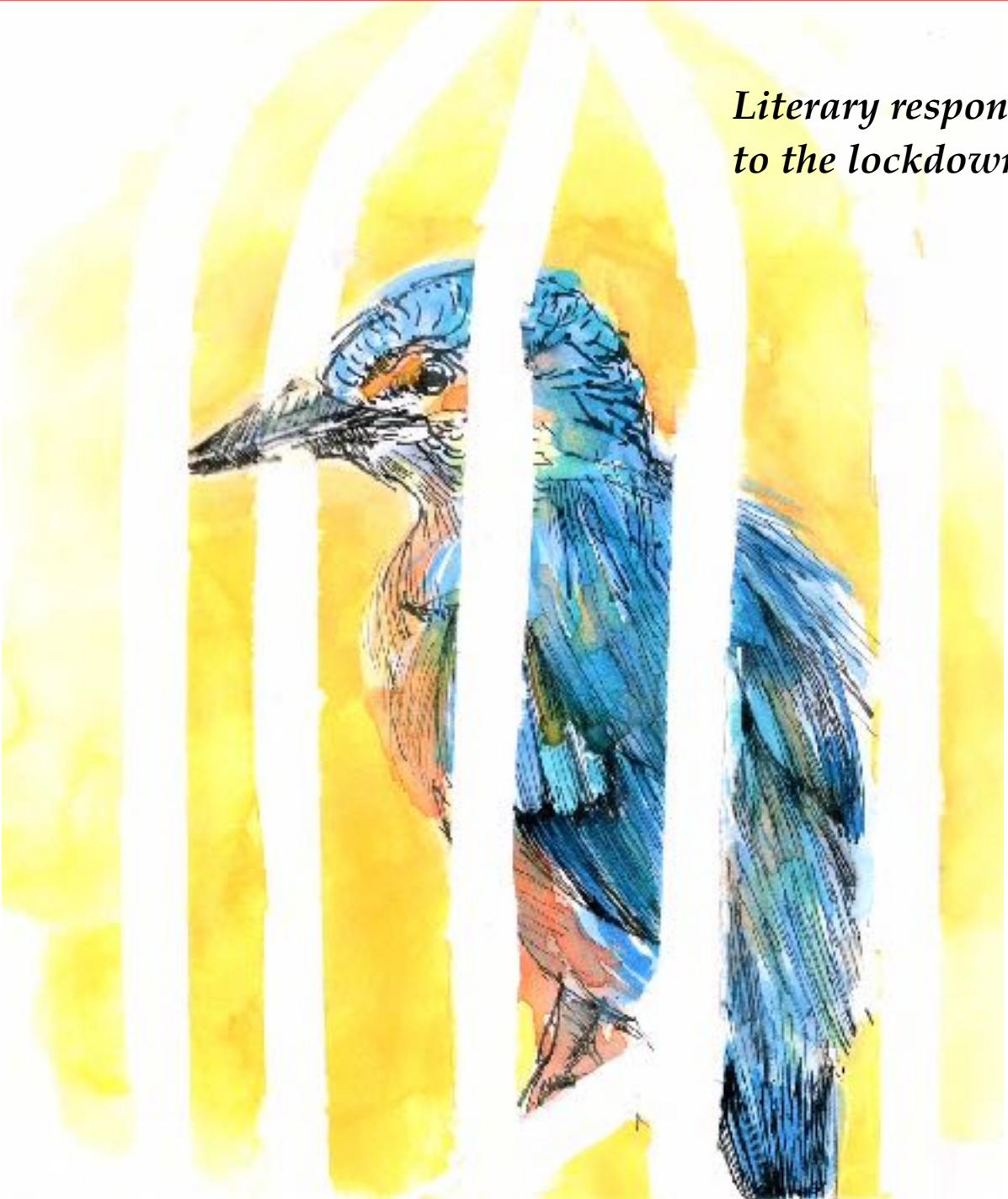


# *Life in Slow Motion*

*Literary responses  
to the lockdown*



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# Foreword



This is Solihull School's Creative Writing Enrichment group's second publication, following the success of their *Winter Word's* Spoken Word event and anthology in February (pictured above). This magazine features contributions from creative writers from the Middle School and the school's own poet laureate, and original artwork by Zarine Kumar and India Armstrong. It's a collection that they should all be incredibly proud of!

In the original poetry and prose that follows, our writers capture their experiences of life in the lockdown, including their reflections on significant historical and political events that have occurred in this period. They explore how social distancing has put a pause on the frantic pace of ordinary life, allowing new and forgotten routines to fill the space: time sat in the garden, walks down local roads and rural paths, time listening and talking to family. Their writing captures how the world's attention has been re-focused, giving us an opportunity to notice the smaller details that are closer to home.

In *Life in Slow Motion*, our talented creative writers have preserved the rare perspective of our days and weeks at home, so that in years to come, we can remember what we noticed.

We hope that you enjoy reading their beautifully illustrated collection of writing - the second, I hope, of many!

Dr Routledge

# Life in Slow Motion

Life in slow motion  
Cherry blossom falls in spring  
New-born birds take wing

Lost in this blurring slumber  
When will this end, I wonder?

Thoughts are flaming in the mind  
Grinding down the bone  
Waiting for their chance to roam.

Each choice we make: a mistake  
We detest this endless break.

Stay home and save lives,  
The human race must survive,  
Alive. Not living

Faces chained onto our phones  
Trying not to feel alone

Locked up, revolution rests;  
These long summer days  
Compound the acute malaise.

Trapped in these phases,  
All grief never erases.

Life in slow motion  
The clock begins its ticking  
Moments, stones. Skipping.

# Happy Tomorrow

Open the window.  
Cold air whips flushed cheeks.  
We climb into the camellia tree,  
It's familiar branches welcome us,  
Bending and slightly swaying  
As our bare feet  
Clamber up.  
Leaves part  
As we settle  
Right at the top, like always.  
“Wow the sky's amazing” I say.  
Silence  
Then  
“All I can see is black” is heard to my left.  
“Open your eyes, you dummy” I reply.  
Silence, searching.  
“They are open, I can only see black!”  
We listen to the wind sigh at my brother's less than insightful speculations.

The air has warmed to us now;  
A steamy blanket,  
shielding us.  
We lay and watch as the clouds race,  
dance.  
There's silence,  
all the creatures are asleep.  
We can see for miles up here...  
“How long are we gonna be here for?”  
Two huge honey eyes are visible  
staring at me though the waxing moon,  
Attempting to mask the fear.

“Be where for, bu?”  
Silence, he struggles for a moment then,

brow furrowed, the words tumble out of his mouth,

“Be here, in our house for. It’s been forever.”

Silence, my turn to struggle.

“Honestly I don’t know, Bu, but what we’re all doing is best for everyone, you know this.”

No reply.

“I know it’s hard and you miss it all but everyone’s going through the same, the whole world”

“I miss nan the most, when will we see her?”

The wind licks our chapped lips.

Silence.

“I’m cold.” he states suddenly.

“Ok do you wanna jacket?”

“No.”

“Erm why?”

“Cus I don’t want you to leave me.”

I felt my heart throb through my thin shirt.

It had tomatoes down it.

We got into a fight earlier.

I lost my temper,

I forget he’s so small,

Like a tiny adult.

I always forget.

We always fight

But whenever we climb the camellia tree,

We forget

The pressures of yesterday

With each breath of the night’s sweet perfume.

And we’re together,

Always.

“YO have u seen the sky?!” he belts into my ear.

Laughter erupts as we try to shush each other.

Eventually the giggles subside

And we listen to

The silence

Again.



“The sky is amazing” he whispers.  
“I dunno what you’re looking at but all I can see is back” I reply.  
He laughs for ages.  
“You’re not too bad yanno” I say.  
Through the silence I hear his little grin.

Silence, then  
His watch beeps.  
We smile, knowing what happens next.  
We climb higher, far above the roof.  
The flimsy branches giggle with us as we gain our balance.  
We grab hands and yell  
At the top of our lungs:  
HAPPY TOMORROW



# Our Little Bird

There is a little bird,  
Who flies to and fro,  
Between our garden fences so.

He's a red-breasted fellow,  
Who drops to the decking,  
Picking and pecking at seed we leave out for his getting.

He carries a pink handbag,  
Collecting squishy worms from the ground as tokens,  
And returning them home to the trophy cabinet he opens.

Calling out to his friends,  
Shouting out about treasure beneath,  
Assembling a team to construct a wreath.

I wonder how far,  
How far have his stick legs travelled?  
We are baffled.

We are still as free as our little bird,  
Who flies to and fro,  
Teaching us to live our lives as we choose so.

We might be trapped in lockdown,  
With boredom reaching its peak,  
But who's to say we can't speak?

Let us smile, laugh and cry,  
In the company of our little bird,  
Who taught us how to fly.



# Houseplant

6.30: rise and shine

Forgotten forlorn

leaves mottled brown.

You bloom like a bruise.

Looking sorry for yourself, aren't you?

I've got to go... but when I get back-

Confusion, contusions.

8.00: run or you'll miss-

Feet pounding the pavement like percussion,

Heels kicking bus tickets clock ticking

Fingers tapping knees bouncing head hammering.

What do you mean 'months?!'

But what about exams-

Leaves lathered in a layer of dust

But- I had plans...

Time drips through the hourglass like treacle.

I suppose this reprieve is a gift.

The sky is clear and blue,

And you, you unfurl like a smile.

Let us clear our lungs of fumes.

Let the sunlight revive us a while.

# The City of Birds

Every morning, buses  
of birds swarm through pylons,  
playing musical chairs on our rooftops:  
perching politely on the branches of our aerials.  
Every morning, boundlessly  
breaking the

—  
bellowing their song;  
enhanced by the welcoming flow of the wind,  
it drifts,  
over the dollhouse cities and  
endless strips of monochrome  
soon to be —  
Broken.

By the colossal monsters  
that swarm our streets  
roaring on.  
The song of nature:  
silenced by the voice of humanity  
yet we move on.

# Root Bound

Morning comes:

I adjust to the sun and stretch.

Stretch up and up towards it.

My home feels too small for me now that I've been sitting in it so long.

My feet know the floor too well, they grow and this room becomes a pair of shoes that would have fit me a few years ago.

I need a change of scenery.

I might move somewhere new, maybe relocate to somewhere with more sun.

Or maybe less sun; my skin is starting to crisp up at the edges and my house is so small that I can't avoid the piercing rays.

Most of my time is spent wondering when I'll be allowed to move.

It's not really my choice, I have to wait for the rules to be announced and then I can leave this place for good.

When it's finally decided, I feel free.

I have to leave some things behind, they break off as I move home.

But I guess that's part of change.

The parts of me I lost will grow back, new and fresh.

With this new freedom I can thrive.

The sunlight is just right, and my feet are really connected to the earth again.

My house is bigger, there's room for kids. If I want.

The freedom of choice is so important.



# Behind a Mask

Right now, 2020 is making 2019 look like a hit.

I hear sober teenagers reposting Tumblr quotes on their meaningless Instagram stories asking people to like their new pic.

I think about those who are mourning the ones they love, the ones who are now gone.

However, people would rather focus on their next holiday to Greece or Mount le Blanc.

I think about the NHS workers, who frankly do above and beyond, they have no voice behind a sanitary mask,

but when we clap after our Thursday nap,

I think about how it must be to see your patient on the news, though its just a statistic to you, that's Ben aged 52.

He has a family just like you.

A wife, a father, two sons at school.

They wish they would have been able to see him

As much as Dominic Cummings on the news, who failed to comply to the lockdown rules.



Sadly, it seems lately,  
only the rich and privileged politicians  
seem to relate to this established patriarchy.  
I think about the rainbows on  
flats, houses, and sheds.  
I think about the homeless with no bed for the night  
And no where to rest their head.  
I think about the poor and hungry a bit mind you.  
We seem to forget this has stolen more than lives too.  
What about the children who get by,  
by eating food from their primary school.  
This has stolen jobs and health,  
Hope and memories,  
that will never be replaced.  
It has kicked people in the mouth,  
and left a big purple bruise on their face.  
It has made me realise how things don't matter and you shouldn't care.  
You should say hello to your friend  
and pronounce your love for you dad or gran,  
it's never too late to show some love.



You should grow out your eyebrows, your  
Body hair and wear no makeup for days.  
Try in lockdown to love yourself for a change.  
If not today, why not tomorrow, ay?  
We are looking so much on the past,  
where I was last year,  
and not right now in the present.  
We are looking to the future as a question mark  
but almost like an unwrapped key.  
I think this has made us stronger,  
You and me.  
Smile and know that eventually,  
the past, present, and future,  
will all soon be history.

# We'll Meet Again

It's a victory-  
We battled and succeeded,  
"We won!" we chanted.

Dancing, drinking, sing-  
Bursts of colour light the streets,  
Saved: we are now clear

Painted in red, white and blue,  
Recognising our country,  
For what we went through

Let us not forget,  
Those precious lives that we lost,  
The bridges they crossed

For future children,  
Saving our lives - sacrifice,  
Giving back freedom.

We will meet again  
Not in lockdown; don't know when,  
But we will, like them.

**Inspired by Dame Vera Lynn, the Force's Sweetheart (1917 – 2020)**

*We'll Meet Again*

<https://youtu.be/8Nzy1cfnKh4>

# Haiku

Shut up. Inside this  
House I can't hear my mind it's  
Too loud. Too quiet.



# Same Story, Different Name

I'm sorry I can't feel your pain.  
Maybe it is skin deep  
I thought skin was just for protection  
It's protecting me.

As he pushed on George's neck,  
George screamed. I can't breathe.  
It's the same story, different name.  
Just one similarity.

Yours is not my friend.  
Your skin is hated upon,  
Killed brutally in the streets.  
Your skin shines in the sun,  
but bleeds in the hands of the police.

I'm sorry.  
We have betrayed you,  
as we hide behind our iPhone screens.  
I will never be able to relate to your struggle,  
but believe me when I plead.

We need no more segregation, reformation  
And funding for black communities.  
For decades politicians have ignored this  
Simplest humanity.

# All Over the World

All over the world,  
Tensions begin to seethe.  
4,000 people in Birmingham,  
Yelling “I can’t breathe”

Selling tear gas to America,  
Peaceful protesters blinded.  
Even though they’re the ones,  
Who can see things so divided.

Demanding revolution;  
Some people are afraid of change.  
The status quo only benefits some,  
The rest are out of range.

Selling rubber bullets to the police,  
Craters shipped over sea.  
The neck of a man, a father,  
Crushed beneath somebody’s knee.

Outrage, anger, grief,  
Mourning the loss of someone who,  
Because of the colour of his skin,  
Wasn’t shown humanity that’s due.

Selling weapons to Saudi Arabia,  
Children running, dying.  
But the rustling of our money pot  
Tunes out the sound of Yemen’s crying.

Fighter jets, bombs and missiles,  
Destroy mountain and desert grounds.  
Innocent people starving,  
Makes us 2.6 billion pounds.

Selling morality for profit,  
We’re so used to looking away.  
Or if we are shown an injustice,  
It only remains with us for a day.

Now we begin to demand action,  
Appalled at what’s going on.  
Even though most of us won’t experience,  
What it’s like to be knelt upon.

Donating what we can to charities,  
Who are directly fighting the source.  
Signing petitions and emailing those,  
With the power to change the future’s course.

We must stop selling weapons of oppression,  
To those who wish to oppress.  
We cannot shy away from the issues,  
That need to be addressed.

We should celebrate our differences,  
Not use them to discriminate.  
We should educate ourselves now,  
There’s no time to sit and wait.

Black lives matter,  
And they always will.  
It’s the mindset of hate,  
That we must kill.





# Dawn

Mother busies herself preparing food for three miniatures.

They all mumble sleepily as Mother bustles around them.

Mollycoddle.

Father bursts in, always the drama queen.

He gives mother a peck on the cheek before shaking the dripping tufts of blue out of his beady eyes.

He gazes at his family for a few moments.

Bright-eyed.

Then he taps his blue boots and takes off.

Mother watches until he is out of sight.

She turns on her children.

At the sight of their father, all three have fully awoken.

Excited.

Chattering, they gulp down their breakfast.

Mother adjusts their matching yellow shirts and blue waistcoats.

She takes off and they follow.

Clouds are clear

as they dance in the sky.

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# *Lotus Notes*

***Lotus Notes* is an epistolary narrative capturing an office romance developing between a boss and his employee, over email, during the lockdown.**

## Wages During National Lockdown

13:34, Wednesday 25/03/2020

S Yorke  
To Joshua Alan

Dear Mr. Alan,

I am emailing you to inquire about my monthly payment post-today, with the new lockdown policy initiated nationwide; with this additional impediment, I am forced to remain at home, and hence will be hindered in regard to bartending and earning my pay. I understand the Labour Ministry issued advisories to businesses not to terminate their employees or reduce their wages for absences, and I was emailing to ensure that neither would be taking place despite our current circumstances.

Yours,  
S. Yorke

11:09, Thursday 26/03/2020

Joshua Alan  
To S Yorke

Dear Sherry,

For the moment, you will continue to be payed as normal by the month so do not worry. In the meantime, be sure not to be too overwhelmed by the situation.

Take care,  
Joshua Alan

11:33, Thursday 26/03/2020

S Yorke  
To Joshua Alan

Dear Mr. Alan,

Thank you for clarifying this with me. However, I felt inclined to call attention to your spelling of the past participle of 'pay'. In this context, it would be spelt as 'paid', as opposed to 'payed'.

Yours,  
S. Yorke

## Payment this month

17:11, Wednesday 01/04/2020

Joshua Alan  
To S Yorke

Dear Sherry,

I thought you might like to know that I have now paid you for last month, as you asked.

Take care,  
Joshua Alan

18:08, Wednesday 01/04/2020

S Yorke  
To Joshua Alan

Dear Mr. Alan,

Thank you for checking in with me, I can confirm that the transaction has come through for March.

Yours,  
S. Yorke

P.S.: I appreciate your correct spelling of 'paid'.

10:24, Thursday 02/04/2020

Joshua Alan  
To S Yorke

Dear Sherry,

Thank you, I made an effort to spell well. :)

Take care,  
Joshua Alan

1v1 vid

21:11, Sunday 12/04/2020

S Yorke  
To Joshua Alan

Heyo Jo,

Found it:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZEVLrA2UMg&list=PLAGrJSQfZStSfV3ufhZ5To6iVvalJaRdG&index=2&t=0s>

They're cool tricks, but they seem a bit flashier than anything else innit? Especially since my dribbling isn't even all that great.

I like the guy's other stuff though. His shooting video is pretty decent.

Your one-and-only  
Sherry Berry

10:14, Monday 13/04/2020

Joshua Alan  
To S Yorke

Hey Sherry,

I don't think this email was intended for me but I was curious, so I watched the video you sent - I used to have problems with one on ones in the past as well, but a friend of mine taught me some cool (I suppose) less-flashy tricks, if those are more your cup of tea

I could show them to you sometime. Pretty sure the lockdown rules say up to two people in a group unless it's a family, so we could always hit the court and shoot some hoops. If you have time, I mean.

Ciao,  
Josh



11:35, Monday 13/04/2020

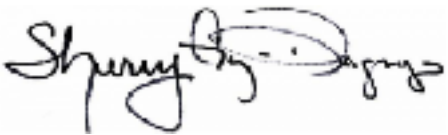
S Yorke  
To Joshua Alan

Dear Mr. Alan,

My sincerest apologies. You are correct, it was not intended for you. In fact, I was unaware that you also played basketball. That is an interesting coincidence.

As of this moment, I am certain the government does not approve of individuals from different households meeting in public, and I myself would rather not put myself or my roommate at risk of becoming ill. However, once the twenty-one days are complete, perhaps if we both don face masks, I might be interested in playing some basketball.

Yours,  
S Yorke

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sherry' followed by a stylized flourish.

13:24, Monday 13/04/2020

Joshua Alan  
To S Yorke

Dear Sherry,

Of course, that only makes sense, and I am glad you are interested! The lockdown finishes as of Wednesday, so all I need to do is buy a mask.

Take care,  
Josh

Oops

22

11:38, Monday 13/04/2020

S Yorke  
To Joanne L

Heyy Jo,

Remember the video you were talking about the other day? Well, I found it, and accidentally emailed my boss instead of you, and I made a bit of a fool of myself. And then he asked me to play basketball with him. And then I think I said I would??

To say the least, this is your fault and idk what to do.

Sherry

P.S. Check your emails more often

12:01, Monday 13/04/2020

Joanne L  
To S Yorke

what is the point of emailing me if ur just gonna txt me 20 min later? anyway it sounds like he's asking u out (on a basketball date, nonetheless a date), and it's not like you've got a bf anyway. just give it a shot.

Jo

Ps make me

Sent from my iPhone

12:03, Monday 13/04/2020

Joanne L  
To S Yorke

wait a sec he's ur boss? Honestly that sounds like hes over 30 so i change my mind

Jo

Sent from my iPhone

12:05, Monday 13/04/2020

S Yorke  
To Joanne L

Uh no, he's not, he's like 27 or something like that. Pretty young for a manager but whatever. Amelia says he studied business at Cambridge, so maybe he's smart enough that they let him at it early.

Sherry

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12:07, Monday 13/04/2020

Joanne L  
To S Yorke

fine, permission granted.

---

Sent from my iPhone

## Extended Lockdown Period

15:01, Thursday 16/04/2020

S Yorke  
To Joshua Alan  
Bcc Joanne L

Dear Mr. Alan,

For a moment, I was relieved I was no longer confined to the walls of my own flat. That was until I stumbled upon this BBC article...

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-52313715>

Apparently (and unfortunately), we will have to wait until someday after the sixth of May to hit the court.

Yours,  
S Yorke

17:22, Thursday 16/04/2020

Joshua Alan  
To S Yorke

Hi Sherry,

I can't believe it! Honestly, I was too - I am in dire need of some fleshy company, preferably of the intelligible variety (i.e. not my dog). Anyway, that is too bad. However, I am willing to wait if you are?

Take care,  
Josh

20:11, Thursday 16/04/2020

S Yorke  
To Joshua Alan

Dear Joshua,

Does your dog have a name? How old is he / she? I wish I could get a dog or even just a cat, but my landlord prohibits it – if I were you I would better appreciate your pup's company. Besides, I've gotten tired of my roommate very soon; human company isn't quite so outstanding, and in my case, not always of the intelligible variety.

Also, waiting is the only thing I've been doing for the whole lockdown, so I wouldn't mind a little more.

Yours,  
S Yorke

20:14, Thursday 16/04/2020

S Yorke  
To Joshua Alan

\*Mr. Alan

10:06, Friday 17/04/2020

Joshua Alan  
To S Yorke

Hey Sherry,

Well, her name is Shelly (almost like your name actually), she is 6 and is a black lab-husky cross - she's a hairy thing, and with what is probably global warming's doing summers are getting quite a bit warmer, and I am a little bit worried she won't like the heat, so I am considering giving her a cut. With over two months spent in each other's company 24/7, I would be surprised if you hadn't had enough of her by now, haha. Actually, I have even weirdly been missing work a bit lately - I know, I know, it's insane.

Take care,  
Josh

P.S. You can call me Josh

11:31, Friday 17/04/2020

S Yorke  
To Joshua Alan

Dear Joshua,

Yes, it does seem like it might be a good idea to lighten her load somewhat. I also was enjoying bartending, and am running out of hobbies to partake in. Also, I will take you up on your offer but add '-ua' to the end.

Yours,  
Sherry Yorke

13:58, Friday 17/04/2020

Joshua Alan  
To S Yorke

Hey Sherry,

Alright, I will settle for Joshua. I do hope that this blows over soon though.

Take care,  
Joshua



09:53, Monday 20/04/2020

Joanne L  
To S Yorke

Tell me you're not serious. Is this a business email or a friendly conversation? You're talking like a robot and I can't tell if it's intentional or not, come on, step up your game.

Jo mama

11:37, Monday 20/04/2020

S Yorke  
To Joanne

Give me a break, it's still weird to talk to him casually at all.

Sherry

# Extract from *Plain Sight*

***Plain Sight* is a novel set in the year 2060, at a time when the nation is ruled by the Kool Party, who have created a utopian state, post World War III.**

Pitch black. Whispers and shivers of excitement. We were packed in like sardines, exactly what everyone who came here had hoped for.

“Ladies and gentlemen, you are about to witness greatness. Poetry, harmony and melody, engineered by a modern-day genius into art for you, the people of England, to stop existing, and to start living. Stop the perpetrating to stop the hating. Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you, the one, the only WICKED WHIMSICAL WALLACE!.” The room came to life, nothing less than a roar echoed around. The beat started.

“It’s hip-hop Friday, hip-hop Friday, hippity-hippity hop, hip-hop Friday.” The bass pounded.

“Yo, yo, yo, yo,

[Life in Utopia]

Triple W

This one goes out to all my people,

We all had to isolate ourselves during lockdown,

No human affection or interaction for months man,

We all felt that pain,

It wasn’t easy, but then again it never was going to be easy,

This one here is about the struggle, that we all went through, together, as a race, as one, as a community!

And how there is always light at the end of the tunnel.

The only demonstration of love is sacrifice

If you don’t believe that, then you’re going to have to roll the dice

You may be alive, but are you really living?

Just look to your left, turn to your right, no matter where you look it’s going to be alright

W42JQ,

If you don't know me then your words ain't true,  
It's Triple-Dub on the mic with something to say  
Listen here people, it's going to be okay  
I grew up in a world, raised by hate  
Whenever in doubt, I'd just discriminate  
Money, money, money, there's something so funny,  
It made the world go round but it never made it sunny.  
Humanity was put back in its place,  
There's really nothing you can do with pandemics in your face,  
But you could stay at home, it really was a surprise,  
Within the act of doing nothing, you were really saving lives,  
Alive. Not living. Isolation to survive,  
Preventing our ambition as a race, to thrive,  
When the virus killed ministers that used to deprive  
Kasabian had to take it to DEFCON FIVE,  
With the old government, becoming a myth,  
The kool party, introduced a new way to live,  
We all came out, ready with the rainbow,  
We got a revolution, we were given a shove  
In the right direction, away from the volcano,  
Finally! The human race spreads love.

The only demonstration of love is sacrifice  
If you don't believe that, then you're going to have to roll the dice  
You may be alive, but are you really living?  
Just look to your left, turn to your right, no matter where you look it's going to be alright

With nuclear warfare, there isn't a winner,  
Yet the ministers would get to go home for dinner,  
In their warm, safe homes, sleeping like a baby,  
People would disintegrate because they were lazy,  
Executive decisions to wipe out a city,  
They were really playing God, no care or pity  
But listen here people, you've got to have hope,  
The British government didn't think they would provoke  
Kasabian Smith to have to rise to power,  
And make some corrections to society's flower,

We wake up one day, it's all gone away,  
Suddenly sorrow has slipped into yesterday,  
Humanity's demise that we managed to escape,  
Stop the repetition, it's time to reshape-  
Our world  
Let's start with Ethiopia  
Man, I really love life in utopia!

The only demonstration of love is sacrifice  
If you don't believe that, then you're going to have to pay the price  
You may be alive, but are you really living?  
Just look to your left, turn to your right, no matter where you look it's going to be alright



Cover artwork by Zarine Kumar