The Invisible Hitchhiker

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The invisible assailant
Closed our Schools
Workplace
Universities
Shops
Places of worship
Crushed movements
As countries rushed to close their borders

Catchy slogans cooked up by spin doctors
Poured on to our screen
Stay at home and protect the NHS
Stay and home and self-isolate
Stay at home and shield the vulnerable
Stay at home and keep safe
Stay at home had no limits

Hunt was on
To fill the cupboards
To step up to the challenge
To do our bit to protect our family and loved ones  
To do our bit to protect the NHS  
To be responsible and attend to civic duties  

And those who cross that line beware  
Be prepared to be humiliated  
Those who tried to attend to their basic needs  
Be prepared to be shamed and photographed for all to see  

The bullies  
Media Mafia stand ready to gang up  
On what they called those ‘shameless and selfish shoppers’  
Wheeling round trollies loaded with loo rolls and sanitisers  
Thoughtless heathens  
Roared the press  
Morals have been abandoned  
Maybe Hobbs was right  

Now what  
Streets are quiet  
No cars  
Few buses  
Windows transformed by children’s painting of rainbows  
Melancholy is the new urban landscape  
Air is cleaner  
Birds can be heard tweeting  
No longer drowned by urban living  
Spring has arrived  
Bringing with her a carnival of colours  
Red, yellow, pink and purple  
Bluebells paint our woodlands  
Greeting sunlight  
Before the arms of nature  
Reveal their foliage  
Forcing a hasty retreat.  

The warmth of April sun  
Release the pungent smell of nature  
Wisterias show off their dazzling clumps of lilac petals  
The senses are tingling  
Thirsty for a touch of nature  
The greenery of the local parks  
Beckons its resident  
Life has not lost its sweetness
Mind, soul and body nestled in the arm of nature
Heartbeat gentle
Fear recedes and withdraws
A stillness
A pause
A release of tension
A rainbow appears
Hope dips its toes and comes out to play
A horizon of plenty appears

Bodies feel the urge to flea
In this wonderland
like the swallow that guilds through skies
Visiting worlds far and near
Not hampered by passports or borders

The touch of air and wind
Moves around me
Greeting me softly
Like water I feel its presence
But it refuses to be captured
It’s not for sale.

This moment treasured is no idyll
My hour in the park has come to an end
Like Cinderella, I scurry back home
And bid farewell to nature for another day

In retreat
I long for solace and shelter in the countryside
The intimate spaces of city dwelling no longer desirable
Lockdown in city blocks has become a site of claustrophobia

Nobody is safe from the invisible killer
But it does not stop urban dwellers
Dreaming of country living
Silence descends
Loneliness hits hard
Joy and hope retire
The pandemic beast comes back to roam
Seeking souls unprotected by the spirits
Bodies touched by alcohol
Bodies unshielded
Bodies unprotected by loved ones
Bodies weighted down by illness
All prey to the beast
Whose claws
Spares no mercy

Those distant, near and far
Look on powerless
As space looking aliens
Care for their loved one
The invisible hitchhiker
Stands guard ready to rip out lungs of bodies
Leaving loved ones unable to mourn their dead

Stay at home and protect the NHS
What if homes are the taker of life
An ugly space where abuse reins
Behind closed doors
Where voices are muffled and drowned
Movement restricted
By a look of the eye,
By clenched fist
By kitchen knives
Tools regulating response
Allies of tyrannical bodies

What if home is deprived of space
Not fit for purpose
Bearing witness of empty food cupboards
Deprived of outside spaces to retreat to
Deprived of technology
Dependent on electrical meters
Top up schemes to keep family connected
What if homes used to rely on food banks
To bring food to the tables
What if home no longer feels like home

Stay at home and save lives
Whose lives?
BAME
Poor
Immigrants
Elderly
Disabled
Homeless
Refugees
Where does the moral compass lie?

The invisible hitchhiker
Touring the globe
Unveils the naked truths
Of the haves and have nots
Of the Oppressed
Ghosts of slavery
Poverty and slum clusters

There is disquiet as it moves slowly
Over the suspension of the care Act
The enormity of loss suffered
Loss of not being able to physically touch
Loss of not saying goodbye
Your photographs remain as evidence of your existence
Stay with me in my grief
As I retreat in my inner

Alone once more
Wandering around each room
In search of your presence
Empty head robbed of your companion
The salty sea tears touch my mouth
Oh, this grief is hard to bear
Bring me love and hope
Bring me kindness and compassion
Relieve this torment of mind and body
Heal the past and restore faith in future

Let there be a tomorrow
But when tomorrow comes
How will we recall these moments?
When a vaccine puts this pandemic to sleep

I want to hold on
To compassion
Empathy
The thank you notes placed on the bins and letterboxes
I want to remember friends that I kept in touch with
I want to remember my baking that
saved me when soberness took control
I want to remember my friendship with nature
The weekly applause for front line workers
That lifted our spirits and connected us to a sense of community
That we did not know that we had

I want to remember the empty spaces created
To reflect and do things differently
I want to remember the vulnerability of BAME communities
The voices that got left behind
I want to remember the importance of being present with
Another human being
Want to remember the importance of staying hopeful even
When you feel that you can’t go on
Maybe this will give me a new sense of direction
Remembering the past to imagine a new future

Citation