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# 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 at 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

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