

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a landscape at dawn or dusk. The sky is a gradient of colors, from a pale blue at the top to a deep red and orange near the horizon. A small, bright white circle, likely the moon, is visible in the sky. Below the sky, there are several layers of mountains covered in dense, dark green foliage. In the foreground, a body of water, possibly a lake or a wide river, reflects the colors of the sky and the mountains. The water is dark with some lighter ripples.

# We whisper to the dawn

An Anthology of Writing by the  
DGS Young Writers

# We whisper to the dawn

**Edited by Elaine Baker**

An anthology of new poems and flash fiction, by the DGS Young Writers' Group.

All the writing was created from/during writing workshops on Zoom, led by poet and mentor Elaine Baker (DGS & SBS Patron of Writing).

With huge thanks to all the DGS staff who've supported this project and enabled it to happen.

To the writers: thank you for sharing your writing with us this year. You are fantastic!

## Contents

<i>Keira Mason</i>	Last week	3
<i>Lily Jones</i>	Mask	4
<i>Madeline Challenger</i>	The fallen down tree by the stream	5
<i>Bethanie Brophy</i>	Rainy Friday afternoon	6
<i>Nina Winstone</i>	I met hope at the park	7
<i>Emilia Friend</i>	The bird in France	8
<i>Sia Veersamy</i>	Value	9
<i>Thomas King</i>	When he tells him	10
<i>Nina Winstone</i>	Madly missing you	11
<i>Keira Mason</i>	Today is a good day to be young	12
<i>Lily Jones</i>	Menendez Brothers	13
<i>Madeline Challenger</i>	To the clock above my desk	14
<i>Bethanie Brophy</i>	Found Film Poem	15
<i>Claire Hague</i>	The mysterious figure	16
<i>Emilia Friend</i>	Polyester minds and porcelain torsos	17
<i>Sia Veersamy</i>	Lockdown	18
<i>Nina Winstone</i>	When my brother tells my mother	19
<i>Thomas King</i>	A night at the bar	20
<i>Claire Hague</i>	Today	21
<i>Thomas King</i>	We misfits	22
<i>Nina Winstone</i>	One of me is drawing again	23

## **Last week**

Monday: Power cut. The lights turned on. Found out why the jam tasted like mustard.

Tuesday: Spent the day under a duvet and several blankets.

Wednesday: Played a record on loop for three and a half hours.

Thursday: Closed my eyes when the phone rang and walked to the shops and back (forgot to buy anything).

Friday: Read a letter that I hadn't sent. Rewrote it. Put it back in the drawer.

Saturday: Patched up the garden bench with sellotape.

Sunday: Took down my hood and whispered to the dawn.

## **MASK**

The soft droplets come cradling across my cheek,  
my eyes are growing weak. The light of day failing to open them.  
They crawl back into their shell of comfort, of protection, of safety.

I snap out of my trance.

The once red light now glaring green.  
We check, to avoid confrontation for not being in this masked world,  
that we protect our fragile, soft on the edge, ego.

## **The fallen down tree by the stream**

Climbing the fallen tree, I think  
the steps I take have been trodden before.  
The scattered shadows of the glowering  
trees oozing the memories from before.  
Here the sound of water gushing over  
the riverbed never stops  
to rest its head. Not even for just a second.

The laugh that was here,  
is now gone to never return,  
the memory will never fade.

The tyre tracks look the same,  
jolting the giggled laugh every time  
we were here with our friends.

## **Rainy Friday Afternoon**

We ran through the door and into the embrace of the warmth. Shoes soggy. Hair plastered to our faces. Throats hoarse from laughing. Like children.

Two hot chocolates and some toast later and we started laughing again, talking again, listening again.

You handed me a blanket and we cuddled up on the sofa, warmth finally starting to seep through my bones. After watching telly, talking till late, you turned to me and after all this time, I still go bright red.

You gave me my book back. And my cheeks heated again when I noticed the notes you wrote for me, your favourite words and your favourite moments and your favourite characters.

And I knew this was going to be the moment, I knew that time was going to stop right then.

## **I met hope at the park**

She was sat on the branch of a tree,  
bare legs dangling over the edge of the bark.

She wore a yellow dress,  
the fresh spirit of spring coating every fibre,  
illuminating it with the tingle of the sun.

Her mouth formed a smile,  
her eyes too,  
already enveloping mine  
and their clouded irises.

She told me that we could hold off the night for a while.  
If we wanted to.  
And cast ribbons of dawn across the sky.

## The Bird in France

*“you know when I went to France two years ago?”*

*“yeah”*

*“well, remember when I told you about that bird I saw...? well I think I might’ve found out what it was”*

(she continues to babble as she walks towards Alex.)

*“Ow...ow, ow, ow!”*

*“what have you done now?”*

*“Ow... I stood on the remote!”*

*“is it broken?”*

*“how come you’re more worried about the remote than me!”*

*“Hey come here you big softie... so what kind of bird was it?”*

*“a Last World Pigeon”*

*“I still don’t know what that is”*

*“it was a mix between a crow and a mewling cat. It also looked like it was wearing a hat!”*

## Value

The desired coin slipping on dew  
The rosy petal swimming in stew  
Witchcraft microwave  
Warmth, depth  
The tusks of a mammoth  
Extinct.  
Museums, Stones  
Pebbles marked in historic ink  
Markings across my fingertips  
The shattered glass  
The covered sky  
These random things  
Are I

## **When he tells him**

When he tells him  
that he tried to bake a cake  
he means

he is trying  
but the sun has begun to set  
sinking behind the horizon,  
ablaze.

When he tells him  
that he watched that show again  
he means

this isn't working  
like how it used to be  
when flowers bloomed and heat blossomed,  
burning.

When he tells him  
that the dog gets restless being home  
he means

the door is closing,  
he is falling and he can't breathe,  
not without  
you.

## **Madly missing you**

*A found poem, after Truly, Madly, Deeply*

Thank you for missing me,  
in more ways than one.

Debut.

Look: eyes, nose, eyebrows.

Rose-tinted memories of love.

Beguiling.

You played that piano,  
something - duet - something

Whimsy.

Heartfelt observations  
often more enthralling than the reality,  
but you were fantastic.

Directorial blow.

Carried a loved one on their shoulder.

Sorrow.

My feet want to march to where you are sleeping.

## Today is a good day to be young

A haibun

It rains and we let warm hands button us up, like paper packages, and dance in wellington-ballet slippers. Trying to catch the drops on outstretched tongue, tracing the streams down car windows. *When can we grow old if we can crayon a happy past in brief strokes of blue and yellow?*

We are all big eyes gazing at the blossoms; how they fall like snow. What's time when you can print sun-cream hands on memories? We don't remember how the leaves last tumbled and lay like ashes. We only know how distant autumns play in our hearts like sunsets we could wade through.

Playing in the sun  
though hold no scars to tell us we're  
through-and-catching gold.

## **Menendez Brothers**

A night in Beverly Hills.  
A clutch on the guns, with a loss of control  
An innocent night, gone so wrong.  
Riches flooding a room,  
The corrupt love to be leaving soon.  
Two boys to miss their mother,  
And apologies for their father's choice.  
Each round of bullets,  
Plunging pain like no other.  
The youngest blaming himself,  
The oldest tries to save his brother.

## **To the clock above my desk**

Our daily conversations were so interesting  
How lunch should be earlier, and finish later.  
Why are the days so long and slow?  
What is for dinner?  
Why did I go upstairs again?  
I think I might be going mad!  
You don't think I am going mad, do you, clock?  
You don't reply very often, I get quite worried when you do  
So I am quite glad that I do not see you quite as often

P.S. I miss you really!!!

## Found Film Poem

*Who are you?*

We are the whole world

*Then who am I?*

You're the star,  
The hope, the joy, the inspiration to millions,  
We know you better than you know yourself.  
But you don't see the place we live in  
The world, the place you don't live in,  
The sick place.

You don't see me because...  
I am like sunlight on the deceptively calm  
Surface of the sea  
You don't see that...  
There is something eerily reminiscent  
Of me, whose life is a complete lie

The absurdities of the place we live in  
Where we accept the realities of the world  
In which we're presented. The world that says...  
'You're going to the top of that mountain,  
Broken legs and all.'  
Our toothy white smiles a tad too wide and  
Too whitened.

*Was nothing real?*

*I guess we'll never know...*

*But hey,  
If I don't see ya,  
Good afternoon, good evening and goodnight.*

## The mysterious figure

You are walking with your shopping bag across the graveyard. You glare at your bag in desire, lose track of your thoughts, gets lost in its stripes, as if it is trying to tell you something. You walk onwards, hear scratching. You look ahead to find somebody pounding with a chisel on a gravestone. You can only just make out a black damp hoodie, a figure tiptoeing to reach the gravestone's top. The only light comes from those stripes on the shopping bag. You walk ahead, closer, and ask, *what are you doing?* The answer comes, *my name was wrong, I had to to fix it.* Your bag goes flying. And all the thoughts it gave you, flying away, losing your only source of light.

## **Polyester minds and Porcelain torsos**

The blue night was blustery on the silent house  
My polyester mind was working in a dingy silence  
Watching chatter interfere with despair and restraint  
Night lingered in the air  
late in confession bordering late night confusion

The air is blissful and gentle on my clammy cheeks  
The warmth fearlessly nips away at my porcelain torso  
I dread the break of day  
When my eyes will blur into a restless sleep  
Slipping just before the sun rises in the chanting sky  
Into the lie of life and buzz below

## **Lockdown**

We, on lockdown

Isolation is us

Altercation is occurring

Darkness corrupts us

We are violent

Silence roams us

Freedom is afar...

our hearts locked down

### **When my brother tells my mother**

that the food's not bad at all  
he means

I want to curl up in your duvet like I did on the weekend  
and giggle as you make pancakes for breakfast.  
Is the dog doing okay without me?

When my brother tells my mother  
the course isn't too hard  
he means

My glasses need fixing, but the opticians won't be open for months.  
The letters swirl in surging tides and leech into my dreams.  
I've been taking paracetamol for the headaches.

When my brother tells my mother  
the housemates are nice  
he means

I curl up next to the window at night, and let the water run into  
the crook of my ear. It muffles the kids across the hall,  
who shout like hacking coughs.

When my brother tells my mother  
that the days go flying by  
he means

Give me some light for the journey.  
Please.

## **A night at the bar**

They dance across the abyss,  
seemingly there,  
probably not,  
close together amongst the chatter  
and clinks of drinks in cheers.

Glass after glass after glass  
and the seat beside me is still there,  
still undeniably there.

Couples sway around the pit,  
bright lights tracing the fluid in my glass  
from beneath the bar, warm  
beneath my clammy fingers.

The night wears on and shrugs on  
a cold coat to leave.

Glass after glass after glass,  
seemingly there,  
probably not.

There's a woman on the stool.

My heart flutters, then drops  
when the night takes her  
to meet with the day.

The barkeep orders me a taxi.

## **Today**

Today is a good day to be bright.

The summer sun radiating onto my skin,  
the idea of cold ice cream as it glides down my throat,  
getting up early to watch the red-fired sun glow into my eyes.

Bad day to wear layers.

We go out for cold air hoping there will be some,  
we wait for the tiny tune of the ice cream van.

Repeat.

Tomorrow might be a good day to be happy  
watching the birds tweet, putting a smile on my face,  
going out to town, hoping to show my whole face.

Struggling to breathe and reveal my full identity.

We say our own names in our prayers.

Today is a bad day to wear a mask.

## **We Misfits**

We misfits.

We lust

and hunger.

We starve

for thunder.

We cower away.

We fear.

We wait.

We want.

We want.

## One of me is drawing again

her fist warped around the nib,  
scratching it with midnight fury  
until the wolves stop circling.

Another one of me is on the top of a hillside,  
easel staked in the ground,  
breathing in the frost which makes her fingers go  
blue and dead.

And somewhere there is a younger version.  
One that didn't have to read funeral poetry,  
who just draws little stick figures,  
in little space suits,  
zooming off to another planet.

There is a me out there who shades  
the way her mother taught her,  
thumb pressing the side of the  
lead into the page.  
She sticks out her tongue in concentration,  
and waits for a miracle to happen.

There is a me who doodles my name next to his,  
all encased in a heart on the desk.

There is a me who lays, frozen in the dark  
and just waits for the water to stop falling.

The best version of me isn't here yet.  
The other versions wait for her.  
We think of her late at night,  
and in the stirs of dawn,  
huddling and collating our notes.

What a long nine months.

She will know how to  
wake up at two in the morning  
for the midnight feed and  
wrap mittens around those stubby fists.  
She has also sorted out her mortgage,  
and remembers to put the  
milk back in the fridge.

Look at her,

as she draws with her little one.

*Whoops a daisy.*

The ink spills and a giggle scampers free,  
scattering fingerprints across the page.

She draws eyes and wings and tails on them.

Watch how they dance.

