

“A Thousand Breaths”

By Julie Scrivener

The city sleeps,
Tucked in clean sheets,
In peaceful dreams...
A curdling scream.
A thousand breaths
Start...Stop...Listen.
The soiled that seeks,
The roiled that reeks,
That noise below
That we won't know.
Some lights go on,
Wails echo, yon;
One solitary, cracking voice...
Woken sleepers roll over, rejoice:
No piercing cry in the scudding sky.
In shelters, streets, parks, ravines...
“They”, silent, die in straits obscene.
A thousand breaths:
Start...Stop...Listen.

“Still Home”
By Julie Scrivener

Glancing into their lit-up glass on my long-ago childhood street,
I somehow end up here on escaping nightly walks...
If I had the chance to go right in and greet,
About what could I talk?

I can see, I can taste, I can hear Dad’s “Dinner!”
I can touch, I can smell Mum’s casserole call.

I can see it all, taste it all, smell it all, feel it all,
See it all, taste it all, smell it all, feel it all.

My toes tread into these ancient haunts;
There’s the park, the trees, our drive...
Our living room window, those people, their jaunts,
My heart jumps, I’m dead yet alive.

I can see, I can taste, I can hear Dad’s “Dinner!”
I can touch, I can smell Mum’s casserole call.

I can see it all, taste it all, smell it all, feel it all,
See it all, taste it all, smell it all, feel it all.

Did you say it was a good idea, that I’d feel all the things I am?
But we all go home if only in our minds, we gotta feel that sense of time.

I played Send in the Clowns, then our neighbour was singing,
Bro, smashing tennis balls against the garage door...
Dad, you patted and hugged me when my eyes were stinging.
Sis, there’s your friend sneaking Mum’s petit fours.

Mum, with your blue smoke, your elegance, your paints,
Dad, we ran these streets, we conquered as one.
Mum, with your love, your humour, not quaint,
Dad, with your tenderness, second to none.

I can see it all, taste it all, smell it all, feel it all,
See it all, taste it all, smell it all, feel it all.

“Broom Holds Room”

By Julie Scrivener

The pointed pile of corner dust
In its rough-edged triangle of sunlight
Glowed a life, it wanted to be collected.

Remember those uneven broom bristles
When we were kids, Mum’s cursing despair
At the way we left them around the house
And how we’d snicker behind the wall?

In my place this pile of corner dust
Is just as rough but sees no sunlight;
It doesn’t care to be collected.

Don’t tell me I should sweep it up, I don’t report to you.
It seems lost on you that “sweep” cradles “weep”.
All I want is to laugh with you again
When you visit, and remember.

The pointed pile of corner dust
Loves to glare at anyone near
And scheme to sneeze.

“iPad Eleven”

By Julie Scrivener

iPad Eleven,
That’s what Zoom called me.
I’m lunched out and launching,
I’m lunar. So scald me.
An appalling apollo,
A rocket that wrecks it,
A wascally wabbit
That takes off like Brexit.
He asked for assonance—
There was Eminem emphasis:
Limbs crisscross so crass on the tree sassafras
In Tennessee Memphis’s
Crushed mitten leaves, orange peel scent...saint?
Medicinal magic for mujik or modern day,
Eastern eyestrain, western mess tin,
All just to say we need nature to stay.
You’ll have to only imagine a whiff,
Of inner bark root beer aroma so charming,
This thick-barked tree in dry Tennessee don’t like its bark sawed—
Just look at limbs clustered and cloistered—alarming!
These are my remedies, herbal and verbal
That I can dream of when apollo...plectic,
When screens are spinning into screams
Dreams save me from downing a neuroleptic.
iPad Eleven,
That’s what Zoom called me.
I’m not liking or looking,
I’m Zoomed out. So scald me.

“Remember”
by Julie Scrivener

November, no embers
Remember
Cheer up, the worst is yet to come!
Drones the anthem bellum
But I've seen the way the Brick Works on walks
To save me to me talks
Of iridescent dragonfly
The red of blackbirds blurring by
December, no splendour
Remember
Cheer up, the snow is yet to come!
Hears the family of one
But I've shuffled through the colours
All through Rosedale in the gutters
Saved by solitary breath
So far evading death
January, no plan, too wary
Remember
Cheer up, the snow is yet to melt!
While upon my heart it heaped and knelt
But I've dreamed of water floating me
In Northern Lights of ecstasy
No numbered waves but saves of love
No bellum anthem, flight of dove

“The Four Walls”

By Julie Scrivener

In the dewy hours, Robin spoke,
In the spewy hours, I awoke
To something other than the spring,
To something other than anything.

On the rainy street, worms floating by,
On the strain-filled tweet, my thoughts and I.
How low to the earth could I get?
My tears are tired, my brain is wet.

“Beginning Again (A Cento)”

By Julie Scrivener

Awake, my St. John! leave all meaner things
Every car park a shining mosaic
Among the cigarettes and the peppermint creams
Hostile, friendly, sober, pissed
Is my grinning bald troubadour
So what is left to justify a marriage?
Into the green ravine
where the voices don't reach
I get that reassuring poem
My youth again in your hair

Credits from (matching line by line above):

“An Essay on Man” by Alexander Pope

“On a Train” by Wendy Cope

“Far West” by A.J.M. Smith

“How to Deal With the Press” by Wendy Cope

a poem in Razovsky at Peace by Stuart Ross

“Wedding Poem for Schele and Phil” by Bill Holm

a poem in Permiso by Ronna Bloom

“Paralysis Beach” by Stuart Ross

a poem in The State of Poetry by Roger McGough

“The Dance” by R.S. Thomas

“the dawning”
By Julie Scrivener

you waste
no time,
a coiling
constrictor,
crushing my circulation,
in your dismay. like a pale blue Lalique vase,
I begin to crack and shatter on my own doorstep.
I stumble, now lethargic, a strand of limp seaweed,
a trashed piece of warped Styrofoam washed up...
and suddenly we are an equation for whom
I crave no solution. I am a collage of
yesterday, today, tomorrow,
love last on my list.

“Into the Swirling”

By Julie Scrivener

Into the swirling, spitting sea
Perhaps the penultimate ecstasy
Before transitioning timelessly
You and I travel in entirety

No one knows, it comes to me
Nothing shows, only to me
It only grows, on you and me
We find our earthly ecstasy

In moments' spirits passing through
You speak to me and I to you
In language only we can spew
We're grateful for the thing that's you

No one knows, it comes to me
Nothing shows, only to me
It only grows, on you and me
We find our earthly ecstasy

We make and find the time to love
It's loftier soaring than a dove

Into the swirling, spitting sea
Perhaps the penultimate ecstasy
Before transitioning timelessly
You and I travel in entirety