



NOTTINGHAM C.A.N PRESENTS

*I Come From
A Mind What*

#communityartistsforcommunityaction



I Come From

Project Overview

Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, the 'I Come From' project is the debut project from community arts organisation, Nottingham C.A.N (Community Arts Network). Inspired by the poem 'Where I Come From' by Elizabeth Brewster, the project worked in partnership with Rising Issue magazine and illustrator Raphicdesign, producing a trilogy of printed anthologies that explored identity, people and place through poetry, with a diverse range of participants.

The project began with a series of online workshops facilitated by poetry specialists exploring the themes of 'Race & Immigration', 'Gender & Sexuality' and 'Mental Health'. Supporting individuals to reach their creative potential, we shared stories, held discussions around specific questions within our themes and set a range of creative writing challenges that encouraged poets of all ages and abilities to express themselves and develop their creative writing skills.

The final session saw participants working with an illustrator; producing live, visualisations of the poetry as it was performed, this process helped our participants to build confidence in their performance skills and gave the poets an idea of how their work would be interpreted by wider audiences.

In terms of project legacy, the anthologies, containing our participants' work will act as a stimulus to provide community groups and educational institutes with a toolkit that attempts to break down barriers and misconceptions of the issues raised and encourages further conversations within the wider community.

As well as being taken on a series of roadshow events around Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire, the work has also been showcased at a celebration and launch event, and a selection of poems have been filmed so they can be accessed by community groups. To view these, please visit our youtube playlist via a [QR](#) code at the back of this anthology.

We would like to thank everyone involved in this, our debut project. It has allowed us to connect with so many people and to develop a learning resource that we feel will be so beneficial to our partnering community groups. We feel strongly that in order to tackle the issues that we have explored it is important to open up dialogue and communication. We feel that these anthologies and our video toolkit is a great way to facilitate these conversations. We welcome anybody to get in touch with us to discuss the project further.

Our inbox is always open.

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Content Warning

This anthology explores the topic of mental health, there may be themes and language that some readers might find triggering or offensive.

Discretion is advised.

2 Fold Grind

by Jay Sandhu

I always like to think, what if mental and physical health were linked, and were always looked at equal?

Like incorporating CBT with your ACCs between chest and leg days

Or even more important to look after what was in your head?

And I get, that for a lot the two are seriously intertwined, although never seamless.

What if what you've been lifting is as important as the load you are mentally carrying?

And improving that strength was the key

To feeling good, self confidence and lasting happiness?

Now having said all of that, I much prefer playing ball than talking my mental health.

Although I'll always help you with yours

Even if I haven't got that energy to give

Get those endorphins flowing,

My problems stop,

For then, at least,

They're not growing

Clean sheet gets this defender gassed

A goal, you'll have me glowing

I love an assist I always pass

Always putting others goals ahead of mine

But I justify it, apparently that's fine

Then I trip, stumble, go flying eliminated royal rumble,

Injured that's when my head starts to fumble

Serious, everything gets effected not just muscle or joints.

Recovery...takes way longer than I thought,

Wishing I was Logan, better genes, rapid healing, because ain't no Lazarus pit for me,

Seeing the physio that's calm and normal but the therapist that's stormy and irrational

But I'll encourage you to go, because I know it'll help

I preach the benefits but not listen

Working on your self. There ain't no substitute, no quick route,

No compound brain workout you can do, at home.

Because when that lock down hit, you couldn't go gym,

Kick ball or anything. That helped you escape.

Just you, trapped at home sweet home, with your thoughts alone,

Mates a phone-call away,

You just don't know what to say,

You just don't know what they'd say,

Oi you know they got you, just speak

You don't want to end up like Ye

Thinking it's all calm, you strong

Don't need help, you gotta get through this,

Heads feeling like I'm at school again,

So there's a reason I don't talk about mine, and it might've taken while.

I might've spent all year but I'm working on it. Both my body fat and brain scramble %

It's not easy but the general trend for both are good.

And right now I'm feeling up, can't stop smiling, head feel right because like my body I'm dedicating time and it's working. I'm not gonna stop this 2 fold grind, focusing on body and mind, because right now, bro...I feel live!



Béar Bán

by Kirsty Kelly-Lewin

I am... Exhausted scream that hides behind a glitter queen.
 I am...bright clothes...pink hair,
 Antithesis to my despair.
 I am the smile that lights your day
 I am delight, I am decay.

I am the healed and the broken,
 I am deep sleep of insomnia woken.
 I am... a gamble for your token,
 I am the truth of lies I've spoken.

I am the grounded and the flighty
 I am the mouse of mountains mighty.
 I am the rebel of conformity exploited
 I am obeyer of confrontation, avoided.

I am the one in zoo who got the job,
 I am forgotten...fumbling through the fog.
 I am the wild and the tame,
 I shine so bright while dull with shame.

I am Inspiring Volunteer,
 I am the truth that fuels my fear.
 I am... success...good job...own house... degree,
 I am... 4 days in bed, un-showered and what the fuck is wrong with me?

I am the sober. And the wasted.
 The sweetness of my poison tasted.
 I am...refusing to hang up my raving shoes,
 I am afternoon tea and channel 4 news.

I am the proud and fiercely independent to the core,
 I am the scattered seeds that cannot harvest anymore.
 I am performer, colleague, coach, mentor.

I am blacked out on a stranger's floor.

I am loved and I'm rejected.
 I am idolised and disrespected.
 I am innocent and guilty, I am filth and I am pure,
 I am bold and I am brazen, I am silent and demure.

I am self-care and self-harm.
 I am chaos, I am calm.
 I am cursed and I am blessed.
 I'm ecstatically elated, I am corpse like and depressed.

I am jumping high to a jungle beat
 I am sinking softly, cemented feet.
 I am my saving grace, so mean
 The sights I wish I'd never seen.

I am self-loathing and despair
 I am carbon monoxide infiltrating my air.
 I am the brave and I'm afraid
 I am the bandage and the blade.

I am the vocalised that...whispers death,
 I am fierce protector of my breath
 I am the tears that never end,
 The heart that only I can mend.

I am the freedom and the caged
 I am meditation, I am rage.
 I am psychotherapy, CBT, NLP, hypnosis...
 I am not defined by a diagnosis.

I am the voice that feeds my mind,
 so why so cruel and not so kind?
 I am acceptance and resistance
 Accountable for my existence.

I am consciousness. I am aware...
 The things I need get to get me there.
 Picked up some tricks along the way
 They help me fight another day.

Whether times are trouble free, or tough.
 Remind myself. I am enough.
 I got my back until the end...
 Worst enemy, but own best friend.

Coping?

by Jay Sandhu

Lilly asked me how I'm coping?
 Sometimes I'm good, it's calm,
 Other times I'm really not,
 Suppose it's a bit easier when it's hot,
 Swinging on the hammock reading comics, listening to Cadet, Cadet,
 Getting lost in Gotham City. Rona?! For that time I forget, forget,
 Even went Argos to get ball, goal and a target,
 Miss playing ball, Serious!
 That shit was more for my head than my body,
 Now I'm trying to fill the void with yoga,
 On top of that, to keep sane I'm baking, I'm baking,
 More importantly every day I'm creating, creating,
 Part of me doesn't want to go back,
 Part of me...needs to,
 All of me, thinking the way the government are dealing with this is whack,
 But I don't want to talk about that,
 So just do what you need to get through,
 When this is all done, we'll get a Nando's, play ball and get a pint...or 5,
 But after, lets not forget to look after the world and each other,
 Treat everyone, like a brother!

Brain Storm

by Dawn Hartley

Thoughts are overrated and often pointless.
 Distractions stop the concentration,
 Even sleep doesn't stop the thoughts racing.
 I focus on the sea, look at the colours,
 Breathe the waves in and out.
 Listen to the thunder and not the voices.

I retreat into myself.
 My breath gets caught in my throat,
 The clouds cry and scream,
 I want to scream,
 What would it sound like?
 I want the strength and sound of this storm.

Is the storm a message from another world?
 I'm listening, You have my attention.
 Why are you angry with me?
 I look around, and see a different world,
 I suddenly understand the message,
 I am alive, so live away from the storm in my brain



Upride Sown

By Ty Healy

I'm sat at the head while scratching my desk
 Tapping my teeth and grinding my feet
 Knocked over a bottle on the ceiling, starring up at the floori
 I took a bite out of a cup of tea but then realised I wasn't hungry
 How could my stomach be empty and full?
 Drunk my lunch but I still had this unsettling feeling
 Looking back down on the ceiling to see if I made a stain
 It was there.
 Alone in my tiny bedroom trying to make sense of the universe
 Rotating in motion Fluctuating commotion
 Spinning myself out, the worlds upside down

Escape from My Demons

by *Natasya Lund*

I come from a mind what...
Felt like everybody's thoughts but my own.
I come from a mind what
Feared living each...and every... day.

I come from a mind that
Housed unwanted demons
Telling me I should live in fear.

I come from a mind that
Painted depression, anxiety
As a weakness.....
My strength became a mask,
Where my face would never re-appear.

I was 14 when I wanted to die.
Because I couldn't handle all the voices...
The voices reminding my existence was a burden.
Creating ideal visions of nothing but... a grave.
A tombstone, next to my father's..
With my name on it.

Sat alone with my demons.
I dug deeper and deeper into my wounds
Hoping to bleed out this anxiety, bleed out the life within me.

Each night I stopped myself breathing.
Running through lists – all the pro's and cons.
If I was gone.

The words of my demons
Pushed me so far outside my own mind.

I was nothing but a puppet,
Starring in shows –
written by everyone but myself.

Pretending, acting like everything was okay.
When all I wanted was for them to go away.

I'm not okay, I AM NOT OKAY – these words ate away at my mind.
But the strings continued to unwind...
Once again – on with the show.

But then one day...
The voices turned into whispers,
Whispers I could no longer hear.

I then started questioning – what is happening?
Sitting alone... actually alone.

White noise filled the air...
A settling mind felt unsettling.
A cliff-hanger, one I liked... I was on my own.

Hanging by a thread – I fell out of darkness.

The strings that controlled me, the demons up above me,
Cut, in single slice – that was it, I was set free.

I come from a mind what
Used to be a death wish.
I come from a mind that
Controlled me, trapped me, but also healed me...
And helped me..
To escape the casket, I called my mind.

This isn't a suicide note,
This is my survivor story.

Give a Fuck

by Lorna Gill

I left a good fuck on my pillow when I went to work
 Thought about the fuck all day
 In the space between the act and my desk
 Crossed legs bent
 To hold the scent
 Before it's lost to memory
 Crossed words in the end
 When nothing's left
 Bereft of meaning
 In the distance between dreaming
 And the dreary

It started in my teens
 Breaking into adulthood like cracking nuts
 Sucking up the calories for growing bones
 And building a shell from the dust
 Life is tough
 When who you are is not enough
 So I abandoned myself in fucks

Fucks given and taken
 That formed me in my making
 Fucks in love that dried up
 Left me dry and on the shelf
 Unrequited fucks
 That reminded me I'm no one
 Fucks and fucks again
 Avoided and pushed away

Fuck it

I reject being shafted into hardened skin
 Inspiration begins in dedication to the page
 I light up when I take the stage
 I need to embrace the praise
 Listen to what they've got to say with ears beyond my walls

It's okay

You are that girl who writes and sings
 She never left
 She'll never leave
 The fucks are on me

Horror Vacui

by Stuart Whomsley

Space where anxiety sits
A hollow stomach
Unfilled and unfulfilled

The devil is in the detail
The detail keeps the devil out
Spheres of protection

Less is more
A void like heaven
The vacuum of creation

Hole

by Benjamin Ziec

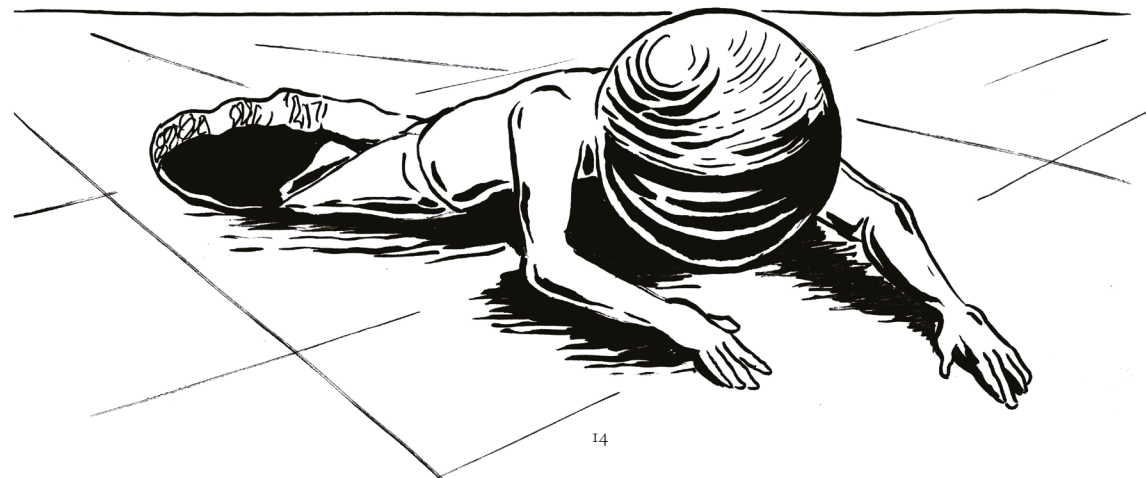
Hole, like a dot. I am but a dot upon this sentence
And dots make connections, from one phrase to other dimensions, shape shifter
is symbolic in the weight in which I drag my head

Transporter, portal, inbetweenner, meditator, low demeanour
The cable you do not see buried beneath the ground, delivering electricity
Hole, like a dot. I am but a dot upon this sentence

The unseen tunnel that is drowned deep beneath the water
Passive, yet unheard
is symbolic in the weight in which I drag my head

The overarching bridge that transports from shore to shore
A transition, but never a destination
Hole, like a dot. I am but a dot upon this sentence

The dusty insulation sitting between that over-confident plasterboard and solid brick
The space in which the earth meets outer space
Hole, like a dot. I am but a dot upon this sentence
is symbolic in the weight in which I drag my head

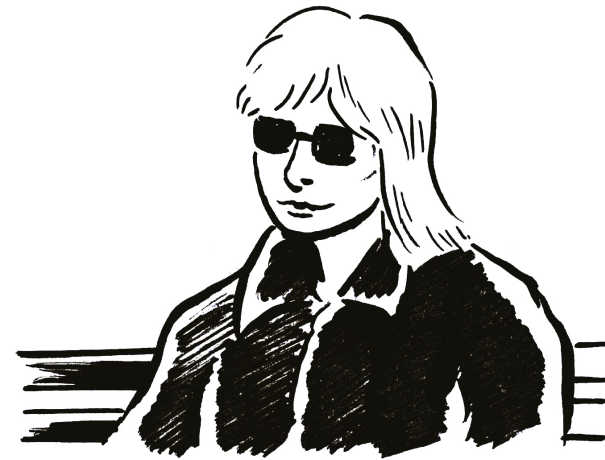




I'm CBT

by Annette Watts

- A 1 How Are You?
 A 2 I'm great
 A 1 Really?
 A 2 No
 A 1 Ahh, so how are, you - really?
 A 2 Really?
 A 1 Yes, really
 A 2 You mean really, really?
 A 1 YES!
 A 2 I'm a bit crap, if you must know
 A 1 In what way?
 A 2 Err, well, being as you're me, you know
 A 1 Please! Stop that....this is serious
 A 2 OK, OK, for the purposes of this exercise, which is to help me
 A 1 (Sighs) YES, it is
 A 2 Crap, crappy, crappity-crap
 A 1 (Sighs again) Can you tell me, in bite size crap, if you would, please?
 A 2 Sorry, its King Size crap, or Nothing, Nada, Nowt
 A 1 (Sighs Longer)
 A 2 You're sighing again



- A 1 (clears throat) Yes, I am
 A 2 I know, cos - just as I said you were, you sighed again
 A 1 Yes
 A 2 Err, Are YOU, Ok?
 A 1 You know what? No, I'm not actually-, this really sucks
 A 2 Err, you're me too mate, and we ain't no CBT Therapist Dude
 A 1 (Sighs louder) Don't I know it - I'd be earning more for a start
 A 2 Hmm, you could use this as part of your application
 A 1 What application?
 A 2 You know, the one that job that you- we- wanted a go at, but knew we were underqualified and we both thought- not fair, we could be great at that!
 A 1 Hmm, you mean we talk about using Role playing, then,
 A 2 MM-Hmm
 A 1 Right, I get it, so are we going to do the role playing properly, now ?
 A 2 I suppose- but I want to be the CBTS Dude
 A 1 CBT- S?
 A 2 Yes, CBTS the Cognitive Behaviour Therapist Sighing Dude
 A 1 (Sighs) Oh what? I Did it again- sighing shows, or might seem to show
 - impatience, or tiredness, or getting frustrated
 A 2 None of that is very professional
 A 1 OK, so can you/we not sigh then?
 A 2 OK. Good Plan, shall we?

My Body is The Biggest Conspiracy Theorist I Know

by Lily Luty

I find myself in bathrooms, heavy as an iron lung
Drowning in water that is not there
I've lost count of the times
I've had to stare my own pupils down
Convince the twinges of my spine
I'm still breathing

My body is just trying to protect me
The air is not safe here-
They start sawing my windpipe before I have a chance
to say no
Lock me in the smallest space they can find
Rub salt over skin
Jolt my limbs to cage
Tell me to call my mother
Say goodbye.
Don't let her leave without first telling her you love her
This time
My body is always three uncracked paving slabs
ahead of the world
They remember the day when bedtime stories
Were soaked through with whisky.
They remember how the child filtered
Radiation through milk skins.
Not safe, not safe, not safe.

Run before the shot calls

Like any conspiracist, my body
Crumbles under the slightest scrutiny
Bones filing to sawdust, legs giving way beneath me
As the earth rocks
They scream
How can we save people now you have broken us?

How can you stop to rest while we disintegrate?

Short blunt statements work best
Sometimes you'll find me in the grocery store
Pacing relays between bottles and
pre-packaged sushi
Muttering
Shut up, we're safe, we're safe, we're safe
Trying to pick the one bottle my body
Not safe, not safe, not safe
Will place to its lips
Fuck off, we are not choking
To outsiders, I must look like the conspiracist

Mother Complex D

by Lorna Gill

The cat leaps from my lap as I walk away
 She wraps around my feet and I fall to the ground
 Tripping over histories
 She watches beadily
 As I push away the earth with my palms and my back
 And my legs stutter
 Stuck in sludge

She surveys the sorry scene from her throne
 Bounces to the window ledge freely
 And settles with a soft purr
 Licks her fur mockingly
 My eyes are on the door
 And the space between us thickens

I slide my belly across the floor to reach her
 And she bends her head to my outstretched hand

She was a kitten once
 She fit into my palm and mewed
 And it broke my heart
 That anything could be so sweet

Now I'm laid out bitterly on the floor
 Undignified
 But her paws pad my belly
 And she curls up on my chest and goes to sleep

Positive Again

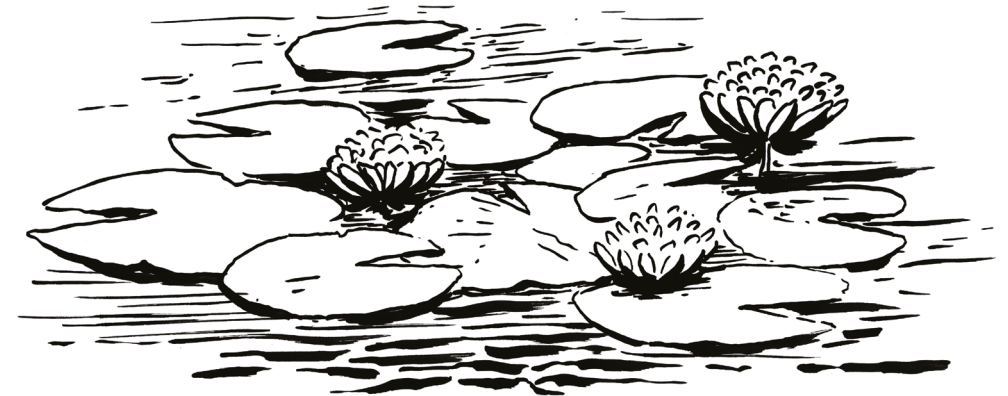
by Charlie Sanderson

I can feel my insides opening
 Like a water lily in the sun
 That the sun is inevitable always
 On the return, no matter what

I can feel myself unfolding like
 It's all how it should be
 It's all like it will all be
 I feel settled in the conflict

In the bottle of imperfect perfection

Ready to embrace the monster
 Charm the snake and dance with the devil
 And that maybe, somewhere in me
 There is a broken angel, about to fly.



My brother

by Lorraine Perkin

My brother goes missing a lot
 Like the sock that gets lost in the wash
 He's lost and can't get a grip on what's what
 his reality is fucked
 See he's a skitzo
 but he loves crack tho
 and he's on the needle also
 It's not him under his skin
 the voices are disgusting
 and they're discussing
 his absence
 Yanno He broke the nose of a nonce once
 because he touched me where he shouldn't of
 He stood up in my defence in court
 even though in the end I lost
 And what a loss it was
 my mental health took a shot
 I was 28 when I took it there
 a full grown adult with green hair
 now he lives in Manchester
 and I'm always scared
 Because my big brothers no longer there
 He just listens to his head and swears
 Sees us trying to help him and swerves
 Won't take his meds coz he says they don't even work

but smokes a crack pipe and ticks it's absurd
 To observe
 the perverse way he doesn't care
 And his son's sick of him
 He wants rid of him
 He is crawling his skin about his next of kin
 Isn't it sickening
 You think I'm going through nothing because I smile through it
 but mate I'm sick of dealing with it I'll be honest
 And It's gonna be hard for him to come back from it
 to a world where nobody wants him
 In a world where his benefits are slashed but it's enough to buy crack
 A world where his only escape is a syringe full of smack and not a laugh with his dad.
 Check on the strongest around you. You have no idea what they're going through don't feel
 obliged but if you so choose
 Check on the strong ones make sure there not blue
 get the scoop
 and make moves

Prey

by Sarah Beck Mather

She stutters, *I'm shy...*

Strands in her eyes as

The peppered clouds,

howl.

She's lying.

But I'm at home, she says.

Curling long arms around knees, One look to the side. Then down.

I like to be light? she says.

White linen in the wind.

Her strap falls off her shoulder. *Someone saw you and*

Said you looked ill.

I won't tell you who.

But *I don't like to do things like that in public*, she says.

That sad cartoon sketch, I've always hated that.

Even when I'm happy!

She looks to the side, then down.

She bites her lip

Until it bleeds,

Soaking-red-milk-blue-skin. Tombstone Teeth.

Shadows falling on her back in summer,

It's a final snap moment.

Fingertips and jasmine swirls in winter.

Eyes to the side, then down.

Her skeleton chatters.

Rock City

by Martin Grey

I was desperate for a working time machine; A DeLorean, a phone booth, didn't matter. As long as it took me back to the Rock City dancefloor during Here Comes the Rain, when she disappeared to the bathroom, so I could grab the arm of my younger self and implore him to leave the gig before she had his number.

When he'd shrug me off and tell me to get lost, I'd tell him he would, between affairs in the few minutes longer than it should have taken walks to the corner shop, until she'd walk half a step in front of him to keep an eye on his eyes, how we'd awkwardly arrange the table mats and TV remotes to cover up the worst of the gouges, and the checks on the volume, current channel and previous channel when she arrived back home. I'd put myself between him and the music to tell him where she'd keep the stolen medication he'd wash and wash down the sink.

How she'd threaten to stab his eyes while he was sleeping.

And how he'd learn to be silent,
because one hit back would have made him guilty of being
more than the worst of the monster he deserved to be.

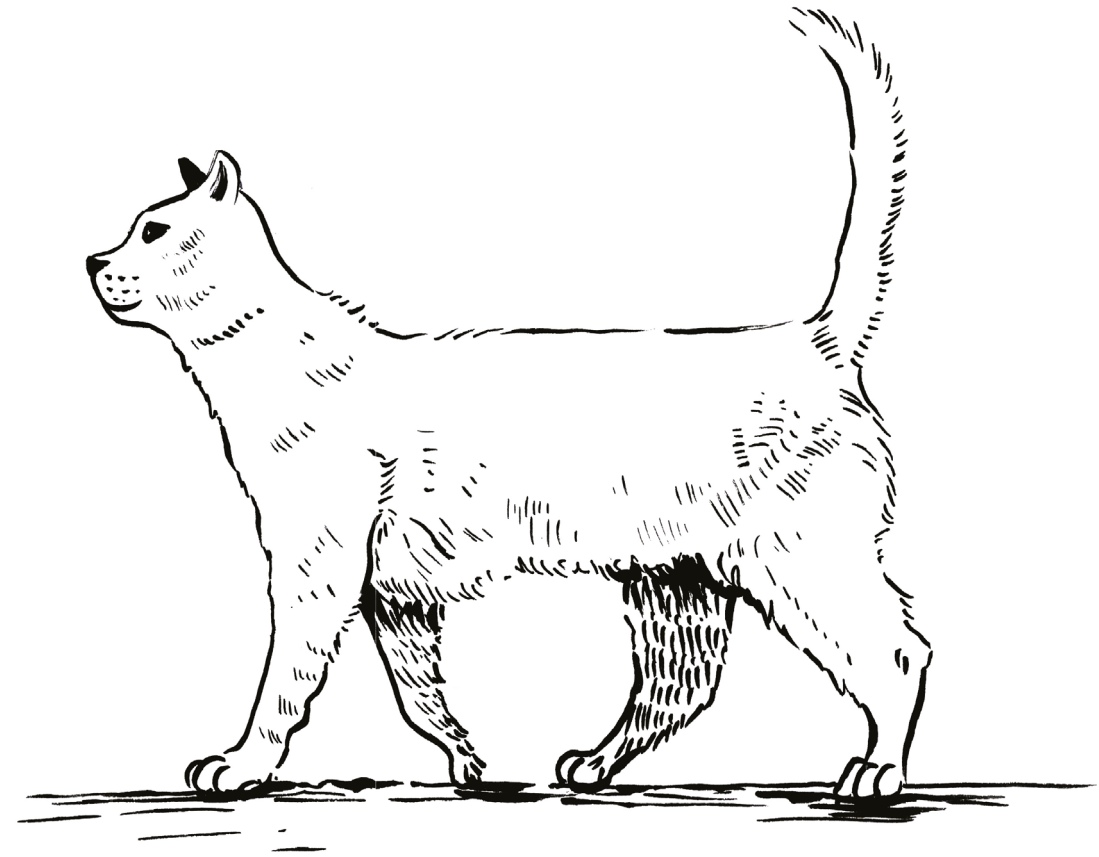
But when he still wouldn't listen, I'd hurl my feeble fists at his eyes, ribs, anywhere, until I took a dive when the bouncers came, smiling wide as we were hauled away, knowing that being barred from Rock City would be a price I was prepared to pay.

I Am the Cat

by Olivia Dedman

My dawn was wrapped in vacutainer needles and piles of consent forms.
 In specimen bags and gauzes, antiseptic applauses from the doctor's pity pauses.
 Carrying my life like a prescription penned script, abbreviated for cordial consumption,
 I'm caged in my sterile retreat.
 I undress myself slowly from my baggy jumper and jeans, unlace my docs
 and stand barefoot, like a corpse.
 A daddy long legs, an angel in the night, I walk naked over to the hospital pyjamas.
 The trousers bandage my slashed stomach and I button the top over my bare breasts, the
 same,
 grimacing as the fabric notices them.

My dawn is interrupted by strange men and women,
 flinging the locked door open to check I'm still living.
 It was veiled in the early morning wake-up calls of Alice's rage-fuelled howls
 and it was shrouded when the crumpled butterfly stuck on my window sighed.
 It was cradled by over stretched systems and facilitated by under paid wages,
 my existence
 lay futile in front of the panel, a statistic,
 I wait in line for my diagnosis and med prescription.
 Handed it in a paper cup, a solution for their omission, I'm required to trade in my own
 submission.



I first felt my dawn break when broken people nurtured hope through strings.
 Souls wide open to songs of mended wings, birds that sing, moon beams and rainbow
 dreams.
 Harmonious in harmony and spell bounded in humanity,
 smiles were formed through cracks shaped tirelessly and wistful tears were shed heartily.
 Damaged memories, muted black and white surrendered,
 lay dormant, past tides pressed tender and collective sun rises rose together.
 My dawn was tomorrow's world, it was fires for the cold
 and, that day, I left the stray cats and copy cats, wild cats and fat cats howling in the dark
 shadows.
 Inhaling smoke into my own carved dawn, I am the cat that walks alone.

Sceadwe

by Lily Luty

She was born 13 days after me
 Half-formed over thin sheets
 Both of us so shallow in our isolette
 Mum watched weakly from the bed
 Worried I may not become solid

She clung to me, dancing every step
 I asked why she always hid behind me
 Replaying Peter Pan to uncover the secret of unstitching
 So we could play pirates properly

She only grew bold
 In the softness of sunset
 Alone with me, she would transfigure
 Herself into archback cats on my grandma's carpet
 Taught me how to tread soft enough to be unheard
 Shooting sudden growth spurts in the park
 My laughter in the air as she showed me
 Warrior, giant, seed, shroud

I refused to sleep without the red glow of a ladybird at the plug socket
 Refusing to separate from her, insisting she'd be swallowed as the lights went out

We waxed on different cycles
 13 days apart
 My bones pushed further from her each year
 I forgot how to be quiet enough to hear her
 Flesh and blood friends needed no unstitching,

Our laughter bounced shockwaves which cracked the concrete
 She tore grass while I made daisy chains
 Thinning herself into spectre,
 Into dimming lightning through grandma's brain
 Locked in camera flash,
 Interlinked with his shadow

Now she tells me she has begun to detest
 The ghosts in her name
 I pull out scrawled over etymology
 Outline her ancestry

Sceadwian: shield, defender

She redraws herself

Darkness. Death. Monster.

Made from the same substance
 As the beasts pursuing us up the stairs as we ran to bed

She asks if I would still unstitch her

I stay quiet, breath filling the room
 As the artificial sun dims

She curls around me
 I start to feel solid again

Sinking

by Leanne Moden

I've been staring out to sea again
perched on the jetty watching the waves
waiting for my moment.

When the storm-swept chaos subsides –
the sink and swell softens
roaring winds soothed –

finally, this water will be
tame enough to tread.

Removing my shoes,
I test reality's impermanence
first with one foot
then the other

half-convinced this new-found buoyancy
will out-perform gravity

if only I choose to let it.

After all, we could all be dead tomorrow,

And it's been so long since I've seen the waves this still.

See, I've been watching the seas
rage and recede for so long,
I almost drowned on dry land.
But now? I think I understand
what I'm supposed to do.

I'm sick of feeling inundated
and floating's not for everyone,
but I will not be submerged again.

I don't care if no one believes me
or if I only stay upright for a moment
because I am choosing to try,
and that is the opposite of sinking.

Specialist

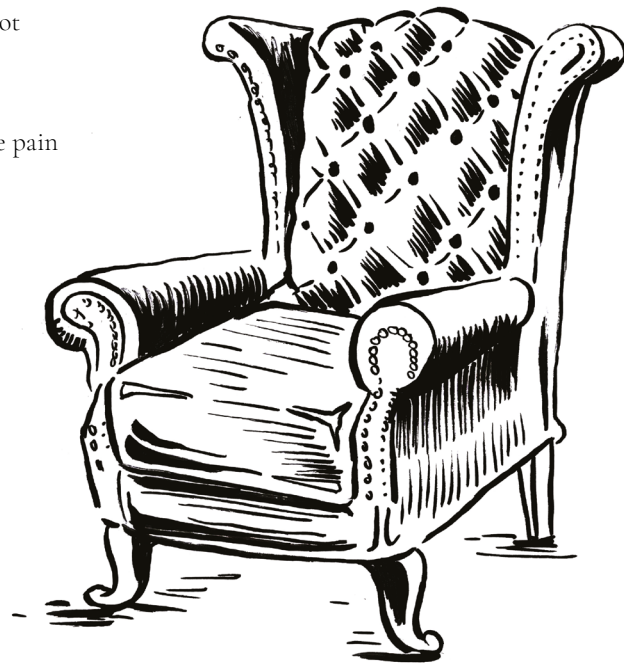
by Charlie Sanderson

The Neurologist says
That it is difficult
Waiting for the mist to rise,
To step out of the fog
She says that mental health
Can be difficult
With these drugs

(I wonder if I am at the hospital
or on the road to Manderley)

When I ask, can I take less
She makes that noise
That plumbers make
When a job is going to cost a lot
She would rather not

I tell her about the cramps, the pain
The sleepless nights
'What a shame,' she says
Like someone spilt tea
On their white cotton dress



Solitude

by Teo Eve

we met when everyone else i'd met had gone,
left me alone in a black room. you
were the buzzing red of the security sign
hanging above the exit door.

and here you are, winding me in your cold embrace,
arms so huge you
fill the room and block the door.

solitude,

i wish to be left alone.
our friendship's road has overgrown,
vines have engulfed our vacant home,
broken through the wooden door.

yet you stand there in the hall,
i politely ask but bite my tongue --
a bond so strong's not easily undone.
i make my way to the swinging door,

poke my head outside. the gentle rain's
as cold as snow, my boots are caked in mud.
i look back to you beyond the door, turn
and look no more.

Sunlight Invisible

by Richard Fox

(i) False Morel

Midway through the wood.
The brain mushroom.
Edible poison.
Bewitching.
Cursed.

(ii) Cellular Growth

Repetition is the key
What is the key?
Repetition is the key
Open the door ahead
Lock the door behind
Repetition is the key
What is the key?
The key is repetition
Repetition is the key

(iii) Roots that clutch

I come from where my father came from.
Where did my father come from ?
I wish I had asked him.
And my mother?
Some things are too difficult to ask.

I busily created a busy sense of being.
A sense of who and where and what I am.
Illusion of purpose.



Definitive delusion.
Humanity is hard to bear.

How do I answer
the voice inside that asks.
What is it asking?
If I cannot hear me,
How can I hear you?

(iv) Look Upon this Little Child

Bedtime ritual. Soothing softness.
Just you and me. You brush my hair.

I push you away. I call you back.
I push you away. I pull you back.
I want your hurt. I want my hurt.
I want you to brush my hair.
I will not let you brush my hair.

Shame embraces me.

(v) to sleep, but not to dream

I could not speak
My tongue was tied
I could not be
I could not be me
I had no answer
I could not say
I think I may have slept
You let me sleep
I needed sleep

PARALYSIS LOST

Systematic sorrow

by Mama Manneh

With a silent tongue, I stand to stare at the aged woman, with gray hair, bruised ear drums, deafened by the conundrum of a war zone.

Bloody streets silenced her spirit, replacing the bounce in her step, with a black hole, all the love she ever felt slowly being sucked into in it.

She pulled her hand out in front of her, her eyes met the hand of steel. A sentimental protection, a prevention of catching the feels.

Trauma's will become remains, that will remain in the cycle. How do you break the chain when the mind is always focused on survival?

Unforgiving egos put out passing lights, tare the will to shreds, introduce fears, bare no love in a mans world, instead, it is after matter not love or care, nor joy, or sentimental shares.

I willed an understanding, an open heart, i weaved a way to stop and start, I felt her loneliness, fighting with her pride, she suffered for leaving it in the back of her mind.

It's a luxury to feel loved, in a cold, broken up world, love is wearing thin. Hairs stand up on my skin, under a spell, the body is in motion, the mind concocting a potion to cure myself of this hell.

I strip down the walls leaving no where to hide, light will emit, the mind will benefit, though none would be possible without love of self.

A great suffering is upon us, clogged in the pipes is the build up of generational anguish. A tortured soul raises a tortured soul, the repetition will be the death of us. Scrap the molds and build a life.

I glanced at her one final time before she was lifted from these thorns, she grew wings and left behind the horns.

I turned around to leave and my attention was drawn, to a young girl who was saying her prayers, her hope burned bright, her thoughts all clear, the shadow wasn't a place that this girl feared, she had a bounce in her step, optimism in her eyes, I should learn to stay by her side and leave the tears for the waterfall.

There are two kinds of tears, tears that seep down deeper into the pain, and tears that release the stress, her choice is my safety net, the journey never ends or at least, not yet.

The Anniversary

by Kirsty Kelly-Lewin

Now.
 It's been 38 years
 And I wonder
 How?
 Because... I'm supposed to be an adult now.
 But I cry like a child,
 my darkness so wild,
 that it can't be contained, I'm deranged.
 No taming this outpour, scratched nails on this cold floor...
 I lie.
 And I cry
 Like a child.

And through these years and the seasons, played over the reasons,
 But your treason of mind is no crime.

Then.
 For you ended
 Breath taken.
 For me daily awaken,
 to my monkey mind reasons, raw, weakened and rough,
 That I Wasn't Enough...

For you...
 Not to do what you did,
 Kill the soul of a kid.
 But I forgive...
 Cos you were just too sick to live.

Your mind racing, thoughts pacing, eyes
 glazing.
 Over.
 Placing hands over neck.
 Our regret.
 It's too late.
 Bound ligature your fate.

Asphyxiate.

Then.
 Distribution of blame
 Never You.
 Infantile blame screams my name.

Guilt.

"Took
 Her
 Own
 Life
 Whilst
 The
 Balance
 Of
 Her
 Mind
 Was
 Disturbed"

Read the words on your death paper.

I inhaled that vapour.
Vomited later.

Now.
Cut to libido of curious desire, pain passion and fire, I wanna get higher
Antithesis of pain and hate
It sealed your fate and yet we recreate...
for different intention.
And I'm too scared to mention
Your method
Because he will probably think, I am truly fucked up.
And stop.

Now
My Avoidance.
That these digressions of lust can't
Compensate for the trust that I lost

Now
Your anniversary once more.
I cry on the floor.

Then.
I'm just 3 years old...
My young life is haunted.
You're just 29.
Your young life aborted.

You and I

by Nova Patrick

Go away go away, I don't need you today

You never see anything through

Ok, I can do this just breathe

Feel your heart racing do you?

Thats not my voice it belongs to someone else

You are rubbish, you'll only embarrass yourself, your cuckoo

"Back off fear back off"

The Rain Outside my Window

by Martin Grey

I hear you,
hammering my window,
as hard as you can.
Your intoxicating,
saccharine cry
trying to seduce me.
Trying to drown me.

I do not fear you,
if I'm in here
and you're out there.
I'm deafeningly dry
when I listen to you bounce
off the boundary between us,
desperately calling me,
darkening your sky.

I will never ignore you,
or forgive you,
for the bludgeoned eyes
and battered ribs
you'd inflict on me
so easily,
for tearing me
from my hiding places,
through the shards of glass
you made me swallow
from every
shattered window,
for the cost



of the quadruple glazing
you tap on.

I make it clear for you,
but you never listen,
not to me,
not to anybody.
I see through
every single drop,
and you will never
seduce me
again.
Not now I'm the one
who has control,
of the rain outside my window,
of the pane outside my soul.

The Second Safety Plan

by Sheetal Martine Joseph

Attached to the email with the last session link
with Victoria

the first was pushed down by 467
new emails

this April, the Uber to the A&E
“Are you sure you won’t do it again?”

Victoria filled out the first form
for me

1. Being made aware of my pain
was a trigger

I couldn’t find one reason
to keep myself safe

2. I obsessively read to escape
the thoughts

She wrote for me
“my reason for living – not wanting to die”

3. I don’t sleep for a very
long time

and “seeing myself finishing my degree
and leading a free life”

But I talked to her every
Wednesday

I thought the sessions were only for
6 weeks

My last attempt made them extend it
through summer

I barely got to the root of
my symptoms

We dissected every inch of
my childhood

I didn’t feel thankful after
the sixth

I pulled out all the memories and put
them back in

Everything that made me happy
didn’t stay

It felt like polishing the paint of
an old puzzle

like I had just relived the worst parts
all over again

And we got to the Second Safety
Plan

I didn’t think I would make it to the
Second Safety Plan

This time, Victoria didn’t help me but
I was alright

“My reasons for living,”
I thought

1. My desire to experience art, music
and stories.

2. My desire to travel and fall in love with
new places.

3. My desire to meet more people that I can make
connections with.

Before my last session with Victoria

After my last session with Victoria

I was ready.

The Shard

by Satin Biege

I picked a shard from the shattered glass,
The one that sparkled the most in the bleak morning light,
The one that reflected the truth most honestly,
And used it to carve mandalas into my trembling, waiting soul.

Powerless to stop my relentless assault, it wept,
Silently spilling steady crimson tears,
The thick liquid filling the beautiful ugly gouges,
Until they overflowed.

I collected each drop to pour into heavy inkwells,
To fill the cartridges of my fountain pens.
I used it to rosin the bow of my cello,
To wax the neck of my guitar.

I painted pretty words with sanguine strokes,
Crafted sweet melodies from stifled sobs,
Performed pain like a cabaret,
Filtered my fears into a bottle and corked it with broken dreams.

Until those fears fermented, bottle filled with toxic fumes.
While the cork held strong, the glass was weak,
Fragmented into a million pieces coated in the perfect poison.

I picked a shard from the shattered glass,
The one that sparkled the most in the bleak morning light,
The one that reflected the truth most honestly.

Barriers

by Ty Healy

The high wall, the drawn back bridge, the coded gate
The locked door with no key, sorry, you cant past
I often ask myself who created them
Was it you? was it he? was it she?
Was it them or was it they?
Ive always looked outwards pointing the finger for someone or something to
blame
Who made me feel romantic relationships aren't to be taken seriously?
What made me believe I should have been a millionaire at 20?
Why am I not reaching out when I need help?
It has to be
The high wall, the drawn back bridge, the coded gate
The locked door with no key, sorry, you cant past
There's a word carved in the wall,
There are floating stones
Spelling another word in the water that the bridge should run across
There's a piece of paper with a password by the gate
And I can nearly see a person through the key hole
The person is holding up a mirror
The password, The stones & the carvings all spell out EGO
What is holding me back is me

Weekend Roar

by Kirsty Kelly-Lewin

Your Weekend Roar turns to Wednesday whisper
 Thoughts bent like twister, brain's a blister.
 Hands are shaking, shook like fists an...
 Then...
 You Miss Her.
 And in my Northern mist, I hear you whisper
 cos I'm your soul scarred sister.
 Pain resistor.
 I know you miss her
 Never kissed her.
 You mugged yourself.
 Life lived in stealth.
 You choked your wealth
 drowned out your health.
 Lies...laughing at your mental state.
 The Weekend Roar at fury's gate.
 Then...
 Wednesday whisper
 Always miss her.
 Your friends all called me Female Roar,
 Chaos cemented at our core
 but they didn't know what came before.
 Your past alluded, not concluded.
 The missing parts that tore our hearts.
 I took my risks but stayed...half grounded.
 You hit harder, hope confounded.
 No narratives of start or end.
 You lied. My friend.
 I told the truth
 For they were never yours or mine
 In deep decline

They stole our time....then time and time and time again...
 I swallowed pain.
 Picked up moved on.
 They had me gone.

And if I'd stayed, would you be saved?
 Or could I be you?
 Deja vu...
 Of times and times and times again
 The many men
 Who choke on words that might betray them...
 Words that could just save them.
 But silence follows Wednesday whisper
 Burning blister
 God, you've missed her.
 Hypothesis of inevitability.
 Born to incomprehensible instability.
 Lucidity doubting.
 Statistics mounting.
 The Matrix calling...
 I. Watched. You. Falling.
 All those hospital wards...
 All the trains that I cried on.
 I am your sister. Defiant. Relied on.
 But your whispered pain fucked up my brain
 Reliving brutalities buried deep,
 I clung to life. You craved to sleep.
 Your whispers mounting, turned to shouting
 Pills went pop, the bridge was swaying
 Guilt for the love you were betraying.
 And they looked down in horror
 as history repeated,
 Guilt for their son who was desperate. Defeated.
 And as the blackness came to take you...
 Rebellion of history.

They wouldn't forsake you.
 Their cries chilled to crescendo,
 'Please Son don't let go'.
 You reached out to touch them a lifetime of yearning
 But they wouldn't connect
 cos your flame was still burning...
 The heat of your fire still smouldered like kindling
 The tiniest embers defying this dwindling.
 And through their grief and their guilt and their sadness and sorrow
 They vowed you would live for the joy of tomorrow.
 You screamed at their faces, but your roar, it betrayed you,
 So frightened and feeble to the parents who made you.
 So they conjured your siblings, your family, your friends
 Begged to consider the consequence of ends.
 And then your roar faltered, like flat lining heartbeat.
 Recalling the guilt, you couldn't bear to repeat
 On a loved one, or any, cos it eats at your skin.
 Your shame of their suicides that killed you within.
 But you knew they were sick and your heart was still open
 Till finally forgiveness for your life that was broken.
 And they knew you were strong and so powerfully loved
 That no doors would be opened to these realms up above.
 Still more your roar faltered...
 Heard heart-warming heartbeat.
 They knew precious life wouldn't end in defeat.
 Still roaring...
 Subdued, a subtle surrender
 You saw flashes of freedom and were forced to remember...
 The hope and the love and the life full of meaning.
 Escaping this nightmare. Returning to dreaming.

 So when your whispering roar
 Brushed by heaven's door
 They sent you back.
 To live, once more.

Defeat

by Bethany Holdsworth

Every morning I get up and I weigh myself
 and I guess i do this for everyone else.
 "What do people think of me?"
 "Would they like me if I was more skinny?"
 "Oh my god I look so fat!"
 "I wish hadn't eaten that"
 And as I look at the scales and fill with dread,
 I think to myself "please say I've shred"
 And sometimes it's that unwritten rule;
 the one that says "don't eat".
 But I can't help myself sometimes and to that I'll admit defeat.

How Does ‘My Guitar Gently Weep’?

by Annette Watts

I haven't got a guitar, yet I hear it weeping
And I've noticed, through the long hours, that the tears will vary;
Niagara type roar of angry power that cannot stop
to a keening moan of lone despair
the 'hiccup-ing' tiny sobs of a baby into thin air
a slow slithering of single, heavy, tears down the strings

And my heart plucks a response
Why are you so sad, distant guitar?

There's a silence and then a rush of lyrics I can sense:
-it's impossible it couldn't happen,
-can't take it in
- am feeling so old and so used and abused
- there is another, newer, guitar and so am left behind, not played
-to gather dust, meant to accept it and quietly trust
that my life is not over, am not alone and abandoned forever
-that my just replaced good for bad strings can sing again- eventually

It's difficult to know what to say- except that:

I've felt this way too
It's hard to imagine the pain of not being wanted anymore - until it happens
It's even harder to imagine surviving it,
that you'll ever want to be played again by anybody else,
when all you feel is that you want to be smashed up and thrown into a skip

But I believe that you will, you have a mature tone about you
a range of emotions audible to others

Well I heard you, didn't I?

I hope in time, that you will believe that yourself,
that your guitar player has moved on but you have plenty of music in you to offer,
We all get older, there's always a newer model than us available, you know
I think it's likely you will be given to someone younger anyway or
maybe someone older- who has always wanted to learn
and now has the time to practice playing you every day

The guitar has listened, it is quiet for a while

-I think I need some more strings, he took my good strings and swapped them for some
rubbish old ones

I've surmised this guitar is female silly to think a guitar has a gender
but I believe this guitar feels like a she
Of course, there could be male guitars -upset at effectively being 'dumped'
after all- we all of us weep

I smiled to myself into the darkness and replied
What a good idea

(Now hoping to sleep)



Scan Me



To continue the legacy of the project and to provide a toolkit for community groups to explore the topics covered in this anthology, we have compiled a playlist of a selection of the poems to act as a stimulus to aid group conversations and learning.





COMMUNITY
FUND



rising
issue