



Original radio plays about life
during the pandemic



Through My Window

‘Well written and expressed.... It surely told us what Covid has done to us.’

‘I listened to all the plays and it was an eye opener to what different people go through and face in the pandemic’

Supported by

The National Lottery Community Fund

UK Government Coronavirus Community Support Fund

Groundworks

The Mayor of London



SUPPORTED BY
MAYOR OF LONDON

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Printed in the United Kingdom 2021

Published by Jazanne Arts

www.jazannearts.org.uk

This anthology is dedicated to Phyllis Grant whose
idea it was to make a book and to Isadora Edwards,
both much missed, may they rest in peace.

Introduction

Jazanne Arts places older people at the heart of our work, using creative arts and reminiscence to improve resilience, wellbeing and quality of life.

Our vision is to strengthen the landscape of arts for and with older people, removing barriers, providing a platform for the older 'voice' and raising the profile and quality of this creative work.

Jazanne Arts ran an online creative writing and performance project for the Aurora Writers, a group of 16 older people aged 60 - 96 who primarily came from Caribbean communities in the London boroughs of Newham and Enfield. They were supported digitally to access the project online. The group wrote audio plays about their experiences and imaginings of life in lockdown in 2020. They then recorded their plays for an online event in March 2021. Since then, their plays have appeared in many festivals across the UK and on local and national radio.

The Aurora Writers commented throughout the project on the positive effect the sessions had on their confidence and well-being:

'I'm doing things now, I never dreamed I could do'

'I enjoy every minute, I look forward to seeing you all - it makes my week'.

We at Jazanne Arts were very impressed with how creative and open minded the writers were. Although they all had the same starting point, 'through my window' they all went in their own unique direction and produced an authentic series of plays that made us all laugh, cry, step back and think.

Acknowledgements

Jazanne Arts would like to thank our funders the National Lottery Community Fund through the government Coronavirus Support Fund, the London Community Story supported by the Mayor of London and Mary Fernandes.

Also thanks goes to Nigel Kellaway for his amazing audio and graphic design skills, Jackie Kohnstamm for proof-reading and to all the Aurora Writers for their creativity, enthusiasm and talented contributions to this anthology.

Jazanne Arts Directors are:
Jacqui Livingston, Annie Smol and Jac Shreeves Lee

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Through My Window

by Isadora Edwards

CHARACTER:

ISADORA: in her 90s. Grew up in the Caribbean, now lives in London in sheltered accommodation. Isadora always appears positive and cheerful.

MUSIC: RELAXED REGGAE VIBE

ISADORA:

Today I'm feeling no better no worse. I am thankful for the health and strength I have now.

(happy) I like it living here. People are friendly and it's nice and comfortable.

At first I wasn't sure about moving into one of these homes but you know, it's nice and quiet and you feel more secure, people can't just walk in.

They have a duty manager on 24 hours.

I am right near the shops and everything, and I love mixing with the other residents, I like the people here.

MUSIC: SLOW REGGAE WITH A DISCORDANT TWIST AT THE END

(puzzled) When they announced the lockdown, things really did change you know.

At first things wasn't too bad. The duty manager told us that although we couldn't go out, we could still do things here. They organized some different, games for us to play together and such like. *(enthusiastic)* They put on coffee mornings and we could meet in the lounge.

One day it was so hot in the lounge we open up the doors to the garden.

SOUND: BIRDSONG

Some of us went to sit down at the table and chairs in the nice sun; we said we would have a picnic next time.

(sad) The next thing you know they started sanitizing and saying that we have to keep our distance. The managers said only 5 or 6 of us could meet but we had to space ourselves out. You started seeing one and two people wearing a mask.

(shocked) The duty manager told us that no family members are allowed to visit and we couldn't meet with the other residents anymore. We had to stay in our own flats. They said some of the residents were complaining, saying we were breaking the law when we met in our groups. So, the manager, the head one, came and said we best just stop, to avoid contention. So they closed down completely.

Some of us still tried to go out to get a bit of exercise. They said it was alright if you went in the garden on your own, but it got too ridiculous, (*sad*) you can't walk around like you used to.

MUSIC: SLOW, POIGNANT GUITAR MUSIC INDICATING LONELINESS

You know it's like I'm in prison but did not commit a crime... I spend a long time looking through the window... Nobody goes in the garden anymore.

SOUND: BIRDSONG

It's a shame because it's looking so nice with the red flowers at the front. (*chuckling*) I like red flowers. You do hear the birds. You wouldn't believe how much comes here. But nowadays, (*lost*) I don't hear people.

(*positive*) I am looking forward to going out and having a drive around different places and going back into the garden for that picnic. If I have the health and the strength (*chuckles*) if I have the health and the strength, yes... at the time when it comes.

END MUSIC: RELAXED REGGAE VIBE

The Birthday Party

by Rose Bramble

CHARACTERS:

ROSE: in her 60s, Raised in the UK, her parents are from the Caribbean, she now lives in London on her own. Rose is glamorous and used to be a professional singer. She has a grown-up disabled son, Paul, living in a home in the countryside.

MRS STEVENS: in her 50s, Rose's friendly neighbour.

TITLE MUSIC: COMIC, RAGTIME PIANO MUSIC

SOUND: TV ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FIRST LOCKDOWN

ROSE:

(joyful) This is gonna be a great lockdown not doing anything YEAH! Don't have to go anywhere! Just enjoy the tranquillity... Feeling good!

AND lovely weather to sit out in the garden with a nice glass of wine.

**SOUNDS: POURING WINE, FOOTSTEPS WITH HIGH HEELS
— DOOR OPENING AND GARDEN SOUNDS, BIRDS, A
NEIGHBOUR MOWING THE LAWN**

I love those red, yellow and purple flowers... (*singing*) 'like a rainbow in the sky' and the smell of that calming lavender! So relaxing... Ahhhh.

SOUNDS: EXTERIOR ACOUSTIC, MOVING CHAIR

MRS. STEVENS:

Morning Rose.

ROSE:

Morning Mrs Stevens — lovely day.

MRS. STEVENS:

I'm using this time to do a bit of peaceful gardening.

ROSE:

And I'm using it to sit back and relax!

**SOUND: BUZZING FLY, CONTINUES UNTIL ROSE GOES
INSIDE AND DOOR CLOSSES**

**MUSIC: COMIC, RAGTIME PIANO MUSIC FOLLOWING
ROSE'S FIGHT WITH THE FLY**

(*shouting*) Leave me alone — get lost!

MRS STEVENS:

Excuse me?

ROSE:

Take that!

SOUND: ROSE GRUNTING, FIGHTING THE FLY, HITTING THE TABLE AND GLASS SMASHING

That was your fault!

MRS. STEVENS:

What have I done?

ROSE:

(furious) Flippin fly! Arrh, you broke my damn shoe!

SOUND: OF UNEVEN FOOTSTEPS — ONLY ONE HIGH HEEL — DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING

MRS. STEVENS:

(laughing as Rose goes back into the house) It's only a fly — Rose you're crazy!

ROSE:

(to herself) Yeah... probably am! If Paul was here, he would have laughed at his silly Mum.

SOUND: ANNOUNCEMENT OF SECOND LOCKDOWN ON TV

(concerned) Oh no! How long will it be until I can see my boy? They won't let me into the home. And what about shopping? I need to get him some crisps and a cake for his birthday. But I'm afraid to go out.

Where's that photo they sent?

(fondly) Oooh yes... look at you — Paul, you've put on weight — You've

The Birthday Party

a lovely place there, that beautiful garden! — so why won't you go out for a walk around? You really must take your exercise — I know you love your food...

MUSIC: INDICATING TIME PASSING AND TENSION BUILDING

SOUND: LOUD BREATHING

(anxious) What's happening?... Can't breathe... hot... now cold... Not on your birthday!... And they bent the rules just so I could come!

My heart's beating so fast...

SOUND: ROSE PACING UP AND DOWN

Calm down — let me get a drink.

SOUND: BOTTLE OPENING, ROSE POURING WINE INTO GLASS AND DRINKING

Right, I'm calm now — Why do I get like this when its time for me to do stuff? It's a nightmare!

Get the keys ready, I have to go.

SOUND: ROSE OPENING THEN CLOSING HER FRONT DOOR

(stunned) My legs won't hold me up — I can't go — But I'm his Mum, they made special arrangements — got to bring him his favourite choccy cake — his Mum has to be there.

He knows I have to be there — I feel so horrible... dark, dismal — heavy.

The Birthday Party

(starts to cry) I can't do what I'm supposed to do, just DO it girl.

SOUND: ROSE BREATHING FAST, OPENING DOOR

(still crying) I can't move!

SOUND: DOOR CLOSSES

(panicky) I'm useless, his own Mum not with him for his birthday... 'She's no good,' that's what the other Mums will say and the staff will judge me and think I don't care... What if that makes them neglect my Paulie... *(crying)* It's all my fault. I'm sorry Paul... *(slowly)* so sorry...

SOUND: PHONE RINGING

(sobs with emotion but holds it together) Yes... I'd like to speak to Paul... is that you? Happy birthday — Yes its me! — Mummy can't come today — but I will as soon as I can. You having a good time...?

(hopefully) I know he's smiling...

(Deep breath and sings) Happy birthday to you.
 Happy birthday to you.
 Happy birthday, dear Paulie.
 Happy birthday to you.

END MUSIC: WISTFUL

To go or not to go

by Mo Cross

CHARACTER:

DOREEN: in her 80s. Grew up in the UK, lives in London on her own. She is usually very busy with different clubs and activities.

SOUNDS: FAST HEARTBEAT, OPENING AND CLOSING OF CUPBOARD DOORS

DOREEN:

(*panicky*) Where's that fan Wendy left here? Oh – this paper will do...

SOUNDS: FRANTIC FANNING, PLONK DOWN INTO A CHAIR

Phwhhooooo!

Ok, so it's a hot day, but not that hot. Why am I letting myself get into such a state? It's just a jab.

If the kids only knew how nervous I am about it...

It was their idea: "But mum, you're entitled to it." "I know that – I

know I'm old, but I'm not frail or anything, so let more vulnerable people have it." But they insisted – so, I made the appointment.

(worried) But I don't like needles! Never did. When I was little, they gave me something on a sugar lump, against polio I think it was. It worked. Can't they do that instead? In this day and age they should be able to think up something different...

I've tried closing my eyes, pretending it's not happening, but it's no good.

Just thinking about it makes me feel quite ill!

I won't think about it. I'll just keep busy.

SOUNDS: MOVING AROUND, FOOTSTEPS, MOVING BOOKS, RATTLING TIN OF PENCILS

(frantic) I've got jigsaw puzzles, Sudoku, Codewords, drawing and painting.

And since Wendy told me about reading online for free, I've been spending a lot more time on that than I used to... and I do a bit of writing as well on the laptop. I've got quite into it. I've even started to order stuff too, like millions of others.

So it's working all right. What do I need a vaccine for?

(walking up and down, agitated) Anyway, these are new ones. They've only just invented them. How do we know they're safe? They haven't been around long enough to find out. They could cause all sorts of reactions. Look at that dreadful Thalidomide thing – all those poor babies with missing limbs. *(hysterical)* It's not even the same sort of vaccine as the normal ones – they say it's parts of animal fetuses put

To go or not to go

into your system – ugh I don't like that idea!

(annoyed) Perhaps they are just trying to kill off all the old ones and the sick. Get rid of us, and save the NHS money – I bet that's what it is.

I think I'd rather take my chance with Covid – I've managed so far without getting it. We got through Christmas somehow, didn't we? AND a third lockdown in the New Year! *(sighing)*

SOUND: WALKING INTO THE NEXT ROOM

(positive) Mind you, it would be nice to go out and about like I used to. I'd be out all day every day. The kids used to say they had to make an appointment to see me!

(wistful) I haven't been able to see much of them lately either.

It is a lovely day.

SOUNDS: WINDOW OPENING, BIRDS, NEIGHBOURS GREETING ONE ANOTHER, DISTANT CARS

Mmmm

What shall I wear? Something with short sleeves I suppose – or do they stick it in your backside? *(distraught)* OH NO!! I can't.

MUSIC: INDICATING BUILDING TENSION AND TIME PASSING

SOUNDS: TV FAINT IN THE BACKGROUND, ENTERING BATHROOM, EXTRACTOR FAN, CUPBOARD OPENING, WATER INTO CUP AND SWILLING, ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSH

PHONE RINGS

Oh, typical!

SOUNDS: FOOTSTEPS INTO ROOM WITH TV, PICKING UP PHONE

Hallo Martin. Just a minute...

SOUND: TV SWITCHED OFF.

(speaking on the phone) That's better... No I cancelled it... Well it's my choice isn't it? Dave said he wasn't going to have one. I know Wendy will – they both will; her husband's asthmatic, but there's nothing wrong with me... What do you mean I couldn't go into my friends' houses? What about table tennis, or drama then?...

Oh that's ridiculous! If THEY'VE all been vaccinated, they can't catch it from me, surely?

Oh... I'll think about it. Bye.

SOUNDS: PHONE PUT DOWN, PACING FOOTSTEPS

(sighing) I suppose he's right; if some of us don't do it, the virus will never die out, there'll always be somewhere for it to breed.

SOUND: PACING FOOTSTEPS.

(anxious) But if it started out in animals – bats or pigs or something, they said – it won't die out anyway!

SOUND: PACING FOOTSTEPS

To go or not to go

I couldn't bear to think I'd infected my friends though...

Oh for heavens sake! WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?!

SOUND: PLONK DOWN IN CHAIR

END MUSIC: INDICATING INCREASING STRESS

The Regal Lady

by Zhenreenah Muhxinga

CHARACTERS:

ROSIE: older woman born in the Caribbean. Lives in London.

IRENE: one of Rosie's neighbours. Born in the Caribbean.

NURSE: works in nursing home

TITLE MUSIC: INDICATING FOREBODING

SOUND: RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT – VITAL UPDATE ABOUT CORONA VIRUS, YOU SHOULD ONLY GO OUT WHEN ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.

ROSIE:

(nervous) We have been on lockdown for months now... Sylvia said not to go out anymore; she's a good girl... When she brings in the shopping, I always make sure she sprays it down before putting it away... I feel safer in my home anyway. It's how I want and it's where I am happy give thanks...

I am always looking through my window. Sylvia says I'm gathering information. It's not that. It's just that I'm... interested in people.

You should see the things I've seen. I mean... I have had to call the council more than once! The amount of rubbish outside; I see all sorts. When we first moved in, the neighbours weren't too friendly then... but it's diverse now.

(admiration) Of all the people I see, one woman intrigues me. Why? Because she wears so many different head wraps. Some bright and uplifting and some plain black, really powerful. I imagine she's quite a spiritual person, sensible.

I like the way she dresses. Very majestic with her choices of colours, makes her look different. I call her The Regal Lady.

MUSIC: INDICATING WORRY

SOUND: RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT - ALWAYS TRY TO STAY TWO METERS APART, DO NOT MEET ANYONE OUTSIDE YOUR HOUSEHOLD, EVEN FRIENDS AND FAMILY

(anxious) Why can't people listen? How will we get out of this? Sylvia says I must start watching soap operas to take my mind off things but the news helps me. Lately, she's been saying that she might not be able to come as often. Maybe I could have more help.

MUSIC: INDICATING LONELINESS

I'm not letting anyone in here! They could bring in anything. But she said that's not what she meant... I'm not going anywhere else... I'm not vulnerable, I can manage, this is my home. I'm safe here. I asked her to start leaving the shopping at the door now because you never know...

SOUND: TIME PASSING

(*outraged*) You wouldn't believe the amount of people I see not following the guidelines. The Regal Lady is having a conversation practically on my doorstep... No mask. How long are they going to stand there? I'm protecting myself, not even going out my street door. Go away darn Covid people... go away.

**SOUND: BANGING ON WINDOW – WINDOW OPENS –
BIRDS**

Hey, hey, do you mind? You're not wearing your mask – I'd advise you to wear your mask. We're not living in normal times you know, take heed please!

IRENE:

I beg your pardon?

ROSIE:

Mask – you're right outside my window talking... without a mask... They said ...

IRENE:

(*annoyed*) What's it got to do with you? You know, you people get on top of my nerves... wearing a mask is not law... I don't have any symptoms.

ROSIE:

So that's why you should protect yourself!

IRENE

(*conspiratorial*) Lie dem a tell... something out there killing people and it's not Corona virus. They put something they put in de air to finish off certain people...

ROSIE:

The hospitals are getting overwhelmed... they are waiting for the vaccine.

IRENE:

You think that gwen help? Me telling you, they putting a chip in the vaccine. Then they can follow you. Know what you do. Know who we talk to. Hmm, you don't have anything better to do than to watch me?

SOUND: WINDOW SHUTTING

ROSIE:

(disbelief) Why are people so blasé with this poisonous virus. Can't they see the rising numbers? It's on the news all the time – I can't believe she was so rude. What is she thinking? You'd think somebody like that would be more careful. I thought she would be different...

Well thank Almighty I'm looking after myself. I am going to take the vaccine. It's going to protect me, wont it...? Something in the air she said. I better clean this windowsill again. You never know...

MUSIC: INDICATING ISOLATION

**SOUND: RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT DO NOT MEET OTHERS
OUTSIDE YOUR HOUSEHOLD EVEN FRIENDS AND FAMILY.
STAY HOME. PROTECT THE NHS. SAVE LIVES**

SOUND: RADIO SWITCHED OFF

(paranoid) More and more people. Rising numbers in the borough. They have the injection now. Should I trust it...? The Regal Lady doesn't. She says it's in the air. If it's in the air it can spread to the house.

She was standing outside my house again even closer... still no mask. What if she comes to my window again? She might try to get in and bring it with her.

Sylvia might bring it in. She said she's careful but... How will I know who has it?

MUSIC: INDICATING CONFUSION

Wash your hands, keep your distance... wash your hands; keep your distance... No!

SOUND: PHONE DIALLING

(desperation) Sylvie... Sylvie... I can't do it alone anymore...

MUSIC: INDICATING CONFUSION

SOUND: OLD PEOPLE'S HOME — RADIO MUSIC

NURSE:

Rosie — you been sitting by the window again? Come on my lovely... it's dinner time.

ROSIE:

You know, the Regal Lady was standing right outside my window... no mask. Not safe...

NURSE:

You're safe here Rosie... she can't hurt you... you're safe here.

Just Another Day

by Delia Ryde

CHARACTERS:

DELIA: middle aged woman. Part-time shopworker works on checkout and customer service.

TITLE MUSIC: CHEERFUL UPLIFTING TONE

SOUND: BUSY SUPERMARKET SHOP FLOOR WITH CHECKOUTS

DELIA:

(exasperated) Well that's another exciting day at the fun factory! And there was I thinking it was going to be another boring day.

There was a ruckus going on at the checkout. A customer was having a go at our Peggy! Saying that she was only there to serve and nothing else. Or sumfin like that! I wanted to know who the heck he thought he was. I got over there real quick; no one talks to any of us like that!

I had to tell him to step back from the counter, he got a bit lairy! Shouting at me and Peggy! Not having that! Doesn't he realise we put our lives on the line every day, making sure the shelves are stocked and there's someone to serve him!

It's a stressful time for us all. They forget we are key workers too. So many people moan at us for asking them to step back, they don't realise it's as much for their safety as ours.

He said she was being rude, but told her to "shut it"! Damn cheek! We're here to help ensure that customers have a pleasant shopping experience, not to take abuse! After all we're people too!! I told him

Peggy is one of our longest serving members of staff, well loved by colleagues and customers alike, she's been there from the start, risking her life, so that he can have food and other essentials, I am very confident in her professionalism.

Perhaps he misunderstood her?... I told him he could make an official complaint if he wished. He told her, she should know her place!

We weren't sure where that was, probably at his feet (*laughing*). He was well out of order! How dare he speak to anyone like that! Boy did she get mad, it wasn't easy calming her down.

SOUND: OUTSIDE — LIGHTING A CIGARETTE

After all that we needed a five-minute break; had a fag and a cuppa.

(*irritated*) People think these rules are a joke, I'm pretty sure it's because the government haven't come up with any rules that make sense!

Go to work, don't go to work! You can mix with strangers in a pub

or on the bus but not with your family or friends in your home or garden.

MUSIC: INDICATING SADNESS

I was speaking to the funeral director the other day, she said they had to collect three or four Covid patients at the start, in March; they've had a pretty steady stream of business since then. Yet people are still not following the guidelines correctly.

(annoyed) How hard is it to wear a mask when you go out and to wash your hands?

(sad) Even Peggy's attitude had changed... all through the first lockdown she didn't wear a mask due to exemptions but now she does. Not wanting to take anything home to John, and I really do understand why she's so stressed.

We go in every week, when so many of our customers are safe at home. We're scared that we'll be exposed to the virus, for ourselves and our loved ones, but still we put food on the shelves and serve them, but do they appreciate us? Of course not, but we have to do it all with a smile, because let's face it, most of them are stupid!!

SOUND: PUTTING OUT CIGARETTE

Hopefully tomorrow a few more of them will cover their noses as well as their mouths! It drives me insane; those are the ones I ask to move back, they say they can't breathe! It'll be much worse on a machine! If they are wearing their masks sensibly I don't mind too much and I always sanitise my hands after every customer, double if I have to handle cash.

**SOUND: BUSY SUPERMARKET SHOP FLOOR WITH
CHECKOUTS**

(determined) We only had an hour after that till home time, we got through it like the stars that we are!

MUSIC: CHEERFUL

The Letter

by Phyllis Grant

CHARACTERS:

PHYLLIS: in her later years. Grew up in the Caribbean, now lives in London on her own. She has daughters in the US and back home in Jamaica.

MAISIE: Phyllis' daughter from the US.

TITLE MUSIC: SETTING A GENTLE AND THOUGHTFUL TONE

PHYLLIS:

To my loving daughter,

I do hope you are well.

From the month of March, the government here, told us to stay indoors. Hundreds are dying in hospitals and nursing homes from the virus and most are elderly and many Black people.

This is a very sad situation, I never knew of this in all my life.

SOUND: JAMAICAN LANDSCAPE, BIRDS AND SOUNDS OF THE SEA

(singing) Oh Island in the sun
 Willed to me by my father's hand
 All my days I will sing in praise
 Of your forest, waters your shining sand*

It makes me think about when I first came to this country, it was like a dream come true. But I had that other dream, to earn enough in five or six years to come back home to Jamaica and get a better life, but circumstances didn't allow that to happen. So here I am now, 28 years later, still in England 2020, the year of the great pandemic.

I often think to myself that If I had gone back, maybe I wouldn't be locked in, at least you have the warmth to be outside - but I know the virus is everywhere, even back home with you. How are you coping my darling, and the children?

I worry about all of you.

MUSIC: SAD MOOD INDICATING TIME PASSING

It's even worse for your sister in America – she told me:

‘It's all around us Mum – not much PPE for us, I am scared Mum’.

Oh I am scared too for all my family, but I'm praying that God will take away this plague.

When I call her – She was coughing.

PHYLLIS:

You work all the time my dear, I am so scared for you in that hospital.

MAISIE: (*Voice of daughter on the phone, coughing throughout the conversation*)

Mum... I have the virus.

PHYLLIS:

(*distraught*) Oh my God you're going to die! I will come and visit.

MAISIE:

No Mum, they won't let you travel, stay inside and stay safe, I'll be alright.

PHYLLIS:

But I'm your Mum I want to care for you.

MAISIE:

I wish you could, but it's impossible! Don't worry, my family will bring food to my door, but I have to isolate downstairs and the children are upstairs – they can't go out and they can't see me. - It's heart breaking.

PHYLLIS:

Oh dear... (*sobbing*)

You're such a long way away. I feel so helpless.

MUSIC: INDICATING SORROW AND TIME PASSING

PHYLLIS:

It makes me afraid to go out because people are not wearing masks and not keeping distant.

SOUND: A BUSY STREET

(frustrated) If you walking along they come in your direction, they don't even shift, you have to move out of the way, so I hurry to come back in when I have to go out.

SOUND: LONDON BUS

Yesterday, when I was on the bus, a woman, about your age, sat down right next to me- she was on the phone and no mask – loud woman –

'Excuse me' I said 'please can you sit somewhere else?'
She ignore me and carried on with the call.

I'm worried about the virus – so if you wont move, will you let me out?

'Hold on lady I don't have no virus' she shouted

I replied; How do you know? Have you had the test?

She carried on talking, I didn't know if I should I stay put or squeeze even closer to get past?

(angry) When I got off the bus, I wanted to brush her and that virus off me.

MUSIC: INDICATING A POSITIVE MOOD

(hopeful) But it's not all bad news my darling, the other day, that lovely postman Jonny popped round, the one who is so faithful, come rain or shine, he always comes to the door. So I shared a piece of that delicious Jamaican rum cake you sent me. He had to eat it at the door, but we had a lovely chat and he filled me in on what all my

neighbours are doing.

This second lockdown is shocking, but they say a new vaccine is on the way, so we may have a good Christmas. And looking forward to better times next year.

From Your loving Mother.

SOUND: LETTER BEING PUT IN AN ENVELOPE

(singing) Christmas Time, mistletoe and wine
 Children singing Christian Rhymes
 With logs on the fire and gifts on the tree
 A time to rejoice in the good that we see**

Island in the Sun*

Written by Harry Belafonte, Irving Burgie
Originally sung by Harry Belafonte

Mistletoe and Wine**

Written by Jeremy Paul, Keith Strachan,
Leslie, George Stewart
Originally sung by Cliff Richard

The Hero

by Ros West

CHARACTERS:

ZARA: a middle-aged health care professional living in London.

TERRY: Zara's husband

JULIAN: Zara's son late teens

TITLE MUSIC: GENTLE, PEACEFUL

SOUND: HEART MONITOR

ZARA:

(annoyed) I only wanted a few items of fruit and veg.

SOUND: CAR DOOR SLAMMING

But the supermarket shelves are totally bare. I can't believe it, people are just panicking. Where will I get some food now after a 12 hour shift!

MUSIC: GENTLE, PEACEFUL

Today a terrified patient asked if I could hold her hand. It was such a small thing sitting there comforting her, but it just felt right. We are very short on staff so, I've agreed to stay on site for two weeks. I'm sure my family will understand it, this is my job and it's an emergency.

Terry will have to look after his Mum. I know she relies on me and he can't always manage personal care. However I'm needed at the hospital, I just have to do my share.

MUSIC: GENTLE, PEACEFUL

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENING – COAT OFF

I'm home, I've had a challenging day. And to top it all off, there wasn't any food left in the shops. Don't know what's for dinner – anyway, I'm desperate for a cup of tea and just want to put my feet up.

SOUND: KISS

TERRY:

I've just made brew. Here you are love.

SOUND: STIRRING A CUP OF TEA

ZARA:

My hero!

TERRY:

Listen, I think we need to have a little chat, Zara.

ZARA:

Yes we do, hello Julian.

JULIAN:

You came back then Mum.

ZARA:

Of course sweetheart, I always want to be with you. I need to do what I can, it's just (*sigh*) things are a bit difficult at the moment.

TERRY:

Me and Julian think you are working too hard and it's affecting the family. Mum's getting more confused, she needs you Zara. I am not a nurse.

JULIAN:

(*sullen*) And because you won't be here, I will have to be chief cook and bottle washer. I can't even use the washer!

ZARA:

Please bear with me. I'm really sorry, but patients are dying around me and I have to help. You will all have to manage without me for a bit longer. I've been asked to work on a specialist COVID unit for two weeks. They're really short staffed, they don't have anyone else to do it. I've already said yes.

TERRY:

(*irritated*) You'll have to tell them you've changed your mind.

JULIAN:

(*annoyed*) No way Mum! It's bad enough you leave daily. It's like you love them more than us – No! That's not fair!!

TERRY:

(*cross*) You can't, love! I'm having to work at home, cook, clean and then go and look after my Mum, just so you can do your Florence Nightingale saintly bit! You know Mum left the bath overflowing

today and fell over? You promised me you would look after her! We need you here, Zara and that's the end of it.

ZARA:

(irritated) These people are dying! It's an emergency situation.

TERRY:

Someone else can do it – you've done more than your fair share, end of!

ZARA:

There isn't anyone else – I need to support my colleagues. We can't let down patients at this crucial time. I have to do it.

TERRY:

(shouting) You don't have to! You want to do it and be a hero! You're putting strangers before your own family! And what if you bring the virus back home and Mum gets it? – Have you thought of that? I'm begging you not to go.

ZARA:

(deep sigh) Terry, please try to understand...

JULIAN:

(annoyed) You don't care about us – I hate you!

SOUND: GLASS SHATTERING

That's seven years bad luck because of you!

SOUND: DOOR SLAMMING

ZARA:

Julian!

TERRY:

If you go, then don't bother coming back.

SOUND: DOOR SLAMMING

MUSIC: INDICATING SADNESS

SOUND: CLAPPING/HOOTERS/PANS FOR CARERS

SOUND: INTERIOR CAR — DRIVING THROUGH RAIN

ZARA:

(tenderly) Thanks again for picking me up – I bet the weeks flew by – How's your Mum? – I know it's been hard on you and the family... Terry?

TERRY:

(apologetic) I didn't want you to go...

ZARA

I know... but they've given me special leave now, so I can make it up to all of you. I do love you...

SOUND: CAR STOPPING — HANDBREAK

TERRY:

I've missed you...

ZARA:

I missed you... and your Mum and Julian – you know I did...

TERRY:

Come on let's go inside.

SOUND: CAR DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING – FOOTSTEPS

ZARA:

Terry? ... Are we going to be alright?

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENING

You fixed the mirror?

TERRY:

(laughing) It's a new one...

ZARA:

I'll make a cup of tea... do you want one?

JULIAN:

(cheerful) Mum you're home!

ZARA:

Yes. I'm back to sort you all out. Let's have a cup of tea. Now what's for dinner? Or perhaps Julian will demonstrate his culinary skills.

JULIAN:

(laughing) Oh no Mum. I think it's take-away time.

MUSIC: GENTLE, UPLIFTING

Teddy Te

by Mary Richards

CHARACTERS:

RAEBAN: child age 10. Lives at home with her mum.

MUM: Raeban's mum. Keeps herself to herself.

TITLE MUSIC: CHEERFUL, CAREFREE

RAEBAN:

Mummy – Mummy – I can't find Teddy Te.

MUM:

(muffled) Did you have him last night?

RAEBAN:

Yes I did have him – I found him on the floor when I got up to go to the toilet last night.

MUM:

Try the wardrobe.

RAEBAN:

(laughing) How would he get in the wardrobe Mummy? He can't reach the handles...

SOUND: SCRABBLING ON WARDROBE DOOR

MUM:

Leave it — You need to have breakfast now.

RAEBAN:

I don't want breakfast! Me and Teddy Te always have it together...

MUM:

Just do what you're told.

RAEBAN:

Can I just...

MUM:

(stern) Raeban, don't argue... I don't feel too good.

RAEBAN:

Yes I'm going...

SOUND: SHEETS RUSTLING

RAEBAN:

(whispering) Are you hiding under the pillow, Teddy Te... or in the blanket? There you are! Good job I looked ain't it?

SOUND: DOOR OPEN SOUND OF KISS

Mummy, I found Teddy Te! You coming for breakfast?

MUM:

(fatigued) Not yet sweetie, brush your teeth and get yourself something to eat.

RAEBAN:

What about you?

MUM:

I'm not hungry, maybe later.

SOUND: RUNNING WATER, BRUSHING TEETH – RUNNING DOWN STAIRS — STUMBLING

RAEBAN:

Ouch!! Ouch!

MUM:

What was that noise?

RAEBAN:

I was walking down properly and then I slipped.

MUM:

You need to be a big girl today...

RAEBAN:

I am a big girl Mummy... Why can't you do my breakfast? I wanted eggs and beans and toast.

MUM:

Cereal today.

RAEBAN:

I didn't want cereal.

MUM:

Cereal!

RAEBAN:

Yes Mummy.

SOUND: MICROWAVE PING

RAEBAN:

Come on Teddy Te. We have to stay at home again today so it's time for lockdown learning.

RAEBAN:

Right giraffe, you can be Marley – Mr Potato Head can be Janet, and Micky can be Zoë, and Teddy Te you can be yourself! Right class, did you wash your hands? Make sure you are all sitting apart. First let me take the register.

Good morning Marley, good morning Janet, good morning Zoë, good morning Teddy Te. All present. Now we are going to do our spelling.

MUSIC: LIGHT-HEARTED – INDICATING TIME PASSING

Teddy T did you cough? If you did, you must put your hands over your mouth. Then wash your hands – you have to wash your hands all the time.

You have done your spellings... well done you Teddy Te, 10 out of 10. Teaching is easy, ain't it Teddy Te?

MUSIC: CAREFREE AND PLAYFUL

(puzzled) We were supposed to go back... I can't even play with Janet

and Zoë. Miss said 'cos we're in different classes we're in different bubbles, that's not fair ain't it Teddy Te? We're best friends – Zoë is having a birthday party on Saturday and she invited all of us.

(unhappy) Janet and Zoë live near each other and they can play in their gardens. We only have the park across the big road near where Aunty lives but Mummy won't take me... I am not allowed to cross by myself.

MUSIC: CAREFREE AND PLAYFUL

SOUND: ENTRY DOOR BUZZER

RAEBAN:

(eager) Mummy, the buzzer – Mum... do you think it's my party dress?

MUM:

Look through the window.

RAEBAN:

Why can't you get up and get it, mummy? You was tired yesterday too – you're tired all the time...

MUM:

(weary) Just see who it is.

RAEBAN:

Mum... I can't see properly... It's the postman... *(excited)* he's got a parcel... are you coming to open the door?

MUM:

Not now sweetheart, you need to do it for me.

RAEBAN:

(alarmed) Me?

MUM:

You be a brave girl.

RAEBAN:

I am brave Mummy.

SOUND: KNOCK AT THE DOOR

RAEBAN:

Yes...

POSTMAN:

I've got a parcel for Evelyn.

RAEBAN:

Mummy said to leave it at the door. He's gone Mummy, Teddy Te and me can get it in.

SOUND: DOOR OPENING – RUNNING UPSTAIRS

(excited) Mummy... Mummy, it's a parcel, all wrapped up. Is it my dress? Can I open it? Do you want to do it? Mummy... Mummy...

(whispering) She must be sleeping again Teddy Te, shh. I know – let's make her a cup of juice and bring her some biscuits. She didn't eat breakfast she must be hungry by now.

SOUND: CLATTER OF BOWL, POURING MILK

Look Mummy – are you pretending like me and Teddy Te used to? Mummy, Teddy Te, I think Mummy is pretending. You are pretend-

ing Mummy – ain't it? Mummy... wake up... wake up... Mummy.

(*laughing*) I knew you were pretending... Me and Teddy Te have got a parcel, can we...What did you say Mummy? Your voice is so quiet. You sound different.

MUSIC: INDICATING SERIOUS AND WORRIED MOOD

Yes, I am a brave girl, Mummy. Get aunty? Mummy what's wrong? Mummy, wake up... Teddy Te... (*crying*)

Let's look out the letterbox to see if we can see the lady next door, maybe she can help.

SOUND: LETTERBOX OPENING — TRAFFIC

What about her phone? Can't unlock it... Mummy...

RAEBAN:

Teddy Te... Mummy is not well. I have to go and get aunty. But the road – and it's next to the park. It looks a little bit dark outside now

(*crying*). Come with me Teddy Te...

(*anxious*) Right, we have to put on our Corona mask. Corona hat. Big, big Corona coat.

SOUND: ZIPPER SLOWLY PULLED UP

Be brave, Teddy Te, our Corona shoes too.

Mummy... Mum. Me and Teddy Te are going now...

SOUND: KISS – DOOR OPENING

Teddy Te

Love you Mummy.

SOUND: LOUD TRAFFIC, BUSY ROAD

MUSIC: INDICATING SERIOUS AND WORRIED MOOD

Tamara's Story

by Mary Fernandes

CHARACTERS:

TAMARA: in her 50s, professional. Born in India, lives in London.

TITLE MUSIC: UPLIFTING, CAREFREE

TAMARA:

I went to sleep in Tier 3, woke up in a crazy Tier 4. (ahhh God!) Stuck indoors, afraid to go out. Oh look, there goes Mrs. Bumm, (*laughing*) the name suits her perfectly.

SOUND: POST DROPPING/SORTING THROUGH MAIL

Ohhh, the usual junk and holiday brochure for the intrepid traveller. That's where I met Ori!

We were poles apart – but we jelled. I was lonely, twisted. Ori was lively, happy, had weekend parties full of electrifying buzz! Whenever I visited, I blushed as Ori stripped, jumped in the river below. Ori is an artist, holds painting classes. Poses naked, but no one lifts an eyebrow. It was their life, different from mine. Soon I took to it,

blushed and shed my clothes. The charcoal sketch was of a boyish figure.

Ori wanted me to move in, but it was too soon. I last saw Ori in September – no contact for six weeks.

SOUND: PHONE RINGING

Damn! No answer. Oh God! I'm dumped.

MUSIC: INDICATING GROWING TENSION

(angry) Why am I so cautious? Why oh why didn't I stay? Because I'm Tamara, the vicar's daughter. They thought committing me to God in prayer would help me grow morally. But I needed more than religion to become a responsible adult. Why did it take me so long to get away from their mental abuse?

They said I was ungrateful; they had done everything for me – made me think everything was my fault. I was locked in fear – Here we go again, back to my sad, loveless life.

They knew my secret, Oh yes, sweep the truth under the carpet – pretend the world is fine. No, it's not. So I'm a disgrace to the church, but where the hell is God? My mind, body a rusted, barbed, tangled, twisted wire, unable to unravel myself. I feel sick! Sick!

MUSIC: INDICATING LONGING

I turned 50 yesterday. No card from Ori.

SOUND: ARRIVAL OF A TEXT

Happy birthday Amore mio! I'm in hospital – I've the virus. Oh no! *(crying)* What if Ori dies? We had kissed the moon and made love

with the stars, but tomorrow Ori might be gone.

(determined) I took matters in hand, delivered an iPad, got daily updates on Zoom. Ori looked bad, but strong. Yesterday, brown eyes fluttered, I jumped with joy. Ori came round but still unable to breathe unaided.

I realise power, money, beauty are worthless. They can't buy you the oxygen you're fighting for. You have to be willing to fight, for a love story to last. I so long to visit. Hugs and kisses are taboo. NOT visiting loved ones is an act of love.

MUSIC: INDICATING HOPE

Ori proposed to me, a tailor-made wedding package in Naples. COVID has taught me a lesson that life is too short to wait. Wow! I'm going to get married. Am I dreaming? Perfecto! Sums up my Italian lover.

Our backgrounds are the same. But unlike me, my darling Oriana ran away. Oh, I am so lucky I met her, the Love of my Life. When we are together, the world Stops! Only she can make my heart tremble.

We are proud, of who we are. We love, and live, like two thirsty souls, free of the fear and shame. I cannot wait for our journey to begin. The past abuse and present sickness have gone. I'm ready to start my life.

La Mia vita e' perfetta. Ciao! Ciao!

The Van

by Mike Shallcross

CHARACTERS:

DAVID: older man. Lives in London by himself.

TITLE MUSIC: CHEERFUL CHRISTMAS MUSIC

DAVID:

(cheerful) Well, so that was a Christmas to remember! After all the gloomy predictions, actually it turned out really well with just the three of us. Very convenient for me, of course, as Lizzy lives just a few minutes' walk from here. Slightly longer for her brother to drive in from Rochester, but then he likes driving – cars as well as trains! And her cooking often seems to go wrong, but this time it all worked out perfectly! So we had a delicious veggie Christmas dinner, followed by a few board games, some TV favourites, and reminiscing about the past. Just how it should be!

And then a few days later I got the good news about the vaccine! First jab in mid-January, followed by the second in early February. And Lizzy got her vaccination dates at the same time; being high-risk, she gets the jabs a few days before we book a visit to my brother in

Scotland; Lizzy has been itching to visit Edinburgh again ever since the first lockdown, and we're eagerly looking forward to getting away. And now I've had the first jab, with the second one due tomorrow, so it's not long to wait!

MUSIC: INDICATING SOLEMNITY

Of course the one dark cloud on the horizon is the infection rates, going up like a balloon! (*irritated*) Why did people have to be so stupid over Christmas, meeting up with their nearest and dearest without a face covering anywhere to be seen – there was bound to be trouble! I'll just be glad to get the second jab before it gets any worse!

SOUND: PHONE RINGING

Oh, hi Lizzy, how are you?... No I haven't heard any of the news today... Lockdown from midnight tonight? They must be joking... Can't go out, even for routine medical appointments? That's crazy, it means I'll miss my second jab! Ha-ha, yes of course they're going to announce "alternative arrangements as soon as possible" – what the heck is that supposed to mean when I'm due for my second jab tomorrow!?... Yes, ok, well thanks anyway for letting me know. Speak soon, bye for now.

SOUND: PHONE HANGING UP

(*annoyed*) What a bloody mess! I thought there was light at the end of the tunnel, and now it seems I'll just have to sit here at home looking out of the window until this all blows over.

And no trip to Scotland, that's for sure! It drives me mad, these people who think COVID doesn't apply to them. Everyone else can wear face masks, but somehow they're immune, they won't get it!

They're the ones who are responsible for this mess, but they won't even realise it!

(determined) It's no good, this is just ridiculous, there must be some way round it! I'm going to go out and head straight for the GP surgery, and see if there's any way they can give me the jab a day early!

SOUND: DOOR OPENING THEN RAIN

Aargh, and just to top it off it's absolutely tipping it down out here! But what's that van coming down the street?

MUSIC: INDICATING HOPE

It's got the NHS logo, but it's not a normal ambulance, looks more like some kind of delivery van. Oh, and it's even trying to park right here in the street! What on earth – *(cheerful)* oh, oh my God, now I see, now I get it, yes of course, it says "Mobile COVID-19 vaccinations"! Thank God, so maybe we'll get to Scotland after all!

SOUND: DOORBELL

MUSIC: INDICATING HOPEFULNESS

Christmas Conundrum

by Lydia Jangdhari

CHARACTER:

JEANETTE: An elderly lady in her 90s. Grew up in the Caribbean, she usually lives in London, but is staying with her daughter during the pandemic.

TITLE MUSIC: CALM, NOSTALGIC

JEANETTE:

(singing) At last my heart's an open door
And my secret love's no secret anymore

SOUND: CAT MEOW TO PURRING, CONTINUES ON AND OFF THROUGHOUT, PLUS JEANETTE KNITTING

Hello puss, don't you come near my knitting, it's not for you to play with. I'm making a blanket for the new baby – what do you think?
– I don't think we'll get to see him though, not for a while...

SOUND: DOOR BELL. JEANETTE'S SLOW FOOTSTEPS, DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING. FOOTSTEPS COMING

BACK. LOUNGE DOOR OPENS.

SOUND: CAT MEOWS AGAIN THEN PURRS. KNITTING CONTINUES

That was the postman – he said that people make more of this virus than they need to, and to prove it, he says he goes out without a mask! I think I agree, but my Anna has promised me that she won't let me spoil what she has started. She took me far away from my home, to keep me safe from the virus.

Only, that means she doesn't want me to go Louise's for Christmas and I really want to go. She sat me down in the car and told me it was up to me if I want to go, but she'd advise me not to – and because I am so old, what she was trying to do, was to save me from the virus.

Anna's so worried about this virus that she won't even take the risk to see her new grandson and help out. I know she desperately wants to hug that baby, but she doesn't want to put us in any danger.

MUSIC: INDICATING PONDERING, TIME PASSING

So what do I really want? Does anyone care?

(angry) They all take over my life and tell me what's going to happen.

Well puss... I'll tell you... I want to go with my granddaughter Louise, and she wants me to come. But if I go, how will I get back here? will Anna let me come back here?

Louise is saying that she will come and get me for Christmas, she says they are coming regardless.

(*angry*) I said don't worry to waste your time coming because your Mum doesn't want me to go. I don't want there to be a bad atmosphere between me and Anna.

But that makes no difference, Louise and her brother are still swearing they are coming.

(*hopeless*) I just don't know what's going to happen.

(*upset*) They all have too much control over my life – I don't know if I even have a choice?

– Ah dear.

What am I to do?

SOUND: CLOCK TICKING AND CHIMING

MUSIC: DISCORDANT INDICATING JEANETTE'S DILEMMA — TIME PASSING

What's the time? Louise will be coming soon... I kept telling her not to waste the petrol on me, but she insisted. Should I go with her? Should I say no even though I do want to go with her?

There's going to be a blazing row – I don't think I can bear that – It's impossible!

It's alright for you puss, you sleep when you want, go where you want, when you want.

Well, there's not much I can do, I'm going to upset one of them –

I'd better get on with my knitting.

SOUND: KNITTING. CAT MEOWS

Now puss, don't you dare try and sit on my lap, not when I'm so nearly finished this blanket – I will not be pleased if you make me drop a stitch again!

(hopeful) I really want to finish, just in case I do get to see the baby.

(singing)

All too soon my secret love
Became impatient to be free

So I told a friendly star
The way that dreamers often do*

END MUSIC: HOPEFUL, NOSTALGIC

***Secret Love**

by Paul Francis Webster and Sammy Fain
Originally sung by Doris Day

14 Days

by Myrtle Laing

CHARACTERS:

MYRTLE: in her later years. Grew up in the Caribbean, now lives at home in London on her own. She is fed up and feeling lonely.

DEE: in her 50s, MYRTLE'S daughter.

RECEPTIONIST: in her 50s, works at MYRTLE'S GP surgery.

TITLE MUSIC: REGGAE MUSIC.

LYRICS: 'I'm so tired, cos this life I live is so full of worries'

MYRTLE:

This is really, really getting on my nerves now. Wear your mask – I can't breathe! Keep your distance – I need to hug.

Wash your hands. – Look at my hands and fingers, they are all stripping and it's burning me!

I'm so fed up of sanitise, sanitise, sanitise until I'm losing my sanity!

DEE:

You need to use the app, Mum and stay positive; you've got so much to be thankful for.

SOUND: PHONE TEXT

MYRTLE:

Dee says, stay positive, look at the big picture. And now some blooming positive person was near me and they're telling me to isolate for another 14 days! Stupid app, I'm going to destroy you – And I'm not going out for any blooming test, probably catch it at the test centre! I don't want to be positive, I want to be negative!

SOUND: DOORBELL. FOOTSTEPS. SOUND OF FRONT DOOR OPENING

MYRTLE:

Hello Dee

DEE:

Hi Mum, here's your shopping, there's enough for the 14 days.

MYRTLE:

(shocked) You can't come in. You have to stay at the door. I don't want to break the rules. You know I love you, but just give me what you bring for me and go.

DEE:

Oh Mum, it's only a couple of weeks, then I can come in again. Stay safe – Bye.

SOUND: DOOR CLOSING

MUSIC: INDICATING MYRTLE'S GROWING TENSION AND DISTRESS

MYRTLE:

Oh no, not again — me on my own.
Back in my shell,
Just like a snail.
Can't meet my family, can't meet my friends. No smiles.
Untouchable.
We need to touch!
How long this virus gonna last?
Corona virus, you so horrible, so wicked, I HATE you.
You take away my life.

Me — I was always dancing

MUSIC: LIVELY SALSA

MYRTLE:

(excited) Reggae, Salsa, an ageless teenager – I need to be out and about. I need to be free! I need company.

SOUND: WATER DRIPPING

MYRTLE:

What's that dripping? Oh no! The toilet is filling up, what if it doesn't stop, what if it floods again? I can't call a plumber, or can I? No I can't, because no one is allowed to come into the house. I'd better not use it. I'm scared — of what might happen.

SOUND: WATER FILLING UP

MYRTLE:

This is silly — I will have to go soon — maybe I can fix it.

SOUND: MYRTLE MOVES THE TOP OFF THE TOILET

MUSIC: INDICATING INCREASING TENSION

MYRTLE:

Arrrh my back!

I can't move – so much pain – have to call the Doctor.

SOUND: PHONE RINGING

MYRTLE:

Hello! Press 2, for what? Wrong one – try again –

I need to see the Doctor.

SOUND: MUFFLED VOICE OF THE RECEPTIONIST ON THE PHONE

RECEPTIONIST:

What seems to be the problem?

MYRTLE:

I'm in pain.

RECEPTIONIST:

You'll have to make an appointment online.

MYRTLE:

I don't think I can manage online.

RECEPTIONIST:

Isn't there anyone who can help you?

MYRTLE:

(*upset*) No I'm all alone, I'm isolating.

RECEPTIONIST:

If it's an emergency, you'll need to call 999.

MYRTLE:

No it's not an emergency –

(angry) I'm not going to hospital, they will probably kill me!

You're telling me I can't see the Doctor, why can't I see the Doctor?

RECEPTIONIST:

The Doctor will phone you.

MYRTLE:

She will call me back?

SOUND: PHONE RINGS CONTINUALLY. SOUNDS OF MYRTLE LOOKING FOR THE PHONE, MOVING OBJECTS AND SLOWLY MOVING ABOUT.

MYRTLE:

(increasingly frustrated) I'm coming – where is it? Bloomin phone.

Arrh - don't rush girl, nice and steady –

SOUND: PHONE STOPS RINGING

MYRTLE:

Hello – hello – who is it?

(frustrated) Arrh - too late.

MUSIC: INDICATING MYRTLE BECOMING INCREASINGLY DESPERATE

MYRTLE:

I don't know what I'm going to do? It's getting worse -- everything

is going wrong! – Am I going crazy? Don't want to bother Dee, oh Lord Jesus I think I'm going off my head.

(quietly) Feel so tired – can't move – just lay down – hope the pain will go away – don't know what to do – can't go on anymore.

SOUND: SLOW LOUD BREATHING, THEN CLOCK TICKING

MUSIC: GROWING TENSION AS TIME PASSES

SOUND: REPEATED DOOR BELL AND BANGING ON THE DOOR

MYRTLE:

(startled) What's that? Oh – I'm still here.

Who's that? Somebody at the bloody door. Hold on a minute.

SOUND: MYRTLE TRYING TO GET UP, MOVING SLOWLY TO THE DOOR

MUSIC: INCREASING TENSION

MYRTLE:

(in desperation) Let me get my mask on – Arrrh I can't move – Who is it? Wait – WAIT – Don't go – please – DON'T GO!

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS WALKING AWAY FROM MYRTLE'S HOUSE

MUSIC INCREASES IN VOLUME INDICATING MYRTLE'S HEIGHTENED TENSION AND DISTRESS

Anne's Story

by Anne McGilchrist

CHARACTERS:

ANNE: in her later years. Lives in London on her own.

TITLE MUSIC: SLOW REFLECTIVE TONE

ANNE:

It won't last long... it won't last forever... but today I have so much time on my hands I don't know what to do. My groups have all shut. They made me feel like I was making a contribution but now they're gone. And I'm sitting here, looking out of my window doing nothing...

SOUND: CAT MEOW

I don't think the cat gives tuppence ha'penny, so long as it's fed and cuddled (*laughing*). A lovely life... a loved cat.

SOUND: CAT PURRING

My daughter Dawn, she pops in most days. I am so lucky to have

her. Otherwise no one else will be coming in. I couldn't live without her. Drives me mad of course, but you can't have everything. She is my only daughter, my youngest. I feel sorry for anyone else in my situation without a daughter.

MUSIC: INDICATING THOUGHTFULNESS

(restless) I might have a little walk but there's nowhere to go here. Well, apart from walking up and down on the streets there's nowhere to go. I have to remember I am not getting any younger! *(laughing)*.

Dawn says I've got to be careful going out. I can tell she's worried, but her heart's in the right place. I'm not complaining really, after all that's happened I'll never complain again...

MUSIC: INDICATING HOPE

Me and Dawn, We can do anything – We like being together, go shopping every weekend. Does it sound boring? It isn't. Sometimes we go to Hertford where she lives... It's very pretty, well not this time of the year, but in the summer it's absolutely beautiful... When she first went I thought it was the middle of nowhere.

Me, I like London, I am a Londoner. I am not moving under any circumstance. I like everything about London, the multi culturalism, the general busyness.

If you put me in the country you might as well put me in a prison cell, wouldn't know what to do with myself. Sometimes Dawn says it would be good for me to be closer to her.

MUSIC: INDICATING REFLECTION

(thoughtful) Sometimes I do feel lonely though, it reminds me of when

I first came to the area, over 50 years ago. I was very, very lonely... there wasn't any other black people... The neighbours thought I must be some kind of tart marrying a black man and no one, and I mean no one at all would talk to me.

The days stretched out because he was working all the time and I was on my own with the kids. It was very difficult at first until I met me mate, once I met her it was alright. She was a bit mad, married to an Italian.

I am very sorry she died cos I loved her... we had a lot of laughs, we enjoyed each other you know. We both had gardens and we would just mess about. We didn't have any money... but what's money, what's that?... I miss her so much. It was a completely different world to what it is today...

MUSIC: INDICATING REFLECTION

SOUND: BIRDSONG

Oh I do enjoy the garden... I like a bit of colour. It's just somewhere to be and if I'm out there and it looks nice, it makes me feel good. It's only small... big enough though. The cat is quite happy with it.

SOUND: CAT MEOW AND PURRING

I couldn't live without a cat, I've always had a cat... its name is anything I call it (*laughing*). She's lovely... When men come round she's all over 'em... especially my grandson because the minute he comes in he picks her up. It's lovely to see the two of them together. Mind you he's not allowed to come over at the moment.

The virus? I mean you couldn't have anticipated that, could you? I think it's a source of great panic to most people but I've got Dawn.

This virus is just one of those things you have got to put up with.

MUSIC: INDICATING HOPE

(hopeful) We will get to the end... it won't go on forever it won't... It will make you appreciate what you did have, that's for sure. – I think next time around, I'll be a much loved cat!

The Good Neighbour

by Hyacinth Treasure

CHARACTER:

MAISIE: in her later years. Grew up in the Caribbean and now lives in London on her own. She is particularly interested in the ‘goings on’ on her street.

TITLE MUSIC: COUNTRY STYLE, SETTING A JOLLY, COMIC MOOD

MAISIE:

I live on my own. I don't like being stuck indoors, I'm a people person, but at least there is always something going on in my street. I've got a good spot to watch. (*giggles*) I've adjusted my favourite arm-chair so I can look out of the window!

(*delighted*) Ooh look – it's that nice young postman Jack, he's always so pleasant and he's there in all weathers.

(*concerned*) Oh – he seems to be going into Mrs Fredericks at No 8, I didn't think that was allowed. I hope she's OK. He has a mask on and I know he uses hand sanitiser because he told me last time we

had a friendly little chat. Maybe he's helping her with a heavy parcel or something. She's looking around and... (*shocked*) what is she wearing? She doesn't seem to have got dressed yet!

Why is she shutting the curtains in the middle of the day? Maybe she's not well... poor thing, I'll leave some honey and lemon at her door when I go shopping tomorrow.

(*vexed*) Oh no! I hope it isn't that corona virus, if it is, he definitely shouldn't be inside her house!

MUSIC: JOVIAL TONE, INDICATING TIME PASSING

Umm that's 15 minutes and he hasn't come out yet. Maybe I should call her... If she's not well

SOUND: PHONE RINGING — NO ANSWER

That's strange, I know she's there... I'll ring her husband — he'll want to come home from work if he knows she's ill. Now let me see, do I have his number?

In the meantime, I could go round myself and check? Better get my mask and gloves.

MUSIC: GLEEFUL AND BUSY

SOUNDS: EXTERIOR ACOUSTIC. FOOTSTEPS, DOORBELL — RUNG THREE TIMES

Where is she?

SOUND: SQUEAKING LETTER BOX BEING LIFTED AS MAISIE PEEPS INTO THE HOUSE

I can't see anyone downstairs... (*shouting*) Is everything alright?

SOUND: THUDDING

(*concerned*) There seems to be a noise from upstairs. If her husband doesn't come back soon, perhaps I should phone the ambulance, or the police!

Better go home. I'll wait a bit longer and then make some more phone calls. (*delighted*) She's lucky I'm such a good neighbour.

MUSIC: JOVIAL TONE, INDICATING TIME PASSING

SOUND: INTERIOR ACOUSTIC

Let's see, it's nearly half an hour and the postman's still in there... her husband should be back soon. Mr Fredericks said Mrs. Fredericks was fine when he left for work this morning, but that virus can strike quick. I chatted to him as he was getting into his car, sweet man, but not as good looking as the postman! (*chuckles to herself*)

(*astonished*) There's the postman! She seems to be pushing him out and he's not wearing his mask!

He's coming over here...

SOUNDS: FOOTSTEPS, DOORBELL, DOOR OPENING

POSTMAN JACK:

Hello there, parcel for you – left at the door

MAISIE:

Wait a minute, Mr. Postman – wait! – Is Mrs Fredericks alright?

POSTMAN JACK:

(slyly) Oh yes...

MAISIE:

You were in there a long time?

POSTMAN JACK :

Was I? She had some trouble with something indoors.

MAISIE:

And you fixed it?

POSTMAN JACK:

(suggestively) Oh Yes.. I fixed it.

MAISIE:

What about her husband, couldn't he have done it?

POSTMAN JACK:

I don't know — She asked me to.

MAISIE:

You look a bit tired... Why don't you come inside and I'll make you a nice cup of tea.

**SOUNDS: CAR SCREECHING TO A HALT, CAR DOOR
OPENS, FOOTSTEPS RUNNING, GATE OPENING**

MAISIE:

(calling) Hello Mr. Fredericks, sorry to have bothered you — this lovely postman said your wife is fine — it was a false alarm.

POSTMAN JACK:

What? Sorry love I've got to rush, letters to deliver and all that...

MAISIE:

(*shouting*) You don't have to run! What a local hero he is, delivering all those letters in all weathers and helping the neighbours. I'm going to make him a lovely cake and invite him in for a chat tomorrow.

Well... if Mrs. Fredericks can do it. Why can't I?

END MUSIC: JOLLY GUITAR TUNE

What Now?

by Valerie Williamson

CHARACTERS:

ANNA: in her 30's. Raised in the UK, of Caribbean heritage, lives in London with her husband Jesse and adored baby, Noah.

JESSE: in his 30's devoted to his wife and son.

NOAH: 6 months old.

TITLE MUSIC: SEQUENCE OF GUITAR CHORDS

SOUNDS: BABY BABBLING ON MONITOR, DISHES BEING MOVED, TV ANNOUNCEMENT

ANNA:

Coming Sweetie.

SOUNDS: FOOTSTEPS, DOOR OPENING, LOUDER HAPPY BABBLING, TV IN BACKGROUND

(Sigh) The thought of being stuck in the house actually makes me feel

sick. We love to get outside and explore the world, but there is no way I will be putting you in danger by going out THERE!

Oh no! I won't be able to play tennis at the club. I was really looking forward to wiping the floor with that snobby cow who looks down her nose at everyone.

Daddy has to work. We've got a mortgage to pay. Mummy will always be here.

SOUNDS: BOTTLE PUT ON SURFACE, GENTLE PATTING, BABY BURP

(anxious) Ugh. How will we cope? When Jesse leaves the house, what happens when he gets home? Will he have to be disinfected every time?

SOUNDS: FOOTSTEPS, KISS, FOOTSTEPS, DOOR OPENING, TAP RUNNING, HANDWASHING

Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you. Happy birthday, happy birthday. Happy birthday to you.

SOUNDS: TOWEL DRYING, MOVING AROUND

(focused) Sterilise all the bottles, sanitise every surface. It never ends. Seems more important than ever now. *(forceful)* More important than ever now

SOUNDS: SCRUBBING, WASHING UP

One, two, three, four, five. One, two, three, four, five. One, two, three, four, five. One, two, three, four, five.

(uneasy) I'm not sure that's clean enough. Everything needs to be

clean. Everything needs to be clean.

SOUNDS: FOOTSTEPS, TAP RUNNING

(intense) One, two, three, four, five. One, two, three, four, five. One, two, three, four, five. One, two, three, four, five.

SOUNDS: FOOTSTEPS, DOOR OPENING, PICKING UP BABY

MUSIC: HAPPY BABY'S MOBILE

Noah, I love you so much. I don't know what I would do without you. I don't mean to push Daddy away but all I can think of is you and keeping you safe. When I think of the things we used to do before you, I shudder. Do you think I would jump out of a plane now? Never. I need to be here for you.

SOUNDS: KEYS IN FRONT DOOR, DOOR OPENS AND SLAMS, ANNA BUSILY MOVING AROUND, PUTTING BABY DOWN, IN THE DISTANCE SOUNDS OF JESSE, HANDWASHING AND WHISTLING

ANNA:

Have you washed your hands?

JESSE:

I washed all my hands! How have you been today? Where's my wonder boy?

ANNA:

We're fine.

JESSE:

Hey son, looking sharp as ever! A chip off the old block.

SOUNDS: SHUFFLING, BABY BABBLING, KISSING BABY

ANNA:

Did you wear your mask all the time? Did you sanitise your computer in the office? Did you...

JESSE:

So many questions. Yes, yes and yes. Even though people are saying it's just a flu.

ANNA:

How can you say that! Which people? Who?

JESSE:

Oh, just people on the internet.

ANNA:

What the hell do they know?

JESSE:

Some people are saying it's not that dangerous. I'm just saying.

ANNA:

(angry) Well don't! Give him to me.

JESSE:

What's the matter? I'm just having a moment with Noah.

ANNA:

(determined) Give. Him. To. Me.

JESSE:

OK. OK. You hungry? *(silence)*

(*good natured*) I bet you are hungry. I'll get dinner on.

SOUNDS: Footsteps, whistling

ANNA:

(*singing*) Mother will always be here. Mother will always be here. Mother will always be here. For you. Mother... (*speaking to baby*) I love his cooking but at the moment it's hard to enjoy anything but you.

SOUNDS: CLOCK TICKING, CHIMING, POTS AND PANS FOR COOKING IN DISTANCE

JESSE:

Ready!

ANNA:

What is he cooking? I can't work it out.

SOUNDS: FOOTSTEPS, PUTS BABY DOWN, CUTLERY ON CROCKERY

It's my favourite Thai curry! (*confused*) Why can't I smell it? I can't smell it! I can't taste it! (*screams*) Aah!

SOUND: PLATE SMASHING

END MUSIC: INDICATING TENSION RISING INTO SEQUENCE OF GUITAR CHORDS WITH AN UNRESOLVED ENDING.

Why doesn't this tea taste good?

by Sheila Mears

CHARACTER:

MAVIS: in her 60s, Grew up in the UK of Caribbean heritage, recently retired, a keen gardener.

TITLE MUSIC: PIANO, SETTING A PENSIVE TONE

SOUND: CLATTER OF A CUP BEING KNOCKED OVER

MAVIS:

Bother! What a mess. Thank goodness I've got a cloth in here.

SOUNDS: CLATTER OF CUP ON A SAUCER

OK.

SOUNDS: TEA BEING POURED INTO A CUP, DRINKING.

Get a grip Mavis, this is your second cup and it's not even 9 o'clock

Why doesn't this tea taste good?

yet. *(pause)* but... what was I to do with that extra cup?

(wry laugh) He'd say silly old fool, why are you sitting in here? The sun is shining and the patio table and chairs are there begging to be used... *(whisper)* The thing is... there are two chairs... Why doesn't this tea taste good?

SOUND: SCRAPING ON THE ROOF AND FLOWERPOTS

Oh no it's you again.

SOUND: TAPS ON WINDOW

(annoyed) Go away and leave those flowerpots alone, there are no nuts in this garden... *(sighs)* We spent ages getting those pots ready. The trips we made to the garden centre. Our neighbours *(whispering)* the ones on the left that we talk to, said; 'we haven't seen so many new plants in pots since' *(voice tails off without finishing)*. He would be so upset to see that I haven't made a start preparing the beds for summer. How could I without him?

MUSIC: SETTING A MELANCHOLIC AND SAD TONE

SOUND: SCRAPING, TAPPING ON THE WINDOW

(angry) Go away, you stupid squirrel, get off that pile of weeds. My neighbours asked if I needed help with things in the garden. Do I? Why am I even thinking about what's happening to the garden?

Terry and I used to laugh at the fuss everyone was making about a cough and a temperature... We were annoyed at not being able to visit the garden centre. It was so strange seeing the empty streets on our daily walks. Umm, fancy not recognising her next door because she was wearing a mask. I nearly said hello, and she's the one we

Why doesn't this tea taste good?

don't talk to! At least we had a good laugh at that over our tea...

MUSIC: SETTING A MELANCHOLIC, SERIOUS TONE

Things changed so quickly.

SOUNDS: AMBULANCE DOORS, BUSY HOSPITAL

(Deep breath in) I'll never forget the sound of the ambulance doors slamming when we got to the hospital. What did the nurse say? Go home, we'll call to let you know how he is. *(long breath out)*

Why don't they ring? Who is that out there? I expect they are thinking she's in the conservatory again. looking, just looking... The neighbours were saying; 'the forsythia is coming on, such pretty yellow flowers...'

I barely notice. *(deep breathing)*.

Where did I put those tissues? *(sniffing and blowing nose)*

SOUND: MOBILE PHONE RINGING

(Mavis answers) Hello.

Hello *(listening)* You're just calling to find out how I'm feeling and to give me a quick update on Terry?

(to herself) I've waited anxiously for this phone call and she's asking how I am feeling. How does she think I am feeling? What is the point of her calling with nothing new?

(to the caller) Yes I'm still here.

Why doesn't this tea taste good?

(to herself, regretful) Why did it have to be us? Why did we put off doing things? That lovely cruise... the trip to Bali, even taking stupid pottery classes... lessons, whatever...

SOUND: BROCHURES BEING STACKED

Got those brochures for nothing...

What's that? You don't have all the details, but the doctors and nurses looking after Terry (*voice starts to fade out*) wanted you to contact me to say...

MUSIC: PIANO SETTING A HAPPY POSITIVE TONE

SOUND: TEA BEING POURED

Aaah that's lovely.

SOUND: SCRAPING

Oh, it's you. It's so lovely to see you again. There are still no nuts in my flowerpots, but...dig away and see what you can find!

SOUNDS: DRINKING AND CUP BEING PUT ON THE TABLE

The flower beds are looking so much better now that the bedding plants are in.

Now where's that extra cup?

END MUSIC: PIANO LEAVING AN UPLIFTING TONE

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