

Poems in a Time of Coronavirus - Issue No. 14



This anthology contains poems and prose chosen by a group of friends from St Paul's Church Grove Park Chiswick on the theme of 'Friendship', shared with each other via Zoom on 2 July 2020.

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***A Friend* by Gillian Jones**

A person who will listen and not condemn
Someone on whom you can depend
They will not flee when bad times are here
Instead they will be there to lend an ear
They will think of ways to make you smile
So you can be happy for a while
When times are good and happy there after
They will be there to share the laughter
Do not forget your friends at all
For they pick you up when you fall
Do not expect to just take and hold
Give friendship back, it is pure gold.

Chosen and read by Audrey Jennings

***A Time to Talk* by Robert Frost**

When a friend calls to me from the road
And slows his horse to a meaning walk,
I don't stand still and look around
On all the hills I haven't hoed,
And shout from where I am, 'What is it?'
No, not as there is a time to talk.
I thrust my hoe in the mellow ground,
Blade-end up and five feet tall,
And plod: I go up to the stone wall
For a friendly visit.

Chosen and read by Sam Hearn

***He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother* lyrics to song written by Bobby Scott and Bob Russell and made famous by The Hollies**

The road is long
With many a winding turn
That leads us to who knows where?
Who knows where?
But I'm strong
Strong enough to carry him
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

So on we go
His welfare is my concern
No burden is he to bear
We'll get there
For I know
He would not encumber me
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

If I'm laden at all
I'm laden with sadness
That everyone's heart
Isn't filled with the gladness
Of love for one another

It's a long, long road
From which there is no return
While we're on the way to there
Why not share?
And the load
Doesn't weigh me down at all
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

He's my brother
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

Chosen and read by Angus MacLaren



Us Two by A A Milne

Wherever I am, there's always Pooh,
There's always Pooh and Me.
Whatever I do, he wants to do,
"Where are you going today?" says Pooh:
"Well, that's very odd 'cos I was too.
Let's go together," says Pooh, says he.
"Let's go together," says Pooh.

"What's twice eleven?" I said to Pooh.
("Twice what?" said Pooh to Me.)
"I think it ought to be twenty-two."
"Just what I think myself," said Pooh.
"It wasn't an easy sum to do,
But that's what it is," said Pooh, said he.
"That's what it is," said Pooh.

"Let's look for dragons," I said to Pooh.
"Yes, let's," said Pooh to Me.
We crossed the river and found a few-
"Yes, those are dragons all right," said Pooh.
"As soon as I saw their beaks I knew.
That's what they are," said Pooh, said he.
"That's what they are," said Pooh.

"Let's frighten the dragons," I said to Pooh.
"That's right," said Pooh to Me.
"I'm not afraid," I said to Pooh,
And I held his paw and I shouted "Shoo!
Silly old dragons!"- and off they flew.

"I wasn't afraid," said Pooh, said he,
"I'm never afraid with you."

So wherever I am, there's always Pooh,
There's always Pooh and Me.
"What would I do?" I said to Pooh,
"If it wasn't for you," and Pooh said: "True,
It isn't much fun for One, but Two,
Can stick together, says Pooh, says he. "That's how it is," says Pooh.

Chosen and read by Hillie MacLaren

Friendship by Cole Porter

If you're ever in a jam, here I am
If you're ever in a mess, S.O.S.
If you ever feel so happy you land in jail, I'm your bail
It's friendship, friendship
Just a perfect blendship
When other friendships have been forgot
Ours will still be hot
A-lottle-dottle-dottle-dig-dig-dig
If you're ever down a well, ring my bell
And if you're ever up a tree just phone to me
A-yes-sir-ee
If you ever lose your teeth and you're out to dine, borrow mine
It's friendship, friendship
Just a perfect blendship
When other friendships have been forgate
Gate?
Ours will still be great
A-lottle-dottle-dottle-chuck-chuck-chuck
If they ever black your eyes, put me wise
If they ever cook your goose, turn me loose
And if they ever put a bullet through your brain, I'll complain
It's friendship, friendship
Just a perfect blendship
When other friendships have been forgit
Ours will still be it
A-lottle-dottle-dottle-hep-hep-hep
If you ever lose your mind, I'll be kind
And if you ever lose your shirt, I'll be hurt
If you're ever in a mill and get sawed in half, I won't laugh
It's friendship, friendship
Just a perfect blendship
When other friendships are up the crick
Ours will still be slick
A-lottle-dottle-dottle-woof-woof-woof
Hep-hep-hep
A-chuck-chuck-chuck
A-dig-dig-dig
Good evening friend!

Chosen and played by Peter Capell

Youtube clip: [Friendship](#)

***Love lives beyond* by John Clare**

Love lives beyond
The tomb, the earth, which fades like dew!
I love the fond,
The faithful and the true.

Love lives in sleep,
The happiness of healthy dreams:
Eve's dews may weep,
But love delightful seems.

'Tis seen in flowers,
And in the morning's pearly dew;
In earth's green hours,
And in the heaven's eternal blue.

'Tis heard in spring
When light and sunbeams warm and kind,
On angel's wing
Bring love and music to the mind.

And where is voice,
So beautiful and sweet
As nature's choice,
Where spring and lovers meet?

Love lives beyond
The tomb, the earth, the flowers, and dew,
I love the fond,
The faithful, young, and true.

Chosen and read by Victoria Lynch

Winnie the Pooh – an excerpt by A A Milne

It occurred to Pooh and Piglet that they hadn't heard from Eeyore for several days, so they put on their hats and coats and trotted across the Hundred Acre Wood to Eeyore's stick house. Inside the house was Eeyore.

"Hello Eeyore," said Pooh.

"Hello Pooh. Hello Piglet," said Eeyore, in a Glum Sounding Voice.

"We just thought we'd check in on you," said Piglet, "because we hadn't heard from you, and so we wanted to know if you were okay."

Eeyore was silent for a moment. "Am I okay?" he asked, eventually. "Well, I don't know, to be honest. Are any of us really okay? That's what I ask myself. All I can tell you, Pooh and Piglet, is that right now I feel really rather Sad, and Alone, and Not Much Fun To Be Around At All. Which is why I haven't bothered you. Because you wouldn't want to waste your time hanging out with someone who is Sad, and Alone, and Not Much Fun To Be Around At All, would you now."

Pooh looked at Piglet, and Piglet looked at Pooh, and they both sat down, one on either side of Eeyore in his stick house.

Eeyore looked at them in surprise. "What are you doing?"

"We're sitting here with you," said Pooh, "because we are your friends. And true friends don't care if someone is feeling Sad, or Alone, or Not Much Fun To Be Around At All. True friends are there for you anyway. And so here we are."

"Oh," said Eeyore. "Oh." And the three of them sat there in silence, and while Pooh and Piglet said nothing at all; somehow, almost imperceptibly, Eeyore started to feel a very tiny little bit better.

Because Pooh and Piglet were there. No more; no less.

Chosen and read by Mary Barnard



Love and Friendship by Emily Bronte

Love is like the wild rose-briar,
Friendship like the holly-tree—
The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms
But which will bloom most constantly?

The wild-rose briar is sweet in the spring,
Its summer blossoms scent the air;
Yet wait till winter comes again
And who will call the wild-briar fair?

Then scorn the silly rose-wreath now
And deck thee with the holly's sheen,
That when December blights thy brow
He may still leave thy garland green.

To me, fair friend, you never can be old (Sonnet 104) by William Shakespeare

To me, fair friend, you never can be old,
For as you were when first your eye I ey'd,
Such seems your beauty still. Three winters cold,
Have from the forests shook three summers' pride,
Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turn'd,
In process of the seasons have I seen,
Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burn'd,
Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green.
Ah! yet doth beauty like a dial-hand,
Steal from his figure, and no pace perceiv'd;
So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand,
Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceiv'd:
For fear of which, hear this thou age unbred:
Ere you were born was beauty's summer dead.

Both chosen and read by Jackie Rayer

***To My Excellent Lucasia, on Our Friendship* by Katherine Philips**

I did not live until this time
Crowned my felicity,
When I could say without a crime,
I am not thine, but thee.

This carcass breathed, and walked, and
slept,
So that the world believed
There was a soul the motions kept;
But they were all deceived.

For as a watch by art is wound
To motion, such was mine:
But never had Orinda found
A soul till she found thine;

Which now inspires, cures and supplies,
And guides my darkened breast:
For thou art all that I can prize,
My joy, my life, my rest.

No bridegroom's nor crown-conqueror's
mirth
To mine compared can be:
They have but pieces of the earth,
I've all the world in thee.

Then let our flames still light and shine,
And no false fear control,
As innocent as our design,
Immortal as our soul.

***My First Best Friend* by Jack Prelutsky**

My first best friend is Awful Ann—
she socked me in the eye.
My second best is Sneaky Sam—
he tried to swipe my pie.
My third best friend is Max the Rat—
he trampled on my toes.
My fourth best friend is Nasty Nell—
She almost broke my nose.

My fifth best friend is Ted the Toad—
he kicked me in the knee.
My sixth best friend is Grumpy Gail—
she's always mean to me.
My seventh best is Monster Moe—
he often plays too rough.
That's all the friends I've got right now—
I think I've got enough.

Both chosen and read by Carolyn Ashford-Russell

***The Sun Used to Shine* by Edward Thomas**

The sun used to shine while we two walked
Slowly together, paused and started
Again, and sometimes mused, sometimes talked
As either pleased, and cheerfully parted

Each night. We never disagreed
Which gate to rest on. The to be
And the late past we gave small heed.
We turned from men or poetry

To rumours of the war remote
Only till both stood disinclined
For aught but the yellow flavoured coat
Of an apple wasps had undermined;

Or a sentry of dark betonies,
The stateliest of small flowers on earth,
At the forest verge; or crocuses
Pale purple as if they had their birth

In sunless Hades fields. The war
Came back to mind with the moonrise
Which soldiers in the east afar
Beheld then. Nevertheless, our eyes

Could as well imagine the Crusades
Or Caesar's battles. Everything
To faintness like those rumours fade—
Like the brook's water glittering

Under the moonlight—like those walks
Now—like us two that took them, and
The fallen apples, all the talks
And silence—like memory's sand

When the tide covers it late or soon,
And other men through other flowers
In those fields under the same moon
Go talking and have easy hours.

Chosen and read by Katharine Makower

***Mrs. Malon* by Eleanor Farjeon**

Mrs . Malone
Lived hard by a wood
All on her lonesome
As nobody should.
With her crust on a plate
And her pot on the coal
And none but herself
To converse with, poor soul.
In a shawl and a hood
She got sticks out-o'-door,
On a bit of old sacking
She slept on the floor,
And nobody, nobody
Asked how she fared
Or knew how she managed,
For nobody cared.
Why make a pother
About an old crone?
What for should they bother
With Mrs. Malone?

One Monday in winter
With snow on the ground
So thick that a footstep
Fell without sound,
She heard a faint frostbitten
Peck on the pane
And went to the window
To listen again.
There sat a cock-sparrow
Bedraggled and weak,
With half-open eyelid
And ice on his beak.
She threw up the sash
And she took the bird in,
And mumbled and fumbled it
Under her chin.
" Ye're all of a smother,
Ye're fair overblown!
I've room fer another,"
Said Mrs. Malone.

Come Tuesday while eating
Her dry morning slice
With the sparrow a-picking
(" Ain't company nice!")
She heard on her doorpost
A curious scratch,
And there was a cat
With its claw on the latch.
It was hungry and thirsty
And thin as a lath,
It mewed and it mowed
On the slithery path.
She threw the door open
And warmed up some pap,
And huddled and cuddled it
In her old lap.
" There, there, little brother,
Ye poor skin-an'-bone,
There's room fer another,"
Said Mrs. Malone.

Come Wednesday while all of them
Crouched on the mat
With a crumb for the sparrow,
A sip for the cat,
There was wailing and whining
Outside in the wood,
And there sat a vixen
With six of her brood.
She was haggard and ragged
And worn to a shred,
And her half-dozen babies
Were only half-fed,
But Mrs. Malone, crying
" My! ain't they sweet!"
Happed them and lapped them
And gave them to eat.
" You warm yerself, mother,
Ye're cold as a stone!
There's room fer another,"
Said Mrs. Malone.

Come Thursday a donkey
Stepped in off the road
With sores on his withers
From bearing a load.
Come Friday when icicles
Pierced the white air
Down from the mountainside
Lumbered a bear.
For each she had something,
If little, to give —
" Lord knows, the poor critters
Must all of 'em live."
She gave them her sacking,
Her hood and her shawl,
Her loaf and her teapot —
She gave them her all.
" What with one thing and t'other
Me fambily's grown,
And there's room fer another,"
Said Mrs. Malone.

Come Saturday evening
When time was to sup
Mrs. Malone
Had forgot to sit up.
The cat said *meeow* ,
And the sparrow said *peep* ,
The vixen, *she's sleeping* ,
The bear, *let her sleep* .
On the back of the donkey
They bore her away,
Through trees and up mountains
Beyond night and day,
Till come Sunday morning
They brought her in state
Through the last cloudbank
As far as the Gate.

Chosen and read by Sue Hearn

"Who is it," asked Peter,
"You have with you there?"
And donkey and sparrow,
Cat, vixen, and bear

Exclaimed, " Do you tell us
Up here she's unknown?
It's our mother, God bless us!
It's Mrs. Malone
Whose havings were few
And whose holding was small
And whose heart was so big
It had room for us all."
Then Mrs. Malone
Of a sudden awoke,
She rubbed her two eyeballs
And anxiously spoke:
" Where am I, to goodness,
And what do I see?
My dears, let's turn back,
This ain't no place fer me!"
But Peter said, " Mother
Go in to the Throne.
There's room for another
One, Mrs. Malone."

Friends from Philadelphia – an excerpt by John Updike

There were a lot of cars at the liquor store, so John had to double-park the big Buick.

"That's close enough, close enough," Mr Lutz said. Don't get any closer, whoa!" He was out of the car before John could bring it to a complete stop. "You and Tessie wait here," he said.

"I'll go in for the liquor."

"Mr. Lutz. Say, Mr. Lutz," John called.

"Daddy," Thelma shouted.

Mr. Lutz returned. "What is it, boys and girls?" His tone, John noticed, was becoming reedy. He was probably getting hungry.

"Here's the money they gave me." John pulled out two wadded dollars from the change pocket of his dungarees. "My Mother said to get something inexpensive but nice".

"Inexpensive but nice?" Mr Lutz repeated.

"She said something about California Sherry."

"What did she say about it? To get it? Or not to?"

"I guess to get it."

"You guess." Mr. Lutz shoved himself away from the car and walked backward towards the store as he talked. "You and Tessie wait in the car. Don't go off somewhere. I'll be only one minute."

John leaned back in his seat and gracefully rested one hand at the top of the steering wheel.

"I like your Father."

"You don't know how he acts to Mother," Thelma said.

John studied the clean line under his wrist and thumb. He flexed his wrist and watched the neat little muscles move in his forearm. "You know what I need," he said. "A wristwatch."

"Oh Jan," Thelma said. Stop admiring your own hand. It's really disgusting."

A ghost of a smile flickered over his lips, but he let his strong, nervous fingers remain as they were. "I'd sell my soul for a drag right now."

"Daddy keeps a pack in the glove compartment," Thelma said. "I'd get them if my fingernails weren't so long."

"I'll get it open," John said. He did. They fished one cigarette out of the old pack of Old Golds they found and took alternate puffs. "Ah," John said, "that first drag of the day, clawing and scraping its way down your throat."

"Be on the lookout for Daddy. They hate my smoking."

"Thelma."

"Yes?" She stared deep into his eyes, her face half hidden in shadow.

"Don't pluck your eyebrows."

"I think it looks nice."

"It's like calling me 'Jan'" There was silence but not awkward.

"Get rid of the 'rette, Jan. Daddy just passed the window."

Being in the liquor store had put Mr.Lutz in a soberer mood. "Here you be, John," he said in a business-like way. He handed John a tall, velvet-red bottle. "Better let me drive. You drive like a veteran, but I know the short cuts."

"I can walk from your house, Mr. Lutz," John said, knowing Mr. Lutz would not let him walk.

"Thanks a lot for all you've done."

"I'll drive you up. People from Philadelphia can't be kept waiting. We can't make this young man walk a mile, now, can we Tessie?" Nobody knew what to say to this last remark, so they kept quiet all the way although several things were bothering John.

When the car stopped in front of his house, a country house but close to the road, he forced himself to ask, "Say, Mr. Lutz, I wonder if there was any change?"

"What? Oh, Goodness. I nearly forgot. You'll have your Daddy thinking I'm a crook." He reached into his pocket and without looking handed John a dollar, a quarter, and a penny.

"This seems like a lot," John said. The wine must be cheap, he thought. Maybe he should have let his mother call his father to pick it up, like she had wanted to.

"It's your change," Mr. Lutz said.

"Well, thanks an awful lot."

"Goodbye, now, my friend," Mr. Lutz said.

"So long." John slammed the door. "Goodbye Thelma. Don't forget what I told you." He winked.

The car pulled out, and John walked up the path. "Don't forget what I told you," he repeated to himself, winking. The bottle was cool and heavy in his hands. He glanced at the label; it read *Chateau Mouton- Rothschild 1937*.

Chosen and read by Simon Surtees