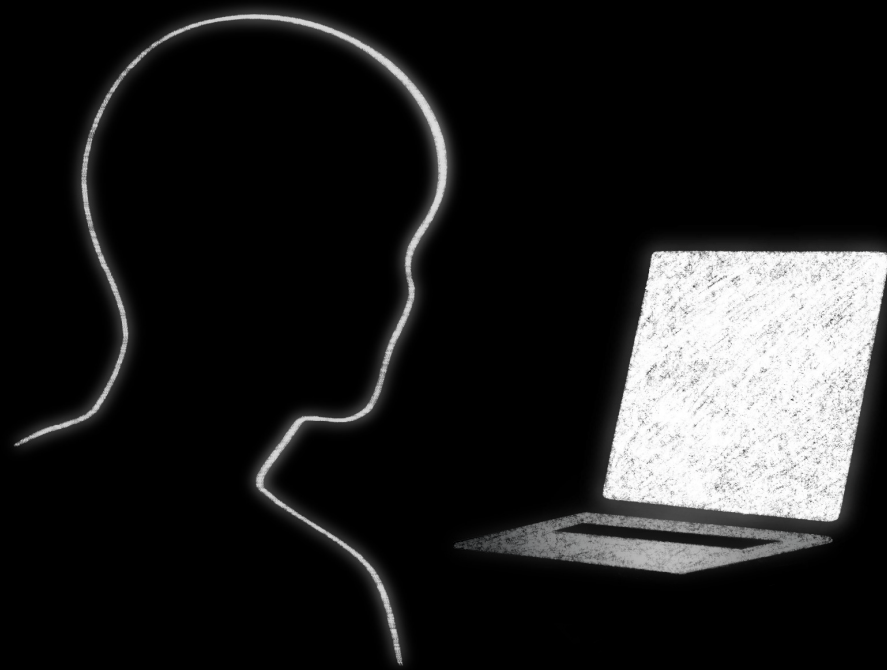


A Flicker of Light



Poems by the
Neuk ND Writers Group

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Another Strong Female Character

Helen Boden

We're talking about Fern Brady trying to tell her parents about her diagnosis and I'm fighting against my brain's refusal to dredge up some deadpan specifics from my Yorkshire dad (or my mum, with disproportionate side-helpings of sarcasm and over-compensatory vowels, in her case).

Long before the phrase became a cliché, dad's putdowns'd *live rent-free in my head*. He died eighteen years ago. He was a baker and dead-panning sort of seemed to go well with the battering of dough. Battening? Flattening?

John Glenday has an image in a poem called 'Grain' that's kept boomeranging back, *Tell me you've never stumbled upon a baker's corpse rising like dough?* I've been happier to let this one occupy my mind, because I actually have, ten days after his heart attack in the market-place. Once I could face it. Face him. Ophelia said *they say the owl was a baker's daughter*, too.

Deadpan, if you like (I mis-typed *dadpan*); face-palm, batten, flatten. And rise once more.

John Glenday:

<https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v29/n23/john-glenday/two-poems>

Quiet, Well-Behaved and Staring at Walls

Orna Zümrüt Demirel

I was finding small stories in the woodchip wallpaper,
Chalking out lines to prove that they were, in fact,
there.

Fixated, nose-to-surface,
In rugs and blankets too.
Fingers tracing and making
All manner of rhythms and routes.

Wholly unaware
That no one else seemed to notice -
The specks
And the defects
And the riddles in glass.

They chatter and natter
Then release bellowing laughs.

Soon back to the telly

Eyes returning comfortably to empty.

I still dream of those patterns;
The ones that I wandered through
So often, when small.

Now I practice new outlines,
Faintly - just in draft,
Upon each of those stories
To prove that I was there too.

I know this may seem strange
And I'm aware it's early mourn,

But really, I just had to ask...

If you truly had to think about it,

Did you notice me there

In that room?

Better still,

After all this time,

Can you remember my laugh?

Boundaries

Alison Murray

Bring to the table

Only what

You can afford to give.

There is no shame

In saying, 'No'.

Setting clear boundaries.

If others demand more,

Stand your ground.

You know your limits.

They may not like you,
But will come to respect
Who you are.

Being liked
Is never the same
As being accepted.

Claim your right
To be true and authentic.
Just be you!

Witness

Alison Murray

They don't see me as equal.

I am alien, foreign, suspicious.

Not like them at all.

Not worthy of their patience.

Not allowed their attention.

Sidelined, sideswiped,

A mere ghost image in their world.

When I dare to speak,

My words clang at their feet,

Trampled with disdain and cruelty.

The visibly invisible.

A cold reminder of what they are not.

A sub-human entity with no place,

No worth, no value,

No identity.

The right people do stick

Sometimes like gum to the bottom of my shoe.

They may not, at first glance, appear complementary.

But, in time, become my confidantes.

A Flicker of Light

Rebecca Teulon-Rose

There is nothing cinematic
or dramatic
about this moment –

only awareness
and truth.

A reset
from doing
to being.

A reorientation
from automation
to intention.

There is nothing ambitious
or monumental
about this moment –

only attentiveness
and acceptance.

A solace
in seeing the sunrise of self
spill over the horizon

and a contentment
in feeling each beam of light
fill me deeply, humbly

honestly.

Piseag

Maureen Johnstone

Tiny spark.

Wild caught.

The smallest packet of enormous bravery
And Spirit, undiminished
by compromising through hard won trust.

Fiery, fierce little independent heart
Learning, to love
whilst so expertly eliciting it in return.

Tiny spark.

Snuffed out.

My world an unfathomably barren landscape
Of grief, thundering
through my empty, screaming heart.

Little paw on my lips was real

Purposeful, definite.

Cannot be reduced to ethereal memory.

Tiny spark.

Atoms dispersed.

Fractals of authentic, unabbreviated love

Shared, eternally

in this finite, closed-system multiverse.

Honoured to have existed in my atomic totality

Simultaneously, with hers

and perhaps entangle in some quantum future.

Tiny atoms.

Love fractals.

Triptych – On winter

Angela McG

I.

Icy rain needles my face

I see scarlet buds on tree branch ends

My knees are going numb under three layers

(one waterproof)

I lean forward into the wind like

those 'Warning, disabled' signs

sticks and all

The lines of the boats at the quay are clanging out their storm song

Suddenly I think to look up

and there is Cormorant flying over our heads

upriver

this Sunday morning

II.

I nest
at my desk
every day

A window-drape covers the gap in the hedge
shielding me from nosy passers-by
and one of the too-bright streetlights
There's a fluffy blanket on my chair
scarves ready to comfort my throat
gloves half-cut keeping my fingers warm
My piles of books surround me
The door is closed
with clear instructions on it
Here in my nest
I write
And rest

III.

When it is dark outside
we light candles
says the lovely woman from Sweden in the Zoom
How straightforward
Candles was all we needed
this Christmas
Just beautiful
and
What's wrong with the dark anyway?
In the dark,
roots grow
deeper
and wider
The oak is as big underground
as we can see above
Comfrey leaves rot into a black blanket
under which the mouse in the wall
stays alive
Soon
shiny green new shoots will peek out of it
The trees
stand black against the winter-pastel-sky
I can see their beautiful bones
All that is missing
is snow-light

NEUK

About Neuk Collective

This booklet brings together poems written by members of Neuk Collective's monthly neurodivergent writers' group.

Neuk Collective is a creative community for neurodivergent and disabled artists across Scotland, creating spaces for connection, creativity, and mutual support.

Find out more at
www.neukcollective.co.uk

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