

# All the Flowers

Apt613 Community Poetry Chapbook



Vol. 2 / June 2022



## Introduction

Tulips bloom, swiftly followed by lilacs and peonies. We inhale the sweet botanical smell and our lungs expand, exhaling a sense of hope. It's finally here and, at the same time, not just yet.

With humble hearts, we present the 2022 Apt613 Community Poetry Chapbook, with poems by esteemed published authors and first-time writers alike. These works explore thoughts about people, places, and things; love, loss, and the unfortunately famed unprecedented times.

The overarching theme of this collection is hope. It seems that with every passing moment, we need hope more than ever before. There can never be enough, can there?

With gratitude to our community,  
Apt613 Editors



## Keeping Hope Alive

Joseph Edwards

Never allow fear to win  
Never let uncertainty destroy your today  
Or tell you how your tomorrow will end  
Instead, look inside yourself  
You are sufficient  
After all, hope lives inside you  
With arms wide open the world awaits your contribution  
Knowing you were built from indestructible DNA  
Caverns of strength still flow throughout your veins  
The innermost parts of your legs are columns of steel  
Upholding an economy of goodwill  
A crown of grace compliments your countenance  
Your chest is still encased in a shield called favour  
Fret not, the dream is about to be realized  
Perched atop destiny's roof is your future  
Its rising is sure like the temperature in summer  
Giving warmth and comfort to all those around  
Yesterday you were cast down  
Today you have risen  
Risen to keep hope alive.

### **three small intimacies**

Glennys Egan

i.

the doctor watches me  
fight back a blink  
inches from my own face  
fingertip trying twice  
judiciously  
to defy my body's instinct

she shows me again  
how to hold the lid open  
and place the lens with the same hand

on the third try i succeed  
the posters on the wall  
return to focus and  
i can see in her eyes  
she's smiling

ii.

on the eve of another lockdown  
bright with wine and laughter  
a friend asks me to cut his hair  
in that dingy apartment bathroom  
thick with soap scum and  
existential dread

he removes his shirt  
bares his shoulders for me  
to hold steady with my hand

i draw the razor down his neck  
careful not to shear a stray curl  
or nick the delicate place  
behind his ears

iii.

my love sits each week  
with a young man on screen  
bent over a book  
labeled G.E.D.  
the boy's concentration is  
carved across his brow

i listen from the other room  
lover reads aloud  
patient and deliberate in his instruction

after each long pause  
he delivers an affirmation  
i feel tender toward them both

## **climb**

carlo a tayler

half-hearted  
and of two minds  
i try to teach  
these tired limbs  
to climb  
these steps  
one at a time  
towards the light



**When sorrow enters your life**    Doris Fiszler

bear the first blows  
like a boxer

but allow the tears to flow

rest in  
the lull before each round

shoulder grief and suffer pain  
the sparring bouts of life

but still respond with love

## After the Drought

Doris Fiszler

this is our earth—  
parched for love  
until rain streams over rocks

pools our streets  
filling the graves  
of those we lost

we praise the brooding clouds  
cup the first drops  
splashing our thirsty gardens

when rain continues into night  
it raises us higher, returns us  
to ourselves for brief moments  
we mount our thoughts  
on mobiles  
hang them in the wind

maps become topsails  
on vessels port to port  
festivities will prevail

## **The Visionary**

Lainie Towell

My grandmother  
She used to read her tea  
And drink up leaves  
Under a clairvoyant sky  
Summoning stories of hope  
Crisscrossed in the stars

My grandmother  
She used to borrow my eyes  
And hold one in her palm  
Cradled along her fate line  
The other in her imagination  
Until she could see  
Into the next century  
And vision a paper doll chain unfolding  
Leaving a meteor trail behind

My grandmother  
She knew dying was nothing to fear  
Individuals speeding through fragile time  
Lasted only one blink  
Then dilated into the universe  
To echo endless tones  
In an accordion song

## **My house**

Bianka Bercier

Since we were little girls  
We were always told  
To be paper thin  
We were asked to keep quiet  
So like papier mâché  
We folded into ourselves  
Until we were nothing  
Crumbled up  
And with puberty and tears  
We withered away

When you set my house on fire  
It's almost as if  
They handed you the matches  
Watched as it burned  
Blew on the flames  
To make it bigger  
You wanted it to burn down  
They wanted me to evaporate

But my house  
It is made of bricks  
It will never fall  
No matter how much  
You gaslight me

I'll use the ashes as paint  
To restore the parts of me  
You so desperately tried  
To melt away

Watch me rebuild  
The severed foundation you left me with  
Except this time I won't  
Ask men to build me back

Give me a hammer, give me some nails,  
I don't need an instruction manual  
I am strident, powerful  
Loud, proud  
Not obnoxious  
I am feminine, masculine  
Unique, special  
Not careless

You will see my house from space  
You will hear my voice  
Even if you're trying to drown me out  
I am thicker than water  
Stronger than steel  
And I am here

## EXPECTATION // GOOD REASON

gloria guns

there's very good reason to believe we'll get through this  
it's gonna get better  
it has to  
doesn't it

we've been through ice storms, tornadoes  
earthquakes and sinkholes  
terrorists, floods and power outages  
there's very good reason to believe we'll get through this

it's taking a toll that's harder than to admit  
it may seem never-ending, but we don't have to quit  
taking things day by day and bit by bit  
we may not be together, but we'll help each other with it

there's very good reason to believe we'll get through this  
it's gonna get better  
it has to  
doesn't it

파이팅!

## **elegy for a friend**

Amanda Earl

I'd been wandering the Farm Boy  
at Metcalfe and Lisgar  
holding a bunch of golden beets

by the stems, conjuring up recipes  
with sweet potatoes and red onions,  
thinking of the salads I could make

while walking my thirty minutes  
of cardio, taking care of myself  
savouring a new slant of light

in an azure sky that set  
my mind to travelling  
to scenes from one of your novels

a daffodil leaned forward  
in front of the brick wall  
of a church at Gloucester

and Kent robins were singing  
they continue to sing  
it doesn't seem to matter what happens

**Reconciliation, according  
to Aboriginals, First Nations,  
Inuit, and Métis**

Jhadiva Elliott

To reconcile is to seek forgiveness

Which is not an easy task

Especially in residential schools when we were young

You forced us to wear a mask

A mask that made us eat, speak, write, and dress like you

Without giving a thought about our own opinion

100 years, 100 years of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse  
have ruined us

Causing problems like intergenerational trauma when children  
don't know why their parents act a certain way

When those parents don't give their children the basics, such as  
love, and care and they do poorly in school or end up in jail

In some cases, they end up taken away

But we have heard Canada's apology for ruining our culture  
and race as a whole

Only giving us a glimpse of hope

But we still have a long way to go

With racism, with the missing and murdered women,  
with alcohol and addictions



And with living conditions, like in Attawapiskat for example  
Described as the fourth world, lower than the third world  
for crying out loud

With things such as these we cannot be proud

The Canadian government is making progress with trying  
to renew a relationship and to restore our culture, but it's  
not going so fast

We are Aboriginal, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in  
the land of Canada

And we wish for our original way of life to be brought  
back and to last

## Early Spring Snow

Jen Cox

The baby's giggles  
Bounce off early spring snow  
Rustle the pines  
Disturb the squirrels  
Jumping from their branches  
At the sound

The baby's joy  
Moves the cedar  
Who tilts her branches  
For a better listen

It stirs the insects in their underground  
Winter slumber  
Desperate to wake into  
The warmth of new laughter  
Calling them towards spring

"Trust; firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something."

That sounds fairly simple and straightforward.

But then why is the result of trusting so unpredictable?

Sometimes, it creates room for love and strength, and other times it leaves you feeling cornered.

Trust means opening yourself up,  
exposing you to the unknown.  
This can pay off for you tenfold,  
or it can leave you feeling even more alone.

It's a risk to trust another,  
after all, you can never truly know another person.  
They could turn out to be who you think they are,  
or they could turn out to be an entirely different version.

Surely it can't be all bad though,  
there must be some upsides to trust.  
Trusting allows room for vulnerability  
and can facilitate a connection that is meaningful and just.

Whether romantic, platonic, familial, or business oriented  
trust is an essential ingredient for any relationship to thrive.  
It creates a feeling of safety, improves communication, and  
promotes self-confidence.  
Without these things, the bond is unlikely to survive.

We often place the most importance on trusting others,  
but there is another vital piece that is often neglected.  
You can trust all the people in the world,  
but if you do not trust in yourself, at your core, something  
will feel disconnected.

To trust yourself means not judging yourself too harshly.  
It means to follow your intuition and listen to your gut.  
It means allowing yourself to take risks and make mistakes,  
even if the result is getting hurt or a door slamming shut.

Trusting yourself does not mean striving for perfection.  
Perfection is a mythical concept that does not exist.  
Some think that with achieving perfection comes protection,  
but this too is a delusion that needs to be dismissed.

Oftentimes, we love and trust others more than we do ourselves.  
We find it easier to have faith in another than in our own being.  
Yet with ourselves, we are overly critical and judgemental,  
seeing no value or importance in taking care of our own feelings.

There's no easy solution for this.  
There's no quick five step method for trusting yourself on Google.  
Expert advice make it sounds so easy —  
"Be compassionate towards yourself and stop seeking  
everyone else's approval."

The truth is, you might spend your whole life learning how to trust in yourself.

Each day will be a grind.

Some days you will find yourself spiralling into a tornado of low self-worth,  
others will have episodes of clarity, and you will think you've left those tornadoes behind.

Being a cognitive, emotional being has its ups and downs.

We are multi-dimensional and have the capacity to think and feel multiple things at one time.

You can trust another person while simultaneously questioning your judgement —  
the duality of this is all a part of the climb.

Life's journey is not linear.

You don't get to move around the board in an orderly fashion, collecting 200 dollars.

It's not a series of tasks to complete and check off a list, or something you can study for and pass with honors.

I don't have the answers,  
nor do I have any helpful advice.

If it were up to me, emotions would be left out of the equation entirely.

Without them, life feels much more predictable and precise.

Nothing is black and white, however,  
as much as I like to think or wish it so.  
It's messy, complicated, and at times, broken,  
and there is little about it that we can definitively know.

So the next time you find yourself questioning your choices  
or your value,  
or feeling regret, shame, or guilt,  
remember that that's a normal part of being human.  
Remember that no matter the damage, there is nothing within  
yourself that cannot be rebuilt.

Inside of me lives a tiny human.  
Patiently waiting to be born.  
It knows nothing yet of joy or pain,  
or what it's like to be an object of scorn.

I know this feeling well though.  
At times, it can consume my brain.  
Chasing away any flickering of light and hope,  
until only darkness and cold remain.

Even still, I am responsible for you.  
It's my job as your mother to love and protect.  
I already am taking this very seriously,  
and it's something I will spend my life trying to perfect.

People say I am smart and caring,  
that these things will make me a good mom.  
But they don't know how easy it is  
for me to get lost in the storm before the calm.

What am I supposed to protect you from?  
Books would say from as much hurt and pain I can foresee  
My biggest concern, however,  
is protecting you from something worse... me.

I can't trust my own thoughts  
They often turn on me on a dime.  
What kind of role model will I be to you?  
Won't I be guiding you into your own prison of  
darkness and grime?

How do I instill in you the ability to value yourself?  
Give you the tools to walk your own path?  
When at any moment, the darkness in my head threatens  
to spill out  
and if it does, you will be engulfed by its wrath.

Sometimes, I believe I will be a good mom.  
But even on those days, I feel apprehensive.  
This is the part of me that causes doubt in myself.  
To cope, I immediately go on the defensive.

Instead, I must try to remember  
"I don't have the answers, nor am I in control,  
it will be exactly as it is meant to be,  
it will unfold exactly as it is meant to unfold."

I must work really hard to keep this in mind  
because the contrary to this is so in my nature.  
I am trying to learn how to accept that I am a normal,  
messy, human,  
in hopes I can be that much greater.



I have no way of knowing the future.  
As much as my brain tries to convince me otherwise.  
All I am allowed to know is that every day is new  
and that just like the sun, every day, I must rise.

## **Dancing with Gord Downie**

Laura Lipson

The night after his first poetry reading  
From Coke Machine Glow  
It was supposed to be a bluesfest show  
Remember when Gord Downie  
Dedicated the Hip's song Poets to me?  
Knowing that he read my Paper Emotions  
Was more than enough feedback for me  
He knew what it meant  
Doing Laura's show  
He wrote it on my ticket  
So that I could say so  
Remember dancing with Gord Downie and the boys  
All those times  
Dancing like a non stop rocking peace sign  
In another encounter with the man  
The man who walks amongst the stars  
Remember thanking him  
And kissing him on the cheek  
After a gig across the street  
From the Canadian museum of history  
When he sheepishly grinned  
Cheeks blushing  
Like his poppy  
Remember dancing in Ottawa  
With Gord Downie and the boys  
Dancing with Gord Downie

Can't write you out of my life  
No matter if I tried  
There's absolutely no way  
I could write you out  
You've played too big a part  
To make me who I am  
You're forever in my pages  
Wish you only well  
And stay a while longer  
So we may laugh together again  
Wish we were together more  
Because it's been too long now  
Way too long  
Wish we could sing another song  
Hope this won't last much longer  
My heart is hungry for your reaction  
When I see you again  
Let's have a big squeeze  
To show our love  
Then we'll sit and talk  
Of our dreams for tomorrow  
We can only hope we live longer  
Having fun times  
Feeling the wonder  
Of the magic  
Life brings us all  
Wishes do come true

When you ask for them  
So I'll ask to continue  
The times of my life  
Having you with me  
On this journey  
Talking about  
Dreams for tomorrow...



## **What is hope?**

Michelle Di Cintio

I walk slowly on the pot-marked path  
and the sky is grey and it's  
cold,  
the snow lurking in the ditches  
and there's a twinge in my ankle that's been there 2 days now  
My nose runs and the birds call  
softly  
wary of disturbing the creaking trees

There's no sun, and my glasses fog  
and I walk on anyway  
I walk slowly, and I stop to stare at the burrs that rise  
taller than the skeletal bushes,  
hooked and ready  
for the unsteady traveler

And I slush through yet  
another puddle, plodding home  
and nothing has changed at all,  
even in the slightest

The next day I grab my coat  
And set out  
On another walk.

## **Breathe**

Susan J. Atkinson

Three weeks into our new reality  
cars are idle, streets quiet.

From my brown couch  
I watch the seasons shift.

Spring creeps on silent feet,  
we barricade behind our doors.

In the breath of morning  
I speak the sky.

Look for new words  
to describe blue and blush of sun.

Birds pirouette on rain-licked wires,  
shifting from foot to foot to find balance.

Black city crow circles bare branches  
buries its neck against wind.

Woodpecker rat-a-tats  
its beak between cracks

in the trunk of a Linden tree  
as a cardinal streaks

through the cedars  
adding its voice to the choir.

Laundry, forgotten on the line  
quivers madly for attention,

while in the kitchen two of my daughters  
bake banana bread with giant chocolate chips.

Beauty betwixt all the uncertainty of now,  
a reminder to breathe

breathe.

breathe.

breathe.



## **Kyiv Stands**

Joseph Edwards

The anxious skies watched with awe  
shaking in its boots  
As war pierced their sealed blue atmosphere  
Missiles of a misdirected tyrant reigns  
Flung recklessly towards unsuspecting civilian targets  
Fear grew like oak trees in every heart  
Breaking down both chambers of resistance  
The city of Kyiv now exposed to utter coldness  
Calamity has taken up residence  
Bringing no gifts of love this month  
Freedom is fenced in but unyielding  
Not an inch or square is for the taking  
Even when bombs twist our arms  
And tanks break our stubborn legs  
We will stand together unfazed  
Facing that mad raging bull  
The land repels gross forwardness  
Falling prey is not an option  
Because unseen hands are holding us  
Whatever happens Kyiv stands.

## Untitled

Morag Elizabeth Humble

Hope is a crocus  
pushing up from last year's thatch  
in early springtime.

## HOPE

Morag Elizabeth Humble

Hope lives  
in shadow and in light,  
in the arms of absent friends,  
in masked smiles of strangers,  
in birdsong and barking dogs,  
and fireflies in the dark.  
Like tiny spring flowers  
that carpet the field,  
Hope blooms where we let it,  
and turns its face to the sun  
whose orange evening robes  
are a promise of return  
tomorrow.

I

The cool, winter wind kisses your face  
while our feet break into the icy snow below,  
treading to new places.

The rests and reading nooks serve as the days' epilogues;  
in the stove come the crackles and pops of the fire-logs  
as the smoky oaks caress their way into our hair and skin  
so that for days after, still they live within,  
stroking our senses and stoking the memories,  
bundling, bundling, bundling warm thoughts of you and me.

II

The tulips bloom through newly thawed earth,  
longing for lovers' gazes and girths;  
and the morning dew glides down sepals and petals  
wetting soil and ending the seasonal solitudes shared by all.  
The sun shines upon the variety of their colours  
evoking renewed beauty before the commitments of summer.  
The tourists and locals fulfil the longing glee  
belonging, belonging, belonging within you and me.

III

When the hot, humid summer finally comes  
And Luanne has laid for hours soaking up the sun,  
the smell of her fur makes your eyes glisten  
to the thought of the approaching season of campfires  
and tenting

when friends share stories and swim in refreshing waters  
naked, draped with nothing but their comfort in each other.  
The sunflower seeds will fall and repeat,  
nursing, nursing, nursing growth within the We.

#### IV

The nursing climaxes into a canvas of chlorophyll leaves;  
colours ensconcing our realities, but birthed from our dreams.  
We imagine a suite of possibilities like out of a children's book;  
I think of my grandfather who'd have loved to add these trees  
to his sketchbook;  
But, most importantly, we remember that seasons always change  
yet stay the same  
and it's with the loved ones of then, now, and later who remain  
that makes life count and worthy of repeat,  
sharing, sharing, sharing experiences with you and me.

Even when we were still just friends  
And I couldn't breathe the same air or touch your hand,  
there was a part of me that would know  
that my heart would be there to help the sunflower grow.  
I celebrate the changing seasons with you,  
the We before and the We anew.

## **To Be Alive In This Moment**

Andrew Kellie

I can breathe, all of a sudden  
And when I do  
When I bring the world into me  
Colour returns everywhere

Under this pink-purple sky  
With its lofty brushstrokes still drying  
The words on the page of my book  
Dance behind my eyes

I walk home from the park  
Light, weightless even  
Fluid flowing through the warm air  
Summer perfection cycles past in loose clothes  
A bandage on their arm

And when the neighbours call to me  
Drunk on the balcony  
Celebrating about their vaccines  
— like winning the lottery, they say —  
I am overcome with love for us all  
So resilient, are we  
So strong

And from where I am  
In the center of my world  
To be alive in this moment  
Is so welcome

And what a welcome change that is

## Still

Jessica Smith

I will spend my days here  
looking for cracks in the concrete  
searching for what's alive  
still



## **We are home again**

David G. Jones

In a dream of anticipation they left the nightmare of  
a ruined economy.

Looking back more than ahead, they made their way to Liverpool  
and the ocean.

Ships, loaded with coal miners and the desperate, too afraid  
to be afraid,  
they faced greater unknowns than ever underground.

The agony of that journey o'er weeks and weeks did not fade  
through thousands of miles travelled over land and water.  
They had left behind family and fellowship, culture and history.  
Their wives, mates and friends struggled on. With little  
or nothing.

In this land that seemed just carved out of Mother Earth,  
they found no comfort. There were no songs. And no solace.  
Clutched letters were read, again and again.  
But they were nurtured. Work gave them worth. And strength.

A day came when they were able to bring their families over.  
The veil of tears on leaving was mere mist to the flood at reunion.  
Then came new friends. What was strange became a new  
way of life.  
Yet in old suits and new suits, there still ran threads of Wales.

In time, they returned to see what they had left. But it was not to be found.

From tattered and battered lands had emerged a land they did not know.

They found green valleys where there had been endless wasteland.

There was, again, music in the hills. Wales could be home to them again.



## **because hope is a four-letter word**

Rob Thomas

hope is a concrete turkey  
hope is a library of dreams  
hope is every book never read  
and ever written  
hope is a four-letter word

hope is the mask you wear  
for your neighbour  
and the lie you covet for yourself  
hope is what's served when the gruel gets thin  
hope is a four-letter word

hope is the lies we sing for our children  
it's the scream from the very edge  
of the edge  
hope is the madness of love and fear  
it's what we get instead of peace

I pray for this world, without hope  
because hope is a four-letter word

## **The first draft**

Lana Crossman

The rake tines lift  
layers of leaves that fell  
and festered, froze,  
melted sludge-brown,  
and molded. A slick plaster —  
and underneath grows  
an itch.

Peel back the skin  
with care. A tendril shoots  
translucent as a tear

It's a start.

### Three Haikus

Bruce Burwell

We start big projects  
Knowing that our time is short  
Better than despair

Once we are all gone  
The trees may return, in time  
Wish I could see that

I expect that love  
Will triumph over darkness  
Or at least, I hope

circle the block and  
dust off the covers of our  
forgotten stories. my coffee stains  
the edge of the page as if to  
say that even stillness  
leaves a trace.

I sit in the grass and feel  
it grow  
and wither  
and grow again.

the trees do not mourn us  
for they have seen the  
battleships dance on the  
canal and rust on the  
horizon. they will tell stories  
of our best laid plans.

a terrible beauty is born  
with a no visitors sign taped  
to the wall. no hand to  
hold or heart to swell.

together, bound by grief as strings  
on a lyre. so we nurture it like a  
beloved friend. sing it hushed  
lullabies and set aside 10% of  
our fears per month to keep it  
comfortable in old age.

for there is nothing as ancient as  
sorrow. no hope as full as a  
half-remembered loss. a promise  
to a past life.  
in this we will be eternal.



## Looking for Shooting Stars

Gita Baack

You shouldn't look  
For shooting stars

You have them don't you?

Yes, but you shouldn't look for them

He is afraid I will  
Be disappointed

And then it burst across the sky  
That shooting star  
It streaked past  
As if to say  
Don't fear disappointments  
Dare to hope and anticipate  
I'm here.

**Peace Doesn't Cost Anything**      Gita Baack

Peace doesn't cost anything

It just needs

Good humour

And a round table

## Sanctuary

Susan J. Atkinson

a near-naked moon

swaddled only in clouds

dangles from

a black sky

while

rain punches

pearl-white fists

against a glass ceiling

we look

for a new sanctuary

a word

to brace you in these moments

we no longer understand.





