

BRISTOL ARGONAUTICA

An extract

By Saikat Ahamed

AFX 1 – house lights down

VIDEO 1 – COUNTDOWN

During video, Saikat will appear at one of the balcony doors on first floor (video will continue to play during first poem – New Years Eve and will finish during second poem, The View From Here)

AFX 2 - may require Juliet (will confirm during tech) – when Saikat opens balcony door

A brand new year
A brand new start
A brand new diary
Going to fill that diary, going to fill my heart,
Going to fill my heart
With hopes and aspirations
I'm talking relationships, weddings,
Jobs, graduations.
Graduations and celebrations
Celebrations a plenty
This is the year for perfect vision
This is twenty twenty!
Hoo wee!
It's gonna be
Something special
A sight to see!
Every year has that promise
That latent potential to amaze
But I can feel in my bones
And I know I'm not alone
Twenty twenty is going to be an unforgettable 366 days!
Twenty twenty here we go!
Twenty twenty, what have you got to show?
It's midnight! It's January the 1st!
Twenty twenty give me your best; hell, do your worst!

Saikat will close balcony door and proceed down to raised level in foyer – the video is still playing. He will stop on stage level to watch video for a few seconds before taking position at front of raised area. Will need either spotlight or lit area along the front of the stage. The video continues to play behind him until its' conclusion

LFX 3 – Spotlight along with low level general wash at front

That was January.
It's now September, but fuck it, Happy New Year
While we're at it, let me tell you about the view from here
There's light in my eyes
So all I see is darkness
But maybe that darkness
Is just where the art is
Darkness where we have the chance to illuminate
Elucidate
Maybe even educate
Please don't think I'm being high-minded or acting the snob
It's just as an artist, I consider it doing my job.

Early on in Lockdown around when it started
People in my echo chamber were crying, consider the artists.
And I do, I share your truths
But that's not how we rally the troops
We do our job, make ourselves indispensable
Make life without art so damn indefensible
I know it's easy to say when so many of our venues are going under
But art has the power to both heal and teach but also bring thunder

And thunder's what needed, after the storm we've been enduring
And I'm not just talking about the virus that's needs curing.
Don't get me wrong, the virus is scary
But I'm more put out by sections of society that are uncaring.
As ever the most vulnerable have born the worst of this.
They way they've been treated, someone should be cursed for this.

Front line workers, we've given them the Thursday clap
But let's be honest, they could have done with more than that, when they were
under attack
The homeless, the poor, the disenfranchised
These are the people we should sing for, these are our allies.

What a calamity you are twenty twenty
When sorrows they come not single spies but in battalions
And we've had battalions a plenty
We've had an armada, we've had a fleet
And my anxiety tells me the year's not complete.

Where was I? the view from here
Doing our job, the new career

We look at the world and where we see shit
We raise a noise, bang a drum, we challenge the shit out of it
Matt Hancock whatever happened with all that PPE
Boris, how many SAGE meetings did you miss, was it two or three?
Or four or maybe more?
You climb on a stage and you shout it.
And if that's not your way do an experimental dance about it.
We do our job, we call out hypocrisy
That's the reason the Muse gave us artistry.

What we've lived through has to be recorded
Not just the science and the politics, but the personal, the stories,
The stuff to be criticised and the stuff to be lauded.
This year has been a kick in the teeth
So I want to make sense of it at the very least,
I want to feel more certain, not give into fear
Those are a few of my concerns with the view from here.

Like others my plans were instantly decimated
All notion of control well and truly obliterated.
All work – gone
My filming. My trip to Hong Kong
And as some you may know, my work defines who I am
That's an issue I've had throughout my life's span
Suddenly I'm at home, listless, restless, nervous.
Strange feelings because I've always considered myself impervious.

I find myself doodling like I did as a kid
Playing with Lego, as I regress to my id.
And writing poetry.

Writing poetry as I did as a teenager
But this time it was a lifeline, a game changer
A way of expressing my frustration and anger
Before I got poisoned by my festering rancour.

Writing poetry came as a surprise
Gave me purpose when I had none
Opened my eyes
To a new possibility

As I tried to make sense of our new reality

The view from here is one of searching
Of trying to understand the constant lurching
From one rule to the next, each unfathomable guideline
It seems the space between regulation
And incapacitation
Is a fine line.

Fears about accidental contamination
Make the view from here is one of isolation
But it's hard being on your own
Feeling alone
And missing your friends
This has to end.

And it will
It has to.
And one day, I'll look out on a different view

Not you down there, and me keeping distance
Because that's not really living, that's just existence.

The view from here.
I can almost touch you if I reach out
But I'm not allowed to so instead I'll speak out
I'll speak out into the darkness, across the divide
And pour out my art from my deepest inside.

From my inside, going to build my hopes,
Going to challenge my fear.
That's the aim.
That's the view.
The view from here

Saikat talks a little about idea behind Bristol Argonautica and then explains about Calliope (unscripted)

CUE: This is the Invocation to the Muse

VIDEO 2 – INVOCATION TO THE MUSE

After video, Saikat will explain about filming for a couple of days, challenges etc... (unscripted)

CUE: This is a potential opening for Bristol Argonautica

VIDEO 3 – RAISE YOUR EYES

Saikat will briefly talk about how Argonautica will look and who the characters may be including delivery driver.

CUE: This is our Winged Hero

VIDEO 4 – WINGED HERO

Like shafts of light from yonder cloud
Emerge the Boreads, strong and proud
Strong and proud yet full of scorn
Looking down on others is so easy when your natural state is airborne.
Calais and Zethes will not descend
Until the Harpies have reached their bloody end.
Jason chose them for just this reason,
Sons of the North Wind, children of the darkest season.
Speed is their gift
Speed and the power to lift
Up and away into the stratosphere
While mere mortals look up in fear
Whilst down below, Phineas prostrates with humility
And the brothers revelling in their divinity
Contemplate the ground in its clod-like banality
Such is the world view for those touched by immortality.

But such is not the case for our first Bristol Argonaut,
Hastily pouring his coffee into three separate flasks lest later his thirst has caught him short
Not just his thirst, also his fatigue
During the day, there's barely a moment of rest, no reprieve
But he is as ever the optimist.
When life gives you lemons, flavour life with a citrus twist.

Ali sallies forth as if his heels have wings
Out before the January sun has kissed the city
With all the warmth that each dawn brings
This city in the southwest
That daily provides a new test
A test of his endurance, a test of his resolve
A conundrum of time and space that seems impossible to solve
Never enough time, each second accounted for in his rota
And the space for his allotted van never goes according to plan,
Makes it hard to fill his quota.
Narrow streets and narrow minds

Parking tickets and speeding fines,
As the morning darkness wraps around him and the empty roads seem a bliss
Ali smiles
As he clocks up his miles
Why can't Bristol always be like this?

First stop of the day at an industrial estate out of town
There to pick up his van, used to cart the deliveries around.
You don't always get the same vehicle, it's just not how it works
So there is a familiarisation for a few seconds as you work out all its quirks
The gear stick that's a little stiff
The hazard lights that are temperamental
But it's the smell of diesel, as always, that gets him
Makes our delivery driver grow sentimental
Remembering a time when he was the package
He was the package, with others getting carted
Snap out of it Ali!
You need to hustle, get the day well and truly started.

Driving the van to the depot, the inky sky begins to seep
Like watercolour on porous paper as if the heavens are about to weep.
But they do not.
They just blot.
The clouds remain thick.
Almost stoic.

At the depot Ali's orders for the day are waiting, stacked in a cardboard pile,
Ali grits his teeth, begins, this might take a while
A while he doesn't have, loading the van,
Scanning each item, making a plan
The order for the day's deliveries is already preordained
There's no room for freethinking as was once explained
On his first day in the job, taking him to one side
The foreman told him, "It's not about being clever or your ingenuity
It's just about getting the packages delivered on time".
But what did that portly man know of Ali's past, his past in the dust filled dark?
Ingenuity was something he was born into, a necessity from his life in Iraq.

The boxes like a giant game of Tetris are loaded on the van
The itinerary's been read, the day has now a plan
A plan, a purpose, a methodological mapped out mission
Bismillah. Ali's ready and softly turns the ignition

First stop of the day,
An old townhouse in the heart of Clifton
By Brunel's bridge, three storeys, obviously no lift and
As ever, Ali's delivery is right at the top
Heaving the box through endless flights that never seem to stop
Your name? thank you. It's pretty heavy, the stairs were quite a mission
What's in it? Greek Myths you say? Each a first edition?
Well enjoy your tales of Minotaurs
Me I'm left with minor sores,
But it's all part of the job, it's how I get paid
When life tastes bitter, mother used to say, just make lemonade.

Next on to Park Street, where the parking wardens seem to lurk
Ready to pounce on unsuspecting grafters just trying to do their work
One has to be vigilant, be sure the coast is clear
The company don't cover tickets and getting a ticket is Ali's daily fear
His profit margin won't cover it, you see, insufficient funds
Ali's not rolling in it, it's what's known as being on the bottom rung

Not that he's complaining, the glass is always half full
Not that anyone ever told him his particular glass would be so small
But he's grateful really to have anything in his small glass at all

Next Ali delivers dumbbells to Hotwells
A duck feather eiderdown to the other side of Totterdown
Tennis balls to St Pauls
And a sheet of four hundred stickers, glow in the dark
To a day care centre in Sneyd Park
Time for his mid-morning moment, a sip of his coffee
Bitter yet sweet, the first of his three
As he looks over the Gorge and the Bristol Skyline
The next delivery is looming, but this coffee, this coffee is my time.
He flicks on the radio and it pumps out some warbling voice
He turns the dial with the briefest smile
During my time, it's my choice
A reporter talks protests, the news is on
Clashes against riot gear in the heart of Hong Kong
Ali is caught with the very first word.
Protests. Protests always pique his interest.
The unheard just trying, against all odds, to be heard.

He recalls his past protesting on Iraqi soil
And then how the West turned up to set them free, yet seemed to leave with oil

Yes, that statue was toppled as the world gleefully looked on
Praise be to Allah and the USA, Old Saddam is gone.
Old Saddam, yet some things never change in war,
The West they came
And apportioned blame
But once gone, Ali thought
“Well now, what was that all for?”

The clouds give a mournful rumble
And slowly surely fat droplets begin to tumble.
Tap-tap on the windscreen as Ali drains his drink
The next deliveries in leafy Henleaze curtail his time to think.

Back then
Way back when
The Amazons were a war-like clan
A female tribe imbued with female pride
Who bowed to none called man
These were the Hellenic suffragettes of which the poets sing
Nowadays
Aside from the river, that sacred life-giver
Amazon means one thing.

The world’s largest shop from the comfort of your home
No need to leave your house to browse
To window shop or roam
No need to speak to your fellow humans
There’s no need or trick
You just ask it
To fill your basket
And buy with a simple click.

But how on earth can they make it so cheap
Whilst minimising all human contact
The answer’s here
As the van shifts gear
With Ali on his zero hour contract.

The next load delivered to Whiteladies Road
Then a ratchet drill just near Southville
And in winding Montpelier
A start-up kit of wines for a budding back street Sommelier.

And on the roads, drivers fray his nerves
With misleading signals and sudden swerves,
No awareness, no lane discipline, the lazy lack of staying within the lane you're in
And worse still, sometimes the tardiness is no one's fault
Like phantom traffic jams that make him halt
This is how his time slips away
With tiny frustrations that fill the day.

And on the radio, it's all aboard the Brexit train
With that right wing demagogue on the air again
Giving his knowledge, his valued insight,
His valued insight based on ignorance and spite

But our delivery driver remains upbeat
Imagining once more feathered wings upon his feet
How he would glide, how he would soar
Barely touching the ground going door to door,
Door to door and then some more!
Oh to be airborne, high above the war/

Not the war, the pastel coloured houses yonder
Sometimes Ali gets confused and his mind begins to wander
Remembering bombs and someone's scream
But it's sepia now, like in a dream
A dream that comes in starts, like a staccato reverie
And then it's gone
And he's moving on
To make the next delivery
The day's ok, all things considered
One by one items are delivered.

The recipients, when they're present,
Treat Ali with gratitude, indifference, resentment
When life gives you lemons, but you can't get past the zest
It's time to/
Well then you/
Ali's got nothing, you fill in the rest.

Time for his second drink
And as he drinks, he begins to think.
This country and its demonisation of the immigrant
Seems so counter-intuitive to him, so ignorant
If the British hate foreigners with some much fire

Why did they go visit so many when making the empire?
And all this nonsense about God save the Queen!
God save the Queen? Seriously? Well I mean/
Why God Save the Queen, is she under attack?
God should have saved Ali's family back in Iraq
But we didn't need God, it's just as well,
It would have been strange seeing God, sifting through hell.
Besides we had the US of A, the US of A and their lapdog, the UK
And didn't they do such a bang up job, back in the day?

The rain has cleared and once more the sun is shining
And as Ali drives he seeks a silver lining

Through all the bombs, the war, the fear
Ali made it.
He made it here.

Bristol, his haven, his blessed journey's end
His sacred spot of solitude
A welcoming embrace, his friend,
His friend even as the day winds towards its inevitable end.

The final delivery on his list remains
A tiny package out of the city, down winding lanes
And true to form, the skies above have turned again.

This time, the colour of petrol
Cobalt blue with greyish metal

A picture postcard cottage like out of a fairy tale by Grimm
Ali thinks one day, if I really save, who knows?
A cottage would really suit him.

His fingers have callouses
His shoulders are aching
High above him
It feels as if the clouds are breaking

He rings the bell and waits. No one's in.
An absent delivery, it's nothing new to him
He leaves a note, the parcel's behind the bin.

Walking to the van, Ali senses something strange

Then a moment later, the wind begins to change
The sense, this tingle, this premonition of thunder
He's had it before and it's always right
And it makes him wonder
Is there something more coming his way
These dark thoughts always come to him at the end of the day.

What happened to lemons, you melancholy man?
Lemons make you bitter and he needs to return the van.

He has his final coffee, it's cold but still just drinkable.
It's had all day
To get that way
That's the inevitability of the unthinkable.

He turns on the radio and now they're talking about a kind of flu
A kind of flue that's kind of new.
He's tired of Brexit, of protests, of endless bad news
This is his time, he's made his deliveries, he gets to choose.

He turns over the radio to a lighter sound
If there's joy in this world, it's got to be found
Ali's done with maudlin sorrow
Today was pretty much like yesterday
As may be tomorrow

But when life gives you lemons
You make a lemon dish
It's not just a hope, it's a fervent heart felt wish
And a wish is a plan of how you want the world to be
His coffee's done,
Time to run
He quietly turns the key.

Then Saikat introduces actor character (unscripted)

CUE: This chapter is called Orpheus

VIDEO 5 – ORPHEUS

Find your light darling; find your light
When the curtain rises and the audience subside to a low hush
When the heart starts to tum-tum like a big timpani drum and the blood begins to
rush
Find your light, the light that's right
A low buzz in the ears, lines locked away ready to break free
Scenes rehearsed, the curtain call practiced to a tee
The character carefully grafted upon your skin
Both the look and the feel but also the truth within
All that you worked for, its culmination
The sacrifices made, all in preparation
For now, this moment, this first night
And through it all, be sure, stand tall
But most of all, find your light.

Your light
The spot upon the stage designated for you
Just the right intensity, a carefully chosen hue
Your starting point, your pulpit where your art will finally cut loose
Our theatrical Argonaut, our thespian, our modern day Orpheus.

What a show-off as a child, always demanding our attention
Loved to sing and dance and act and also, did I fail to mention
So precocious, constantly putting on her extravaganzas
Dressing up and showing off in neatly scribbled stanzas
A little *actorino* at such a tender age
Telling friends and family that her life would be the stage
The stage, the stage and also the silver screen
To play the princess and the pauper and everything in between
The child, she grows but as she grows, the child, she still believes
In the dreams, she has faith, the hunger never leaves
The hunger, the thirst, the constant burning desire
To be a star, to light up the stage with her brilliance, with her fire

And sometimes when she's in a lonely place
She imagines the actor's mask upon her face
The one that's full of joy, Comedy, presenting its shining smile

And in the mirror, staring back at her, it's counterpart all the while
Silent
But present.
Two masks side by side,
One to show, one to hide.

School plays, always the lead, the only one taking it seriously
While others muck about and take the mic, she seethes furiously
Don't they know, can't they see, can't they even feel
That rather than being artifice, the stage is where she feels most real
She comes alive with this supposed make believe
Which to her from the banality of reality is a theatrical reprieve
Her drama teacher sees in her a glimpse of what could have been
The path not taken, the forbidden adventure, the possibilities unseen.
And accordingly takes her under her wing
She can pass on all her knowledge, she can teach her everything.
Lesson one, voice is all
It must carry to the Gods from the very front stall
Words should be crisp and clear, muscular, robust
The playwright spent all that time writing dialogue, the audience hearing it is a must.
Vocal exercises will help with this
Blowing raspberries, the pouting kiss
The top of the teeth and the tip of the tongue
Using the diaphragm to work each lung
The words should fall like leaves in autumn
Free and easy like lotus blossom
Like warmth cascading from the summer sun
That is your voice, that is lesson one.

Lesson two, mind your spine
Your flexible friend, the thread divine,
Feel the space between each vertebra
Your spine the conductor, your body the orchestra
This is the way you change your shape
From Lady M to primal ape
Harness the power of transformation
Physicalising character creation
Your voice, your body are your instruments
The tools you've been given to implement
The truth required to serve the play
So begins your lessons but that's enough for today.
And it so goes class after class
And every class a new lesson to learn, a new test to pass

Until at last the class is the last
The teacher has done all that she can, the die is cast
And the child, the student, all expectations she has surpassed

Drama school offers are abound,
A glittering career, waiting to be found
But last lesson before you leave, if you don't mind it.
Miss? Your light. My light? Please be sure to find it.

Drama School! A brand new phase!
Away with childhood and childish school drama days
Time to get serious and face her fear
She's on her way to her chosen career
The Globe is beckoning, the West end, the RSC
She's going to be the star she was always meant to be.
But Drama School is not what she expected
For the first time, she feels uncertain, doubtful, disrespected
They shake you up and break you down
They pick your pieces up off the ground
And try to remould you into something blank
A theatrical commodity that one might bank
What's your type? What's your casting?
They want to package the actor in a way that's lasting
Are you an English Rose or a sexy temptress?
God forbid your type is unusual or in any way more adventurous
The Agents are coming to view your skills and looks
But mostly how you'll fit into place in their bustling books
Like a game of Tetris, you have to fit
Otherwise prospects are most likely shit
Do you know how many people have the same silly dream
Treading the boards, gracing the silver screen?
You might have played the lead in every school production
But so did everyone in this class completely without exception
Welcome to the cut and thrust
The ups and down, the breaks or bust
The agents come and they fill their gaps
While the students send out CVs and headshots like they're doing laps
Constant, constant and often without reply
Like shooting arrows into the night sky
And while she studies, three years slip by
And suddenly she's in the business in the blink of an eye.
And by in the business, that means waiting tables
Serving coffee, working at anything that enables

The dream to stay alive
The dream she dreams by night, after the nine to five
Occasionally her agent will call with an audition
(She secured an agent through sheer hard work and no small amount of wishing)
Darling, darling, you're perfect for this part
Just change your hair, don't smile too much and be the character from the start
Or a commercial casting for some product that really shouldn't exist
Give us cool and sexy darling but at the same time never been kissed
Frisky virgin out on the town on a wild and thrilling caper
Remind me what the product is? Oh that's right, extra soft triple ply toilet paper
Sacrifice goes hand in hand
With the decision to live your life in Dreamsville land
While other childhood friends go on holiday
And post their pictures of each sandy bay
Our actor works each possible shift
While living a life of meagre thrift
And saving each spare penny, of which there are not a lot,
To pay for grainy showreels and the costly headshot
And meeting family once in a while
They all laugh and reminisce and smile
About the little actorino of such a tender age
Making her shows in scribbled stanzas and how she was born to be on stage
And by the way have you tried TV?
You'd be great on Eastenders or maybe Casualty
You just need some luck, what is it they call it, your lucky break?
Of course we're proud of you! No, you didn't make a mistake
And they say these words, oh so kind, while their eyes look on in pity
And after every family get together our actor has a week of feeling just ever so
slightly shitty.
Find your light, these words drift back
Like a gentle recrimination or subtle bittersweet attack
Find your light she remembers,
And remembering her eyes they fill with tears
Hoping, trying, wishing has filled so many years

They always talk about the highs and lows
The triumph of treading the boards, of receiving awards
Along with the necessary woes
You see, the actor has to suffer, if true art is to be your goal
They make it sound so romantic while never costing out the toll.

Our actorino had an almost high
When a casting director thought her perfect for a new part on Sky

It would have been a massive opportunity without a doubt
Even if artistically it was nothing to write home about

After the audition, which she had aced
She waits for her agent to ring, all the time with the taste
Of triumph in her mouth.
She can feel her dreams, like tectonic plates, shifting, realigning,
At last some movement after so much frustration and silent pining

Maybe she should move, get a place closer to the studio
A bigger place
A bit more space
A place that can let her grow

This programme, casting directors will watch
Her auditions, her castings, should all move up a notch
No more random on-lookers or parts labelled by their occupation
She'll get to play emotional characters which is a different situation
She'll be known, she'll be a face
The kind of person that casters give the special embrace
You know the one, so European
A kiss either side and a cheeky lean in
And why not, they too will want to bask in her glory
This part will change the narrative, make a brand new story
The National, The Globe, The RSC
Shit. That's my agent calling for me/
This is it, what I've been waiting for
Unlocking the potential of what the future has in store.

Aha. Yes, Ok. So/
That's alright, thanks for letting me know.

In the end, they went for a name
And with ratings to think about, there's no one to blame
I mean what was I thinking? It's the cachet I lack.
Anyway, where were we? Your coffee? Is it white or black?

This is the life of the actor, the almost, the nearly
And the price of the almost costs them so dearly
The cost of losing out, after so long waited
Our actor has weeks of feeling deflated
No, not deflated, devastated.
This emotional upheaval cannot be overstated.

It's having your dreams snatched away
Snatched away in the space of a day
The space of a day? The length of call
Makes you wonder if you ever had those dreams at all.

And while she's feeling low, she can't get to sleep
She tried counting sheep
But the sheep didn't keep
They kept leaving her
Tutting and baaing, saying her performance was ok
But they weren't quite believing her

Then she remembers her flat mate, a dancer from Bologna
Purple beads in her matted hair who constantly battles insomnia
Battles insomnia and doesn't like to lose
She's away on a tour, a European cruise
She left a bottle of sleeping pills and our actor hasn't tried them yet
Now where would they be? Of course. The bathroom cabinet.

She takes a couple and slides into bed
Closes her eyes and enters her head
Her sheep are there, each with their prescribed number
As her mind grows woolly and she succumbs to her slumber

She sees a little actorino putting on plays
Putting on plays through a stippled haze
Whilst her family are there, her friends, even critics
And their rapturous applause is spontaneous, ecstatic

And in the morning she rouses herself up from bed
And her pillow is wet from all the tears that she's shed
Or maybe there not tears, maybe the pills meant she sweated.
But at least she is rested and for that she's indebted
And after a good night's sleep, the day has a new sheen
So obviously, inevitably, the pills become part of her nightly routine.

During the day she waits tables, brings people their cappuccino
And at night she reconnects with the lost little actorino
Chasing after her younger self through a sunlit dappled dreamscape
Here, there's release, unencumbered escape.

During the day she auditions, exhibiting her art
While daily she waits patiently for night-time to start

One mask for the day
And one for the night
Perhaps only in dreams can she find her light

And then one night,
After a week so relentless
She yearns for that sleep
That sleep, like a sweet caress
And rather than two of three or four
She wonders how many pills
How many more
To ease the pain
To make her feel whole again
Not two masks in opposition
So unthinking, she makes a decision

The bottle is emptied, she has her fill
And the sleep she encounters from each single pill
Is heavy
Like the sleep of the dead
And this is how her flat mate, back from her tour, finds her,
Prostrate on the bed

Nine, nine, nine, what's your emergency?
She's not breathing, send an ambulance urgently.

Rushed to St Thomas' A and E
Stomach pumped and then placed in a bed in recovery
She opens her eyes, the room feels foggy
Her mouth is dry, her mind is groggy

There before her a figure with a turban and beard
Trying to coax her out from all that she feared
He takes her hand, and drawing in close
Whispers the words that she needs the most.

Days later, her parents want her to come back home
She can hear them crying on the other end of the phone
But she is resilient
She tells them it was just an accident
It never should have occurred
It was just one of those things, a mishap, that's the right word.
Something for her to write in her long awaited memoir

She's not going to give up, having come so far.

What was it her teacher used to say?

Find your light

The light that's right.

Hoping, trying, wishing has filled so many years
That giving up has become the very greatest fear
It may be elusive, her shining light
But she has an audition tomorrow, a big one
So who knows maybe, just maybe she might/

She sits in the waiting area
Alongside carbon copies of herself
Like a factory of identikits
Each actress from the same shelf
The same shelf
The same look
The same chapter within the same book

Back when Spotlight did books
Now it's all online
She's getting nervous.
Don't get nervous, find your light.
All may be fine.

This is Central London, theatreland
A new play from a theatre great is here at hand
Something to make the critics sit up and listen
Like a golden fleece brought out to glisten
To dazzle the audience, to make them gasp
To make them feel alive at last
A play that has something to say
A play that will stay in the consciousness longer than just one day
Like Jonson said, to mix profit with pleasure
A theatrical event, at last, to treasure!
This could be a Doll's House or a Seagull or a Waiting for Godot
As she feels her Endgame closing in, this could be the chance to say no
No, no. I will not go quietly into the night
I will not, I will however find my light
I will shine that light and seize this chance
It's now or never, my final dance.

Our actorino has read the script
And with each line, her heart just skipped
The beats she marked she did the work
The prep is something she doesn't shirk
The role she's reading for, cleft her heart
This is her moment, this is her part.

In the waiting room, the receptionist listens to the radio
They're talking about a flu in China that starts with a nasty cough
I'm sorry, would you mind? I'm trying to concentrate.
And then the radio's off.

The job would open in the southwest in a historical pearl
At the oldest continually-operating theatre in the English speaking world
And then, all things being well, will transfer to the heart of the West End
She's pinching herself!
She shouldn't really be here but the casting director, truth be told, is her agents
friend

Er, yes, there you are, you're next.
No, no. Leave your bags, just bring your text.

A small room where the daylight seems to fade
In rooms such as these dreams are broken, dreams are made
He sits across the desk, like a wizened old sage
This monolith of knowledge, this elder of the stage
This director, this big deal, elicits just the right amount of fear
This kind of opportunity can make someone's career.

She breathes in shallow breaths like she's lost within the ocean
Trying to stay calm and collected, mastering her own emotion.

This she can do, this is her audition.
The director opens his mouth and spells out his vision

The part is for a woman her heart is almost broken,
Chasing unattainable dreams, dreams so oft unspoken
Clambering for the stars while her feet are made of lead
Looking at one last shot of glory before her childhood dreams are dead

Show us what you've got
Push beyond the dreams so youthful
Show us pain but then again

Just show us something truthful

Find your light.

The light that's right.

And she does, she shines in all her desperation

Showing what dreams are really made of when they've reached their full stagnation

Tears they flow

But they're not for show

And that truth he wanted, she gives him plenty

This she can do, this is her moment at the start of 2020.

It's as if the playwright words were written in tune with our actor's voice.

The part is hers, it's clear, the director has made his choice

Thank you for coming in, your agent and I will speak

You're aware, it's a tight turnaround, rehearsals begin next week?

You'll need to pack your bags

Find your digs

We'll see you on the Monday at the Bristol Old Vic

She leaves the audition, walking on air,

Gone are the dark thought, the worries, the care

This is going to change everything, make no mistake

Twenty twenty's going to be a special year

After years of graft, at last a shining shaft.

She's found her light, her light and her big break!

Next Saikat will talk about scientists and the political importance of science during this pandemic, he will briefly introduce Chris Whitty, Patrick Valance and Neil Ferguson (unscripted)

CUE: These are the Sons of Apollo

VIDEO 6 – SONS OF APOLLO

Idmon and Mopsus, sons of Apollo
Predicting the future and all that might follow
Cutting the entrails of selected creatures
Examining innards for remarkable features
This peculiar kind of blood has a special significance
This discoloured liver tells of heavenly providence
There is something in the swoop of that swallow
Or the shape of that tree, the depth of its hollow
We seek the truth where others are blind
Where others see chaos, answers we find
They warn Jason of dangers ahead
Of how to proceed, where not to tread
Way back then
Way back when
Great deeds to which Jason aspired
The sons of Apollo gave him the knowledge required
That was then
Today is now
A different world
A different how
To determine events yet unseen
Predictions are clinical, soothsaying's clean
Rather than examining entrails to make predictions of later
You hypothesise your theory, you extrapolate the data
The world that we're living in still seeks that unknown answer
A way to make sense of each inexplicable disaster

The sons of Apollo, though Apollo be gone, the sons, they still exist
But rather than an auger or soothsayer, they go by the moniker 'scientist'
While we no longer have a use for a prophet or a seer
Science has found its place as the world's chosen panacea

Science, in all its forms,
Astrophysics and astronomy

Calculus and trigonometry
Geoscience and geology
Physics and ecology
Functional biology
As well as down to the cellular level
Microscopic details where one's sure to find the devil
Chemistry and Logic
A modern alchemy and magic
Every kind of 'ology'
Where once they gave us augery
These are the descendants of the priest at the alter
That surety, that certainty, that cutting hand that does not falter

Behold the hubris of science
The arrogance of fact
When tragedies call
Heroes fall
Brought down by a Faustian pact

Our scientist sons of Apollo
They provide the government the science we follow,
The science? The legitimacy; that's the deal
But rather than demi-gods with aspects of deity
These mortal scientists prove human frailty
Their names; Chris, Patrick and Neil.

Chris, Chris, what have you found?
Your head in a bush, your knees on the ground
Clawing through flora, scraping through dirt
This isn't the behaviour the natives deserve.
You're an Englishman, well a boy, to be candid.
But you've been lost in the foliage since the day that you landed.
But Chris doesn't mind his parents' unease
As he's drawn closer and closer to these African leaves
The colour of them, the vibrancy too,
An intoxication like a heady perfume
A heady perfume - a heady - overcome
Quick call for his parents.
Quickly, now! Run!

In his dreams, shapes colours
Not like the British ferns, insipid and duller
Here the flora is so much stranger

At once exciting and thrilling and crawling with danger
Tiny creatures to make the skin burn
With venomous fangs, you won't find that in a fern
There is something making its way through his blood
A stowaway from his time in the mud
Something has invaded both his body and dreams
And just like that its flushed from his streams

Chris recovers after just a few hours
The herbal remedies they gave him full of curative powers.
His father is stern, his mother full of hysteria
Why bring your family to the edge of Nigeria
The edge of Nigeria for a family from Gloucester
She says this with all the calm she can muster
But what's done is done
And her eldest son is bitten by the bug,
A bug, he smiles, as his fever it eases
Bitten by a bug alright
Chris is in awe of diseases.

Diseases, plagues, gross infections
These are the subjects of his young fascination
And as Chris grows, so does his curiosity
With each and every pestilential malady
Taking delight
In each new parasite
A sense of euphoria
With a novel bacteria
It's not healthy to have such a hobby as this
But health is the prize for a boy such as Chris
If you understand the disease, you'll work out how it's cured
His progression to epidemiology from childish 'bugs' was thus ensured

Chris becomes a doctor (which was always going to be)
But maintains his interest in tropical diseases – it's good to have a speciality
Honing his knowledge, becoming ever more specific
Earning the reputation of the man who talks epidemic
If you know the symptoms, Chris will name the disease
With details of transmission, be it birds or bats or fleas
He'll recount for you the side effects, be it nausea or shortness of breath
Hyperventilation, pupil dilation, loss of appetite or death
Such an unrivalled knowledge of all known disease
All from playing in the mud in Africa, down on his knees

Professional recognition
Promotion after promotion
When Ebola breaks on the African coast
Chris is on hand with the thing he does most
Using his knowledge to stave off the spread
Isolation and containment to keep down the dead
Well done Chris, job well done
But don't stop now, here comes another one.
When Salisbury had a wave of very sick people
And it turned out to be Russians who'd come for the steeple
Chris was there with his expertise
To ascertain the truth behind this Soviet disease
Nice one Chris on that Salisbury affair
We didn't see that coming! It came from nowhere!
Chris is the man made for this disease-riddled age
The captain, the hero we need to head SAGE
SAGE; Scientific Advisory Group in Emergencies
The people you call when there's a need for some urgency
Who you gonna call when your throat grows tight
Or you've been retching and puking throughout the night
When there's blood in your stool or you're coughing up phlegm
Better call Scientific Advisory, better call SAGE, better use the acronym.
2019, Chris gets a new position
Chief Medical Officer for England, the pinnacle of his ambition
He has the ear of the government top brass
Talking public health and what rules should pass
What initiatives will work and what others should get ditched
Choosing between all competing ideas pitched
But for Chris there's no professional respite
One brooding thought keeps Chris up at night

In the depths of the darkness a sense of unease
Ebola and Salisbury, these things come in threes
And as 2020 emerges Chris expects some new disease.

Hogwash!
Balderdash!

I'm sorry Chris it's not very scientific
To believe in threats in threes, emerging like a hat trick
I'm sorry you are?
Chief Scientific Officer, you can call me/

Patrick loves dinosaurs
Fantastical creatures that seems to defy the laws
Of gravity, of nature.
Scientific understanding would eventually come much later
When no one was about and he was sure he was quite alone
His childhood excavations started, digging for a bone
A bone, a sign, something more
A triceratops horn or a raptor claw
A pterodactyl beak or a T-Rex tooth
Just a sign, a little proof
Despite the digging and his childhood goals
And a childhood garden full of childhood holes
He himself never did find that collagenous proof
But he learned the importance of proof when pursuing the truth.

So early notions of palaeontology
Made way for the more usual human biology
Dinosaurs sure are a fascinating lot
But human beings are still here, dinosaurs are not.
But what did survive from Patrick's youth
Was the desire to claw away and excavate the truth
And as he studies Science, then Medicine, then Surgery
There's an archaeological honing in of what he knows his path will be
Research. Uncovering the world
Seeing what we're made of once the veil has been unfurled
Research. To elucidate and enwise
To dare to be the pioneer peeking beyond the horizon.
Research, but where before Patrick was digging in the mud
His field of interest is endothelial and vascular. Patrick's searching in our blood.

His research is cutting edge, setting out to measure
The affects of lining on blood behaviour but also on blood pressure
Examining whether vessels demonstrate endothelium-dependent relaxation
Whether you understand the science it's enough to draw the attention
Of private drug firms, of a particular corporation
Who see in Patrick the required spirit of innovation
A valiant champion to herald a brand new day
New drugs for the next century and GSK will lead the way.
As head of drug discovery at GlaxoSmithKline
Patrick has found a place where his talents can really shine
New drugs on his watch for cancer, HIV and asthma
These are the archaeological finds when one is searching plasma.
He pulls together his business world with the academia he left behind

Making partnerships to see what new friends collaborating can find
And when he leaves GSK to move onto the next stage of his ambition
It's not business or back to school but rather a government position
March 2019, Chief Scientific Officer, Patrick has a shiny new post
To push research forward and pursue the truth, the thing he values most.
From his days digging for bones, truth has been his quest
And 2020 is as yet uncovered, Patrick will meet a brand new test.
Talking of meeting, an official greeting;
Chief Scientific Officer meet Chief Medical Officer
Patrick this is Chris, there's an issue, perhaps just minor
There's something happening overseas, something happening in China
It's not a bull or a tank but an infection in Wuhan
We need an idea of what might happen
Do you know someone with a new plan?

A new plan
A new man
Someone who can read the signs
Who reads the signs and then divines
Like a disease modeller, someone who has a feel for this
A feel for this?
We should get Neil for this.

Neil arise.
Awake from slumber under Cumbrian skies
And count the clouds that compromise
The bluest canvas above which heaven lies.

Mother speaks of heaven and enlightenment through religion
But to Neil, there's no doubt at all, God is a Mathematician
Looking at the intricate complexity of the natural world at work
The environmental equations, each numerical organism, each quirk,
Each random act that seems impossible to explain
The curve of a leaf, the flight of a swallow, the likelihood of rain
These all fall under the auspices of a creed most mathematic
But young Neil keeps this to himself, lest Mother should brand him a heretic.

He goes to Church every seventh day
And counts the organ pipes as they begin to play
The stained glass windows depicting saintly lives
He numbers the colours and then divides
The sum of God by the hours passed
Doing the numbers in his head until at last

The sermon spoken feels less grim
It's nothing personal God. Numbers just speak to him.

They speak to him and Neil he also speaks their language
The world makes sense to him wrapped in an arithmetical package
As he grows inch by inch, day by day and monthly
His love affair with numerical life also grows exponentially.
Looking at the world this gives Neil a sweet elation
Making all his worldly choices based on calculations
From theoretical physics, he studies mathematical biology
Slowly, surely, inextricably entering the world of epidemiology.

But when he shuts his eyes and spies the truth in nightly slumbers
Diseases aren't just random flare ups, he sees them all in numbers
He studies germ theory and the law of mass action
Working out how we take control of a disease's reproduction
With the theory of competing risks, one might predict what will happen
He sees the numbers within the germs, Neil he sees the pattern.

Numbers never lie, they have an incapacity for mistake
In 2001 Neil advises mass slaughter to curb the foot and mouth outbreak

He sees
He sees
The patterns of disease.

And during swine flu when others vacillated or even worse opposed
Neil, he checked the data and then called for schools to be quickly closed

He sees
He sees
The hidden matrices with ease

And in the Americas when things were getting bleaker
Neil extrapolated from all the numbers how to combat zika.

He sees
He sees
A blur, no.
Her
When he looks at her
Numbers fade, patterns blur.

What possible calculation
Will explain Neil's palpitation?

Calculus
Never felt so erogenous.

What disease is this
That prompts the desire to kiss?

They had met online through a well-known dating sight
Had decided that they should meet, meet and spend the night
Neil wasn't expecting to fall for her in some silly lover's tryst
Well versed as he was in the theory of competing risks
She was married but that didn't seem to matter
As Neil had looked at the triangle and mapped out all the patterns.
Her marital relationship allowed a special dispensation
So really no risk at all to Neil within this simple calculation?

Neil arise
Open your eyes.

Will this all add up or will you end up playing the fool?
Attraction (unlike subtraction) is not all maths, it adheres to a different rule.

Neil feels secure.
If love is a disease, she is the cure

While his numbers keep life predictable
Predictable, professional and reasonable
Seeing the mathematics within every new disease
Ensures the world will have a need for Neil and his specialist expertise.

He's just the man to map out a plan,
To see the pattern before it happens
Neil arise, it's your time
It's your time and yours alone

Talking numbers, Patrick, Chris
By any chance, do you have his?
Let's gets this Neil chap on the phone.

These are our scientists, between them thirteen degrees.
An encyclopaedic knowledge in battling disease

Modern augers, these new sons of Apollo
But will the science they speak lead the way to a brand new day
Or just provide a new way to swallow
The lies we're told
Much like those soothsayers in the myths of old?

Saikat will talk about NHS worker and also in particular people of colour. He will mention doctor who's death inspired this chapter (unscripted)

CUE: This chapter is named after the greatest of hero in Greek mythology

VIDEO 7 – HERACLES

O sing of Singh, the great lion, more A and E than,
The stalking beast Nemean
Up and down those corridors, patients' rounds and observations
Even handed with tacit resign, muted joy or sudden devastation
This warrior, this goliath, this paragon of all that is noble and fine
This key worker, this embattled doctor battling on the front line
This man of the five Ks, this grandfather of the department,
Understanding the difference between clinical knowledge and what the truest part of
the heart meant
When it told him to deal with the patients' needs with ease
This is the story of Singh, NHS Argonaut, Hippocratic Heracles.

Seventy years back at the tips of the furthest tendrils of the English
A little boy with a kara in the heart of Uttar Pradesh
Dreams of a world where sicknesses are freely treated
Where ones' health is not tied to wealth and coffers depleted
Sitting underneath the Ashoka Tree in his village by the lake
Wondering if the night will take his sister or will the fever break
While his childhood is blighted by sibling disease, poverty and pestilence
The boy with the top knot has only one wish, just one, to make a difference.

To make a difference is no small thing,
Perhaps for other men but this boy, this boy is a Singh.
A Singh from a long line of Singhs
With the heritage to match and all that that brings
A sense of duty, a sense of community
A desire to heal and bring a salving peace and unity
To those suffering, to those hurting within
In that moment a revelation, he should study medicine!
This is his Bhakti, his core devotion
He closes his eyes and pushes down the emotion,
Makes the promise, speaks the words to the night
The words that drift up to the constellations where they're embraced and held tight.
That night, that night,
The sister she dies
And little Singh, he cries.

But a promise has been made, words have been spoken
And with sister already lost, the oath will not be broken.
An oath of that kind is more powerful than any belief
Forged, as it is, in the molten heat of grief.

Medicine, the noble science
The courage to face ailments and accidents with knowledge and defiance,
The courage to penetrate the skin
To penetrate the skin and seek what lurks within
To search for the cause whilst treating the condition
But a life as a healer doesn't happen just through wishing
A plan must be made
A pathway must be laid
For that boy from Uttar Pradesh dreams are hard to contain
His desire to heal as strong and steadfast as the relentless monsoon rain
When your calling comes calling, your heart must rise to the bait
But the course of the bird that flies the nest is never ever straight
To dream unfathomable dreams and witness the hitherto unseen
A leap of faith as in all migration, to venture where one has never been
As so it was for Singh, no longer boy but not quite a man
Aboard a liner, papers in hand, heading to the motherland
The motherland, the motherland
The welcoming bosom of Albion, this Eng-er-land
This nation calling up our brothers and sisters of the colonies
You are most welcome, surely there must be a space for a would be Heracles?

Whoever told Singh that the UK would be like this
Not be a smiling embrace or a mother's kiss?
He studies to be a doctor in a land that's like a strange anatomy
Desperately shielding the childhood promise from each and every racist catastrophe
The motherland needs his skills, that much is assured
But his darkened skin, mysterious turban, foreign tongue, they're barely endured
Calling across the street, what's that on your head?
Big beard ain't it? What's your name, can I call you Mohammed?
By the Gurus, the English don't know the difference between Sikhism and Islam
This is just their ignorance, they mean no actual harm
And so it goes, stoicism, whatever life throws, he has shoulders to bear
A young man who already knows right and wrong and how to be just and fair
He studies remembering his sister lost
I will be a doctor, I will succeed, no matter the cost
Meanwhile words fly like migrating birds from home
Abba has gone
Carry on

Bebe has passed
Hold fast
A promise is like an oath to your shadow
If you break it, the light will always know
Somewhere near a lake the monsoon rain is falling
But for the medical student with the turban, a promise is softly calling
The life of the immigrant is one of sacrifice and chasing the elusive dream
Of swallowing the pain of being caught, caught in the world of the slipstream

Graduation! Singh, at last a doctor, the start of his clinical life
But sent from home this time not a letter, something better, a wife.
A wife? A spouse?
Next Singh will make a family to fill his empty house
And he does or rather they do
A family is created as they begin their journey new

First he takes a post
Up north and on the coast
Whitby Community Hospital not far from Whitby bay
His tiny children have the beach to occupy the day
And while they play in the sand
He begins to understand
That it's not the ailment that just needs his attention
But rather the patients who often fail to mention
The real affliction, the unseen addiction,
The fear of pain, of growing old, of turning senile
That they need someone to listen for just a while
And Singh becomes that sympathetic ear
That reassuring voice to calm the patient's fear
Whilst at the same time coming up with a diagnosis of what ails them
And with each patient he sees his sister and knows he mustn't fail them

Sure, some of his patients are less than grateful
To be treated by a brown doctor and their words are hateful
Their tone of voice full of recrimination
Each stare and glare an accusation
But Singh rolls with each daily challenge.
This is the way he's going to manage.
As he sees it, racism is an infection of the mind
Stopping people from thinking straight, making them sort of blind
Makes them cough up bile, in the form of ignorance
But Singh is a doctor and treats them with kindness
And that may just make all the difference.

O sing of Singh once a stranger in this land, an anomaly
And how he served his community and how he also made a family
The family at home, growing keeping the Punjabi culture alive
The family at work, colleagues where his medical passion can thrive

After a while, he and the family make a move
The children, upset to leave the seaside groove
His wife will miss the salty air that lingers on her mouth
But Singh's services are required elsewhere. The family's moving south.
South, to the capital, a position at St Thomas
There too, he can make a difference, he can keep his promise.

By Westminster Bridge, in the centre of London town
Over looking the glistening Thames, that's where St Thomas' can be found
A teaching hospital open to the public but also like a medical college
So Singh can treat his patients while passing on his knowledge.
His knowledge, his understanding, his experience and expertise
And the philosophy of treating the person first before one treats the disease.

Every morning he gets off on the other side of the river
So he can enjoy the sparkle on the water, the translucent dappled sliver
And he traverses the bridge, the reflection he inspects
And upon his inspection of his reflection, Singh recollects and reflects

He thinks back to the sea right by Whitby Bay
And years before that his childhood as if it were yesterday
He always needs to be near water, make no mistake
Singh may have grown but for all the years he's known
He's still that boy with the kara, sitting by the lake.

One particular evening Singh meets a patient in a sorry situation
A young would be actress who accidentally overdosed on medication
Accidentally.
She accidentally grew despondent, as her fading dreams accidentally made her sad
She accidentally took a few too many pills, did something she wished she never had.
Sometimes life's course is a strange accident
Singh spies her in her hospital bed, in her pitiful predicament.

Stomach's been pumped, fluids administered, the worst is past
Yet as Singh spies her he sees her sadness is holding on fast.

Her takes her hand, her frail fingers

Gives them a squeeze which seems to linger
And then travel up her arm and to her mind
She opens her eyes to his face, hirsute and kind

Life is for living.
But time is forgiving.

He stays with her throughout the night
And leaves her in the morning light.
But only when he's sure she'll be alright.

His patients they come and go
In an endless procession, a febrile flow
And listening and treating, doing what he does best
After a few more years, Singh looks west

Southwest to be precise
Looking for a quieter life where the air is clean and nice
Singh is a senior consultant now, in consultancy terms he's the lead
So when he's offered the top position he takes it
In a newly refurbished hospital called Southmead.

Southmead Hospital, in Westbury On-Trym
Singh feels home at last as Bristol welcomes him.

There after years of stalling
Singh at last finds his final calling
That childhood promise, that sense of urgency
It all makes sense as Singh heads up the Accident and Emergency

In A and E, Friday nights are the very worst
It's not just the inebriated, the shift seems to be cursed.
Everything that can go wrong seems to occur
As if the week long problems have the urge to splurge
But through the storm and the harried harm
Our Singh is a bringer of much needed calm
Up and down the corridors, stethoscope at hand
Keeping a promise alive, one made in another land
Night after day, shift after shift,
The days they merge, the months, they drift
While his children grow and his beard turns white as snow
All the time keeping his promise he made all those years ago
Those night time words, the constellation deal

To spend his life with one single aim, to heal, to heal, to heal.
And as he works, his children take partners of their own
Themselves no longer children but before his eyes fully grown,
He works but at the same time, keeps his family in its place
The centre of his heart, the smile upon his face
O sing of Singh, the family man, making yet more generations
O sing of Singh, grandfather of the ward, king of consultations
O sing of Singh, who kept his word and followed what his heart meant
All the way, to that long awaited day, the day of his retirement.

But what to do with all that time,
After a busy life spent in service sublime.
How to stave off ennui, sitting waiting
Waiting, contemplating, how aggravating!
But the pitter patter of tiny feet
Tiny feet make the world complete
Grandchildren! Singh's reward, his blessing,
Whether they're cuddling, kissing or simply messing
They are to him, the greatest medication
Two drops of joy, taken with laughter and a dose of sweet elation.
O sing of Singh, whose final days will all be blessed
As retirement in 2020, at last the boy by the lake can rest

Rest.
No time to.
All the rest is/
His story is not over.

Sometimes even the end of the tale has something new to bring
The year is 2020 and the world is not done with Singh

IMAGE 8 – BRISTOL ARGONAUTICA LOGO

Saikat will briefly wrap up and then one final poem

THE NEW NORMAL

Everyone's talking about the new normal
The new normal, like it's something rigid,
Something formal
This is how things are, moving ahead
But no-one's got a clue what it is,
It's just in people's head.
How about we lay it out
Say it out
Loud
Witnessed by a crowd,
Try to construct a new normal of which we can all be proud.

Ok. Here, we go.
A new normal manifesto.

Whenever required I will cover up with a mask, this I promise
But at the same time can we agree to uncover all the lies perpetuated in the name of
high office
It seems a little hypocritical of the ruling classes
To expect us all to change our tune while they carry on as before
With their traditional farces
Their pantomime of populist propaganda
Their division and derision of morals that perhaps are a little grander
Than the selfish notion of self-interest that we've got used to,
As a starter for a new normal, how does that strike you?

I will wash my hands at intermittent intervals
Because I know cleanliness in combatting the contagion has been proven to be
integral
Twenty seconds, happy birthday, keeping them spotless is a priority
But at the same time, how about cleaning out some of the bile that's long been
infecting our society?
I'm talking about the same bullshit that's been happening for over two thousand
years
People in power making us cower, sowing confusion and fears
Blaming it on immigrants or single mothers or young people or extinction rebellion
Or really anyone who doesn't tow the party line, or simply keep shtum and fall in
You're talking about eat out to help out as a nifty solution
And I'm talking about tearing it all down with long overdue revolution.

Sorry, sorry if I got carried away,
It's just I'm really hacked off at the way things are today.

New normal, right, maybe for the likes of you and me
But it's the same old same old as ever for the privileged powers that be.

I will keep my distance, the 2m plus, though to be honest it breaks my heart
You see I'm a tactile kind of person,
I've never required alone time, I'm not hard wired for keeping on my own time
Never really been after time apart.
But we do what we do to keep each other safe
And that's the point
It's not about me.
It's all about we.
While we are all distancing
Maybe can bridge the distance from top to bottom
The poorest in society have next to nothing while the top are getting richer
Seems kind of rotten
Especially when we're being told we're all in this together.
Yet another lie to keep us in our place forever.

This new normal, life after the covid-19 war,
It's got to be mean something actually new
Otherwise what the fuck's it all been for
The future is calling, so many possibilities are beckoning.
The New Normal and hopefully an almighty day of reckoning.
In the new normal, I want to stand on the right side of history,
I want to feel secure in my knowledge and in my pride
We will get there
And in the meantime, please take care.
Me, I'll see you on the other side.

LFX - BLACKOUT