



## Friendship Submissions For Scottish Book Trust 2025

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# Aberdeen ESOL Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Ali, Andrea, Janusz, Jurgita, Larysa, Maryna, Sahel, Yevheniia*

## My Friend

The memory remains  
When you are far away  
You are always on my mind  
Our friendship never fades  
You were close in dark times  
You were my strength  
I can't believe you are gone  
Your voice sounds in my heart  
I want to see you soon  
I need you  
Though there are many stormy oceans between us.

# Aberfeldy Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Petra, Carolyn, Lesley, Cat, Eilidh, Emma, Amanda, Bruno, Karen, Gail, Norman, Jude*

## You'd hate me writing this\*

Looking out your window as we drove past:  
'She's going to be in your class at school,' mum said.  
You glowed like a cutout picture in the lit-up room and I was terrified.  
You made school feel real - summer would end and  
It was really going to happen.

Mary, known as Ray, we met before we were born.  
School days – a memory of cod liver oil,  
you left the classroom to go home to the toilet!  
We were bridesmaids – June and September.  
You moved around – Ireland to Ilkley –my pal. h

Two girls in a sea of first years,  
Never in the same class but we clicked.  
You were arty, designed costumes at the BBC,  
while I lived a different life entirely.  
You scattered your husband's ashes. I was by your side.

Sitting in our hooded jumpers,  
opposite in the music class.  
You were Soprano, I was Alto.  
We survived the comprehensive in our shared world of faux English voices and giggles.  
You and me, sat next together again at 'Miss Jean Brodie,' in our primes.

A new school, new friend, showing me around the place.  
You always remained horse-mad but never too far away.  
You stayed in England whilst I moved away, Scotland bound.  
I miss you always, counting down until I see you.  
You are my best friend, I will always adore you.  
We met in that big hall on that big day.  
Instantly we laughed as timetables unfolded.  
You inspired me with energy, brilliance and fun,  
cycle trips, drinking pints, camping and hills.  
You gave me support, ear-pods, advice and meals.

We survived high school together,  
Laughing of nothing when we felt so tired.  
You can listen to what I cannot say with words.  
We talked until late about people and love.  
You welcomed me in your home just two months ago.

At first, you seemed to me a silly girl.  
Your big eyes, your funny voice, the taste for gossiping.  
You are not what you look like.  
Enduring three days in a car is not for everyone.  
You came back from Angola and brought me palm oil.

To begin with, you were just my pal's boyfriend.  
I didn't know if you'd stay the pace  
or if your Glasgow cool would stop intimidating me.  
When you finally split, my friend made me choose.  
You are the one I still giggle with now.

Parentally disapproving of sledging and outdoors generally,  
Saturday night's drinking fizz – green or orange –  
you snorted as it spilt out of your nose onto the carpet.  
Tenderly holding my hair back as I heaved in the toilet.  
I'm your banana bridesmaid. We still blether about life and laugh.

Blunt, Paisley-like Irishman – serious reader  
hidden under a sports producer's bluff.  
Your love, laughter, mischief and song  
ring down the years.  
Your craic makes me happy.

First day at work together, we had to  
read out our bios to the whole board.  
You made gagging motions after we sat down.  
We've been muckers ever since.  
You'd hate me writing this.

\*with thanks to Jude

# A K Bell Library Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Agness, Andrew, Angie, Carole, Fiona, Fiona, Lucy, Rosie, Ross*

## On Friendship

We gather once a month  
And write and reminisce and sometimes  
Sigh  
As a turn of phrase catches on our breath.  
Our talk is of friendship  
With memories that form and dissolve  
Like a teaspoon of sugar  
In the brew of time.

And yes, friendship is a weathered face from the past,  
That sits in silence.  
The calm presence of a stranger.  
Allowing me to heal.

And yes, friendship is that special time,  
Free from grown-ups.  
Creeping through the bracken, in search of battle.  
Each tribe had their place.  
Ours is amongst the willow trees.  
Death or disaster would never find us.

And yes, comfortable in each other's thoughts.  
Friendship is a hand held in childlike stillness.

And yes, Friendship is our boat of common background.  
Navigating the seas of youth.  
Secrets shared and whispered tears.

And yes, friendship is a pilgrimage  
The sun ironing hot on the nape of my neck  
Companions? Some known only for minutes,  
Yet I feel their soul.  
Others walk for days with me,  
Their minds unfathomable.

And yes, friendship is not easy.  
I cannot recall the faces, the voices, the mannerisms  
Of those I once knew.  
But their closeness, I recall like a secret charm.

And yes, I think but do not say.  
Friendship is this.  
This moment.  
Some of us strangers. Some kindred spirits.  
Gathered in the verse.  
We write. We read. We speak. We listen  
And then disperse.

And oh, my heart,  
Oh, my heart is full.



# Arbroath Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Andrew, Gillian, Ita, Kathleen, Morna, Shona, Suzanne*

## The Path of Friendship

We discovered we shared  
a love of books, of words,  
of life in general. We just got along.  
Life intervened, things changed,  
but the friendship stayed.  
The colours of her sari,  
the smell of the banquet,  
the sound of laughter, and  
the taste of welcome...  
The touch of friendship will always remain.  
The friend you don't have to try with,  
who makes the effort. Reciprocal.  
Never one-sided as some friendships are.  
She would look at me intensely, see my fear,  
offer me compassion and reassure me.  
I remind her of her strength and courage,  
and of how far she has come  
We will get through this.  
Togetherness-  
it's key isn't it? To friendship,  
to everything perhaps.  
Friendship should help to lift  
the blinding fog which can  
envelope our hearts.  
We just need to find the path.

# Bethany Christian Trust Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Angus, Alan, Fiona, Tony, Richard, Sandra, Lauren. John, Monique, Sam*

## Tea and Biscuits Included

These groups are my life force,  
a safe place to share,  
a break from myself  
like minded meetings.  
Suddenly you discover people,  
an extended family,  
they resonate with you,  
neighbours that you get to know  
warm welcome guaranteed,  
holding space for each other  
friendships that carry  
an infrastructure of hope and acceptance.

# Brora Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Carly, Josie, Lynne, Shirley, Liz*

## The Reunion

If stars were hearts  
Then I am loved by the night  
I am here, you are there  
Under the same sky  
I wonder if you think of me  
As often as I do you  
PING!  
Let's do this again  
We don't do this enough  
PING!  
Forty years of propping each other up!  
We have an understanding  
An unbreakable bond  
PING!



# Coigach Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Gabby, Ann, Paula, Lorraine*

## The Moment of Friendship

You can't say -  
it's something you know,  
gifting a shy smile.

Caught off-guard and unaware,  
we laughed and laughed  
and laughed.

Having fun, enjoying life,  
loved and looked after,  
the unsplitable fusion.

## The Unsplitable Fusion

Loved and looked after  
Having fun, enjoying life  
We laughed  
and laughed  
and laughed  
Caught off-guard  
and unaware  
Gifting a shy smile  
You can't say - it's something  
you know,  
The moment of friendship.

# Cupar Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Wanda, Sue, Nicola, Janis, Helen, Geoff, Catherine, Catherine, Alistair*

## *not oversharing*

how does friendship begin?  
fleeting enduring  
a deeper conection

we meet on a wild swim  
our screams fill the air  
limbs frozen by cold waves

*you drop everything  
someone who cares  
my 3 a.m. friend  
so much to share*

dewberry smells  
bacardi and cokes  
camparis  
in a back-street bar  
uv lights  
and dandruff lapels  
snowy streets  
not feeling the cold  
chips on the way home  
or a bridie  
burnt toast in bru  
cups of tea  
your sympathy

*you're holding back my hair  
while I am sick  
my 3 a.m. friend  
so much to share*

# Dundee Creative Writing Group

Writers:

She never asked why I was crying,  
she just seemed to know.  
nurturing things,  
moving them to shade or sunshine as required  
I know she's gone, but I still  
hear her,  
sense her,  
speak to her,  
write her letters.

Remember: No matter where you are on this planet,  
your heart sits right above fault lines.

# Dust by Julia Barton

(Dundee Creative Writing Group)

There is dust on your picture  
The picture that you gave me  
Do you remember?  
You never liked it  
Said the lighting was all wrong

There is dust on your picture  
And it shocks me to see it  
Not the dust, obviously  
There is always dust  
But that it's been there for so long

There is dust on your picture  
And it makes me really sad  
When I think about what happened  
I just didn't understand  
You felt that you did not belong

There is dust on your picture  
I can't believe you didn't tell me  
That you were leaving  
I wonder why you did it  
But you were always so headstrong

There is dust on your picture  
And now I'll have to clean it  
It represents time's passing  
That life itself is fleeting  
And that you are really gone

# Boat by Britta Benson

(Dundee Creative Writing Group)

We give ourselves names.

A garden, home, unmown.

We press the grass flat,  
find form,  
erase,  
breathe,

fill summer with sea,  
waving,  
leaning,  
sailing.



## How to put a foundation underneath friendship by Britta Benson (Dundee Creative Writing Group)

Don't think concrete. Any hard material, those certainties in life, will betray you at some point, and when you least expect it.

If you'd like to think of friendship as a building, keep it flexible, create space for silences, allow wiggle room. A bit like those earthquake-proof houses they build in Japan.

Always remember: no matter where you are on this planet, your heart sits right above fault lines and that's okay. Really! Just don't hold on to anything or anyone too tightly. Don't strangle people with your expectations. Nobody likes to feel trapped, boxed in and labelled.

Here's a little note from an archaeologist friend of mine: It's the loose and crumbly stuff that survives. The random coins, chips, broken bits. They travel light and well – and last much longer than perfect wholeness.

# Eyemouth Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Margaret, Maura, Dawn, Ruth*

You would recognise my friend, she....

has a New Zealand accent  
appreciates nice things  
met me when we were three at Sunday school  
draws people to her, they like her  
plays and teaches the organ

lives in Washington (DC) now  
always had more money than me  
made me laugh so much we were put off the stage  
is open and bubbly  
wears big boots, carries a truncheon

You would recognise my friend, she....

is half Arabic and very dark  
is arty and educated  
likes to be looked after  
calls it out  
thought her mother was her sister

loves to visit Seahouses  
is decisive to my procrastination  
would keep a rabbit too if she could  
holds her own in company  
smokes and drinks and plays in a band

# Fruitmarket Creative Writing Group

Writers:

## I saw this and thought of you

She delights in the narrowness of her skeleton  
and pictures radiant with colour:  
deep blue, tawny yellow and ochre red.  
In the pale light of a wintry Scotland,  
the gap between lockdowns, and three  
Proseccos later, a real friend would have  
understood their duty. Sometimes  
friendship comes at a price;  
I'll do the same for you when it comes.

# Gaelic Creative Writing Group

Writers:

Dà charaid, trì eileanan

1.

Air rothair, ghabh sinn cuairt fad lethcheud mìle sa chòig  
timcheall Eilean Arainn aon latha  
Cia mheud mìle air falbh a tha thu fuireach a-nis  
ann an eilean eile?  
Cia mheud cuairt a dh'fheumamaid dèanamh mun cuairt  
Eilean Arainn mus ruigeamaid Taiwan?  
Tòisich gu slaodach agus ruigidh tu do cheann-uidhe uaireigin.  
Fhathast air mo shlighe.

2.

Tillidh mi gu tric gu Eilean Eday - abair àite sna seachdadan  
thusa a' sgreuchail leis na luchan  
mise a' trod ris a' chailleach neo-thuigseach  
coltach ri Hobbit a bha i, sùilean a' deàrrsadh  
'faca sibh na luchan ma-thà?'  
Dè chanadh mi?  
Chaidh sinn nar slighean eadar-dhealaichte an latha sin  
Fhathast sgapte gun fhacal gu sìorraidh.

# Grassmarket Community Project Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Fiona, Karen, Peter, Dave, Alan, Holly, Steve*

## Unexpected Friend

Never feeling noticed, fearful of doing things wrong,  
destructive comments bringing me down.  
I hear noises, rustlings in the wood, in the dark.  
The dark can be a good friend.

People flit through my life -  
I'm a wounded man shielding the psychological scars, few can get too close.  
Sometimes it clicks, sometimes it clunks.

It crept up behind me in more ways than one. An unexpected acquaintance.  
I was reticent.

But one day the blinkers covering my eyes fell away.  
One amazing lady who lifted me when I was struggling to get up.  
Thank goodness for Bella! She'd take me away from all this clippity clop of my mind.  
It bears no resemblance to tactical allegiance -  
    instant connection intoxicates the ego and invigorates the mind.

What followed was many emotional and lived dialogues -  
    we are ultimately frivolous.  
Like coming out of the airport into the heat haze, the sizzling white of the plaza,  
the hot crush of horses,  
welcoming us home.

# Glasgow Women's Library Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Kate, Rina, Adia, Sheila, Isobel, Sarah, Kathrine*

perhaps we want to belong

shouting at the adolescent magpies that try to come in  
picking at nails, cleaning sneakers with a toothbrush  
the turn of a hand telling the taxi driver to keep the change  
how you can sleep anywhere and for so long  
how everything has to be in its place  
the pool of water left on the chopping board

never ever ever making the bed  
who you glance at and for how long  
not wearing outside clothes on inside furniture  
writing 'your feet stink' on every greeting card  
your raised eyebrow and wry smile  
escaping to the kitchen knowing you'll be left alone  
sending texts that are too long, descriptive and multiple

## Images + Words Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Susan, Cara, Angela, Mary, Sandy, Angi, Kay, Jack, Liz*

### Permission to Touch

You slither into the world  
Startlingly yellow, floppy, sniffable, lickable  
Fractals of light flickering over the lush green land  
If sheep could speak, they would share their woolly secrets  
Lines written in a forgotten book  
A dream of touching what I can't reach  
If I come too close you turn your back and walk away  
The pack of wool you carry ripples like an accordion  
You are my shelter

# Inverurie Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Catherine, Christina, Ian, Laura, Marianne, Patricia, Peter, Ralph, Sophie*

## Golden Threads

Agate burnisher, forcing the gold leaf to flame  
like the memories between us

I love to think of our golden days  
when everything was clear and innocent

hair down to our shoulders, now  
growing out of our ears.

You won't know I'm back, but still, I look for you,  
tell you about the unfurling bracken on the heath

imagine you smiling, pulling a frond  
and not knowing why.

What a thing! It jumped out like  
a secret message, but we both heard it:

whispering trees, lapping waves  
and childish chatter, echo

over sunlit rock, weathered by the ages  
we talked about the stars, set sail again

across the vast oceans we travel  
but this, here, will always be home.



# Saved By A Friend by Ralph Dunn

(Inverurie Creative Writing Group)

Dear James,

I ran away from home – aged 43! In the 35 years since that traumatic event, you have never known the true impact on my life of your immense generosity and hospitality. In this letter I will try to express the extent of your life-saving intervention.

You turned my life around and a huge problem in my life was overcome. Yes, as you know, I did the unimaginable and unthinkable-I abandoned my family and it turned into an unmitigated disaster. How much of my anguish did you really know or understand? I did give you a shock when I turned up unexpectedly at your office. You did a major double-take of incredulity and astonishment. How was it possible that I was standing right there, before your very eyes? I lived in Scotland - by what trickery did I materialize in Taipei? You were such a good friend when I knew you as a student in the 1970's. Now, 11 years later, I'm back.

You immediately saw how emotional I was. Clearly, I was in some distress and agitation. Thankfully, without hesitation, you welcomed me into your life and home. For several days I found it difficult to eat or speak-until my family story spilled out. It was all utter madness.

I didn't say much about my first night. My contact in Taipei had arranged lodgings in a Church member's home. The plan was, I was to stay there for about a year. I only lasted one excruciating, extraordinarily harrowing night. The enormity of what I'd done crashed upon me with unbelievable force. I was a complete wreck, utterly bereft.

As I settled into my small room, I discovered, to my horror, that I'd lost several important documents. I completely panicked- turned my bag and suitcase upside down, going through everything ten times. My academic certificates, college and University Diploma and Degree – all gone. I was completely distraught. Almost demented and inconsolable.

Not one second of sleep did I have that night. I was in deep shock. The appalling reality hit me- I was miles away from all my loved ones in Scotland. I was in a stranger's home. I had lost precious things. It was stiflingly, unbearably hot. I was deeply homesick, and painfully alone. How had I ever thought that running away was the answer? A million thoughts flooded my tormented brain. This must rank as one of the longest nights ever in the history of human suffering- or at least in my miserable life. What on earth had I done? My former life in Scotland haunted me. My private life was a mess. My marriage, of over 20 years, was tipping dangerously towards disaster. I wept over the phone from Heathrow, when I confessed to my wife that I wasn't coming home again and was heading for Taiwan to start a new life.

It was only later as I reflected on this- that in the hustle and bustle of a major airport, one lone soul was making a heart-breaking phone call. No-one paid any attention to this sobbing wreck. I slept on hard benches in the airport terminal. I was accosted by 2 policemen, but allowed to remain, pleading an early flight. By morning I should have abandoned my ridiculous, farcical plan and made my way home- but I had no money left.

Like an automaton I went through all the procedures and boarded my flight for Taipei. Somehow, I survived the journey and avoided all thought of what I was actually doing.

I pretty much crumbled inwardly, immediately on arrival. A special welcoming party of the young people I was to teach English to, took me out for a meal. I must have seemed very strange to them. I could barely hold a conversation, and I had no appetite whatsoever. The situation was unendurable. A cataclysmic torrent of insufferable pain overwhelmed me.

By morning's light I came to a firm and determined decision. I had to get out of this home-lovely as the poor confused family were, when they saw me broken and weeping.

The Pastor came to collect me, and I completely broke down and confessed everything to him. I told him that I wasn't planning on working in Taiwan for a year. Nor that my family would join me. He didn't admonish me for such deceit and madness, but asked how he could help sort things out.

Thankfully, James, I had your address. The Pastor drove me immediately to your office. Seeing you was the greatest relief of my life. You changed my life with your generosity and support. If you hadn't been available or had responded badly to my wretched predicament, I cannot imagine how my disastrous venture would have been resolved. It's no exaggeration to say you saved me from oblivion and total destitution. To this day I bless you for literally saving my life and restoring me to my family.

Perhaps the significance of what you did never occurred to you, but I assure you, it was life-transforming. Firstly, you financed my stay, and opened up your home to me for 3 weeks. You organised my travel back home, even to the extent to paying for me to fly business class. Most important of all you understood and did not judge me. On my return home I was able to reconcile with my wife and family and go back to my work, only 2 weeks late from my summer break. Strangely life did change thereafter- a new home, a better job. Thank you from the bottom of my heart- you gave me HOPE for the future!

# Lerwick Creative Writing Group

Writers:

## Auld Freends

The truth we had  
was transient. Maybe  
you did end up  
being a bad friend.

If I went searching  
www.what the — a website,

hit wid have bin tae see auld freends  
at I ged tae da skul wi...

maybe you did end up  
being nonexistent.  
Loyal, though,  
the truth we hold

# LGBT+ Creative Writing Group

Writers: Kat, Stephen, Jezka, Asche, John, Zephyr, Ash, Jamie, Ling Ling, Jude

## Cento Between Friends

I have a few which is news to me  
They hold me upright and make me feel supported,  
    accept and value me.  
They invite me into their homes, include me in their weddings, their  
important milestones.  
They write poetry for me and make me feel hope.

They ask me how I am and mean it,  
    laugh at me until I am laughing too.  
They keep my secrets, keep us close,  
    believe me and make me feel seen.  
They choose me at my worst.

I'm unafraid and unashamed to be myself,  
We want what's best for each other.

# Maryhill Integration Network Creative Writing Group

Writers:

## Friendship is a Recipe

The first time you come round I'll make you a sandwich,  
maybe cook chicken and chips or fry you an egg – nothing fancy

The next time, I could prepare a vegetable biryani  
or Egyptian Molokhia with lots of garlic and coriander

After that, I'll make you my famous Mahshi – grape leaf parcels  
that take all day, but are eaten in 5 seconds

I will act sweet, give you chai karak, but my apron has many pockets...

In one, I have a hot chilli who does spicy dancing,  
in another, a magpie who'll borrow your Hoover  
and never give it back

I have chocolate in my pocket –  
on some days I'd give it all to you, ignore my own need,  
on others, I'd give you one single m&m, ignore your text messages

I have biltong in my pocket – salty, beefy, chilli –  
they are impossible to find here, so I will only share  
with someone who'll really appreciate them

## Friendship - Mitrata by Minaxi Champaneri

Inspired by Suma Subramaniam

The view of friendship and attachment through the technology of WhatsApp group chat and video calls.

In the turbulent chaos of the pandemic how the buds of loving Friendship - Mitrata kept blooming via WhatsApp.

Feelings kept flowing in in my heart and in the hearts of loved Friends.

Technology allowed everyone's needs to be met and continued to be met through our WhatsApp Friendship group.

Anila formed a long thread with her relatives through the tangled journey via telephone and video calls.

Bhamini learned a new recipe, made it and fed it to her little grandchildren. She joined virtual Pilate classes in her own home via Zoom platform.

Jaswanti came like a gust of wind. She gazed through her WhatsApp window, smiled and went away.

Kokila listened to everyone's stories, nodded her agreement in salience and exited WhatsApp for her daily walk.

Kundan quickly exchanged pleasantries and talked about the highlight of going for a walk.

Parul chatted about their past holidays, and her Zoom music and exercise classes.

I collected my old memories, painted pictures of them and wrote stories to share on in WhatsApp Friendship group.

Shila came without any prior thoughts and learnt about new recipies and left, in the different mind-set.

From this bond, everyone got into rhythm, reminiscing the past joyous memories and thinking of the future.

Surely the silver lining of the Corona virus was to make the friendship bond amazingly strong.

Everyone was out of touch but came into touch via their comfort of own home through the small WhatsApp window, seated in the new train and travelled the world.

*Note from the poet:*

*During the pandemic we all were missing out each other's company outing, movies. Few of our friend felt worthless, depressed, so I had an idea to create a WhatsApp group and decided to set a day and time each week to engage in group video call in comfort of their home.*

*We dressed up as if we are going out, we played Bingo, Riddles, singing, dancing, played the board game, exchanged recipes and had a blast of time together. Friends are so important in the life to share and have fun. Above I have mentioned Anila, Bhamini, Jaswanti, Kokila, Kundan, Parul, Shila who are my best friends. Sadly we have now lost our friend Shila.*

# MILK Cafe Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Anna, Sam, Ivtifa, Ababa, Mina, Saffanna*

## I

My friend

The first time we met  
It was different.  
And after that,  
Everything changed.

Your friendship shaped  
me,  
Made me someone new.  
When others let me  
down,  
You never did.  
You softly said, "I'm  
always near,"  
And that's the voice I  
always hear.

You stood by me

## II

When everyone else  
walked away.  
In sorrow and in joy,  
I miss you,  
My dear friend.

When you came into my  
life,  
I felt safe  
Like I could finally fly.  
And your smile...



It blooms like the  
morning sun  
Breaking gently through  
the curtains,  
Warming my soul.

# Next Chapters Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Aileen, Dennis, Geraldine, Jane, Jen, Laurie, Linda, Muriel. Renita*

## Kinship Blessing

May your heart be a standing stone

May the sea bring you songs on salt-laced wind  
Whispers of laughter from long ago shores

May you know the company of seals  
Breathe Hebridean air  
Dance with oyster catchers

When storms rise fierce on restless tide  
May you stand unshaken  
Rolling mist carry dreams yet to awaken

May your boat bob safely in harbour  
Your anchor be love  
May the heavens sparkle like the sea  
And stars shine bright above

When darkness falls on the coldest of nights  
May the lighthouse of kinship give you light  
And guide you safe home

May you find your way back to the gathering place  
May old friends bless your courageous heart

May you drink soft waters  
Stand on the beach when the tide is out  
Sun carving geometrics on the sand

May you brave icy plunges- swim wild  
May you be taught how to fish  
And your holds be full of the best fish you can catch

Let the hills and mountains be open to you  
May all you nurture enlarge you  
Grow, bloom, fledge and fly

Near or far, through calm or through squall  
These Isles hold you close  
And so do we all

# Neurodivergent Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Becky, Mimi, Becky, Lindsay, Jill, Morag, Emily*

## Souls Awaken

Time deepens  
as we walk  
Minds quieten  
as we walk  
Memories sharpen  
as we walk  
Stillness settles  
as we walk  
Souls awaken  
as we walk.

Knowing  
You  
once saw  
means  
I am  
still seen.

Is a friend the person here right now?  
Would you care if you never saw me again?

# Open Creative Writing Group

Writers:

## Knocks on the Door. Who?

*After “Knocks on the door” by Maram Al-Massri, Translated by Khaled Mattawa*

Someone who listens  
at my chest  
with a stethoscope and a dream catcher.

Someone who reaches into my chest  
and strums the tendons and pops out the ganglions.

It's your birthday today and I forgot.  
Thanks for knocking on my door.  
Thanks for becoming a new friend  
by the deathbed of my mother so many years ago.

And then another surprise, a friend knocks on my door a bit later.  
I saw her while commuting to work every day  
for many weeks before I was the one  
who asked if we could have a chat.

You smiled and said yes.

Who is knocking at the door?

Who is knocking at the door?  
Are you here to tell me night has fallen?

Are you going to walk with me through the dark?  
Do you even know where we are going?

A gentle knock, not ring...

Mighty me! The woman round the corner chaps at my door.  
Her wee yappy dug is with her.  
And I have a cat.

How is this new friendship to be managed?

A gentle knock – not ring,  
the child opens the door to a shy hello  
and wide grin, a chance for a friendship to begin.

Hovering over my threshold a warm heart,  
complete unknown with familiar eyes.  
Let go, let them in, let it begin.

My eyes always looking who to take on with us,  
the next in line one, two, three...  
I slip it in.  
Please add his lunch.

## Don't Fear New Friends by Joanna Paul

(Open Creative Writing Group)

New person, their unfamiliar life situation.  
There's a mechanism, a defence  
Ruling my space, flailing my confidence.  
Heartbreaks can be platonic too.

Hesitate, bargain, deny:  
Too old to try,  
Life is on my mind,  
Who has the time.

The walls grow tall,  
Vulnerable happily hiding in their shadow.  
Comfortable with ones it knows,  
Terrified of ones outside the window.

Build new bridges, you know how.  
Find a path through the rough.  
Rusty latch on a dusty heart  
Lifted, it still works.

Soften your edges, notice,  
Hovering over your threshold a warm heart,  
Complete unknown with familiar eyes.  
Let go, let them in, let it begin.

# Orkney Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Annie, Sally, Steve, Yvonne*

## Gathering

I love fiddle music; you do not.  
I love taking photos; you do not.  
I love watching birds; you do not.  
You chose me for your friend.

You are no-nonsense, practical; I am not.  
You hate salad; I do not.  
You have daughters to care for; I have not.  
I chose you for my friend.

When events reduce my life to rubble  
you are my go-to friend when I'm in trouble.  
We meet for coffee: very much the odd couple  
We hold on still!

The day you came to my school  
with your Main Character energy  
your Big City accent,  
you chose me for your friend.

Years of constant exposure  
made Glam Girl and Brainbox alike.  
Chasing the absurd,  
pretending not to heed the herd.

You took that blond boy home  
then started your own blond tribe.  
We hold on still, but with hands  
and minds always busily engaged.

My go-to friend – wandering  
we weave friendship  
from old threads, new threads.  
We hold on still.



Your oboe sang and sighed  
with such sweetness –  
phrases that arched out  
like embraces through the silence.

You drew what was inside  
out – and you allowed  
what was outside in.  
We duetted

as ducks filed past  
the open window;  
as the cow trit-trotted  
across the flagstones

and pushed her sweet face in  
at the kitchen door.  
The music drifted  
over garden and fields

fading as your wild red hair  
smouldered to grey  
and your swollen hands,  
earth-grained, stiffened; fell still.

Through the silence, it's still with me –  
how you drew what was inside  
out; how you allowed  
what was outside in.

First year – I was there.  
Jovial jazz, fresh freedom.  
Drumsticks, tailcoat, winkle pickers.  
Barrels of laughter. Quiet joy.

Twenty years on – we were there.  
Wandering cobbled streets. Warm jokes;  
sharing his loss; my pain; his sorrow.  
Weaving friendship from old threads.

Forty years on – he was there,  
weeping softly while I fought death.  
Steadfast as always, through the silence,  
he told his love, forever on.

My go-to friend – wandering, sharing,  
we weave friendship from many threads.  
Even through the silence  
we hold on still.

## My Go-To Friend by Sally Hallam

(Orkney Creative Writing Group)

I love fiddle music; you do not.  
I love taking photos; you do not.  
I love watching birds; you do not.

You are a no-nonsense practical person; I am not.  
You hate salad; I do not.  
You have daughters to look after; I have not.

You are my go-to friend when I'm in trouble,  
when events reduce my life to rubble.  
We meet for coffee: very much the odd couple!

## On by Steve Miller

First year on – I was there.  
Jovial jazz, fresh freedom,  
drumsticks, tailcoat, winkle pickers.  
Barrels of laughter, quiet joy.

Twenty years on – we were there.  
Wandering cobbled streets: warm jokes,  
sharing his loss, my pain, his sorrow,  
weaving friendship from old threads.

Forty years on – he was there.  
Weeping softly while I fought death.  
Steadfast as always, through the silence,  
he told his love, forever on.

## Always by Annie Thuesen

The day you came to my school –  
Main Character energy  
Big City accent –  
you chose me for a friend.

Years of constant exposure  
made the Glam Girl and Brainbox  
alike. Chasing the absurd,  
pretending to not heed the herd.

You took that blond boy home then  
you started your own blond tribe.  
We hold on still, but with hands  
and minds always busily engaged.

# Paisley Creative Writing Group

(a group poem on unexpected connection by the Paisley Library x Open Book group)

## Somebody Will Always Look For You

A bolt from the blue.  
We walked through each other's hearts and minds  
without maps,  
just a pair of buckle boots  
and a secondhand herringbone coat.

Somebody will always look for you.

We circled in bubbles,  
wobbling from side to side,  
never meeting  
until we were meant to.

We took in the flowers and greenery.  
The world, once blurred,  
grew edges again.  
Using hands to stand up,  
we lunged bravely  
into the soft unknown.

Somebody will always look for you.

I saw you once.  
I saw you twice.  
We spoke for some time.  
Maybe you read my mind.

It's good to talk, she said.  
But it was more than talk —  
we walked through each other's  
hearts and minds for hours.

Somebody will always look for you.  
Patience is important.

It takes time.  
But it could be worth it.

You'll fill a space in a picture  
where there would've been a gap.  
The world will be waiting  
to embrace you again.

Trust that everything will end well.  
An epidemic of happiness.  
The acceptance  
I had so long sought.

Somebody  
will always  
look for you.

# Perth Letham Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Lucy, Duncan, Margaret, Fiona*

## I

waking up from the anaesthetic  
safe in the cheery buzz of the nurses' familiarity  
I wish I could open my front door and see my mother again  
and have her hug away my anxiety  
a silly thing to miss, a small thing  
but miss it I do

## II

a true friend is also a friend  
in need  
the shorty was always delicious and buttery  
like her care and friendship

they sat on the porch step  
watching the glow-worms flitting, like a search party  
she only came in the summer when she visited her gran  
for the school holidays  
running around, sweating it out  
the only one that put a smile on my face



# POC Creative Writing Group

Writers:

1.

I have all the time in the world.  
Perhaps the world does have all the time.  
I'll have the energy to listen to everyone.  
I'll have the energy. tomorrow was the day  
we were going to lay  
out the poison but  
we never did, wished a sky burial.  
The ancestors have a belief in me  
that there is work to be done here.  
Even death didn't catch me  
I can become whatever I choose to be

2.

A blue door is opened,  
clean and unpolluted.  
The ancestors have  
a belief in  
the possibilities of clouds.

Within the garden of my inners self,  
I can say no.  
Each morning  
wrapped in silky oat dust

3.

sometimes you don't die  
when you're supposed to  
and now  
instead of give-give-give no more  
stare at the ceiling  
at the black and pink mold

The ancestors have a belief in me  
that there is work to be done here...  
I would like to lie down  
stare at the ceiling  
feel grateful to breathe in the oxygen  
a blue door is opened  
to fly within possibilities of clouds  
we intended to kill a mouse  
who lived in the garage  
we were going to lay  
out the poison but  
we never did  
Even death didn't catch me  
I can become whatever I choose to be  
I would like to lie down  
stare at the ceiling  
& wish a sky burial

4.

And now I feel grateful to breathe in the oxygen, the clean and unpolluted air, whilst I lie down staring at the ceiling at the Black and pink mould. I think of the bag of split oats spilled that was left to be cleaned up this morning. However, I seize the day as it comes, no longer thinking of tomorrow as I get up to do some spring cleaning and throw out all those 'out of date' tins of food!

# Polmont Creative Writing Group

Writers:

## Friendship

Friendship is a two-way street  
Shared experience and shared interest  
Two people who share a journey  
- sharing time.

Even if it gets you through a day  
or through the years  
Sometimes just a moment in time  
where someone stepped up.

Friendship is fickle  
it has to be earned  
It's difficult sometimes  
like a contract I haven't signed  
If you cage it, it tries to break free  
If you don't offer a lead the path becomes long  
Trust is different from respect, faith, love  
You need all of them to have a true friend.

Regardless we take ourselves on the journey  
Me, you and that glimmer of hope  
We learn and grow together  
From school days to nursing home  
we have learned, laughed and lived.

You'd done this before so you knew the script,  
coffee mugs and digestives at the ready  
Thirty years later you're in a distant land  
where once I had aspirations to be.

Our treasures are our good friendships  
and you are a gem.

## Portree Creative Writing Group

Writers: *LaDawn, Rohan, Liz, Francis, Katharine.*

### All Of It.

Today, eyes red-rimmed,  
You ask me — *what is friendship?*  
And I answer  
Without thinking.  
*It is something wonderful, life-affirming*  
—  
*A true connection.*

We promised to always be truthful.

I try again.

*Friendship is a strange thing —*  
*Expected, certain,*  
*But with rules unwritten*  
*This feels uncertain...*

Havering.

I try again.

*Maybe it is a compass*  
*That helps us find our direction*  
*When the lines on the map are fading?*  
*But, and I pause for a moment,*  
*You should know that sometimes even a compass drifts,*  
*And what once was true north*  
*Can one day be nothing.*  
*A civil confluence of camaraderie*  
*Becomes*  
*An accident of geography,*  
*A quirk of cartography,*

*A catastrophe of a career  
That led us here.*

You blink. I think I've been too  
metaphorical, I should speak plainly.

I try again.

*I mean, it was a happy coincidence.  
That you were made a mirror —  
It has taken years  
To see who I am —  
The rebel deep inside of me  
You saw me before I did,  
My own best and worst self  
Reflected back through the cracks,  
the places where the light  
breaks through,  
showing you, you and me, I —  
Us, so much together,  
Travelling in sync,  
Not thinking what the future might bring.  
Hard to imagine  
One day, today, maybe,  
We are not.*

A pause. Breath, shaking.  
How did we get here?

*But even fear —  
That slow unravelling —  
Cannot undo what is woven.  
The pattern remains,  
Threads still pull towards each other, we are straining,  
Pain each time the needle stabs in.*

I try again.

*It is a metronome,  
keeping time,  
even when we forget  
to measure the moments.  
The click is steady.  
We may fall out of time,  
it brings us back,  
reminding us that even in silence —  
the beat goes on.*

I think, maybe, this is better.

I try again.

*Friendship is music,  
A song,  
Each chord created with love, with passion,  
In harmony.  
We learned the rhythm together  
A thousand years could pass,  
And you'd still be here beside me,  
locked in unison,  
Moving on,  
Playing the same songs.*

What is friendship?

*It is this.  
All of it.  
Messy, miraculous,  
And worth it.*

# Scots Creative Writing Group

Writers: *Jacqui, Evelyn, Mary, Alan*

## Freenship

I canna gang alang wi oot ye  
There's bogles in the bushies,  
Bullies on the brae  
Oor world is new, bumbaislin –  
Rules, restrictions, birsy adults.  
Alane, ah'm mindit for tae hide.  
Together, we chap the doors  
An lowp the fences,  
Daur the warld tae follae.

I canna gang along without ye  
shopping in the toun, mini skirts to match  
Platform heels tae catwalk around  
Walking in the disco in a haze of cheap perfume  
Staggerin tae the toilet , already a half pint down  
“Fit de ye think o that loon or that aller een  
Dinna pull the chain yet , I've no finished ma wee”  
Aye, but will we gang hame thgither  
Or is it ma turn to play gooseberry, agin?

I canna gang alang wi oot ye  
The wye ye say my name ...

I canna gang alang wi'oot ye  
somebudy tae daunder wi through the day  
tae yonder dreams  
throu the years  
'til the day the clocks stap  
an wan walks aheid  
then bides fir the ither  
juist ootside the windae.

# Shakti Women's Aid Creative Writing Group

Writers: *The Women of Shakti Women's Aid*

## My Jambolan friend

I remember playing hopscotch at breaktime  
our bata shoes pounding the dirt  
laughter hanging in the heat.  
You in your patchwork dress  
you, brilliant student, pulling me up to your heights.  
How you would make the sweets, I the pudding and salads  
and we'd study all day on the mountainside  
in the cool air, under the mango tree and the jambolan tree  
known for its healing fruits.  
We ate ripe fruit as it fell, yellow and red  
biting those mangoes, squishing the pulp under the skin and sucking them dry  
laying down afterwards, satisfied and sleepy.

I remember being so inseparable we called ourselves sisters  
matched our clothes and make up.  
We lived parallel lives.  
Our mothers got sick at the same time  
our fathers died.  
We would go to the temple together to study  
school was cut short for us both, replaced by housework.

Remember, how I called out your name in a fever dream?  
And they sent for you, fearing my deathbed.  
You, my jambolan friend, who set me on the road to recovery.  
You, who I am no longer able to call.



# Social Bite Creative Writing Group

Writers:

## Groups and Pals

Making new friends  
learning new things  
we are there for company.

This group fed me  
when I moved to Glasgow  
when I had no place to go.

That universal language of food  
Social Bite I'll never forget  
the kindness you showed, the people I met.

Pals keep you sane  
tickle your fancy, if I wasn't with them,  
I'd be round that corner with my aunties.

We have a good laugh  
hand massages, fake tattoos, the chats  
the days away, learning arts and crafts.

Quizzes where I always just guess the answers  
Bingo, knitting, cast-on, cast-off  
beautiful people, time to be daft.

Dominoes, board games, new nails and hair  
a room filled to the brim  
with people who care.

These are places for women  
to meet together  
for wellbeing, routine, to make friends forever.

# Spinal Injuries Creative Writing Group

Writers: Bridget, Barrie, Annie

## Journey

He felt he'd been the grey man  
while I sailed the high seas.  
Unsettled – my anchor pulled adrift.

We parted because the tide turned, the wind blew,  
we drifted – on different waves, on different seas,  
in different ways.

I forgot, without intention,  
our castles and our footprints in the sand.

Years had blessed and hurt us both.  
Now each, as an old man, sees the other as a warrior.  
We revel in tadpoles and baggy minnows – still little boys.

Somewhere, deeply layered beneath all that life expected  
we emerge from wrinkly cocoons and fly  
like superman again.

# Stranraer Creative Writing Group

Writers: Gill, Jane, Jean, Jeni, Marion, Pam, Sarah, Shelagh

You lived on the other side of the field, a world away.  
Before you, I didn't have many friends.  
Before you, I had no one to share my days.

Until, we waved.

Then, you wanted to know me more, you wanted to explore.  
We crossed the field and jumped the fences,  
we unlocked doors, let down our defences.

Until, you left.

You knitted me this scarf.  
Your love and comfort woven  
into woollen strands.

It still keeps me warm.  
It still keeps you close.  
Your scent is gone,  
But your memory lingers on.

# The Welcoming Creative Writing Group

Writers: The Welcoming Goup

## Weird Creature

I was the smallest kid in school  
hiding behind my sunglasses  
desperate to be seen.  
Eventually I found a group of weird creatures  
where I belonged.  
And night turned to day.  
I took off my shades.

That summer was ripe with fruit and gorse.  
and the carefree parties of youth.  
Five boys would pick five girls to dance.  
My cheeks would flush red  
my palms sweating as I tried to hide  
my nervous, shaking at the hand on my hip.

Deniz picked me.  
He was calm and confident and clear  
my fear subsided  
He made me feel like I could fly  
He was a torch shining warmth into my deep heart.  
I felt myself, felt pretty  
Luminous.

