

Hands up

Hands up we've got you surrounded,
said the voices of no-one, I'm nowhere now, unbounded.
Northern girl now minus the next-door support network,
Don't know the bus routes, the lingo, all this to get work?
23rd tower of a skyscraper get's awfully quiet come 1 am.

Long journey's home alone on the Northern line to that leaky bedsit,
double check my locks, breathe, call my boyfriend, insomnia, eyes closed, quiet, that's it.
I wanted a foot in the door, but I want out the place, could fly out the skylight, glide away?
Millions of people, why do crowded cities make me feel this way?

What right have I to complain? A 20 something on the great Norther brain drain. You're in love, why complain. Lucky. You can't be lonely – just be happy.

Surrounded in tube stations but lonely, no brunch with 'girly friends', relying on conversations with desk mates, with strangers on trains, facetimes home, distant friends,
Get me an intravenous dose of Avanti Pendolinos to revive me.
Do those strangers ever know how much their chatter mattered?

Lock down and I locked in. Contacts in my phone like lighthouse beacons slowly burning out – frightened I might never visit home. No parents or siblings for a year. Thoughts running...running...running.

What saves me is finding sanctuary. Libraries, coffee shops, the lady who sold me vinyl on Tooting Market. I hope you know I could talk Eartha Kitt with you for days.

Stranger talk, daily talk, like a lifesaving prescription of chatter flooding over me.

I leave the city, move back North, and everyone talks, like a wonderfully simply magic, I leave the job that shut me away in my back bedroom, become a teacher, and I teach people conversation matters.

Lonely is a word with a stigma, a misunderstanding, its taste is bitter,
but it's human, and without shame, it's a time in our life, an age, a situation, a change.
We'll know it at some point, but I hope those who've known it will, shout!
Hands up we've got you surrounded – if you felt lonely, we're here, now you know.

By Hannah Louise Adams