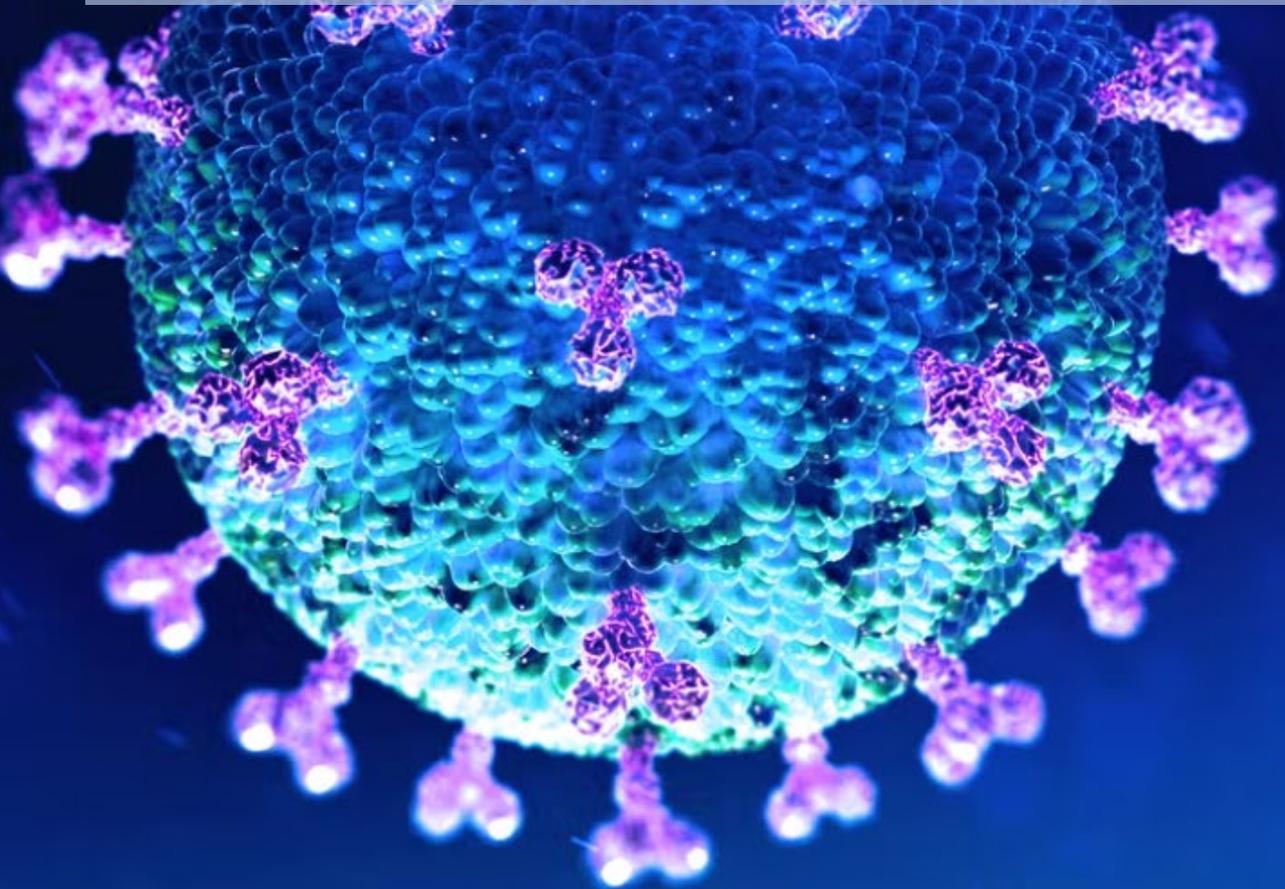


King Corona

21 August 2020

Written in Lock Down



By Katharine McLennan
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Poem continues on the next pages →
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King Corona

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Corona, meaning a crown, you've entered our world
Sneaking upon us yet another flu, your power unfurled
Little did we suspect the power of your rage
Recovering from the flood and fires, in Oz, yet another plague

22 million you have infected, and we've called you a pandemic
Having started in one city, you have surpassed an epidemic
Eight hundred thousand you have killed, as we near September first,
And we wonder if our "curves are flattening" have we seen at your worst?

It seems that Mother Earth has sent us home for a global time out
Banishing us to our rooms, perhaps punishing us for our assault
In the meantime, She has cleaned her rivers, earth, plants and air
She has revelled in the quiet and her time and space to repair

We have been lost for many years, in our exponentially growing pace
All the time we'd save by technology, this hasn't been the case
The desire for wealth, for efficiency, for a "good life," for more ease
Has driven us to depression, anxiety, more sugar, more disease

Perhaps our advanced science will discover the solution
We can then return to our lives, and once again our pollution
The effluents to return, the climate change to accelerate
Our stress levels to rise as more mental disease proliferate

We pray that we will never reach the levels of Spanish Flu
Killing a third of the world, a pandemic through and through
Perhaps 100 million lost(1), the deadliest scourge we've ever known
Again, containment paid off for the cities that closed down (2)

(1) Estimates actually range between 17-100 million, a very wide range. There was no capacity for detailing records of testing and diagnosis in the 1910s and calculating was made even more difficult given the unreliability of death records. See [an excellent article that details this in Vox](#).

(2) See an [excellent article](#) in National Geographic written on 27 March 2020 that analyses the Spanish flu proliferation through American cities. It compares various US cities' deaths per 100,000-curves, showing the drastic effect that early containment had versus later containment—and the impact of halting the containment too early

Wearing masks, closing streets, quarantining all to stay inside
Closing shops, schools, and business, as the flu spread worldwide
Were the world's only answers then just as now
Perhaps we have learned from its lessons, as history does allow

On one hand, globalisation, urbanisation and transportation now at play
Ensure that the virus grows, in not months, but day by day
And we can watch it on our screens, as our world leaders close their borders
We observe humans worldwide, as we saw the toilet paper hoarders

On the other hand, our medicine and health systems have transformed
Antibiotics now treat the lungs, and we hope antivirals will solve this storm
We have research that can spread its results in seconds and not years
With instant communication, our scientists share with their peers

The Spanish flu revolutionised public health and disease and research tracking
Galvanised socialised healthcare as the world began tackling
The enormous cost on society, the orphans and the "lost generations" (3)
The disease attacked the young, leaving orphans across the nations

So here we are, a century later, and I wonder what we've learned to be exact
The World Economic Forum argues early intervention in 1918 kept economies intact
That the spike in mortality was the major cause for a decline in nation's wealth
That we should focus on saving lives first and concentrate on society's health

But with our societies so interconnected, we see mayhem in Covid's course
Tourism, hospitality, transportation, a few of the major reductions in force
And we are losing our beloved elders, the source of experience and wisdom
But had we already lost them isolating them from family in the aged care kingdom?

(3) See Laura Spinney's summary of her book, *Pale Rider: The Spanish Flu of 1918 and How it Changed the World* in a BBC Future [article found at this link](#), with the book written in 2017 and the article in 2018

(4) See the World Economic Forum's summary of their paper studying the economic effects of the Spanish Flu and its applications to our current situation published on 2 April 2020, originally posted by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York's Liberty Street Economics [see this link](#)

(5) A reduction in force (RIF) occurs when a position is eliminated without the intention of replacing it and involves a permanent cut in headcount. A layoff may turn into a RIF or the employer may choose to immediately reduce their workforce. [See this link](#)

We experience on the one hand physical isolation, our mental health most affected
Yet with Zoom we make connections long lost in families; alumnae reconnected
We've learned about each other's families and particularly our own
No longer rushing in the commute, no schools or day cares to chaperone

For some, the change in health and love has been cataclysmically transformed
For others, the stress of balancing young children and work, an overwhelming chore
For others who live by themselves, the isolation takes a massive toll
And for all, we've overZoomed and over Netflixed, our boredom to cajole

For many now jobless, there is no certain future income, no safety net at all
Further increasing inequality between rich and poor, strengthening the wall
We see ironies of the conservatives supporting the unemployed as we pray
That the economy will return full steam soon, this misery giving way

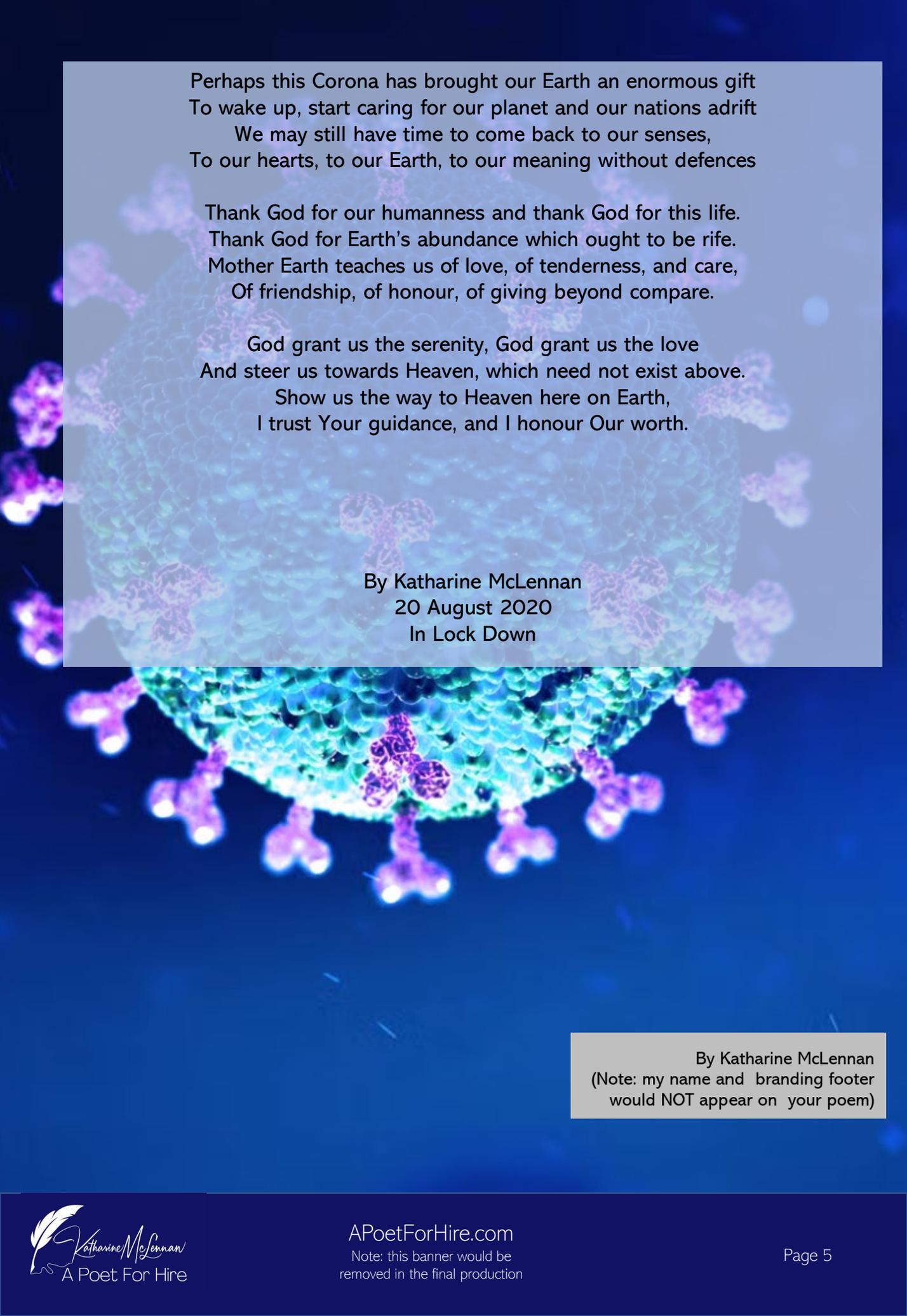
We see our women in country leadership rising in power matriarchal
From New Zealand's Jacinta to Denmark, Finland, Taiwan, and Germany's Merkel
We see our beloved medical and frontline staff becoming heroes everywhere
Risking their lives and reminding us of their commitment, facing a veritable nightmare

But Mother Earth and Father Sun no doubt have their own plans and destiny
Reminding us that our time on Earth may be limited, way past a remedy
We cannot chase wealth and technology relentlessly without serious deprivation
We cannot have the divide between rich and poor grown without ruination

So, as we connect to our beloved family and friends more despite isolation
As we collaborate more as nations despite temporary halts on immigration
Many of us have had the time to wonder about our lives in the space of inquiry
Reconnecting in the quiet to nature and our inner selves, the perpetual mystery

All this rushing to achieve means nothing without our love and connection
To our meaning, to our Earth, to our each other with affection
Every now and then, we are served up with a chance to rethink our ways
To change tack in the way we approach society
the way we care and our mores

What will this be for you, you might take the time now to ask
What contribution to your life and the world that you could make that could last?
We all have reason for being here now and lessons long overdue
Can we now tackle these with each other with forgiveness and love true?



Perhaps this Corona has brought our Earth an enormous gift
To wake up, start caring for our planet and our nations adrift
We may still have time to come back to our senses,
To our hearts, to our Earth, to our meaning without defences

Thank God for our humanness and thank God for this life.
Thank God for Earth's abundance which ought to be rife.
Mother Earth teaches us of love, of tenderness, and care,
Of friendship, of honour, of giving beyond compare.

God grant us the serenity, God grant us the love
And steer us towards Heaven, which need not exist above.
Show us the way to Heaven here on Earth,
I trust Your guidance, and I honour Our worth.

By Katharine McLennan
20 August 2020
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