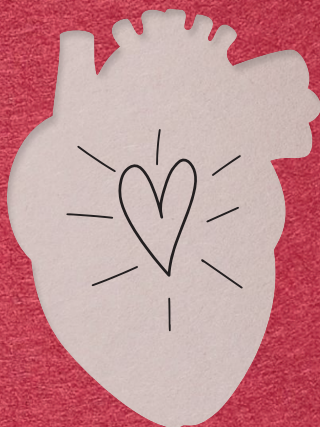


HOPE TALES



Chapbook V:
Love

ЭРОН

HOPE TALES



Chapbook V:
Love

Contributors

Jules Pretty is author of *Sea Sagas of the North* (2022), *The Low-Carbon Good Life* (2023), and *The Climate Chronicles* at www.julespretty.com. He is at based the University of Essex.

Nicky Saunter is a writer of poems and stories, and a creator of diverse things, from artwork to sustainable businesses. She is a director of the New Weather Institute and trustee of Beaver Trust.

Andrew Simms is an author, political economist and campaigner. He is co-director of the New Weather Institute, assistant director of Scientists for Global Responsibility, and a research associate at the University of Sussex. He co-authored the original Green New Deal, came up with Earth Overshoot Day and jointly proposed (with Peter Newell) the Fossil Fuel Non Proliferation Treaty.

Eva Badola is a UK-based Indian writer and freelance journalist. Her several articles and a book focus on nature, culture, and sustainability, covering the Indian continent and the UK.

Emma Kittle-Pey loves writing vignettes and stories for performance and is about to submit a novel for her PhD at the University of Essex. She teaches at the university, at ACL Essex and a primary school, works for Essex Book Festival and is the founder of local writing community, Colchester WriteNight.

Contents

The Fisher Foxes	2
Count The Stars In The Sky	5
Poems by Andrew Simms	8
The girl with the hair.	12
Red was her putrid love	14
Poems by Nicky Saunter.	16
Waiting.	19
A brief history of Chapbooks	22

The Plague Poets

Three friends - Andrew, Nicky and Nick - each wrote a poem a week in response to a suggested word or theme during the pandemic (and continue to do so).

JULES PRETTY

The Fisher Foxes

It happened this way, not so very far,

From the once flooded, mountain
slopes of snow-capped Ararat,

You approach the eco-farm,
through blasted agro-badlands,

Past exhausted state-farm, each
factory with shattered windows.

Soon after independence, three
hundred thousand small plots of land,

Were handed back, to the
rural people of Armenia,

And from a distance, you
could not mistake the fact,

That something interesting
was happening, now orchard
trees were growing.

This was the dry land, the
dying light of day,

Where two trickster people came to
fish, the ribs of each were sharp.

The traveller crew sat around the
picnic table, patient in the heat,



There were cold foods from this very
farm, kinds of cheese and sour cream,

Diced root and cooked fish,
stoned apricots in bowls,

Before them was the transformed
place, this oasis in the wasteland.

Here was the taste of freedom, for they
had chosen to plant rows of trees,

Corn and legumes grown together,
spicy greens in the sandy salty soil,

There were frogs calling in the
grass, songbirds on the branches,

And two concrete pools filled with
water, they seethed with types of trout.

Wait spoke the farmer, for you may
not have the faith in hopeful things,

How the world, might yet
unfold and open up,

As does the pale forget-me-
not, so all was quiet,

There was a flash of russet, a
flying pair of crested hoopoe.

Two red foxes strolled on stage,
gliding through the grass,

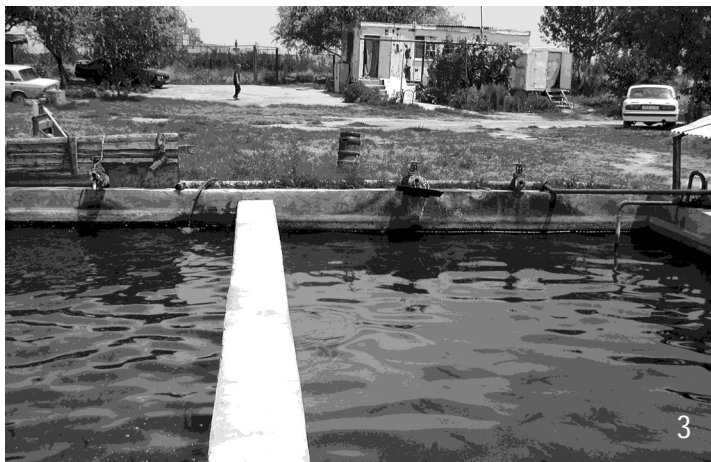
Their tails were held up high,
white-tipped between the trees,

Each settled back on haunches,
lingered in the dusk,

They looked towards the people,
the man called across a quiet yes.

The fisher foxes turned, one
dipped his tail into the water,

The vixen did the same, the
fish fought and snapped,



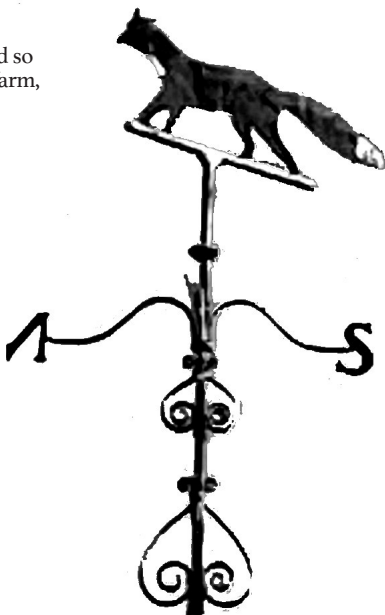
Snap snap again, they bit each tail,
And the foxes flipped the fish up
high, two fell upon the grass.

The foxes spun, each carried
in their mouth a fish away,

Each dusk the same ritual,
and from the cathedral
of Etchmiadzin,

The ancient bells pealed, and so
the men and women of the farm,

They grinned once more,
and settled silence came
upon the land.



Count The Stars In The Sky

How wet it was.

The fire ants were moving,
they were aligned,

Biting and laughing they
leapt aboard, jumping
from the levee grass,

To burn and blister feet and
limbs, and soon out in the swamp,

On the rising waters of the
bayou, water switched to save,

Each refinery and factory, acrid
on the Mississippi River,

The ants had seen this before,
so formed up a treadmill,

The colony became a
ball, their turning planet
brought up ants for air.

A heron was gliding on a tangled
mat, there was snake and alligator,

Amongst the roots of old
growth cypress, water brimmed
above a wooden bridge,

It flooded house and hunting
cabin, out on Bloody Bayou,

The sky was bright yet strained,
vehicles nose to tail,

Facing north away from
seaborne storm, red lights
flaring in the gloom,

You have to get out of the coast,
urged the anchor once again,

That's right, on some people
slept without a troubled dream,

計
星
日
天



While in abandoned homes,
beds lay chill and desolate.

The man when younger,
had stared upward from
an ornate garden,

Counting all the stars, the frogs
singing from the swamp,

A discourse from the dinner host,
had become a form of welcome,

There was never such a thing, your
myth of global warmth from oil,

And anyway what was so
wrong, about a coast undone,

By flood and hurricane, the
thirty poorest parish names,

Drowned at nearby delta, claimed
forever by the good sea god,

For in the gulf were finest
rig and vessel, and sacred
treasures on the seabed.

Since that time another
piece of sky has fallen
from the spiral castle.

Before dawn the day after another
storm, the same moon was bright,



Across the floor of his distant
home, and outside the
robin still was singing,

A red heart that beats, a
thousand times a minute,

Many a farmer in the old
country, would never want
one in the house,

This dark-eyed bird was
known, to foretell death by
flying in the kitchen,

So the girl and boy stood beside
the bayou, counting stars
and citing constellations,

And all the world began
expanding, there's one
there's another one,

Stars forevermore, that
shone between their toes.

All the lights sparkled,
and still there were,

Some things talked about,
some things never,

Well there's a star, in the
spinning mill of heaven,

Look, there's another one.



Cuckoo

To every bird a spirit flower
a bloom, a costume
for the bower

The dove, its sprig of olive
carries lofty peace and love

A black dahlia for the raven
inviting dark arcadia

Bad boy magpies in dog-rose blossom
hide kindness, share berries

Starlings stalk the grass
hazing worms among the daisies

Blackbird, like a dressed down diva
sings, lyrical as the lily

Skylarks hide in open sight, among
creamy clouds of meadow sweet

Barn owl, its red rose blood blossoms
left in snow, mouse the unfortunate

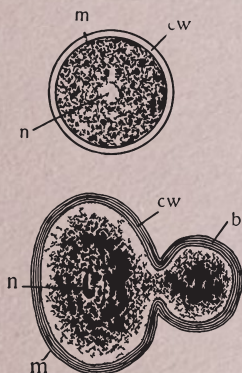
Sparrows chatter in the buxus hedge
discuss the scent of curdled sweet

And then the clever Cuckoo flower
that stole the brood thief's name
its inborn urge to rout, nests
pale pink along green verges
pushing bluebells out

**ANDREW
SIMMS**



Parthenogenesis



Solo goes the lonely
island bound komodo
laying eggs anyway
there is hope
men meet your nemesis
we're talking parthenogenesis

Sat alone beneath the moon
or otherwise marooned
there's hope for you too
friendships grow like random
cell division, poetic visions bless
seek out all that beauty
born fatherless

3²

Morning



Street jewels of broken glass
crown Friday night, sleep
grey on pavement till morning

above, blossom wakes
grins like a baby, oblivious
trusting it will be loved

fed adoring glances
replies with blesses
falling, chortling petals

as if to be, and be seen
is enough, and this alone
coats carnage underfoot

Night before

Had they known
the night before
they'd have gathered
photo albums spread
opened that old wine
laughed much, said things
that burn with awkward, honest love
then laughed again

Had they known
they'd have written down
names, habits, places lived
so the morning after
could be more endured
and stories told

Marathon

Hissle storm gathering
eat London from the East
Fifty thousand feet in pairs
cricket legs scritch
striding, stridulating
down roads plagued with yearning
people feeding on the seething street
empty miles devoured of absence
cacophonous tunnels
loved ones screaming on, on



Autumn of souls

It's not all bad, the autumn of souls
to kick through piles of fallen memories
colours drained, shape remaining
there is fruit, love grown over decades
fallen, bruised, but filling palms
Morning mist, chill breath
on tracks retraced, shorter days
the kind embrace of dusk
darkness welcome, hiding all weariness
letting cares fall
No, the autumn of souls
told in huddled fireside tales
is wood smoke on clothes
your lived-in face that glows

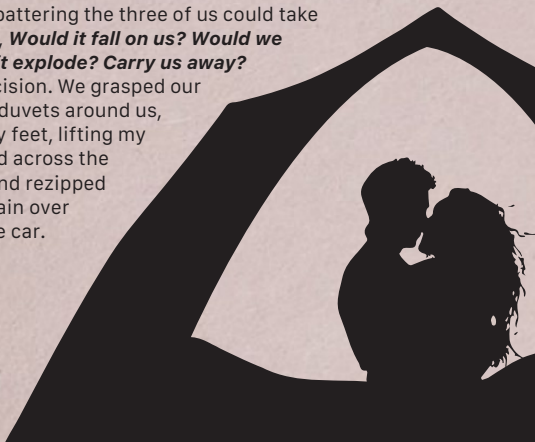
The girl with the hair

That first night, for what seemed like hours, we could hear a high-pitched cackle from the tiny tent next to ours. We'd seen the girl by the tiny tent when we arrived: bleached hair wild, shouting at someone into her phone ***If he comes here! He ain't coming to get me.***

Later there was a boy, yellow hair too, tall and stooped. When I went to the toilet block we all waited with two metre gaps, for others to leave so we could enter, but the girl with the hair pushed right past us and into the toilet slamming the door behind her. I could feel her scowling ***I ain't following no rules.***

We'd pitched in a field by a fence, amongst other tents in the corners, in front of foxgloves, fields of sheep and the mountains beyond. When we got back from exploring all the other tents had gone, apart from ours and the tiny tent next to it. That night, we were beaten by the winds pummelling our soft compartment from all sides, lightning illuminating all corners after billowing thunder barks. ***What. Have I done.*** There was only so much battering the three of us could take in the shaking tent, ***Would it fall on us? Would we be struck? Would it explode? Carry us away?***

I had to make a decision. We grasped our sleeping bags and duvets around us, mine away from my feet, lifting my daughter's as it slid across the floor. I unzipped, and rezippped and we ran in the rain over uneven earth to the car.



I fumbled opening the door, but soon we fell in, dragging our wet bedding behind us. Silence, safety; my daughter burst out crying.

She gasped and paused. In front of us, through the windscreen, was the tiny tent lit up inside and behind a silhouette of the young woman and man kissing. We watched for a minute. Later the rain drummed the roof while the children slept and I thought about the couple in the tiny tent.

The next day we went out, a long windy mountainous trek in the car to find a lake, where we hung our feet in the clear cool water and watched schools of tiny fish swim around them. When we got back there was a ring of large tents in our field. They sat around tables in the middle and didn't wave when my daughter did. They spoke in another language, I thought it was Welsh but the kids disagreed. At night I listened to the lull and flow of the words, the men's voices deep and chuckling, they opened cans, they added wood to a crackling fire.

The laughing in the tiny tent stopped and it was gone the next morning, leaving just a patch of yellow grass and rubbish they'd left behind.

EVA BADOLA

Red was her putrid love

They met in that boggy marsh where two conflicting worlds cross,
The fluid and the stubborn – the sea and the land.
Promises were made on the lavender bed to bore berries in the deepest red.

The fate condemned so harsh like the silky sand dumped on the marsh.
She turned into a static shore – He, the fluid.
Twisting on those wobbly moss –through transiting meadows, they walked.
Emotionally flooded – then drained and exhaust.

Lifeless as consuming a poison hemlock,
The gawky eyes of a swamp hawk perched on her – She a vulnerable frog.

He unloaded his complaints like malicious water dumped into a pristine lake.
Overwhelmed! In the dampness she fades.

The waves weened away, leaving boat carcasses on the bay.
Once sailing, now rotting,
In the tidal pools – both entrapped.

With a relentless anger boiling – for no vent toiling,
She guzzled the loneliness of the vast creek.

Sunk in dirt and weeds –she swayed the nasty reeds.
Her supple fingers dropped a pearl of blood,
Blazing the meadows red.

Red was her putrid love.
Like an autumnal fire, flickering unloved.

As winters proceeded, the sea birds deserted– leaving their favourite hides,
Telling ferocious tides to give up the fight.
Her chocked-up emotions drank the silent potion,
Waiting for the tears to turn into an ocean.

As she purged her melancholic heart out, the bog sponged her devastating pain,
Transforming the bitter tears into a sweetened syrup.
A feather lightness she entailed,
To feel liberated again.



NICKY SAUNTER

Chanson D'Amour

Heart brimful of spring's source
Lungs lifted, throat open, beak wide
He rasps his scraping chanson d'amour
Darting through grass too short to hide
Chestnut plumage flaming with promise
For his love, long gone - or never been
Does he know he is alone
The last corncrake in England

Saturated

I want to be saturated with you
roll the moss bank, twigs in my hair
laughing at the moon and mushrooms
let the chalky water run through my fingers
toes seeping pungent mud like fat combs
gorge on overripe pears, gritty juice on my chin
waking fingers with nettle, thorn and thistle
hear the fox, the owl, the mouse, the wind
absorbing them through my new skin ears
submerge in the woods, sink into the sea
tumble with the seals, scuttle with the crabs
let this full world fill my imaginary self

Careless
 They say I'm careless but I couldn't care less
 You say I care too much and I care enough
 for this to hurt
 I know I'm careful and hold
 To my breast fragile dreams
 Lest they be broken carelessly

The singer

From time to time
 73 On the number
 The conductor would sing
 Smiling like Dick Van Dyke
 Coming down the apples and pears
 Taking an arm or two
 Settling bags around tired feet
 He'd do songs from the shows
 Checking tickets in the chorus
 Winding handle whirring music
 The finale often on one knee
 Arm spread wide to applause
 Laughing, we tumbled off the platform
 Into the fray of London city

Rising

born small but already grown quite tall
she likes the top of stairs, plinths and towers
places where crowds congregate to look up
and clouds gather to change the weather

she spent the week blowing up balloons
pink and orange and yellow and green
tied in bunches with bows and spangles
they cluster like frogspawn overhead

us pond dwellers below gaze upward
wondering about mud-free worlds and light
if, when we finally reach the stalk end
our newborn wet wings will unfurl in splendour

sad to see her go, but happy too after all
to see that ceiling smash and her float through
taking with her that endless string of balloons
like bubbles escaping from a bottle

Mayday

May we take what we need and leave the rest
May we grow sweet fruit to share with love
May we sing often in harmony with others
May we dance with abandon and arm waving
May our gardens be full of bright eyed birds
May our skies be clear for all flying creatures
May our river waters be slapped by beavers
May our hearts be strong enough to love wasps
May our eyes open to weeds as flowers
May the swish of scythes drown out the lawnmowers
May our children roam free to know danger
And come home laughing with stories to share

Waiting

Ida looks around the porta-cabin in the car garage, and takes a seat next to a small table. She wonders how long the pink sweets in the charity box have been there. She reaches out a hand and moves it away again slowly as she hears the squeak of the door opening.

A man in a leather jacket comes in. He looks at Ida and she beams. He sits down in the other chair, the synthetic fabric exhaled. 'Pardon,' he smirks.

'Pardoned,' she laughs. 'You could ring the bell,' she says, nodding toward the counter.

'I'll wait.'

'He's just getting my spare tyre,' she says.

'I'm here for an MOT. I forgot to do it in September, my sons realised.'

He continued but his story began to confuse her a bit, she leaned towards him. He had a strong Italian accent. Her cheeks warmed.

'I forgot about my tyre,' Ida says again and feels herself blushing.

He smiles. 'I forgot my MOT.'

Ida sits back. The seat padding belches again. She chuckles. Sweet petrol particles begin to infiltrate her nose, rising up behind her eyes. Her cheeks cool and then heat again.

They are quiet. Waiting. Ida looks at him and quickly down at the sweets on the table. Out of date. A riotous electronic waltz bursts out, colours the air, fills the space. A phone behind the counter.

'We could dance!' he says, and laughs.

Ida grips the arms of the seat, shifts forwards and laughs too; a quick and hot giggle that starts to spin out of control and onwards forever. Ida's stomach is hurting. She can't stop.

by EMMA KITTLE-SPEY



The garage guy comes into the cabin, 'is this the tyre?' he asks, holding up a spare wheel. He looks at the two of them. The man is smirking and Ida is crying, red, coughing, laughing. Out of control.

'That looks like it.' She has no idea, she wants the talking over with, she cannot stop herself laughing. She doesn't know how to say goodbye to the man in the coat.

'We could have danced,' he laughs.

'Stop!' She says spluttering, and then takes a deep breath and realises that she could stop, and her body sighs, and she feels foolish. It wasn't that funny. She follows the garage guy to the van, and he lifts the tyre into the boot.

'Don't make vehicles with a spare anymore,' he says.

'What do people do then? When they get a puncture?' Ida asks, genuinely interested.

'They stand on the side of the road and wait to be recovered.'

Lifting herself up into the front seat, she glances over to the car in the courtyard. Pale blue, clean. Heart bulging, arms beginning to shake a little, feet rocking, cheeks burning, she writes her name and number on the back of her receipt, and finally, why don't we dance?

And slips it under his windscreen wiper.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHAPBOOKS

Chapbooks first emerged in the 1600s, and grew in popularity the 1700s and 1800s to become widespread forms of urban and rural street literature. A chapbook was small, typically short in length, published on flimsy paper, and illustrated with woodcuts and drawings. Chapbooks covered a wide range of material: from fairy stories and folk tales to heroic journeys, from ghost stories to songs and ballads, from fortune telling to political manifestos, from almanac to religious tract, from news of crime and disaster to dreams of hope.

Chapbooks were sold by shopkeepers and booksellers, but achieved great popularity through itinerant vendors and peddlers. These men and women came to be known as chapmen, who also carried to rural villages other items for trade: bootlaces, ribbons, needles, seeds and spice, gloves and fans. The term “chap” originates from the Old English *cēap*, meaning to barter or exchange. In France, chapbooks were known as blue books (*bibliothèque bleu*), and in Germany as people’s books (*Volksbuch*). “Chapman” became a common surname.

Many well-known fairy tales were first published in chapbooks: Jack and the Beanstalk, Jack the Giant Killer, Cinderella, Bluebeard, Little Red Riding Hood. Samuel Pepys collected and published chapbooks; John Clare heard chapbook tales as a child; and Robert Louis Stevenson and Charles Dickens both used the form. Traditional folk songs and ballads were recorded in chapbooks, and chapbook tales and poetry was read aloud in pubs and salons. It is said that tens of millions of chapbooks were sold annually on the streets by the mid-19th century.

Chapbooks are for sharing, passing on and discussing.
Please leave a comment on this page and pass it on to
someone you think will enjoy it.

