

FARE WELL

PART 1

by jackie kay

This air has heather and malt on its breath
as it sighs, puffed oot after a year of death,
under the blue mask of its flag. The Saltire's
been a warning cross. Dinny come too near.

And this air has no been able to sing
the old familiar airs, or fitba chants, or hymns;
or blend its griefs in funerals for the dead;
or laugh its joys like confetti over the newly-wed.

But the lone piper fills the pipes with air;
our individual breaths blow oot in prayer,
wee church or secular, over these rooftops;
to travel endlessly and to not stop...

Till the hands wring the minutes out of the clock
and the new year turns its key in the old year's lock.

All along the lit paths lights go oot
Small notes fall from the air..

And you cannae forget the year's goodbyes
The endless waves the old year sent

A small hand raised at a window.
Lips to the glass, that last smile, heart-rent.

So candle light the night sky
And dress the long tables.

Let us remember and never forget
That we won't let our hopes fizzle out

Someone hears the Bereavement Song through till dawn
And someone reads the lost stories of the stars.

They pull their slow oars through the clouds;
And every old hello has become a goodbye.

And every new year makes a brand-new cry.
And every new year confronts an empty sky.

*A' tarraing nan ràimh maill ac' tro na neòil,
'S soraìdh slàn air ràdh ri gach halò.*

*'S gach bliadhn' ùr ag èigheach às ùr
'S gach bliadhn' ùr a' cuir aghaidh ri speur bàn*

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