



more space than you can imagine

janey verney

© 2019 Janey Verney

All rights reserved

*No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any
manner whatsoever without written permission.*

*No part of this book may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted
in any form or by any means including electronic, electrostatic,
magnetic tape, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise
without the prior permission in writing of the publisher.*

Cover photo: detail of a poppy Janey Verney and Nicholas Breeze Wood

www.heartclown.com

more space than you can imagine

janey verney

with fields of gratitude to all of you
who have encouraged me
read, listened and supported me
and with special thanks to Tom Davis

contents

this is what i am	10
blue angel	11
Ayodya 1979	12
found in Budapest 2018	13
bring comfort	14
unless	15
napalm girl	16
shell shock ?	17
the pen	18
what is truth ?	19
let go	20
its time	22
travelling	23
sessiwn cerddoriaeth	24
what is here ?	25
christmas cheer	26
to a special fellow traveller	28
sharing	31
after storm Callum	32
autumnal	33
waiting to hear	34
having heard	35
gratitude at the hospital	36
song	37
recipe for a vision walk	38
the way	40
still	41

surprised by joy	42
in the garden	44
ducklings	45
damsel flies	46
those things	48
small girl	50
i too	52
waking	53
what is a woman ?	54
rage and ecstasy	55
white light	56
what is a clown ?	57
chough	58
fire works	59
i want	60
connected	61

this is what i am

i am the space
that can expand
between my breaths

i am the time
that turns one gesture
into the next

i am joy
that bubbles
faster than thought

i am both rage and ecstasy
their flood complete
in a moment

i am the song
whose power rings out
from my belly

i am
that which observes
my sensate self
now
and now
and again now

blue angel

once upon a moon
she seeded deep blue in the rocks
for humankind to find and prize
it became the painters' only choice
to colour a mythical mother's frocks

marc chagall knew blue
yves klein thought he owned it
blue angel smiled
winked at marlene
while her fingers followed trails of indigo
traded across the world

mississippi men woke up
with her essence all around their beds
calling their souls to music
so their pain could be shared and shed

some days she paints the sky
just when my back is turned
blue seeps and spreads around the clouds
blazes like praise
into my lightstruck heart

Ayodya 1979

first time in another continent
so far from home
three parched travellers sprawled out flat
on a bed in a concrete room
drained by sun and dust
abandoned to heavy heat

with shock of sudden sound
the showerhead sprayed to life
instant energy
craving bodies rushing
under the flow
joyful screaming
splashing
with new understanding why
people
worship
water

found in Budapest 2018

Center of the world at an affordable price.
Valid for one entry of one person.
Coffee by your choice. Feel yourself like home.
Throwing anything and jumping in the water
is strictly forbidden.
Please turn to our hostess with confidence.
Open your sandwich open your mind.
Love is all you need.

bring comfort

gathering clothes for refugees
i am shamed by my reluctance
to part with things i hardly use
which could make this winter passable
for someone whose loss
exceeds all that I know
home, people, places, connections

how can i begrudge warm gloves
thick jacket i never wear
hanging there because of its history ?
let it wrap its warmth round someone else
bring comfort to their heart
as mine is eased by gratitude
that i can give

unless

it's hard to know i can't stop what i'm seeing
open or close my eyes it's in my face
unless i let it go and trust wellbeing

why do people smash things even though
threads binding them are intricate as lace ?
it's hard to know I can't stop what i'm seeing

how to stay calm as rising storm winds blow
that may not let me travel at my pace
unless i let it go and trust wellbeing

how much pain would drive someone to stow
away as cargo just to reach this place ?
its hard to know i can't stop what i'm seeing

anger and fear break me or make me go
and hide inside a bloody carapace
unless i let them go and trust wellbeing

dark moments steal my knowledge of the glow
of sunset, all my love they can displace
its hard to know i can't change what i'm seeing
unless i let it go and trust wellbeing

napalm girl

she's still screaming down the years
trapped in that instant of agony and terror
her very nakedness
pointing up the uniformed anonymity
of soldiers behind her
two small cogs in the vast machine of war

but its her that i remember
her howl that broke through
into my comfy sunlit world
the other side of the globe
that stopped me shocked me
woke me long enough
to learn a small something
about the ongoing throb and splinter
of the pain of war
as it flares again somewhere right now

her agony reached my body
my thoughts my sheltered reality
and could never be unheard again
her image impossible to spool back

despite my reluctance to engage
my broken heart reaches across decades to hers
in horror
in shame
in gratitude for a terrible awakening

shell shock ? *(for Percy)*

100 years ago
they thought
that shock waves severed nerves

no

the hole in his soul
sent him home in a wheelchair
the hole in his soul
made a hole in his life
draining him back to the mud
where his lostness hid
making him risk
so much that he loved
dealing the cards
that shortened his life

only concentration
from a later generation
would complete the excavation
of his young self from that crater
leading him down
along other tunnels
to the joy of reconnection
and his soul's journey onward

the pen

the pen slants here in my hand
leading me on into words
like fingering in the sand

its my turn to write
to be here feels right
not to hide in the night
there's no-one to fight
its been coming so long
just keep on letting it
keep on bringing it on
its prime time and it rhymes

stay here at the brink
don't stop to think
give words their wild way
don't know what they'll say
easier than you thought
who said it was fraught
the ship is in port
no ought to or have to
you found your place
just get on the case
its time prime time

what is truth ?

truth is now
my alertness writing this poem
your sentience reading this poem
the past has seasoned us
the future is unknown
this is the moment of the rose
unfolding each petal
in our hearts
now

let go

let go
let go
i will guide you
you know what that feels like

let go
let go
i will take you
to new waters
you don't know
it wont fit
you can't be comfortable
if you wanna grow

let go
let go
this is not where you've been before
this is not how you've done it before
let go
let go
let
your
pen
talk

dance
over the threshold
you don't know what comes next

let go the walls that were your strength
walk free
find new form join the flow
all you need will be with you
you have to walk away

its time

the view spells spring
but the air is cold

tulips in their vase
have unfurled in all directions
becalmed

the radio opens up the past
other sights and seasons
vie for focus
discolouring the afternoon
leaching
time in hand for other things

time to break
the spell and
move

travelling

afraid to share
to let another in
or yourself out
what do you fear to find or lose ?

try travelling with one suitcase for two
over days and nights your belongings might mix
no longer sure what is whose

random socks and knickers disturb neat tee shirts
books and devices tunnel through fabric
your dress unfolds
flows sideways
meets an uninhibited trouser leg
freed toiletries nestle cheekily in a pair of shorts
a bra parties with large shoes
a small comb
and a scattering of souvenirs

turn the bag out what's left ?
love actually

sessiwn cerddoriaith

1 2 3 4
fiddle flute fiddle harp
melodica and whistle
fiddle flute fiddle harp
guitar flute fiddle

another tune starts spreading round
twisting turning line of sound
snaking curling round the room
held in place by beating boots

patterns speak the land they're from
places chords and dancing bows
weaving countries joining minds
linking history down the years
giving back a moment's life
to all of those who knew these songs

1 2 3 4
fiddle flute fiddle harp
melodica and whistle
fiddle flute fiddle harp
guitar flute fiddle

what is here ?

here is my eyes focussed on a tiny backlit fly
moving just perceptibly on the window pane
and double wing mirrors on my car beyond

here is changing a habitual twist in my back
so that ache doesn't recur now

here is finding my fingers moving again
not knowing when they started
because then i wasn't here

here slows me down
here is also now
if i am not here and not now
i am not here

one thing's clear
i can't do what i'm here for
if i am not here

christmas cheer

does a girl have to shop
till she goes off pop
afraid to be a flop
wield the polish and the mop
till its all tip top
and she's ready to drop
lost the energy to bop
wishes it would stop ?

no !

don't be down in the mouth
cos the sun's gone south
it's the dark of the year
that's nothing to fear
just look around here
and let us veer
towards celebration and christmas cheer

still the message from a baby in a manger
calls to us for kindness
both for strangers
and familiar ones around us

the smallest present brought with love
reflects the star that shines above
lights up the truth in all our hearts
opening the place that starts to grow
when we know
our love is seen and heard
can fly like a bird
with good thoughts and kind words
to share forgiveness joy and love
that comes from above
to be with us now
and always

to a special fellow traveller

thank you for the warmth of your weight
on my body
when i lay on the floor
knowing before i did
that i needed
rest

thank you for your early daring as a hunter
when all fluffy kitten of you
jumped into space
from the kitchen window sill
to run in circles mewing
on the downstairs neighbour's lawn
bird in mouth

thank you for your hungry sense of humour
first thing in the morning
when you knew that though
pushing small items
on the chest of drawers
might not get to me
whiskers in my face
would

thank you for teaching us about food
the 2 day old mess on your saucer
which i thought stank
having only now perfectly
ripened

thank you for curling
round in my lap
to join and deepen
my meditation

thank you for teaching us the value of home
following us down the street
a few doors behind
almost to the main road
so we had to persuade you
all the way back
and miss the film

thank you for teaching us diplomacy
how to pour water from on high
upon your adversary
who then levitated
through the garden gate
out of your life

thank you for staying at my parents' house
during our holiday
for your restlessness
hours before we returned to fetch you
and for following us
all round the garden

thank you for knowing
that the warmest place
on a cold night
was on the duvet
between us

thank you for teaching us to care for you
to the end of your time here
and when you let go into sleep and beyond
thank you for the deep gratitude
your head spoke to my arm

sharing

take time for each reflection
there's joy in meeting what you know
no need to push

new growth comes from old roots
from rot the ivy climbs to the sky
tiny hazel leaves expand ineluctably
and one small yellow flower
can change a landscape
in spring the grass resumes its work
those weeny leaves will be bluebells.

ancient presence stands beside modern ways
and some are marked for death
be vigilant
there is more space than you can imagine

after storm Callum

there's a skeleton on my window
a small leaf
hurled by the storm
stopped by the glass
the top stuck where it was spreadeagled flat
lower part recoiling in the afternoon sun

i open the door
stand in the day's late warmth
look from the other side

dry labia curl forward and inward
meet and overlap
creating a brittle cavity
whose backbone points to the sky
up through the leaftip glued to the window

bleached lines radiate out
their broken crosspieces
reminders of the intricate network
that pumped life
danced flickered and flexed on the tree
before being tugged and battered blown
into headlong rain whipped flight
ending abruptly
between storm's warm breath and wet glass
stamped here
stranded through days of calm
fragile tenacity still beautiful

autumnal

sunburnt wind-torn colours
fall away
leaving backlit clarity

leaves play
desiccated dancers
making visible
intricate spirals of air
bobbing and scuttling
blown into heaps
held
by rise of a root
or width of a wall

time and the rain
blacken them down
to mulch with the earth
precondition for birth
next spring

waiting to hear

my mind keeps rushing on to what'll happen
if when how
when now
is so beautiful with sun and birdsong
why isn't that enough ?

my fear has sped ahead to questions in the future
even though
it may not be like that
and the willow leaves are waving and enticing
in the shade
saying
hang loose
stay here
with me

anticipation has its place or we would never even
make it down the stairs
but why
as my eyes
follow the season's budding apples bobbing
on their tree
is my chest
so tightly waiting for the phone to ring when
office hours are over for today ?

i have a choice to spend the evening
on edge, distracted, disappointed
or let it go
say thankyou to the roses
and conjure up some yummy food for tea ...

having heard

definite news lands heavy in my chest
muffling my radar
knowing it was coming is no preparation

the timeless gap between here and there closes
its no longer an option to be now without then
the connection feels complete
the trajectory is one

my imagination tiptoes closer
with more focussed apprehension
no more obfuscation
one bald word

surgery

the axis of my life resettles

gratitude at the hospital

thank you for the moments
when i know you
when your love fills me
contains me
and i contain you

i cease reaching out
you radiate round me
in the midst of apparent crisis
there is no hurry
all is well

song

there is a song which sometimes can't be heard
but never tires
moving through this world
like the lone pink cloud
that catches the sun's late glow
in pale blue sky

if you find it is singing you
welcome its spaciousness
it is food for your heart

recipe for a vision walk

ingredients

really comfortable footwear

a long stretch of unboundaried time

a journal with favourite writing materials, or a voice recorder

clothing in which you feel free to walk / run / sit / dance / lie down outside

a question you would like help with

method

1 take the ingredients outdoors to a woodland, nature reserve, park, beach, mountain or other unhurried place

2 put on the footwear & the clothing

3 write your question in the journal and find a safe place to leave it and your writing materials, or recorder

4 step away from this place, and stop this is your threshold

5 breathe deeply and slowly, ask your question, thank the place for the walk you are about to take, and ask the place to show you the way

6 step over the threshold

7 walk forward gently, letting everything be new -- being led by the place -- walk, stand, sit or lie in different places -- maybe dance or sing -- judge nothing -- take your time -- for as long as it takes --

8 walk back to your threshold

9 say thank you

10 step back over the threshold

11 retrieve your journal or recorder, sit somewhere very comfortable, and write, or draw, or record yourself, describing all that you have experienced

12 take time to think about what you have written in relationship to your question

13 treasure it

the way

if you don't consider wrong
the place where your steps have led you
if you decide it took just long
enough to get here, and accept you
made the best of it along the way

is there room to give up blaming others
a choice not to inveigh
against opponents, friends or brothers
because they choose another way
or see a different view ?

there is a way of silence
where layers fall away
all the hurts that warp us
outweighed by love

still

i didn't tell her
and yet she knew
she knew so much of me
i didn't realise
what that meant
till after she died
and i heard myself say to you
no-one will ever know me like that again
and you said to me
but she still does
she still does
she still
still
does

surprised by joy

arrival
an old stone cottage
two solitary weeks before
anyone else arrived

long days of cleaning
in response to a deep need
a call to fill an absence

scrubbing away the sadness
of occupant before occupant
starting to befriend these walls and floors

bucket after bucket of clean water in
bucket after bucket of dirty water out
the hurts of the past ebbing away

making waves of sound and music
to clear the density in the air
again and again

yet another morning
teabreak on the sofa
the moment of realisation

as something more than sunshine
arrived like a weather front
slowly advancing across the room

lovingly filling the house, and me,
reconnecting us to earth and sky
filling the spaciousness between things
the house's spirit returned

in the garden

diminishing remnants of a wooden gate
rest and rot against the barn wall
this year's nettles not yet tall enough to hide it
irrepressible ash saplings
threading up through the bars
sudden urgent wingbeats bring
a great tit to a stop there
its tight little beak crammed with food
it checks round with care
past the tufts of new leaves
and suddenly is gone
into a gap in the breezeblocks
seconds later shooting back out and off again
tiny cheepings chorus briefly
in the depths of the wall
then all is still again
need continues to wait

ducklings

it's the third day of ducklings on our pond
mother rests on the bank
head tucked down in the overcast warmth
the exquisite purple band on her side
leading my gaze to
a hatchling nestled at her side
while the water in front of them ripples
with the busy zigzags of
fluffy siblings
scudding to side and front and side again
ingesting as many teeming insects
as the afternoon allows

i remember the imperative
my childhood self felt
when spring arrived
the compulsion to run
and run and run

damselflies

pausing on the way to my studio
i am stopped
by a damselfly
whose undeniable blueness
comes to rest on
a leaf in front of me

i pay attention
and the garden opens out

a bumble bee
in hectic obeisance
softly places a burrowing nod
in each pink geranium blossom
next to a crowd of rosebuds
just beginning
to relinquish themselves to the sun

the voices of growing ducklings on the pond
push with louder emphasis now
as their foraging hunger
displaces wider ripples

and again and again
my eye is led
by the brilliant blue lines
of the iridescent damselflies
purposeful and silent
cruising and stopping
floating and joining
allowing a hole to widen
in the weave of my day
feeding my soul
for when its my turn
to be busy

those things

i woke up this morning
and said to myself
the sun is shining
this is the day
to do those things

but Life said
look at this
this leads to that
and consider the other

i said ooh yes
if i give this a moment
that would fit there
which means first do this
after those
are out of the way

the morning just went
it was time for some food
and a walk
won't be in good shape
without exercise
and then
i can do those things
before it gets dark

just when i got home
Life phoned me up
really needing a chat
then i couldn't not finish
what i promised last month
and catch the post
before doing those things

the light was going
when i got to the post
i met Life in the shop
what a story she told me
we've made a plan
for a wonderful time
all day next tuesday

my other free time
for doing those things

small girl

small girl watches man on the wall
man on the wall watches small girl
small girl knows she is connected to him
he has a stick
a real one just like it hangs below him

small girl loves to sit on the sofa
and listen to her father's comforting voice
man on the wall listens to her story time too
he has no voice
his eyes are sad and patient
he never looks away

small girl knows his life hurt
and his hand is buried under the church
where there is no door

man on the wall is not like any of her grownups
but he is hers too
he wrote letters
and they know at school
she didn't like everyone turning to look at her
in the middle of history

man on the wall has long hair and wears armour
the neighbours upstairs leave a door open
so that he can walk through
does he wear his armour ?

her uncle has seen him
small girl felt him once
and so did the dog
they didn't see him
they were afraid to go and look

small girl would miss man on the wall
if he wasn't there

i too

after years in a chest
my father's coat
strong black weight
packed in a crate
passed along
its not too late
to reach a throng
of empty hands
from other lands
to say i too
care about you

waking

the child outgrows her shoes and clothes
and joins up newfound words
to touch the world

the blossom's petals gently spread
beyond the bud
that held it tightly home

the pupa splits and folds apart
allowing newness to emerge
and dry its wings

how will our senses be transformed
as love calls forth
our waking souls ?

what is a woman ?

a woman is a dancer
she makes shapes with those around her
or moves alone in the power of her wildness

bending stretching turning stamping
she reaches subtle spaces
slowing spreading balancing
she waits
regroups
rides her heartbeat onward
into the unknown

a woman is softness bellyness breastness
she is nurture and abundance
she determines life and death

fierce loving vulnerable
she sits naked in the mud
not knowing where she ends
and Mother Earth begins

rage and ecstasy

in the blind moment
when rage stamps
fists clenched
and howls her fire
she meets her sister ecstasy
whose senses widen
like a prayer
her arched back
melting the world
in one timeless cry

white light

white light does not evoke for me
products promising
a laminated modern life
where
poreless and pixel perfect
you can have
the whitest smile

but
the memory of an LP cover

white light is not
those rainbow colours
widening from the prism

but
the all inclusive endless beam
that gives them life
and shines on after

what is a clown ?

clown approaches poem warily
tests it with a finger
scoops out some words
and feeds them to her heart

she rolls the rest into a ball
puts the ball on her shoulder

eyes and nose follow
how it rolls down her arm
teeters on her fingertips
spills over her edges

it bounces three times
and flies into a tree

clown stretches after it
amazed

it can speak fluent movement

chough

to see by the sea
the lift of a chough
is enough
to set my heart free

my spirit flies with it
flouts the fact of my feet
bound to the ground

spirit bird acrobat
relish your habitat
show my soul how
to fly with you now
to play with the wind
no longer pinned down
but free

fire works

clouds flame like satin cushions
until sunset leaves the sky

doubled in the window pane
a candle's prayer
flickers briefly brighter

fireworks' fierce flowers
vanish in a moment

behind the dark horizon
sun still pours light
extravagant as love's truth
fire without end

i want

i want
to take
time
stretch it
wide enough
for you
and i
to step in

i want
us
to run
out of time
out of the waste
of time
immemorial
to the place
that time
forgot

i want
to leave
time
out of mind

i want
time
to find us
wanting
in the timeless
present

connected

what is it that connects us ?
that knows each particle dances in place ?
that wavering branch
the sparkle of drops on grass
your stationary shadow
as you listen
to something
like the sound of a great bell
that never
quite
stops
ringing

