

Young Birmingham Poets:

Notes from a Pandemic

Rollercoaster

by Jasmine Gardosi

This pandemic? Absolute rollercoaster.
Wild. But I'm trying to carry on as normal now.
That's what everyone else seems to be doing.
And I should be grateful we've got our freedom back.
Look at the direction we're going in -
on the up.
Finally emerging into the light,
back out there. In the real world.
Yeah, my social skills have gone off the rails but...
I'm getting them back on track.
We've turned a corner - in a good way.
I've loved going back to sweaty gigs
and sitting on trains full of people
and shaking hands with absolute strangers
and coughing once and thinking it's COVID.
The path forward is clear... so clear.
We've done the hard work, so shouldn't it be downhill from here?

See? Everything's fiine.

It's going smoothly.

I've found my rhythm.

I'm in control.

We've taken a turn for the better

and then for the worse

and then for the better

and then for the...

Why does it feel like we're going backwards,

and round in circles at the same time?

Okay, you want the truth? I'm still terrified.

I freak out in crowded places.

I can't tell where my OCD ends,

and 'acceptable' COVID anxiety begins.

I'm afraid so, I stay home, I lay low, I say no.

No matter what's happening with the number of cases

we're still riding through our own waves -

like my shielding friends, they're still isolated.

We're on the same coaster - different carts.

Same play - different parts.

Same storm - different boats,

holding different floats,

wearing different coats.

Just do whatever makes you feel safe.

It's more than okay to go at your pace.
We've still come so far
even if we're technically in the same place.