

The Many Hats

Bless the hats that parents wear
The hat racks full even pre-virus
Each hat hook carries weight and care
A look, a fate, a responsible prayer

A hat for Nurse, or Chef or Chauffeur,
And one for Mathematician and Humorist
Another for maid, Fashion Cop, Teacher,
Veterinarian, Nurturer, Courtroom Judge, Bleacher

Now those hats demand an upgrade
Are put on alert, steroidally injected
Redefined, refined, ordered online or handmade
Worn all at once and stitched onto the fronts
Is artistically written, "I don't know"
As an answer to kid's endless daily affronts.

"When will this be over?
Has replaced
"When will we get there?"
Since we don't go crosstown to playdates or aunties
And we actually drive exactly nowhere
So instead it's a hard call to quell the kids when antsy
And none of the hats they wear have answers plain or fancy.

The genes hardwired into us
That gift a child with reassurance
Are unemployed genomes right now
And parents have run out of endurance

The hats get smushed with mac and cheese, trampled, tie-dyed
And one becomes damp with sweat while serving
As a tech support - password finding baseball cap spy

Worldwide parents fervently wake up with cheerleading intent
Sing-song telling their kids, "It's a new day"
While notifications ping or landlords call for rent
Splurging on favorite berries or bacon or banana bread
Sometimes even a dance in the kitchen of optimism
To brush away at dread

Motionless kids stare at yogurts
While they should be scrambling out the door
In pre-corona times they'd be packing their backpacks
To get the bus on time or before

There'd be friends there and enemies too
And in that split second of waiting in silence
They'd learn a relationship skill or two
Then on the bus they'd squeal or whisper
Practice that song from music class
But now the downbeat is heavy in music
Teaching tunes over zoom – kids say “pass”

“Our kids are so resilient”
The hat manufacturers say
And a father keeps up his mantra:
“This will all be a memory one day.”

There are no hats for the many meltdowns
And one that really burns up the rug
Is Monday journal writing time
When kids become unplugged
Since there's nothing about the weekend to write
And the screen - just like a drug
Has weakened our children's eyes and used up their sighs.

In parent's dream life hats come off
An aftermath with fields and sky
A dizzying hill of somersaulting bodies
And laughter, but no cries or whys
Grass blades in barrettes and shoes
A squeal a shriek a laugh a coo

Parents pausing without a phone nearby
Hats off masks off shoes off - in lavender
Or lilac or other scents – the great balancer
A field so lush
With no rules about touch
A screenless cushion
A timeless rush
Another hug rushing
A deep inhale
A reset button tale