**Winner**

**Pod Life**

The pod was too small. Everyone knew that. They had all been growing so fast that the pod could not keep up and now it was stretched so tight that they all felt they were being choked. They were pressed together so tightly and now the pod walls were getting dry and stiff. Things were getting intolerable. The pressure was getting too much. Someone moved. Bam! Everyone was flying. the pod was gone. The world was so bright away from the pod. So big. So lonely. The strong ones put down roots, Thrived. Started pods of their own.

By Beano

**Winner**

**An sàs**

Bha i a’ coimhead air làimh an dorais, is air a làimh fhèin, crochte san adhar air a slighe, glaiste na gluasad. B’ ann na ceann a bha a’ chòmhstri a’ ruith. Mu shaoghal an taobh a-muigh. Tarraingeach. Eagalach. Oillt na mionach, oillt ga mùchadh. Ach a bhith beò...

Beò.

Priobadh dòchais. *Sin thu a-nis*. Rinn i greim air an dòchas is air làimh an dorais, mar nach biodh a beatha air fad air a gleidheadh san dearbh thiota seo. Ghluais a’ ghlas ann an sgreuch, agus tron doras leth-fhosgailte, dhòirt solas drilseach an latha.

B’ fhada bhon uair sin.

Feòrag

**Stuck**

She looked at the handle of the door, and at her own hand, hanging in the air on its way, frozen in motion. The conflict was in her head. The outside world. Attractive. Frightening. Terror in her stomach, terror smothering her. But to be alive…

Alive.

A flicker of hope. *There you go*. She grabbed her hope and the door handle, as if her life depended on this one moment. The lock moved in a screech, and through the half-opened door, the dazzling daylight poured in.

Long time no see.

Feòrag

**Migration Routes**

Weeping, as I fly. Tears that welcome me in the nest. As I flew seasons ago, longing for a nation that now seems to fail. To fail to provide, a home or a roof, some shelter of any kind. As they fall from up high and I, retake my way. Howling, as the path goes by. Moans of solitude on a far away land. As I swam upstream, pink belly, youth’s vigour. As they go back home, and I, on my feet back again. Long ago, forgotten my way back home, and now I roam, longing for what I lost.

Mish Lys

**Freedom**

*September*

Freedom. To be free to think, to speak, to *live.* It sounds good; like it’s some sort of pinnacle of life. To be free means you’ve made it, right? The truth is, freedom is the arch enemy when you leave home. You have an infinite void that can’t be filled by anything other than that feeling of being *home*…

*June*

Maybe freedom is the pinnacle of life after all. I’ve learnt how to be happy being free because I’ve learned one important thing: home is not a place; home is about the people that make your heart happiest.

Sophia Riley

**Finalist**

**Becoming Homeless**

Home. For some it is a big building, with rooms for comfort and belongings, but for me, it was my husband.  Saying my parting goodbye to him was the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do. Seeing him laying there, in the sterile white bed, surrounded by the constant murmur of the hospital. It didn’t matter that we didn’t have full privacy, we were together and we both knew what was coming. As I watched his last breath, tears fell like hailstones from my eyes, burning as they went. I was all of a sudden without my safe place; homeless.

Jade Hendry

**Shortlisted**

Towards the void I open my eyes and see two fireballs in the dark sky. They're looking at me as if they were the universe's eyes, and I know I have to leave today. I'll abandon this piece of land where I've been lying on since I remember. It's not much, but it's everything I've got. There's nothing around me. If I step out of my 10m2 , I'll fall into the void. I don't actually know what would happen, but that's a possibility. If those giant balls of fire don't kill me, boredom will. Will the air resist my weight? There's nothing around me...yet? Perhaps that will change someday. I stand up and step on the blank space. I don't fall. I guess I just have to walk.

Pina Colada

**Finalist**

Brave me

When I first thought about leaving home

I was 3 , I might be wrong?!

I took some toys and a mat

And ran away to my grandma's flat

I sat down with indignation,

Telling her my big frustration.

“ Granny please listen to me

I am big as you can see “

I have a problem with your daughter

“Mainly because I spilt some water”

I hope you don't dispute

I will move to live with you”

Time has passed and now I live

Far away from my home land

All I can do is only wave

To that time when I was brave.

Diana Solo

**Leaving home**

This day is like timeless; minutes and hours have stopped. The streets are empty without people and cars. Sometimes by spending a long time at home, we lose track of what date and day it is, as if the past, the present and the future are merging into one.

We must be more positive and know that after every bad thing follows good. We must be together, loving each other and appreciating that we are good and safety, behind the walls of our homes.

Isolation make all of us so creative ready to painting our windows, to play instruments and singing songs. One day we will be ready to leaving our homes, but not yet. Until then we have to be happy and grateful and use the free time utilized.

Families are reading, singing, dancing and laughing and just the hope is connection to real life.

The only hope and salvation for millions of people around the world, is that we will be free to go out one day.

VANYA IVANOVA

**Morven**

The drive to work took thirty minutes and is approximately thirty miles. This symmetry pleased Cait and she thought about it most mornings as she climbed into her car. Today though, those thirty minutes rolled out in front of her. Cait paused to glance at her buzzing phone before throwing it in the passenger seat. She could see the great grey lump of Morven, it’s familiar lines traced her journey home every evening. Her phone buzzed again inside the car. Cait took another glance at the mountain then got in the car. She looked down at the phone: ‘Mum Calling’.

C. Mountford

**Leaving but Returning**

I’m leaving home for the first time in an age to go to a supermarket during lockdown. Gosh I hope the car starts. Please start. Well it unlocked so the battery isn’t dead. A quick tap of the steering wheel and a bolstering pep talk, and vroom! The car coughs into life. Phew!

Driving down the road, hearing the brakes grind, unused for so long.

At the supermarket, what goodies I may buy! Oh! The queue! Look at the queue! No.

Just no.

I turn around and go home.

Still, at least the car had a drive.

Melanie Philpott

**Finalist**

**Leaving Home**

It wasn’t meant to be difficult. Everyone did it. Anyone who had an issue also had a diagnosis. Everyone knew that. Long word for a big problem. Mine began small. As most problems do. In fact, so small I wasn’t even aware it was there. Excuses covered any obvious signs and justifications filled in the gaps. It wasn’t an issue. Then, it grew. Enough for me to notice it. Although, it was shy and disguised itself as many other things. Things that were easier to understand. Eventually, the disguises decreased, and I saw it for what it truly was – Agoraphobia.

The H Word

**Leaving Home**

Many things to consider, so many emotions about it all and challenges, along the way.

Anticipation and excitement, a sense of freedom!

A feeling of independence, tinged with slight trepidations, along with a fear of the unknown.

Knowing that the future is what you make it, according to well-wishers.

Something to bear in mind… As history reveals itself!

The days loom closer to the big day, there is a sense of relief. Because…’remember this? remember to do that...?’, Is getting annoying….

Oops, a week into my climbing and camping trip, I realise that I do miss the dishwasher, the washing machine, but, most of all, the home-made soup and scones!

Adventurer

**Leaving Home**

Leaving home is being all alone.

Is it me or is it my clone?

What is real and what is known?

These are questions I ask when leaving home.

It isn’t a trial, it is not a test,

To see how you far you can go without needing a rest.

Two steps back and one foot to the fore,

Before stepping outside your front door.

An invisible thread looming outside.

Who can we ask to be our guide?

Look within yourself, deep within your mind.

That is where you’ll find,

Important decisions, you’ll need to make,

Before getting past your garden gate.

Paint Shed

**Shortlisted**

**HOME SPIRIT**

The toaster’s faulty. The bread won’t pop up and gets stuck. You turn it off before the slices are incinerated. Can’t blame her for that.

You’re late again. Drink some coffee and head for the front door. You pull the handle and it comes away in your hand. The screws are loose. Did she do it? No time to fix it.

To the back door. Hurry now. Here’s the key. Too late. You can’t turn the key in the lock.

“Marie, I’m coming back” you plead. “but I must work”.

You try the key, and it turns. “Thank you”.

Samuel Derek

**An Upgrade**

There was a mixture of euphoria and fear. This time, during the 22 months of lockdown, the Authorities transformed the world completely with technology we had not known existed.

 As a token of comfort,  just this one time, before leaving home we were allowed to undergo an upgrade.

We said we'd just fix a few, small things. You joked I'd still like 'the deal'...

Later, on the way to the future, we shared  our hopes and reminisced the past,  now filtered by different perspectives... Walking  alongside hundreds of busty blonds, power suits and superheros, we slowly realised our mutual irrelevance.

Varg Otti

**Leaving Home**

I hate saying goodbye
since he has left.
That was not his fault tho’
The War could be blame for.

Their love was the sweetest
and gifted me to them.
But how can I go
knowing what I know…

We lived happily and were sure
that would last forever.
Our hero said the fatal goodbye
but promised to return alright.

Our hope was huge
but I was her only refuge.
Every sunset brought up a tear
and it Had to come with fear.

The War has ended
but he’s never arrived.
I must leave home now,
but cannot say goodbye.

Julien DeLuv

**A' chuairt mhòr**

Bha a poca-droma beag dearg làn is deiseil ri taobh an dorais. Trì ceapairean càise, dà bhàr teòclaid, botal uisge agus geansaidh mòr blàth. Dhèanadh sin a' chùis, shaoil i. Thog i am poca bhon làr agus chaidh i gu sgiobalta tron uinneag - a casan ruisge a' tighinn sìos gu socair san fheur. Thug i sùil air an taigh a-nis, 's smaoinich i air a pàrantan nan cadal - am biodh iad ga h-ionndrainn sa mhadainn? 'S cinnteach gum biodh, ach bha an taigh beag sa choille deiseil 's mar a bha e san leabhar. Ach a-nis, bha i dorcha fuar

Eubha

**Eagal san Eadailt**

Bha Maria air turas taistealachd *Via Francigena* ullachadh fad dà bhliadhna. Rinn i cùrsaichean Eadailtis, rinn i rannsachadh air na pocannan-droma as fheàrr, agus leugh i blogaichean turas coiseachd. Cha d' fhuair i ach còig làithean air an taistealachd agus chunnaic i damhan-allaidh.  Chuir e dearg-eagal a beatha oirre agus dh'fhalbh neart nan cas. Chaidh i na closach air an t-slighe. Cha bhiodh sin cho dona mura robh i air slighe beinn. Dhùisg i san ospadal.  Cha b’ ann mar seo a shaoileadh i a bhiodh cùisean nuair a thàinig i, ach ’s iomadh car a chuireas cuibhle an fhortain.

Mùrdag