

Leeds. Large, lively city of hope
Chasing dreams through the drizzle
Ever expanding city centre roads
Expanding pathways for survivors and foxes and demons...
Change peeking through the dazzling market fabric stalls
Refuge, resistance and attitude stitched into our bones
Wildness too

Time slips, speeds up, slows down
Time slips here and there and also backwards
Memories woven into the private spaces behind locked doors
The bath, the bed, the phone is ringing
Who's that knocking?
Memories woven into the public spaces we have to navigate just to live
Into the street, the bus, the B&M store
Memories woven into the private spaces of our bodies
Stomach cramping, jaw tight, heart racing

Time slips here and there and also forwards
Dynamic fear - everywhere is danger, shame, dread

Trying to predict everything that's going to happen

What if...?

What will it mean if...?

What will I do if...?

What if he's there...?

I want to get out

I want my own space where there is no judgement

Sometimes it's just easier to be alone

Where I get to be me and I don't have to guess

The constant internal dialogue

It's a huge hidden workload and nobody knows about it

Imagine if brains were out loud

Imagine if bones could talk

Imagine if we could just say

Imagine everyone's thoughts

[Overlapping voices]

I'm not gonna eat/I haven't deserved to eat/I haven't done anything/I haven't walked today/I haven't exercised/I haven't burned any

calories/How many calories is in that/How many calories is in an apple/Is it 50

I want to get out/Why do I want to get out/I don't feel safe/Am i making it up/Is she looking at me

What if I'm not good enough/What if she's there/What if he's there/What if they're there/What if I'm too much and nobody will accept me for who I am

[Sung]

Imagine everyone's thoughts all in one place

It would be so noisy

Imagine if we could just say

But we carry it all inside

Imagine everyone's thoughts

Outside is silent

Except outside isn't silent. Outside says...

[Overlapping voices]

You need to forget about the past and learn to move on/You've had lots of input but with little success/You're a waste of energy/You're way too sensitive/You're not trying hard enough/You're too needy/Too sensitive/Too unstable/You need to let go of the past/Do you just want

attention?/Move on/It was a long time ago, stop playing victim

If my bones could talk they would tell you that I am a survivor of child sexual abuse

They would tell you about statistics and how many of us there are and how so few of us get justice

They would tell you that it wasn't me, that I didn't do anything wrong

And that I live every single day with the extra unseen burden of abuse

In a society that has abandoned me

They would tell you about the pain, the nausea, the migraines

They would tell you that my body hurts more on some days than others

That most of all I need safety

They would tell you that I crave warmth and acceptance

Clear boundaries, coconut ice cream and Kit Kat chunkies

That I need decent rest and sleep

Compassion and understanding

Accountability and compensation

They would tell you how complicated it is as a survivor to acknowledge that you have needs at all

My bones would tell you about the things I love

The music that has kept me alive, that has held me through the darkest nights
They would tell you what it means when people just get it
The people who help me believe in myself, who know it will take me time to trust
And that how I am makes sense in the context of the abuse that I have suffered
They would tell you about the absolute joy I sometimes feel in nature
About the iridescent blue kingfisher I saw flying through the woods last week

My bones would tell you that I want to fly
I would like to spread out my wings and rise up above this city
I want to flock
I want community and connection
I want to feel the power of the collective to stand side by side and fight for justice
I need to make art to weave my story into the fabric
So eventually people understand, eventually we become impossible to ignore
I need you, extraordinary Leeds to open up your arms and welcome us in
To open your minds and try to do better
To open your ears and listen...