

**Going to my first pap smear
on the day after I finished my period**

I am trying to write a poem about kindness but it is hard
when all the mirrors hold their teeth backwards
& I have spent the morning being rejected by various
kind emails & trying to be thankful I make jam

in a large bottomed pan & send it in the post
with hand-made labels to the usual suspects promising them
I know they are very small & cold & the pandemic
wounds them but I am thinking of them today

& yes, I know it will be put in the cupboard for another time,
when it is easier to be thankful. I go to the doctors
& listen to two unremarkable songs play on the radio
to the empty waiting room & feel hot inside my mask while

the nurse is neither kind nor unkind when she tells me
my blood is too close to the surface for me to be tested
& there are no more appointments available until September
but two weeks after my mother's heart attack

I no longer have the luxury of believing myself
immune to death so I wait in my mask & I am neither
kind nor unkind to the nurse just small & cold –
outside the rain is no longer falling but is held too close by

the heavy sky I have spent the day having to be thankful
for the many kind emails asking how my mum is recovering
remembering to be thankful they are asking about recovery
& not – the moment is now far enough away

that today I can be sad that I did not win the poetry prize
& I had to reschedule my pap smear & I overcooked the jam.