

# Lockdown Limericks



Satya Bhattacharya

## Foreword

My day job is that of a busy surgeon. The lockdown caused by the Coronavirus pandemic has meant less operating and a lot more administration. Amidst all that, I found time to divert myself penning a few rhymes. Maybe you will enjoy them too. Despite the title, they are not all limericks. Most of them are light hearted, but a few aren't. These are times of small pleasures, big worries, a scary illness, and for some, immense suffering or terrible sorrow.

Stay safe, and stay well.

Satya Bhattacharya  
May 2020

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To Ogden Nash,  
Whose lines  
“Candy is dandy,  
But liquor is quicker”  
Could be a motto to live by

## Blessings

Why did God add gallstones  
To mankind's burdens?  
It's simple, He was just  
Being kind to surgeons.



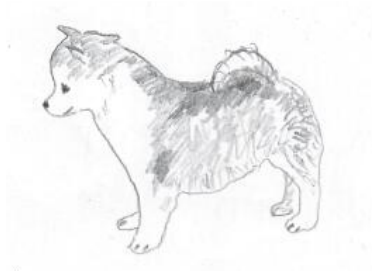
## Discrimination

I met a snail most political  
Who was, of the French, very critical  
It said "You are right  
I'm a hermaphrodite  
But to eat me for that is hypocritical"



## Puppy love

There was a young husky called Booker  
Who met a Pomeranian hooker  
Although size was a factor  
It wasn't a total distractor  
Their puppy, when it came, was a looker.



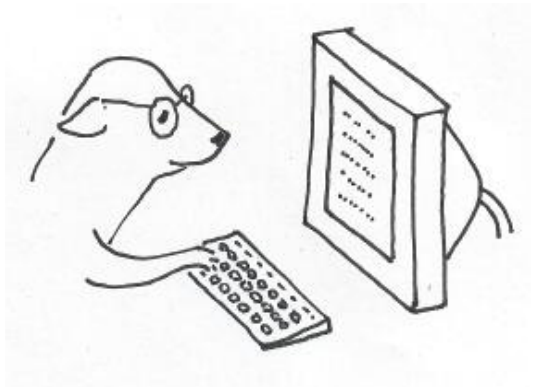
## Morning run

Cupboards are empty, the wife bereft  
Breakfast options are down to zero  
A quick trip to the shop – Ah, croissants!  
The hunter gatherer returns - a hero!



## Competition

I met a very educated dog  
He calls himself Phileas Fogg  
To compete with the cat  
Who is always on snapchat  
He has now started his own travel blog





## Thinking of Arsène Wenger

Thank you for the good times Arsène  
You mixed football with the art of zen  
Trophies you won galore  
But you cheered us even more  
When you lost your rag now and then



## Sloth

My missus has been pointing out  
That I am letting the grass grow  
I've not taken the lawnmower out for weeks  
And now it's beginning to show.

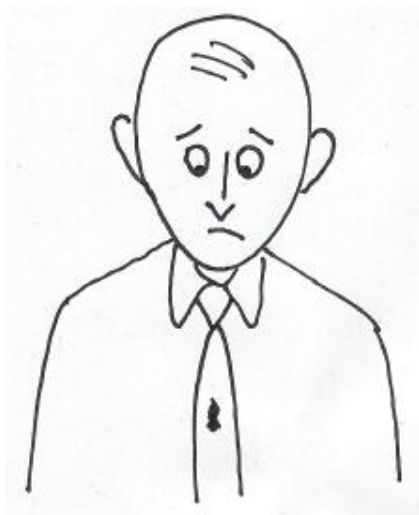
The forget-me-nots have taken over the place  
The clematis is breaking the fence  
Tulips that did not show up last year  
This time are making amends

But the real reason I am being lazy  
And letting the grass grow  
Is I think the neighbourhood cats and foxes  
Like it to be just so.



## Neckties

What's the point, you ask, of a necktie?  
It can be rather pleasing on the eye  
A touch of colour it does add  
To my visage grey and sad  
And when I see one by Hermes, I sigh.



*Oh! Ketchup?*

## Limitations



I know there are several  
Ways to tie a tie  
But I know just the one  
And with that I get by

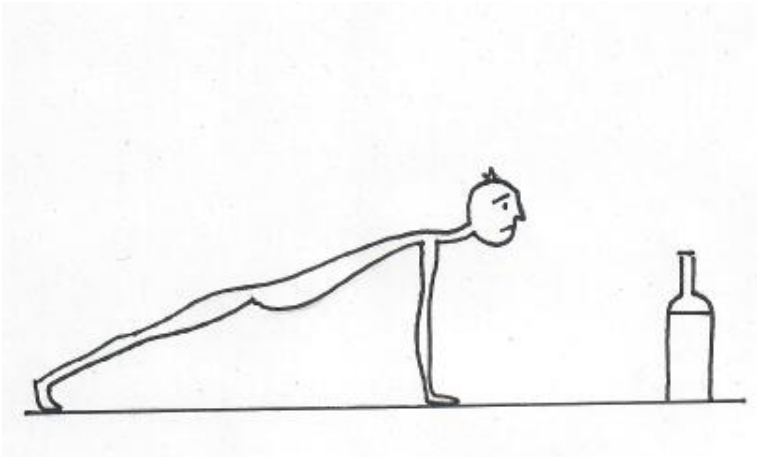
## Splash

One of life's complicated riddles  
Is why the duck inelegantly waddles  
When it can effortlessly glide  
Over expanses wide  
Maybe it just loves to splash through puddles



## A confession

Friends, to be utterly frank  
I have a weakness for Sauvignon Blanc  
But to make up for my sins  
When the yoga begins  
For ten minutes I hold the plank



## Mangoes

I can cope with a winter without snow  
But as big natural disasters go  
A complete bummer  
Is an entire summer  
With no sight of an Alphonso



## Birds

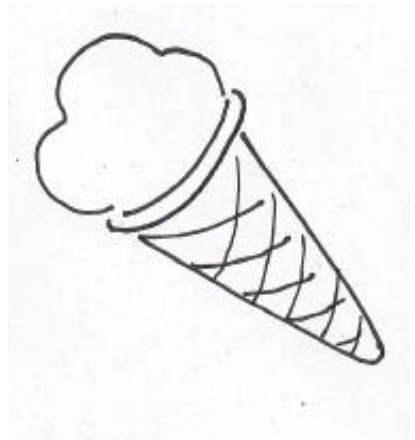


These days you will hardly hear a skylark  
But you'll see lots of parakeets in every park  
That tells you the state this country is in  
We are letting too many immigrants in!



## Gadgets

Of the gizmos in my kitchen, the mixer, the shaker  
I truly love the ice cream maker  
On a hot summer's day when all is remiss  
This dear machine brings me bliss



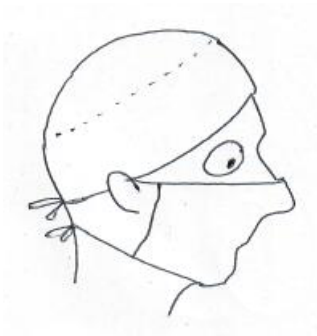
## Pancreas surgery

To a surgeon the pancreas means trouble  
Don't prick it's enzymatic bubble  
If the operation goes wrong  
You had better be strong  
You'll spend a long time picking up the rubble



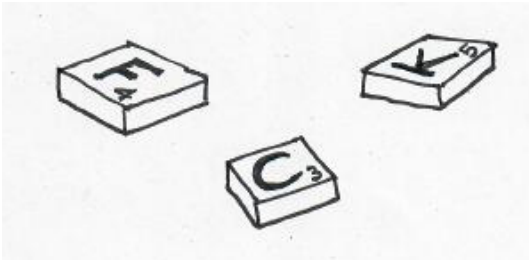
## Liver surgery

To the approaching surgeon said the liver  
“At the sight of your knife I don’t quiver  
Any segment you mow,  
In a month I will grow,  
In resection I am a true believer”.



## Escape strategies

When it comes to a domestic squabble  
The wise know how to get out of trouble  
Flowers always help  
Or a bottle of wine  
And at times just a game of Scrabble





At the bank

People in masks queue outside banks  
How do you know they aren't robbers?  
Well they are all wearing surgical masks  
None are in balaclavas.

## Birthday greetings to a friend - in lockdown

A mixed blessing, birthdays, if you see what I mean  
Keep coming like clockwork through times happy and lean  
You think “Another year’s gone, another ring under the bark,  
Am I doing all I want to do, am I making my mark?”

It’s the day to pop a cork - or two - and put aside the worry  
Go online, get that meal, be it Lebanese, Japanese or Curry  
Cakes are a bigger challenge, unless you have a baker at home  
Or else in the pudding aisles of shops you may have to roam.  
It’s the day to do Zoom calls with family and friends  
You haven’t rung for months? Well, today make amends!  
Go on, unwrap presents – you’re lucky, given that the shops  
are shut!  
Do not venture to think of work, that cell phone must stay  
put.

And if this damned pandemic is digging at your mental scars  
Remember even in the darkest night, you can always look up  
at the stars.



## Statistics

I've read that in this lockdown mess  
One in three people is drinking less  
Regardless of who that refers to  
You and I must be the other two!



## The Adventure of the Strange Virus

Did it come out a lab, from an infected rat?  
Did it come from a pangolin, or an unhappy bat?  
Wherever you look, there are theories galore  
Some less plausible, some rather more  
But I think it came out of Sherlock Holmes's hat.





## Epidemiology

When all the dust has settled  
We have buried all the dead  
And it's time for introspection  
Some bitter truths may need to be said

The basics of how to manage contagions  
We have known for many years  
Isolate the patients, trace their contacts  
Test them - and put up barriers.

Why did we forget these basic principles?  
Why did we think of economics?  
And blithely talk of herd immunity  
Which does not halt epidemics.

Yes, it is a pandemic of huge proportions  
But had we gone into lockdown faster  
It would have still been utterly horrible  
But perhaps not such an epic disaster



## The Swedish approach

For the Swedes I have a lot of time  
Think of Bergman, cinnamon buns, Ikea!  
And now when it comes to the darned virus  
They've got a bright idea

Let's not do a lockdown, they say  
Let's not force distances  
People can generally be relied on  
To be sensible in most instances

Hmmm... let's see how that pans out  
Their death toll seems on the rise  
Compared to the Danes and Norwegians  
Who've been conventional and wise.

It may turn out in a year  
There will be no elderly Swedes  
The sick and the frail, the browns and blacks  
All gone - like so many weeds.

But they'll have a functioning economy  
And fewer mouths to feed  
If you're a cynic, you may very well say  
That's utopia indeed.

## Of foxes and fiends

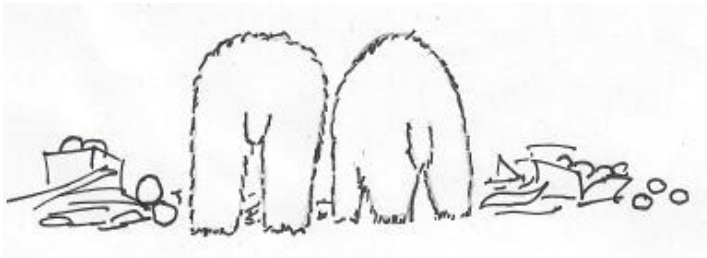
'Twas Oscar Wilde who said fox hunting  
Is "The unspeakable in pursuit of the inedible".  
I think he got that utterly right  
Though country folks might think that's  
terrible.

I asked Mr Fox who was sat in my back garden  
What he made of that  
"I agree" he said, with a quizzical look  
And made off in pursuit of a rat



It doesn't bear thinking about

Polar bears are gorgeous beasts  
But their ice is rapidly melting  
Soon they will be the new homeless  
In our rubbish dumps scavenging



## Lockdown thoughts

The warmth of the sun still feels good  
Children bounce on trampolines  
Buds still break into bloom  
Simnel cake still rises in the oven  
Coffee still feels good  
A friend's phone call still dispels gloom  
Not too far, a battle rages  
But you don't hear cannons boom  
Only the occasional shrill cry  
Of an ambulance.  
But dispatches record rising deaths.

In quiet grey rooms  
Without hint of dawn or dusk  
Men and women in masks  
Work as gently as they can  
Amidst tiring febrile bodies.  
Tubes get pushed into windpipes  
Ventilator settings get adjusted.  
Oxygen flow gets dialled up.  
Syringes pump in sedatives  
To turn the mind off  
While the body struggles.  
People get laid prone  
To help their soggy lungs drain better.  
Plugs of snot get sucked out of airways.  
Little clots form in the fine  
Capillaries that course through air sacs.  
Swollen membranes struggle to  
Swap oxygen molecules across.  
Little red cells work like mad  
To do their jobs, and yet

Fall short.  
The heart pumps faster and faster.  
Kidneys fall silent.  
There comes the point where  
The whole structure collapses.  
The frantic rhythmic trace on the monitor  
Becomes a squiggle  
Then a flat line.  
No grieving relatives.  
A phone call to the family.  
And another to say a bed is free  
In the ICU.  
Bring in the next.

Elsewhere  
Sombre queues form, everyone two metres apart  
Outside food banks, shops.  
Factories fall silent.  
Aeroplanes grow cobwebs.  
Fruits rot on branches.  
Flower harvests wither.  
Crops wait to be picked.  
Does the sky look brighter?  
Bluer?  
Are there more birds?  
Are they singing louder?

We will emerge from this  
At least some of us.  
The lucky ones.  
Bruised, battered, some bereft  
Many poorer, even penniless  
But still lucky.  
But will that be a wiser  
Us?

