**MY YEAR WITHOUT AN E STRING**

They called it lockdown, but for me it was the year

without an E string on my violin.

I could not play the highest notes once it had broken.

Cursing my clumsy hands, I was afraid

to fit another string and tune it up,

the tuning peg too stiff for me,

I feared I’d break another one.

And so I left my fiddle for a while,

abandoned in its case

until I realised I could still play it.

There was some beauty there, a richness in the tone

of lower strings I had not heard before.

The world outside was greatly changed

but there were details, little things

that lifted me and filled my heart.

The sunshine and rich blossom on the trees

seemed more intense than usual,

the lessening of traffic on the empty roads

that magnified the birdsong,

bright stones and shells in patterns on the beach,

the footprints in the sand.

But I still missed my E string and the voice it gave me,

and yet felt guilty that I did not know the fear,

the loss, the pain that others knew in the pandemic.

I started playing higher notes,

extending fingers on my A string,

swooping notes in strange positions, learning new skills,

developing a virtual world where I could see

and talk to family and friends on Skype and Zoom,

my virtual choir, my lovely, lonely walks on the beach;

it wasn’t the life I needed but I tried to make it do.

I told myself that I could fix my E string,

buying books on violin repairs online,

googling fine tuners to order and replace

the metal jammed and broken on the tailpiece

where one end of my E string should have been.

But I could not move the metal tuner

without damaging my violin.

I needed a new tailpiece and a violin restorer.

I had to put my life on hold until some distant time

when things could be mended, though they’d never be the same.

Jennifer Keevill