



It's up
to us

SALENA GODDEN [UNITED KINGDOM]

WE COULD BE HEROES:

How the survival of the hero is up to us all now

Your heroes are here. Your heroes are all already here, darling. I see your heroes, I follow them, I watch them, they keep going and never stop. Your heroes are never giving up on their dreams. I see heroes at the food bank, your heroes are at homeless shelters, they take food to people sleeping in doorways. Your heroes are itinerant and broke, with no funding or arts grants. Your heroes are in Calais and Dunkirk, they wait by the shores of Mediterranean seas and volunteer to help the capsized boats and refugees. Your heroes are on the borders. Your heroes are down in Soho donating and distributing food and blankets. Your heroes are working overtime in the crumbling NHS A&E departments, your heroes are your doctors and nurses, your teachers and volunteers, people taking phone calls at the Samaritans and talking people down from the edge.

Your heroes march for human rights and the future of the planet. Your heroes are millions of school children protesting for the climate strike. Your heroes write graffiti and poetry. Your heroes are everywhere, they walk among us. Your heroes are waking up every day, skint and underpaid and busking it, your heroes are making work, beautiful books and music and art that you cannot see or find or read as it is drowned out by all the propaganda and noise and adverts and the fear-mongering and the performative cruelty of politicians.

It is your job, your only job, to seek out and support and nurture heroes, this is all your responsibility. We can all do our part in the chain, to help others to help others, to help the others who help the others who inspire and help the others.

Find the others!

You are losing your libraries, museums, galleries, independent bookshops, pubs and music venues, so the beautiful spaces where thinkers and writers and artists could meet and share work and gather and blossom and dream are being erased. The survival of the hero is up to you all now. It is important, now more than ever, to fight for all of this, to fight for your rights, for your freedoms, for your art, poetry and music. Because you all need to be heroes, to step up, to speak up, to support each other. It is all about kindness, and you need the doers and the creators. You must pay attention to the ones who listen and hear and do and can and will and share. And to the people of science and art, books and music, otherwise what is the actual point of all of this? What was the point? Why are you all here if not for that? You are here for love. To share the love.

When hate is rising, then love can only rise higher.

We stare deeply now into the charcoals of winter and watch the last flames lick the chimney. The fires leave the sky and dance into the everything. All the warmth and all the joy is boiled in a soup of memory, we stir the good stuff from the bottom of the pot and hold the ladle up, drink, we say, look at all the good chunks of goodness, take in your share of good times, good music, good books, good food, good laughter, good people, be grateful for the good stuff, life and death, we say, drink.

Written as a contribution to the Winternachten international literature festival The Hague by Salena Godden.