



# LYNN ATKINS

I was diagnosed with Leukaemia unexpectedly seven days before the first lockdown in March 2020. I learnt very quickly that life was now risky and became accustomed to shielding, narrowing my life down to working from home and leaving the house hardly at all. I was hot on hands-face-space.

However as our second wedding anniversary approached in August we decided we would risk a meal out to celebrate. We researched carefully and found a local place which had a comprehensive risk assessment online to view and all the precautions in place - and we could eat outside, a definite requirement. So after five months indoors we ventured out with much trepidation.

I wrote my poem, **Covid Al Fresco Dining – A Shielder’s Experience** shortly afterwards as a tongue-in-cheek recollection of that experience.



There's a list on that table for contacts, dear.  
You'd best not use their pen,  
There's probably virus on it and you  
Will just have to sanitise again.

The waiter's coming over to get us my love,  
He looks nice behind that mask.  
Do you think they've wiped the tables down?  
My angel, could you ask?

How lovely it is coming out tonight,  
The gales are an added thrill,  
Can we look at the menu without touching it dear?  
We need to develop that skill.

I didn't quite catch that, what did you say?  
(A gust just took the salt),  
We order our food on an App, and you can't?  
My lamb it isn't your fault.

A simple meal is much better, I think,  
There's less to click and swipe.  
You've done it my darling? How clever you are,  
Now give your phone a wipe.

The waiter is bringing the wine on a tray,  
My precious, will you pour?  
Just wipe the glasses and tip out the leaves,  
It'll be wonderful I'm sure.

This is perfect my dearest, a toast to us both,  
With storm-clouds raging above.  
The pizza has come – is the cutlery clean?  
Or should we disinfect it my love?

The food is all finished, the wine almost gone,  
We've done it dear heart, you and I –  
Our first dinner out since the Lockdown began.  
Now for pity's sake lets get home to where it's safe  
and clean  
and covid-free  
and warm  
and dry!

**Covid AI Fresco Dining – A Shielder's Experience by Lynn Atkins**