

I used to start by saying "Sorry"

by David Lindsay

I used to start by saying sorry
For my choice of verse
For the words I was about to speak
It was really quite a curse

I used to start by saying sorry
That maybe I'd recited this before
Or that another voice had spoken it
And that I could add no more

I used to start by saying sorry
That maybe I was wasting your time
With my attempts to declaim or utter
Some prose, or monologue, or rhyme

I used to start by saying sorry
If I slipped up on a word or two
Or even forgot my place completely
As I'm sometimes prone to do

I used to start by saying sorry
Before the first stanza had begun
And that somehow left the poem ungrounded,
Lost. Untethered. Too easily undone.

There's a place for an apology
If careless words cause pain
If they whip and wound without context
Or hunt. Or hurt. Or shame.

But I take pride in the words I craft
When I get them to work out-loud
When they trickle together off the tongue
With form and meaning. And proud.

You see, I like reciting Shakespeare
And Burns, and Owen, and Keats
And Barker, Causley, Dahl and Elliott
And sweet scores between them and Yeats

And I love listening to contrasting voices
Of creative spoken word
Of singers and musicians in folk clubs
To talent that is largely unheard

This won't bring fame and fortune
Won't see me at the Albert Hall
But with like-minded folk, like those in this room
It has meaning. So to repeat my call...

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It used to be a curse