



The This Is Mental Lockdown Support Group's Inaugural Meeting

by Saffron Swansborough

They were nervous about the future world
This brought them together online
In rectangular cells, to be unfurloughed
A pop video meeting of minds

"Introduce yourselves - and your fear" the host began
At the group-therapy video conference
Five figures bent the frames in which they did hang
Shrinking or jostling sums of self-confidence

"I'm Poppy, YouTube beauty vlogger" said the peacock in red

"We haven't been out for 62 days.

Mum's health's not good. Nor's mine now" she said, pointing a gun
at her head

Modelling how to hold the viewer's gaze

"I'm Lee, director of a high-street bank" he jittered

With a backdrop poster of Jaws

"I'm addicted to class As and single malt whisky

They're the only things that help my mind pause"

"I'm James, I'm asthmatic" said a dad by a curtain

I'm not being allowed to see my daughter

My ex says I'm a risk, I don't know when I'll see her for certain."

Rain - as though on a windscreen, poured - distorting his frame
with water

"I'm Megan, a single mum with a boy of five

He cooks, cleans, says 'Mum get off your backside'

But now they've cut my mental health services I can't get upright

Everything I'm afraid of is outside"

"I'm Covid and I can't stop myself" screeched a bat-voice from
under a blanket

"I'm being blamed for everything happening

But if it wasn't for Man, I couldn't transmit

It's an existential crisis I'm battling."

"Lee, why don't you try some deep breathing?

I find that's what keeps me sane"

Poppy sucked in the air and slowly blew out

Lee would never fear sharks again

"Meg, you need a routine" offered James
"With exercise, mealtimes and fun.
I'd give anything to be with my daughter
Imagine you just have Today with your son"

"James mate, make wishlists" said Lee
"Of all that you'll do with your boy
So when you're thrown around in your boat of despair
Cling on to that charter of joy"

"Go out Poppy" said Megan "take babysteps"
"One path at a time, you must try"
Flowers need sunlight to blossom
Without it you'll shrivel and die"

All gazes then shifted to Covid
Spit-splattering his screen as he coughed
"A genie won't go back in the bottle" the host said
CLICK
"But at least you can switch it to Off."