

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This *COVID Winter* anthology is a production of the WCC Poetry Club, at Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

It features work written by WCC students, faculty, staff, and alumni that was posted on the WCC Poetry Club website from December 2020 through March 2021.

----

Book design and digital images by Tom Zimmerman unless otherwise noted.

Cover photo, Locked In, by Hannah Lain.

Copyright © 2021 the individual authors and artists.

The works herein have been chosen for their literary and artistic merit and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Washtenaw Community College, its Board of Trustees, its administration, or its faculty, staff, or students.

wccpoetryclub.wordpress.com

# **COVID** Winter

# A WCC Poetry Club Anthology

Edited by Tom Zimmerman

### **CONTENTS**

Hannah Lain	Locked In	Front cover
Olivia Bottum	My Life as a Cat: A Pandemic Tale	5
Quareese Calhoun	NYC	6
Cornelius Fortune	Kisses Come in All Sizes	7
	What is your story?	9
Taylor Hart	The Boundaries Crossed	11
Amy Higgins	Open the Door	13
7 00	Traces of Winter	14
Tommy Kaminski	Lost in Thought	15
Diane M. Laboda	Interlocuter	16
	The Seduction of COVID-19	18
	Slow Change	19
	The Story in Your Breathing	21
	2020 Lost and Found	23
Hannah Lain	Locked In	25
Draganel Magda	Burn It Down	26
Ella Markel	Broken Record	28
Scott Schuer	Covidnotes 1	29
	Covidnotes 11: Supplemental	30
Sophia Sims	I Wait in Silence	31
Thaliana Smith-Ponce	Masked	33
Kesley Walter	World Wide Web, Trapped in My T	iny
	Little Bed	38
Tom Zimmerman	I Think of Things I love	41
	The Morning After	42
	Sonnet with Four Requests	43
Contributors		15

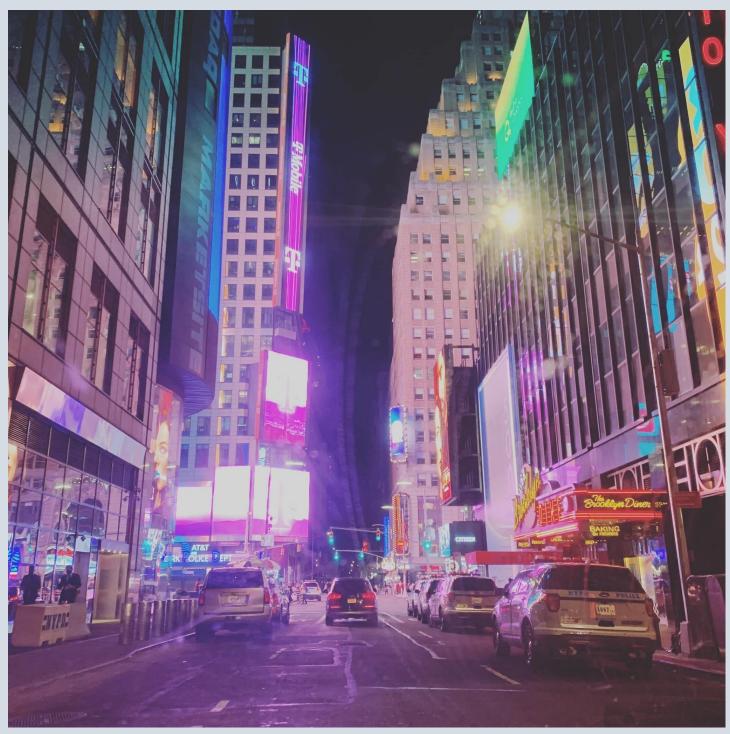


O	<b>71.1</b>	/IA	BO	T	LI.	JM
$\mathbf{\sim}$	$\mathbf{H}$	, T, T	$\mathbf{p}$		_	, ,,,,

## My Life as a Cat: A Pandemic Tale

Pre-pandemic, I always set three alarms. Cannot oversleep! Got to get those kids to school/music lesson/tutoring/basketball/running club/orthodontist. They are counting on me! I have to push through my driving anxiety. Darkness, snow, I cannot be stopped! Got to get my mother-in-law to the doctor/PT/lunch/church! Got to meet friends for lunch/dinner! Time for hubby's date night! Meanwhile my cat Bette calmly surveys her scene: napping/eating/resting/playing.

Then: lockdown. The kids live elsewhere. No one goes for lunch or date night. Church is on Facebook. Campus is online. No driving anxiety because no driving! Let it snow, I don't care. Now my life is napping/eating/resting/ reading/fear of gruesome death. With my cat.



Quareese Calhoun NYC

Artist's statement: "This was a photo I took during the height of covid of the empty streets of the usually bustling NYC, which I think does wonders to show the contrast between normal and the 'new normal.'"

## **Kisses Come in All Sizes**

I was a chess brat on a chess team back in the late '80s, packed in a van full of hormonal middle school aged teens, riding along to the *Dirty Dancing Soundtrack*. We were going to The Nationals—the Chess Nationals in Memphis, Tennessee, home of Elvis Aaron Presley. And, having seen too many John Hughes movies, you know, *Pretty in Pink*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Sixteen Candles*, and all the rest, I was certain love couldn't be too far behind.

Enter: Danielle. The girl of my dreams. She was from a sister school, but that was okay. My chess coach brought her along and she brought her mother along as a chaperon. Still, I was foolish enough to believe we'd have a moment alone before the trip was over. She was sort of awkward and shy—that's what I told myself when she averted her gaze. I'd never been too pushy in the love department, not at 14, but that red clay brought out a primal beast, one who would stop at nothing for a kiss. Just a kiss: "A Kiss to Build a Dream On."

The girls on the team got wind of my crush; they wanted to help. I wrote notes and they were passed on to Danielle. This pretty girl with light brown eyes, brown skin and curly hair, had agreed to give *me* a kiss. More notes were passed and I was given a specific time to knock on Danielle's door.

I was ready to get this love bug, this kissing virus out of my system.

I rode the elevator up in anticipation. When the elevator doors opened, my heart was beating a fierce pattern I'd never felt before. I hadn't kissed a girl before and couldn't believe it was going to happen in Tennessee of all places. I kept repeating the room number over and over to myself, so I wouldn't forget it.

Finally, I arrived.

Knocked three times (as it requested in the note). Then another three. I started to worry. Glanced down at the foot of the door, and there it was—two Hershey's Kisses.

There was a series of giggles and sidesplitting laughter from down the hall (my teammates) and even Danielle had a good laugh—that's the part that hurt most. I didn't get my first kiss that day, but I sure tasted what those kids in John Hughes films felt when they got their heart broken to modal synth pop.

In my case, a chess queen actually broke my heart.

The perfect checkmate.

Or more accurately, a Fool's mate.



## What is your story?

I am a writer who is the son of a writer.

I am an artist who is the grandson of an artist.

I am a man who was raised by a woman.

I was brought up in Detroit, so by default, Detroit is buried in the labyrinthine strand of my DNA.

Unlike Dostoevsky's underground narrator, my liver does not hurt, but my reality likes to perform right before my eyes in a blinding carnivalesque worthy of Bakhtin.

My polyphony usually resolves itself from the distinctive "S" curvature of a maze to the "I" of intersection, a straight highway with no discernable exits.

In fact, my first act was *Harrisonian* ("I Me Mine") in nature.

This second act is something different ...

It's not I, or me; rather, the narrative of my story has shifted from the first person to the third, pressing gingerly against a fourth wall: A wonderful *spatial encounter*, where in the course of helping others shape their thoughts into words, new worlds emerge, in a whirl of stunning possibilities.



#### The Boundaries Crossed

Instead of bad news, my little sister exited the middle school gleaming, A pep in her step as she slid into my vehicle.

This had been a significant change in her aura from previous days, When she quietly fumbled into the passenger seat, Without even muttering a hello.

There remained this feeling that I was creeping too far over the line, A boundary set up for all young teenagers,

The point where they're free to keep their insecurities to themselves,
The place where older siblings and pestering parents weren't supposed
to venture to.

I guess I hadn't realized I was outside that boundary now.

So when she entered my car,
I felt like I had just received a free pass,
My one ticket to board onto her train of ongoing life,
Speeding away into distant lands I was now on the ride for,
But I didn't know if it was my place to continue on.

At that young of an age,

Just before we're old enough to fall into the dullest patterns of life, We're trapped inside shimmering bubbles, transparent and glimmering.

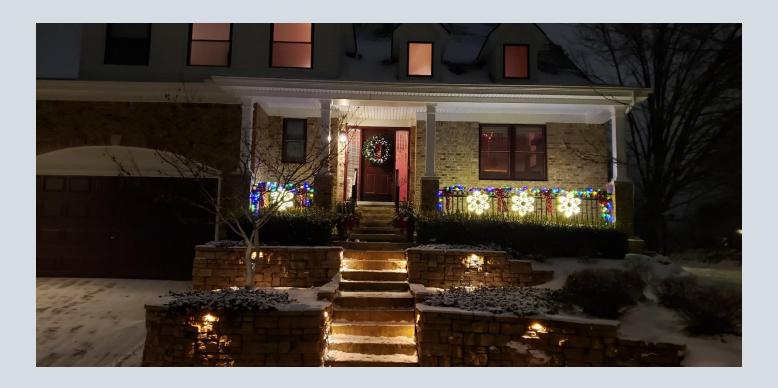
This display is one in which we want to stay, safe within the realm of youth,

But we all end falling astray, never to be the same.

With the pop of our protective barriers, The guard is heightened, We start to push those around us farther and farther away. These words my sister confides had no significance to me whatsoever, And yet, here I was, listening as if I was still on the inside of the borderline.

When she explained to me she got invited to a party, I had to bite my tongue back, Using all my strength to not reveal the truth, The reality that she didn't need to be a part of yet, That a middle school gathering was insignificant.

With these thoughts in mind,
I keep up my hardened smiles for her,
Remembering the times when I got excited for social gatherings,
Until the day came when I crossed the line into the real world,
But let her ramble on anyways, the entire way home.



## Open the Door

In spite of the rasping whisper of a snake shedding its skin in there

In spite of the tobacco-colored smear that could be anything, that you will touch in spite of yourself, that will stick like tar

In spite of the creaky hinges which will turn every ear and draw the gawking crowd

In spite of the certainty that your body is on the other side—not posed in dim light but splayed like a Mapplethorpe exhibit.

#### **Traces of Winter**

I stamp into empty woods brimmed with snow. My boot soles rub out the robin's three-toed calligraphy, replace the rabbit's tracks with pigeon-toed zigzag treads, size nine.

Wizened bittersweet berries shine crimson from cross-country ski trails as if arranged by a child's hands then pressed in wax paper—third-grade art class, hot-candle smell.

Must be a whiff from memory because my nose is numb, my fading fingers ache, shafts of sun crash like two-by-fours through clouds creating painless wounds which disappear like me—unbodied, restless, soundless, white.

## **Lost in Thought**

Blue water flowing Through a stream of consciousness— Not clear, but beautiful

#### Interlocutor

There's nothing to see here.

We're all wearing masks, great, gory
caricatures with feathers and beads.

Oh, the surgical N95s are there too,
covering spewing, viral mouths.

Those who should be wearing them aren't.

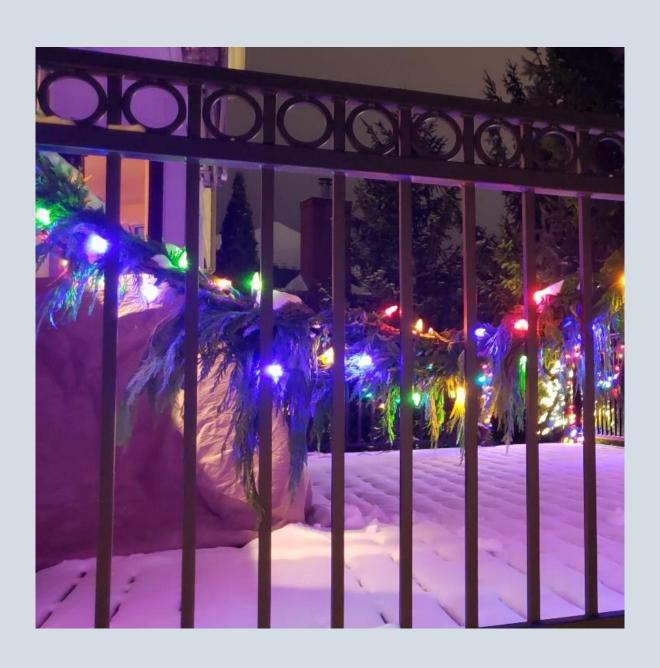
And the ones who shouldn't be wearing them
have them glued to their faces under bandanas.

At least with feathers and beads we should be able to assume a party posture on Zoom, dress up and have a masquerade call. We're going to be Zooming for a long time, so we need variety—cover our most recognizable faces and play a voice recognition game.

Then who's going to want to pay attention to what we say and how we say it—no smiles as cues, no facial tics to tell whether we're hamming it up or dead serious, whether that cough is just allergies or viral doom, whether that comment comes with a sneer or a smirk, whether the conversation needs an interlocutor.

Masquerading under the mask can become a serious endeavor. We get to be whatever character we want to be in this passion play for the sleep-deprived, and deaf looking for lips to read. If we're convincing, we may have to mask up more often just to not be ourselves.

Perhaps we need a conversation with that masked person in the mirror—can't tell if it's a he or she because the hair's pretty long, the eyes are a bit blurry from blue-screen syndrome, and the voice distorts. Perhaps we'd get along better if we just didn't have to see all those lips flapping, that spit spewing. We'd only have those rolled-back eyes to signal a bald-faced lie.



## The Seduction of COVID-19

I often delay until I think I can make the perfect choice, but no choice is as simple as black or white, right or wrong, me or you.

Gray comes in a thousand shades, from your blackest heart to a mere shadow of your pale apparition.

Clouds gray when laden with rain, letting go the darkest of floods to wash the lightest of your moods into hate.

What's right is indisputable. What's wrong is indisputable.

What's right for me may be wrong for you—
if it's any of your business at all.
What's right for you may be wrong for me—
so you'd better listen up.

For me no perfect choice exists. Every day has its silver-lined cloud that spatters my mirror. Every night holds a sliver of moon, and a million stars to blind me to your love.

Every meeting hovers on the edge of me and you, teetering between a joining or a loss, a mating or a broken heart, keeping me intact or scattering my viral soul to the countryside.

## **Slow Change**

This comfortable world is slow to change. Like every younger generation that's been born into their parents' world, youth believes, insists, on having what their parents took decades to earn by hard work.

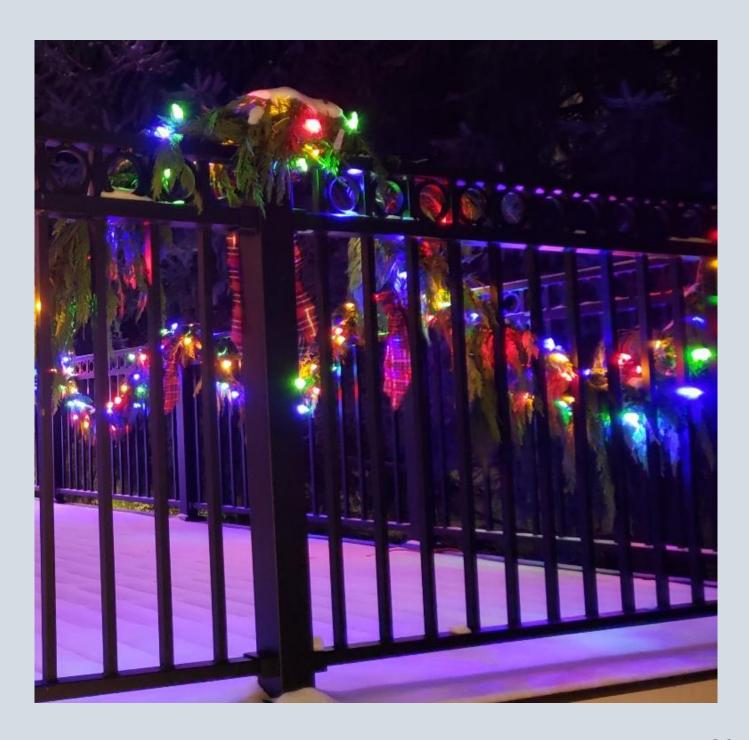
In whatever circumstance, kids need to know they have to work just as hard to deserve and accumulate a life's worth of comforts.

Likewise, they get to share in the consequences of the decisions made by their parents' generation. They get to social distance, wear masks, share in the care of every other person they come in contact with.

And they get to know the consequences if they don't. They get to lose family members, friends, teachers, coaches. They get to witness the inside of an ICU just like the neighbor next door.

They get to have quarantine rulings applied to them if they become sick, even a little bit. They get to be grateful to their families for taking care of them. And they get to learn the lesson of caring for their family who've become sick too.

Those slow to change their habits have not had to reckon with the consequences of their ignorance or defiance. But a time will come when they too will care enough about their fellow beings to quicken their response, to change when change is needed rather than waiting until the 11th hour when there are no more beds in the ICU.



## The Story in Your Breathing...

The story in your breathing is not a fairy tale where the Prince rescues the Princess from the evil ogre, kisses her back to life and lives happily ever after.

For one thing, ever after is a Disney myth and neither the Prince nor his lackeys will wear a disguise. Therein lies the tale.

The real-time tale resides in the plague upon the people of little care, the good common folk who believe their Prince will slay the Dragon with his papier-mâché sword.

The story begins, evolves and withers on the vine in the third act set in the ICU that's crowded and noisy and full of angst. The story there is all about breathing.

Or more correctly, not breathing, which is how many end up because the Medicine Man cannot figure out where to put the blood that's starved, the lung that's hardened with scarring, the party mug this Patient still clings to.

The plot literally thickens.

The story begins and ends with breath

after breath for some, until no breath is enough. Until the once-healthful Patient is no longer able to fill a breath with air, the blood with oxygen, and literally drowns in his own body.

The story in your breathing is a tragicomedy. Those playing the role of Patient are poorly paid and do not get a dressing room of their own. Those playing Medicine Men have lost their wise-feathers, one for every Patient lost, one for every failed cure.

Those playing the invincible Innocents wander clueless from bar to bar with their mouths agape—just what their ancestors warned against. Those in the gallery seats turn their heads away in disgust.

Those of us with one foot in the River gather close our gloves and masks, shields and Bibles. We are in it for the duration—covered, distanced, hiring cabs to do our shopping, watching other talking heads Zoom about, skirting the topic, but washing our hands to "Happy Birthday" and planning to hide out for months until the Dragon is driven from the Kingdom.

#### 2020 Lost and Found

We've lost the soul of our country somewhere between micro-politics and macro-consumerism, decompression and disrespect; somewhere between I-need-it-now and It's-all-your-fault.

There's no waiting for common sense for new ideas to ripen like beans in the garden—let's pick them over and pack them before they've sweetened forgetting health and husbandry.

Let's pick them all, put them in a hat and make a lottery of it, run them up the flagpole and call them the latest, greatest idea to be recycled from the pandemic.

Let's back it with big bucks and bland consciences. We've lost the soul of the soul. The place we promised to God, the place we promised to each other and to mother Earth.

Our souls have holes like the ozone, round holes in which square pegs still won't fit. Large holes where cynicism creeps in and sets up housekeeping, where common sense, self-worth and charity should be.

They both headed south to vacation where hurricanes and tsunamis roam, drinking rum and nectar of the gods of greed. Corrupted by the sun, which also shines on fools and folly, homegrown war-mongers and thieves.

We've lost all hope of redemption if we continue to listen to the talking heads that draw our souls closer to the reef of insensitivity, the rapids before the falls of irresponsibility, the temple of care-less-ness and a new normal.

We've lost what it takes to be human, what was given back in haste before we got to lick the icing off the spoon, and realize what we had lost.

We've found in our solitude words, Zoom-box community, respect for first responders, and the resilience and patience to allow democracy to work despite the despots, and science to conquer the novel coronavirus.



Hannah Lain Locked In

Artist's Statement: "This piece is entitled Locked In. It's a feeling I think we're all familiar with due to COVID so I wanted to photograph that feeling."

#### **Burn It Down**

Swarming, climbing, tearing
The angered masses flowed
The halls of freedom hardly bearing
Their audacity, firm and bold

Burn it down, burn it down, collectively they cried Burn it down, burn it down, their intention to divide

Despite sacrifice of men before them
The horde conspires their subjugation
Trampling souls meant to defend them
The Capitol succumbs to desecration

Tear it down, tear it down, the angered horde did think Tear it down, tear it down, bringing justice to its brink

Men and women of integrity
Defend the Capitol on the hill
To protect our hope of unity
With Their purpose and their will

Hold them back, hold them back, they screamed for all to hear Hold them back, hold them back, they cried amidst the fear

And in their wake, there lay
The broken pieces left in fury
That marked the actions of the day
Leaving righteous minds to worry

Why did they come, why did they come, to justify their cause? Why did they come, why did they come, in contradiction to our laws?

One brave man, now lies in state Leaving family, friends and all to grieve The result of man's undying hate Never to forget what happened on that eve

Heal the wounds, heal the wounds, the rest of us do pray Heal the wounds, heal the wounds, we must act, without delay



#### **Broken Record**

My life is a song that is stuck on repeat.

Repeat is the only button I can press.

Press through the days that seem to move so slow.

Slow but the years go by so fast.

Fast and I can't seem to catch up, I'm stuck.

Stuck like a broken record that won't stop spinning.

Spinning and spiraling out of control.

Control what I can, but life just goes on.

On and on playing the same tune.

Tune out the same things everyday.

Everyday like the day from before.

Before I was happy, but now I am lost.

Lost in this ride, this ride we call life.

Life that repeats, day in and day out.

Out of time, I'm running out of time.

Time that doesn't exist.

## March 26, 2020 Covidnotes 1

The stillness no refuge from home, no way to confirm myself a part

vehicles parked and quiet, yellow light flashing, a distant police car keening—singular notion of movement.

Witnessed by face-masked sanitation workers, birds unburdened by traffic noise shriek in symphonic confusion

The idea that the president deserves a cock-punch consumes my waking thoughts—"If yer afraid the terrorists win!"

I guess it's not as bad as Nero's time

## Dec. 21, 2020 Covidnotes 11: Supplemental

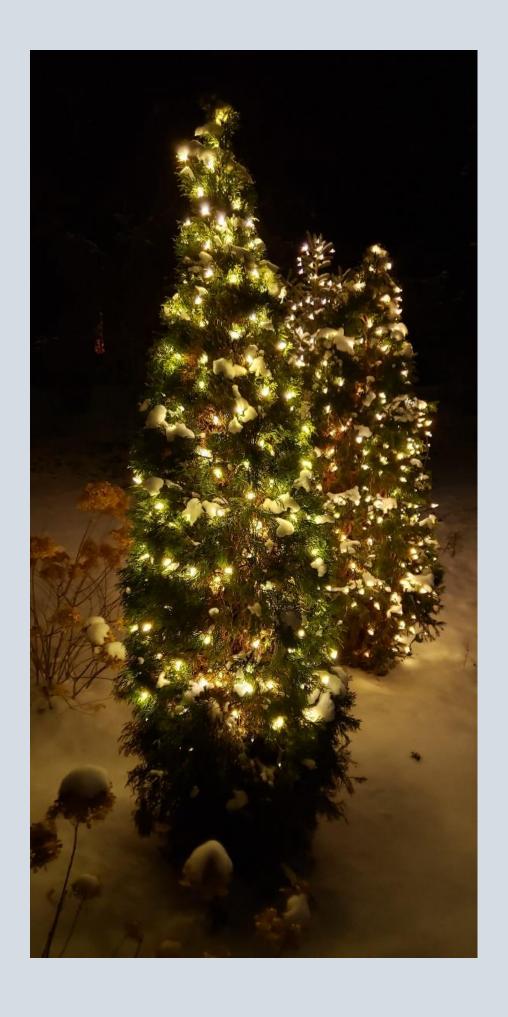
Our sphere of succession continues through the elliptic vacuum, round a blazing ball of life—182 days since springtime uploaded a naive hope.

Historians will recall the time of anti-vaccer reconning, when the sick and healthy chose sides at the expense of all—what we secretly knew came to pass in gory technicolor.

There will be a comin' round to a time when everything changed and normality refused to reign.

### I Wait in Silence

A candle burns as darkness engulfs the room
Desperation silences my words
But the feelings rage
Winter is haunted by clouds and a kiss of loneliness.
Thoughts waltz around me
Sitting, I hold one
It will be the one that sets me free.
The words forgotten, the lines never written
Feelings I don't say
And a photo of the one I love
Reminds me of the fire that burns alone
Keeping me warm until the day is right.



#### Masked

03/28/2030

"Dear Journal,

I begin to lose myself in my own thoughts as if the walls are crumbling in and I have nowhere to go. The world is heavy like I'm carrying boulders on my shoulders. It continues to beat down on me like I'm a boxer fighting in the ring, trying to find enough strength to keep going. And through all that, somehow I am lost at a loss of words to describe what is happening to this planet and even my own life...

Around the world, yet another deadly disease has come upon the human race. One that is hard to battle and find a cure for. Families are directed to stay in their homes at all times unless it's necessary to leave. The law also prohibits you from going to family gatherings and parties, that way if someone does have the deadly disease, they won't infect others. Some stores, amusement parks, and movie theaters are required to shut down until further notice of opening back up. The economy begins to diminish over time. Reports of the disease begin to increase at high rates and so does fear that fills the air. Over hundreds of years, no scientist has seen any disease like this one. They call it Aparalistic.

The cause of the disease was simply eating the new species of berries and it is very contagious in the same way Covid-19 was. If you catch the virus, you will start by coughing. Next, you will be short of breath. Then you will experience nausea and vomiting. Not only that, but you will suffer from bumps and rashes. Under this time, you are under the influence to wear a mask and stay 6 feet away from people.

Quarantining isn't the only negative effect on my life, but being with

my parents is so much worse. A true nightmare. As an only child, my life from other people's perspective is it's tremendous and they would love the lifestyle I have. We're talking 4 Audis all RS7's (sports cars), a mansion, and pretty much anything you have ever dreamed of. Even if that dream includes a private chef, maid, and butler, but in reality, sometimes it's overbearing. My parents are successful and rich, and that's how I want to be, but when they put money over their own child then that's where it begins to become a problem for me. My mother and father aren't totally horrible parents. They push me to do well in school, but when I do perform well, they don't praise me for it or even acknowledge it the slightest bit. I feel like a book collecting dust on the shelf, all alone and forgotten.

As much as I would love to tell them that, the chances of them caring are zero to none. When I walk into a room to try and talk with them, they don't ask how I am because they are always on their phones, and they don't suspect anything is wrong because I plaster a smile on my face. I remember telling them I won a scholarship of \$400,000 because I didn't want my parents paying for my schooling. I even donated \$200,000 to charity and the only thing they said was, 'That's great son, but I have to take this call.' As I told them this, they didn't even glance at me, they were too busy glued to their phones. As a result of my parents, money and work are their priorities.

What really keeps me going these past few years is my best friend Harper, who I have a tiny crush on. She's helped me through everything, thick and thin. She threw me a birthday party last year because my parents forgot my own birthday and by birthday party, I mean the 2 of us. We are all we need..."

"Eric, are you done writing in your diary?" Harper asked.

I closed my journal so fast, the papers on my desk flew off. "A. it's not a diary, it's a journal. And B. I am now since you interrupted," I said.

"Fantastic because I have a couple of questions on why guys—no offense—are idiots? This guy Trenton I am talking to doesn't even the time of day," she said.

I said, "None taken because I am not one of them. Anywho, go on."

After her rant, she asked how I was, I told her some of the things I wrote in my journal, and then she came up with the idea for me to write a letter to my parents about how I feel. She left me to do so, and as I wrote the whole encyclopedia of things, I felt a little weight lifted from my shoulders.

As I headed downstairs, my face began to sweat. I felt as if I was going to puke, I really hope it's not Aparalistic or Covid. When I stood in front of my parents, I grabbed each of their phones. They looked at me as if I was some sort of alien. Then, I handed each of them a copy of my letter. It was a stressful waiting game to hear what they had to say after reading it. The results were surprising, they both got up and hugged me.

Then my father said, "Son, I am so sorry I made you feel this way. I love you so much." Something I haven't heard from them in a long time.

My mom said, "We do love you so much and we want you to know that. I will make room in my schedule to have a family night and Bob you clear your schedule too. Friday nights are family nights."

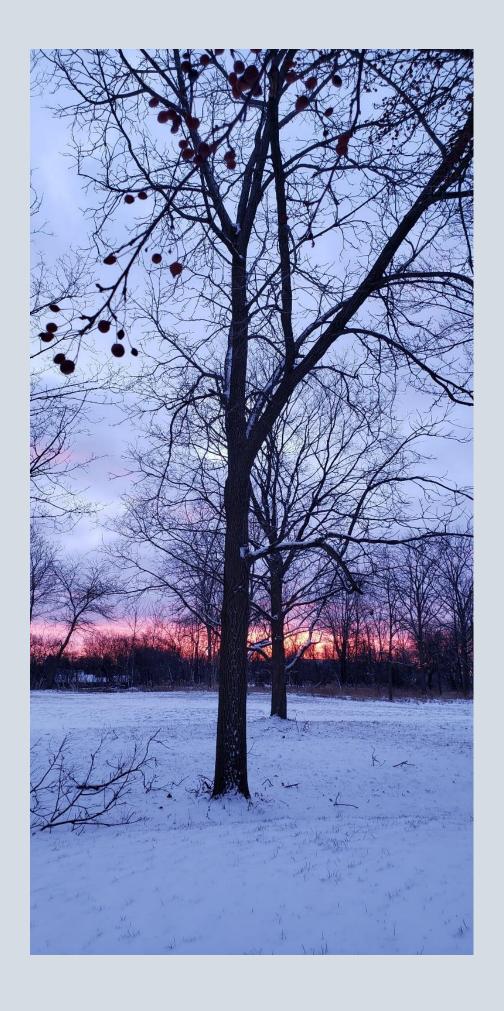
I walked upstairs happy for once, knowing that things were going to change. This time I didn't have to put my "mask" on, it was a genuine smile. Once I got upstairs, I continued to write in my journal.

"Sometimes I think to myself, am I the only one who puts on a 'mask' all the time, or are there other people out there that do the same thing. What does it take for people to realize that sometimes a person is not

actually okay? How do you know people aren't hiding behind a mask all the time—not the ones you actually wear at the store? Coming forward to my parents wasn't easy. The thought that rushed through my mind is will I lose my parents after this or have I already lost them? I felt like all my emotions broke through and became flustered the moment they started reading my letter. Almost like molecules trying to break free from being trapped in a tight squeeze in order to find room to breathe. Finally, the aching moments were over when my parents looked up at me, hugged me, and began apologizing to me. I felt free and glad that I could catch my breath knowing things will begin to change. I was no longer suffocating in the dark. Everything at that moment felt like they were grabbing my hand from the shallow deeps of me drowning. As if those boulders were finally lifted off my shoulders. My whole life I felt like I have been wearing a mask. So, I will no longer be wearing it because when you wear a mask, sometimes it's hard to breathe.

Until next time Journal,

Eric"



## World Wide Web, Trapped in My Tiny Little Bed

Any glare I fix the blank page Gets thrown back at me Even harder Even colder

I sit at the table, Hours ticking by Just as fast as the minutes do

My mind wanders against my permission
Thinking about a TV show
About a story
About plans with friends
I yell at it to focus
Focus, focus
But I focused so hard on focusing
That I'm not paying attention at all

In times of old,
School was my prison,
Home was freedom
But now all of my time is spent in one place
Bed to desk
Desk to bed
Go to sleep
Repeat again
Again
And Again

Even my choices of escape come from screens Binge watching a tv show Scrolling TikTok Snapchatting friends E-books because the libraries are closed

I try to write everything down
On paper and pen
Looking for some relief from the blue light
That I see more than my family
But going back and forth
Takes extra time
That I don't have because I've procrastinated until the last second

I have too much time on my hands
But not enough on my feet
My legs bouncing with an unreleased energy
My lips raw from the biting
My fingers itching to type something
The knowledge that due dates are quickly approaching
But still no energy, no drive to get me to do it

I used to be able to spend the whole day at school
Then go straight to rehearsals
And them sometimes to work
Now too many notifications send me into a sensory overload
Where I have to lay down for 3 hours

On my twin sized bed
In my small bedroom
With a bookshelf
And a desk
I can access the world at my fingertips
But I'm so burnt out
I sleep instead



## I Think of Things I Love

When things are going really bad, I think of things I love: this Glenn Gould Bach that's on the playlist now; my memories of Pink Floyd's caustic *Animals*, the vinyl gone; there's *Giant Steps* and *Kind of Blue*: the first jazz albums that I bought; Bob Dylan, yes, my fetish; Otto Klemperer, the burst of thunder in his Beethoven; the press that published my first poems; verse by Bly, two other Roberts, Frost and Lowell; plays I'm teaching: *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*; the sky on fire at dusk or dawn; hard rain on days I need to read; pandemic dogwalks; hiss of coffee brewing; chance to live through this.

## The Morning After

A grim freewrite last night: "Subconscious COVID poem," a fellow poet said.

This morning, out with Ann and Trey, I photographed a frozen pond, the etchings in the ice like synapses, the reedy tendrils fossilized, an ancient giant's thoughts locked down, a ghostly ruin traced, museum piece.

Piano music playing now: the sounds like cracking ice. "Beloved dead still hover round me, black but spangled with some matter shedding light": I thought this true last night.

If not epiphany, at least a little comfort. Coffee's gone but coursing through me. Trey's asleep, his belly full. And Ann is making toast.

## **Sonnet with Four Requests**

Before you speak, please count to seven: gives your demons time of eat themselves, and then your angels can ascend. New virus lives: at large but wildly seeking cells, and when it wormed inside our heads, its shadow killed and sheltered, soaked our speech in poison swirled with medicine that some of us distilled to waves of energy that lit the world. Before you speak, please put your hand, there, on your heart. We'll all like better what we hear, the mind and body joined, old lines redrawn, emotion and cognition stronger, freer. And don't forget to breathe. A million dead, toll mounting. Dream of better days ahead.

25 Dec. 2020



CONTED	IDITECTO	
CONIK	IBUTORS	

**Olivia Bottum** writes, "I have been taking classes at WCC since 1992. I'm retired from 30 years at the University of Michigan and still taking classes at WCC. Reading and writing are my favorite things to do. I have a cat Bette. Write on!"

**Quareese Calhoun** writes, "This was a photo I took during the height of covid of the empty streets of the usually bustling NYC, which I think does wonders to show the contrast between normal and the 'new normal.'"

**Cornelius Fortune**'s work has appeared in *Yahoo News*, *CinemaBlend*, *The Advocate*, *The Novel & Short Story Writer's Market*, *Midwest Living*, and others. He holds an MA in English Literature and has taught composition, technical writing, as well as poetry and drama. He is a part-time faculty member of WCC.

**Taylor Hart** is a full-time student at Delta College, and after her completion, will be transferring to Saginaw Valley State University to pursue a bachelor's degree in professional and technical writing and minor in creative writing. She believes that "writing is the gateway for expressive thoughts and communication, a way to tell stories in a variety of methods. We all have ideas and stories to share, it's just a matter of how we choose to express them to others that will leave the greatest of impacts."

**Amy Higgins** teaches composition, literature, and creative writing at WCC.

**Tommy Kaminski** is a student of 3D animation at WCC. Tommy writes, "Storytelling is my passion, and I forever seek new ways to improve my skill. Writing in poetry, especially in haiku, makes one truly appreciate the value of every single word, and I encourage it for all aspiring storytellers."

**Diane M. Laboda** is a former teacher-librarian and retired WCC executive assistant. She enjoys exploring life's mysteries and sharing with others in her writing and artwork. She's published poetry, short stories, articles, and photos in literary journals and anthologies both online and in print. She has published two chapbooks, *Facing the Mirror* and *This Poet's Journey*, and is working on her first book-length collection of poetry on grief and care giving.

**Hannah Lain** writes, "This piece is entitled Locked In. It's a feeling I think we're all familiar with due to COVID so I wanted to photograph that feeling."

**Draganel Magda** writes, "I am currently enjoying retired life after working as an automotive designer for over thirty years with both General Motors and Ford. The tragic events at the U.S. Capitol on January 6th moved me to convey my emotions into the words of a poem."

**Ella Markel** is currently a student at WCC and wrote this poem for a creative writing class.

Scott Schuer teaches English at WCC. His latest book is Covidnotes.

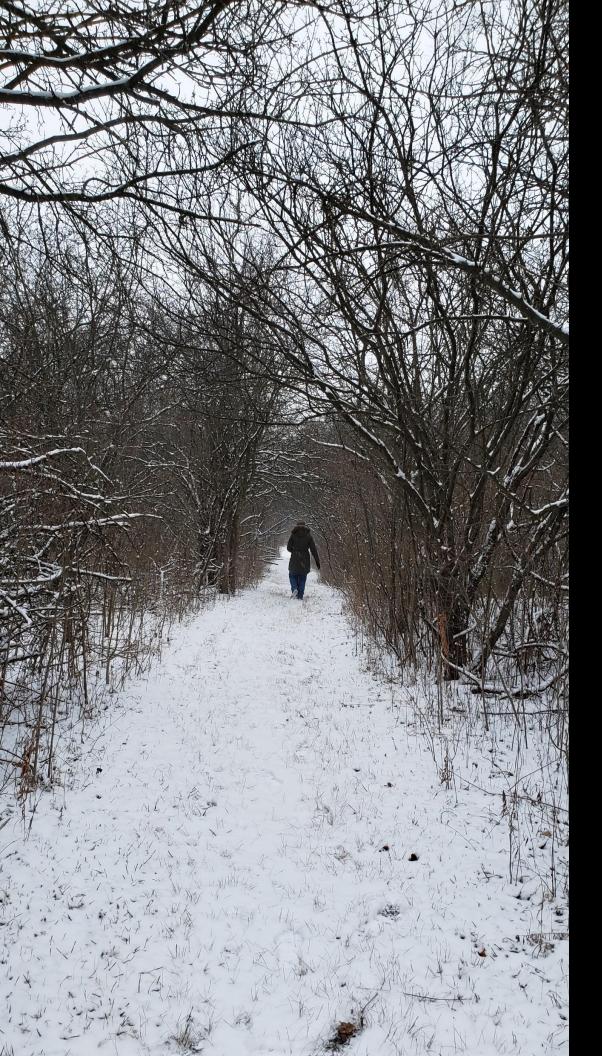
**Sophia Sims** writes, "I'm a student at WTMC who spends my free time making music, writing, watching movies, and spending time with my dog. I find a lot of inspiration through personal and other people's life experiences. And one way I express that is through poetry."

**Thaliana Smith-Ponce** writes, "I am a student that loves to write and getting a chance to submit this to your competition is a chance I am willing to take. Not only is the opportunity amazing, but having people read my work would be a dream come true. Due to Covid-19, despite changing the economy. It has changed the way people live and who they are as a person. I hope that is portrayed in this piece."

**Kesley Walter** writes, "I am a full time student who is dual enrolled as a senior in high school, but I spend my free time at work, rehearsals for my drama club, and writing."

**Tom Zimmerman** teaches English and directs the Writing Center at WCC. He also serves as editor of *The Huron River Review* and *The Big Windows Review* and faculty advisor of the WCC Poetry Club.





BOTTUM CALHOUN **FORTUNE** HART **HIGGINS** KAMINSKI LABODA LAIN MAGDA MARKEL **SCHUER** SIMS SMITH-PONCE WALTER

ZIMMERMAN