



*Behind the Mask:*

40 Quarantine Poems  
from Humboldt County

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*This poetry collection is dedicated to  
our neighbors and community members  
who have passed from COVID-19. May  
your numbers remain few, and your  
memories live long.*



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The lion is a god. The virus is a god.

We're going to the woods to pray.

-Jerry Martien from "Prayer"





# Refugee

*Lsara Firefox Allen*

You are in  
your distant, sparkly, smelly city  
celebrating  
your six-month anniversary  
during Shelter in Place  
and you are sad

We never stop being  
parents  
and I wish I could change  
all this  
for you

“All this,” I say,  
and imagine I am waving my hands around  
gesticulating wildly  
at the very air  
we breathe

You are out there in that shiny city air  
and I wish I could change the fact that  
global warming  
and pandemics  
are the cold war  
of your generation

Except now the war  
is heating up  
and global warming brings nightmares  
larger than a mushroom cloud

we are already  
climate refugees  
home no longer exists  
it has been eaten  
by fire

# **Raptured**

*Robert Allen*

The rider came frenzied  
on a pale horse and  
his name was  
pestilence.

Other  
riders, held for  
a moment, then  
flung the deathly  
themselves  
back to other  
violences.

This is what it comes to,  
what fear is;  
a white horse, a  
disease, and, alone,  
the way the fury of the long night comes on.

## **The morning of April 7th after COVID-19**

*Greg Bee*

I drive to the North Jetty at 2:04am PDT. I can't sleep. I have a perfectly good "shelter," but the "in place" part is something I've never been able to figure out.

I come to this same spot on the Jetty when I feel unsure of what to do next. No matter what is going on with me, or the world, this place stays the same. The ocean is always there. It makes the same sounds, I watch the same crash.

(When the day comes that I drive to this spot, and the ocean is gone, that's when I'll know we can just say, "fuck it," and be done with the whole thing!)

Right now the tide is rough. Humboldt overcast covers every star in the sky. This is literally what I'm seeing, not a metaphor for hard times or uncertainty in the future, although it would be a good one.

Maybe this place knows how to make its own metaphors.

Maybe this world knows what to do without us. Maybe it will be just fine when we're gone. Maybe right now, all we need to do is listen to the waves as they crash, cook Sunday dinner and tell the people in our lives that we love them.

Shelter in a way that doesn't say, "I'm afraid," in a place where you'd rather say, "I'm trying the best I can," instead of, "I'm sorry, I didn't know what I was doing."

At 2:31am PDT I wonder if I can sit here until the sun

comes up over the ocean. I wonder if I could sit here with you on a blanket until 6:49am like that time we did in Asbury Park, we counted 7 shooting stars that we BOTH saw, I knew that if I just held you there a little longer it would make everything better but YOU said, "We should get going." I know that no matter how hard I try you will not sit here with me, no matter how hard I try the sun will not rise over the Pacific Ocean. But I still wonder.

(In that last part, I started sounding like Buddy Wakefield at the end of Convenience Stores in my head a little, it was unintentional, read it again if you didn't hear it.)

At 2:42am PDT I think about how tragic it would be if I didn't take off my shoes and socks and dip my feet in the water. How tragic it would be if I didn't feel the wet sand between my toes the last time I ever came to the North Jetty to think things over.

So I take them off,  
one by one  
and run off to dip them in,  
And as I get closer to the water it feels like the ocean is receding,  
with every step the water is somehow farther away.  
I run faster and I am so scared that there is a tsunami waiting to crash down around me.  
I'm scared that god is hiding there.  
Neither Omnipotent nor Benevolent,  
just hiding there,  
the way cowards do.  
My feet feel a beautiful splash of water and I rejoice!

I let the moment pass without acknowledging it.

I turn around and start sprinting back to my car. I don't know if I'm running away from a Tsunami or god or Humboldt County,  
The love of my life or lifetime of regrets.

Maybe I just love to run.

Maybe it feels good to move my body this way after spending the day in bed, and after however many weeks we've been living this way. Maybe viruses aren't the only things that want to spread.

Maybe it's okay to love the run and at 3:08am PDT I can confidently say that it doesn't have to be towards, or away from, anything. It can just be on the beach, for fun, to make you feel something other than boring.

To let you know the things you want are always there, even when it's raining or cold, or you just don't feel like going.

## **The Fallowing**

*Michael Bickford*

*(with acknowledgements to Billie Holiday & Abel Meeropol)*

These fallowed fields frame our time,  
the structure of our soil  
redefined untilled,  
until the flood we know will come.

Well-worked before the blight,  
we test its tilth in silent streets  
quiescent public spaces.  
But the abandonment is hollow  
only surface-bare, the buildings bleed  
so thick they are with life and longing.

Still we shelter in our private places:  
the flesh retreats to salty sallow bones  
of sickness and regret. In desperation  
we borrow the youth of our children's lives,  
secretly reverse our parents' mortgage,  
and pawn grandparents' legacy for booze.  
All to justify, preserve the privileged past.  
The bill is due.

Ironic elect-ronic comics co-mix on the air,  
virus protection severed at the head,  
logic circuits shorted-out with hairspray,  
spurring minions on to armed denial:  
Open up! Damn the data! Full speed ahead!  
Yo! Gallows crooners! Sing to the gallery!  
Appeal for more applause as trapdoors drop  
and body-bags of new Strange Fruit are hanged

from pure white yardarms of The Good Ship Hope,  
its red double-crosses spawning tent-morgues.  
Embalmed.  
Becalmed.  
Fallowed.

Now the fever fills the lungs and shallow,  
intubated breathing clings to life.  
We cultivate, we culturatare,  
evacuate occult blood from our bowels  
as all around us human tallow drips  
and draws the sea-salt sorrow from our eyes.

Ground-fog rises to lowering sea-clouds,  
the vampire mist is brighter than their slate  
as dawn-light splits the air from darkened hills,  
grey rainbows wet the backs of fatted calves:  
the morning comes, yet no one wakes.  
We sleep.  
Fallowed.

These naked fields will in time be fecund.  
Weeds that we call crops will intercede.  
Though oceans we pretend to rule are beckoned  
by our fires to salt the seeded shore,  
the earth below, slow burning, will explode.

Our culture is at work at home  
the culture of the loam  
the tunnels of the worms  
the nematodes of joy  
the nodes of nitro-fixing germs  
we till to live we live until, untilled,  
we fallow.

How will the callow children of this night  
begin to find their hallows of delight?



## **Weathering the Storm**

*Stephanie Bigham*

Like the rain they fell.  
And those inside watched  
Through windows blurred  
Helpless to catch the falling.

Like the rain they fell.  
And those inside stayed for fear  
That to breathe, to touch, to reach out into the rain  
Would sweep them into the torrent.

Like the rain they fell.  
To be a raindrop measured by a scientist, by a number—  
Not a name, as they joined the masses  
Someone's loved ones all and none.

Like the rain they fell.  
And in our hearts, the rain of tears is falling still.  
Sadness, anger, hollowness, fear  
Precipitated by the invisible rainmaker as it leads us into the  
unknown.

But like the rain our love  
Can be the rainbow in someone's sky.  
No mask can hide the sunny gaze of smiling eyes or kind hello  
That reminds us that someday we will have clear skies again.

# No More Doing to be Done

*Laurie Birdsong*

Life takes longer  
when you walk  
on the border of green things  
you notice the shallow gutter  
full of trash, the hillside  
white with daisies  
the blue blue sky  
curious with clouds

Life takes longer when you walk  
your breath slows  
to the pace of your heels  
tap tapping down  
your arms swing  
with graceful helix?  
everything spirals around you

Life takes longer when you walk  
on asphalt, through city streets  
hard and empty, till long  
you reach the earth worn path  
out into the field  
where hawk is stanchion  
on the high wire  
chickadees flirt and blush  
through the branches  
and the sky widens  
the length of your dreams

Life takes longer when you walk  
home, the mailbox is empty  
there is no more doing  
to be done

no more sharpening the blade  
across the wet stone  
no more filling the gas tank  
for the third time this month

no more doing to be done  
we simply walk  
and walk  
and walk on  
till the roar of crickets  
and the pulse of your breath  
resound in the twilight

## **White Fog**

*Susan Bloch-Welliver*

We walked by the bay enveloped in fog.  
Its giant net caught walkers with dogs,  
drifted on bikes, cement sculptures,  
couples who stared at its milky haze.

Our hands held tight, sheltered by white;  
we could be ghosts, blanketed in sky, in dense bright white.

Gulls fluttered above, barely there, lost in light.

A ping of metal disturbed the quiet  
paws crossed water/ raced home/  
tan tail waved.

We talked, dreamed, told stories where we learn from this,  
walked in a whiteness so bright, each separated, shapeless  
light with no shadow  
bright without sun  
on a trail by the bay;  
relieved by water—air,  
umbrellaed in fog  
shielded by masks  
safe by distance  
counted in feet,

alone in our dramas,  
together this day.

## **Virulent**

*Sarah Brooks*

Release the innocent  
from their prisons  
Sideline the players  
and cast out the naysayers

Infect the unbelievers  
Inject the economy  
with the beleaguered, but  
the rations will be meager

The thing that sets  
Us humans apart  
To have vision and prepare—  
Or wait for tragedy to start

A lack of imagination  
(necessary for compassion)  
Could be the fatal flaw  
In our reaction

## **Personal neuroses and pandemic**

*Wendy Butler*

There is no time to obsessively self-reflect  
People are dying  
There is only time  
Why didn't I say that?  
Have you got it did you recover?  
Why did I do that and what can it mean?  
Don't get too close  
I wish I could perfect connect  
No listen  
Re-emerge, replenish, reconstruct  
Time will tell  
Time won't tell anything

# **In The Shadow Of Waiting**

*Daryl Ngee Chinn*

Chinese have an expression for impatience,  
Dog can't hold it in, dog can't wait.

We are waiting  
to take off our masks  
to staunch the flood  
of new words. We don't want  
to practice social distancing,  
to comprehend Kawasaki  
Syndrome, hear about ventilators,  
surgical and N95 mask shortages,  
intubation, negative pressure,  
we are waiting.

We are waiting to topple the crown  
of the new king, SARS-CoV-2,  
COVID-19, hoping we can stop a virus  
like Ebola, Dengue, bubonic plague,  
like AIDS—how that sounds like a bandage.

Every day we see or read about  
something new and something old  
—a marriage, til death do us part,  
of the heart, the kidneys, the lungs,  
the blood, the clots, the fevers,  
diarrhea, the liver, bloodshot eyes,  
the loss of taste and sense of smell,  
atom-smashed and stir-fried together

with the invisible ink  
of people with no symptoms,  
negative tests, no breathlessness,  
who walk by and then drop dead.

We are waiting, and afraid,  
Like Oedipus, who wanted,  
in the end, to know it all,  
to demand truth, whole truth,  
truth soon enough.

We are waiting, waiting for plasma,  
for throat and blood tests, for vaccines,  
because they are all we know,  
which feels like nothing.

We are all waiting  
for the numbers to subside,  
for the extra hospitals to go away,  
we are waiting to breathe, to exhale  
for the arc of health to rise.  
We are waiting inside.  
Spring is here. The air  
has changed. Are we done?

We are waiting  
for a cure. We are fighting  
this perfect disease,  
one that changes  
with each discovery,  
this pandemic.  
We are fighting this war  
against which we have no  
known weapons.  
It is not something we see,  
we are waiting, because  
there is no medicine,  
no gun, no bomb,  
we are throwing darts  
at a tank, berries are ripening,  
poppies blooming, not waiting.

it is almost hopeless  
except for the Samaritans,



the nurses, doctors, aides,  
cleaners, therapists, janitors,  
those who flew toward the infected,  
toward the unfair battle,  
dressed against the invisible,  
attending to the dying, staying  
with those who die alone,

we are waiting for the morticians  
who took and stacked up the dead,  
making space where there was none,  
worked and worked to bury, to cremate.  
We saw, we see,  
and we are waiting,  
careful in our homes.

We are waiting and watching  
the ones who blame and threaten,  
the ones with guns and bullhorns  
who, like all of us, are not used to  
listening and sacrificing  
for the greater good,  
for the public's health,  
we, us, each of us all.

We are waiting  
to shake hands, to kiss,  
we are waiting to touch  
granddaughters, we are waiting  
to tackle, arm wrestle,  
to love our enemies,  
to sleep with one another.

We are waiting for those  
to admit they were wrong,  
that they didn't know it all,  
we are waiting for someone  
to stop insulting the questioner,  
we are waiting to stop blaming

the Chinese, the Korean,  
the Japanese, but it is hard  
to wait without blaming,  
to admit the virus traveled  
west and east and anywhere  
a plane or person went,  
Wuhan or Paris, Siberia,  
Buenos Aires, London,  
Shanghai, Marseille, it flew  
into everyone's open arms,  
a conspiracy of travel deals,  
unintended migration  
of travel currents, sneezes,  
sea cruises, charter flights,  
airline deals, all-in-one resorts,  
Christmas shopping,  
New Year migrations.

We are waiting.

## **An Introvert Laments**

*Larry Crist*

I long for the crowds i once abhorred,  
would avoid like the . . .  
In current pandemic parlance, steer clear of  
Nostalgic at present for Piccadilly Circus, or Chicago's  
Rush & Division, Mother's Bar on that same  
block where i once lived, jostled, coming and going  
all hours of night. The hustle bustle of Times Square  
or Philadelphia's Broad Street, the bars and theatres,  
the throngs of humanity that'd force you off the walk  
Philly's Italian Market where you'd drift like a boat  
amidst the people-packed current  
Cheek by jowl in the subways of London, the shops  
on Oxford St., where you'd best know where  
you're going or get swept up in the . . .

The crowd—its own animal—an animal's animal,  
a swollen beast with multiple backs, out of mind  
without feeling, a mob or riot, standing in line,  
camped-out for one of those big stadium concerts  
—a Bill Graham presents or mega sporting event,  
exhilarating, possibly life threatening, everyone  
on their feet, screaming, stomping, chanting, demanding

A deafening hive-mind yelling themselves hoarse,  
at the top of their uninfected lungs, arms raised  
as if victory were imminent, like a collective force  
that would rattle the cosmos, reduce this unleashed  
populous in terrifying singularity

Predatory birds maintain distance, beyond the pale, way  
past the orange, firmly ensconced in the pink or on the green

Hoi polloi placed here within, a thing distinctly human,  
dissipating like gas, smoke or shattered crystal, stirred  
ashes a swirl, ALL FALL DOWN, wandering ghost cities  
throughout the Loserverse, dispersing over and upon  
the Monoverse, drifting past planet ME, onward ho  
onto solo singularity where infinitesimal granules  
orbit dead satellites, dissipating into  
loneliness unimaginable  
infinite entropy forever

## **Meet me on the corner**

*Dylan Collins*

Most days  
I try to believe  
that people are inherently good

despite the evidence,

despite every moment I have  
swallowed the opposite

with a chaser of denial.

But today you met me on the corner  
of I wish a mothafucka would  
And today is a beautiful day  
To cuss a mothafucka out  
Tuesday O' clock.

Today I am sending a complete  
unabridged user's guide  
to just who the fuck  
do you  
think  
I am

to your mailbox  
for every time you mistook  
my kindness for weakness.

Today I'm sending a flock of mountain dew stains  
mixed with the patches in Post Malone's crusty ass beard hair  
onto the lips of every bro  
who thinks no  
means try a little harder,  
try another approach.  
It will be a warning shot  
Because if you push,

touch,  
try a little harder,  
see the red dot on your forehead,  
back the fuck up,  
tread  
So lightly that you disappear  
into the definition  
of consent.

Today I'm sending the dirt from every grave  
of the bodies of essential workers,  
healthcare employees and our elders  
inside an envelope with  
A \$1,200 check of our own money  
the government asked us  
to beg for  
to each CEO  
that stacked their billions  
while we died  
when they told us to stay home

Shelter in place,  
when the only shelter  
you truly have in this country is  
the cover of currency.

Today I am sending my body  
as cover  
to Minneapolis,

I am sending my voice as a weapon to the corrupt  
Humboldt County Justice System  
and D.A. Maggie Fleming

I am sending a death threat inside a megaphone  
to every cop who can't hear  
"I Can't Breathe"

And a giant flaming bag of dog shit

to the porch of anyone who wants to step on the voices  
of persecuted people to interject  
“But All Lives Matter”

Currently I'm at a level  
of burning this bullshit to the ground  
based on things I can't even speak on  
With the feeling of helpless in the eye of  
this hurricane.  
Tomorrow I might resume believing  
humans are inherently good  
because it hurts my soul too hard not to,  
But if you believe these hands will not  
Square up to protect myself and those I love  
Even on those hopeful days  
Don't forget what I told you  
On the corner of  
I wish a mothafucka would  
And today is a beautiful day to cuss a mothafucka out  
Tuesday O'Clock.

**April 18, 2020**

*Therese FitzMaurice*

The fog is smothering the coastline  
reaching into the valley,  
over the first ridge.  
The children are still in bed.

It feels like the right time to cry.  
Today's NYTimes briefing  
mentions mass morgues  
for nursing home patients,  
families overwhelmed with care,  
children struck by rising poverty,  
the mental health impacts of isolation.

The local economy reports 15 business  
have permanently closed,  
the first in many waves to come.  
The Humboldt agency spokeshead says,  
the economy is more than the numbers  
it's the story we tell about it.  
He's hopeful the Nordic land-based  
salmon farm will bring 100 new jobs  
from the east coast company.

I want more than anything  
to curl up in my father's lap  
like a child and cry,  
let his strong hands  
rock away all my sorrow.

He's asked us yesterday to cancel  
our summer flight to see them.  
There were years where I would've celebrated  
that freedom, released from the obligation of family.

Now I wonder when I will see them again?  
If my mother's fragile lungs will be spared.



If my step-mother's radical, stoic strength  
will keep her from one of the mass graves.

My son is tired of me asking how he's doing  
My daughter has begun to say, she needs  
to see her people. I can no longer be  
the center of their orbit.

Last night at dinner, they asked  
why we had gone to Jamaica.  
We told them stories about  
the three international trips  
we took before they were born.

The reggae concert in Montego Bay.  
The cenotes and ancient Mayan ruins in Tulum,  
the stunning architecture in Rome.

I wonder when we will travel again  
beyond the small radius of our home.  
The fog is so thick today,  
we can no longer see the ocean  
from our second story window.

There is a candle lit on the altar.

This morning I asked aloud, for the spirits  
of the river and the Earth  
of the wise ancestors to help me,  
to heal me, so that I may be  
a presence of love through these  
gray and mysterious days.

# **The Trouble with Pibbles**

*James Floss*

Klaxons rang and  
Alarums sounded

Front door whooshed  
Protocols defied

Airlock unleashed  
Lockdown defiled

“It’s Henri!” Jean cried!  
“He’s outside!”

Gamboling over  
Grass still green

I suited and embarked  
Gathered him in my arms

We tumbled into the inward  
The iris clanged shut

Disinfectant sprayed  
Protocols reframed

“Henri!” I shouted!  
“What were you thinking?”

“Look! It’s Mr. Pibbles!”  
His hands declenched

Revealing Mr. Pibbles  
“I saw him outside

And I knew it was OK;  
Now can we go out and play?”

=====

POET'S NOTE: NO. DON'T. STOP.  
SOME WILL. HOPE YOU WON'T.  
MASKS/DISTANCE STILL. STOP  
PATIENCE STILL VIRTUE. STOP.  
– COMMON SENSE.

=====

## **Do What You Love**

*Mariana Franco*

Entering Venice beach  
your old childhood adolescent stomping grounds.  
20 years later, the bio -luminescence has come  
paying a visit on the southern Pacific Ocean shores.  
Parked on Washington street by the canals,  
taking a detour behind the alleyways  
remembering us walking there when we first began  
our courting of one another.

Walking past the Venice canals, Baja Cantina restaurant,  
where we had stopped, admiring at how the sun that day  
was reflecting off the water its golden orange rays.

Walking past Kifunes Japanese restaurant and sushi bar,  
where you for a whole year, your virgin tongue tasted  
different cuts and rolls of fish and Japanese delights  
as a kid. Your mother couldn't cook that year; she never  
got over the death and loss of your father. And you,  
probably never have either. You took me to Kifunes  
and we tried their famous big clam dish you raved  
about. But Kifunes is boarded up, lost  
in the darkness of night, in the background. I wonder,  
will it exist after the pandemic?

Walking toward the pier, but not stepping onto its path,  
I walk on the sand of the beach. Walking towards the illuminating  
waves crashing onto the shore.

I am happy.

For an hour and a half only small glimpsed thoughts of you  
disrupt but do not cloud over the beauty of the sea. I almost  
forget that Covid-19 is reality. The lightning flashes of blue,  
periwinkle-turquoise hues drowned in white waves,  
is too beautiful and miraculous to be overshadowed  
with thoughts of you or the virus. My eyes,  
my body, my senses are blessed with this gift  
from mother Ocean from great goddess Earth.  
She is beautiful in all her glory.

I am grateful, I am thankful for the cold ocean air  
hitting my face and body. Slightly chilly, a little cold

and nonetheless happy.  
I'm alive.  
Smell of dead fish or something ripely smelling of decay,  
is not so bad.  
Keeping me captured in this moment, enamored and hypnotized  
by the sea and all her magik. I wonder, if you ever walked  
this particular part of the beach with your own feet. And  
I am here now, cannot reminisce of your past that you shared  
with me or think of the experiences we shared together.  
I am here now.  
I am here experiencing my life and these moments in Los  
Angeles.  
I am making Venice my own.  
No more crossroads of Washington and Wade  
with you in the driver seat.  
I am behind the wheel.  
Take a look at me now.  
I'm driving away seeing the signs that open up my eyes  
In bold blue letters, it is the Ocean saying to me, calling me in  
letting you go for something greater,  
"Do what you love."  
And I am blessed, releasing myself and you from exhausted  
expectations.  
I release you.  
I am free.

## Rehearsal May Be Over

*Quarantine Poem #7*

*Anne Fricke*

While digging up blackberry vines from the chicken coop,  
I thought of my great grandfather, the crooked house with  
the tall, chiming clock, gloriously red tomatoes hanging  
heavy on vines, and berry bushes ripe with sweetness lining  
the fence,

I thought also of the people I fed in the nursing home as a teenager,  
their lives dwindling from years of use, unforgotten stories  
carried on hunched shoulders, snacks of saltines and  
buttermilk (their favorite) a shadowed memory from  
younger, leaner years

I clipped and slashed at the thick, spiny arms weaving through  
cherry-blossomed branches, scratching red lines into my  
flesh as I cleared the space with a growing Depression-era  
anxiety

I would have made a good pioneer woman  
strong hands, broad shoulders and skin that browns in the  
sun

I've dug garden beds on the side of rocky slopes, removed stones  
in piles like my Gaelic ancestors to create rivulets of fertile  
ground  
bathed children and clothing in buckets of cold river water  
eaten meals solely of food grown or fished by my husband  
and me  
made medicine with the plants who grow here by choice

I have played the part of the frontier survivor—in the comfort of  
modern civilization and roads that lead to town  
but now the future feels uncertain

our survival is not a given

we are fixing the fence of the chicken coop, cleaning out their  
space so they have a secure place to lay—free range is hip

if you have store bought eggs to fill in the gaps of your  
hens' freedom  
we are planting seeds to feed a small community—who knows  
what friends may have the need?  
we are gathering medicine into pots upon the porch—there may  
not always be a tincture for what ails us  
we are dusting off our homesteading books, refreshing our  
memories of the local plants, stuffing cabbage and salt into  
crocks to learn new sources of nutrition

This no longer feels like a weekend retreat, or what I yearned for in  
my youth, this no longer feels like a lifestyle,

it's beginning to feel like survival

## **Alone in Quarantine**

*Susanna Gallisdorfer*

I miss touch

not the touch of today's spring wind  
sure and strong off the ocean  
sending bird flight careening,  
hurrying through grass all rushed  
and flushed in silver,  
whipping hair upward like flames  
in a brushfire,

not that kind of touch.

I miss the way a hand  
can open to another,  
fingers soft like a wing  
gently unfolding,  
palm cushioned and warm,  
its heart line shaped in the womb,  
how a hand can tenderly send  
a gesture, a caress, a comfort  
across separation to join  
in oneness,  
if only as a handshake.



## **Blame**

*Margot Genger*

The anti-enlightenment, a cage, a trap.  
The Hatfields and McCoys have nothing on us.  
We sew poison, throw bombs that ricochet  
off walls cast in cement.

Blame China  
Blame the World Health Organization  
Blame Obama.

Fight back.  
But how? Blame?  
What else is there?  
Love isn't working.

Blame Trump.  
Child, narcissist, liar, mentally ill.  
90,000 dead. 60,000 his fault.  
Of course! Perfect attack.

But what if we said nothing?  
Or if we shot him?  
And they shot and we shot.  
Would the blame end?

Disease is now political.  
Hugs falls into a right or a wrong.  
The pandemic infects our bigotry.  
It's an exponential, visual, soul sickness.  
We cannot look at ourselves.  
We cannot look away.

So...  
Let's blame the ancestors.  
The white ones.  
Those selfish, self-righteous  
"If you can get it you can have it"

founders of an upstart democracy  
where black people served white ones  
so as not to be whipped or worse.

240 years later,  
while brown people get deported,  
more and more black people get shot  
so the lily white can spend  
all those greenbacks  
regardless of the land, the air, the water,  
regardless of morality, kindness, generosity, life.

Now though,  
we've got a pandemic.  
white is pit against white.  
A deadly proposition.  
Devoid of compromise,  
harmony a pipedream,  
the stakes so high.

Watch out all you black folk,  
brown folk, old folk, women folk.  
Whitey is afraid.  
He's gonna' blame you,  
and I blame him.

I turn off the news,  
write this poem that will change no one  
write another one about the good  
in the world  
where ever it is  
that I so hope  
will prevail.

**4/1/20**

*Susanna Gibson*

I don't know  
what to write down anymore.  
I cannot seem  
to leave it behind me  
or put it down  
or scrub hard enough  
or often enough  
to make the seams match up again.  
Dreams about the virus  
and my sick patients  
and in my dreams  
I can do nothing to help them.  
I can do nothing to help them.  
Most of the time  
I can not tell  
if I have slept  
or if I am driving.  
Work is never done.  
There are so many of us  
who have it worse than I do.  
I read every day  
it is not enough.  
We are not enough.  
They are stronger than I am,  
they say "I got this"  
before they kiss their kids goodnight  
before they wash their hands  
before they get sick  
before they don't say words anymore  
there's too many people  
that are going to die.  
They'll be alone.

It is illegal to mourn in this country.  
Illegal to mourn this country.

Someone said I was  
the beating heart of our practice.  
That was a long time ago  
and lately I fantasize about  
how best to cut out  
my beating heart.  
I could give it away.  
I could stop  
making friends with my patients.  
I could swallow whole  
my heart.  
I have gained weight. I eat  
as if I burn calories.  
As if my heart races  
for good reasons. I eat  
so I feel heartburn while I lay awake.  
So I can feel my fullness for hours.  
At least it is something.  
I don't understand  
how we are not all suicidal.  
My patients are not supposed  
to hurt like this.  
They are not supposed  
to be sick getting sicker.  
They are not supposed  
to all be sick together.  
I am not that kind of nurse.  
I do not know how to do this job.  
I do not know where the lines are.  
I can not keep inside of them.  
I cannot keep them safe.  
I cannot work this out  
so we are ok  
and that used to be what I was good at.

Now I am not able to be  
used anywhere, I am told.  
I am told my set of skills is useless.

I cannot make sense of this.  
I read there is not enough.  
There is no light.  
There is no "when this is all over..."  
there is only my heart burning.  
There is only my one foot  
in front of the other foot.  
There is only a countdown  
until my friends are dead.  
I see this virus everywhere.

## cherry sutra

*Karen Harris, M.Div.*

It was Jesus who looked into a field  
Where blooming lilies wise lessons did yield  
Today it was my turn, standing under a tree  
To receive gentle instruction on how to be

While taking a sunlit morning walk  
Dogs for company, no need to talk  
Blessed by silence, I was free to see  
The beauty of a cherry tree

I stood still beneath her, feet firm on the ground  
Not restless, distracted, or running around  
The thought came: She knows how to shelter in place  
And she shelters others within her embrace

My eyes and heart turned up toward her crown  
Open to receive whatever might drift down  
In that moment of quiet she poured into me  
The simple wisdom of a cherry tree

*Stand firm and strong in the place where you are  
Create beauty and food from the light of a star  
Spread your arms wide to give shelter and shade  
To any who come, needing your aid*

Her sweet lesson had already filled up my heart  
But there is more, so much more, to her gentle art  
Blossoms wreathed the sky like delicate lace  
Petals swirled down to caress my face

In every direction the clear air danced  
With twirling petals delicately romanced  
Her love poured out to the world all around  
She stood still in the center, not making a sound

It was Jesus who looked into a field

Where blooming lilies wise lessons did yield  
Today it was my turn, standing under a tree  
To receive gentle instruction on how to be

## **surrender**

*Kristy Hellum*

every day  
i get up  
open the door  
and walk through the hole  
in my heart

opening to such beautiful sorrows  
whether or not by choice  
as natural  
as breathing

to protect myself while feeling  
such limitless despair  
i must don a sacred headdress  
in preparation for simply going  
to the grocers or walking  
through a farmers market  
impossible to conceal

my road is paved  
with vulnerability stones  
to better fathom this path  
requires that i walk alone  
and far from myself  
at times  
it was  
the only road  
i could follow

one day we will all crumble  
inevitably parents  
will get their hearts broken  
by their own children  
even my own vocation cannot save me

so if i ask for guidance



i shall make this an invitation  
sending it only to those  
whose wisdom is  
sourced from their  
well-earned heartbreaks

every day  
i get up  
open the door  
and walk through the hole  
in my heart  
standing in awe  
arms outstretched  
to greet the dawn.

In quarantine 4/20

## **Bord för En\***

*David Holper*

Please sit. This is your table. It stands  
rooted to the earth. Like the Galapagos  
where for centuries the flightless cormorant  
harbored. Without fear of predation.  
We too have one special  
today: safety. It comes with a side of sky,  
over the russet bed of a fallow field  
where we promise you will be left  
utterly alone. We will send over your meal via cable  
in a wicker basket. We place a little checkered cloth over it  
like the print from Dorothy's dress in which she was swept  
far from any world she knew. What else  
is available? Sorry, we're out  
of assurances. Yet even in the whirlwind, it is still  
the safest restaurant in the world.  
If when your food arrives, a sparrow alights,  
we would appreciate it if you offer her a little bread.  
A bit of water from your glass.  
She has come so far to be with you—and it takes  
so little to show you have not forgotten  
your humanity  
at home.

Bord för En\* is a Swedish restaurant that was recently opened during the pandemic. The restaurant is a single table in a field, and the food is sent via a cable in a basket. Only one person per day is served.

# **Pandemic!**

*Ian Jewett*

A cough and ...  
I am sick for the ages!  
Nah, just allergies—just allergies  
Pandemic! Pandemic! Ruling the pages

I mask  
I hide—I shelter-in-place  
I am gone—I am gone  
Did I even leave a trace?

I am covered  
You are covered  
Whether we are sick or not  
I can tell  
Can you tell?  
It is the connection we forgot  
In your eyes turned away  
and your head bent low  
there's a comfort in holding on  
to all the love we can bestow

My home becomes an office  
and my office becomes a home  
Where do I go just to breathe?  
Where do I go just to roam?

Will you tell me a story of your churned up soul?  
I long to tell you a story of mine  
There's a yearning—always, pressing—yearning  
for another kind of peaceable time

Maybe you can swim in your riches and chill  
Maybe you live in unemployment and panic  
Maybe your protests are ungrounded – steeped in dissonance  
Either way, just listen to those politicking tongues running rampant

So a fever and an illness  
noted in the story of human ages  
Pandemic! Pandemic!  
Ever-bearing down upon the pages  
So, I. So, you. So, them. So, us.  
We all take our place  
on the grandest of stages.

# Grieving Our Whole Family

*Deborah Kearns*

I am broken-hearted for the sick,  
who say it's like drowning.  
I weep for the dying,  
mourn for their families—  
deprived of final moments together.

And I cannot forget the pangolin—  
shy, harmless—world's most trafficked animal,  
COVID-19 carrier suspect #1,  
along with the horseshoe bat.  
Blameless mammals,  
their torture begins  
in a cramped cage.

Euphemistically called “wet markets,”  
where their blood,  
other bodily fluids and parts  
flood the floors—  
local customers and tourists abound.

“Wet markets,” where their limbs  
are severed from their living bodies,  
and sold piece-by-piece,  
until finally they are slaughtered,  
and whose suffering we share—once again,  
with our loss of those we most loved.

Can we stop this now—  
the mutilation, agony and prolonged death  
of innocent wildlife?  
We may have to save them  
to save ourselves.

## Psalm for Surreal Ceremony

Zev Levinson

—for Richard Stone, mayor of Piedmont Avenue, in the days of  
COVID-19

Long conversations as I always desired.  
There is time to talk and the people  
are lonely. They let words cascade  
as they piece together distant deaths  
and fear whispers beneath the tongue.  
I have always been a good listener  
and I like this unexpected light.  
Twenty-minute dialogues six feet apart  
in grocery stores, neighborhood walks.  
Though rural with houses on acres,  
we often chance upon one another,  
alternative exercise for lost workouts,  
and Doug stacking his firewood,  
Susan tending her streetside landscape,  
Ted at his endless lawnmower,  
familiar faces now with names.  
They are letting me in, so I recount  
today's burial of Uncle Rick in Oakland.  
With my family in their faraway homes,  
all of us safe behind our cameras,  
I observed the handfuls of earth  
that began to deliver him back to loam,  
blanched at my cousins', my attendant brother's  
shattered passages. We will gather  
when the air is clear, long conversations  
sifting this reality and the love that remains.

## **Distancing**

*Jason M. Marak*

Distance perches on dark cliffs above gnashing seas overlooking scattered eternity. Molted, cracked beak, dead eyes. But make no mistake, she sees. And she demands to be counted: feet, furlongs, meters, miles, six of one, half dozen of the other. Distance is distance, by definition, the space between: Point A, Point B. Bridge of Sighs, Caesars Palace pool. Lovers separated by ten steps across a crowded cocktail party or by the mysterious chasm of time. Makes no difference. Both spans measurable and felt. She's powerful. But here's the trick: She owns a weakness great as Achilles. You see, it's like they say, *takes two to tango*. No destination, no distance. No point of departure, same math. A magnet, one tick beyond attraction's elemental pull is no longer consumed by the tug. But at heart, electrons still hum, content with knowledge of the other.

# Prayer

*Jerry Martien*

*Spring, 2020*

Neighbors up the ridge report a mountain lion prowling  
in their yard at night.  
It's the logging over in Elk River, replies another. Driving  
out the animals.  
It's not hard to understand. You push the wild. The wild  
pushes back.  
The virus is an animal driven from the woods.

We murdered the gods who looked after the forest.  
Then we built the gods a temple. Using trees for  
columns. Burning trees to make bronze.  
At first we went to the temple only to celebrate and  
pray. Then we'd all go home—except for a few  
priests to look after things.  
They built more temples. Let in the money changers, the  
brokerages and banks. Service workers and little  
dictators to run it all.

You see where this takes us. Why we find temples  
buried in desert sand. Decaying in jungles.  
I worry about the neighbors' cats. The neighbors.

I'm sheltering in place today. The air is clear. No planes  
in the sky. Somewhere a pump is running. Another  
log truck going by. A couple of crows bringing  
news.

The lion is a god. The virus is a god.  
We're going to the woods to pray.



## Gaia's Rage

*Pat McCutcheon*

I counted on you to be awestruck  
at the Fibonacci sequence,  
recognizing the same numbers in the petals  
of a purple flower and structure of a pinecone,  
or hearing a bird's song repeating  
my Morse Code, my cry for help, my S.O.S.,  
but you were blind and deaf  
to how everything is connected.  
I was confident you'd have known  
trees so welcoming it seems  
they've grown all this time  
just to feel the warmth of your hand on their trunks?  
Was so sure you'd be dazzled  
by full double rainbows streaking the sky.  
would hear poetry in the canopies of forests,  
the gentle roll of hills,  
stories in creeks' chuckling water,  
a benediction in the kiss of sun.

But I was so damn wrong.  
You assume it is all just for you alone,  
run your fingers through the grass,  
grab it in your fist, feel my pulse  
echo in your blood—but then  
dump tons of filthy waste into the primordial  
waters of the oceans so great whales wash up dead,  
their bodies crammed with plastic.  
Thousands of orange-beaked tufted puffins  
wash ashore killed by starvation—  
fish they depend on decimated in waters  
warmed by your demand for oil, gas  
so greedy it has changed the climate.  
Your endless dams and deforestation wipe out  
the red-haired orangutan, your brother  
with ninety-six percent of your DNA.

You have not respected the virgin beauty of the earth.  
I have sent floods, tornadoes, earthquakes and wildfires  
destroying homes, towns, your own kind,  
but still you do not understand  
the interconnectedness of all.  
Perhaps a plague will capture your attention,  
make you stop the fierce competitive haste that keeps you  
from hearing our common breath, shared heartbeat.  
A tiny worldwide virus for you, strong and deadly,  
so easily shared—passed from a friend’s hug,  
the sneeze of a passerby,  
someone at work two weeks ago.  
Maybe the wildfire in your body,  
a fever burning your filled lungs, or  
your wife’s cough becoming desperate  
gasps for air from her, from your baby?  
You may turn for comfort to my natural world,  
as you have so often in the past  
—but the sky is filled with your toxic smog,  
rivers polluted, whole species vanished.  
Maybe now you will know you  
are as diseased as our precious planet.  
Watch me show you how to slow down.  
Stop! Listen now!

## **This Wasn't Supposed to be a Love Poem**

*Katherine Nunes-Siciliani*

we share half a bottle of rum  
your skilled fingers trace rims  
with tangerine skin  
a nod to the job that is no longer

a nod to why we are sharing a bottle of rum  
on a Wednesday night  
I say,  
"here's to maintaining a sense of normality, right?"

it is late  
or early, one could say  
records spin alongside  
the sound of your stories  
we share worries  
sometimes kisses  
even though we're not supposed to  
especially when we're not supposed to

with blissful eyes locked to mine  
you say,  
"we're doomed, aren't we?"  
to love, you mean

"yes. yes we are."

\\

I am scared to love you  
not because you are scary  
or flighty  
or dysfunctional

you are none of these things  
quite the contrary, in fact  
you show me safety is not a gift, it is a right

and you are anything but passive  
in how you give and ask for consent

there is a fear of your safety,  
and your simplicity makes my bones shake  
maybe it's just the trauma speaking,  
but isn't there supposed to be something wrong with you?

something for me to overthink  
over-analyze  
over-worry  
aren't I supposed to doubt myself in your company,  
just a little bit?  
aren't I supposed to drown,  
just a little bit?

In times of solitude I find myself searching  
for reasons not to love you  
but when we lie back to back  
the sweet nothings I whisper to myself  
as you sleep  
say otherwise

they say  
give in  
let it be what it is  
let it be  
simple

\\

we make a home of your bed  
the rum has made us giddy  
and your laugh sings  
alongside the records

You say, 'I love you.'  
and, I, without missing a beat -  
'I love you, completely.'

It was not inaccurate,  
I just needed the liquid courage  
It was true  
I know because I remembered it all the next morning  
and smiled as you slept

you told me you love me  
and I did not drown

you are safe  
and simple  
and yes  
yes, we are.

# Latex Gloves

*Vincent Peloso*

One size fits most  
does not fit me.

The latex rips.  
The cashier smiles

at the shards  
clinging to my hand

sweaty as the chilled glass  
of homemade lemonade

I will pour at home  
after washing and soaking

the produce I bought  
in vinegar water

for twenty minutes  
and hanging my knapsack on the line

to solarize.  
But who am I kidding?

Though helpful, these precautions  
don't guarantee shit.

Most of us will eventually get it.  
And a lot of us will die.

One size fits most.  
If the glove rips,

don't panic, don't cry.  
Wear whatever you want.

But remember the man  
standing before you in line.

All he wanted to buy  
was a candy bar.

# I Startle Ospreys

*Will Schmit*

with my saxophone.  
No urban legend,  
I play for the abandoned lots  
of the Lord.

Industrial pampas  
clusters promise bush fire  
in the place of critical  
acclaim. Song sheets  
the color of smokestacks turn.

Rehearsal, in Covid, is  
a concerted effort to remember  
angel bands in tandem,  
the cycle of fourths  
calls fingers to prayer.

It's good for the lungs. Soul  
stretching the limits  
of upbeats down river.  
Circling birds consider  
the safety of rest.

A wail, slipping  
by half steps  
to the altar of logging  
cranes, carries  
an echo to sky high nests.

The caws, in counter  
point, trill to the blues  
and be-bop, await  
the sudden funk  
of sunset.

An hour, between trucks,



makes the day work.  
Folding the instrument  
back in the case restores  
the calm.

The mask comes back.  
Music shelters.  
Every sound in the air  
is feathered. Whistling  
memory licks dry lips.

In the weeks a day  
much likes another...  
in the year, a moment  
moves from chord  
to chord.

## **Dreams of Light**

*Joe Shermis*

Once I was so hunkered down  
my blankets smothered me,  
and as I tapped out life online  
I decided I could see  
all the things that were not here  
but lived within all dreams  
cuz as I reach out to the world  
it becomes more than it seems...

Once I lit my soul on fire  
with matches and a book,  
and as I read the things I saw  
within the place we look  
I saw how things will show themselves  
as dreams turn into light  
as we wake up from the moment  
and have gained a night of sight...

Once there was a given dream  
that floated into days  
and as we both remember  
and forget the ancient ways  
we give ourselves a reason  
to look at what is true  
and become the very moment  
when then I turn to you...

## **The Choice of Service**

*Jacqueline Suskin*

See how it may already appear to be  
a losing battle and we choose  
to take up arms anyway?

This is what we do.

We shoulder the possibility  
of all endings and delve  
into the core of strength  
that is so, so old.

We look beyond survival  
and explore the booming lineage  
of what it is to truly heal.

We hold space for the great correction  
and develop connection bedside.

In the moments before death,  
we pay tribute to that grand promise  
built into each body, the potential  
to mend and make new again.

We apply ourselves to the path of aid  
even when we fail, for our efforts  
of attention, our presence and practice,  
can cause breath to return.

## **A Lot On Her Plate**

*Neil Tarpey*

Our cell phone connection  
is crystal clear,  
my niece  
a nurse who's routinely so calm  
holds back crying  
she's been the final face  
a few patients have seen  
before they died  
in her Long Island hospital  
whose 519 beds  
are all COVID-19 cases.  
I listen and worry about  
dangerous twelve-hour shifts  
heartbreaking compassionate care  
her husband home sick with mono again  
three college-age kids with cabin-fever  
who must rebuild their backyard fence  
blown down by a rainy windstorm  
so their dog Buster won't run loose.  
Shit, she's got a lot on her plate.  
We discuss other family members  
in the New York hot zone  
I visited them all last fall  
when none of us foresaw  
a Grim Reaper virus  
collecting the old and sickly  
the young and bullet-proof  
the cocky, the oh-so-holy,  
the wrong-place-and-wrong-time victims.  
After our conversation ends  
I stare at the dying sunset  
lilac orange amber crimson  
a panoramic candlelight vigil  
for those dead on the other coast  
and a warning, quite clear,  
that darkness is coming.

## **What Covid Took from Me**

*Dawn Tisdell*

Covid took my last chance to see my mum again.  
The cancer gave her an expiration date,  
but at least cancer would wait  
just one-more-last week till spring break  
maybe cancer could wait a whole-lot-longer  
than just spring break, or the summer, or Thanksgiving  
maybe even Christmas

But Covid took her lungs capacity of a whole-lot-longer  
Covid couldn't wait a whole-lot-longer  
Covid couldn't even wait for our one-more-last...  
Covid took our one-more-last...

Covid took our one-more-last hug.  
Covid took our one-more-last eruption of laughter.  
Covid took our one-more-last motherly kiss, the kind you have to  
wipe off your check after.  
Covid took our one-more-last playful tease.

Covid took our one-more-last summer by the pool.  
Covid took our one-more-last volunteer day at the rose garden.  
Covid took our one-more-last cry over some dumb show, like  
American Idol.  
Covid took our one-more-last chance to see and hold each other's  
faces.

And now, Covid makes me wait a whole-lot-longer see her ashes  
spread.  
Covid makes me wait a whole-lot-longer to cry to the tree that  
bears a plague with her name.  
Covid makes me wait a whole-lot-longer sleep in the bed she made  
me.  
Covid makes me wait a whole-lot-longer to see my Dad and my  
family.

But Covid didn't take from us

Our one-more-last phone call  
I could hear through her voice  
That she knew—we didn't have a whole-lot-longer

Covid drown her and Cancer choked her  
But she fought to give us one-more-last words  
she said, one-more-last time  
“I **LOVE** you, sweetie”

And in those one-more-last words  
She encased all the one-more-last times we would have had  
She wrote all the one-more-last times into my soul  
And through her one-more-last words she burned into my heart  
I have a whole-lot-longer to see what Covid did NOT take from  
me.

## Connection Failure

*Izzy Unsinger*

Prom over Zoom is underwhelming,

Don't let anyone tell you different.

Your dance partner is your pillow and he forgot to dress up.

He still has the drool stain from last week, but only you know that.

You look beautiful, all glitter and tulle.

And don't forget your sweatpants. And shame.

Your friends look grand,

Luke is only in his pajamas.

Emma is wearing mini milk cartons as earrings, she made them  
herself.

Nate has dyed his hair for the third time this week.

Kate is reconnecting...

Sean is reconnecting...

Delilah isn't here.

You miss the sweaty monkeys you call peers.

You miss the friends you call sweaty monkeys.

At least you have your family,

And they have their Netflix.

Everything you know is reconnecting...

Reconnecting...

Reconnecting...

Connection Failure.



## Grapefruit in a Global Pandemic

*Ryan Van Lenning*

Sometimes in the midst  
of global pandemic crises  
I sit on the river's bank  
to watch gnats dance

then peel a grapefruit  
just enough to see plump flesh  
and pretend it's her

slowly sliding my finger  
up  
and  
down  
and in  
and I bite my bottom lip

because I'm missing intimacy  
and going nutty for lack of touch

I know, I know, such is too much

I've been told I overshare  
that some things are just not  
supposed to be mentioned

like how my heart sunk  
and my knees buckled  
to lover mud

screaming why why? why!? when I heard they told  
the big companies  
that pandemic means pollution  
they could pour  
into our water and our air

the water and air that's yours  
and yours and mine

and not only the American  
Petroleum Institute's

or how how when I found out  
that the body  
of Homero Gómez González,  
Monarch Butterfly Defender, age 50,  
was found at the bottom  
of the well

I grieved for days  
and I'm not sure  
I will ever recover

or whether I should

when you can't listen to mariposas  
and expect to survive

The war on truth  
and the war on imagination  
are the same war  
waged by the petty tyrant,  
Fear

and everybody knows  
'we're all in this together'  
yet the well-offs  
will be weller off

while miles of lines  
flood the food banks  
finding the lives of lesser-offs

wondering what this together business is that we've been hearing  
so much about

and how I'm not supposed  
to admit that  
I let a Jacoby Creek's  
worth of Jack

slowly wash me away

when I discovered  
the decline in birdsong  
and butterflies—  
those other pandemics  
we don't mention  
because it's not polite

despite the work of Homero  
and his friend Raúl Hernández Romero  
whose skull someone found fit  
to smash at the top  
of a hill filled with sacred fir

because being human  
requires a certain amount  
of denial

but being human  
also means telling the truth

and today the truth is  
grapefruit turns me on  
and I want clean air. I want

to drink wild, clean water. I want  
every last king to fall

but every last monarch butterfly  
to carry the souls of Homero and Raúl  
into every person's heart

and the truth is I want  
to make love  
to this ruby red  
and forget about pandemics

## The Ceiling Stares Back (but never answers)

*Adrienne Veronese*

& so the question  
comes down to  
whether to  
stay or go  
after all.  
although not even  
the most prescient  
among us thought to  
ask the ceiling this:

what cost does any kind  
of future come to?  
is this the day  
i grow the tiniest death  
within these walls  
hoping for a dirge  
to bring me out  
of this fatal ounce of living?

how distanced must i become  
a poet growing smaller  
with each language forgotten  
—including the language of touch?

(i regret that i have  
but one death  
to choose)

& even though there is little chance  
of remembering much more  
than i could write  
in any single space  
i still distract myself  
by calling memories  
on  
the

phone  
in the middle of the night

to remind me  
of when i was never young  
& so  
naturally  
less alone  
than i am  
now.

(there is never any answer)

## **Lost in Calamity**

*Jake Williams*

My Dad said when lost find your  
starting point by reversing course  
uphill or downhill until you see  
a distinctive familiar landmark.  
Being lost in the Covid-19 calamity is not  
like that. It is a vast baffling maze  
of data, disinformation and emotion.  
Dad's advice falls flat in the face of this.

I go masked in public; avoid hugging kin  
and friends, observe social distancing.  
Over and over, I forget the time or day,  
or what activity was planned next.  
The TV runs unattended or I binge watch  
or blankly stare into the refrigerator.

## **Covideo**

*Amantha Wood*

Dance-a-lone  
Dance-a-long  
Scroll-a-song.  
Guitar in hand  
Making bread, man.  
Virtual tip jar  
Quarantini from  
My at home bar.  
8 o'clock howl  
Yoga online  
Download divine.  
Here's my cat  
My belly fat  
Homemade food  
Homemade masks  
Quarantine snacks  
All gone.  
Okay, I will play!  
Lists:  
Jobs I've held  
(one is a lie)  
Nouns in 4's  
Popular likes I dislike.  
~scroll some more.  
Guitar in hand  
Making bread, man.  
Post-a-Pic  
Of a landscape  
I've been,  
Not in.  
4th pic on the camera roll  
with blues, reds, yellows  
and Teals (wtf?)  
~scroll some more  
10 Incredibly typical things  
I love

for Realz!  
Tag. I'm it.  
10 album covers  
10 mixtapes  
10 8-tracks (not really)  
Show us the 4th pic of your camera roll  
that is white, brown or purple.  
Guitar in hand...  
Scroll-a-song  
Ecstatic dancers in Zoom boxes.  
Scroll-a-selfie  
Shows to binge-watch. Go!  
Kids cooking  
Covideo chatting  
Home schooling in the nook.  
I'm not gonna read one dang book.  
Breathe in Breath out  
Memes. Loops of Giphy.  
Lost Coast Outpost News.  
Pretty day sunny walks  
#staythefuckhome  
~scroll some more.  
#alonetogether  
Okay, I'll play--  
People:  
connecting,  
commenting,  
(emojiiing)  
supporting,  
participating,  
sharing,  
caring.  
Social-in-place  
Shelter-in-Face.  
Book.







## Contributors

*Lasara Firefox Allen (she/they) is a writer, Witch, and gritty academic. From the wilds of Mendocino County, they currently reside in Arcata, in the ancestral and contemporary lands of the Wiyot people. Lasara is a Harm Reductionist, social justice activist, and co-conspirator for our collective liberation.*

*Robert Allen lives in Northern California where he loves and wanders, creating edges and intimacies in his head. Edges like a saw. Intimacies like a new lover. Robert lives for and in this, and also likes tea and cats and books and birds flying.*

*Greg Bee is a traveling poet based in Eureka, CA. His work deals with topics like mental health and addiction recovery, as well as social and political issues.*

*Michael Mallot Bickford is a partner, father, musician, scientist, democratic socialist, humanist, and for over forty years has been a teacher of adolescents, mostly in public middle schools. A life-long Californian, he graduated from San Francisco State University and writes fiction and poetry with the Lost Coast Writers Retreat Collective.*

*Since early childhood, Stephanie Bigham has held a fond appreciation for the nuance of the written word. She finds writing to be a means of discovering grounding significance in the mundane aspects of life.*

*Laurie Birdsong finds deep solace in the ever-changing wilds of the North Coast. She believes as we heal our relationship to the earth, we heal our lives and communities.*

*Susan Bloch-Welliver writes poetry to increase awareness and express layers of reality. She uses metaphor to express her impressions in both poetry and sculpture. This drove her interest in combining them. She received a 2019 Victor Thomas Jacoby Grant for poetic sculpture awarded by the Humboldt Area Foundation.*

*Sarah Brooks has lived in the Southern Humboldt community for thirty years and is thankful for the beauty of this place, which provides a daily source of inspiration. She recently completed a BA in Interdisciplinary Studies from California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco—find her @sarahbeneaththemoon*

*Wendy Butler is an associate faculty member at College of the Redwoods. She has been a print and radio journalist in Humboldt County for the past 25 years. She co-founded The Ink People Center For the Arts program Redwood Coast Writers' Center, which held monthly writers' groups and produced a bi-monthly Poetry Jam.*

*Daryl Ngee Chinn has lived in Arcata with his family since 1975 and has worked as a father, househusband, Chinese cooking teacher, admissions counselor, and poet. He encourages everyone to be patient, to get tested, and to stay curious and well.*

*Larry Crist lives in Trinidad and has one collection of poems: **Undertow Overtures** and a new story/poem collection **Alibi for the Scapegoat** due later this year.*

*Dylan Collins is a writer, spoken word artist and teacher dedicated to creating community. He is a nationally touring poet and author who has led writing workshops and coached youth slam poets coast to coast and created Word Humboldt, a spoken word community and open mic in Arcata.*

*Therese FitzMaurice writes on her back deck below a climbing white rose vine that someone planted years ago. Mother. Wife. Teacher. Poetry MC. Humboldt Immigrant, grateful for the Wiyot's stewardship of this sacred land. She's working to live sustainably and teach children how to honor the gift of being alive.*

*James Floss is the exclaimed author of several imaginary works including An Intricate History of Clock Mechanisms, the spy novel Bang! Bang! You're Dead, and the fictitious children's book, Hiffledy, Piffledy POP! a non-Newberry Award winner. Retired, he currently lives in Freshwater, California with his wife and various animals.*

*Mariana Franco lives in Los Angeles, California. Is part of a large group of poets in a published anthology of poetry titled, Coiled Serpent: Poets Arising from the Cultural Quakes & Shifts of Los Angeles.*

*Anne Fricke is an author, poet, podcaster, storyteller, mother, wife, and aspiring pandemic survivor. When she feels the fear of uncertainty, she goes to her garden to pull weeds.*

*Susanna Gallisdorfer is a writer and painter whose practice is simply to listen and to see deeply into the nature of being. She resides and works in Arcata CA.*

*Born and raised in Eureka, Margot Jarvis Genger travels around inside her head and writes poetry. She loves Hal and their two children—Chris and Seiche—absolutely. In 2018, she launched Shift Happens—Breakdowns During Life's Long Haul. She recently published her second book, Baobab Tree—Collected Poems, 1970-2020.*

*Susanna Gibson is registered nurse in a graduate program to be a nurse practitioner who loves her family and her job. Yes, you can ask her nurse questions, she won't mind.*

*Karen Harris is the steward of Vanaprastha, a nature retreat and 50 acre permaculture farm on the Mad(alena) River. Karen is a grandmother, avid student of nature, life-long spiritual seeker and former minister of the Humboldt Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Bayside.*

*Kristy Hellum has been in and around Arcata since 1975, HSU Theater graduate, activist mischief maker, visual storyteller, Mother, Flow States Engineer, nonconforming MFT therapist who encourages outrageous acts of grief and then going outside to play more. Ever since she signed a healing contract with poetry, she's been better.*

*David Holper has published two books of poetry, *The Bridge* (SequoiaSong Publications) and *64 Questions* (March Street Press). He is the current Poet Laureate for the City of Eureka and teaches at College of the Redwoods.*

*Ian Jewett is a Humboldt transplant, poet, nature lover, and explorer working as a behavior consultant on the Northcoast. He carries his human experience through the coronavirus pandemic with all of the global community.*

*Deborah Kearns attended HSU in the 1980's, later completing an MA at SFSU, but she never forgot the physical beauty of Humboldt. Finally returning in 2017, she discovered she didn't have to give up the vibrant poetry community of the Bay Area; it was right here all the time.*

*Zev Levinson, author of *Song of Six Rivers*, brings poetry into classrooms and other sites through California Poets in the Schools. He has taught at Humboldt State University and College of the Redwoods, is a Redwood Writing Project teacher-consultant, and a founder of the Lost Coast Writers Retreat.*

*Jason M. Marak earned an MFA from Columbia University and returned to Humboldt after a decade in Tokyo teaching at Temple University's Japan campus. He's also worked as a hotel doorman in NYC, grill cook, house painter, garbage collector, and in 1990 he played semi-professional baseball for the Humboldt Crabs.*

*Jerry Martien lives in Elk River. He is the author of two collections of poetry: *Pieces in Place*, and *Earth Tickets*.*

*Pat McCutcheon retired from College of the Redwoods after 30 years of rewarding teaching. She writes more now and lives with her wife and two cats amid the redwoods of northern California, having published two chapbooks and many poems in journals and anthologies.*

*Katherine Nunes-Siciliani is a writer and photographer based in Arcata, CA. Her work explores the depth within each living moment.*

*Though he no longer wears latex gloves while shopping, Vincent Peloso does wash his hands often and well. And he hopes you do too.*

*Will Schmit is a Midwestern poet transplanted to Northern California. He has been reading, and writing poetry, in between bouts of learning to play the saxophone, for nearly fifty years.*

*Joe Shermis writes in the morning, works in the afternoon, and plays music at night. Sometimes he switches it up for fun...*

*Jacqueline Suskin has composed over forty thousand poems with her project, *Poem Store*. She is the author of six books, the latest *Help in the Dark Season (Write Bloody, 2019)*. Her work has been featured in the *New York Times*, the *Atlantic*, and *Yes!* magazine. For more, see [jacquelinesuskin.com](http://jacquelinesuskin.com).*

*Neil Tarpey's poems and stories have appeared online and in print, including Flashes of Lightning, a Pushcart Prize nominee. In 1976 Neil left New York City and drove to Humboldt County, where he has worked primarily as a substance abuse counselor, a college instructor, and a sports writer.*

*Dawn Tisdell is an Environmental Resources Engineering student at Humboldt State University, enjoys biking around the Arcata Marsh with friends, and reading. She works at a small local company called Liberty CBD to create natural medicine alternatives.*

*Izzy Unsinger is one of two Youth Poet Laureates of Eureka. She lives at home with four cats and her family. In her free time, (which is a lot), she makes giant worms on strings and researches obscure stories for play material.*

*Ryan Van Lenning is an inner/outer wilderness guide, Founder of Wild Nature Heart, and the author of Re-Membering: Poems of Earth & Soul and High-Cooing Through the Seasons: Haiku From the Forest. He lives among the diverse forests and rivers of Humboldt County, ancestral Wiyot and Yurok territory.*

*Originally from the Pacific Northwest, Adrienne Veronese has been writing, publishing, and giving poetry readings since apprenticing at Boston's Stone Soup Poetry at seventeen, where her mentors included Corso, Ginsberg, Sexton and Snyder. Her undergraduate and graduate work were at the University of Oregon and Antioch University West in Seattle.*

*Jake Williams is a retired newspaper guy, who's been trying for 19 years to court his elusive poetic muse. He writes, reads and studies poems in Eureka at the end of a lane rich with wild creatures.*

*Amantha Wood is a lover of dance, writing, river swims, and tree hugs. Her side professions are teaching Special Education, crafting dolls, and sewing homemade clothes.*



