

Something Endless

If the flowers did not bloom

and the leaves did not fall, how lonely I would feel.

If the rain did not fall on the asphalt

and diffuse the scent of fresh water, how lonely I would feel.

If the clouds never turned pink and orange

on my early drive to work, how lonely I would feel.

If the floorboards did not creak

and the wind didn't whistle through the windows, how lonely I would feel.

The earth in all her ways, holds me.

Wraps me up in her seasons, scents, and sounds. She lets me know I'm not alone.

The world will keep turning. The seasons will keep changing. The new sprouts will pop

and grow into all they will become.

I only have to be and watch and let myself be swept up in it. I am not alone, I'm a part of something endless.

Memory

When she looks at me it's like she has forgotten the way she used to hold me, the way she used to run to me, the way she used to love me. In this glance is a summary of so many fears. Fears that I am replaceable, unlovable, and most of all forgettable.

To be remembered is one of the most precious things. To be known and remembered for who you truly are is a rare gift in life. It is a cure for loneliness and medicine in isolation. To be remembered is to be in someone else's mind, no longer existing by yourself but connected to another.

I hope that I will be remembered by the trees and the birds and the flowers. The ones I lean against lovingly or bend down to tend to. I hope that even if all people forget me, the earth will know who I am.

I pray she will always embrace me. She will always know the sound of my feet on her ground. She will remember how my hands touch the soil. She will always remember how I look at her and how I want to be with her.

I know that humans can be forgetful, we move from one thing to the next, not learning from mistakes or remembering to give thanks. But the earth seems to remember all, for better or worse.

The landscape shows us bluntly whether it has been treated well or abused, tended, or misused. Time seemingly moves cyclicly around her, never stopping or starting but always being. She seems to embrace even the tiniest organisms and sustain even the largest.

She is not preferential. She loves and sees all her inhabitants. And she mourns when they do not see her. But still, she sees us, renews us, remembers us.

Storm

Sometimes I see sadness roll in like a storm. When it has become so familiar that it is something I feel I can see.

Starting soft and small, the waves ripple through my body. It's an uncontrollable thing that grows on its own. Surging and receding until finally it is gone.

The waves soften again and I'm left in a confused peace. A peace that is calm but not a true peace like of reconciliation. A peace that lasts only a few hours or days because the source of the storm still lives.

The waves will soon rush back once again to my body.

When this is over, let's all have a barbecue

Everything feels as it was before. Inside I can wipe my nose or sneeze or cough. I can sit close to another body and I can breathe the air with no fear. I can touch whatever doorknob I want and open any drawer without thinking. I can turn on the light without consequence and lay on the carpet without a second thought.

But outside things have changed. So subtle, it is almost unnoticeable. There are still cars on the roads and the occasional person walking or jogging. There are still birds singing and flowers blooming but then you notice the tiny signs. Signs of fear or anxiety or denial. The used mask laying on the sidewalk. The children waving from behind a windowpane. People zigzagging across the street as they walk to avoid being too close to a neighbor. The yellow caution tape wrapped around every swing and every playground. Closed signs at parking lots and state parks. Thoughtful pieces of art stapled to the telephone pole saying, "when this is over, let's all have a barbecue."

Someone who had not seen the news in six weeks might think nothing of it. They might walk down the street and see nothing noting the change. They might expect to walk into their favorite coffee shop and sit down for a slow cup of morning coffee. Only to find that they are quickly told to take their coffee to go and through the window, they watch the barista spray and wipe up bleach where they had sat for only half a second.

But for those who have seen the news, they know of the invisible killer that is sweeping across the world. The thing that is causing cities to quiet like ghost towns and hospitals to overflow like a

MASH unit close to the front lines. The invisible thing cause fevers to spike and lungs to fail. Forcing doctors to look more like astronauts and nurses to fill the place of loved ones who are not allowed to visit their dying mother, father, partner, grandparent, or friend for fear the invisible thing will take hold of their body too.

Time goes on and while parts of normalcy go on untouched, other things will be forever disfigured. While there are small signs that show us where and how this invisible thing is moving, there is one thing that has mastered the trick of revealing it. It is not a black light, symptoms, tests, or fear. It is not quarantine orders, unemployment numbers, or closed businesses. It is not even the number of people who have tested positive, who know for certain the invisible thing is or was in their body for a time. It feels intensely violating to think of the thing killing thousands also existing silently within you.

But the one thing that reveals it most fully for what it is, is the death toll. Showing up on every social media, every news program, and even in the weather app, to remind us that even though the killer is invisible, it is no less real. Today there are 104,800 fewer people on this earth because of one killer that will never be put behind bars. Justice will never be brought and still more lives will be lost.

I wonder if I didn't date my writing if someone years from now could trace this back to the exact day it was written just based on the number of people we know to be dead right now. Do you know it is April 11th, 2020, Holy Saturday, five months into the invisible war? Will our time still be marked by our calendar after this or will it be marked by the number killed. Today is 104,800. We do not yet know what tomorrow's date will be.

Don't ask, don't tell

You say "not to worry, I won't ask you to speak about that." You stay quiet
so I stay quiet and move on as if it wasn't said.

But the silence doesn't feel neutral. How can the lack of words be silent and at the same time
screaming, manifesting that we do not talk about that here.

That is not acceptable here. That is something to be ashamed of and afraid of. You are
something we are afraid of.