

The Myth of Normalcy

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May we never forget the questions raised in
the relative quiet:

What is essential? What is not?
Who is essential and who is not?
How dare we ask that question?
How dare we ignore that question?
Who are we to judge?
Who better to judge than us?

May our newfound sense of “us-we”
become cellular memory.
May the not-so-peculiar loneliness haunt
us,
Remind us of what’s changed
Or remained woefully, unbearably same
Since before the incident.
Viral outbreak. Type: pandemic
As our gazes search the horizon for relief
Remember that we are still in it.
This moment now needs our attention
If we rush there will be leave behinds
We’ve been there, done that

This world.
I keep wondering if COVID’S the only thing
we’re sick with.
On lockdown, my friends and neighbors
went straight to swapping homemade pies
Like it was something else they were trying
to cure:
All this distance between us?
Flour, butter, sugar, space and time we’ve
forgotten to share.
On lockdown, some of our students went
straight to being hungry.

And quick came the “rules” on what we
could do about that... and for a while the
rules sounded like “no.”
Civilization can be mean.

White coats say for most of us the disease,
it’s a-symptomatic.
But fever is not the only thing that has us
burning.
What’s the temperature where you are?

Is it like this where you are?
We talk-talk-talk quarantine-talk
We walk-talk
We sing pray
Our tongues are dripping with aftermath.
Lips quiver with effect.

I put my ear to the Creative Underground:
“Social distancing is social overload,” she
said.
“There are eight people in my house. We
are supposed to be safer at home.
I have headaches.”

“This is what God wants to do,” he says.
The one tear in his eye is acceptance.

“Being an empath is hard right now.... She
says, “People are... WEIRD.”
I can’t help but laugh.
He said, “The extroverts are so sad”
She asked how you balance the fear of
scarcity with the need for sharing
So many wondering eyes.
So many burdens.

So many breathtakingly beautiful things
we've created to fulfill the void.

Timelines teeming with visions of
handmade loveliness

Too many stories never heard.

Tales we think are too small to tell.

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The still for some of us is chaos for others.

Our should be brothers and should be
sisters

Are trying to tell us they're not alright. And
they are not points on a graph.

Our children are showing us how it can be
fine.

They are wonderfully loud in play!

When they're getting on your nerves.

They have our laps to sit on for the first
time in such a long time...

What do you hear when you really listen?

Amid the whimpering and wailing, is there
good news?

Who do you tell?

What mind are you making up in
preparation for what comes next?

The World has gotten small y'all...

If the criteria is common anxiety, I got 'bout
7.8 billion kin folk

Maybe when this thing is "over"

Y'all can all come on to Memphis,

Plenty riverside, folding chairs, and
whatever you like on the grill

We got it and bring some foil take home
what you want to your people...

We are a poor city with plenty love.

The bass bumpin' from somebody's car

Will wear down this accumulated confusion,
sadness, grief

Separation, we've been curled up with all
these weeks...

If we can just hurry up and get to "this thing
being over" ...

Is that realistic?

I'm scared that over won't means what we
think it means

Will we remember our enlightenment?

Will we do enough to take care of those
who've been taking care of us

And haven't had the time to be
traumatized.

Those who didn't lose a loved one,
but lost ten, twenty, forty of ours, maybe
more

And felt helpless

Slipped right from the tightest grip of their
hands?

How will we care for them?

How will I know,

When once again, the choice is mine

When to move?

When to be still?

They're saying outright the world has
forever changed.

I want us to make sure of that.

Let these losses not be in vain.

Let us-we proclaim that life before was not
normal

Normal is what you name your cat

Normal is a lie we swear never again to tell.

Take the time to count to the beat of 7.8
billion hearts.

Band together no matter how difficult or
how long that takes

Hashtag "don't rush" and mean it. Every
soul is worth lingering on.