

REALM SHIFT

And so it is that
Now we are being forced to do
What we could not imagine doing before.
Abruptly, almost without warning, and with our old,
outworn practices and belief systems
We find ourselves entering a total shift of realms.

It is time to evoke the wisdom of our ancestors, philosophers
and sages.

Anzaldúa, she would say we are now living
In Nèpantla, in liminality, straddling
The old and new normal.

Atwood would admonish:
The truth is not irrelevant.

Indigenous people would remind us
That the universe is an inseparable whole.

Mama, she would say
Ten mucho cuidado mija. No salgas.
All precious wisdom.

The virus, the fear, the uncertainty
The chilling tales of
Other nations have migrated to us.
An unfamiliar strangeness has taken over our bodies.
Every day begins to feel like a week,
Even a month, some say.

Yes, there is the uninvited darkness
That has crept into our lives.
But Jung would remind us that
The other side of darkness is light.
Yes, the virus kills and fear creates chaos.
But it is at precisely these moments
Of extreme crisis that our human spirit
Presents itself in uniquely soft, endearing ways.

Light, hope, community, sacredness.
It's in the balconies of Italy and Spain that
Burst with song.

It's in the women who are
Sewing homemade facemasks for doctors.

In the two-minute prayer
Requesting a miracle
Recited at the same time
Across the world.

In the teachers who take
To their cars to drive in neighborhoods
So that kids can see they are still there
For them.

In a little girl's social distancing birthday
With friends driving cars by her house
With signs and banners.

In the parents who choose to eat dinner
Every night in the hallway
Close to their quarantined daughter.

In the people who set up Christmas lights
And cook Thanksgiving dinner in March.

In the people volunteering
To bring groceries and medicine
To those in need.

In the therapy dogs who go
To comfort senior citizens outside their windows.
In ordinary people who read children's stories online.



Artwork by Liliانا Wilson

In virtual watch parties and happy hours with friends.
In the first responders who risk their lives to save others.
In priests who walk the streets of Laredo
To offer comfort and blessings.

Let us remember that darkness
Can bring forth our finest hour.
In this realm shift
We come to know
That a new reality is in store for us
A reordered promised land,
As Luther King would call it.
Now we learn that the I is about the We.
We are all in this together.

And so it is that
We find ourselves at the verge
Of spaciousness—expanded possibilities.
Those who are coming behind us
Will ask:
How did we cope?
What did we not get right?
What did we learn?
Is it really true that we can:
Isolate in our togetherness?
Socially distance to save our relationships?
Work in a context of uncertainty, confusion and fear
And yet find a sense of stability?
Break open from our rigidity
To find a new foundation for humanity?

I have hope that
We can, as Rilke suggests,
Live the questions now as we stumble
Into the vast territory of answers that
Defy a choice between one or two options.

I have hope that in this
Realm shift we will journey to re-connect
With things that really matter--
Our humanity, our communities, our loved ones,
Our sense of purpose in this life to find
Our perfect centeredness in a shifting reality.

—Laura Rendón, Professor Emerita UTSA