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Intersections

# Pandemic Creation Story

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In the beginning a fever, blood-orange heat and headache.
Pressure in my chest-cavity like a clenched fist, squeezing.
Every day I am learning the ways to be quiet.
How to close myself as men and women in white coats rush by.
How to open myself to IV fluids, electricity through my veins.
During daytime, I sit and stare out the window for hours.
During nighttime, I shut my eyes and want out of these white walls.
So I slither, I swallow, I creep. I press my belly against the floor
And squeeze my shoulder-blades through door cracks.
I search for the swollen earth, wet budding flowers, dry crackling leaves.
I search for my own smoke-breath from lungs that could never carry
Oxygen very well. Yet—still I respire, and still my heart pumps,
And still I would put my hand to my chest, listen to its primal beat.
Still I wrote my first lines of poetry at this hospital,

Its rhymes and rhythms borne out of a silence I am still learning.
I'd write lapwing and stardust, desert cactus and wanderlust.
I'd write Ylang-Ylang and bergamot, musk and pine.
I'd write survival and lovesong, I'd write my beautiful lungs.
I'd write sonnets by the day, shaping fear and uncertainty
Into something structured, tangible. Something beyond stillness.
I'd write thank-you cards and get-well-soon notes,
Write love poems and hate poems. To death, knocking at my door,
Its frigid breath seeping into flesh. To death, the ninety-two-year-old
Forsaking his own life for a newborn as he gives up his ventilator.
To death, its shock and heat, its fight, its thrashing, silence.
And to life, tongue and marrow, current through my veins.
I open myself to life, my belly pressed against the earth that gives,
As I creep, I writhe, I rattle and dream for hours.

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