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## The Sky Over Wuhan

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**By Donna T. Obeid**

We think life will always go on the same way,  
Our freedoms as endless as the days.

Gradually it seeps in –  
The reports and numbers from the other side of the world.  
Until one day, what we had is already gone.

Stay home, the politicians say.  
Wash your hands. Don't touch your face. Stay six feet apart.

Canned goods and noodles and toilet paper are the first to disappear.  
Students are asked to leave. Staff are told to take essential things.  
Graduation is cancelled. Museums and theaters and hotels close.  
My brother bakes bread. My father cleans his cellar.

Planes lie like sleeping giants.  
Cars vanish, the trains stop running.

Spring is silent this year but for the beeping of dying hearts,  
The quiet opening of buds, the song of sparrows.

Where are the masks?  
Where are the emergency supplies?

In Bergamo, sirens scream across the sky.  
Military trucks transport the dead through the town.  
In Madrid, the ice rink is turned into a morgue.  
Nurses and doctors openly cry. Then even they begin to die.

Italians sing from the balconies, their voices lacing over the piazzas.  
The sky over Wuhan becomes blue again.  
Frogs and fish appear in the Venice canals.

We dream of when it will end. We dream of dressing up, doing our hair.  
We will fling open the doors and come out one by one.  
We will hug and kiss and greet each other as old friends.

Years from now, we might find ourselves sitting on a bench in the sunlight  
Suddenly weeping when we recall the precise moment we were permitted  
To begin again.



Author commentary: The pandemic has put up close and center how fleeting life is, how quickly everything can change. Time spent in lockdown is a reset, a bit like being up in the air between where you've just been and where you are going. Perhaps you come to look at yourself and your place in the world a bit differently. Perhaps you learn to love more.

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