

The Malibu Times

NEWSPAPER • MAGAZINE • ONLINE

The Sky Over Wuhan by Donna 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.
We start to see – 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.



Originally from Grosse Pointe, Michigan, Donna holds a BA in English with an Honor's Concentration in Creative Writing from the University of Michigan, and an MA and MFA from American University. Her work has appeared in Carve Magazine, Detroit Metropolitan Woman, the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council sponsored poetry anthology, and elsewhere.
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