

"Words of Comfort or Hope during COVID-19."

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THE PREDATOR

Elliott Light

A lifeless form stalks me now.

Unseen predator that hides in plain sight.

Travels on winds of coughs and breath.

Threatens to take until nothing's left.

But I'm blessed with conscious thought.

I can choose where I go and what I touch.

This predator needs me to make its clones.

And so I must deny it my chromosomes.

Washing hands until they hurt.

Keeping away from those we love.

Staying inside behind locked doors.

Keeping the predator from hurting more.

The lifeless form will fade away,

Into the ether from whence it came.

We will embrace our lives once more,

Treasuring the moments like never before.

IN THE GRIP OF COVID-19

Don Erdek

*Things are as good, or as bad as can be.
We are in such strange times to make for the surreal.*

*Not sure what to believe or who to believe.
Saddened by a virus which has created social Apartheid.*

*This is a never-before-seen level of national calamity.
History doesn't get bigger than this.*

*All of us have overreacted causing borderline panic to infiltrate everything.
We have been entombed in our homes which are further surrounded by a vague cloud of worldwide uncertainty.*

*Never-the-less we are hopeful for a full and rapid recovery.
We Americans have the can-do, can't be beaten down persona.*

*What was started by the Chinese must be corrected by American ingenuity?
The United States is the world's pinnacle for hope.*

*Hope cannot be shackled.
Each of us can enhance HOPE.*

*We require a solid belief in our own inner strength.
Faith and confidence, encouragement and optimism, aspiration and trust can transform hope to be that which we desire.*

BOB'S SWAN SONG

Robert Messier

Verse One: 1962

The Return of the Poet, JFK May King,
 With Dem words that gave meaning to thoughts, when to sing.
 It was the Year of our Lord in 1962.
 The beatniks, the folkies and rock that was new.
 A quiet revolution that took place in the streets.
 While crazy white people are still wearing white sheets,
 Blinded by the colors of the old black and white,
 Just McCarthy's vision of the political right.

Verse Two: 1963

The Return of the Poet, The Death of the King.
 The assassin's bullet that changed everything.
 It was the Year of our Lord in 1963.
 It was a cry in the night, In the dark to be free.
 Civil rights marches, the death of Jim Crow,
 The revolution got louder with the young in the know.
 They took a left turn when the right just got wrong,
 Determined to sing a brand-new song.

Verse Three: 1967

The Return of the Poet, Praise for the "Wild Thing."
 The Summer of Love will change everything.
 It was the Year of our Lady in 1967.
 The Age of Aquarius, the Goddess, the Hippie's heaven.
 Free love and music, a still-life of leisure,
 Acid dreams, up in smoke, brain stem seizure.
 Drop dead, drop-out. The cool cooing of a dove.
 The Beatles were singing, "All You Need is Love."

Verse Four: 1968

The Return of the Poet, the Death of M.L. King.
 Another assassin's bullet to change everything.
 It was the Year of our Lady in 1968.
 Revolution and drama did not change our fate.
 Through the "Eyes of a Child" we see what went wrong.
 The Moody Blues music still flows through our song.
 A cold world now emptying its bowels for hope.
 It's just a metallic noise, louder than dope.

Verse Five: 1969

The Return of the Poet, The End of a Thing.
 The Hell's Angels and Manson ruined everything.
 It was the Year of our Lady in 1969.
 "Tommy" was telling us we are deaf, dumb and blind.
 The war raged on in the Land of the Yellows.
 Still killing our souls and the far away fellows.
 "I Me Mine" now became the anthem of peace.
 Either Woodstock or Altamont, two dreams of release.

Verse Six: 2016

The End of a Poet, the Crowning of a King.
 The left made a right, more money's the thing.
 It's the Year of the lost Lady in 2016.
 Making America Great. Do you know what I mean?
 The College of Fools elected some Immigrant wall,
 To be the next president. They Demanded it all.
 Fattening the bovine and the poor to the slaughter,
 Laughing all the way to the bank, as global warming gets hotter.

Verse Seven: 2019

The End of the Poet, The Reign of a King.
 The Cultists of Trump have changed everything.
 It was the Year of our Lady in 2019.
 Hippies "Long Time Gone," corporate profits now bling.
 Kardashians gibber with nothing important to say,
 Except 'Take a selfie Kim, in the best possible way.'
 Hip-hop and guns and a culture gone mad.
 Everything about America now just makes me sad.

Verse Eight: 2020

The Return of the Poet and Beyond "The Lizard King."
 A corona virus has now changed everything.
 It is the Year of our Lady, Two Oh-Two Oh.
 No place to hide, then again, nowhere to go.
 The Poet returns and his name is still Bob.
 Trying social awareness, as writing's his job.
 Whether Bob Dylan or Bob Messier, it's still all the same.
 Until the Poet remembers that everyone's to blame.

This Too Shall Pass

Joanne Simon Tailele

in my life when things seem to be more than I can bear. I always thought it was Biblical, but when I Googled it so I could name the exact passage, I was surprised to find that those exact words are never spoken in the Bible. What I did discover was that Genghis Khan, the 13th century Mongol conqueror, asked his philosophers to come up with a truth that would always be unchangeable. They came to their leaders with this quote: "It too shall pass."

So regardless of the origin, It has saved me before and I am trusting it to save me again. We will get through this. We will come out the other end stronger, smarter, more compassionate. I believe this with all my heart.

A few things I think we are learning while going through this:

1. Businesses are learning that their employees can work just as productively from home.
2. With more people working from home, there will be less pollution, and our planet will thank us for it
3. Families are rediscovering each other. The family bond around the dinner table is making a come-back, and the family nucleus will come out stronger than we have seen since the 50's.
4. America will return to a production country, making our own good including medicines and medical supplies so we will be self-sufficient.
5. This will create countless jobs, many of which are not require being a part of the academic world. The average blue-collar worker will have more opportunities than ever.

I am sure there are many more. I know we still don't have all the answers. I know right now the information and guidelines change daily. But we are learning- all of us from the top down.

Am I still afraid? Yes, I am. Am I going to continue to shelter in place? Yes, I am. But while I do this, I'll keep repeating: This Too Shall Pass. This Too Shall Pass.

Hope Regarding Surviving Coronavirus

Linda Walker

First some dictionary definitions.

Cabin fever – a claustrophobic reaction manifested as extreme irritability and restlessness that takes place when a person ends up in an isolated or solitary location or is stuck indoors in confined quarters for an extended period of time.

Cooped up - you live in or are kept in a place which is too small or does not allow much freedom.

Stir-crazy – stir is a slang term meaning prison. Stir-crazy was used among inmates to refer to a prisoner who becomes mentally unbalanced due to prolonged incarceration.

Cabin fever, cooped up, stir-crazy. They all describe how I am affected by the coronavirus threat as I live on a 60x100 foot lot in a 12x65 foot trailer. I found a list of activities claiming to ease that stir-crazy feeling. Things you could feel comfortable doing by yourself.

1. Take yourself on a coffee date. – I don't drink coffee.
2. Go for a walk. – I'm a Walker in name only.
3. Do something crafty. – 10 thumbs, 2 left hands.
4. Discover a new hike. – Refer to No. 2, I'm a Walker in name only.
5. Pick up a new hobby. – What's a hobby? Does pulling weeds count? I've filled 5 trash barrels full this week.
6. Get lost in a bookstore. – Won't work, bookstores & libraries are closed.
7. Build a gingerbread house. – Refer to No. 3, 10 thumbs, 2 left hands.

When I get really restless and it's too hot or too dark to pull weeds I pick up my phone and look through the contacts list. "Who haven't I talked to recently?"

The other day I called a horse show friend I hadn't talked to since I was up North last September. She's a widow living alone. We talked for 3 hours. Good thing I have unlimited minutes. If I have your number you may want to ignore my call. Unless you are stir-crazy too. Otherwise listening to Chatty Cathy on the phone may drive you stir-crazy.

My hope is that this crisis is over sooner rather than later.

You should hope I don't have your phone number.

PATIENCE

Don Erdek

My anxiety remains high during the lockdown.
I look for guidance to endure.

The recovery may be slower than projected.
Worries will continue as we cope with the ways of the virus on our path to recovery.

Here in the land of plenty, it is hard for us to see beyond a period of uncertainty and deprivation.
How it started is not the most important issue, the fact it is here upon us requires a focus on survival and control.

Americans are resourceful people more willing than most to take risks.
However, now may be the time to differently handle a situation destiny imposed.

Problems would be reduced substantially with a short-term forbearance system.
It would be far better for the country's future if a brief period of patience is adopted.

We should try hard not to form harsh judgments.
Attitude is everything; germs don't respect state lines.

There are many of us who have no way to contribute to any of the solutions.
We are experiencing a crash course in patience with limitations on our scientific medical knowledge.

The thing to do is to be patient, we all require some give.
Judge fairly and stay ready to countermand what proves dangerous.

Hope lifting restrictions succeeds.
But be quick to point out and admit dangerous areas and failures.

We're all more than what we seem.
We all need to display patience.

A Different Perspective

Don Fedor

What do you mean they don't fly?

Have you ever seen one of them fly?

Well no, but that doesn't mean they can't.

I thought that too but the longer I've watched them, the more I'm certain they can't. Look at their wings; useless for flying, no width, no feathers.

My mom told me about birds that lost the ability to fly. Their wings kept getting smaller and smaller until they were mere decorations. It's why she made me practice my flying when I was young. Said that was not going to happen to us gulls.

Yup, my parents made me do lots of wing exercises. I didn't pay much attention because they groused about everything. Once I was strong enough it was goodbye parents and out to sea. Guess I should be thankful, but boy could they be noisy.

Well, I've been thinking why they walk up and down the beach sorta going nowhere. And they pass by perfectly good food. What's that all about? Yesterday there were some great fish wasted up. It was a banquet yet they paid it no mind.

Maybe they carry their food in, what do they call them, cups?

Have you ever checked out what is in those things? It is dark and the smell is enough to gag an octopus. And what's the deal with the ones that run? Don't you only run when something is chasing you? And there's nothing chasing them that I've seen.

Maybe those are the ones that aren't quite right. There are strange ones in every flock.

You know those big fish that jump up out of the water and twist around. Now if that isn't crazy, I'm not sure what is.

How would you like to be stuck down there in the water?

Never thought about it like that. You could be onto something. We are like the best things alive.

So back those things walking on our beach. They can't fly, they drink their food which is horrible, and some of them are crazy and run from nothing. And they're all different shapes and colors? Their ancestors sure didn't do them any favors!

We don't come in all manner of shapes and colors. I'm confused. Most of them move by the same two legs, have two scrawny wings and a head that far too big. They have different colors and have things draped on them that make no sense at all.

Well, I once heard a senior gull talk about this. He squawked about fish coming in all different types, but they're all fish. He was sure there was no reason for it - just something that happened over time.

I guess if you give anything enough time, it's going to get screwed up. If you think about it too much, it can make your head hurt.

Sure glad I'm not one of them.

The Dreadful Hand

Dima Altyn

Every day, around one o'clock in the afternoon, grandma Katerina looked through the window with her face glued to the glass. She was on the seventh floor of the USSR concrete block hill stuffed with mortals like her. The view she had popped up in front of her eyes was a football-field-size grassland that featured a lush bird cherry tree. Further up was Rublyovka parkway; down this parkway every day until yesterday, the Presidential motorcade drove Mr. Putin to the Kremlin. It was the second day in a row that Katerina did not see a bullet-speed Putin's limo; COVID-19 isolated him in his country residence Ogoryevo.

The grandma was in agreement with Mr. Putin's blaming western neoliberalism for disturbances in Russia. In her early eighties she was in good health with a positive outlook despite two horrible war experiences she lived through. In the coldest winter of 1941 twelve-year-old Katya survived the siege of her town, Tula by the German Nazi. Often Russian Army Command had taken Katya, and her classmates to the front-line hospitals. She wrote dozens of letters dictated by fighters wrapped in white bandages from head to toe. In the late sixties, she cared for casualties of war again, when she taught Russian language to Vietnamese girls and boys; thousands of them fled their burned country and found asylum in dormitories of Russian universities. That time was long past; but still the grandma's big blue eyes filled with tears.

When her only son Sergey, the pilot on a contract with the Russian Air Force came from work they sat for the dinner in a tiny kitchen. That night the mother told the son a sad story about her failed attempt to see a doctor at a nearby polyclinic: *She had discomfort in her chest, but the pale-face nurse sent her back home because there were no specific medicines for COVID-19, or even masks; the polyclinic was not equipped to establish Covid diagnosis, or determine the cause of death, so they were okayed to record any course of death but Covid, when somebody died.*

Sergey kept silence, making an impression that he was busy with dumplings.

All at once Katerina started preaching of peace: *I do not want the World War Three! Look, President Trump called Corona virus "Chinese". Chinese Foreign Ministry Mr. Zhao Lijian fired back, suggesting that it could be CIA that set up the virus time capsule in Wuhan during the Military World Games in October 2019.*

Early morning next day Sergey arrived at a military airport located in a suburban Moscow. His massive "An-124" was bound to JFK, New York carrying 60 tons of ventilators and masks. The peculiar shipment was a half-gift-half-purchase paid off equally by Putin and Trump.

Landing was smooth. Gathered embassy diplomats were praising Putin's caring mind. Ridiculously they followed the pattern of the Kremlin's spokesman, Mr. Peskov who connected the "half-a-gift" with Mr. Putin's hope for reciprocal if Russia would be in need. *Already Russia was in need.*

An FBI agent, strong, long-haired brunette asked Sergey regular security questions; then she went off: *the Good Samaritan gives to strangers in need, expecting nothing in return.*

Good Samaritan? Sergey didn't have time to deepen into the Bible. When he took "An-124" off JFK runway his son called saying that grandma Katerina was taken to the hospital for emergency care: *Mother, wait for me.* He ran directly to the chief doctor's office who mumbled: *You see, the age... Her heart failed...* Sergey knew that it's a lie: *Katerina did not complain about her heart recently. Bloody COVID-19!*

On his way to Katerina's flat exhausted Sergey stopped by the blooming bird cherry tree. The white flowers with tiny yellow stamens radiated the sweetest aroma, causing healing dizziness in the big man. He leaned against the trunk the way he used to when he was a happy kid under his mom's care. A teenage boy walked his doggy; when he came closer, Sergey asked: *Does the Corona virus have a Hóngwèibīng's uniform, Cowboy's hat, or look like the Russian doll Matryoshka?*

"You are crazy, man!" yelled the boy and vanished into nowhere.

Note: This is a work of fiction.