

PANDEMIC POEMS

Poetry from March 2020

~

Keith R. Parris

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Black Knight Classic
San Antonio, Texas

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Black Knight Classic

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**PANDEMIC
SEEN IN PASSING**

We have yet to know their faces,
And not their names or nations or ancestral races.
And though they'll move but briefly among our masses,
Who will hear the stricken church bell knell,
As each dark-paned wagon passes,
And sing the story of those who fell
And of their earthly graces?

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IN COMPARISON

Have you been watching TV today?
There are so many talking heads with so much to say.
“Wash your hands and don’t touch your face.
Don’t go where so many people are in one place.”
Did you know China ran out of hospital space?
They’re even bringing some back to our military base.
My neighbor, Meaghan, has been out to get groceries,
And I know she’ll hoard.
You know she will. “My Lord! My Lord!” Then she’ll say her rosaries.
She’s Catholic, you know, and her husband’s traveled overseas.
Madison, my Facebook friend, texted me that it’s a sign of End Times.
She pointed to omens like earthquakes, climate change and hate crimes.
I heard the President tell everyone it’s been contained.
He said something about getting a vaccine,
But I don’t think my doctor’s giving them. That’s obscene.
He, the President I mean, was on the White House lawn. It rained.
I must say, I’ve been getting emails all morning,
And each one has a different message, a different warning.
Emma... Her mother’s in a nursing home... called.
Said she was appalled they weren’t testing,
For the virus, I mean.
Some have died, but the home says her mother’s resting,
And she can’t be seen.
Do you think it’s going to get as bad as 1918?

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FAMILIAR SHADOWS

Do you have a view?
I'm not questioning
The kind you can see,
Not Niagara Falls,
Or San Francisco Bay.
I want to know
If you have a thought
About anything
That's relevant,
Besides the virus,
Or market chaos.
I hope you don't mind
Me asking my question.
Our conversations
Were so effortless,
Truly delightful,
Before we lost touch.
I've tried to be patient,
To figure out what changed.
I know there's disease,
And I know there's fear,
More than enough fear,
But I won't give up.
I promise, dear friend,
That I haven't lost
Appreciation
For what you have meant
To me and our years.
We've never lived long
In isolation.
We each had a voice.
I trusted you to
Be one of reason.
But we're being torn,
As if by a storm,
Casting darkening
Clouds over all things,
Over familiar
Shadows that wither
And then disappear
In the deepening
Abyss of absence.

If you come to me,
If you want to paint
With words of reason,
I'll be yours once more,
But let us not wait.
Dare we ration life,
Or turn away truth?
Even in the midst
Of the Holocaust,
Through her still young voice,
Anne gave us a view,
A rich view of life
In an attic crammed
With doubt, a prison
Turned sanctuary.
Where darkness filled streets,
It looked to the sky
And showed her mind's eye
A heaven filled with
Untold worlds at peace.
Where laughter conquered
Untamed fears of war,
It nourished her soul.
So, I ask again.
Do you have a view?
Do you have a voice
That paints with words?
If you have a thought
And can be trusted
To be one with reason,
Come share yourself with me.
Give form to our old
Familiar shadows,
The ones that brave the storm
And turn this prison
To sanctuary.

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[For information on current national health questions contact CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

