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View from the Hourglass
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A door flung through space, its hinges thudding as it bounces in places. I sprawled my legs and head further, peeking up from my massive claimed space. My suitemate held a fury I had never seen. His voice cried not salted tears but fiery unjustifiable anger. We had carved from our long-gone roommates a paradise, in quarantined mazes of empty halls. Our resettling, truly glamorous, made our rooms more us than our homes. We understood the corona pandemic. All four of us, in jokes and quips. "Till they kicked us out... " "Over my dead body... " His anger took the space, more than my own. I could only watch as his groans and yells befell our happy now hell. They gave an ultimatum. And I think they work. We had to leave the dorms by April 13. And then we did.

I didn't pack. Not the day of, nor the day before. Swaddled in lethargy, I leaned further into the depths of my chair. The COVID-19 problem. A disease so impossibly effective. I am under almost no risk. Maybe a bad day or two. At worst, a week. And so tumbling backward in unresolved sadness, those most at threat... my family. My mother, well over 50, the family all into their years. It was a selfless feeling. And despite that, uncomfortable in altruism, a rebellious isolation. Three trips and my stuff settled in the rented car and began the fifteen-hour drive to Austin. The desert was as empty as the

roads. My suitemate's loathing anger spread its feathery wings and settled across my head. Forced from comfort, I voluntarily threatened my family's life on the undetectable chance I had Corona. Why, why could I do nothing but comply? Was it for the \$1500 back? Would I even get the dorm relief \$1200? Would I get anything back? My classes were already shambling. The teachers transitioned like it was their job while a jobless parent and an unemployed America take me down the dust-bitten roads.

My lethargy was the only thing I carried because my luggage rode in white and black plastic trash bags, soaked in two spritzes of bleach. Their red tags look like a bad sale, one on forlorn seas like an odyssey returning home. And so my queried mind stumbles. America, the powerhouse of the 21st century. The leader of our age, mocking itself in the media, as New York reaches complete shutdown. My brother, stuck on the east coast, hopes for reimbursement from the moving company he works for just to pay another month of rent for the home he can't live in. My sister, like many others, holds planless. Despite our massive economy and endless power, we are powerless to prevent the COVID-19 from spreading danger. She planned to check New York, but now she can only see genius in her popcorn ceiling. My other sister is working less, as a member of the event service. America has lost its events. They move online, sure, but like classes, it can only go so far. Both parties require equal engagement to a screen of bits and bytes. The work by a thousand behind-the-scene toilers, that smile knowing what they do is unseen but appreciated, is impossible. No gigs, no birthday parties. America has lost its party.

And sure, people take to the streets. A protest, almost ironically historical. A sign, almost historically ironic, claims, "Social distancing = communism." They stand as if the people require a self-started firefighter. As if we are wronged by hiding in our hobbit holes. Wholly ignorant, or purposefully bliss to the media they gather. Swaggering like a martyr, the rich agree that we can all make it through these "unprecedented times ."

Like America in these un-presidented times.

When can we call the shot? Who killed Franz Ferdinand? Do we turn the dial on our hate for China? All the way to 11? Do we blame the unclosed stores? The necessary jobs? The hapless helpless workers? As corporations cut them off like skin tags for their losses? We can't choose. I can't choose. We shall not choose. For no reason, more so than this is America. We do not pin the tail of hate, not again. The donkey is the ass we made of ourselves, and the prick will hurt worse than our crippling depression. So many of us do the thing: right or wrong. We buckle up as times continue, change, and overcome. America is not the next problem we make for ourselves. But the infrastructure and history to never mistake what makes this country worth fighting for. Something we fight for every day, every dollar we spend, and every life we save--by staying indoors.

I am more shut-in now than ever. A change I am never surprised enough by. And so we are isolated, smiling at the idiots, those that oppose science, those that threaten us all. We smile because in our new and old cubbies of life, it's all America can do. While other nations mobilize protection, we horde who knows what, we profiteer on the

paranoia of what might happen, and again whom to blame. The government and the people make a nation. One nation indivisible, or so the anthem says. I hold fast to the reality before me. The COVID-19 has impacted my life, but not as hard as others. Not as fierce or deadly. As horribly or cruelly, and yet in isolation, I question why we need a criminal for the crime of dis-ease.

The End