

# love letters

*to 2020*



*Vol. 2*



## **love letters to 2020 V.2**

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About the Love Letters to 2020 project.

In 2020, the human residents of planet Earth undergone a new kind of obstacle, dreadful changes unraveling all around us. These new changes were due to the Coronavirus (Covid19) *the pandemic*, and the murder of Black and brown people of color in the United States by law enforcement.

We were coping. We were responding from our “stay at home” orders. We were evolving.

*Love Letters to 2020* is a series of workshops that take us through: confronting the traumas of the year, looking at the positive, and rebuilding. The journey through these topics using poetry and creative writing as a vehicle, has proven us brave, and the act healing.

Within these pages are the traumas and triumphs of our 2<sup>nd</sup> cohort, making up *Love Letters to 2020 Vol.2*.

Relate, enjoy, let go, and rise beyond the moment.

*Write on!*

Jessica M. Wilson, MFA

*Poetry Teacher*

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**A poem of declaration and appreciation  
for the change in you, or the land of you.**



*Elegy:*

**I want that glass of wine**

That makes me feel sublime as I hold the stem of it plastic is fake and glass is real so is the thick of it. The thickness has a pulse, carotid of the left side of the neck clasp it from the bottom, the coolness of the liquid has not evaporated, and the glass on the outside looks if it has sweat. Instead it is wet, and 8 ounces, fluid as I put the glass upon my lips. I want to feel the hypnotic effects of 13.5 percent from a chaotic 8 hours day for work, glean the stem between my fingers to the circle decor on the bottom as I call the glass a fool or a jerk. Who are the fools or jerks you ask as in my hand the glass collapsed and all is on the floor, the glass bits that resemble diamonds that are a girls' best friend. The only friend is the liquid in the glass, fluid from sweat, and easy on my lips and drunken to head to hypnotic effects I see diamonds on the floor and my other hand holds my carotid side of neck gingerly glistening in sweat.

- Michelle Smith

## Monarch Matriarch

My Queen Mom wears heavens crown  
A monarch butterfly gingerly flew by  
Cloudy skies break  
as her spirit reigns down  
It touched a calla lily  
Was that your greeting to me  
On that March 16th spring glide?  
I don't question the Lord of this and him  
How wonderful you looked  
Brilliant orange, spotted white and black  
Moments fleeting,  
seconds and not on a whim  
Your wings flapped like pages of a book  
A butterfly fit for a queen  
Not to be caught in a jar, hand, or finger  
My heart, mind, and soul  
has this memory carved  
Spread your bloom  
And forever in God's flight  
Your beauty will linger.

- Michelle Smith



## **RIP**

I thought that I was finished losing.

I had already collected a shelf full of defeats, and I was finally ready to make space for new trophies, for victories.

For the first time

I had a path, and a plan.

For the first time

my shoes felt like they fit, like I could actually stand up

strong-

without falling over,

without tripping over

all of the obstacles that we put in front of me.

I didn't mean to love you.

If I'm being honest I

was just seeking another distraction in the form of your body.

If I'm being honest I

never planned to text you back, after slipping out of your bed at 3 am.

Staying for breakfast was never my jam.

I didn't mean to return,

again and

again;



I had zero intentions.

But in my desire to pursue  
these new, uncharted pleasures,  
I allowed myself to be taken in  
(emotionally)  
with you.

And although you(r)  
presence was sufficient to fill me up, the bits and pieces of me that I offered  
in return

weren't substantive  
(enough)  
for you.

I was  
(still)  
like a child,  
dipping my toes  
(cautiously)  
into the pools  
of feeling.  
Afraid of love's cold sting, but willing

to slip in gradually.  
I couldn't float with you, for I wasn't full yet.  
Couldn't give all, for I wasn't whole yet.  
So you packed your bags and drove away,  
no goodbye note.  
And I'm left to stay  
alone,  
drowning in the middle  
of this puddle  
that I attempted to swim in  
for you  
(with you).

I'm tired of writing letters and songs for a ghost who won't appear, who  
doesn't care.

Every line is about who I don't want to write about anymore.

I'm going to lay you to rest,  
put this paper to bed,  
honour your memory,  
write an elegy instead.

Lover,

May you

Rest in poetry.

You took my breath away  
But I need it back.  
I've been gasping shallowly for days,  
But I must reset myself on track.  
My dreams haven't been sweet  
Since you left with them.  
Pain, my constant relief;  
Farewell, my far away friend.

I'm grateful for the smiling moments,  
Thankful for the late nights.  
You ignited me, fiercely and passionate,  
Made beauty of daylight.  
I lay you to sleep in my memories,  
Preserved and forgotten you'll be.  
One last kiss to the imagery,  
Lover, I set us both free.

- Ali Blanco

*Ode:*

### **Disconnect/Connect**

My Coolplay Legacy phone is turned on in the morning

Before I say a morning prayer

Before I use the bathroom

I need to disconnect

From the warmth of my beds duvet cover

Before there is a river all over

Instead the bell notification seems of importance to me

The devil made me do it

doesn't apply here

Social media's truth is stranger than fiction

Connects me or magnetically

My piece of mind

That fits into that social media puzzle

Instead I question becoming an introvert

And the lack of peace

That the pandemic has created

In a year adaption to Zoom,

Google Classroom or Meet more than once a week

I want to hear, "The Sounds of Silence"

By Simon and Garfunkel

Or travel to "The Road not Taken"

by Robert Frost.

Become shaken not be stirred

Connect the dots

And walk to the other side

And not become complacent.

- Michelle Smith

## **Reconnect**

Reflection to 2019  
is a swimming pool,  
Dolphin kicks  
and the backstroke  
I can feel the water  
Blue and splashing in my dreams  
Smell the chlorine and  
the warmth of sunbeam touch  
On my skin bronzing me naturally  
2021 disconnect me from the decade  
And not allow my memories to fade.

- Michelle Smith

## Ode to Chris

There is a Sunflower  
His brown coffee countenance  
of disk florets  
is framed with maize petals cheery  
and happy go lucky spirit pollinates  
where he goes  
His laughter contagious and that Colgate smile  
blooms in conversation 🌻  
His body with roots  
of Nigerian-American strength,  
sprinkled with Melanesian,  
Native American, and  
Endo-European soil  
firmly planted from the feet  
Evident is the stem  
green, vibrant leaves of for shaking hands  
or arms for the best bear hug  
You are unique and wonderfully made  
You grow and glow to new heights and horizons  
Can be seen for miles and miles  
There is a Van Gogh painting by the same name  
There is a Sunflower  
And my son that is you

- Michelle Smith

*Ode:*

## PANDEMIC GODLETS

GOD of tiny tender things

A Valentine on a Vine

A bird that sings

Of bramble bush and thorn

God of tree limb Weatherworn

You paint the barren

Red with Joy

And leave a Promise

Oh so Coy

PANDEMIC GODLETS

Of tiny tender

Wings

- Anneliese London



## Ode to 2020

It felt like you left me with a pile of rocks to kick,  
like you left me in the dusty remnants of promises,  
and the weight of my ache was too heavy to lift.

How did I go from writing you a love song to writing of a phantom  
who disturbs my sleep with memories of wishful thinking?

You uncorked me like an aged bottle of champagne,  
and my love over-poured,

over flowed;

dormant emotions and words rising tumultuously from the pit of me,  
up through my throat.

A raging volcano

of anguish,

molten feelings

and tears

and ink

spewing violently,

threatening to land,

possibly turning everything near

(me)

to ashes.

Forcing me to decide

whether it is safer if I

evacuate my home of rubble,  
or find a place to redirect my eruption of lethal lava.

My agony crashed

in waves

onto pages.

Blank sheets

became poems and stories

and a dwelling

of escape

to be safe in.

So if not for the pain,

I would not have tumbled down

into the book of my making.

Chapters to sit in,

spend time with reflection.

Left alone in my thoughts,

(albeit troublesome at first)

but after a while

I was able to get to know myself.

And without any calls from club-hops and insobriety,

I was no longer so busy

being busy,

but productive,

instead,

with appreciating me,  
and my family.

I found community-  
an entire world of writers, creators, and poets,  
who welcomed my lyrical down pour  
with open arms and hearts.

An online collective  
who values the raw outburst,  
as well as the introspective.

I've stepped into a gift,  
a passion  
for performing.

And although the stage right now is virtual,  
in-person connections will resume,  
(eventually)

and when theaters reopen for shows,  
I'll have new soul friends  
spanning from

L.A. to N.Y.C to the U.K.  
(and many more places globally).

There will be a  
book tours,  
fundraisers,  
and marches,

because my spirit folk  
have been planning,  
(un-distractedly)  
on the many ways  
we'll remerge,  
    empowered,  
        waving flags,  
            fighting for human rights,  
                like, "No Justice, No Peace!"

I'm thankful for the hours spent in my corner,  
for I've been accumulating college credits,  
taking classes,  
hoping to advance my career a little further.  
Our school days begin on a patch of grass in the park,  
an outdoor classroom  
beneath the trees,  
where math facts and stats commingle  
with the birds and the bees.  
Grateful for the opportunity  
to be my children's professor, of sorts.  
They grow too fast, after all,  
and so I'll hold dear the remembrance  
of the year  
we picnicked grammar worksheets and compassion lessons

at the park swings.

Because when there's nowhere to be,

it seems that there's a lot more

attention

available

to

listening,

having open conversations

like, "how are you really feeling?"

So with newfound strength and self-devotion,

I've made

(we've made)

a beautiful, inviting

fire pit

from all the rocks

that I was left

surrounded with,

from the debris

that I was littered with.

And I did kick them,

and haul them too,

but now my kids and I

have perfected

a s'more-roasting technique.

- Ali Blanco

*Epiphany:*

The Star

The Star of Bethlehem  
Sparkles for the love of Jesus  
And as in Harriet Tubman's North Star  
The Magi follow steadfast  
For the Epiphany  
Encourages us that  
Our faith strengthens who believe  
And the road traveled  
By them empowers all  
My CHRISTmas tree has its spirit  
And the Rosca de Reyes ring cake  
Will celebrate his crown of truth  
The Lord Jesus loves you  
Read in the chapter of Matthew  
Their journey will enlighten  
And comfort too  
A jewel in the midnight black velvet sky  
Is not a diamond in the rough  
It is our strength through the Lord Jesus  
No matter how our lives path  
May become tough  
Trust in him  
And you will know  
The meaning of the Epiphany

- Michelle Smith

## A Cog in the Machine

### Part 1

I feel like a cog in the machine  
A robot with moves of  
strength, and sustainable steel  
Put back  
Output  
Input  
Build again  
Oil my machine  
Replenish me  
Bend back and forth  
My steel can only take so much more  
Machinery breaks down  
Factors break down  
Multiples build up  
Is my employment a math equation  
I am married to my job  
I am it's greatest defender  
In all the glory and splendor  
There's woe and wonder  
Will I become like them  
Walker, wheelchair, or rollator bound  
Assisted shower dependent  
Or walk to the patio with independence  
I move about at a brisk walk pace and on my feet 95 percent  
I hear and see a 101 year old quoting Proverbs 3:5-6  
and happily singing lyrics for Amazing Grace how sweet the sound  
She is the church and my revival  
Good God thank you for this survival  
I am married to my job and don't want a divorce  
My heart, patience, and drive



Reflects in my work ethic

A deserved paycheck is not all I see

There are residents old as my mom and dad and other ancestors that are  
dearly departed

I cannot help to have cried at times wishing I could have combed her  
hair or help to select a suit and tie for dinner

I am married to my job

I work flexible hours

Accommodate one to a health appointment  
or to dialysis

Walk one to his daughters car for St. Patrick's Day dinner

And eventually I will take a 10 break sit-down

I am married to my job

A bit much than I should be

Happily and with integrity

## Part 2

I am the cog in the assistive living facility machine  
Robotics have nothing on me  
Up and down  
Side to side  
Transfer from the bed to the wheelchair  
or raised chair commode  
I am a well-oiled machine  
And the Tin Man of the Wizard of Oz with a heart  
There's 15 to serve  
At times they may grate on your nerves  
Individual and similar  
mind, body, spirit, and verve  
We workers are busy and provide lovingly the nitty gritty  
taking them to bingo or an exercise activity  
Yes WD-40 is not the same as Red, Red, Wine by UB 40  
My steel and strength can only take so much  
My heart, patience, and drive sustains me  
And will there be a well-oiled machine to care for me  
in my silver Tsunami years  
Or a Tin Man of the Wizard of Oz with a heart?  
The future cog in my machine  
Encourage me because one day you will be me  
And I will be them.

### Part 3

Eating my envy  
with pizza and coke  
Domino's on speed dial  
my expanded waistline is not a joke  
And is envy too strong of a word that reveals  
My hobbies and classes have ceased since I have become a cog in the  
working wheel  
Hectic hours of the AM shift float to the PM since CM's have called off  
How much more can I take of this shit, I mean shift no I mean truly shit  
As in an ADL assistance and the change of an incontinence brief  
Even the seniors call them diapers not depends or always  
Damn it's 4:30 in the am and time escapes me stolen from the sandman  
thief  
Drinking my envy from a glass of chilled Cupcake Chardonnay  
the 13 percentage dazes me and I hear have another drink in my head  
In eight hours I shall only to gallop like a horse to the racetrack with  
blinders on to the starting gate as I the jockey prepare for the win, place,  
or show, or am I the thoroughbred  
Trot my hooves on the smooth gravel and dirt  
Run like my life depends on it  
For the win, place, or show.

#### **Part 4**

A cog in the working wheel and I'm tired a zombie of repetition  
Same thing different day, evening, or night  
Will I have it any other way?  
Am I expendable  
certainly I am beyond dependable  
and my CNA license proves that I am capable  
Envy from the devourer of cherry cheesecake pairs with a glass of ice  
cold milk  
I laugh about Rhinestone and I a.k.a Trump's brown-nosers Diamond  
and silk.  
And what are they doing these days  
They can't hold a candle to me,  
their wick would burn out anyway.

- Michelle Smith

## Epitaph

I will no longer be controlled.

I have cut ties,  
and removed bondages,  
the likes of which I was told  
were meant to console  
me.

I will walk forward upon my own two feet,  
casting off the fears of rejections  
that were used a means of manipulation  
to restrain me.

I will speak,  
unapologetically,  
and without shame.

I vow to ask for help,  
without guilt,  
when needed,  
from the ones committed  
to building healthy bridges.

And if relationships built on love  
are supposed to be selfless,  
and balanced in nature,  
then I am free

to request  
the types of affections  
that align with my new self-loving communication.  
I will no longer attempt  
to digest toxic commandments disguised as devotion,  
I reject the notion  
that I was born to blindly obey.  
I will no longer wield a shield of  
    unforgiving,  
        dispassionate,  
            solitude.

Clutching to the que  
of emotional intelligence,  
I promise  
to praise vulnerability,  
    complex feelings,  
        and honesty  
        (outspoken).

Though everybody may not agree with me,  
I find comfort in knowing  
that I am pruning negative behaviors and habits,  
while planting new seeds.  
I will continue to fellowship with nature,  
establishing roots beneath trees,

meditating with the beauty and ways  
that the sky graces day,  
and enjoying  
    each  
    moment  
    in  
    liberty.

I am content with my own company.  
And although I'm thankful for friends,  
I don't seek  
(meaningless)  
distractions  
to carry me.

I value the kindred spirits  
whose interactions are nourishing to my person,  
promoting of dreams and goals.

I will never again allow a humxn  
to consume my body but neglect my soul.

I shall be ok with the unknown;  
seeing glowing opportunity  
awaiting me,  
deserving of every joyous prosperity,  
refusing  
to dwell in despair when my steps are unclear.

I will not return to the safety of constriction  
that I walked away from,  
but will instead breathe  
into  
    every  
        next  
            unsteady  
                step  
                    underneath  
                        my  
                            footing.

Resorted to selling my possessions to pay rent,  
but I would rather lose my stuff and keep my pride,  
knowing I possess gumption enough  
to find solutions,  
despite difficult situations.

Exhale  
    through the apprehension.

Inhale  
    as new beginnings  
pen and perform themselves,  
on every stage,  
    yoga mat,  
        and park bench.



Strength and peace  
will continue  
to be like colorful ink  
upon my skin.  
I've burned my veil,  
let down my hair,  
and dismantled the alter;  
marrying myself,  
fists up,  
in celebration.  
And you're all invited-  
welcome to the revelation.

- Ali Blanco

## Shutdown

When the lights turned out,

I squinted in the dark

Desperately searching for forms, lines of light amongst the shadows,  
my mind cast net around elbows and armchairs, window panes, stair  
way railings, plugging sense into my world.

But my eyes have never been good at seeing form

Not in the dark

Not when restricted.

In 2020, when my limbs were stapled to the cement,

Perched over the uncertain tomorrow

Without episode of familiarity, I took control only of me.

The only certainty of my doing right

To extend my life, past the typical pasture of day to day desires,

Needs, nutrition.

I forced myself to bend forward,

Stand wider, holding arms out sideways,

Double tap my toes,

Run, move, dance, move, double time

Move.

This lifestyle of activity gave me hope during the darkness  
Each few days a new gift that I had given myself.

Running, jogging, walking, trimming, bending,  
dancing, shaking, and sweating.

It moved my heart to a new rhythm;  
A new necessity to breathe into myself,

The time to live full

My own chemistry filling me

Burning me away.

The toxic odors a drift in wind,

Toxic therapy of discontent, removed.

I gravitated to a cultural connection, rooting into the Spanish music,

That thundered into my caved ears,

Each drum a footstep that met the ground with force

A pound each time

Heavy and left behind.

The spring sweat

The summer sweat

The beauty of fulfilment and no regrets...

What I learned, when alone,

Is I needed me

To be determined, exact,

Each way to the mirror, a step to the past,

To the longevity of choice,  
A horizon to last.

Jessica M. Wilson

Love Lessons

2021

Scatter joy everywhere

Tend to your family with love and care

Time to participate

To activate and liberate

Time to dream

Ponder and glean

See the best

Leave the rest

The hell with trends

Hug your friends

Do more

Want less

Transmute pain into possibilities

Honor all responsibilities

When you mess up

Bless up

Love more

Fear less

FINALLY set yourself free

Free to just BE

Anneliese London