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### Poems

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COVID 19

The world knows  
who will stand,  
hold your hand,  
gown tied on  
backwards. Checking  
your safety from both  
sides of your metal  
caged-in bed rails.  
After you push  
the call button,  
after she heard it,  
she comes to you  
gasping for breath—  
you're not ready for death.  
She straightens  
your twisted  
nasal oxygen tube,  
evaluates how deep  
the blue of your face,  
of your lips may be.  
He wears a worn mask,  
having given the fresh one  
to his colleague with children.  
They agree to page docs  
scattered all over  
seven floors up,  
who decide which electrolytes,  
what number of drops  
to drip, so hearts don't stop.  
Your left arm puffy,  
she restarts your IV.  
They see you breathe,  
He takes a pulse  
while holding your hand,  
continues to count.  
She hears more bells,  
coughing sounds mount.  
She prays while treading  
over taugt electrical cords,  
ventilators arrive, hopes staff  
can split them in half,  
to keep more patients alive.  
The world knows they want  
an ICU nurses at their bedside.

Nancy Kerrigan M.S., APRN., B.C.

## Pandemic Prayer

I pray today  
with Churches closed  
with Temples torn  
with Mosques locked  
to again be infected  
with people.  
To risk a goodnight kiss,  
to shake an ungloved  
stranger's hand,  
to share a hug  
close enough  
to sniff the hugger's  
breath from food  
eaten in company.  
To again lie next  
to a warm body.

I pray this day  
all of future reality  
is not virtual.  
May we bury  
our dead with dignity;  
not pile them up  
like human logs  
in freezer trucks.  
May we give them  
a proper send off,  
surround them  
with family, with friends  
telling intimate stories.  
We may even add  
blaring trumpets  
to announce  
their coming,  
their going.

Isolation will not save  
Humanity; we must.

Nancy Kerrigan M.S., APRN.B.C.

## The Unspoken

Wearing black pointed rhinestone glasses  
dangling from rope cords well past her bosom,  
I hear her before I see her. I know she checks  
her watch before she begins. Roman numeral I,  
type, type, type. She reaches for the carriage bar.  
The electric machine dings. I'm late for my first  
evening class as a part-time University instructor.  
I climb the spiral staircase two stairs at a time up  
to the school. This lone secretary's desk at the entry  
is my goal.

She checks her watch before allowing herself a break.  
Returns on time, adjusts her desk chair upward to get  
above the task. Type, type, type. She slaps the carriage  
bar. The machine dings. She inputs roman numeral II.  
Continues, type, type, type, enters roman numeral III.  
Type, type, type. Continues typing, with each page  
the sound is more like machine gun fire as I stand  
in what feels like war zone, with emergency sirens  
going off in my brain until page IV. Silence reigns.

It's as if she's under a spotlight when I rush towards her.  
She hands me all four pages of my promised syllabus—  
typed, single spaced-- in gibberish. Not one intelligible  
word on all letter-size sheets. Paragraphs marked by  
roman numerals. My mouth open. No sound comes out.  
I only recall her as female. She reaches across the desk  
bare arm jaundiced under the fluorescent light, shoves  
my gibberish towards me, enunciating ever so clearly:

*We don't type for our faculty.*

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