

An illustration of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a blue dress, standing on a balcony with a green railing. She is looking down at a small brown pot on the floor. To her right is a large, leafy green tree with a brown trunk. The background is a light blue sky with soft white clouds. The overall style is soft and painterly.

E(e)rie Stillness

The world feels like it's standing still.
If I recorded this moment,
It would look like a photograph because
At this minute, it is as if I'm sitting
In the eye of the storm.

There's no movement, no growth, just
Everyone and everything waiting—even the wind
Seems to be holding his breath.
The air cools my cheeks, flushed from the heat
Of my mom's apartment, but there is no gale.
The trees have not yet begun to bud
As if they too sense the chaos.
The sun shines brightly but there are no squirrels,
Not even bugs out to enjoy it. I spot a
Black dog sent out to relieve itself;
Even its excitement is subdued.

This peacefulness should be a comfort compared
To the news, but it only signifies fear.
Of the virus, of our neighbors,
Of our incompetent leaders,
Of the unknown that lies ahead.
On my mom's balcony I watch the apartments,
And take a deep breath,
Wondering how much longer
Before the storm breaks the stillness.
I exhale the suffocating silence
and stand, going back inside.
At least in there, the quiet is my choice.

POEM BY, Mattie Updyke

Mattie is a junior and is the winner of
two Humanities Awards this 2020-2021
academic year: the Colleen M. Brown
Memorial Prize in Poetry; and the
Louise Letizia Miele Award

ILLUSTRATION BY, Allie Costlow