

ALISON WHITTAKER

*the poets are about to lie to you*

the poets are about to lie to you  
say something vile but kind. this time  
what we all did. *we yearn out windows,*  
*inching ever closer to something something our reflection*  
*in each other.* i can't lie to you anymore. i would, but.

we're getting lazy in the face of the obvious, we  
eke out a bread metaphor, like  
*rising together, knotted, scored, kneaded and*  
*porous.*

don't give. grip until it gushes between your knuckles  
no air no crumb, no equivocation no distance no breath.

don't let the poets patronise you, or the  
op eds the memoirs —any public record.

recall each time someone taped a note in red to  
someone else 's door threatening to call strata if their kid  
kid screamed "i miss you!" to a parent (who was there!)  
(with them!) any later than 10pm. remember having to

scrounge for a vaccine, hiss in the quiet desperation,  
frenetic queues. remember when anyone not in  
a capital city or  
a wealthy suburb or  
anyone who was not white or  
anyone who was in prison or  
a group home was surely by bureaucratic accident  
denied their prophylaxis  
denied their chance at a chance at a chance at breath.

remember those strained calls home.  
memorise mailing boxes of masks.  
remember getting used to cracked hands.  
remember when you quickened your pace to get  
to the shelves at 7am only to find them full and blush.  
think of the man shadowboxing  
in the park with a lopsided stomach tattoo that moved

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and how much you (I) wanted to fight him      in your (my) sundress  
because we all might have enjoyed it.  
remember the family stealing food from the shared  
garden (and why). remember kids                      lacking stimulation  
trying to kick the swallows come near them              playing chicken.

remember the closed borders.  
the interminable itchy waiting.  
remember the end of welfare.  
remember those fucking hashtags.

recall some worlds getting smaller. remember others exploding into deathly view.

when this poet tells you about the butterflies and moths that  
ride the heat column over her apartment,  
nose pressed against the glass in wonder  
*a sight unseeable if I wasn't here*, remind  
her they're coming early this year and next time  
they'll probably be on fire.