



### **Abstract**

In an effort to make sense of the flurry of news and pandemic-caused events, this writer spent many nights laboring on poems which reflect his experiences during these trying times. As part of a collective project, these poems serve to represent the Filipino experience of the pandemic through the microscopic view of the writer who lived by himself during this period.

### **Keywords**

Pandemic, food delivery services, new normal, curfew, isolation, social distancing

# **POEMS FROM THE FAUX NORMAL**

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**GES JAICTEN**

# 1. FAUX NORMAL

Because we keep pretending to live  
in the confines of our own resting places,  
what they say was normal becomes  
our north star, merely admired  
by Galleons crossing the ocean,  
or by young men with wild dreams,  
and feeling our way blind through uncharted seas  
like insects who worship smoke and fire.

And perhaps today's normal has made us  
    into a scattering of insects beneath upturned stones,  
or perhaps it has made us  
    into lost asteroids, like insects, scattered but unceasing,  
or perhaps it has made us  
    into guiding stars, shining despite pollution,  
or perhaps it has *made* us.

## 2. ECLIPSED AT TIMES OF HUNGER

In rare moments of intersection,  
 that penumbral peek of headlights,  
 etching a halo between the gaps of gates:  
 your motorcycle as a sign of these last days.  
 I was looking for some spare time,  
 and you were looking for a living,  
 and what we found was each other as passersby.  
 In our short exchange we would reach to each other  
 beyond the gates, fixing us to our own worlds—  
 you to the outside and I within—  
 with hands filled with what the other wants,  
 and during these many lockdowns, we had somehow  
 found a way to be eclipsed in new faces, covered, every day,  
 but if it weren't for these lockdowns  
 we might have aligned some other way:  
 Perhaps when this apocalypse ends  
 we will exit this universe and reach another  
 where we may become short-lived friends at a bar,  
 or perhaps in another universe  
 I would have taught your sons and daughters,  
 or perhaps in another universe  
 you would have read some of my writings and said  
*I cannot believe there was someone like me.*

## AUBADE, SPOKEN TOO EARLY

On the first day of curfews being lifted  
and all of us released one great exhale  
of tired *Amihan*, it was a Ber month  
and we celebrated behind bleached walls,  
and streets were still empty like it was just beginning,  
and the way in which we touched this world again  
are with hands still quivering at molecules.  
On the first night, I walked between the lines of once busy roads  
and I stripped my mask to dare parade, bold underneath the canopy  
of the *parol* like an audience.  
But it is as dark as solstice, and no one  
can see, and I have my mask, it is cuffed  
to my wrist, just in case.