

In quarantine, listening to the news

by [Katherine J. Williams](#) in the [June 3, 2021](#) issue

Clouds of locusts cover the face of the earth  
darkening the land in Somalia, Kenya, Uganda.  
A single swarm devours what 35,000 people could eat in one day.  
In Washington State, Asian giant hornets behead  
thousands upon thousands of honeybees, sting  
a beekeeper through sweats, his bee suit, high laced boots.  
The ER doctor wears a mask at home and scares his little boy.

But here's the mourning dove whose call I've heard high in the white cedar—  
she's on the ledge by my window, looking in, her dusky feathers  
glowing like a little fire in the weak light after the storm.  
The wrecked brown orchid I was ready to toss has just sent out  
a translucent shoot with six tight blossoms as small as ideas.  
I've started speaking to it to give my voice a witness in this silent house.  
My friends drove through the barren streets to bring me  
preserved lemons, nestled in their bed of salt and juice.  
The jar opens with a click. Tiny sticks of pungent rind slide  
off my knife, building a hill on the wide white plate.