

In praise of small living

by [Karen An-Hwei Lee](#) in the [June 3, 2021](#) issue

I do not mind small living. I love the minuteness—  
ducks and geese grooming, swans preening lazily,  
sharing our rice and beans, spending hours indoors  
with lungfuls of room air, going outside for a walk  
after the rain. I can suffer wearing a mask, in fact,  
prefer it in cold weather with no need for lipstick.  
I hold an umbrella by its bamboo handle, just so.  
I enjoy the smallness of this life. I love the edges  
of souls looking at other faces on a screen, praying  
about who and when, and where we are going.  
There is a way to savor the small in this pandemic—  
a sad consequence of being so numerous on earth.  
Let us focus on the essentials if only for ten minutes  
before jumping into the next glass puddle of hours,  
each breath marking the tender schism of life  
against death. The wind stirs up dust in the night  
when crocuses bloom under snows, and the world  
opens again with gusts of saffron, blustery splendor—  
a year has fled and the wind agitates heat and rot,  
the yard soon fragrant with roots of growing things.  
It roars up in the trees like midnight surf pounding  
when you walk on the coast, a broken moon in chords  
of light on the waves, glossy, rolling back and back—  
dogs do not bark, the wild doves hold their coos,  
neighbors box up their tossed shell wind chimes—  
the wind, a formless cleansing, is only the motion  
mingled with a commuter train floating over rails  
in the midnight rhythms of rest and reassurance.