

Grieving for Normal

Carter Thompson - 11th Grade
Fairfield High School; Fairfield, Iowa

Code Bravo unheeded, countries conceal
Unprecedented news that we dismiss;
Daily revision, this cannot be real!
To Armageddon will I compare this?

Aristocratic noses of leaders
Turned up and away from the people's pain.
Denying the experts to keep order,
Their façade of icy lies melts again.

Whispering snowflakes cool my heated fears,
Quiet snow hushes darkness in my soul.
One serene, fatal leap could end my tears;
No! A new life has begun, is it whole?

It is life. For a light burden, don't ask,
This training from life builds you a strong back.

This sonnet encapsulates the journey I have taken alongside everyone else in this world through 2020 and 2021. *Grieving for Normal* follows a theme of how I was forced to leave my simple, comfortable, and predictable life that was the first fifteen years of my life for one I had little to no control over. The best way to explain how the rollercoaster of the past two years has made me feel was through the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

The first quatrain represents the first stage of grief: denial. Confusion and denial filled my head as the first news about the COVID-19 pandemic came out. We soon find out that this silent killer, which should have been a warning code "Bravo," was ignored by China and the United States. We heard about it, but nothing was done. Then soon upon us was the reality of the situation, as newly educated opinions rose daily with their new recommendations and regulations for us to follow. This felt like the end of the world was upon us, or at least the world we knew.

The second quatrain is representative of the second and third stages of grief: anger and bargaining. Rage filled me as I tried to understand what was going on. There was no leadership by President Donald Trump, Governor Kim Reynolds of Iowa, or the Fairfield Community

School District administration. Our leaders put their agendas above all else while ignoring the opinions of experts and the reality of the situation and world we face. They ignored us! Their people were suffering, and they didn't seem to care. However, the façade that they held up, and maintained with their icy voices filled with lies, couldn't last forever. Slowly their lies melted as the truth was revealed to us all. Hundreds of thousands of people will die if nothing is to be done.

The third and final quatrain represents the fourth stage of grief: depression. It starts with the personification of snowflakes as whispering, symbolizing the quiet and pure calm I recognized in the fallen snow of the Winter of 2020-21. This "whisper" of snow cooled off and quieted my intense fears, as it represented a pure hope for me and quieted the dark times that plagued my mind. I even reached a point where I contemplated the peaceful freefall and finality of a jump for all the pain I was experiencing. At this point, I merely made it through the day as I tried to learn college-level classes virtually, including AP Calculus AB and BC and AP Psychology. I felt less human and more robotic as I logged on, watched the daily video, printed off the worksheet, did the problems, and then took a picture and submitted all my work for classes. Forget having fun sports, honor choir, and band. I was depressed. However, this quatrain ends with me reeling back to reality and away from the Evil One's temptations, saying, "*No! That is not the answer to my troubles!*" I repeat this to myself, but not without the thought of the bizarre and uncertain life that I'm left to live. Is it a whole life, or just a shell of the good thing it used to be—like me?

Finally, after I was able to reel myself away from those dark, evil, and close-minded conversations I had with myself. I reflected, and that's what this couplet represents. It's the fifth and final stage of grief: acceptance. I lost everything I knew that was normal, including the person I thought I was. They now serve as building blocks, as trials that I endured and came out stronger. I look back and say, "*I made it through that, so I can definitely make it through this.*" The phrase "Don't ask for a lighter load, ask for a stronger back" reminds me to seek God in the hardest of times. To ask Him to make me stronger in every way and to stand tall and proud amidst adversity. Also, to ask Him to grant me the strength to cast all my fears onto Him and trust that He will help me in every way He can. After all, in some way, everything that we go through in life is a part of His greater plan for us in the end.