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MUTATION



My *Life in COVID-19/13032020* are the pages in an almanac that seemingly got stuck on a single date. But, according to the Gregorian calendar, as I sit down to write this today, 245 days have passed since I shut myself up in my home like never before in my life.

My outings in now-distant March consisted only of morning walks with Daniel, my dog. When I got home, I took off my shoes and my routine of household chores began. As I swept the accumulated dust up and washed the dishes over and over,

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my mind was lost predicting apocalyptic scenarios that I hid very well in the silence of my breast. My son would not know of my terrifying dreams, my insomnia, my fear of not being able to recover the freedom we had known before COVID-19.

Every time he asked me, “When will I go back to school?” I would answer, “I don’t know, but it won’t be long now.”

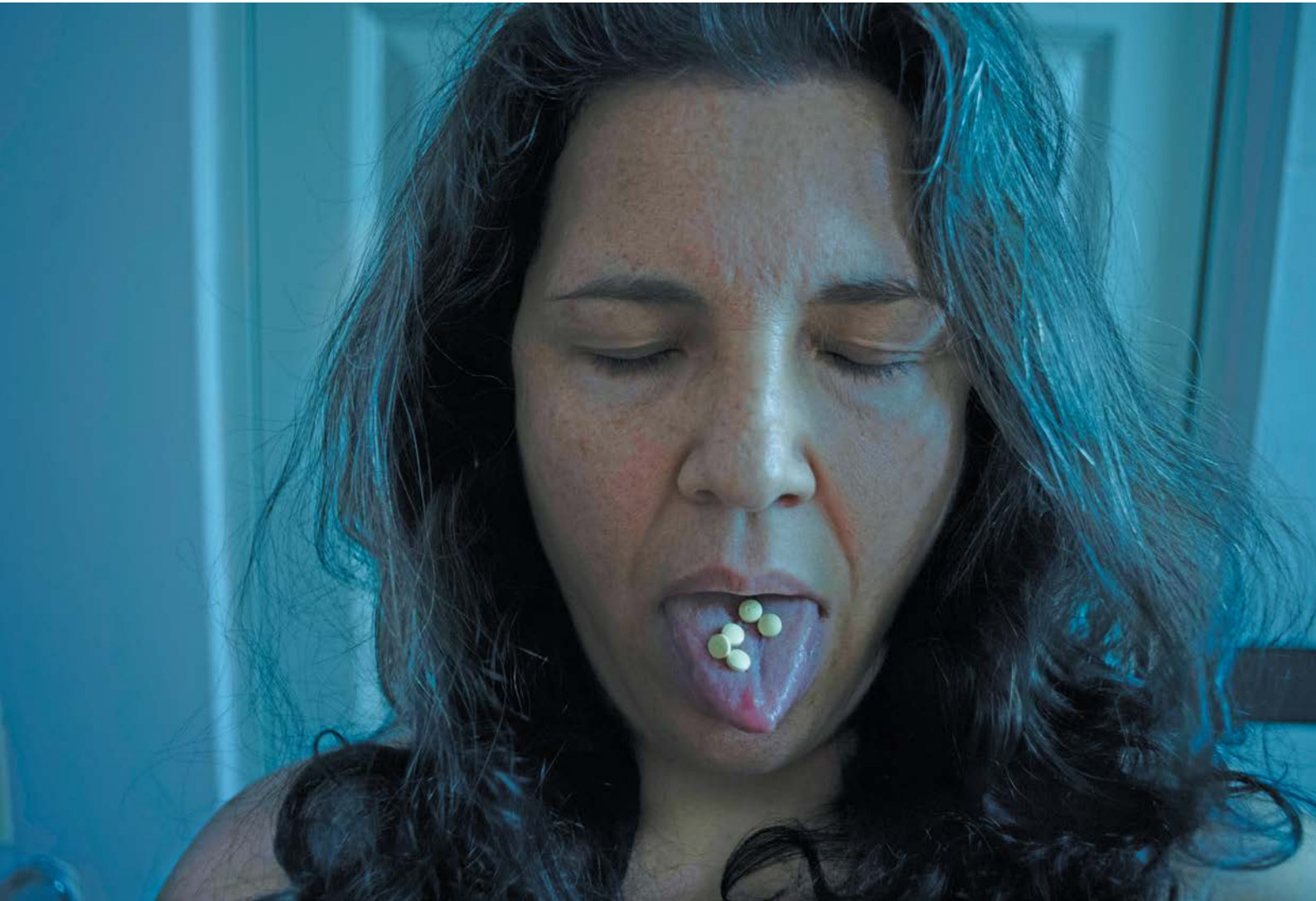
To beat back the confinement, I diversified my brain and body in all the ways I had at my disposal: yoga, reading, cardiovascular exercises in front of the screen, embroidery, and cleaning —exhausting cleaning that has left me more frustrated than satisfied.





Every morning I open my bedroom window and throw birdseed out to the birds; they're already waiting for me on the roof of a neighboring school that's on pause, the same pause that crushes the streets and the restaurants and the notions stores and the little workshops that have been forced to close.

I don't always have the strength to watch the news; it's enough to hear the stories told in the businesses in my neighborhood every time I ask the same question: "How are you doing?" Their answers leave me devastated. When the sadness passes, I make up a little food basket and give it to a passer-by. A small gesture that might encourage others.







Sometimes I ask myself what kind of karma dropped me into this time. I still don't know if I should feel privileged for living in the first global pandemic in human history. Will this lesson make us create societies with more empathy, with better access to public health, and with better digital reach? I don't even recognize myself fully; I know that I'm mutating, leaving my skin on the sheets every morning. But what am I changing into? I've always had empathy, so the new skin flakes come from a new me that is yet to be seen.

The fact is that we should live the time we have left with love and wisdom. The future and the mislabeled "new normal" has still not taken shape in our lives. Despite that, I continue to look toward a bright horizon and wait. I wait in my home for the shining moment when I can hug again. **MM**

