

# **Eradicating Chaos, Inviting *Duende***

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It is no secret that we have entered another dark chapter of earthly hell this year. I have yet to meet a soul who claims that 2020 was not *that* terrible. I thank goodness that this conversation has not transpired, because if it did, I would be rendered speechless and walk as far away as my feet could carry me. Sheer optimism alone will not cloak the prominence of our two main invisible enemies: COVID-19 and racial injustice, the latter of which has been occurring since time immemorial. While we as humans try with every fiber of our being to do what is necessary to protect our species, it does not always pan out in our favor. As history shows, it *rarely* seems to bode well that way. One too many have fallen at the hands of others. To this day, why we willingly degrade, exile, inflict physical and mental trauma, corrupt, and kill our own kind based on what we deem as inferior, whether it be gender, race, orientation, religion, or other factors still baffles me beyond all belief. It pains my heart to see certain peaceful protests and demonstrations of equality turn riotous because of the ‘authority strike of fire’ on an innocent. It makes me question the very nature of our collective existence. Perhaps this makes me ignorant or unmindful. Perhaps it leads me to believe that there is no hope for humanity whatsoever. As much of a neutralist [or cynical realist] as I am, I refuse to believe that we are headed straight for oblivion. While we are infants in comparison to other species on this planet, we have much to learn and we are still attempting to do so.

The late comedian George Carlin once said that our species had our chance and we squandered it. I agree with him to an extent. This is part of the reason why I am neutral on the prospect of our species colonizing on Mars. Why is it, however, that the many groups of people who attempt to preserve our sapphire and emerald home, as well as its inhabitants, are overshadowed by the amount of parasites that form into one gargantuan maelstrom? It is fascinating how a great deal of us choose to focus on the negative and leave the positive to be feasted on by mental scavengers. Let us not forget the alarming amount of natural disasters, a gory political battle, and a certain species of hornet with a menacing moniker.

The aforementioned virus has been the cruelest teacher that this planet could ask for, save certain actions that should have been taken in its preliminary stages. It has taught us what we can accomplish as a collective as long as we cooperate with the necessary precautions. It has tested our mental limits and patience, provoking us to lose our craniums and step out into the warzone as if our lives are still perfectly normal. It has separated us into two categories: the paranoid and the reckless. The tragically hilarious part is that both sides believe that their actions are correct and the other side is being moronic in some form or fashion. I do my absolute best to remain in the middle. I am not going to subject myself to any small or large variations of a high-risk environment with high-risk individuals while protecting myself and the people I love, but I am by no means going to board myself in my home until this umpteenth wave of chaos has ceased to

be. It has attempted to rewire our thinking and survival tactics. I am torn between shaking my head at those who freely choose to remove their masks in public and congregate in larger crowds, save a few noble causes, and feeling a massive amount of pity for those who have lost the willpower to remain isolated from those they love and the social activities that were suddenly stripped from them. Our species was not wired for prolonged isolation and quarantine. Many introverts have converted to extroverts who wish to splurge their social juices. Nevertheless, such actions have caused medical staff members and frontline workers around the globe to put themselves at higher risk than anyone else. They are more heroic than people seem to realize. I lost *my* mind within the first couple of months of this pandemic and I have yet to reclaim it, but I am not going to risk everything and everyone I hold dear to me just for the possibility of losing health as well. John Lydon once said, “Life is precious and not a thing to be destroyed,” though he was speaking on the subject of Kurt Cobain’s sudden passing. Such a statement relates to our present situation.

If you have read this far in the ink words of such unintentional vitriol, I salute you. After all, as author Madeleine D’Engle once said, “Maybe you have to know the darkness before you can appreciate the light.” Where does chaos end and where does *duende* begin? For those of you who do not know the latter word’s definition, that is quite all right. I am not speaking of the Latin American mythological creature of the same name. *Duende* is one of many ‘incredamazing’ words that cannot be translated into English, but contains a powerful definition. *Duende* is described as ‘a work of art’s mysterious power to deeply move someone’. For centuries, many creators and their chosen crafts (or the crafts that chose them) have spread a trillion and eight possibilities, unless they carried a sole intention. During a fraction of this time, the element of self-expression came into play through the creation itself. Most of the time, it has been used to evoke thoughts from the masses. It is also during this time that the arts have placed our minds at ease amidst the chaos, whether through aural pleasures, the written word, the visual and suspended, the visual and in motion, or kinetic and tangible. We have relied on the arts to keep us relatively sane, centered, and balanced. A personal philosophy of mine, especially during the accursed year of 2020, is that as long as you do not inflict harm upon others or yourself, sanity is overrated. At this point, if you are not at least a *tad* bit cuckoo or peculiar, I may not trust you. For me as an individual, the arts, whether appreciating or creating, is a lustful craving, akin to fitness, meditation, and other various pleasures. What is more relevant is that it contains the power to grant us hope and to aid us in not losing that hope, even if at this point, hope is a thin, sliver-shaped shrapnel piece. Despite the number of life-threatening cases that seem to continue piling on, we *cannot* lose this shrapnel of hope. Many of the word wielders in this issue of *Harbinger Asylum* exhibit this intention through their poetry and prose, as well as the captors of photographic serenity. I am thankful to have played a major role in the development of this journal and Transcendent Zero Press in this manner, as well as the manner of diversity in our pages. Each issue and each manuscript we release is like a basket of potpourri delights, some containing mysterious elements and the other with raucous neon gods.

We are not out of the woods quite yet, my dearest fellow peoploids. However, we *will* make it through this seemingly apocalyptic Tartarus. We *must* make it through, for the sake of our health and the universal love we cling to day in and day out. I would personally like to dedicate the Fall Edition of *Harbinger Asylum* to the fallen victims of 2020, whether through the violent brutalities of racial injustice, those whose bodies succumbed to the virus, and those we have lost due to Madre Terra's disasters, as well as the disasters we created ourselves. To your families, every medical staff member, frontline worker, and to everyone reading this journal, I say, "*Pax vobiscum*. Poetry lives. Long live the arts." ...and dare I add, "Long live love."