

2021 POETRY OURSELVES HONORABLE MENTION

Tinnitus

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You know that ringing noise in your ears when it gets real quiet?
That's called tinnitus.
My tinnitus began the last time I walked off my school campus,
But I didn't notice it then.
The world was shut down, the streets hollow and empty,
A pandemic taking over the world. But I was fine.
Everything was silent, sitting inside of my room, and I was content.
But then my dog died.
Many places were closed, no one there to help, and in the end
I didn't get a proper goodbye.
And so my tinnitus became audible.
Around the country protests began to break out,
People screaming at one another.
All the while I sat in my room, my tinnitus getting louder.
Every time I logged into Zoom, it got louder.
Every time I forgot to put on a mask, it got louder.
Every time I woke up, did nothing all day, and went back to sleep
It got louder. It got louder everyday.
Nowadays, the once unnoticeable ringing in my ears roars every second,
Stabbing my eardrums, shrieking like a crude violin.
I pace back and forth in my room, wanting somewhere to go, anywhere,
So I could outrun this horrid ringing forever.
I want to go back, back before I had tinnitus, back when it was silent.
And I know I'm not the only one either.
It's easy to forget, but others can hear the ringing too.
Perhaps you can as well.
Perhaps we're both longing to go back.
But I know it will grow quieter, someday.
Not silent, but quieter.
All we have to do is wait.
That's the hard part.
But it gets easier when you have someone to wait with.