



# Alone, But Together

CREATIVE COLLECTIONS

## Lily Low

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*I looked up but couldn't see the stars at night.*

The skies grew darker.  
I had to squint to see the stars.

Many unanswered questions  
*Who am I, aside from seeking validation through my academic performance?*  
*What am I worth when I am not creating,*  
*when it feels I am forever stuck in waiting?*

The walls I'd built around me over the years –  
I now found myself on the outside looking in.

*My world had shrunk to a room.*

At a standstill.  
Confused, worried, and scared.  
Worldwide, the numbers were climbing,  
yet within my four walls, my world was shrinking.

This past year  
I was waiting on examination after examination,  
failure after failure.  
My confidence, shattered.

All of a sudden I was falling  
with no way of knowing when I'd stop.  
These expectations I had laid out for myself –  
my eyes were unable to tear away from the remnants of their destruction.  
Chewed up, spit out.  
I was left with nothing but a shell of me.

Is this where I'm meant to be?  
Can I be rebuilt outside these walls?

*I'm used to an entire world shrinking in an instant.*

I felt beaten down, defeated.  
What is wrong with me?  
Get up, I whispered to my aching body.  
Stop using sleep as an escape, I screamed.  
Reply to those texts in your phone, it's been more than two weeks, I berated.  
Seemingly small actions were becoming too much to handle.

*This time it felt different. It felt lonelier and smaller.*

In this time on my own  
I reflected on myself.  
In the midst of my guilt, shame, and despair,  
I had to unpack and repack my thoughts on self-love.  
Just because I've fallen off my own expectations  
of who I should be, where I should be,  
I am still worthy.  
My sense of purpose, though buried, was still within me.

*Now more than ever, we must try to remember who we are, and face who we are.*

And now I was faced with myself.  
Borderless, yet trapped—  
wanting back in my four walls,  
in utter fear of what was beyond.

Have I become so convinced  
that I am only worthy if I am  
Running for a cause?  
Fighting for something more?

If our human body was constructed to survive,  
was I, regardless of what I was doing, not worth fighting for?

I may not have all the answers —  
yet, is the key.  
However,

*If I give up here, then I'm not the star of my life.*

In finding my way to who I was once more,  
*I found again the people I love.*

I drew closer, treasured further, the love around me and within me.

I became more attentive  
to the ways my family shows their love.  
Despite our different love languages, their hearts shone bright and vibrant —  
from the grocery runs,  
to sharing cut-up fruits and snacks over my favourite shows,  
to their gentleness in welcoming me home despite my failures,  
and the way they continued to pray for me, a light that remains in the darkness that was me.

*He said he couldn't see the stars any more, but I saw my face reflected in the window.  
I saw all of our faces.*

I see the faces and hear the voices of those I love via calls and videos.  
I am reminded that we are all united.  
Despite our weariness, weaknesses, stunned by an unbridled fear of what's to come,  
we are united in making the most of what we've got.  
A continued pursuit of hope—  
a bond in lifting each other up, even when the light within us flickers.

The stars may be hidden,  
and we may not always witness the fullness of the moon —  
The sky, however, is still illuminated.  
Near or far, a slower or a quicker pace,  
loved ones cheering for my success and well-being, even from continents away —  
I am not alone in this strangeness and uncertainty.

*If even the moon is dark, let our faces be the light that helps us find our way.*

Last September  
you reminded me that my feelings were valid.  
You handed me a gift —  
one of resilience, wrapped in a sea of courage.

Giving up is still a brave courage.  
All of us are trying our best with what we have.  
Who am I and what I feel  
are far bigger than these four walls I've built.

It may look like I am surrounded,  
going in circles over what my next step should be.  
In this season of waiting, I am learning to breathe —  
taking it day by day over frenzied to-do lists and self-blame,  
an active choice to not have my worth be entrenched in my productivity.  
In learning to let go, I embrace the good within the chaos.

*Life goes on. Let's live on.*

## Artist Statement

I have always loved the written word, as writing helps me to express myself. Speaking out may be daunting sometimes, but writing out a thought allows greater reflection. I decided to write a poem incorporating the message of “life goes on” and what I have personally struggled with during this season of uncertainty and waiting. In reflection, I am reminded of the various ways love can be shown.

This poem is me bouncing off my thoughts on BTS’s speech during the 75th United Nations General Assembly. Incorporating some of their personal anecdotes, I wanted to write this poem to remind anyone who may be reading this that though we may feel alone — we are all going through this season of life together. 2020 has been a tough year in many ways, for everyone around the world. The pandemic has taken lives, taken jobs, taken homes, delayed — all in all reminding us of what we may have taken for granted of.

RM’s speech for the launch of UNICEF’s Generation Unlimited in 2017 was something I often listened to whenever I was struggling with my postgraduate studies. Being able to hear the different perspectives of all seven of the members this time around made this speech even more special.

The message has evolved.

From RM asking us to love and speak ourselves, BTS has come together to remind us to live on. There is still space for gratitude, for hope. Times may be bleak, it may still be for a while. But the night is always darkest, before the first light of dawn. As Suga says in “Nevermind,” “Even if it’s a road of thorns, we still run.”

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