

## The Pandemic Halo

by **Jim Moore**

The first time I saw it was above the head  
of an old Lab. He was being walked, as usual, at 7 AM  
by his young owner. Lots of lamppost stops, as usual.  
There it was: faint at first, then hovering at a rakish tilt  
above his silky head. I thought maybe it was a weird trick of light —  
the day was bright — but then the next morning the nurse who parks  
across the street, in the now almost empty lot, was trotting along  
on her way to the clinic that is just below my window. She had it, too.  
I don't think she noticed it at all. She was moving quickly, late  
to work. I imagine that's what was on her mind, not holiness.  
The third day a young man in a red cap with a backpack slouched past.  
I had never seen him before. You could see he was seriously depressed,  
looking down at the sidewalk. But there it was, firmly in place  
above him, so he couldn't see how beautiful  
he really was. By now the pandemic halo is well recorded.  
We almost take it for granted, what once seemed so amazing.  
After the pandemic is over, they say, the halo effect will disappear.  
They say we will return to life as usual. We won't need it.  
I have my doubts. I think we might need it more than ever.  
I think we might be saying things like "Remember how incredible it was  
during the pandemic, how everyone had a halo,  
how grief and holiness were all we knew of the world  
and the sight of a dog at a lamppost could bring us to tears?"

*Jim Moore's newest book of poetry, Underground: New and Selected Poems, is forthcoming in 2021. When he looks out his window each morning in Minneapolis, Minnesota, he sees nurses and doctors going to work, which helps him keep things in perspective.*

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