

Happy New Year! (Another Year of COVID)

Mara M.

Old Donation School, 8th Grade

The New Year isn't sad so much as it's

Cold, despite the weather app's summerlike 75 degrees fahrenheit

Nothing's changed from day to day, save for the come and go of pedestrians outside your window

And the gradual lengthening of your hair

You'll need to cut it soon

Maybe even dye it

You are alone in your room, facing the ceiling from your bed as people try to celebrate

The fireworks are more like flares; each person sending up a signal of

"I'm still here; it's been two years and I'm still here," like a battle cry

It doesn't feel like an ending or a beginning

Your room is still empty, and you are still the only one awake in your house

The heater is still off when you go downstairs to make hot chocolate

And darkness feels less harsh, more gray than black

It's tired too, or maybe it's just letting up out of sympathy

Beeping cuts through your miasma and you open up the microwave to greet

Hot chocolate with chunks of melted marshmallows, in a chipped turquoise mug

You sip it sitting against the front door, where you can catch glimpses of the outside world through a window

It warms your insides like slipping into the disorganized den of blankets on your bed

But there's no wave of drowsiness; no increased weight on your eyelids

School is a few days away, but being around other people again is scary as much as it's a welcome reprieve

And between the mug in your hand and the noises outside, you know you're going to make it