

**A Keyhole That Needs A Key**  
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There was a pandemic. The specifics of how we maintained our blissful denial until the last possible moment are perhaps important for a different conversation, but today, it is not the point. For many of us, life was normal one day and upside down the next. And while we all tried in our own ways to cope with the changes, the inconveniences, the fear, and the grief, it slowly became apparent that our short term coping strategies would not prevail against the slow, persistent crisis that refused to recede, but lapped repeatedly at our shores with a maddening constancy.

We learned quickly to work from our homes, peering at colleagues through computer monitors and conducting meetings with children playing at our feet. We ordered groceries and other necessities online. We donned our armor against disease and discovered the strange isolation of existing in a crowded place where no smile could be seen. We found that income, shelter, and food could be acquired from inside our bubbles of solitude. We called our loved ones on our tablets and computers, smiling or crying through jittery video feeds or pixelated pauses. We imagined that we had created a “new normal” that would carry us through the crisis.

And one by one we faltered.

We learned to say, “I’m not okay.”

I’m not okay.

The overwhelming advice, heard on the wind and in the streets and from the blue light of our screens, after “wash your hands” and “wear a mask” was “self care.” Take care of yourself. Give room to yourself. Have compassion for yourself. Treat yourself.

The powers that be do no elaborate beyond this point, because to do so would require acknowledging that we are more than economic components, and they don’t know anything about us beyond our usefulness in that capacity. We are given some suggestions that will certainly help us to retain our functionality – exercise, eat well, perhaps meditate, all good things, but are largely left to our own devices to determine what is needed to feel okay.

Though all my physical needs are met, even though I have money for mortgage and groceries and clothing, though I have shelter and safety and creature comforts, though I can see my friends and family and have anything I want delivered to my home, though my smart TV can entertain me into eternity, there is something more, something that the larger culture keeps us numb to, something that a pandemic has illuminated.

A keyhole that needs a key. A keyhole that I was content to ignore while life seemed normal, but now begs to be unlocked. When I put my eye to the hole I see a tiny slice of the universe of potential that lives inside. I must find the key that unlocks my inner mysteries, a key I wouldn't have known I needed if I hadn't been thrust into the prolonged crisis and nagging melancholy for which the proposed solve is, supposedly, "treat yourself."

I will treat myself. I will treat myself to a Kai shaped key. I will study the hole and understand the shape and the size of it, and I will fashion a practice of love, and family, and art, of deep inner examination and uncontrollable laughter – I will hammer and melt and file and bend all the pieces available to me until they fit just so. That, I think, is the work of "self care." That unlocks a piece of the universe inside, filled with more doors, more keyholes.

More delicious puzzles to be solved.

Endless Treats.