

As Young Adults Living Through 2020 Together
after Carolyn Forché; for V

Late into an Alabama
fall with rare moments
of visible breath in cold
air and muted changing
of leaves, we walked
around. Our shoes wore
down on sprawling
sidewalks with countless
loops and talks about new
cocktails to try. We laughed
about our terrible new boss
and the time we found \$20
in the Target parking lot
and used it on a chocolate
and wine night. I pointed
at our neighbors' curious
cats peering through kudzu
covered windows as we
passed and how you saw me
begin to fall in love with cats
and grow attached to the idea
of adopting one after I moved
back home. In the woods,
we did the same—nearly
stepped upon a snake,
fought our way up steep hills,
counted steps and miles,
birds, and turtles, and spiders.
We made a weekly journey
from our living room
to the nightmare, a masked,
fearful, and draining world.
This wasn't how our last
months of living together
were supposed to be, but we
drove through ritzy
neighborhoods for just
a little joy—to see a dog,
grab a drive-thru shake,
see the Christmas lights—
any reason to get out
of our bubble, took it all in:
the excess of pumpkins

and college football fanfare,
how each blue and orange
sunset felt like it only
belonged to Auburn. I always
believed this, Vanessa,
that we'd find a way to miss
that yellow apartment
with its stupid thin walls,
vomit green couch,
and unreasonably large
furniture our other roommate
insisted we needed. The walls
there held us; together, apart,
a melding of memories to last us
a lifetime: your 21st birthday,
double tequila shots
at midnight, you graciously
shared your celebration
with me after I finished
my last college final ever,
with a cake we left out
that made us sick the next
morning; and days later,
we had a final meal together,
unpacking mugs to drink
hot chocolate and slurp down
ramen in the safety of our home
one more time before college
was over for me. I remember
feeling bitter—at the state
of the world, for the experiences
we were robbed of—but then
remember the nights in
with horror movies
and episodes of *Bob's Burgers*,
our Dutch oven full of fun-sized
candy, watching the drunk girl
roller-skate down our street
in a thong bikini, and all the other
moments of delight and support
only a best friend can offer.
Then and now our time together
never seemed to be long enough
and still doesn't. Every time I miss
you, I think how our quarantine
forced coming together

was actually a sort of kindness
in the middle of the world
disintegrating before our eyes.