

The old rusty window

I awaken to a chill that bites like winter's breath,
Open my phone, I count the days,
How long since I've been here, I asked
But no one answers, because I'm here, in an empty vast.

Shhh...shhh

I hear you shushing, the angry leaves
Rustling with the wind, you gossip
Whispering my secrets, with every creak,
About my pathetic self, the racing thoughts that I keep on repeat.

The haze of autumn's grasp emerged into the icy fog of winter's chill,

So cold, I am frozen in time and space.

A foreign land, a foreign scene, outside of the old window frame,

Where the snow falls in front of my eyes for the first time.

Christmas comes and goes in silence,

No merry laughter, no joyful feast.

Just the sound of my own heartbeat's violence,

A lonely rhythm that will not cease.

That old rusty window frame is

the only world I know.

I watch the world go by,

time is paralyzed.

In the heart of a foreign land, during my first semester as a freshman, I was writing this poem while sitting in the Ray Street C isolation room and gazed through the window frame.

Snowflakes fell, and I watched in wonder, for it was my first experience of winter's embrace. The world outside was a mystery, and I longed to understand its touch. How does snow feel, like wetness and moisture, or perhaps dry like salt? And what of Halloween, with its tricks and treats, or the joy of decking the halls?

I had always dreamt of these moments, and I believed that everything I desired was about to become my reality. However, they remained distant fantasies, viewed only through the small window in my dorm room.

This happened because of a sudden twist of fate—I tested positive for active tuberculosis, just two months after my arrival. I remember that moment vividly, when a call from UD Health Services disrupted my class. "Please pack your belongings; you're moving to an isolation room" they instructed. My heart raced, and for a brief moment, I contemplated the possibility of the worst things that could happen. I was paranoid that I was going to fail my freshman year, or even further, die from the disease.

But the University of Delaware proved me wrong. The support I received was beyond words. Financial aid for meals, academic assistance, and the guidance of a dean specialist—they all became pillars of strength. Yet, still, the isolation was a challenge, especially for a social butterfly like me. Laughter and music drifted in from the world outside, taunting me with festivities I couldn't join. Emails announced campus events, reminding me of what I was missing. The feeling of missing out was unbearable. My daily routine in those initial weeks became a cycle of phone screens and solitude. Eight hours of scrolling, followed by meals, showers, and sleep. Motivation eluded me. However, a glimmer of hope emerged as I scrolled through my notes. A message from 2019 reminded me of my yearning to be in America. The realization hit—I was living the life I'd always desired. In that darkest hour, I sought a silver lining. I was not missing out. I explored new horizons, stepping into uncharted territories. I ventured into the realm of writing poetry and creating art. Four months of solitude, meeting no one in person, became a journey of self-discovery. The isolation room became my cocoon, and I emerged as a transformed butterfly. I delved deep into introspection, uncovering layers of myself I had never known. In the silence, I discovered the music of my own thoughts and the palette of my creativity. Emerging from quarantine with newfound strength, I concluded my freshman year with a 4.0 GPA and active participation in various extracurricular activities.

As I write this essay, I've just returned from an incredible Halloween party. The American spooky season is now my reality, and the excitement of my first days in this foreign land remains. I look forward to meeting new people and exploring this country. As an international student, I've encountered challenges, from xenophobia to impatience with my accent. However, UDel's warmth and inclusivity have left a lasting impression. Delaware may not be the most

diverse state, but the University's efforts to foster diversity are deeply appreciated. My journey is far from over. Each day is a new chapter, and the dreams that once seemed distant now guide my path.

Through the isolation and trials, I've found my light, my resilience, and my dreams in this foreign land. In the face of adversity, I've discovered that strength and inspiration can emerge from the most unexpected places. The window frame, once a barrier to the world, became a portal to self-discovery.