

**The image etched and morphed into my brain,  
depicted every person navigating the collective normal.**

Either a unique sense of calm,  
or in craze from what seemed to be the whirlwind  
of one disaster after another,  
*Every shade in between was painted.*

Some started off at the brink of deterioration of mental health  
Spending their hours alone,  
a cocktail of “the perfect” medications  
slew of new diagnoses,  
facing the haunting temptation of their past self-destructive “coping skills”  
what starts as one bad day,  
one sip  
one missed or extra meal  
fear faced or challenge missed  
for some becomes the appearance of never-ending spiral...  
Just now they might be finding out what their new rock  
bottom is,  
Or they started off at rock bottom,  
Each day that person was turning the page of the  
past  
Self-revelations and joy fill the day,  
Pure bliss  
A moment gone too soon...  
The overall process spanned the whole pandemic,  
The whole pandemic that is *not* over.  
*Everyone is still on their journey and will keep continuing their journey.*

*However, I thought I existed in an alternate reality...*

I began to feel ill just weeks into the pandemic.  
My high tolerance of pain,  
Geared with international knowledge of perception modification and problem-solving,  
Previously I thought of this as my “talent”;  
*but was now being used by doctors to gaslight the idea that my  
physical symptoms,  
were due to some underlying mental  
health condition.*

*I felt alone*

But I also always challenged myself to search for optimism, or at least answers.  
I felt like every day I was having to learn to cope with a new reality.  
I had the coping tools drilled in from countless sources:  
CBT; DBT; whatever psychologists recommended;  
I had already learned the consequences of letting negativity fester  
I spent years spent dealing with one family mental health crisis after  
another,  
bouncing therapist to therapist  
psychiatrist to psychiatrist

*most were forced upon me by family,  
or the family court system,  
But it worked.*

**I tried to use these skills to “fix “my health issues.**

*My body is and was not functioning properly.*

Something felt wrong,

But treatment plans from doctors were never presented.

Simple lifestyle modifications presented as a temporary solution

But the waiting lists are years.

In the mean time I must persist in uncovering any hidden clues  
that may lie in the heirloom of family genetics.

Both, at times,

feel like blessing and a curse.

*No matter the pain, I will keep going because that is all I know.*

**But if I’m honest, I fear that my ability to adapt will kill me.**

**This is said not because I think I am special;**

**but because my name is one of thousands continuing to wait during this pandemic.**