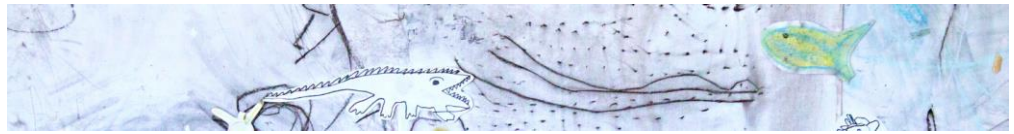


**Eight Minutes: Walks with my Daughter**  
**Glimpses of Home Inside a Pandemic**

*Laura Lloyd-Jones*

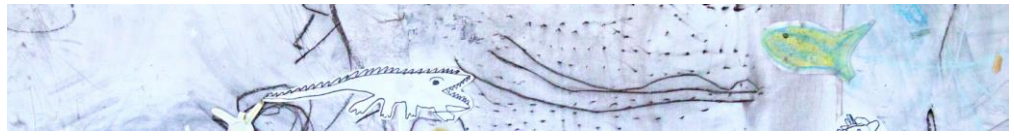
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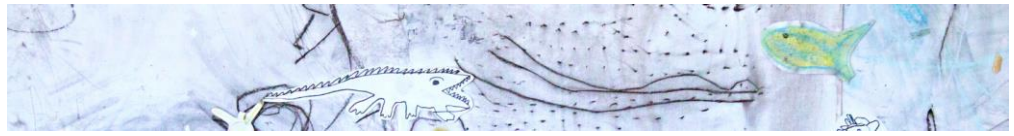
### ***Eight Minutes***

Pandemics are enlightening in a way. In our usual daily lives, we take for granted the ability to move, to see, to visit, to go places and step out of our ‘bubble’. And now we have nothing but a bubble, a small circular world that cannot, must not grow at this moment. At the very center of this fragile droplet of life is a home for those who have them. A micro place of peace and sanitized comfort within a masked and unclean macro. Our bubble extends for four blocks, every weekday morning my daughter and I walk hand in hand, mask on face to school. These photos are tiny specks of our bubble that we have observed together over the course of several weeks, this essay has been gleaned from a hundred conversations. We think together on the idea of ‘home’, what does that mean to a flicker? What does that mean for the neighbourhood cluster of starlings? We begin to see habitations everywhere we look, the same route we walk each day has turned into a domicile spotting trek, eight minutes of ‘look here’ and ‘who do you think might live there?’ For eight minutes we wonder ourselves out of our tiny sphere and into the lives of the creatures that live amongst us, the lives of the aging houses, the plants. Our bubble becomes a biosphere, teeming with lives and places of asylum from the chill of deep winter - we become attuned to our surroundings, the brief moments of quiet before our bubble inevitably pops.



### *Peep House*

Looking out from behind the wide branch, suspicious of strangers walking by. It is unobtrusively observing the comings and goings of the neighbourhood, mostly hidden, camouflaged amongst the moss. It is curious, it is watching. The tree stretches up, slowly tipping the peep house further...further...will it fall? A bird has never been observed coming or going, does it stay empty? It seems lonely, wanting. Perhaps the potato bugs have set up camp inside, warming themselves against the chill with tiny leaves for blankets. This home provided by someone long ago, left for dead, quiet and alone. Come spring a nest may be deposited atop the cast-off leaves, and its useful life begins again.



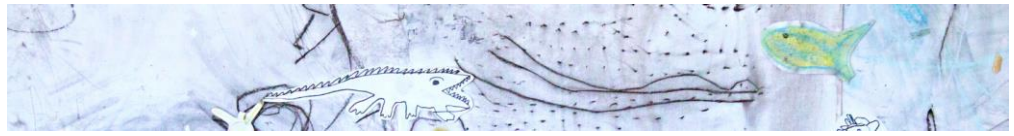
### *The Honey Pot*

It is stuck there. Wedged in place by growth and time. A friend or possible adversary for the shy and reserved Peep House on the next tree over. It is not tilted; it is not unsure of its place - it is steadfast and upright. Cars zoom, cars creep past, squeaking and shrieking day and night ignoring the glaring stop sign just as well as the house does. The house stands sentient, a honey pot waiting to lure in a new occupant - not with sweetness, nor with softness or comfort but with safety, security and assurances whispered on the wind. Carried swiftly to those creatures who would heed its siren call. The honey pot with moss covered roof and lichen walls casually waits, wanting nothing more than a wing or claw



### **Flicker on a Wire**

A flash of orange, a flame wings past, up and up to the top of the wires. Once a symbol of friendship and happiness a Flicker now means an early morning wake up, an annoyance thumping away on the side of the house in search of a tasty treat buried in a crack. This is Mum, she calls for her partner and her little one, the trio from the evergreen tree on the corner. Frequenting the tin tops of telephone poles that they clang, clang, clang into submission. Is it music to them? Or do they just simply enjoy banging their head against the wall?



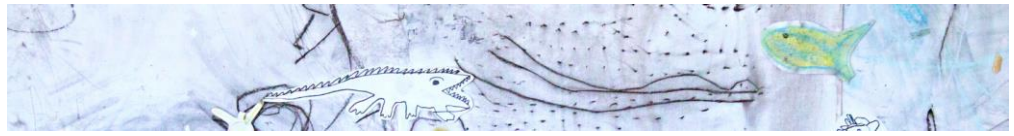
### *Spilled Gasoline*

It stands empty. A hulking monolith blocking out the sun, the snow does not melt under its eye. Seven years hollow, the sign goes up the sign comes down, the sign goes up the sign comes down. Endless cycles of attempting to fill the void. Little does the proprietor know that it is not empty, a family is present and accounted for. At the very peak of the roof there is a crack, a shifted panel. The neighbourhood scourge of predatory starlings resides there, flitting in and out chattering and chirping to their heart's content. Wings that look like spilled gasoline on a rainy-day road, pretty little things until you get to know them. The family home is not for children as the eggs are left with other birds to tend, it is more than likely a den of iniquity - murmur on elsewhere Starlings.



### *Storm Witches*

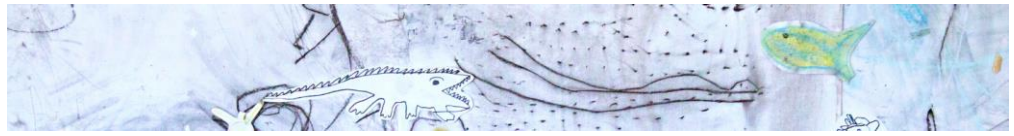
Empty trees make visible the abodes of corvid friends, or maybe fiends? Luminous tar-glossed wings flap and intelligent eyes wink whilst the head tilts to get a better look. If a crow is an omen of an ominous nature than we are all doomed for these night winged creatures abound in the most temperate of urban rainforests. Grandmother calls the crows ‘Storm Witches’ and a whip smart solver of problems, shouting hexes at you as you pass underneath. There is nothing they cannot know, nothing they cannot un-riddle. They build dark castles in the sky, bare branched turrets with wind whipping through unchecked. It is surely a wonder that these piles of twigs and twines are not torn from their perches but if they were, that is an easy fix for a canny crow.



### *The Handshake*

“It’s holding the house up.” she says matter-of-factly and as the house is a century long-in-the-tooth, she is not wrong. Gnarled hands twist and clench at the beams of iron, squeezing and grasping but the iron does not bend. The Wisteria grows, deep winter causing it to slowly, slowly creep towards eternity. When the first blush of sun brushes the tips of her fingers, she relaxes and begins to unfurl, time reverses. She is youth in brilliant shades of purple - a thousand blossoms of sparking periwinkle fall from her hands. They cascade until they have all gone, aged bony knuckles now exposed for all to see again. The elder woman with the powerful handshake, constricting and tightening, willing the iron to give.





There is always a longing for home. When we are out rushing around doing chores, harried, and stressed. When we are gone just a minute too long it seems time drags on endlessly until the feet cross the threshold and breath held tightly is exhaled, worries are lifted, the heavy load is lightened. Do the birds feel the same when they flit over the edge of their nest? When the beetles tip tap down into their hole under the earth, or the squirrels return to their cozy nook in the crook of a tree. They breathe out and sigh, content in the safety their shelter affords them, or do they worry that they are not out and about scavenging and scouring the earth for each and every scrap they can find. They are afforded the luxury of not knowing what horrors the accursed virus has wrought on our society. Their oblivion is envious. Each day we walk and each day we talk. We fascinate ourselves with chitter-chatter about fae houses in tree whirls or mouse toes in branch burls. This topic founts endless discussion, for eight minutes a day. Eight minutes to ponder the tiny four block universe we are surrounded by, eight minutes, and then.... pop.



## **Artist Bio**

Laura Lloyd-Jones is a fourth year Early Childhood Education student at Capilano University completing her bachelor's degree in the spring of 2022. This photo essay was composed during the winter of 2020 when Laura was homebound after the birth of her second child, in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic.