



John Prine is dead. I never met John, but I loved him. He wrote and sang *Sam Stone*, *Hello in There*, and *Angel from Montgomery* among many, many other songs.

His voice wasn't sweet, it was real. And lung cancer didn't take his life, Covid did. When I learned he was in the ICU in Nashville with the virus, I'd check-in online to learn his status. I was awake and writing at 2 a.m. when a newsfeed lit my laptop screen to inform me that the "celebrated singer-songwriter" had passed. Prine died on April 7 when the moon was full, and pink, and super.

So many writers, bloggers, poets and pundits are digesting this pandemic with words. I am adding to the viral reflux and I ask for your patient consideration. Like many of you, I am gardening, catching up on long neglected reading, and conjuring magic by tidying up. The ping of a text from an isolated friend diverts my attention away from these tasks and reminds me of this new decade's burden. My process is to write about it.

In my quest to stay busy, I move from one undertaking to the next. I've learned how to host Zoom meetings. I made Easter nut bread for the first time ever, a family tradition that immigrated to the United States in the mind of my Lithuanian grandmother sometime in the early twentieth century. I've organized toolboxes, power washed the backyard deck, and scrubbed the roof of the parked RV. I've hand washed an American flag in hot water separating yellow-green pollen from the red, white, and blue fabric. The flag, submersed under dissolving soap bubbles, reminded me of our nation, drowning in a bath of bewilderment.

I fight worry. My gratitude list is endless but anxiety filters through the ether of my conscience when I listen to reports on the dwindling availability of medical equipment, unemployment statistics, and the plight of caring families unable to provide comfort to ailing loved ones.

John Prine's last album, *The Tree of Forgiveness*,¹ was released in 2018. The irony of the album rests in his song *When I Get to Heaven*.²

A few of John's lyrics:

[illegible]

have Prine's music and the song of a backyard wren, small gifts of defiance to appease a soul sentenced to staying at home.