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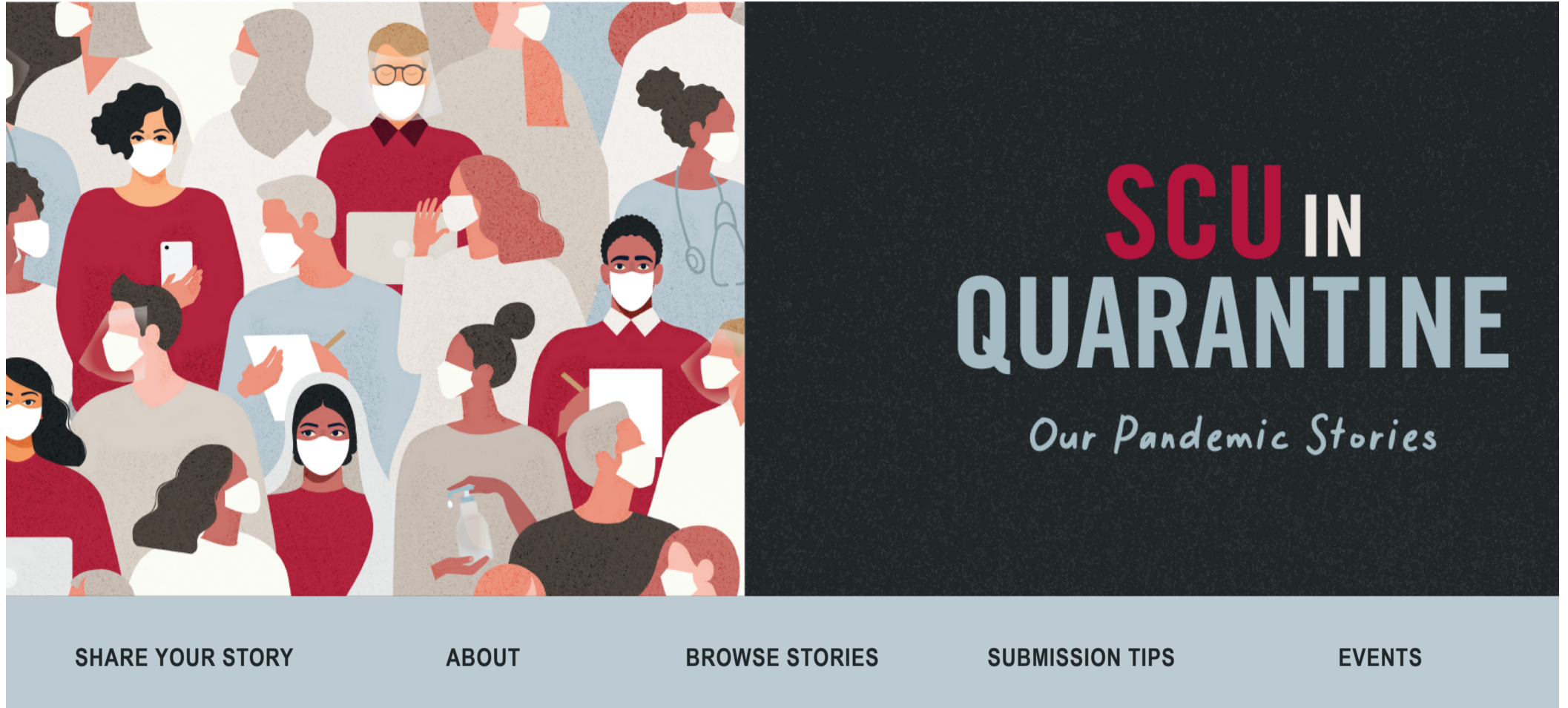
Closer to Fine

Julia Claire Santos

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Closer to Fine

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After about a week of working from home in March 2020, a band I love, the Indigo Girls, let folks know they were doing a Facebook Live living room concert. People from so many parts of my life virtually attended that concert. Friends from college, grad school, ministry, current and past colleagues at Santa Clara; all around the country, there we were: TOGETHER.

Many, like me, were requesting one song: “Closer to Fine,” a staple of my college soundtrack. Of course, they saved it for the end. I’d been staring at screens nonstop for a week trying anything I could think of that might alleviate others’ fear and anxiety while also trying to manage my own. But, this would be my moment—I yelled to my husband in the next room, “Lewis! Come here! You have to come dance!”

Switching between laptop and phone, I kept trying to see which device would be louder so we could really belt the song out—WE HAD TO!—and just as he entered the room, both devices froze the livestream. The chat feed was still alive and well. People joked that the band had broken the internet.

I did NOT think this was a funny joke.

I got so overwhelmed: WE HAVE TO SING THIS SONG! I’VE GOT TO HEAR THIS!

It was like all the pent-up frustration of the uncertainty, fear, and surrender of those initial days came out over this one trivial, little glitch.

My husband, for his part, waited patiently.

At some point the feed returned. In fits and starts, we could hear them singing. With or without “the Girls,” I sang that song at the top of my lungs, simultaneously belly laughing, dancing, and sobbing.

[Side note: When I cry, my husband fake cries harder—a really, over-dramatic, soap opera wail. I hate it because sometimes you really need to cry, and it is impossible not to laugh when he does this!]

So, I was singing, dancing, crying, and now laughing. Looking at me like I was possessed, Lewis, too, was dancing, “crying,” and laughing... And now, our German Shepherd, Will, became really worried so he was wailing, whining, barking, and dancing with us.

It was pandemonium in our living room.

And for week 1 of hunkering down for a global pandemic, it was precisely the catharsis we needed.

This experience of joy, I know, is drenched in privilege. That frenzy over weak wifi doesn't begin to compare with the half-million Americans who have now become weak with the virus, weak in the knees from bereavement; from dealing with unemployment, homelessness, racism, and the real risks of infection, contagion, deportation, isolation, oppression, and depression.

Though frivolous, my "frenzy" was consuming in that moment, all the same.

Over a year later, each of us has suffered. We've faced profound loss, outrage, grief, and so much more. Yet, we've also experienced moments, perhaps brief ones, tinged with the inexplicable consolation of connection.

Mine was "Closer to Fine."

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