

Life Stories And Musings During A Pandemic

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS

VOLUME 1

From the team that brought you
The Crazy First Year & Before I Do Anthology | Bros Before Hoes

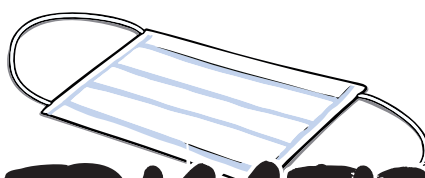
KATH C. EUSTAQUIO-DERLA,
PUBLISHER



2020 SUCKS!

Let's all write about this son-of-a-bitch of a year!

Share your Quarantined Thoughts with us!
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DEDICATION

This book is for any one who feels helpless, frustrated, angry, and confused at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Know that we can do something about these feelings—**write about them.**

If you're reading this ebook 20 years from the year 2020, we want you to know that this year sucked.

But we were badass!
We were all heroes in face masks.





Quarantined Thoughts Volume 1

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Published by HS Grafik Print

Pasig City, Philippines 1611

Telfax: +63 2 77483551 | Mobile Number: +63 905 2160836

Email: paperkatbooks@gmail.com

Website: www.paperkatbooks.com

Editing, Book Cover, Inside Layout: Kath C. Eustaquio-Derla

Photos: Pexels.com

Illustrations: Acworks

Published in the Philippines



ISBN 978-621-8232-68-6 PDF (downloadable)



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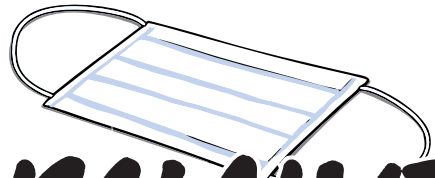
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First of all, this ebook is free. So if you paid for the ebook you're reading now or you're holding a printed copy, tell me who sold it to you or printed it without the publisher's permission and I will sue the son of a bitch.

Why is it free? Because our goal for the **Quarantined Thoughts** ebooks is to encourage people to write down their thoughts during this COVID-19 pandemic. We are giving the ebooks for free because we want to inspire more people to write, even if they don't have a writing background.

In other words, we are not monetizing this project. The advertisements you see here are also free. We didn't charge them anything to place an advertisement because we want to give SMEs, especially home-based businesses that started during the quarantine, a new platform to advertise their products and/or services.

That belly roast ad? We didn't ask them to give us a free sampler in exchange for ad placement. In fact, the publisher will place an order because she believes that the best way to support

friends with businesses is to buy their products/services and pay the full price. That's how we roll. We hate freeloaders.

This book is for everyone—feel free to share this copy with your friends, family, relatives, fans, bashers, lovers, exes, what-ifs, haters...and encourage them to join our new volumes. Yes! We are accepting more entries and more advertisers who want to be part of this initiative. So please help us spread the word.

The publisher, Kath C. Eustaquio-Derla of PaperKat Books, like saying “fuck” and other colorful expletives a lot. If you are easily offended, sensitive, and takes yourself too seriously, then this book isn't for you.



ADDITIONALLY

Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals, companies, and organizations.

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Happy reading during this fucking *whatever-they-call-it* quarantine.





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PRESSURE



CREATES



DIAMONDS



(NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER)

Hey there! I'm Kath, founder and CEO of **PaperKat Books**. Since I work from home, nothing much changed in my routine when the Philippine government announced the lockdown of Metro Manila in March 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The biggest change was, perhaps, I can't go out of our condo unit for a run or even errands during the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ). Thankfully, I panicked early and bought a month's supply of food and formula milk for my family before the ECQ and Metro Manila- and Luzon-wide lockdown announcement was made.

Since the lockdown, I've seen many posts on Facebook—both legit and fake—that caught my attention as a storyteller and publisher. Some from friends, some from relatives, and some shared posts from strangers. There are many human-interest stories there. So many musings. So much anger and confusion. So many thoughts and realizations during this trying time. And you know what, those long posts with nuggets of wisdom are worth sharing to the world, not just on your Facebook wall.

I read once that every 100 years or so, nature throws humans a curveball in the form of a pandemic. The effects, challenges, and changes

INTRODUCTION

may not be the same for everyone. Still, a pandemic affects us all. But soon, everything we are experiencing will be part of history.

When I read that article wherein historians suggest we should keep a record of life during a pandemic, I thought of an idea. As a book writing mentor, self-publishing consultant, and publisher, I thought that one of my biggest contributions to the world would be to compile these stories for the future generation.

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has not only slowed us down, but also changed the way we work, live, and plan for the future.

Not only for the duration of the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), Modified ECQ, or General Community Quarantine (GCQ) but for a very long time.

Hopefully, our **Quarantined Thoughts** book writing project (formerly called Coronavirus Chronicles) will give many of us something to do during the ECQ, GCQ, and whatever-they-call-it. There is no better time to write than now when we have so many emotions bottled up inside. If we don't take charge of our emotions and thoughts, it can wreak havoc in our lives. Writing down your thoughts is a great way to channel that energy—both positive and negative—into something productive.

For example, we have one book author who submitted numerous entries—from the time he almost lost his job because of the ECQ and went on a mandatory leave to the time he went back to work in the “new normal”. His first few entries were sad and heavy. I encouraged him to keep writing and use the project as a way to pass the time. I'm happy to read that his new entries are filled with newfound hope. If I could help one person like that through the book writing project, imagine the ripple effect those essays have to people who will read them.

INTRODUCTION

That is also why we offer free advertisement space in this ebook. Since the pandemic, we've seen a rise in home-based businesses—from *ube* cheese *pandesal* to sushi bake to cloth face masks—more and more people are channeling their inner entrepreneur. I know this because I lost track of how many food and non-food items (and how much I spent haha) I bought from friends who I see are selling on Facebook.

I know this because before the COVID-19 pandemic, I started a gourmet butter business but decided to only sell during the holidays. My goal was to get featured in *My Puhunan* and be interviewed by Karen Davila, haha. I never thought that my *My Puhunan* dreams would manifest in the form of me giving “my *puhunan*” (seed money) to one of our “angels” (helpers) so she could start a small food business at home. Due to the lack of transportation, she couldn't go to my parents' house to work. I told her I'm more comfortable if she earns at home. A quick trip to the supermarket, a seamless delivery from Grab, and poof—instant food business.

Across all **Quarantined Thoughts** volumes you will see advertisements of many home-based businesses. I encourage you to check them out, like their Facebook/Instagram pages, and



Photo by In House Coffee Bar



Photo by In House Coffee Bar



INTRODUCTION

help spread the word. We are doing this because we are all in this together. Maybe not inside the same brand of pressure cooker, but we are all being tested (especially our patience). So let's throw each other lifelines.

After all, pressure creates diamonds.

During trying times, we end up creating something good. It could be a new flavor combo of *pandesal*, a new way to enjoy “sushi” or coffee, and—for me—new book writing projects.

I hope that all **Quarantined Thoughts** volumes will be diamonds in the future—filled with real stories from real people who were able to write a book with or without a writing background.

**Each of us has stories that deserve to be told.
Let's chronicle life during a pandemic.**



Cheers,

Kath

Founder and CEO, **PaperKat Books**
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Image from the movie Home Alone 2

#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts #QuarantinedLoveline

My Husband Came Home Looking Like Marv in Home Alone

April 14, 2020

BY KATH C. EUSTAQUIO-DERLA (PHILIPPINES)

Late in February 2020, my husband, an SAP (IT) consultant, flew to Kortrijk, Belgium for a one-month training at his company's mothership (main headquarters). This isn't the first time he'd be away from me for quite some time. Early in our marriage, he moved to Malaysia first (he left on my birthday) and I followed 6 months later. LDR (long-distance

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relationships) isn't for me. So if I have a choice, I'd choose to move than be away from him.

But this time, it's different. It's just a one-month business trip. This time, we have a 2-year-old kid and I have a publishing business to run in the Philippines. We could have joined him for a working vacation in Belgium, but we said, "Maybe next time."

And it was a good thing that we didn't push with the original plan: to spend a month in Belgium. Because one week before his scheduled return to the Philippines, trusted sources have told us about a possible lockdown in Metro Manila. At one time, the grandparents called and told me to rush to the supermarket and buy as many formula milk I could buy for my son. So when the lockdown is finally announced, I won't have to deal with the madness of people rushing to get the essentials.

Normally, I don't believe this hush-hush news, but they came from trusted sources. If it were just me, I can live off of bread and coffee and whatever's left in our small pantry. But I have an active toddler. And I knew that I needed to act fast.

The following morning, I went to Unimart in Estancia, Capitol Commons and bought a month's supply of food and formula milk that could last us three months. The mood in the supermarket felt like it was the day before Christmas—people weren't panic-buying but the lines were so long that I waited for almost an hour to pay for my purchase.





When the Enhanced Community Quarantine was finally announced, I rushed to the supermarket again and the mood was quite different. People were panic-buying already but since this particular supermarket and the entire compound are quite lofty, everyone was courteous and decent. But they already ran out of trolleys. Good thing I had the big Landers eco bag with me, but it wasn't enough. I found a sturdy eco-bag in the stationery aisle and used that for my purchases (I paid for it too).

During these two trips, I did all the carrying. I figured, well, this is what I trained (weightlifting) for. It was so exhausting and wearing a face mask was a nuisance because my eyeglasses kept on fogging up. But it was a good thing that I bought our stock early on. After that week, the news showed people rushing to the supermarkets and establishments running out of stock because some consumers kept on hoarding.

Two days before his scheduled flight home, my husband called me from Belgium and said they would be flying home the next day. The COVID-19 cases in Europe were already skyrocketing at that point and a lockdown would be in place soon. Finally, my husband's on his way home from Belgium. We couldn't be more excited but it also meant a mandatory 14-day self-quarantine because of his travel history (he visited Luxembourg, France, Amsterdam, and Dubai too).

We live in a high-rise condominium and with a toddler here, we knew we couldn't risk it. So, the family decided to have Jet's 14-day self-quarantine at his home in Taytay, Rizal. It was quite depressing for me—imagine not being able to kiss or hug your husband when you visit him at his hotel near NAIA 3 for breakfast. Imagine not being able to go home and be with his kid after a month of being away. It's so hard to be so near but so far. I know that many families experience LDRs for different reasons and longer duration.

So I told myself to focus on the good side of things:

my husband's home and well; we have enough food at home, and being the only parent visible for a long period of time has made my son and I closer.

Soon, the 14-day self-quarantine was over. But at this point, there were checkpoints set up already and stricter Enhanced Community Quarantine guidelines.

I belong to a family of over-thinkers so you could imagine just how "extra" the preparations were for my husband's return to the condo. We had all sorts of contingency plans and a complete set of papers. Since my brother is a doctor, one of our cars had a sticker that says it was being used to transport frontliners. My doctor brother issued a medical certificate to Jet and we printed all the paperwork that would support the need to travel from Taytay, Rizal to Mandaluyong City in Metro Manila. I had approvals from the condo administration about my husband's return from abroad.

**WE ARE LAW-ABIDING CITIZENS.
WE ARE SO EXTRA.**

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My husband's been away for almost two months and I've always imagined his post-apocalyptic look to the tune of Jake Gyllenhaal's Dastan in the movie *Prince Of Persia*. But my husband came home looking like Marv in the first two *Home Alone* movies.



ECQ isn't for this guy. *Kakalbuhin ko ito*. And I eventually did. But that's for another **#QuarantinedThoughts** entry.



About The Author

Kath is a published author, editor, hybrid publisher/printer, book writing mentor, self-publishing consultant, and a communications strategist. She is the founder and CEO of **PaperKat Books** and the COO (child of owner, #truestory) of her family's business **HS Grafik Print** with nearly 40 years of industry experience.

As a hybrid publisher, Kath offers a writing and mentoring program for aspiring book writers. She is the recipient of the *2018 Best Editor (English Category)* and *2018 Best Printing Service* awards during the *Gawad Parangal Sa Mundo Ng Literatura Awards* of **Penmasters League**.



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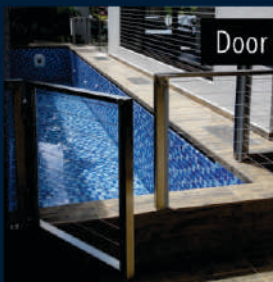
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#CoronavirusChronicles #FrontlinerStories

A BPO Agent In Batangas City Works On Despite The COVID-19 Pandemic

March 24, 2020

BY KIM COROLLO (PHILIPPINES)

It is a fine Tuesday morning for me amidst the issue of COVID-19 here in the country (Philippines). I wake up early to do my usual routine before going to work. *Kailangang kumayod*, so that I could earn a living.

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I am working as a support agent in a BPO company here in Batangas City. And although it was already declared that the work in the private sector should also be suspended due to the increasing number of infected cases due to the virus, not just here in our city but also the whole Luzon area, *siyempre may pasok pa rin kami. Parte yata kami ng grupo ng mga imortal na tao*. Kidding aside, as I've said, it's still a normal working day for all of us in that company.

Then lunch break comes. We hear the news that all public transportation is already suspended and people are prohibited to travel publicly. All of us are like, "*Hala! Paano tayo uuwi mamaya?*", "*Maglalakad tayo pauwi?*", "*Kalayo ng amin! Bundok pa!*", in their usual *Batangueño* accent.



As for me, it is not a big deal anymore if I need to walk from work to home that day. I used to walk a lot—way back in my high school days when there were no jeepneys available on my way home. But it is a big deal for some of my workmates whose homes are so far from the city grounds.



Some of them live near the mountainsides.

Well, then again, we do not have any other choice.
The effect of this COVID-19 pandemic is getting worse.

Even if the virus is out there, waiting for its next target, what can I do? I don't have any other choice but to walk or else, I might not be able to go home before sundown. That one is also scary. So, with a brave heart, I start going on my way from work to the city proper. From there, I gather more strength and courage to walk home alone. It feels like a ghost town now, especially in the streets that were once full of smoke coming from different vehicles going back and forth. There used to be a lot of people making their way, minding their own business, in the streets of the city proper.

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Then again, wait! I stop walking when I realize something. In times like this, where the virus is attacking the immune system of a person, making his or her body weak, I think I should be more careful and conscious about my health, right? I sighed, "*Oo nga pala, yung vitamins namin. Kailangan ko pa palang bumili.*"

If it's not for the virus, I won't be this conscious with everything I do and everything that is happening around me. I am just grateful that I still get the chance to arrive home today, unharmed, despite the deadly virus we are all afraid of.

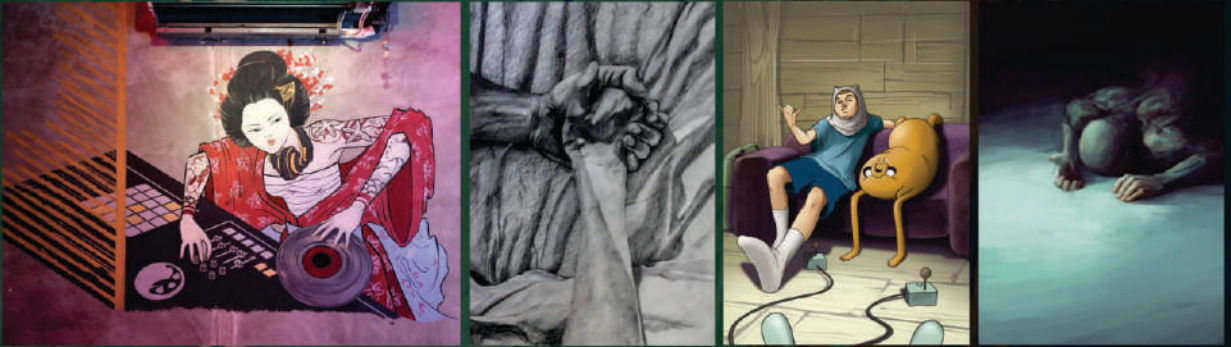


About The Author

Kim is a support agent in a BPO company who lives in Batangas City. She's currently taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education and her major is English. Her past time is browsing the internet to get news about the things she's interested in such as K-pop. She likes reading e-books from her favorite local authors. She also writes for famous apps Wattpad and Dreame.



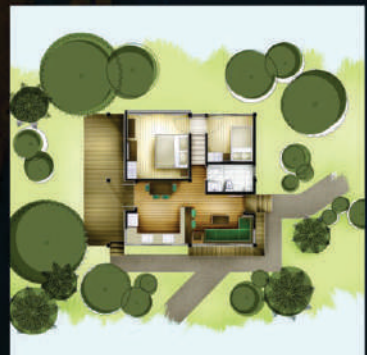
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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

A PWD Writer Attends An Online Event For #WorldPoetryDay

March 24, 2020

BY JOHN VINCENT PARUNGAO AGBUNAG (PHILIPPINES)

A day in my life. Yesterday, with my group Damdaming Nakapaskil, I successfully participated in an online event made for World Poetry Day Year 2020.

I was invited by Edbert Darwin Casten of Baon Collectives. Other groups joined me in that online event, here are some of them: Hiraya

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Kolektib, Cavite Young Writers Association, TulasalitaanPH, White Wall Poetry, Midnight Collective, Xplicit, KM64, and Linangan sa Imahen.

Before the event even started, one can tell that poetry has risen again. Afterward, I thought, *minsan lang kami maririnig nang mabuti. Makikisigaw na ako.* I was no longer scared to shout out or share my pieces of poetry. I felt protected. I felt that my vision as a poet was heard. I felt that the suggestions residing in my head were heard, some of which are solutions to solve our country's problems.

Because, aside from this pandemic,

the problem we face is how to deal with the situation given our different situations in life. Not all of us can easily adapt to the present situation and the government's solution. But we still have to follow them, right? But then, not everyone can make comments bravely.



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Sometimes, I need to see and hear the sides of the unfortunate ones for me to know where to safely go during this time. Like this event, where we writers and poets got united as one, it doesn't need political colors. For all we needed was to make poems for our land. To wake up the sleepy heads, to feel alive during the poetry reading.

In the succeeding years, maybe, they'll be able to do it outside, just like before, when there's no pandemic. I wish that I can still join, using my gifted limited capacity as a PWD writer. I want to write a poem dedicated to our beloved land, the Philippines.



John Vincent Parungao Agbunag (aka ParengJuanVicente) was born on September 12, 1996. The 23-year-old writer with 5 years of experience is originally from Cabanatuan City. He is a member of Penmasters League and a former WWG article contributor. He also writes for various pro bono anthologies.

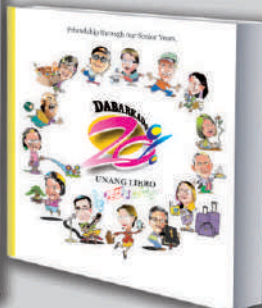
About The Author



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Silver Lining: Seeing The Beauty Of A Pandemic

March 24, 2020

BY JENNA STO. TOMAS – ZANTUA (PANAMA)

A distinct feature of modern life tells us to always be on the go. And to reach our goals, we must work, work, and work ourselves to the bone.

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It never tells us to slow down.

It never tells us to reflect.

It never tells us to ponder.

It never tells us to wonder.

It never tells us to enjoy TIME.

Because, who has TIME when we all have things to do, right?

Wrong.

So, listen up. We live in extraordinary times and in the wake of a pandemic like this, there is no choice but for everyone to slow down. I don't know about you, but I have been fucking exhausted and this pandemic has given me the gift of a much-deserved rest.

Yes, TIME is the only commodity that we all have plenty of right now. What you do with it NOW, determines the next few days, weeks, months, or even years of your life.

We may laugh at the memes showing the pains of people who are now working from home. Yet, these are the same things that freelancers and online workers have been doing pretty much every single day.



We go crazy thinking of ways to keep our children occupied. Yet not a single teacher complains about being with your children in school.

Have you forgotten how happy you were as a child doing silly things with your family? Give that to your children NOW.

Play with them. It is the best time ever.



We struggle to feed our family with home-cooked meals because our modern life got us so used to eating out or getting take-outs and deliveries. Well, this pandemic has given “slow food” a much-deserved come back. Now you have time to cook those delectable meals that you watch on YouTube or Facebook. We buy books that we never read. Now dust them off and start reading them. You’ll definitely learn a thing or two. No more excuses unless you prefer to binge-watch on Netflix or pass the time doing TikTok videos.



You see, we all have different coping mechanisms. Some entertain themselves with online games and making TikTok videos over and over. Some choose to get more sleep than usual. Others pass the time by scrolling through posts on social media. Others keep themselves busy by taking up a new hobby or learning something new. Others seem to want to just eat all day.

Whatever it is that you choose to do, be grateful for your life. Be thankful that you are not called to be a frontliner in this invisible war because every single day, these heroes put their lives on the line. They have no choice but to keep on fighting pesky COVID-19.

These are your doctors and medical staff who leave their own families to take care of others. These are your food service workers who still show up for work just to serve you a meal. These are your police, security, and military personnel guarding the borders, making sure you are safe and compliant. These are your reporters and media friends that are out there bringing the news to you.

While we hear about looting, panic buying, and self-serving people, we also hear more about communities coming together and neighbors supporting each other. There's less pollution. The skies are getting brighter. Lakes and oceans are getting cleaner. And animals seem to thrive and look a lot happier.

So, to you, my fellow human, revel and enjoy the silence. Get yourself together. Bring out your inner calm. See the silver lining for it is only in seeing what's hopeful and beautiful out of a seemingly hopeless situation do we realize how lucky we are that we, the ones who are left behind, are still alive.



Jenna Sto. Tomas- Zantua is a digital ex-pat living in Panama. A certified online business manager, brand copywriter, digital marketing geek, amazing cook, tough mama of one, fiercely loyal friend, and wife to Steve Aoki's (better-looking) doppelganger...

About The Author

...also a badass female entrepreneur and founder of **Digital & Boundless**, a consulting company that helps multi-passionate, purpose-driven, women founders with brand positioning and strategy to build, systematize, and maintain a unique and profitable online business.

She hopes to see more women-owned businesses grow and thrive in the big, exciting, vast, and sometimes scary, online universe.

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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

Coming Home To A Lockdown (A Backpacker's Mini Tales)

March 24, 2020

BY IAN BENEDICT MIA (PHILIPPINES)

I went on a backpacking trip to Vietnam last February to March 2020. A few days before the lockdown in Metro Manila, I was in my hostel

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lobby watching the Philippine president deliver his address. It was horrible news. I asked myself, “Will I really go home to this?”

I quickly went back to my hostel room looking all annoyed and disgusted with the news. The people I passed by must have been confused with my facial expression. I decided to reschedule my flight home because I didn't want to face the hassle caused by the lockdown. I was supposed to spend one more week. I got my phone, went to the airline's website, rescheduled my flight, and spent my last day in Vietnam.

While waiting for my flight back home, I spent most of my time in the hostel killing time, watching Netflix, playing a mobile game, and injecting myself with more toxic news back home. All I really thought of was I just want to go home.

My roommates seemed perplexed with the situation. They were digging through the news like me and were asking for advice from various online communities and fellow travelers. They were Europeans, and Vietnam was beginning to place a lot of restrictions on European travelers considering what was happening in Italy and the UK, among others.



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Many Vietnamese were also closing their establishments and not allowing Europeans to go in. The city I was in felt like a ghost town. The good thing was, despite Vietnam's draconian measures, that was pretty much why they haven't experienced very high rates of infection (up to the time I wrote this).



Photo by Ian Benedict Mia

I got my last Vietnamese coffee that night to calm my nerves. Such a classic.

Suffice to say, it was a short-lived backpacking trip because of the pandemic.



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The moment I arrived at NAIA, everything seemed in order. The usual health protocols and thermal scanners were in place. I also wasn't questioned as to why I was gone for a month, nor did they remind me to undergo a self-quarantine. Finally, I got home. It was March 13, two days before the Enhanced Community Quarantine or ECQ. I started my self-quarantine and I'm currently undergoing it as I write this. Fortunately, my work is remote, so nothing's changed that much in terms of my work habits or setup.

But one thing's for sure. For many backpackers like me, coming home at the time of a pandemic was an imperative choice. Although we went home only to get trapped, we basically saved our asses and prevented any potential spread among people who could be vulnerable to it.

I, however, still see so many backpackers continuing with their trip. This is very irresponsible. Though I understand they want to get more out of their trip and to see more places, traveling at this time is a no-no. Though I do have to admit, traveling in a time of coronavirus added to the novelty of my first backpacking experience.



Ian Mia graduated from De La Salle University with a double degree in psychology and business management, and currently wonders why he did that. He wears multiple hats at the moment, but you can refer to him as a digital nomad. Someday he wants to work in a 'green job' and contribute to the sustainability industry.

About The Author



Ian Benedict Mia



Ian Benedict Mia



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Thank God I Married An Introvert

March 24, 2020

BY JILL BARCELONA-SUZUKI (JAPAN)

I thought that being an extrovert is all I wanted to be. Some people say a couple (married or not) should either be both an introvert or an

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extrovert and not the exact opposites. Well, here I am trying to know what life is when you have this person in your life who simply wants to be alone but still very much productive.

I am a person who likes going out, meeting people, and exchanging views whenever I have the chance. Staying at home was never my first choice. But because of the pandemic that affects each of us, including me, we need to make immediate changes.

Now, I'm trying to focus on doing things myself (and around the house) without someone disturbing me. Concentrating was hard but I try to check on my partner who does his work tirelessly and without any interruption.

So, instead of going out and continuing to write my book at my favorite coffee shop.

I had no choice but to stay home and do my thing.

We're together in a small house here in Japan but we respect each other's time. Until this pandemic happened.



I remember when my daughter was surprised when I told her to ask her dad about something while my husband was busy editing a video. She was surprised when I told her that because she knows it's not the right time to ask her dad a question. Unfortunately, we still had to ask my husband something (I already forgot what it's about). My daughter was right. She got scolded at that moment because my husband was busy editing a video. I simply told him it was my fault and just gave him my sweetest smile.

Here I am now trying to adjust to things. This includes the way I handle my activities—not only when writing my book but even when I'm preparing our meals. I try not to depend on people who are within my reach. But of course, there's a time to talk, to discuss, to play chess. But the important thing is how we extroverts respect the introverts, especially during this time.



About The Author

Jill taught at Xavier University - Ateneo de Cagayan from the school year 2003-2004 and summer of 2004. She got married at the end of 2004, and two years later, she and her husband decided to live in Japan. She gave birth to their daughter Kei in 2007. Jill still lives in Japan with her family. She is the author of the self-published book *SF - Sad and Funny Experiences of Japanese People - YNNUF (=ENOUGH) Being SAD*.

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The End Of The World Is Boring

March 27, 2020

BY KENNEDY SERAFICA (PHILIPPINES)

No one expected that it's going to be this bad. Right now, it feels like the prelude to the end of the world.

My brother and I love zombie movies. We used to stay up all night thinking about how we could survive a zombie apocalypse if it started right there and then.

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“The apartment is a good start,” I said, as my mind reeled at the possibilities. Our unit is part of a five-story building with a huge, bolted-stainless steel main door.

“It’s defensible and we are on the second floor. So, we can throw a bed on the ground and jump out if it ever comes to that,” my brother observed while looking down at the lighted street below.

“But we can’t survive for long without food,” I retorted.

“Yup. We have to trek to Alphaland in Magallanes,” he answered. It’s 400 meters away or so from the apartment. “It has multiple floors, groceries, clothes, possible weapons, and everything else we will need.”

We would spend entire nights thinking up scenarios and how to survive them. It was exhilarating to imagine ourselves as protagonists in *The Walking Dead* movie. We would pick an overlooking hideout first. Then, we will make it defensible and start roaming to help people and maybe start a community. The end of the world was going to be so much fun.

How wrong we were.





My brother went back home a couple of years ago and stayed in the province. I remained here in Pasay. Now, with what looks like a real end of the world scenario, I find myself alone, with no one to save and no community to start.

I don't feel the thrill and moments of tension we used to dream up. The most heroic action I did (and could do) is to stay at home to keep the virus from spreading.

There are no monsters to kill.

And yet, it has infected all of us. It's everywhere. It is inside of me and in everyone I have met in the last couple of days: **FEAR**. We are all infected by fear.

I see it the mirror every morning—a kind of dread that has seeped into our hearts and embedded itself in every kind of social interaction. A simple exchange of money or a friendly chat is not what it used to be. There is a slight hesitation. A slowly growing fear as news bombast us with a heavy dose of death counts and infection rate.

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We are fighting something worse than a zombie apocalypse. Unlike in the movies, there are no safe places we can travel to where the plague has been vanquished. It has turned every home into an island and every man a prisoner as we sit tight and wait.

No one saw it coming...

Oh, I had no idea how the end of the world could be so boring.



Kennedy Serafica has been generating stories in his head for as long as he can remember. He is fascinated with religion, pop culture, history, and *Pinoy* mythologies. He spends his days consumed in research while writing a series of interconnected short stories that combine said interests.

About The Author



Kadi Serafica



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Another Birthday Spent in Quarantine

March 27, 2020

BY MARK MANALANG (PHILIPPINES)

Another day ends in quarantine. Today's news scripts are still open on my laptop. Then there's part of Chapter 7, which I promised myself I'd finish as soon as possible. I soon notice the pile of messages directed to me. Right, I forgot something important.

Happy birthday, me.

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Two years ago, I spent my birthday on an operating table. Last year, it was on quarantine with amoebiasis. This year, it's the COVID-19 scare.

The sun soon sets by my window, and with it comes the preview of the day's episode.

Another smoke, another snooze, another peek at my unfinished chapter. How exactly do I make men fight with words? How do I write a high-class character that can subtly piss people off? I type a few paragraphs and then read it.

As much as I want to improve my fiction writing while everyone's on lockdown, I have the COVID-19 pandemic, the infected and the dead, the politicians trumpeting their prowess (and stupidity), and the constant fear of a full lockdown breathing down my neck. Well, I'm a journalist, and holidays don't really exist in my book.

There's a frozen pack of spaghetti and a tub of protein powder near my desk, courtesy of my Pops who invited me to lunch. Our lunch is a double birthday celebration over spaghetti and chicken and pork *kaldereta* with cheese and brown rice, along with idle talk about the Morse code, relief goods, and Koko Pimentel. Pops is guessing





another month's extension for the quarantine. I'm tired of being cooped up at home.

I take a peek at the mini-outline I wrote to get through this new chapter in my book. A lot of talking is going to happen, plus some important scenes. But first, I need to research more on copycat murders and romantic tension.

An office memo came up.

HR has required us to report again to the office starting tomorrow. An early nightcap is in order.

Left-over *tinola*. Two episodes of *Kaguya-sama: Love is War* and *Destination Wedding*. In the months that passed, I've softened my stance on rom-coms. Is this growth?

In the moments of clarity that pass by, I find myself looking forward to what I can write. How much more do I need to improve as an author? I dreamed of excelling in crime fiction, yet, now I'm delving into romance.

Am I stretching myself thin, with journalism already eating up my psyche? Can I really pull this off? Or is this me fighting off the pangs of old age, or worse, singlehood?

I've just turned 38. I survived a lot of trials and moved forward. Can I regain my mojo, or will I be buried under the rubble of overwork and worry? There's so much for me to sift through in my head.

Either way, I could always take it step by step, right? From here, I can push further. I did so yesterday and today. And I'll do so tomorrow.

And yeah, I think Keanu Reeves should do more rom-coms.



About The Author

Mark Manalang takes pride of his career as a journalist, working for various print and broadcast companies since he graduated from the University of the Philippines Baguio. He is currently a news writer for the Philippine News Agency. Outside the journalism field, he takes up food blogging, writing fiction and poetry, and indulging in anime in his spare time. His inspirations for writing are Anthony Bourdain and Snoopy.



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Beyond the Screen: Love In The Time Of Coronavirus

March 27, 2020

BY SJ WOLF (PHILIPPINES)

The thing about pandemics is that you are never truly prepared for it—nobody knows when it would strike, or how hard. Nobody knows how powerful an unseen force could be until it begins to show its power.

My fiancé and I would often see each other mostly because of work. Sometimes he would pick me up from home and we'd go to work together. At times, we would go to the gym together before work starts. But mostly, he would drive me home and massage my head to sleep before leaving at 4 o'clock in the morning to go back to his place.

Mind you, I'm from Makati and he's from Cainta. But when the government declared a one-month lockdown, it broke my heart. It shouldn't, but it did.

***Borders and checkpoints were put up.
The government is strict with these.***

There is no way anyone could leave or enter Metro Manila.

I would be away from the people I love.

And there is nothing I could do about it.

Initially, I stayed with him and his family for a night when the announcement finally came the evening after. No worries, right? I was safe. I was with him and his family. There's shelter, food, water, and good company.

But then, back in Makati, is my mom. And she is alone.

As much as it pained me to leave, I needed to go home. I knew my mom well enough, and I knew she needed me. It left me to choose, and I chose my own family.

With a heavy heart, I booked a ride going home. With a long, warm, tight hug; a Tupperware of deliciously cooked food and a bottle of water from his parents; and a wave of goodbye from him and his beautiful family at the threshold of their home, I went on a painful two-hour ride back home.

The problem with getting used to something is that it tears you to pieces once it disappears, gets cut short, and crash lands in the middle of the desert, without consent or due preparation.

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Being a *probinsyana*, I know what “far away” is like. And I never would have imagined how far 10 miles felt like until then. But that is just a small barrier that wouldn't get in the way of what we truly have for one another.

The solution is merely simple: he has a phone. I have a phone. He has internet connection and so do I. We both have something that could keep us close, and that is through technology and social media platforms.

Oh, the joys of innovation!

We would often chat, day in and day out. At times, we would send pictures to one another, update each other on what one is doing and what one is not. Quarantine style, if I do say so myself. We try to keep each other busy, being workaholics ourselves. It's all fun!

But it's never quite the same.

You couldn't feel the warmth of someone's hand through a screen. You couldn't smell their intoxicating scent that leaves you wanting for more. You couldn't hold them close or wipe away their tears when you are miles apart. Awful isn't it?

Not quite.



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Nobody knows how powerful an unseen force could be until it begins to show its power, so I say. Lucky for me, I have hope—an invisible and yet powerful thing. Beyond the screen, is the love of my life. Beyond the screen, are people who are well and who are concerned about what's happening across the globe. Beyond the screen, there is still something to look forward to every single day.

This hope has been good for me and to those closest to me. I wish the same for everyone else.



SJ Wolf is a self-published author born and raised in the “City of Love”, Iloilo City, Philippines. The proud Ilongga currently resides in Makati City, Metro Manila, and is proud to raise the LGBTQ+ flag to the world.

About The Author

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PS: From Paolo+Sarie To Postponed+Stay Safe

March 28, 2020

TEXT, PHOTOS, AND LOGOS BY SARIE SANTIAGO
(PHILIPPINES)

To all postponed weddings, brides who dreamt of the “big day”, and couples who put so much effort into preparing for their guests, we feel you.

Today, **March 28, 2020**, was supposed to be what I would’ve called the “best day of our lives”. But then, things didn’t go our way. No one is

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winning in this time right now. It was a tough situation to navigate mentally, emotionally, and logistically.

With this bulk on our plate, thinking clearly wasn't in our vocabulary. Until the moment we decided to postpone our wedding did we feel relief and peace in our hearts and minds. Our wedding anxiety subsided. The worry of putting the health of our entire guest list in jeopardy was gone in a snap. It was the smart and only decision to make.

It is quite ironic considering it the "best day ever".

Setting aside the lockdown, imagine if we pushed through, I couldn't picture getting married with so many loved ones absent.

While we had awesome plans for today supposedly, we are just blessed and grateful that we are safe and sound. Our elders are well. Our relatives and friends are healthy. Most of all, we are with our families. That's what all our prayers are focused on right now. And for this virus to die down.

Now with all things just floating, we don't mind waiting (hope our suppliers too!). We still have no date, but we know it's going to be much sweeter. And only God knows it feels incomplete to say "I do" without my complete #bridetribe.



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On a brighter note, we have MORE time to lose weight, polish our program, and draft my vow since I haven't done it yet TBH haha.

So to all the soon-to-wed couples for this year, stay strong! We are stronger than any dates, than any "vee-rus"! We got this. We are all in this together. We pray for you and your plans ahead! Stay safe and healthy!



Sarie Santiago is a photographer based in Manila, Philippines. Her work has been featured in several exhibits in New York, Paris and Munich. She currently provide photo services for various needs like events, advertising and editorial. Travel is her happy little pill.

About The Author



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*For the
Love of
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Coffee*



#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

Family Life During The COVID-19 Pandemic

April 20, 2020

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY VINCE BUNUAN
(PHILIPPINES)

I believe we are now living in an escalating nightmare scenario akin to apocalyptic movies and anime scenarios where we must heed all of the

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safety and health precautions to survive. The number of infected and death cases worldwide due to COVID-19 is staggering, almost demoralizing, especially if you see all of the stats and numbers twice daily.

Seeing how the virus spreads—silently and quickly—it can be a challenge for anyone to fathom what the next steps are or what the future will be like. If we live in fear everyday because of the posts we read and the news we watch, it would appear that we should stay indoors and bunker-down as we anxiously wait for a vaccine to be made and distributed.

Along with keeping a productive flow to the day, as a parent, I feel the additional urgency to have deeper and longer conversations with my sons, especially my 12-year-old. The realization of our mortality looms—with the fear that once you are infected with the virus, you are quarantined or brought to the hospital where you are further isolated, with a chance that things can turn far worse.



Since my eldest son wakes up earlier to do his morning chores, we sit and have breakfast together and just have chats. We talk about TV shows or YouTube videos that he likes, his views about school, goals for the summer and near future, his fears about the pandemic, and insecurities of adolescence. We exchange stories of my childhood, our family, and how proud I am of the *kuya* he has become for his younger brother. We talk about similarities of how we are raised, and how different times are

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nowadays. I try to pass on more thoughts, ideas, and freedom to be the man he can become, trying to embrace the current situation as much as we can.

One of the new activities we have instituted during the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) is a show-and-tell activity. It involves one parent and one child. We take turns to present something that they value or have a memorable story about to the rest of the family. Then we alternate with the other parent-and-son tandem. I am reminded of some of the objects and possessions of my parents that I never knew the backstory of or why they continued to keep some of their things throughout their entire lives.

One of my sons presented a Batman figure that he had renamed to be an alternate universe Batman, complete with a set of alternative abilities and backstory. I presented my favorite running shorts that I bought because of the color and high quality, and mentioned some of the memorable races that I ran with them.

This sort of activity allows our family to see “the why”—why we chose the clothes, toys, or memorable objects. It tells a story and positive experiences. You will never know what value someone places on something until you ask and share so that the others can also appreciate and value it. Taking the time to listen, as well as share, becomes a key



family value that will pay itself forward as the boys grow and we get older.

Having two boys in this modern digital age, one of the challenges my wife and I face is finding unique ways to keep a regular schedule that does not involve too much TV, internet, or video games. We started having regular family board and card game activities such as RISK, Monopoly, Guess Who?, chess, and Spades. Oftentimes, the boys request to play these games versus watching TV or playing video games. We end up feeling closer and sharing more laughs when we can unplug from technology and other distractions.

Living an active and fit lifestyle has been something I have grown up with and something that I have been hoping to pass on to my kids. Playing sports and, more importantly, having weekly scheduled and unscheduled exercise sessions that focus on both the physical and mental well-being of everyone are important to me.

We undergo so much stress and are constantly distracted from our goals that having time for ourselves to re-center and “sweat it out” is essential.

It enables us to release the negativity and promote a happier and more positive attitude.

One of the things that we implemented with the boys is to exercise three times a week—though only our eldest can be consistent with this while our 7-year-old joins us whenever he can.

With all that being shared, sometimes, just spending a few more seconds or minutes in a tight embrace, or catching a glimpse of our loved ones in a candid moment will be the type of memories buried in our minds and added to our “happy place” is so much more fulfilling than it ever used

to be. In the past two months, we have been forced to mature faster, appreciate every moment more, and live closer to the future than waiting for the distant.

This COVID-19 pandemic has many far-reaching negative effects and further implications that will affect us and potentially generations. We have to maximize our time with those around us—our family, our friends, and our communities—to show how much we value them. We also have to try to make the lives of everyone we meet more fulfilled and appreciated.

We are given another chance to embrace life and not continue to see it just go by. I choose to make this experience as positive as it can be—to nurture, infuse, and to grow. Our innocence and vulnerability had been torn apart and it is up to us to rebuild in the present moment and help our families to be stronger and be ready for the unscripted future.



Vince Bunuan, 40, has been married for 13 years and has two boys ages 12 and 7. He is a certified Road Runners Club of America running coach, as well as a very active parent at his son's school. He is also one of the contributing authors in the book *The Crazy First Year* published in September 2019.

About The Author

Profile photo by Michael Socito

 Vince Bunuan

Mark Clint Lura is a member of the Registered Financial Planner Institute Philippines. He is very passionate about sharing Financial Literacy to everyone.

- He started investing in Mutual Funds in 2005
- He started investing in the Philippine Stock Market in 2009
- He got his certification as a Registered Financial Planner in 2014
- He became a financial advisor in 2017
- He became a self-published author in 2020



Follow and like his Facebook Page, **Race To Wellness by Mark Clint Lura, RFP**. Here, he gives information and insights about Personal Finance topics such as:

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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

Work From Home: Mic Drop

March 31, 2020

BY EARL LEONARD Y. SEBASTIAN
(PHILIPPINES)

Who would have thought that the “work from home” idea we were proposing three years ago would turn out to be the fad today? At that time, I was still working for a prestigious broadcasting network, cooperating with the news desk. From what was a regular 9-to-6 job turned out to be a rotational shifting work that covered morning, afternoon, and graveyard shift, including weekends and holidays.

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Suddenly, my life changed, including lifestyle and vacation plans. Since our work only required a television and strong internet connection, I suggested to my higher-ups that for the graveyard shift, weekends, and holidays, we could work at home. It would be safe and efficient. Their argument was this: how do they check attendance and the sensitivity of our job? Well, so be it.

A year later, in what was simply not part of the plan and would change my world forever, in a freak accident in the office, I injured my knee. I could barely feel the strength of my left knee. I was grimacing, crying in pain. It changed my plans for the holidays. What encouraged me to get better were my upcoming trips to Singapore and the US. I needed to regain my full strength.

I was lying down on my bed all day because my left knee was just operated on and in a cast. Days became weeks. I was restless and hopeless. I stayed/worked from home for a month and a half.

Fast forward to today, work from home was meant for something worse. The world is now battling an unseen enemy. This is not even Thanos we're talking about. One thing is for certain, the "Snap" and the COVID-19 pandemic wiped out significant portions of the world.



The world suddenly paused. Everyone is affected.

In the Philippines, cities would undergo Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ). Only one individual per household can go out and buy the necessities.

All I could do now is watch online masses, binge watch again shows on Netflix (especially *Crash Landing On You* and *Kingdom*), update my social media accounts, and listen while artists perform online.

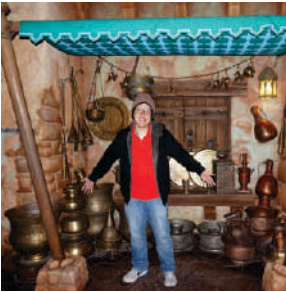
Since our company is based in Singapore, we would give updates via Zoom or Skype. I still wake up at 8:00 AM. Then by 10:00 AM, we all go online to share updates. We still talk about work and things to be done and we ask about each other's current situations. Our bosses would kid us because some of us are in our pajamas or gym attire. I think COVID-19 made me appreciate life more, outside the technology that we have. I was able to appreciate nature more just by looking at how beautiful the sky is every day.



QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 1

Way before the work from home setup was implemented, a possible four-day work week with long working hours proposal was also discussed. I guess what's supposed to be a guinea pig of an experiment has now become a work-in-progress, trial-and-error system.

I'm working from home. Mic drop!!!



About The Author

Earl Leonard Y. Sebastian finished with a Bachelor's Degree in Commerce and completed his Master's degree in Marketing Communications from the University of Santo Tomas and De La Salle University, respectively. While working in a multinational company was his ultimate dream, his career took a U-turn. He became a writer for some of the top media organizations in the Philippines.

At present, he is a PR consultant for some prestigious companies both in the Philippines and abroad and has helped with their crisis management and media planning.

If he is not writing press releases, feature articles, or love stories, he's either playing football or billiards, traveling, or going to concerts. He is among the members of the pioneer batch of the **PaperKat Books All-In Mentoring Program.**



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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

Cheat Code

March 31, 2020

BY JOHN LUKE QUINTANA (PHILIPPINES)

We've all seen the memes on Facebook. Staying home is a gamer's heaven. I used to spend 10 hours on a weekend hooked on my PlayStation. Now, I can do it every day with no one telling me when to stop and throwing responsibility out the window. Within these game worlds, you feel invincible. A true escape from the harsh reality of this contagion and the toxicity we find on social media.

We may be seeing the beginning of Wall-E's world where humans are relying on virtual reality as a form of entertainment. Yes, another Ready Player One realm is about to happen. Will that time come? It may be



inevitable if this situation does not improve.

As of this writing, I still see numerous people clamped up in groups just to do their afternoon Zumba workout or a supply run in the wet market. Safety precautions are being practiced, but social distancing seems to be the problem. Humans can't stop themselves from connecting with other humans. We need to learn how to tap the pause button.

***Yes, video games are my escape.
But now, it is a weapon against this virus.***

It keeps me at home. It keeps me from spreading the virus.

It helps flatten the curve. Hobbies that seem to be nonsensical to others may have its use after all.

Despite having an avatar in a role-playing game that grants you to respawn after being killed by a dragon, life is not a game. You can't input a cheat code (up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right, B, A, start) and expect to have 30 lives. You only have one life to live.

Now, choose your character and press start.

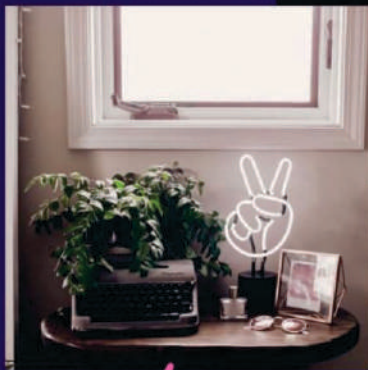


John Luke Quintana is the Creative Director for **Grafik Crowd**, **RED Entertainment**, **Village Pipol**, and **RED Sports**. Previously, he was handling the marketing activities of MyPhone, a local mobile phone brand in the Philippines. He has always been in love with writing stories.

About The Author

He is frustrated with publishing a sci-fi fantasy novel, but it looks like he has been brought to a path where he needs to write about his life first. There are a lot of people who have trouble finding themselves. He knows it is kind of self-centered to say, that if they read his stories, they (his future readers) may find his words to be relatable and inspirational.

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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

A Day That We Had Mulled Over 9 Months Ago

March 28, 2020

WORDS BY PAOLO BERNARDO
PHOTOS BY SARIE SANTIAGO (PHILIPPINES)

So, March 28, 2020. A day that we had mulled over 9 months ago. So many factors were considered, even our zodiac signs. We worked on our wedding preparations early on so that we wouldn't be cramming towards the end and will just chill early this year.

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 1

But at the beginning of the year 2020, we were welcomed with a volcano spewing gas and ash. Although our venue is 50kms away from the danger zone, it looked like the apocalypse after. The alert level kept escalating too. We had to prepare for a contingency.

Still months away from our wedding day, we were confident it'll clear up. Thankfully things subsided. Then we thought to ourselves, "Alright, we survived that." We got to enjoy a short reprieve.

***Until COVID-19. At around March,
flights were getting banned.***

Our VIPs from abroad began sending us heartbreaking news that they can't push through. At this point, we found ourselves in a legitimate pickle.





*Do we push through but sacrifice not having our
VIPs at our wedding? Or do we postpone?*

Two weeks away from the wedding, the stress levels were through the roof. My bride would tear up from the stress. I felt helpless.

When the Philippine president finally announced the lockdown of Metro Manila on the 15th of March, it was like an **ANSWERED PRAYER** for us. While watching the news, we were hoping he would put us on lockdown, and we're glad he did.

This made our decision so much easier. We have a valid reason to tell our suppliers and the burden was lifted from our shoulders.

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 1

We might not get what we have planned for, but these uncontrollable situations made us stronger and let us lift it up to Him. Surprisingly enough, we are feeling fine and would joke about how we would be getting ready by now. Until then, we will see you on our new date when we have decided, and we will have a blast! For now, let's stay home and safe!

Praying for everyone right now.



Paolo has spent most of his corporate career in the petroleum industry. In recent years, he has begun dabbling in business by starting several ventures, first with his father and brother, and another one with his fiancée Sarie. On the weekends, Paolo puts on his helmet and kneepads, then heads off to his local mountain bike trails.

About The Author



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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

The Vinyl Of My Youth

APRIL 5, 2020

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY
AURORA CASTILLO PULIDO (USA)

When I retired in mid-2019, I thought I would have more than enough time to attend to my projects at home. But between all the trips, helping put together my college alma mater's Golden Jubilee celebration back in the Philippines, and above all, trying to write a book, the to-do list has remained a to-do task.

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Then, the directive was announced: to stay home as COVID-19 starts ravaging the world. And so, the mental to-do checklist finally caught my attention. I started with the huge plastic bins of memories that made me smile and cry, and the painful decision of what to discard and keep came with it. And finally, yes, the cabinets and the closets! This was when I came face to face with the vinyl records.

My vinyl records are kept inside the cabinet of a mid-century console table. I only see them once a year or even longer for the obligatory dusting. Sometimes, well-meaning friends who love music will remove them from their jackets to lovingly caress these “plastic”, as I call them, and do the cleaning. A few years ago, I bought this modern turntable to add to the nostalgia of my youth. I wish I could say it improved my music inclination, but it did not.

I grew up in a household where there was no piano, guitar, or even ukulele. Once, my best friend in college, who was from Cebu, gave me a





brand-new guitar. I brought it home and occasionally I would hold it mostly to feel the generous gesture of the giver. Other than that, it was usually played by my visiting suitors and of my sisters' suitors.

So it was a total surprise when I saw the LPs (long playing) of my younger brother Ramon when I came to California. By default, I inherited these vinyl records when he died several years after that visit. As I was going through his LPs, I was so impressed by the magnitude of his musical taste. They ranged from Santana to Chicago, from Woodstock to Barbara to Carpenters to Julie Andrews. There were some James Brown, The Lettermen, Carol King, Stevie Wonder, James Benson, and the great Elvis. Some of the records have his name on them. Some have stain since he smoked. But most of all, it was obvious he listened to them so many times. These were his companions during those years that he was alone.

And then, it dawned on me that I have two brothers who loved music, albeit a little bit late. The other brother who lives in Texas loves Elvis Presley or, to be precise, loves singing like the artist. This shy guy would

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 1

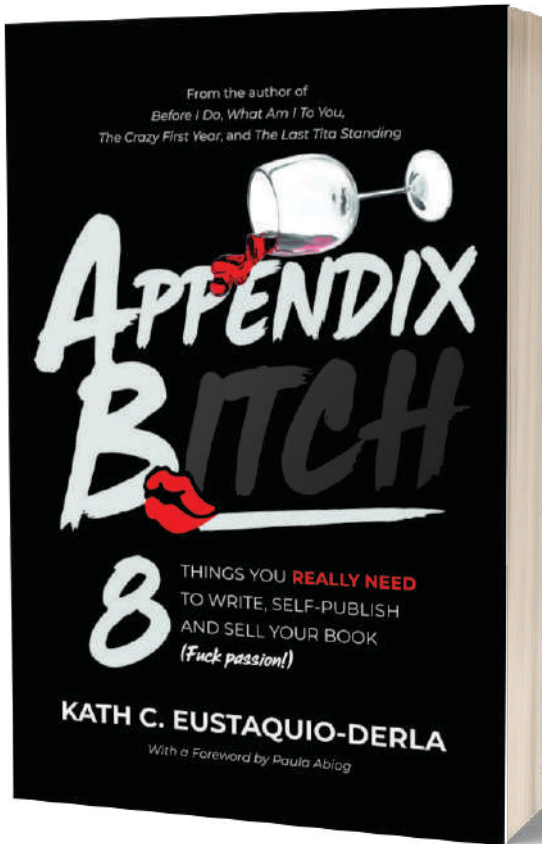
literally transform into a different person when he is in front of an audience belting out Elvis's love songs!

So when this pandemic is done and all of us will go back to our interrupted life, I will always remember that during the shelter-in-place weeks, I rediscovered my brothers and finally understood their love of music. And now I know the title of my musings should be *The Vinyl Of My Brothers' Youth*.



About The Author

Aurora Castillo Pulido was born and raised in the Philippines. After graduating from St. Paul College Manila with a degree in nursing, she migrated to the USA where she still lives near her children and grandkids. She obviously loves books, flowers, and traveling and has visited at least 30 countries and hoping to do more. This is her first try to explore the world of writing. She hopes to publish her first novel this 2020.



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- **Aurora Castillo Pulido**, US-based self-published author of *The Seamstress with the Sampaguita Flowers*



Get the ebook here:
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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

“I’m On A Break But Can’t Wait To Get Back To Normal!” And Other Illusions

MAY 12, 2020

BY LORI DUMALIGAN (PHILIPPINES)

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 1

The beginning of 2020 was a whirlwind of the madness and mundanity of college. Bombarded with sleepless nights, I felt like I haven't caught a break. I stayed out of my dorm room until 1:00 AM in offices, study areas, or workspaces before I'd fall asleep.

I spent most of my free time working so that I could earn my scholarship. I put a lot of value in my routine even though I didn't enjoy every bit of it. The few minutes that I loved out of my day were spent daydreaming, writing, or reading. Then, I surrender again to the movement.

Despite the escalating news of a pandemic, I felt relieved to slow down.

Yes, I still had a lot of schoolwork to do and I was disappointed by the daily news of the virus' onslaught of interruptions in our lives. But just like Rapunzel in the animated movie *Tangled* anticipating freedom from her tower, I came up with meals from scratch that filled my day with excitement.

I finally finished the 59-episode show that I had on hold. I read short stories about a man who interpreted maladies for a living. I also started a series of on-the-spot sketching sessions of our cat to chronicle her unbreakable spirit of tolerating us messy, restless humans stuck in limbo.



*As I held onto the hairs of my routine in a new space
far away from my dorm on a foldout bed.*

I tried to remember to recognize that I wasn't just watching numbers of cases, deaths, and recoveries increase but people losing their lives.

So, I tried to brush off my negativity and categorize my emotions instead. Let me put aside the guilt and shame of not being of a person of action who initiated projects to help others in need and the fact that I am just trying to glide my way through this haze of having free time.

Instead, I redirected my energy to helping cook food for the homeless. I focused on drawing and writing about the highlights of our days inside on post-its on the wall. I ticked schoolwork off my list. I rationalized it as this is me trying to do the best as I can in a situation I cannot control.



But why am I so focused on wondering when will my life begin? What about the people whose livelihoods simply stopped? What about those who have no security that they will have food to eat tomorrow? What happens to the ones who have no family and no shelter?

This is not a waiting game for the disruption to end once this virus glitch is fixed.

While I comforted myself with the illusion that I had a life that I could get back to after this “break,” our city is slowly being reduced to tears to mourn the lives we lose day by day.



Lori Dumaligan is a design student who enjoys reading and exploring. She wishes to design and build a tiny house and travel to Marrakech one day.

About The Author

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Keep The Fire Burning: Virtual Church Amid The COVID-19 Pandemic

APRIL 5, 2020

BY ARABELA TARRAYO (PHILIPPINES)

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 1

Pack up your old stuff, rearrange your clothes, clean the house, water the plants, recreate your passion, and reinvent your old beloved recipes. I bet you did everything listed above. Boredom strikes, doesn't it? What else have I forgotten? Oh, the most important thing to do during a crisis—cling on to God.

This may sound too absurd and a bit corny to most of the people these days, but it's a fact. Drawing closer to God is an act often neglected. When people are in a state of comfort, security, and certainty, we often forget to pray or even bid a simple "thank you". We might not notice this most of the time, but it's true.

Now, during this COVID-19 pandemic,

our church decided to replenish and restore each and everyone's faith in Jesus through a virtual church service with just one click on our phones.



We may not see each other face to face, or hold one another by the hand, but we can reach and touch everybody's heart in a one-hour live streaming video that motivates us.

In this time of trouble and uncertainty, we are being bombarded by negative news and gossips that may fill our minds with anxiety and negative thoughts. It's so good to find someone that we can hold onto—one who knows our weakness and can turn it into strength; one who will cheer us up and give us warm comfort amid frustrations; and one who is powerful and mighty enough to conquer and heal our land. That is none other than God.

It's not hard to open your heart and welcome positivity throughout your life. Keep the fire burning, keep God in your heart—always.



Arabela is a young Christian who passionately writes for the glory of the Lord—maybe that's simply how she would describe herself. Aside from being an art and writing enthusiast, music is also what gives her life.

About The Author

how to use social media for your business



SCAN ME!



#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

New Formula Of Success: Compassion + Empathy

APRIL 16, 2020

BY BENG RAGON (PHILIPPINES)
HEADER PHOTO BY NICK FEWINGS ON UNSPLASH

Have you ever been told by anyone that you cannot succeed in life because you have no ambition? Well, given our situation in the world right

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 1

now, it does not really matter because ambition is not what the world needs. What we need are compassion and empathy to help us succeed in taking care of the world.

During the Holy Week, four weeks into the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), I chose to detach myself from any source of “virus” that has eventually morphed into something more contagious, especially in the face of this ECQ, the virus called “self.” We can see and feel this invisible disease in its different forms even in this time of distress: self-interest, self-centeredness, and self-entitlement. I cannot imagine of anyone still thinking of money and control when many are hungry and homeless.

While most of us are still very lucky to keep our jobs and get paid by working from home, still, everyone at some point experiences the same restlessness and anxiety in these uncertain times. The fears and worries seem to surface from different places that make us question our readiness to face this new normal. Will I lose my job? What if I or any of my loved ones get infected? What can I do to reach out and help?



Many are taking this turn of events as a reset button to appreciate simple things at home.

but we still wake up to the sad reality that people are sick, tired, and grieving. This scenario can make us feel uninspired, confused, and unmotivated.

I myself am feeling the same fears and worries living alone and away from my family since the ECQ. I have been worried about my father who has COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) and has been in and out of the hospital for the past three years because of pneumonia and other infections. Luckily, he is doing very well at home and has been pushing himself to walk and feel better during this trying time.

I also think of my sister, a nurse in the US, who has small kids to attend to while responding to the call of duty. Currently, the US holds the highest record of confirmed COVID-19 cases with more than 500,000 infected patients as of this writing. I also share the anxiety of most people who have family members in the frontline who commit their lives to saving and serving people every day while we stay at home either bored with routine or inspired with new ideas.

Selflessness is what makes our frontline healthcare workers brave the danger that awaits them at work even if it means putting themselves at risk. They are the first to show us how compassion and empathy can make all the difference in bringing hope to the lives of many COVID-19 patients who have already recovered under their expert care.

Stories about simple acts of human kindness can somehow help alleviate the negativity this ECQ and the virus have proliferated. Individuals and groups are self-organizing to feed the poor, drive frontliners to work, and raise funds for cause-worthy projects. Kids are sending get-well-soon cards to uplift and encourage COVID-19 patients.



Companies, big and small, are offering services for free to keep more businesses in operation and support their employees. Poor families are pooling in the little resources they have so all families in the same community can share a meal together. Even the homeless and the hungry are finding ways to reach out and help.

Focusing on the good things this humbling experience is bringing to our lives.

there could be no greater source of light than allowing ourselves to still feel hopeful and inspired. We get that hope and inspiration from people who show compassion and empathy, at any given time, crisis or no crisis.

If you are still thinking of power and prestige, even as we face this appalling pandemic, realize that they are not essential. In one of my conversations with a close friend, we were trying to rationalize some people's lack of sensitivity in the face of this crisis. Some of us during better times would speak for human rights, for the good of the meek, and for fairness and equality. It is saddening how some are questioning social services for prioritizing the poorest of the poor with our taxes. If we still feel

that we are more entitled than the indigents to get our share of support from the government, think again. Understandably, we are all in need and most of us can still get by with even more or enough resources to last us a month. Many of the daily wage earners have already lost their jobs and they are struggling where to get food for their families.

There is no better time than now to practice what we preach and walk the talk. If we aspire to see change in this world, let's start by changing our ways. The COVID-19 pandemic has given us this chance. Let us not waste it. There is only one formula to succeed in our shared causes: Compassion + Empathy for others. Think selflessness.

(All expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of any organization I am connected with.)



About The Author



Beng Ragon is a journalist by profession and a bohemian at heart. She has more than ten years of cross-industry experience as creative writer, marketing professional, and content strategist. Beng loves writing and talking about passion, purpose, and process as reflected in her personal website **myboholifeph.com**, which she describes as a blog and a shop with a point of view.

Currently based in Quezon City, she takes a break from corporate work to devote more of her time and ideas collaborating for creative entrepreneurship, social advocacy, and more passion projects.

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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

Struggling Alone Amidst A Pandemic

APRIL 29, 2020

BY REAGAN A. LATUMBO (PHILIPPINES)

April 25, 2020. Five days before the second Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) ends, I decided to share what I learned and realized during this COVID-19 pandemic.

March 16, 2020 was my last day at work. I was late for about two and

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 1

a half hours when the president decided to lock down the entire Metro Manila to keep the virus from spreading.

I managed to compose myself despite the fear that I will not be able to go home after my morning shift. Luckily, I was able to do that safely and free from the transmission of the said disease.

During this pandemic, I realized that it was another battle that I need to face and survive...alone.

But, the saddest part of my life that day, and until today, was when I wrote this article. I am one of the people working in the Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) industry who suffered from a “no work, no pay” policy. And I am not even able to avail of the Work From Home arrangement of the company up to this very day.



QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 1

And now, the lockdown is extended, again, until May 15, 2020. When I saw the news, I pitied myself. But, then again, I learned and realize something.

First off, it is necessary to save something for yourself financially with or without a crisis. Why? I have been a breadwinner since my childhood years, both for my real and step-siblings. For almost three decades, I've never failed to help them, but I ended up with nothing saved in my pocket for myself.

Secondly, living alone while fighting depression and struggling with deafness is very hard. You must learn how to fight it and endure it to survive. I've been struggling with deafness since 2013 and depression for the last eight years. I even attempted suicide six times in my life. Fortunately, I survived and I must continue to survive all these.



I do not know when this crisis will end, but I promise myself to endure it, to live with it, and to survive it. If I can handle this alone in my life, other people can. Let us continue to pray for ourselves, for our family, for the government, and for all the frontliners who are risking their lives to help us.

Stay at home, so they can do their job.



About The Author

Reagan A. Latumbo is a graduate of Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English. He is a man who loves singing, a responsible breadwinner to his family, and a friendly colleague to his workmates.

Writing is his way of releasing stress and tension in his daily life. He may not be a licensed teacher or pursued his career as a teacher, but he is a man full of hope and determination. He dreams that one day, he can put up a cafe full of books to read.

*Congratulations to all
the book authors of
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Here's a BONUS ESSAY from

REAGAN A. LATUMBO

Quarantined Thoughts "most prolific" writer, so far.

"Bigyan ng jacket!"



#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

Battling The Unknown

MAY 12, 2020

BY REAGAN A. LATUMBO (PHILIPPINES)

My heart goes out to the bereaved families who lost one of their kind due to COVID-19. The widespread pandemic turned my life upside down.

For more than three decades of my life, it's my first time to see

BONUS ESSAY

families grieve for the loss of their loved ones; to hear sounds of newborn babies without their mothers; to smell the greediness of those wanting to survive only for themselves; to taste the stigma of being kicked out because you have nothing to pay for your rent; and to feel depressed because you are living alone and no one is there to cheer you up.

Whenever I go out of my pad, the fear of being infected by the novel coronavirus bothers me. The fear of losing my entire self when no one is there to help me engulfs my inner being. The fear of not seeing the dawn if my family no longer sees my existence haunts me.

Every single day, I pause and wonder if I can also find answers to the many “what ifs”.

Then, there is the word “hope” that encourages me to brighten my day, to smile, and to let bygones be bygones. The word “hope” assures me that despite this current dark side and downfall of life, I am still alive. I am still lucky to be alive.



BONUS ESSAY

Being lucky does not mean forgetting God as the center of our lives. Praying and trusting Him are our greatest weapons to win the battle of the unknown. And these words—prayer and trust—I keep in my heart and soul.

We are battling the unknown.

We must fight our fear.

We must hold a tight grip on our hope.

Our prayers must be sincere.

Let us put more faith and trust in our Almighty God.

And only then we can make the impossible possible.



About The Author

Reagan A. Latumbo is a graduate of Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English. He is a man who loves singing, a responsible breadwinner to his family, and a friendly colleague to his workmates.

Writing is his way of releasing stress and tension in his daily life. He may not be a licensed teacher or pursued his career as a teacher, but he is a man full of hope and determination. He dreams that one day, he can put up a cafe full of books to read.

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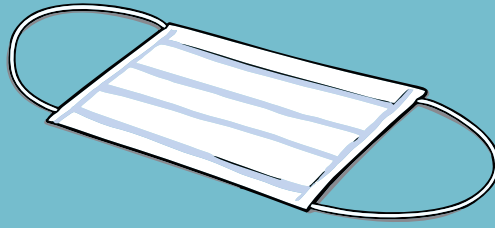
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THANK YOU FOR THE STORIES & MUSINGS

BY KATH C. EUSTAQUIO-DERLA (PUBLISHER)

When I first announced the call for entries for the **Quarantined Thoughts** project (formerly called **Coronavirus Chronicles**), I did not expect that the first story I would publish on the website would be from a stranger.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The first entry I edited and published was written by a BPO agent who lives in Batangas. I believe she saw the project in my “showbiz FB account” (the one I use for my work, hehe). I did not expect that people would embrace the idea of sharing their “thoughts and musings while in quarantine” in a public space. I thought I needed to bully my friends to submit an entry so we can publish something. I initially just wanted to publish a few stories, say 10, and one ebook.

Nearly four months into the project, we’ve edited and published nearly 50 stories from over 40 people. As I write this, I have around 20 unedited entries in my to-do list and around 20 unopened emails with Word Document attachments.

Like in many of our books in **PaperKat Books**, we offer advertisement space to help our friends with business (and side hustles) get the word out. At first, I offered the free ad space to people I know but decided to open it to the public. This is my way of helping people sell in the digital space during this fucking pandemic. Just this morning, I replied to around 50 emails for the free ad space.

I am officially drowning in *Quarantined Thoughts* submissions and free advertisement. This is on top of mentoring 40+ aspiring writers who enrolled in my mentoring program and writing my own books. Sometimes, I don’t even know why I started the whole thing.

Joke *lang*. I would do it over and over again. This is just Volume 1 of our *Quarantined Thoughts* ebooks. I am currently designing Volume 2 and accepting entries for Volumes 3, 4, and 5. As a writer, I believe that everyone has a story to tell. And as a hybrid publisher, I believe that it’s my responsibility that no story should go to waste.

YES! Volume 1 is out. I’d like to thank everyone who helped make this project a reality, especially...

My parents (Homer and Sol of HS Grafik Print) who taught me everything I need to know about printing and grit. And my mother-in-law (Eden) who sends us food and supplies. Thank you to our parents for the constant support and food.

My husband (Jet) who pushed me to change the project title from

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Coronavirus Chronicles to *Quarantined Thoughts*. I gotta admit, you got style, man!

My son (nicknamed Peanut) who provides both amusement and frustration day in and day out, haha. Ate Leah who supplies us with milk tea, hehe.

My brothers and sisters (Anne, Patrick, Ding, Stef, Austin, Ate Anne, and Kuya VJ) for the baked goodies, free health checks, stories, and support.

Ramen Group and Zoombies for the weekend Zoom calls and “power walks”.

My circle of friends and carefully chosen relatives who are always present in the form of ads, likes, shares, and comments in every book we produce.

My mentees (aka “boldies”) who not only help share this project but also submit their own musings. Thank you also for interviewing me on your own online shows.

And to every person I met (book authors and advertisers) through this project. **THANK YOU for trusting me with your stories.**

It may sometimes go unwritten, but I always thank God for giving me the gift of words (and the gift of gab) so I can help others write, self-publish, and sell their books.



Cheers,

Kath

Founder and CEO, **PaperKat Books**
COO (Child of Owner), **HS Grafik Print**

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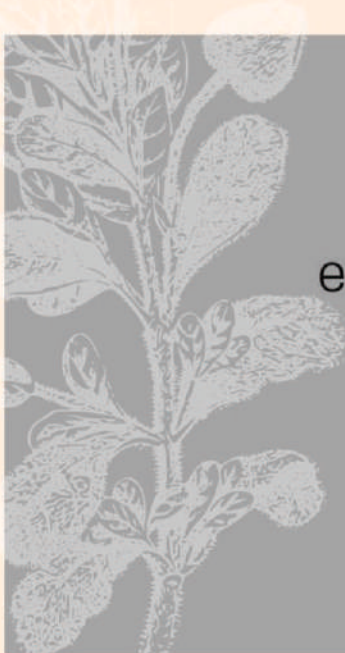
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Photo by Natalie Donato

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has been delayed for far too long.*

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Limited slots available because Kath is very hands-on.



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ABOUT THE PUBLISHER



Kath believes that anyone can write a book. But you need a plan. Fuck passion.

Kath C. Eustaquio-Derla is a registered author, editor, layout artist, book designer, book printer, and book publisher with the National Book Development Board - Philippines. She wears many hats but her favorite is being the COO (child of owner, #truestory) of her family's design-print-publish business HS Grafik Print with nearly 40 years of industry experience.

As a second-generation printer, Kath founded and heads PaperKat Books, the self-publishing arm that offers a writing and mentoring program for aspiring book authors.

She won the 2018 Best Editor (English Category) and Best Printing Service during the *Gawad Parangal Sa Mundo Ng Literatura Awards* of Penmasters Administration. Kath is also named Marketing in Asia's 70 Rising Personalities On LinkedIn

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

Philippines, Writing Hacks Academy's Top 35 Filipino Coaches Aspiring Writers And Entrepreneurs Should Follow In 2021, and VB Consulting and Connected Women's 100 Most Influential Filipino Women on LinkedIn (2021).

Kath is the founder and editor-in-chief of **PaperKatalogue, The Magazine**, the first online and social media magazine for and by indie authors. She also founded and heads **Story Factory**, a long-term partnership project that allows non-industry writers to pitch their storylines and/or concepts to producers and directors for film and/or TV adaptations.

Moreover, she is a personal branding and self-publishing speaker. She offers free and paid talks and webinars about self-publishing as well as intensive book writing workshops.

Her mission is to prove that anyone can write and self-publish a book. Her vision is to elevate the self-publishing industry in the Philippines by creating well-edited and beautifully-designed books by Filipino authors wherever they are in the world.



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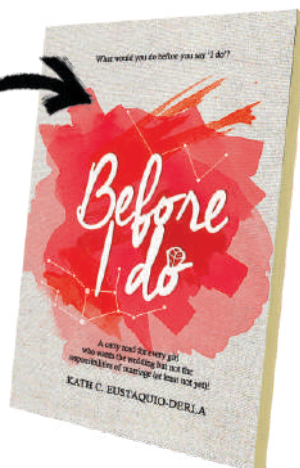
are you

-  Single
-  In a relationship
-  Engaged
-  Enraged
-  Married
-  In denial
-  In between
-  Friendzoned

Regardless of your relationship and Facebook status, this is a must-read!

Before I Do is a hilarious, catty, and heart-breaking read for every Filipina who wants the whole wedding shebang but not the **gulp** responsibilities of marriage.

Well, at least not yet.
#BeforeIDo



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AUTHORS STORIES

They say that every 100 years or so, nature throws humans a curveball in the form of a pandemic. The effects, challenges, and changes may not be the same, still, a pandemic affects us all. But soon, everything we are experiencing will be part of history.

The **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)** has not only slowed us down, but also changed the way we work, live, and plan for the future. Not only for the duration of the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), Modified ECQ, or General Community Quarantine (GCQ), but for a very long time.

The **Quarantined Thoughts** book project (formerly called Coronavirus Chronicles) was created to give people something to do at home during the ECQ in March 2020. Our goal is to encourage everyone to chronicle life during a pandemic and help process thoughts and feelings through writing.



**Each of us has stories that deserve to be told.
This is one of the many volumes.**

WITH STORIES FROM

Kath C. Eustaquio-Derla (PH) | Kim Corollo (PH) | John Vincent Parungao Agbunag (PH) | Jenna Sto Tomas – Zantua (Panama) | Ian Benedict Mia (PH)
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