

Life Stories And Musings During A Pandemic

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS

VOLUME 2

From the team that brought you
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KATH C. EUSTAQUIO-DERLA,
PUBLISHER



2020

SUCKS!

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

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DEDICATION

This book is for anyone 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 2

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First of all, the **Quarantined Thoughts** ebook project (formerly called the Coronavirus Chronicles) is a pro bono project. Anyone can join—as an author or an advertiser—for free. We edit, design, publish the essays on the website and in an ebook format, and distribute it for free on **Yumpu**.

Our initial goal is to encourage people to write down their thoughts and/or chronicle life during a pandemic. And of course, give them a taste of what being a self-published author is like.

DISCLAIMER

In August, we put Quarantined Thoughts Volume 1 on Amazon. The sales from this platform will be divided among the authors per volume. Each author can donate their royalties to the ABS-CBN *Pantawid ng Pag-ibig*, a program that helps Filipinos who are greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Or they can choose whatever charity they want.

You can read the full version for free on Yumpu and share it with your family and friends. You can also get the paid version on Amazon and help us raise funds. Whichever you choose, we request that you share the word with your friends and family and encourage them to join our succeeding volumes.

I believe that we all have stories to share. And our team can help you bring those stories and thoughts out there.

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YOU WILL NEVER HAVE THIS MUCH "FREE" TIME

SO CONSIDER THIS YOUR **WAKE-UP** CALL

Sometime in July 2020, I accidentally poured brewed coffee on my laptop. It was one of those WHAT THE FUCK moments that should have turned me into a rage machine even though it was my fault entirely. My husband's been telling me not to place my ceramic coffee cups near my laptop so I can avoid this specific type of accident.

But I was eerily calm.

Sure, I screamed when I saw my heavily saturated laptop

INTRODUCTION

keyboard and grabbed the nearest cotton rag to wipe down the coffee (I think I grabbed my toddler son's *sando* from the laundry basket). But after that, I was calm. Inside, I felt calm, which was weird given that my entire livelihood is dependent on that laptop and all my publishing files—including the **Quarantined Thoughts** files—are saved on the laptop's hard drive.

I'd like to think it comes with age. Normally, my younger self would blame the stupid coffee. And the stupid cup. Such level of maturity, right? HAHA. Maybe it was because of the shared post I recently read on Facebook—the one that says you shouldn't react so strongly to these types of accidents because, hello, *natapon na, ano pa magagawa ko*. Reacting so negatively would just lead to unnecessary stress.

I figured, okay, so the laptop's drenched in coffee. The next step is to dry the entire thing, backup the files, and bring it to the service center. That's exactly what we did, *buti nalang* we were on General Community Quarantine at that time and the malls were open.

For the next two weeks, I used my old laptop so I can still edit manuscripts. When the repair and replacement of the keyboard took another week, we installed my so-called holy trinity of design software (Adobe Photoshop, CorelDRAW, and Corel PHOTO-PAINT) in the old laptop and we published **Quarantined Thoughts Volume 1**. Perhaps I was calm because I knew I had a backup plan (a backup laptop) and I had money so I didn't need to worry about





paying for the repair and replacement of parts. If circumstances were different (or *lahat ng files ko hindi na na-recover*), it would have sent me on a tailspin.

I was reminded that many people couldn't afford to be calm in a pandemic world—those who earn minimum wage, those who need to work daily to feed their families, our frontliners who risk going out every day to keep services available—especially the healthcare workers who deal with death and recoveries every single day. Thinking about all these make my laptop problem pale in comparison.

So, that laptop-incident was a wake-up call for me—to step on the gas pedal and hasten the timeline of my own projects. After launching *Quarantined Thoughts Volume 1* free on Yumpu, we started selling it on Amazon. The proceeds will be divided among the authors per volume and they can decide to donate their royalties to the ABS-CBN *Pantawid ng Pag-ibig* program or any charitable organization of their choice. This way, our Amazon sales can help families who are greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also launched some of the books of my mentees. I became more active in online webinars and interviews to encourage more people to write their books and not delay plans. Looking at the inquiries we get in PaperKat Books, people are starting to realize that they should write their books during the quarantine. For some, it took a pandemic to realize a dream.

INTRODUCTION

I said yes to joint pro bono projects. I sponsored the school supplies of the children of my son's nanny like I do every year. I also offered three aspiring writers free mentoring under a scholarship program. And the boomerang effect of generosity is so surprising. I wasn't expecting anything in return, but the good karma came in the form of new projects.

What I want to pinpoint is this: every now and then, the universe will give you a wake-up call. Before the laptop-coffee incident, I sort of slacked off, thinking I had all the time to do the projects. When I was forced to use the old laptop, I felt bad for all the hours I wasted watching *Raffy Tulfo in Action* on YouTube. I told myself that when I get the new laptop back, I will fucking perform like a badass and get all these projects done.

Today, my new laptop is back but the DEL, CTRL, and F1 buttons are not working, as well as the arrow keys. Like that would stop me. I bought a fucking laptop stand on Lazada, plugged in a separate keyboard, and turned our dresser into a coffee corner so I won't accidentally drench my laptop again. The repair and replacement can wait, I don't want to risk going out at a time like this.

And for those who are curious, I still watch *Raffy Tulfo in Action*, but only when I'm doing design work. I listen to it like a podcast of some sort. At least, this way, I don't waste time.



INTRODUCTION

If you're reading this Introduction during the COVID-19 pandemic, think of it as a wake-up call. Sure, we all have 24 hours in one day. We may not be on the same boats, but we are still traversing the same ocean of frustration because of the pandemic.

Remember that what you do during the quarantine will determine what your life will be like post-COVID-19. If you have an online job and you're slacking off; if you have an internet connection and you only use it for Tik Tok; and if you're spending all your waking hours watching Netflix instead of enrolling in discounted online courses to improve your skillset, you only have yourself to blame if you come out of this pandemic poorer before the lockdown.

We still have the power to choose what to make of this time.

And I hope you choose to rock it.



Cheers,

Kath

Founder and CEO, **PaperKat Books**
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Watch Kath's interview with *Our Awesome Planet!*



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I Held Out For 40 Days... Then I Freaked Out

April 23, 2020

BY KATH C. EUSTAQUIO-DERLA (PHILIPPINES)

Yesterday, I felt depressed for the first time. Clearly, I'm not a doctor and I've never seen a psychiatrist or psychologist but I've never felt this kind of helplessness before. And everyone who knows me would attest that I'm the kind of person who can break down a brick wall, not literally, of course.



Yesterday, I felt a different kind of helplessness—the kind that stuck me to my “boss chair”, slumping, hands clasped and resting on my tummy, and about to cry my eyes out. If I were to describe it, the helplessness felt like a huge boulder was on top of me, weighing me down on my “boss chair.” And nothing I can do can get me out of that spot. The sensation lasted about 30 minutes.

I called my husband, who was working from home in the living room. I asked him to sit with me and told him that I was probably feeling depression for the first time. And I asked him to listen to me.

I felt the sensation after reading this opinion piece published on Inquirer.net. The title was *Into the post-COVID-19 future* and it was written by a 28-year-old philosophy student. I saw the post from a fellow mother’s Facebook wall. She posted a warning that the article was depressing.

Still, I purged ahead. I was confident that the article would not affect me because just that morning, I worked out at home, swapped “new business venture” to-dos with my husband on our balcony overlooking Metro Manila. We have a home, food on the table, the internet, our family is safe, and we are all okay. But my God, that article moved me in such a way that I couldn’t move after reading it.

As the title suggests, the article talked about the post-COVID-19 future. **The irony is that there’s no future after it (according to the writer) because there’s no going back to the pre-COVID-19 life.** And it’s true. No matter how we sugar coat this and stay optimistic, COVID-19 will change the world forever and life as we know it. The effects—physical, psychological, mental, financial, and emotional—linger on long after the lockdown, ECQ, and whatever you call it are lifted.



We can't just go back to attending big events and not wonder if anyone's asymptomatic. We can't blame countries for imposing stricter travel rules (even visas) just when the world is becoming smaller through tourism and overseas work opportunities. We can't go back to looking at those **tourists/workers** and not feel the burning (but understandable) desire to punch them in the face and wish they get deported because this problem started with them and their government. At this point, I don't care about being called a racist because it is their fault!

And the saddest of all is this: there's no getting back the time we lost not being able to see our immediate family, friends, and people we love and care about for almost two months because of the ECQ. **Is it just me? I just feel like a lot had been taken from my life, not just time.** I miss our regular family dinners every weekend, my routine catch-up with friends, my monthly meet-up with my mentees, and just spending time face-to-face, side-by-side with the people I care about. Some people would probably say, "Hey, that's just two months" but for me, it feels longer. I feel like I aged 10 years in the past two months.

The most depressing part of the article is this: the writer talked about that my generation *“cannot ever dream for our children what our parents dreamed and achieved for us—a little wealth, good education, some status. And it would be a mistake to even dare so: If there is anything we should realize now during community quarantine, it’s that those will not matter in the future anymore. We are not just entering a new normal. We are saying hello to doom.”*

In a previous, unpublished long rant, I wrote that I feel like I’m doing a big injustice to my son just by staying in this country and its politics and third-world mindset. And that line above was probably the final push that shoved me down the depression rabbit hole. I feel sad because my son, who’s currently **#2years5months** old will never experience the beauty of a pre-COVID-19 world. From here on, the roads he would travel will be rougher, less free, and more challenging.

Maybe it’s the collective effect of nearly two months of being stuck at home because of the ECQ; news about the government’s mishandling and lack of proper risk management of COVID-19 and the funds for the poor; the protests in the US (**Dumb Ways To Die** style) and the US government’s failure to save the world like in the movies; thinking of what kind of future I can build for my son, and how we all can’t go back to a pre-COVID-19 life. When will a vaccine be available? Will it be free? How soon can we get that vaccine? Is it effective? All these coupled with the shocking news of my cousin Onin’s stroke and death, thoughts of my own mortality, and how we all have limited time. It is just so depressing.

I shared all these with my husband and later with my closest friends. My husband told me that the pandemic will be over soon. I told him today we’re okay because we have savings, what if we run



out of money? He reminded me of the projects we're building and told me to focus my energy on those. Later on, my friends said that these are all valid feelings and we added this topic in our weekly Zoomies sessions (where we rant, swap stories, reminisce, and drink at home via Zoom). A friend told me that I held out for 40 days. Good for me. She freaked out at the start of the ECQ.

In the group chat where I shared my thoughts, my husband said that this is what happens when we run out of alcohol. The liquor ban is infuriating. Good thing we managed to score some alcoholic beverages from our neighbors in the condo community even if we pay a fortune for it.

Last night, I got to chat with one of my husband's *ka-barkada* about the depressing situation. Like us, they are a young family of three. And he said, "I don't watch the news *na*. Too depressing. I just stick to what I see. I have a very fat baby and a beautiful wife. That what keeps me sane."

And that's what I'll do starting today. I will focus on my family, my friends, the relatives and people I care about, and the projects I'm working on. Sounds selfish? Well, at a time when my mental

health is starting to suffer, I choose self-preservation. I need to stay healthy, safe, and sane for my family.

The depressing sensation only lasted 30 minutes and yesterday, I did nothing but watch Netflix, knit (as my meditation), and drink. Today, I'm okay. I'm back on my desk here in our balcony, writing, editing, designing, plotting while overlooking Metro Manila.

In the past two weeks, I've become addicted to Suntory Strong Zero. I might come out of this pandemic an alcoholic.

Send booze.



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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NOT YOUR TYPICAL LECHON BELLY

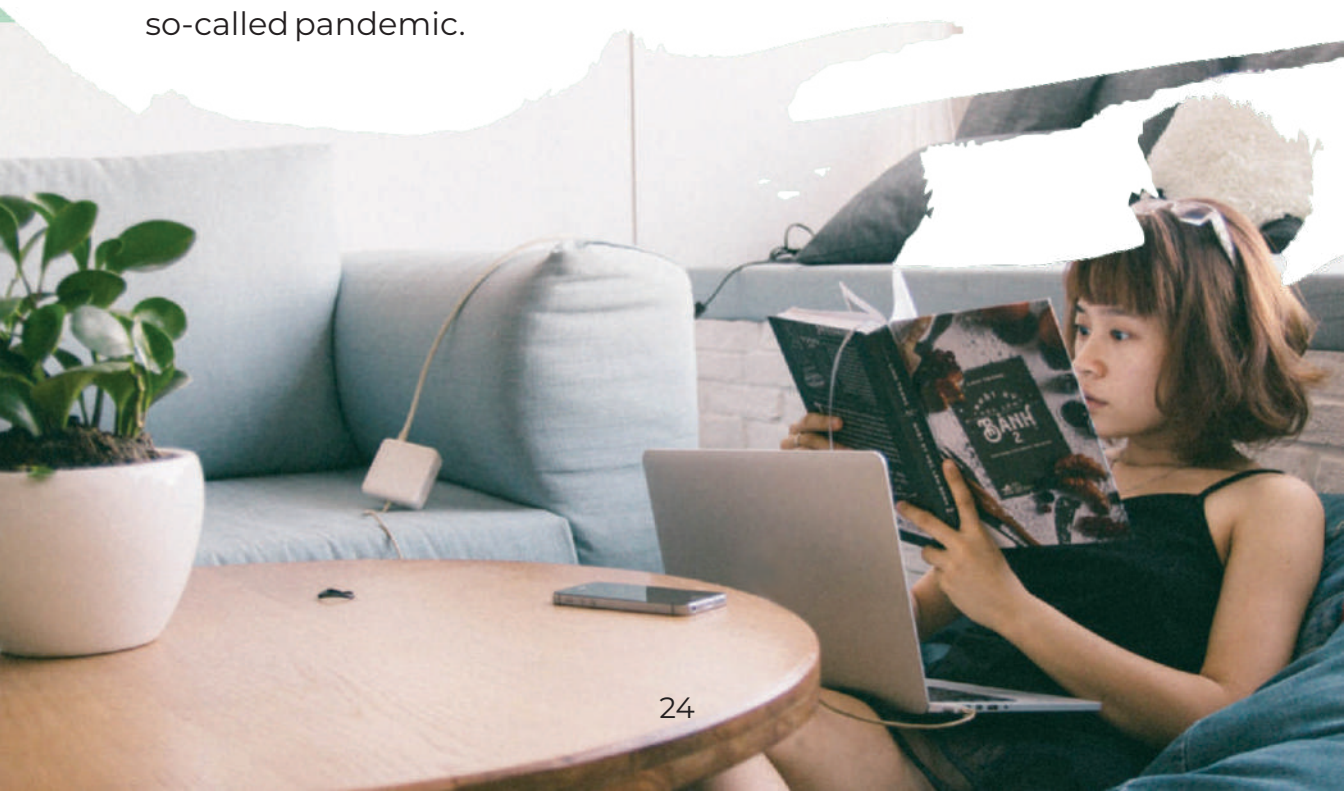


Pandemic Is Academic

March 27, 2020

BY JILL BARCELONA-SUZUKI (JAPAN)

In this rare time, you can learn things you haven't learned before, similar to how you learned things while in school. You can either be a student or a teacher—both sides of the brain are learning, getting and absorbing new information. This could be a time when we want something new, we want to do something productive, and see the good side of things while experiencing this so-called pandemic.





We know that panic buying gives more pressure to this situation. We were told to only get the essentials. We've heard that we only need to supply ourselves or our family for a week or two. But when we arrive at the supermarkets and we only see those two bottles of disinfectant, we probably end up getting the two bottles and pretend we are not in that "panic buying mode."

We don't even care what those words exactly mean. But during this time, since we have more time to do a handful of things for ourselves, we're able to check some words that exist in this time, connect them with other words, check the origin and history, and so much more. It's always good to learn something new every day.

But for me, since the word "pandemic" itself is already negative. Given the news that we see every day from the Philippines, I'm still hopeful that the word will help people see the good side of things. One of which is that we get to know ourselves more, the things we want for ourselves and for the people who are both near and far from us.



 SFJBS2020

About The Author

Jill taught at Xavier University - Ateneo de Cagayan from the school year 2003-2004 and the 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*.



Watch Jill's interview
with *Our Awesome Planet!*





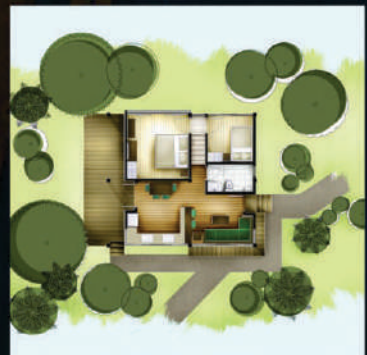
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I'm Always Right Where I'm Supposed To Be

April 29, 2020

BY KRISHNA LOU AYUNGAO (PHILIPPINES/USA)

I REALLY miss my husband. And that's an understatement. I mean, he's 8,000 miles away, on the other side of the world, and things are the opposite of how they should have gone.



I left Los Angeles in February to finally attend my immigrant visa interview here in Manila, which we have waited for a year to process. There are two ways to work on your green card—one where you get to stay with your spouse and one where you need to wait and get interviewed in your home country.

We chose the latter since it's supposed to be a faster and cheaper option. But not only did we spend thousands of dollars on flights just to be together, but I also got detained once. And now, Trump put an indefinite halt to immigration.

Great. Just our luck.

These are times when I really struggle to believe that I'm always right where I'm supposed to be.

And to be honest, most of my life has felt like I'm at the wrong place at the wrong time with all the wrong people. But I always come back to reframing and believing that maybe there's the reason why we're back to our old ways of falling asleep over Facebook Messenger, talking about what we would do to each other when this is all over, and missing out on all the cuddles. Oh my God, the cuddles. His arms are my place of refuge and would have been the best place to be in the middle of ANY pandemic.

It all just feels so...unfair.

But then again, I may have actually asked for this. The deepest parts of me knew I have been struggling for months about giving up this identity of being a Filipino. I have talked for hours about this discomfort of renouncing my citizenship.

While most people wait for years just to have a better life in the US, I never really wanted to become an American. You know, aside from getting to travel without stupid visas—but that's it. Shallow AF. And while I grew up jumping from one country to another, culturally torn and never feeling fully Filipina nor fully



American either, my love for the Philippines runs deep. And this bitch of a pandemic has helped me answer the questions that had been looming over my identity like Peter Pan's shadow.

I answered questions such as:

Am I ready to leave? No. I really want to stay. But my husband and I both know that I'm the one who's capable of this switch.

Would I really die for this country? Initially, I said yes. But the way the government has been acting lately like they'd be willing to kill you instead of protecting you (at least during the first few weeks of the quarantine), I think I'd rather give back in other ways.

Does denouncing my citizenship equal leaving behind this part of my identity? I hope not. I guess I won't find out 'til I get there. It's not just gender identity that's fluid—identity itself is fluid. I'm probably going to be a different person later down the road either way.

How do I learn to love and care for this new country that will be embracing me? To be honest, I have no idea. I have no ounce of care. But maybe I feel so strongly about the Philippines because



of the 20-something years it had cared for me and helped me become who I am. It's biased and unfair to even feel this way towards a place that will be replacing that care.

Why the fuck am I making a big deal out of this??? Because who the fuck am I if I'm no longer who I always thought I was?

In the end, my heart and my identity chose to compromise. My heart had already decided to quit college, get married secretly, and ultimately bridge the gap between me and the love of my life. And my identity only asked my heart to break a little bit and leave behind a piece of it where it had always belonged.

It's funny how I send postcards to my husband whenever I travel saying, "You will always be my home." While also always blurting out during arguments that "I want to go home" every time I feel homesick and alone. Because maybe that is the way things are supposed to be. Maybe the people who say that home is where the

heart is has never traveled far or loved two things at the same time.

And maybe that's why I want to believe that I'm always where I'm supposed to be. Because that's a better place to land than being "home" but never really feeling like it.



About The Author

Krishna helps freelancers and office-based employees transition into stable full-time corporate remote jobs. She is a remote career coach at **Successful Remote Workers** and an online business strategist at **Krishna Lou**.



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Successful Remote Workers



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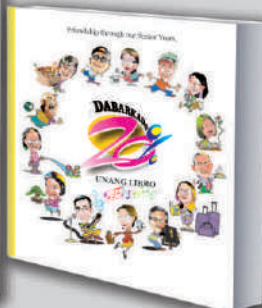
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The Shredder... My Best Friend Or My Foe

APRIL 16, 2020

BY AURORA CASTILLO PULIDO (USA)

It has been several weeks since our President declared the Shelter-In-Place order due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I have done my part as a responsible citizen by dramatically reducing my errands, avoiding going to two favorite boba or milk tea places that was still doing take-out orders, and cleaning my house again and again to while away my time.

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 2

But there is one task I could not bring myself to tackle. Even during normal times, I have found creative ways to avoid it, finding every justification why it was not a priority during my days off when I was still working. The result was the accumulation of boxes and boxes of papers to be shredded—some inside the cabinets, some are under the beds, and some are outside in the patio covered with used shower curtains. And of course, a few boxes are staring at me in my room, lest I completely forget.

I have had several shredders before this one, different brands, big and small, one more efficient than the other. They do the same job and they have the same problems! Papers get stuck, the machine will stop in the middle of shredding, they give the same wheezing sound, probably saying they are tired or want to rest. And there I am, wishing I had the industrial, efficient, and big shredder we had at our office that was always so reliable! But of course, since I am a responsible employee, I would never use it for “non-official business”, especially since we had to swipe our ID each time we use it and our name would be recorded, to be resurrected I am sure if supervisors feel an employee is overusing it.





That is why I dread this shredding business. But now that I have more time to do this, I still feel my hesitancy. Why do I have so much aversion to getting rid of these papers? They are only papers, right? Come to think of it, the primary reason is not the act of shredding. It is really giving up proofs of my life, my successes and my failures, my love life, and my professional life, my being a mother and grandmother, my businesses and my adventures, my travels, and my health challenges. It is giving up a part of me, the fiber of my being, the inner core of me. This is the reason for my postponing the final act of saying goodbye to so many items that define me. It is a very difficult task indeed...

So I will not force the issue. Let it come naturally to me one day when I will do it willingly, with tears, I am sure, and laughter, I hope. I would have those mixed feelings when I would shred the first income tax I filed with the help of an accountant with the excitement of getting a refund; the first job offer as an RN in California; the first paycheck with so big a deduction that I thought there was a mistake; the first bank statement I got with barely any

amount saved; the payment for a month-long stay in an apartment followed by the first mortgage payment; and the several credit card offers that meant “I have arrived”. These were proof that my credit score is starting to build up, the real meaning though is that I owe more!

There are airline tickets and boarding passes, as well as store and restaurant receipts from several parts of the world. There are prescriptions and results of medical procedures, both good and not so good. There are receipts of expensive private schools back home and letters from PTA from the public schools here in America.

All these papers to get rid of are proof that I am a normal human being, not rich, not poor. I am the average citizen of the world with a fair share of glory and happiness, and pain and heartaches.

So with all these tools surrounding me, I will survive this pandemic and my family will too because they have been exposed to my resilience and my faith in my Creator and the human race.

So, let the shredder remain at the corner of the condominium hidden in view.





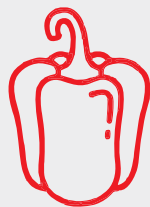
About The Author

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.



You can read Aurora's essay *The Vinyl Of My Youth* in Quarantined Thoughts Volume 1.

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How I Help My Partner Who Lost His Cruise Ship Job Because Of The COVID-19 Pandemic

July 27, 2020

BY KAYE ANGELYAH PINGOL (PHILIPPINES)

One of the biggest challenges that I faced during this pandemic is *habang nagluluksa pa ako sa pagkamatay ng mama ko, marami din akong regrets. Tapos first time pa mag-seaman ng partner ko napauwi siya kaagad dahil apektado ang business ng cruise ships sa COVID-19 pandemic.*

We don't have much savings. We went back to zero, that's why we thought of risking whatever money we have left to start a business. We did everything. I started with online reselling of whatever items I can sell. *Share dito, share doon ng mga paninda ng friend ko. Kumikita ako ng PHP120 kapag may orders ako dahil PHP10 to PHP15 lang ang patong ko sa mga items.*

Madalas pinanghihinaan ako ng loob kasi wala ako masyadong friends kahit sa Facebook na gusto umorder ng items. Also, there are many resellers already. It's so hard to earn a living.

After trying online reselling, we tried to pre-order and sell *sisig* and *putok batok*. There are many people who ordered from us but *dumating yung time na* we had to stop because my father-in-law's partner went back to the house to cook food for their own food business. *Nawalan kami ng puwesto para sa pagluluto.*





That's why we gambled whatever money we have left to start the meat shop business.

But on the third day, *nalulugi na kami*. Maybe we were overwhelmed, and we didn't know how to manage the business well. That's when my partner and I decided to cook the remaining meat from the meat shop business and sell the cooked food online and in front of our house.

While we were planning the food selling business, my partner and I often fought just because we couldn't agree on the size of the stove to buy. We didn't speak to each other for almost four days just because of that.

During those four days, my partner sold the cooked food online and in front of our home with the help of his cousin's partner, Ricoh, who also did the cooking. When we finally talked to each other, he decided that I will be "hands off" in the business and focus on our two boys as a full-time housewife. He decided that he will handle all the business operations himself.

At first, I disagreed because I really love cooking. But I also realized that I need to focus on our kids. So far, sold out *kami lagi!*

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 2

I want to share our story because some of my partner's relatives, even some of my friends and people I know, do not believe in me. Not all of them like me. They think I don't support my partner. And it hurts that they think that way. I decided to share this story in the Quarantined Thoughts ebook because I hope that, maybe, they will also believe in my capabilities even just a little.

I want to share my story in this ebook project because I know that many can relate. You see, my partner lost his cruise ship job because of the COVID-19 pandemic. All the money he had left from his job we used as capital to start the meat shop business. Unfortunately, *nalugi kami*. We lost almost PHP18,000 but here we are, fighting this pandemic together even if, sometimes, we also fight with each other.

Noong nalugi kami, I thought of creating a Facebook page and call it **"All About Pork"**. Sadly, almost all my partner's relatives *walang ka-amor amor sa mga ginagawa kong tulong*. They only support my partner because they are related by blood. *Pero ako? Out ako sa suportang binibigay nila.*



To be honest, I know that not all of them like me. *Marami silang sinasabi at iniisip* against me. *Pero pinapatunayan ko naman na hindi lahat ng mga iniisip nila tungkol sa akin ay totoo. Mahirap dahil karamihan sa kanila hindi bilib sa akin.*

But you see, no matter what is happening now, I keep the faith because I believe *na kahit maraming tao na nagda-down saiyo sa gitna ng pandemya, gumagawa ka pa rin ng paraan para mabuhay nang maayos at mabuhay ang pamilya mo sa maliit na kinikita mo.* Life goes on even if there are many struggles, even if there are many haters, even if some of the haters are actually relatives of your partner.

There are so many people I know—some even became friends—who bullied me. But I don't fight back because I choose to just cherish the good memories and think of the good things they did for me. I try to always remain calm *kahit na inaaway na ako.*

What I learned is to always do good, even if some people are not good to you. I learned to always be thoughtful and generous, to be humble and share my blessings. I'm not a perfect person.



All I want is for some people to appreciate me, even through the little things that I do. I hope that soon, people will see that, especially those who don't have faith in me.

I will always choose to forgive and do good to other people, even if they bring me down. I know that God and my mother in heaven will never abandon me. I know that my sister will also never stop supporting me and what I do in life.

Even if my partner and I always argue, we will not stop fighting this pandemic together. Even if there are only a few people who buy from our store, our goal is to never stop and always take risks in business so we can provide for our family.

I hope you like my quarantine story.



MARKO



The Butcher Shop



About The Author

Kaye Angelyah Pingol owns and operates All About Pork by Marko The Butcher Shop with her partner. You can order cooked meat dishes from them via Facebook.



ALL ABOUT PORK

By MARKO the Butcher SHOP.

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How COVID-19 Changed My Mindset

June 20, 2020

BY ARA D. LAROSA (PHILIPPINES)

When 2020 started, I already have an idea of how my whole year would be like. January would be colorful because of my Japan trip. February to October would be my busy months due to my preparation for the Bar examination and, of course, November—the Bar exam proper—where I expect myself to be focused solely on doing the right things to achieve my goal of becoming a lawyer.

And December—the month of celebration and relaxation with my family.

What I expected for January really happened. I had so many wonderful memories from my Japan trip. I never thought that I could be there for a week with my friends. My happiness was, indeed, indescribable. So, when I returned to the Philippines, I was recharged and completely ready for the second semester in Law School.

Everything was going wonderfully until March came. We were supposed to have our mid-term exams but our classes were postponed. Finally, a lockdown was announced due to COVID-19.

I thought it was just for a short period and that the number of infected individuals would not increase. But as the days went by, the numbers kept increasing. I became more scared as our country had been on the top of the list among Southeast Asian countries with the most COVID-19 infections.





I was so afraid, especially for my kids. My 6-year-old daughter could have graduated from pre-school but the ceremony did not happen due to the pandemic. I was quite sad because I always keep my children's milestones documented, but we just resorted to taking photos at home with her graduation dress. She also learned how to pray and would often do so with her younger brother. I was even glad that they were able to make get well soon cards for COVID-19 patients.

Even though there were no COVID-19 cases in our place last March and April, our family always make sure to follow the safety precautions required. But as the lockdown continues, I became more paranoid, especially when I feel something unusual in my body or if anyone else at home feels something uncommon. I would always be anxious for my husband who would go out every day to work. I had some sleepless nights because of overthinking.

But I realized that I should not dwell on loneliness and should distract myself. I choose to watch funny videos online and comedy movies. I also make sure to attend regular online mass or

recollection. More importantly, I have fun bonding with my kids by doing some artwork projects and playing with them.

I engaged myself more on making snacks or desserts. I also read a lot of books that were stored inside my shelf for years. Reading is my form of relaxation as well. I joined a lot of contests online. We joined a family photo contest about how our family is coping up in a pandemic, and we won! Not only that, but I also joined a regional flash fiction contest here in Bicol. Fortunately, out of the 587 entries, my two entries were included in the 100 best stories that will be published. I could say that, even though in this time of crisis, we can still shine and share our talents with everyone.

Of course, I have been praying to God to strengthen me more in studying for the Bar exam. I made my reviewer in the form of a novel. I was also happy when our professors gave us activities and exams via e-mail. I became fond of attending online lectures in different bar subjects. I also gained new friends online who helped me with my studies.

Because of this pandemic, the Bar exam is moved to 2021. At first, I was quite disappointed because I had already set the whole plan for it, but I think this is God's way of giving me more time to prepare for the exams.

COVID-19 has brought about a lot of changes in my life. Before, I would always wish to travel back in time to change some decisions I made, especially in my career path. I wished that I could have returned to college and choose a course that would give me more advantage in law school. I said that because if I did, then I could have already passed the Bar exams before.

I also wanted to fix my method of looking for a job. I thought that if I did well before, I could have been earning a high salary now and be in an executive position in any company or agency. I was



filled with regrets back then. I would call myself an idiot for not having a permanent and high-paying job. But surprisingly, this pandemic removed such kind of negativity and I am now in a state of healing and I am gradually forgiving myself.

I realized that in one click, my job could be gone because of this pandemic. I find myself resolving to loosen up yet make my life more worthwhile by plotting resolutions instead of harboring regrets and disappointments. I could say that acceptance is the key to forgiving oneself.

Back then, I would always live up according to what others say or expect me to become. I am so tired of being that kind of person. During the lockdown, we have forgotten what date it is, all we know is day and night. That is because God is showing us that we are the only ones who complicate our lives by feeling bad about the things we cannot control. These days, I am no longer mad at myself for not finishing my daily To-Do List.

I have seen how this pandemic has changed a lot of lives, especially in the career aspect. And I am ready to move forward and begin living in the present for the future that I deserve.



About The Author

Ara graduated with a degree in Mass Communication from the University of Santo Tomas in Legazpi City (formerly Aquinas University). In 2011, she got her first regional award as Honorable Mention in the 1st Bienvenido N. Santos Short Story Writing Contest sponsored by *Bicol Mail*, Naga City. She also worked as a content writer and an editor in a private firm. Right now, she keeps herself busy as a mom, a bar reviewee, and the sole proprietor of Arlexus Training Consultancy Services.





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Quarantined Birthdays And Self-Love Rituals

June 20, 2020

BY RACHEL ARANDILLA (PHILIPPINES)
PHOTO BY @DJSITAUN OF TWENTY20

I spent my birthday on lockdown. I'm no special snowflake. My story hardly deserves any headline real estate at all. An estimate



of almost 21 million share my birthday, and more than one-third of the world population (or more than 3 billion people from 70 countries) have been living under lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If we put together birthdays from mid-March to end of June collectively and divide that by a third, that means around 480 to 500 million people have spent their birthdays during the lockdown.

My quarantined birthday was unusual in many ways. I spent it in our condo when on normal days, I would spend it out of town. I watched a nature documentary when on normal days, I would be swimming in the sea. I received an unusually high number of homemade food deliveries from loving friends when on normal days, Facebook greetings were enough.

I'd expected celebrating my dirty 30 doing something else—most likely *wal/wal* in a bar with my friends. But the world has other plans.

On my 30th year on earth, I treated myself—not with a shot of tequila—but with steaming hot *masala chai*, praying that the lockdown would not be extended and we could finally have some semblance of normal life.

Afternoon Delight In The Form Of *Masala Chai*

I am purposeful when I brew my tea. I boil water, add milk, and add some spices (cinnamon, star anise, and saffron). When the pot is simmering, I add Darjeeling black loose tea leaves for a few minutes before I pour it into an insulated metal teapot.

“That sure is a lot of work,” my mom said. My parents have noticed how I've increased my kitchen time as of late.

In normal times, I would probably just douse a Twinings



teabag in hot water in haste. Or more accurately, I would just go to the CBTL downstairs my condo and order one chai latte to go.

The faster, the better. In our neurotic urban life, we were always in a hurry to go somewhere, we were in a rush to get to another appointment, to meet people, to do stuff.

But I have all the time in the world now. I'm not doing things just for speed, or convenience. I'm doing it with purpose...I have a body clock that attunes me that it's time to brew my tea. It's a self-love ritual.

The end product, the *masala chai*, is my daily afternoon delight.

A couple of my friends have found their chi in kneading bread, in baking chocolate chip cookies, in mixing cocktails. My slightly overachieving friends found comfort in daily circuit training practice at home.

Whatever the ritual you found, keep it. Make it your thing. These little rites reaffirm us and nourish our soul, doing wonders to

our mental health. These rituals remind us to appreciate the little things, to fill our senses, to appreciate day by day, and to be conscious of how we spend our precious hours.

And I hope that during GCQ, we won't forget our self-love rituals. We might not realize it, but these rituals had probably saved us.



About The Author

Rachel Arandilla, who hails from Cebu, is a storyteller and entrepreneur. Travel columnist with Sunstar Weekend, and founder of Story Nights: Cebu, a non-profit group that promotes storytelling and organizes storytelling events.



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The Most Painful Battle

May 19, 2020

BY REAGAN A. LATUMBO (PHILIPPINES)

Shout out to those who smiled because they received their Calamity Loan from Pag-IBIG, cash assistance from the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Social Security System (SSS) sent by their employer through the Small Business Wage Subsidy Program.





Shout out to those who received cash aids from their respective cities, provinces, and municipalities; relief goods distributed by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) through the help of Local Government Units (LGUs) during the battle on this COVID-19 pandemic.

But those smiles are only to those who received any of these aids. Many people are unable to sustain our personal finances and our immediate families for the last two months of the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), including me.

I can live without sumptuous meals on my table, but I have no means to pay for my electric bills, water bills, and boarding house rent. I have been a no-work no-pay employee for the last two months. And it affects me, it even hurts, especially my mental health. It is very hard on my part because I live alone.

I don't know where to get the money to pay for my rent. Due to the lockdown, deployment of equipment for our Work-At-Home arrangement was even stopped.

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 2

Now, the area where I am staying in is under General Community Quarantine (GCQ), which means only those within the jurisdiction of the province can go out and start working.

Last May 16, I did my best to check if I can travel back to work, but there is no sign of a bus going out from Cavite to Makati. I even found out that buses cannot enter areas under MECQ in my workplace. Again, this left me unable to work.

Craziness overload. Irritation strikes many times. Suicidal thoughts bursting out again. And depression poses a new threat within. How long can I hold these painful battles inside myself? I don't know. I don't even know when to stop thinking about this and how I should react more to this on-going crisis.

We can survive without catching the disease, but the most painful battle lies within ourselves. We should not let our positivity be ruined by our negative thoughts. We must fight this inner little demon growing inside our minds to remain strong.



We have to hold on.

We may not be all carriers of the virus, but we are immune to the spreading of evil in our hearts. And that is the battle that we need to fight even more.

Stay calm. Stay at home. Think positively. A little sacrifice is needed, but not to the extent of committing suicide.



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.

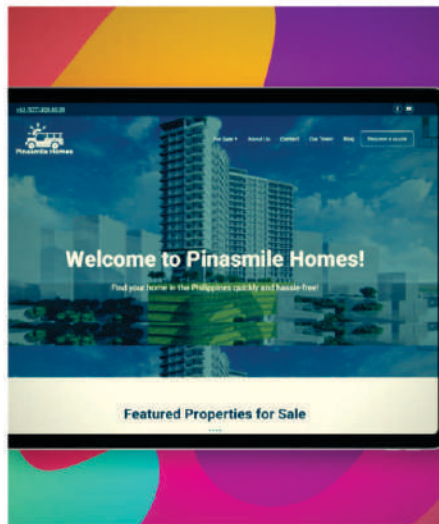
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The Day Before

April 25, 2020

BY IVY ANTION (SPAIN)

Our lives ended on March 14, 2020.

This is what happened.

I went to school and continued with my usual routine. I woke up, ate my breakfast, took a shower, dressed up, and walked to my school.



There was something different in the air though.

It was like an electric jolt. Everyone was just trying to keep in control. It was palpable as if everyone was waiting for something to happen but at the same time, everyone was in denial.

My teacher was 10 minutes late.

Coincidentally, she was also my school principal.

“Is there any news? I’m so confused by last night. Everyone already announced they’re suspending classes except us,” I said.

“Everyone is angry,” she replied to me.

Good thing nothing happened in that Science class. I was just there, with her staring at her students as they worked on their PowerPoint presentations for a project that they should present in a few weeks.

A caveat though. She told her class that if the government suspends classes, they should turn their projects in via email. She also gave them her blog address so they can access lessons.

12:00 in the afternoon. I was talking to one of my English teachers.

“I am not worried,” she said. “I think people are paranoid and making this a bigger deal than it is.”

“Yeah,” I smiled and nodded, but deep inside, I was screaming.

They don’t know. They haven’t experienced anything like this. They will fall to their knees.

“It was so bad in Italy. My friends went there and people are staring at them because they’re Asians. They thought my friends are Chinese. I have another friend in Tromso and she said a man threw a bottle of alcohol at her,” I said, I try to make small talk.

That is my small talk. I really cannot talk about anything to them aside from that. It was eating at my mind as early as a month



ago. I had been monitoring the news, I had been monitoring an international organization and their incompetence, their corruption. They said it's a "global health emergency." There is a word for that: pandemic.

I see countries scrambling, thinking of ways to mitigate the spread—lockdowns, travel bans, masks, hand gels, handwashing, gloves. It's getting nearer to where I am right now.

And the people around me don't know. And they laugh, and they talk, and they go about their business. And here I am, thinking if I should buy a mask now.

"They should have announced suspension yesterday so we can tell the kids what to do today," ranted my other English teacher.

"Yeah," I responded. "Murcia, País Vasco, Cataluña...I think almost everyone already closed their schools. I saw on Facebook they are going to announce it this afternoon?"

"But without the kids. How would they know what to do?"

I shrugged and continued telling the kids what to do in a language the kids do not know while my teacher ran after every errant student.

I was looking at my phone, scrolling social media, going back to WhatsApp, and reading every argument in the chatboxes hoping for fresh news.

2:00 in the afternoon. The class ended and I saw a headline. I showed it to my teacher. *La Junta anuncia el cierre de colegios, guarderías y universidades y recomienda el de los centros comerciales y de ocio* (The board announces the closures of schools, day-care centers, universities and recommends the same for malls and leisure centers).

A groan. I shared the article with my friends and to my flatmates hoping that both of the latter would go back home, to their hometowns, as they don't have classes anymore, leaving the flat to myself.

2:05 in the afternoon. Another teacher went inside the classroom and told my teacher that there was a meeting. The kids have gone now and I said my goodbye.

2:06 in the afternoon. I opened the school's gates and another teacher told me there was a meeting. "Oh, I'm not included in meetings," I told her. I'm an assistant here, not a teacher. Small mercies. I hate teacher meetings. Most of them could be emails.

I went back to my house and that electric jolt was palpable in the flat as well. Palpable. They will leave, I think to myself. I am too old to be dealing with university students if this is a damn Italy-style lockdown.

No hay anuncio final pero probablemente, sí (There's no final announcement yet, but I think, yes). I heard my other flatmate tell his parents on the phone. Someone was not reading the chatgroup.

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 2

I go on my usual routine. I microwaved my lunch and ate. And readied myself for my only private class that day. I looked at my phone again, in English this time: The Spanish government declares a state of alarm. That was bound to happen anyway, I thought.

As I went out of our building, an older woman called out to me in Spanish that I didn't understand. Then she switched, "You're Carlos's* flatmate."

"Yes," I answered.

"You shouldn't be going out now. Where are you going?"

"I have a class."

"Oh, just cancel it. It's dangerous. We're taking Carlos home now. Just call your student and cancel."

"Uhm, yes. Thank you."

I continued walking. If this is a lockdown, let me earn my bread first before everything closes.

3:59 in the afternoon. Yevgenia's* doors are already open,



as usual. But, what is not usual is that we didn't do the Spanish kisses, which is honestly fine for both of us. It's not in my culture and not in hers (she's Russian).

One hour later and I told her I won't have classes with her son until the state of alarm lifts. I said goodbye and told the kid that I'll see him when I see him. I walked to the bus stop and texted all of my other students' parents the same thing. I arrived home and checked my email thoroughly. I missed an email from our provincial coordinator the day before. It said something about it not being wise to imagine the worse scenario (me contracting COVID-19) but that if I still want reassurance then I should ask the regional government. Well, that exact attitude is why we are here right now.

For the first time in my stay in my flat, I sat down and watched TV. It was the prime minister's press conference. I didn't understand anything, but from the little I could make out, it said we could still go out for grocery runs and go to the pharmacy. Not too bad, I think to myself. But knowing them, they were playing it by ear. I have faith in this government though. They have social nets. I'll stay at home, I thought to myself. I'm not sick. I can do this.

Two weeks became another two weeks.

And became another two weeks.

That became another two weeks.

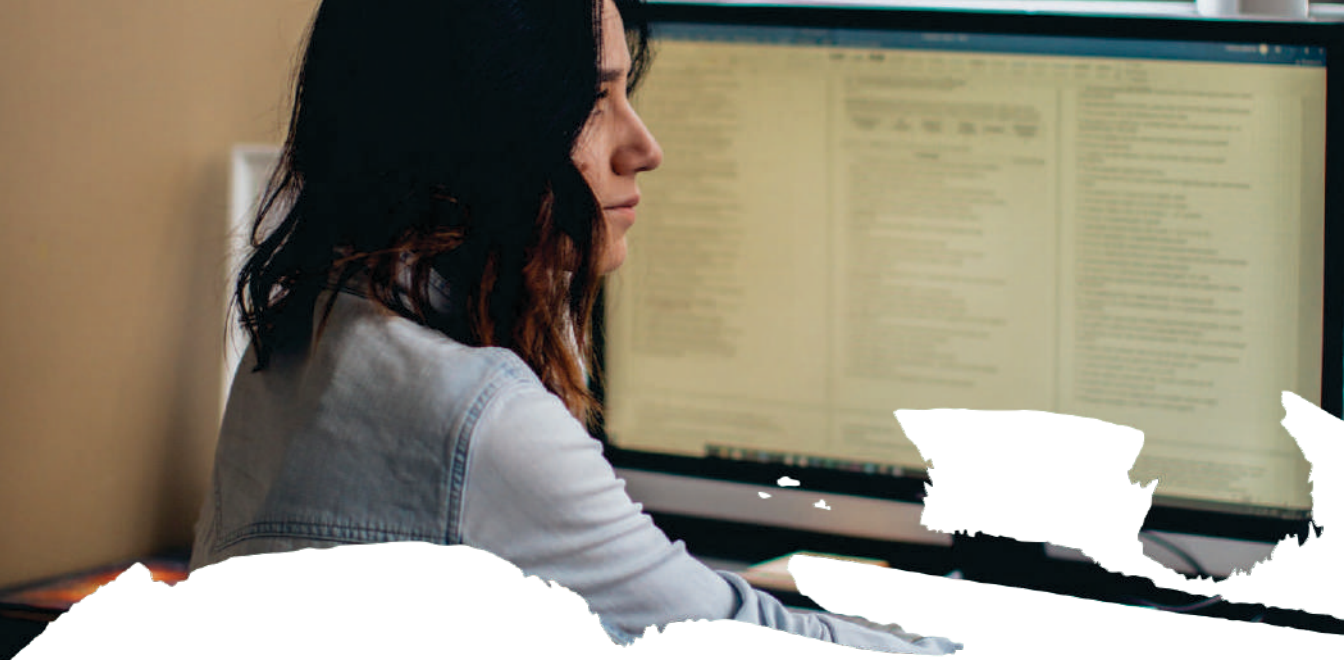
The days melded with each other and I punctuated it with grocery shopping, pharmacy runs, and taking out the trash. I went out today to buy toilet paper and dishwashing liquid.

What day is it? Ah, tomorrow they will allow kids to get out of the house. Next week, they will allow us to do our walks and exercise.

Almost two months.

And I am angry.

There is a palpable change in the air.



The people against the government. The politicians arguing as early as the second extension of the state of alarm (just what we all need, arguing politicians). The health workers against the people who kept on violating confinement rules.

Two weeks ago, a man killed his wife by throwing her out their 4-story apartment. The day before that, another man killed his wife and killed himself. A month ago, the police discovered a residential hall for old people and the staff abandoned their wards, some of them with the virus, leaving them for dead.

The charitable institutions imposed an appointment system for people who needed relief goods because there had been cases of Filipinos, who kept on coming back and using those relief goods intended for the economically vulnerable people, to send back to the Philippines. Students being busier than ever because, suddenly, there is a deluge of schoolwork from teachers. Teachers not knowing how to convert their classes online. Workers applying for amelioration from social security.

I haven't bought a mask.

I cannot even go up to my building's rooftop.

They don't know. They haven't experienced anything like this. They will fall to their knees.

The day before our life ended, I was told they are not worried. The day before our life ended, I was told not to worry. The month before that, there was a football game in Italy that the Spaniards attended. Two weeks before our life ended, some people went to Italy to see its Carnival Festival. The day after Madrid announced its lockdown, the citizens scattered to different parts of Spain. On March 8, there was a big demonstration in Madrid for International Women's Day. At that time, 589 cases had already been recorded and 202 of that were from Madrid itself.

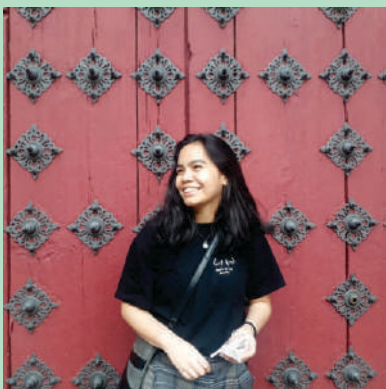
And people have the gall to tell me to not worry.

It is April 25 now. We're inching two months since our lives ended.

They don't know. They haven't experienced anything like this. They will fall to their knees.

And oh, how the mighty have fallen.

**Names are pseudonyms.*



About The Author

Ivy Antonio is a digital nomad currently residing in Spain. After quitting a comfortable teaching job in a posh school in 2016, she's been jumping around places ever since while working as a content developer and editor for the private and government sectors.



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What Did You Do This Time?

May 26, 2020

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY KEI SUZUKI (JAPAN)

The coronavirus started in March 2020. My family and I live here in Japan. In Japan, people are so quiet and they follow rules. They don't say if it's bad or good. The good thing is they listen and follow rules. Living in Japan is a little difficult because the house rent is very expensive and the tax is very high.





Kids here couldn't go to school because of the virus so children stayed in their houses, but some parents are getting stressed. Parents have their jobs so when they go home, they are already too tired. That's why they easily get angry. Sometimes, everyone doesn't have any idea where to go because of the sudden change in their daily life. Most of the time, they are in their houses, so they pay the water, gas, and electricity bills more. Staying in the house all the time makes the person more stressed. Kids also need to meet their friends and teachers but they couldn't. People sometimes need to go out.

Some schools here in Japan had no graduation and entrance ceremonies. The day before my Junior high school's entrance ceremony, I was so nervous but excited. I was prepared to go to school but I was surprised when we were told that there was no entrance ceremony.

Last March, graduating students were lucky because we had our graduation ceremony, but it was only for 30 minutes instead of two hours. I met my friend and talked to her. I told her that I study every day. She was surprised when I told her that because she said she only played games every day. I thought that studying every day is natural, so I was surprised too. We were both surprised!

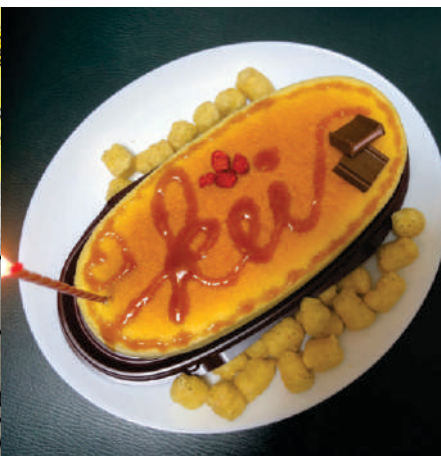
QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 2

Last April, it was time to go back to school but because of the virus, we still had to stay home but we are given a lot of assignments. The good thing is, we can practice more the things we like because we have more time in our house. Children like me can also play with their parents, so we all enjoy and are less stressed. We can also rest if we want to.

I heard that in the Philippines, there was no graduation ceremony. I felt sad. I miss the Philippines and I really want to go there. I miss the sea, the people, and the food, so I learned how to cook *lumpia* shanghai. It was so yummy and fun to make! I also tried making French toast.

Here in Japan where my family lives, I don't go to school because of the pandemic. So I learn how to cook and I help my parents wash the dishes, hang the clothes and also with other housework. I remember when I was watching a TV program, many mothers said that cooking breakfast, lunch, and dinner is tiring so I thought that I should help my parents. Some people are doing live videos and telling people that they are stressed.

Some people buy plants so they can get vegetables and fruits from the plants they grow but some shops and malls are closed. If you like to think, you can play with Lego because you can make many kinds of characters, shapes, and things like police, ninjas, houses, and more. I recommend you play Lego.



QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 2

If you have some *origami*, you can make your shapes and sizes too, and choose the colors you like. I also recommend making your own shop because it's fun for everybody—you will earn money and at the same time learn about selling. I hope kids will try it. But please don't forget to wash your hands with water and soap or use alcohol and wear your mask when you go outside. You should also walk or jog even for a short time so that you will keep your body healthy.

In the house, we sometimes have drawing contests and it's fun to do it with your family. You will also be able to draw better if you practice more.

I know that if kids are in the house, they want to play games all the time but if they don't study and the school starts soon, they can only write their names and nothing else. So, I hope kids will continue studying in their house because it's very important. Please remember those things I wrote. Thank you for reading.

Stay home. Stay safe.





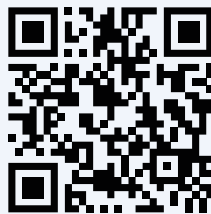
 keilovesguitar



Watch Kei play *Fuzz Universe*
(Paul Gilbert) on Music Crowns!

About The Author

Kei is a 12-year-old 1st year Junior High School student in Japan. She loves playing the guitar. Her guitar skills were featured on Iron Maiden's (UK) Facebook page in 2016 and was twice featured on Music Crown's (UK) Facebook page in 2016 and 2020. She was also selected to perform at the Funabashi Music Street in the year 2019.



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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

The Beauty Of The Small: Dreaming In The Time Of Quarantine

April 29, 2020

BY PAULO LORENZO L. GARCIA (PHILIPPINES)



I don't miss Mondays.

I don't miss waking up at 4:30 a.m. wishing I could have at least gotten the prescribed number of sleeping hours each time I roll out of bed. I don't miss the initial shock of water trailing down my body whenever I force myself to bathe each morning. I don't miss having to take as large a bite as possible from my sandwich as I do my mental math to find out how much time I have left before being forced to leave my sandwich half-eaten, hoping it will taste just as fresh in the afternoon.

I don't miss the daily commute or the roar of the train. I certainly don't miss long queues and risking life and limb for a seat or squeezing into the tightest corners of the LRT. I don't miss the daily nine-hour grind, hastening from one class to the next and straining my "teacher voice" before settling in the confines of my cubicle, mutely hunched over an endless stack of paperwork and having to take them home.

I don't miss coming home a vegetable. I don't miss being a human clockwork who shuts down the moment he reaches the couch late in the afternoon. I don't miss Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or any day of the week.

I miss smaller moments and pleasures.

I miss the newness of an open book, the flare of petrichor in the nose, and losing long periods to meaningful pages without the feeling of guilt and the threat of minute-by-minute obligations waiting to be done. I miss the rapid flight of my pen over a notebook as I struggle to write the verses I hope would see in print one day.

I miss the taste of my mother's cooking and the thrill of waiting for her to serve hot meals that have become so unfamiliar to someone who packs lunch daily. I miss sitting and taking my time to dream.



These are the simple things that I missed. And these are the things that the pandemic gave back to me.

You know there's something wrong when it takes a pandemic for you to focus on yourself. Either that or we all just tire of being human sometimes. For the longest time, to be human is to do. To be human is to be the ever-buzzing busy bee juggling life on six legs and two antennas. To be anything else was a crime, and to be any less busy was to earn less than what would make ends meet.

But as I sit in front of my computer upon completing my work-from-home duties, I find I can see clearer. The quarantine offers a way of looking at your life from a distance and offers you the quiet, the chance to love and hear what you've lost in the day-to-day noise and demand of work in the city. To be stuck at home, to see disorder in the news, and to feel a little fearful of the fragility of life helps rinse our eyes and see humanity anew.

Humanity is not in the grand clockwork design we resign ourselves to. It's in the beauty of the small, fleeting things, and the

little dreams we're often too tired to pursue, dreams that only you can choose. I've dreamed of publishing a poetry collection for a long time now, and while life and the endless obligations of a teacher have forced this dream of mine into the back-burner for many years, the much-needed pause brought about by this pandemic has allowed me to rediscover the joy of pursuing it. Now more than ever, we need to build up the courage and determination we need to pursue what we want, no matter how slowly it may come. For me, the quarantine is an opportunity to hone my craft and dictate my own pace, and I won't let this opportunity go to waste.

If there's anything that the pandemic has taught me, it's the value of a dreamer, and how life forces you to sleepwalk through rare chances and brief enchantments without pausing to savor the small. Between weekly grocery runs, fulfilling my role as an educator from home, and taking the time I have left to write my poetry collection and other humble pursuits I may want to start tomorrow, I have learned to sit still and just be.



We are all going back out there at some point, but while we pray and hope for the best, why don't we do something for a change? Why not watch the steam go out of your coffee, and drink in small, careful sips instead of rushing it to cool? We will never know the beauty of the small, and the teeming life that a cup of coffee holds if we don't know how to slow down and pause.



About The Author

Paulo Lorenzo L. Garcia writes whenever his heart can't speak. He is a BSED-English graduate currently teaching Literature and Oral Communication at St. Paul University in Quezon City. A learner at heart, he continues to explore his love for literature and writing by pursuing his MA in Creative Writing at the University of Santo Tomas. Some of his poems have been published in *The Literary Yard*.

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BANANA CAKE

PLAIN	200
CHOCO BANANA	220
ALMOND BANANA	240
CREAM CHEESE	260
CHOCO + ALMOND	270
CHOCO + CREAM CHEESE	280
ALMOND + CREAM CHEESE	300
OVERLOAD	370

(CHOCO, CREAM CHEESE, ALMOND)

BANANA CAKE CONTAINER SIZE:

8X4 INCHES (PAN)

NUTELLA BROWNIES

HALF	250
WHOLE	450

COOKIES

	6'S	12'S
CLASSIC CHOCO CHIP	140	270
NUTELLA FILLED	160	310
CREAM CHEESE FILLED	190	370
CLASSIC + NUTELLA	170	330
CLASSIC + CREAM CHEESE	200	380
CLASSIC + NUTELLA + CREAM CHEESE	220	430

CHEESECAKE

OREO	600
STRAWBERRY	775
BLUEBERRY	799

CHEESECAKE CONTAINER SIZE:

8X2 INCHES (TIN CAN)



COOKIES

BANANA
CAKE

NUTELLA
BROWNIES

CHEESECAKE



At The Time Of COVID-19

April 29, 2020

BY ALBERT GAVINO (PHILIPPINES)

The Capital Towers, along E. Rodriguez Sr., just a few meters from St. Luke's Medical Center in Quezon City.

Our medical doctors are passing away one by one. Each statistic is highly crucial. Don't tell me that the statistics posted a month and a half ago of 600 cases were going to create panic. A certain senator did panic and for all the right reasons: no contact

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 2

tracing, no COVID test kits, lack of public healthcare facilities, etc.

I stopped posting these things on Facebook because they started political debates among people who believe numbers and statistics are not real.

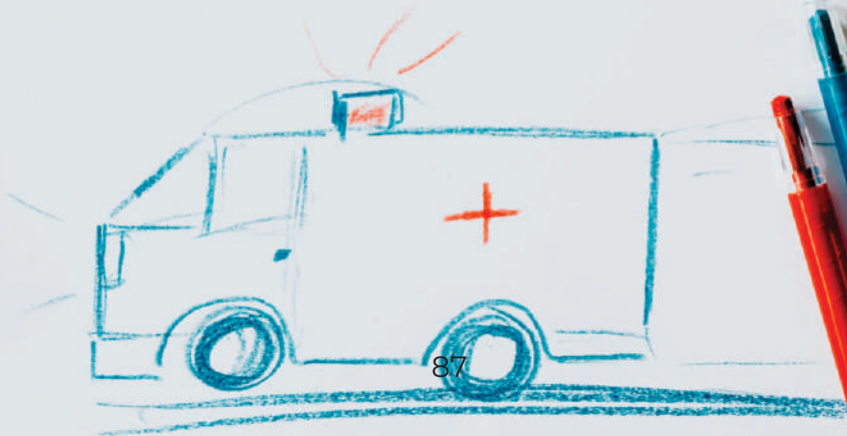
Ah yes, we should have spent allocated more military funds because that is the answer to the virus. Ah yes, we have enough public healthcare facilities for the people.

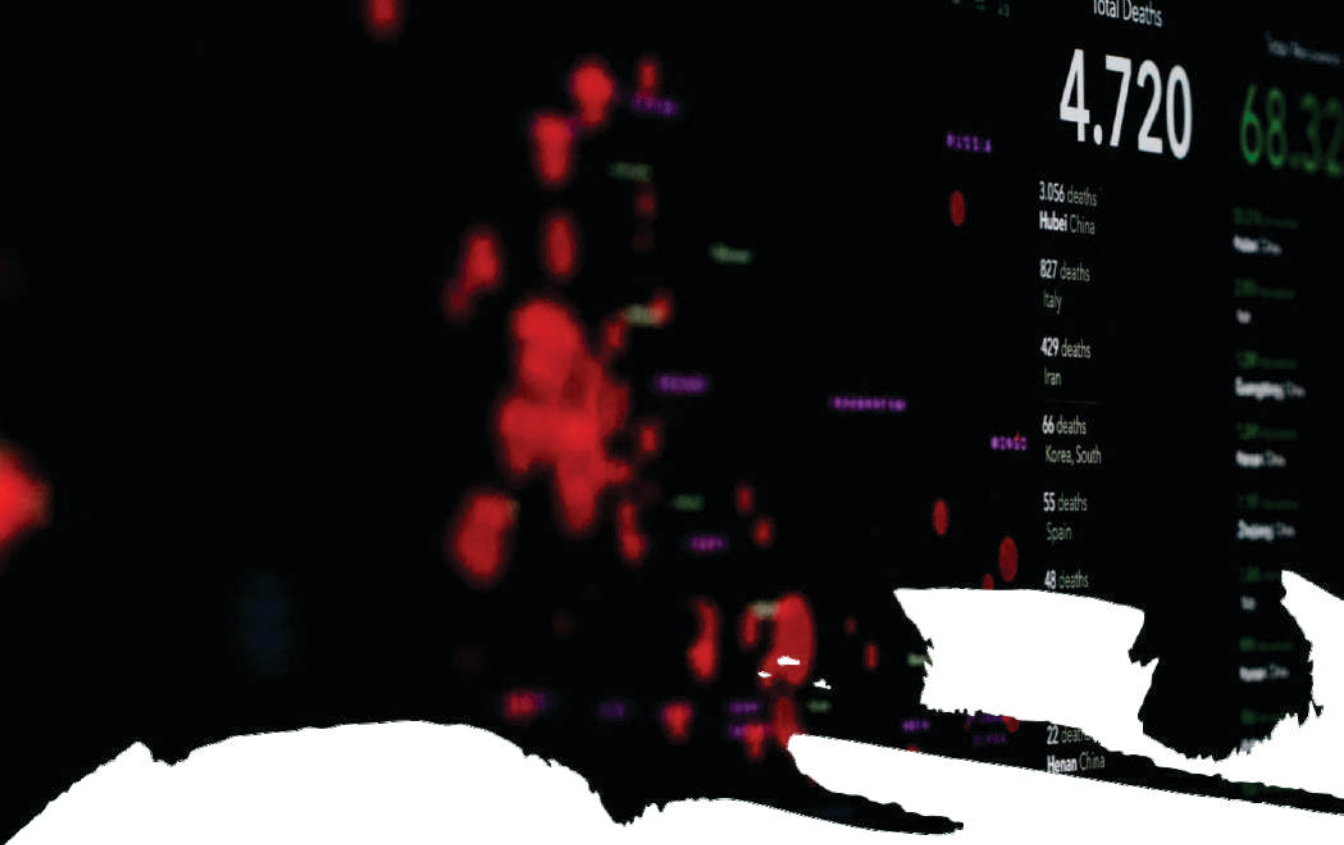
Look around, most of the well-known private hospitals are fully booked to the maximum capacity. Doctors and healthcare workers are heavily fatigued and are prone to get infected themselves. Yet we focused more on the political interests that really messed us up.

Now, I don't even care about the numbers anymore or about the new cases. It felt normal to me and I felt I could do nothing but just stay at home and work on my laptop—trying to be as productive as ever but I felt more online meeting burnouts.



THANK YOU DOCTORS





Where are the people who gave us the wrong information?

The disease will not survive in a tropical country—FALSE

(Aggregated data != individual data, nor does the temperature play on pandemics.)

It's okay not to wear a mask—FALSE

(It's not infectious you say?)

We have zero cases—FALSE

(True, we did not test any.)

We have adequate public healthcare facilities—FALSE

(Based on the number of beds and doctors available last 2019?)

Having to lie and fabricate something result in lives lost. Holding data privacy over contact tracing because of profits. If there is one thing I learned from my MBA and Organizational Ethics, use your values and your organizational values. Leaders should have values and integrity. That is the right and humane thing to do.

Where whistle blowers are condemned of truth.

Where human lives are lost.

When jobs are lost.

When hunger sets in.

Who is going to die first?

Who does not get to sleep?

The lives of the people are at the leaders' hands right now. It is a war against a virus more deadly and potent than the SARS of 2003.



 Albert Gavino

About The Author

Albert Gavino has a bachelor's degree in Mathematics (specializing in Statistics and Actuarial Science), an MBA degree from De La Salle University, and 20 years of work experience. He is an advocate of Data Science for Social Good and dabbles in R and Python for data analysis. Oftentimes, he collects *Star Wars* figures from the 70s or rides a mountain bike to get exercise the knees.



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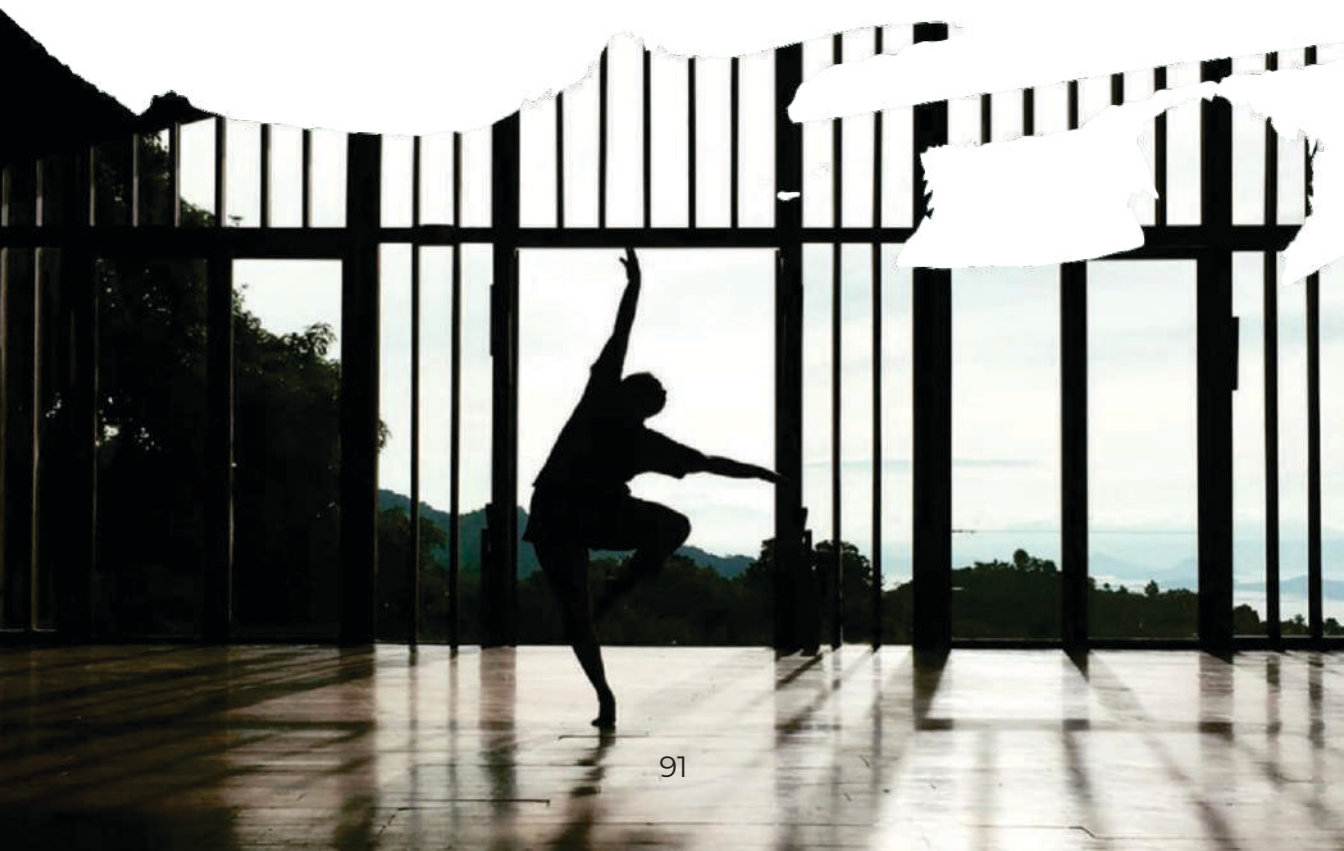
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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

Still One Of The Lucky Ones

May 19, 2020

TEXT AND MAIN PHOTO BY
TRIZZA TOLENTINO (PHILIPPINES)



It's been a little over two months since the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) was declared in Metro Manila, and I consider myself one of the lucky ones to be where I am in this pandemic.

Here's my current setup: I live alone in a condo unit with my dog. I chose this [relatively more expensive] option instead of living with my family mainly because I needed a quiet, solo space to work from home in. And my mother is a frontliner, so I wanted to be one less person they would worry about infecting by staying away from home. I am lucky to be able to still have office work, but I had to say goodbye for now to my other sources of income: teaching dance classes and running my milk tea shop.

I am also one of the lucky ones who were able to celebrate my birthday exactly a week before the ECQ started in March. I was able to see friends, celebrate with family, eat pizza and cake with my students, drink alcohol before the liquor ban, the list goes on.

Looking back, maybe I should have celebrated a little bit harder and made more of those memories because they would be the LAST I would ever have of those in a long, long time.

I didn't expect this quarantine to last this long. No one did. I thought that after a month of quarantine, we could all go back to our normal lives. I thought that this virus could be fought after just a month of obedience from everyone.

I thought that we could battle this better than how the past generations fought against the Spanish flu and other previous pandemics because of how much more advanced our health care and technology are now. I thought that the years they spent in past quarantine periods would be avoided this time and wouldn't last as long as what we are seeing today.



Along with the new normal, one of the things that this virus had done is to highlight the class divide among so many of us. I know I'm coming from a perspective and position of privilege, and I always feel pangs of guilt when I have these thoughts. So in an attempt to appease myself, I try to give back in any way I can: I take online dance classes for a cause. I donate to artists who do commission drawings. I give food to all the riders who deliver food and items to my home—anything that my *sweldo* can still reach without getting to donor's fatigue and still be able to buy food and supplies for myself.

Social media helps me cope through compartmentalizing. I became active again on Twitter for all my angry thoughts against the government, and I report trolls every week as a stress reliever. I post on Instagram for all my positivity and rely on Facebook for my daily meme and *trashtalkan* posts, as well as to connect with small local businesses for purchasing goods and groceries. This is borderline toxic, but it helps me live with my day-to-day thoughts.

So many should-haves, could-haves, and would-haves are running through my head now. If only I knew that this is what life would be like for a long time, I should have taken longer walks outside more often if I knew that I would be staying inside for so long.

I should have said yes to every invitation to go out with friends if I knew that the next time I would see them would be through the four tiny corners of my laptop. I should have danced longer and harder in our team's dance studio if I knew I'd barely be able to within my tiny condo. I should have traveled to more places. I should have hugged my students more often. I should have slowed down my walking pace. I should have taken in the mundane sights and sounds around me. I should have lived life a little more, a little better if I knew that the new normal would be this way.

I should have done so much more if only I knew.

And now that we don't know anymore, it is so easy to lose



sight of what your purpose is when you don't even know what everything will be like in the next few months and years. It was relatively easy when we knew when quarantine would "end" during its "first season". I spent my time working out, trying out new recipes, finally reading the books I hoarded during book fairs and sales. *Tatal, isang buwan lang naman 'to*. This is my chance to be productive while staying home!

But as the government kept extending the quarantine period, with no plans of mass testing in sight and the fears of second and third waves of infection becoming more and more real as time went on, the sinking feeling I had kept getting deeper and darker, because now, we have no idea what we can do with our lives in the future.

All plans, even the simplest and most ordinary ones, now have to be restructured to include social distancing, mask-wearing, much less physical contact, and every other precaution needed to prevent the virus from spreading and re-infecting.

I don't know how to end this because there seems to be no end to this in sight. I still haven't given up hope, but I'm not about to tell you or anyone to keep your chin up and stay positive because not everyone can afford to do that. But I am grateful for this: I am grateful to still be alive, to still be uninfected (I hope), to still be able to eat, to still be able to work, to still be able to earn a little, to still be able to go online, to still have my family members alive, to still be able to read and breathe and take it all in and be connected. Only now have I realized that counting your blessings is a form of survival and I'm willing to take anything and everything to get me through.

It's been a little over two months since ECQ was declared over Metro Manila, and I still consider myself one of the lucky ones to be where I am in this pandemic.



About The Author

Trizza Tolentino is a double degree holder in Psychology and Broadcast Communication from the University of the Philippines Diliman, and is currently in the marketing team of a startup fintech company. She absolutely loves to dance. She is a semi-professional dancer and a contemporary jazz dance teacher to young girls.

Trizza mostly writes emails, reports, and other business-related, non-fiction writeups. But every once in a while, she gets the itch to write with her imagination instead of her business-y left brain. She lives in Metro Manila with her dog-child, Khuffy the Pomeranian.



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The Virus Of My Birthday

May 20, 2020

BY ANJALI SINHA (INDIA)



I don't remember a time when I was so sordidly confined to bed on my birthday. Everything is heart-wrenching and I don't like it one bit. Things haven't gone to plan and here I am, lying under covers, crying, procrastinating, and hurting. I know I'm having a pity party inside my bedroom, but that's the only party I can have right now.

"Why it has to happen on my birthday? Why will it happen only around my birthday when it had the rest of the year to latch onto people's bodies and take their lives? Why has this outbreak caught on to us massively anyway? Why do I feel so isolated? Why do I have to feel isolated? What is this social distancing thing?"

These thoughts ran awry and flew around my head like an alien bombardment of asteroids in our lithosphere.

Social distancing is a new kind of poison for an ambivert-ist soul like me. I know I'm used to staying in. I'm an introvert per se, but I'm also not a circle, a Venn diagram of an adjective. It's a choice. A collective responsibility to keep ourselves and others safe, especially those who have had their immune systems threatened by life-wrenching diseases. Hear me out.

There are still painstaking questions that don't make this doomsday any lighter in emotion and substance. Who will make sense of these questions with me? Who will hug me and provide me with any warmth on my birthday? Is it fair? Do I feel any less isolated? Do I feel any less betrayed by that "best friend" who canceled on me at the last minute? Why I am at this certain disposition? I perfectly abhor it. I don't want to be around it. I just want to be far away from it. My thoughts are floating around my head like doves on a peace process meet of organizations.

I am feeling meh these days.



It's understandable.

When this quarantine thing started, I saw it as an opportunity. Yes, a goddamn dazzle opportunity to be a better human. To grow new skills, learn to do new things that I've been procrastinating on for decades, and do another hundred zillion things. Like a typical Gen Z, I wanted to spend my time being highly productive, but no matter how hard I planned my days, and no matter how many things I ticked off my to-do list, I don't feel satisfied spiritually or even remotely content. I feel off to my core. I've been feeling equal parts overwhelmed and equal parts frustrated at the same time.

Given how hard I always try, I still feel like I'm always failing. I don't expect you to understand this, neither do I think anyone can understand. I have generally low expectations from people I should have expectations from. Any kind. I just didn't expect this situation to have such a stimulating effect on my nerve endings.

Anyway, this quarantine thing is hitting me pretty hard right now and I hope things are okay with you. I hope you're safe and healthy (whoever is reading this).

Also, today, our area had been converted into a containment zone, and bleach mixed water was sprayed onto all of our house windows from all sides, including the huge mounting buildings by our government. I feel like I'm living in such a dystopia right now. What will it take to be safe again? What will it be like to feel safe?

In this quarantine, I've been trying to stay sane and have scheduled active resting periods. Some days are easier to get through, some days feel like I'm processing deep and dark emotions. I'm easily stressed and frustrated but I'm trying to remain optimistic given the current situation of India.

My mental health has taken a hit for the worse. It's expected that we can all get depressed from time to time. One day you can be really happy, laughing, having the best day of your life around your closest family and friends, and in the middle of biting into your favorite cake or in the middle of a funny inside joke that always gets you, you start to hear feelings rumble. You just feel a dark hole inside your soul which is filled with empathetic sadness and emptiness. I know that exquisite feeling extremely well.

But as with any situation in life, somehow you manage. After a few days of your emotional funk, you manage to put yourself together for the world and yourself. You breathe a little deeper. You get less stressed and you go with the flow. You get sucked into things, but you pull yourself out with your inner strength. There are always things that make you unhappy but you choose to be happy. It's a decision. The point is, we'll get through this. The journey of mental health is neither steady nor linear. We'll begin healing again.

But the point with fighting this pandemic is: when, how, and with what?



About The Author

Anjali Sinha is a journalist, editor, and content strategist who romanticizes book characters too much. She fell in love with books when her mum bought her first story-book in grade first. She loves cookies, new cities, and philosophical conversations with optimism. She is constantly found nestled under her duvet making stories up in her head.

You can mail her at:

anjalisinha666.as@gmail.com





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Just Mumbling Thoughts During ECQ

May 17, 2020

BY DANICA D. PROFETA (PHILIPPINES)

I put down my pen and remember how immaculate and peaceful and full of cheer December 2019 was. I sigh as I wish we could have magically stayed in that happy and safe state onto 2021 and skip 2020 altogether.

In January 2020, I was caught up with doing a couple of art commissions and finishing my novella, alongside taking care of my daughter and doing household chores. My older sister, like many other OFWs, was worried that she might not be able to return to Kuwait because of the temporary travel ban. She got stressed during the few days of her vacation here with us in Cavite, instead of just relaxing, bonding with her niece, and playing Mobile Legends. Still, God was good, and she was able to go back to work as a sales representative in Kuwait.

Then, as we all know, Taal Volcano later erupted and affected the whole of Batangas, Cavite, and even some parts of NCR. Batangueños, who had nowhere to go, were evacuated to different places in Cavite. My nephew and his former college batchmates went to Alfonso, Cavite to donate essential goods to the evacuees. And, as we all waited for the volcano to calm down, pessimistic analogies circulated in social media, warning people that the eruption of the Taal Volcano, according to its activity history, could last for months. Again, we prayed that that be not the case this time. And God had answered our prayers once more.

The news about coronavirus began in late January. And Filipinos were already onto something—that the restriction of incoming flights, especially from China, should be implemented as early as possible. But before the lockdown in Wuhan, many Chinese nationals were able to hop on planes and even reached Cebu. You know the rest...

The complacency of some people (not just in our country but in other countries too), the rising anger of the citizens...

Then March came and there were already cases of NCoV, later renamed COVID-19, in Metro Manila and other places in Cavite. It was like a dark, red curtain dropped on our lives and everything was

in a standstill. March leeches on us slowly as everyone stumbles in the dark, and leaders planned and provided (some more effective than others) for the people who are stuck in their homes, as well as to the frontliners, especially healthcare workers.

Now, what can I say? Well, to be honest, and I may sound overreacting here and this may seem unrelated but bear with me. I was frustrated (and still am) that when this global crisis began. I wasn't able to write the other stories I planned to write. My personal goals were put to the back burner again. I didn't have the energy nor the time to write because I was the one who was bestowed the golden Q-Pass.

I wouldn't worry too much about everything if I were alone in my life. But I'm with my parents, who are both senior citizens, and I have a young daughter. And all the Schrödinger effect the coronavirus had on all of us (community quarantine and thoroughly disinfecting things, assuming everything and everyone including ourselves are already infected) and the suffocating daily news



updates on every positive case, adding to my pre-existing anxiety, made me want to just give up.

But then I pray.

I pray hard, both during quiet times and active times. It's hard as I feel alone most of the time with all these thoughts of paranoia. My husband is just one voice call away but I don't want to bother him too much. Their employer had provided them shelter while they work, knowing that daily travel and work-from-home setup would not be possible for most of them. He's working hard, staying strong, and I have to stay strong, too. Still, I miss our bonding time as a family and our weekly trip to the nearby park or mall. And of course, breathing fresh air, laughing non-stop, blowing bubbles, and eating snacks outdoors, and just...just walking without wearing masks and worrying about diseases.

April and May arrived and it seemed the disaster assessment was over and actions were being taken and/or already in effect. Some have adjusted to the ECQ rules, and others, unfortunately, have exhausted their means to survive.

The hot weather, blackouts, neighbor and family squabbles, and hot-headed and negligent people add to the pain of the situation. There are so many things happening simultaneously and one could be left frozen, confused as to what to do.

We could blame humanity and all our sins. We could blame a specific country's greed. But is that productive? It only is if we take action and change for the better. Be kinder. Be wiser. It's tough to do that when we're all being distracted (willingly or otherwise) by ironically two extremes—poverty/hunger and material things (having or wanting too much of something).

But we must make an effort—in the form of little acts of kindness towards others and even ourselves because some of us

like to put pressure on ourselves too.

Be your “brother’s keeper”, keeping in mind that we must be concerned about others as well as in every action we take and follow guidelines to stop the spread of the coronavirus. Couple that with the belief that the Almighty God will protect and save us from colossal problems.

And so, I convince myself to write again, function again, and be more thankful for the people who keep me sane...for the obvious but often neglected blessings of family and food and roof over our heads. I also keep on saying to myself, “Believe in Him.”

Because, when all else fails, God doesn't.





About The Author

Danica D. Profeta is a full-time mom and an aspiring book author who loves drawing, watching anime, and reading random stuff—from the classics, to behaviors, to philosophy. Oh, and a little dose of tasteful memes every now and then.

She is always searching for her soul and trying to understand others and everything. As of this writing, she is still getting used to the idea that the more she tries to know, the more she knows nothing. Yet, she knows that, somehow, she is blessed and guided by the Providence.

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The Coronavirus Can Cancel Our Vacation But Not Our Fun

May 13, 2020

BY ERIKA APRIL V. CRUZ (PHILIPPINES)

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 2

My three best friends and I have been excited since September 2019. Daryl, the “boss” of our *barkada*, booked tickets on-sale for us to Taiwan. After a year or two of dreaming of our squad vacation abroad, we finally had a common available schedule and agreed on a country to go to, which had to be near and visa-free.

We planned to visit Raffy, another close friend in our group, who was living in Taiwan for postgraduate studies. We would be celebrating his upcoming graduation and our 11th anniversary of friendship with him in Taiwan.

We were looking forward to our squad vacation abroad. We would often say, “See you soon, in Taiwan!” and “Can’t wait!” We even fussed over the fact that Daryl forgot to add extra baggage allowance for our flight. Well, it was mainly my problem given that they can pack light while I, more often than not, cannot. Talks and chats about what to bring, suitcase sizes, snacks, and whatnot also transpired. When we had our overnight Christmas getaway together in December 2019, we even sort of practiced our routine for the Taiwan trip.

From May 13 to 19, 2020, we were supposed to be on our first trip out of the country together. Unfortunately, came March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic broke out here in the Philippines.

At first, we just waited and watched out for updates on whether the situation would be over soon. But the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) in Metro Manila got extended and extended. We then converted our booked tickets into travel fund credits. Hence, we said goodbye to our Taiwan 2020 trip and stayed safe in our homes.

But that did not prevent us from having fun, albeit virtually. During our chat groups, we are always noisy, especially at night. We even have this inside joke that we are on “night shift” because we

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 2

often go online at night. We tease each other a lot during our group chats, comments on social media, and calls. Whether it's online or over the phone, we sometimes argue over little things but get over them soon.

For millennials born in the 1990s, group video calls initially seemed like a novel experience to us, especially because it was not a thing back in our college days. Our first group video call was just for fun and catching up. After two months of not being together, we were happy and invigorated to see each other's faces again.

These days, our video calls are spent in laughter, more teasing, and smiles. They usually last for about three hours late in the night. I could say that our video calls also give me a sense of normalcy and motivation because it had been a long time since I last saw anyone else face to face, aside from my family. Looking back, I'm really thankful for that video call because it helped me go through this ECQ. Later on, we had another group video call to help Audric practice for his online teaching demo. As math education



QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 2

graduates, we did peer evaluation so he could improve his way of teaching the standard equation of the circle.

Then came May 13, 2020. We all joked around about our trip, both in the group chat and on Emjoy's timeline post:

"Are you at the airport already?"

"OMG, what time is our flight? I forgot!"

"Faster, we're leaving already!"

"Where are you? We're about to head to Taipei 101 now!"



Berna, Raffy's girlfriend, surprised us by sending our "Taiwan 2020 pictures" in the group chat. She photo-edited our previous vacation pictures by cropping and placing them in her and Raffy's past pictures in Taiwan. Hence, in the pictures, it seemed that we were all together in Taiwan. Still, it was easily evident that the photos were edited, which gave them a comic effect. At least we had fun in Taiwan—in the pictures, haha!

QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 2

Even if the COVID-19 pandemic cancelled our dream *barkada* vacation, it failed to spoil our fun. I guess it's really a Filipino trait to make the most out of the situation no matter how dire it is—and to make fun of it. It's not about being insensitive or unconcerned. It's a culturally-innate way to humor ourselves instead of succumbing to frustration and negativity. Consequently, our humor helps us maintain a positive outlook in life despite challenges.

For now, we are still waiting and praying for this pandemic to be over. In the meantime, we are working from home, doing a lot of chores, sharpening our skills, enjoying ourselves in whatever way we can, delighting in our passion projects, and spending quality time with our families and friends, even if some of them we see only online.

Hopefully, the cure for COVID-19 will be found ASAP because we can't wait to see each other again and have our dream Taiwan trip soon.






About The Author

Erika April V. Cruz, LPT graduated from De La Salle University with a degree in Mathematics Education. She met her best friends for life in the same block. She has been enjoying the challenging but fulfilling life of being a teacher and still finds time to write, whenever possible. Read some of her writing on:

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how to use social media for your business



SCAN ME!

Ang Korona Ni Ava

May 27, 2020

BY AVA BANZUELA ESPLANADA (PHILIPPINES)

It was April 10 and I was browsing one of the Facebook groups for *Marikenyos* to check for online sellers who are selling chips for my kids. I was also looking for foods I can buy for my upcoming 27th birthday.



As I scrolled, I came upon a post of a mother asking for help to provide food and milk for her child. She posted a picture of her 1-year-old baby. I clicked on the post and surprisingly, other parents commented asking for help for their children. I was shocked to see pictures of children asking for milk. *Kahit anong gatas daw papatusin nila* just to feed their children. *Nakakaawa talaga, sobra.*

While I was reading the comments one by one, I thought, what if I am in their shoes and have no means to earn a living for my kids during this pandemic? Just imagine, when the cash flow is good, I still have a hard time doing the budgeting for our family. How much more if there is zero income coming in? *Baka mabaliw na ako sa kakaisip.*

I left a comment on the original post and asked for her baby's age, the brand of milk, and address. Of course, I did a profile check first to see if the post is true and not fake news. I also checked if they are worth helping *kasi baka naman sila ay manginginginom, sugarol,* or whatever. So I stalked their accounts and even checked how they interact with their friends. I wanted to see what they are posting on social media. You see, *sa gut feel ko lang ako umaasa* when it comes to judgment. *Isang baby lang kasi ang kaya kong i-shoulder* because I also feed my 4 children and a nephew. And I want to help the real needy during this time.

After that, there was another shocking moment. Ang daming nagta-tag sa akin sa comment section at nagme-message privately sa Facebook. I was shocked because I received over 20 message requests from different accounts. *Baklaaa!* I don't know what to do. I couldn't shoulder all the milk requests from all of them.

So, I thought of raising funds to give them milk. I created a Facebook post on the same day (April 10) and boom! Negative *agad*



yang ginawa kong post because of that MILK CODE! A friend of mine commented and told me about it. Thanks to her *at baka ngayon ay nagkakaso pa ako*. I edited the post and just put in there *na baka groceries na lang ang ibigay ko*. Good thing, *madaming tao ang ang sumuporta sa aking #AVAyanihan Project*. Yes, that's what I called the donation project.

I was able to raise PHP 13,000. The next day, I went to the nearest grocery store and bought all the milk needed for 20 babies who were on my list of recipients. FYI, we profiled them all. We asked for their names, age, brand/type of milk, and address for the delivery. We did a little background checking too.

After shopping, we packed the milk with some bread and biscuits for the babies. We started calling them one by one and asked them to pick up the packages from my place instead.

Nagpanggap pa akong ibang tao (and not the Ava they talked to on Facebook) when they arrived. This is because I don't want them to know my real identity. I told them that I was the

secretary of Ava who helped prepare the donations for the **#AVAyanihan Project**. *Mahirap na at baka may mga kumatok sa bahay ko at manghingi ng tulong* out of the blue.

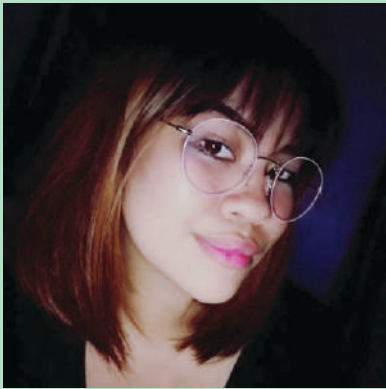
What's crazy about this project is that many people also sent me messages just to let me know that I am going against the milk code. One of the messages said that I do not care about the babies and all I'm just after is fame for being a "fake" concerned citizen". I just ignored them but I was already a little nervous *kasi baka makasuhan nga ako*. Of course, I wanted to help. I didn't give just the milk that I wanted to give. I also gave them other things that they need for their babies at a time like this. *Pinagpasa-Diyos ko na lang ang mga inggiterang bashers*.

This project helped me realize that some of our laws suck. I realized that it is better to prioritize survival rather than the principles of promoting breast milk when there are mothers who really cannot provide it either. I realized that I am beyond blessed and that I should be thankful for what I and my family have been



blessed with. I realized that not everyone will be pleased when you try to help. That there will be people who will still be against your will to help and that there will always be negative comments no matter how good you do.

And lastly, I learned that unity, understanding, and sharing are some of the ways on how we can survive a global pandemic like COVID-19.



About The Author

Ava is a social media content strategist and a legal and e-commerce virtual assistant. She is the founder of **Ava's Virtual Assistance**.



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How To Survive And Strive Amidst The Pandemic

June 12, 2020

BY JEFFREY G. DELFIN (PHILIPPINES)

Coronavirus or COVID-19 came like a thief in the night. We didn't know when it will hit us. We were unprepared for this scenario. Most of us were saddened by the experiences that we had from this pandemic.

Our economy went down. No revenues are coming in because of the temporary closure of businesses in our country. Some are experiencing anxiety due to thinking about where they will get their food for survival. Depression hits those who lost their jobs, which is another dilemma that some of us are facing right now.

Because of the current scenario that we have, I said to myself that we have to do something about it. We must be strong for us to fight the anxiety and depression that come with it.

We Filipinos are resilient. I know that we can find ways to survive and strive amidst this pandemic. Every day, I'm browsing my Facebook account and checking my newsfeed. Then, I came upon this webinar that talks about surviving the crisis that we are facing. I wanted to share the takeaways I had from this seminar. According to this well-known business guru, there are 6 things that we can do to endure the crisis.

1. Coordinate with our employer. If we are employed, the first thing that we have to do is to talk to our employer. Talk to our



boss and ask if they can provide some help or assistance.

2. Coordinate with our local government. If it is difficult to seek help from the National Government, probably, the Local Government Unit (LGU) can provide us some aid through relief goods.

3. Talk to DOLE and DOH. We can ask if there are available part-time jobs in the meantime so we can provide food for our family, such as being a frontliner.

4. Talk to our friends and relatives. If we are truly incapable of providing for our family as of the moment, we can ask them to lend us some money.

5. Use our emergency fund. We should budget our money for our food and our health. Now is the time that we can use the money that we have been saving for a long time.

6. Pray to God. There is nothing that we can do without the presence of our God Almighty. Nothing is impossible with God. We know that He works in mysterious ways.



The business guru also gave some tips on how to earn money during this time. He gave us the 8 ways to get instant income during the lockdown.

1. Be an online tutor. If you are a teacher, you can use your teaching skills in delivering your lessons to your learners online.

2. Cook for your neighbors and friends. Because of the current situation that we have, we know that it is difficult for us to go outside to buy food. Knowing how to bake bread and cookies will be an advantage. You can gain profit by selling them to your neighbors.

3. Be a personal shopper. If you have a car or a tricycle and your neighbors or friends don't want to go to the market or the grocery store, you can ask to be their personal shopper. You can earn from the service charge and delivery charge as well.

4. Make a saleable craft. Make some dustpan, broomstick, or anything that can be used in cleaning the house and its surroundings. Use extra materials that are available in your house and that are longer needed.

5. Sew and sell. Check if you have a sewing machine in your house. Better use it to make face masks and personal protective equipment then sell them online.

6. Become a freelancer. There are popular websites like Fiverr, 99designs, and UpWork wherein you can get various online jobs. This way, you can work and earn from home.

7. Rent out your WiFi. You can make money out of your WiFi connection. Ask your neighbors for a small fee if they want to have access to your WiFi.

8. Become a virtual assistant. Be a personal assistant to your boss online. If you have the communication skills and you are a tech-savvy as well, then this job is suitable for you.

To end this article, I would like to share an insightful quote that I read coming from George Lopez who once said, “When things are bad, it is the best time to reinvent yourself.”



About The Author

Jeffrey Galindez Delfin is currently a Senior High School Teacher III at Cabangan National High School in the province of Zambales. He is one of the Grand Prize winners of The League of Poets’ A Song of Peace: World’s Biggest Anthology of Contemporary Poetry 2020.

He also won as Champion in the *E.C.Q. Essay Writing Contest* conducted by Mother Theresa Colegio De Zambales. His articles were featured at 7 Eyes Productions, Marketing In Asia, and DepEd Zambales Journal.



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Hi! My name is Summer and prior to the pandemic, I was an Event Planner organizing social and corporate events and Before I Do Bridal Fair Series which runs 4 times a year at Megatrade Hall, SM Megamall. I've been planning and organizing events since 2005 but like everyone else in the event industry, we have to put everything on hold and find new ways to earn a living or at least to survive this pandemic.

The items that I sell online are basically supplied by other event professionals who tapped their own network. Thus, food items, and cleaning/safety products that you see on the wall of Mercado de Biñan Home Essentials would come from different places and not just in Biñan. When you buy from me, you are supporting not just me and my family but also my other friends in the industry who might be a mother, a father, or a single parent trying to earn a living to feed his/her family.

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A New Beginning: Hope And Resiliency From Organizational Downsize

June 12, 2020

BY KATHLEEN MAY C. GAGASA (PHILIPPINES)

These are dubious times. We're all suffering from the coronavirus pandemic. It has disrupted everything we took for granted—dining out, taking a stroll, playing sports, family, friends, and for some, it includes their jobs as well.

Having to let people go is a painful thing to do at the best of times. There is no good way to tell someone they no longer have a job. And amidst a worldwide emergency, when the world is loaded with instability, the stakes are higher than ever.

COVID-19 is already hitting businesses hard. The first waves of layoffs are here and unemployment is rising in hard-hit areas and industries. There is arguably no worse time to lay people off. But for many businesses, it is becoming an inevitability. Teams are distributed, people are in lockdown, emotions are running high, and big decisions need to be made quickly.

Layoffs are shocking because they're almost always unexpected. It is even more daunting because they are happening at a time when the economy has effectively been stopped. And we really have no idea when it will start up again and how long it will take to regain steam. A lot of leaders don't want to see their team members suffer, so they turn to layoffs as a last resort to help save the company or cut costs. The reality is, losing a job sucks and is always stressful.

To all who are reading this who had been laid-off due to the recent pandemic, hear me on this: Stop thinking that our jobs define us as a person. Please understand that you're not alone and are going to be okay.

You're probably feeling a lot of emotions right now, which is to be expected. The key to getting through it is to acknowledge the emotions, not run from it. Embrace the way you feel and surrender to feeling sad, excited, angry, or whatever emotion you're feeling.

Give yourself time and space to process everything before you move forward. No one makes good decisions when they're emotional. Start by calming yourself down and taking a deep breath.

When you're ready...

Reach out to your family, friends, or colleagues with whom you haven't spoken to in a while and make it a habit to connect with someone every day. Break the news to your loved ones and let them know about your situation. They are the best people to turn to in times like these. Be open and don't let shame keep you isolated in the dark. You don't need to impart all the subtleties to everybody, set some boundaries if you don't want them to pester you with questions. The key here is to perceive this is a difficult time. Seek out their support in this time of need.

Now is a great time to boost your skills and reinvent yourself. Regardless of your goals and plans, gaining new skills can help. Turn your skills into opportunities. Do the things you love to do.



Rediscover your passions. Find new hobbies. Your time has been shifted around, so use it to your advantage. You've got to take care of your mental health during the uncertainty of the coronavirus.

Realize that change may be a good thing and tap your connections to move into another direction. If your industry has taken a blow, it's time to start branching out into other types of work. Be willing to step outside of your comfort zone. Touch base with your industry contacts, friends, and social media networks and let them know that you're in the market for that next opportunity.

Find your tribe. You are not a one-man band. A true friend will do whatever they can to help you find work. Don't be discouraged if you don't see any success with your immediate circle. Oftentimes, it's not about who you know—it's who they know.

Keep asking and digging and cultivating your network. It might take a bit of time but if you're persistent and approach it with the right attitude, this little interlude will lead you to find new opportunities to bigger and better things.

Follow the demand. If you know you could be facing a long stretch before securing a full-time position in your previous industry, you may be considering a temporary gig to make ends meet in the meantime. A crisis doesn't hit the economy evenly. There are lots of companies hiring in "essential" fields. The hiring process may look different now because of social distancing measures.

No one knows as to how long this pandemic will last. This is the first time we've ever been through this as a nation, but our leaders and—special shout-out to our brave frontliners—are doing the best they can.

So, buckle down and have a long-term mindset. Be that as it may, remain confident and hopeful.



Times of crisis reveal the kind of person we are. Be patient and don't forget to practice self-wellness. It's just as essential to protect your mental health as well as physical health during this tumultuous period. We are not in control of this period of our lives. Being laid off from a job is tough, and it makes it more overwhelming if you factored in a global pandemic.

But you can use this time to your advantage. Gather your thoughts, come up with a game plan, and get back out there. Allow things to unfold. Just because things aren't happening in your time doesn't mean they haven't been set in motion. Be confident that you'll come out of this stronger if you decide to rise to the challenge. Be resilient and stay hopeful because this won't last forever.

You have what it takes. Rather than viewing the situation in a negative light, look at it as the opportunity for what it truly is—a new beginning. Keep in mind that when you've hit rock bottom, there's only one way left to go anyway—and that's "up".

Good luck and carry on!



 Kathleen May Gagasa

 kmcgagasa02

About The Author

Kathleen May Gagasa graduated from De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde with a degree in Information Systems and is currently working as a Software Quality Assurance Engineer. Apart from technology, some of her other hobbies and interests include traveling, photography, sports, and LEGOs. She also loves watching sunsets while having meaningful conversations.

Kath is just a simple girl with big dreams but appreciates the simplest things and experiences in life. Aim high, dream high!



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Here's a BONUS ESSAY from

REAGAN A. LATUMBO

Quarantined Thoughts “most prolific” writer, so far.

“Bigyan ng jacket!”

Life Is Precious

May 27, 2020

BY BY REAGAN A. LATUMBO (PHILIPPINES)

The struggle is real for those who want to go back to work after the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) becomes Modified ECQ in Metro Manila, particularly in Makati, the place where I'm supposed to work. Cavite is now under General Community Quarantine (GCQ), except for some parts of Bacoor. However, GCQ is another plight to endure.

I took a risk to return to work, but, transportation is lacking and only essential workers can go in and out of Cavite under the GCQ. Right after I saw how crowded the streets were, I realized that it's a matter of life and death.

All of us want to go back to work, to fill our empty stomachs, to sustain the needs of our family, and help those in need. But we tend to forget that there is no specific vaccine yet readily available for COVID-19. Thus, we are still not 100% safe.

Why am I writing this? Because my life is what matters to me the most right now. I want to return to work, but transportation is lacking. Social distancing is strictly implemented and wearing of face mask is mandatory when going out. That is why I'd rather stay at home than going out. I don't want to be like those desperate ones who waste their temporary freedom strolling at the malls.

If I am unable to work and cannot pay for my rent for the past two months, amounting to PHP3,000 per month, I will humbly ask my landlords to understand my situation. It's not that it is my fault for losing my job or I have not been able to avail of the Work-From-Home arrangement, but the situation was temporarily blocked by this crisis.

Currently, I was tagged under LOA (leave of absence) in my company and I am not questioning that. I fully understand them. It is very hard to take a risk to travel to work at this very moment. People are flocking like ants trying to fall in line to get out of the traffic just to reach their workplace.

If everyone can only understand that their life is more valuable than any of their jobs, they won't bother going out. But not all can comprehend. Not all are single or with a lot of savings that can sustain them. Not all are rich or belong to business tycoon families that can fill their hungry stomach at any time.

If I can live without food on my plate, it's okay. I won't complain. What matters to me is my life.

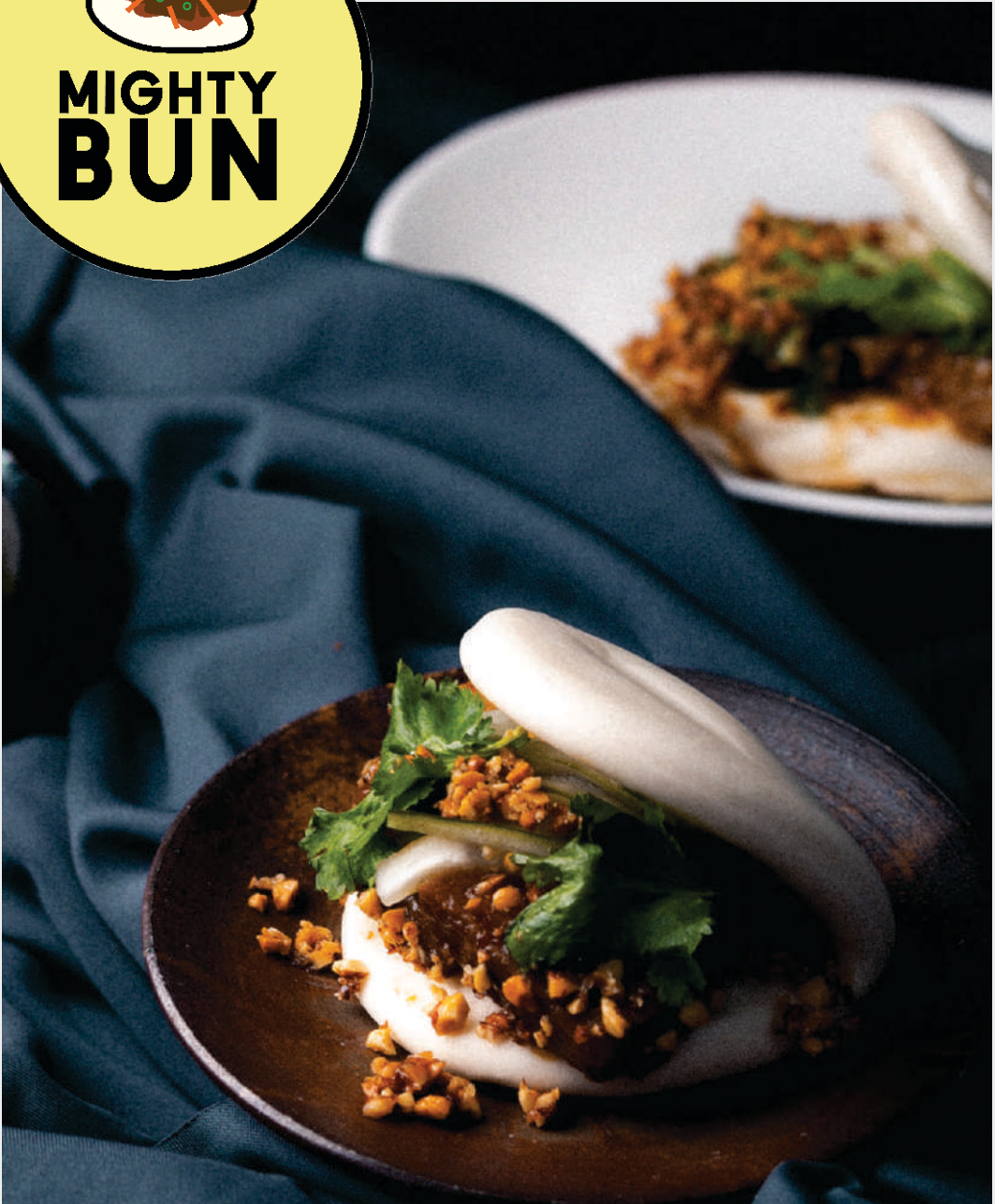
Our life is precious. Always remember that our frontliners are also humans that need our support and assistance in this pandemic.



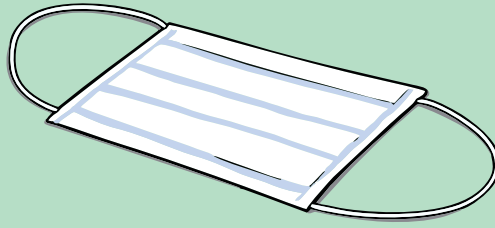
About The Author

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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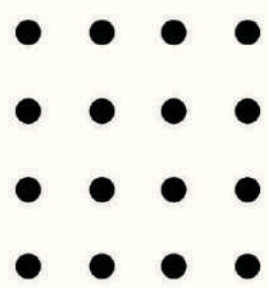
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THANK YOU FOR THE VALIDATION

BY KATH C. EUSTAQUIO-DERLA (PUBLISHER)

Here's the thing about me—I jump from one project to another so fast I don't have time to revel on the success of the past. In fact, I start a new project while I'm still in the middle of the previous one—something that my husband don't understand.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I don't like waiting. That's why I often start multiple projects. This way, while I'm waiting for updates on the first one, I'm already building project #2. No time wasted.

And because I move too fast, too soon, I end up not giving myself a pat on the back for the good feedback we get on past projects. I just don't have time to wrap myself in glory for the triumphs of the past, I guess. In a way, I'd like to out-do myself most of the time (which isn't really healthy because we need to slow down sometimes).

When I started **Quarantined Thoughts** in March 2020, I didn't expect it to have such an effect on people. I had no idea how many people would be willing to share their thoughts with me and allow me to publish the essays on the website and in an ebook. I thought I had to write some essays myself or force my husband and friends to contribute pieces just so we can publish one ebook.

By my god.

When we signed in our 50th book author in the Quarantined Thoughts ebook project, I had to give myself a pat on the back for a milestone. I had to slow down for a few minutes and marvel at how far we've all come since we published our first essay on the website. As of writing, we have 54 writers and our line up for Volume 3 is already completed. So all new submissions will be for Volumes 4 and 5. We also receive emails from freelancers and online sellers who want to place free ads, something we do to get the word out to help them sell during this time.

Since the release of **Quarantined Thoughts Volume 1** on Yumpu and Amazon, people have been congratulating me and the authors and advertisers. They told me that what I'm doing—especially at a time like this—is a great feat. After all, there are many stories that don't get their share of the spotlight. There are

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

people who have stories but don't know how to turn them into essays. Our template has proven effective. I had no inkling that a single idea—of helping people write their own stories—could have such impact.

So in this thank you note, I am not just thanking the authors who trusted me with their stories, the advertisers who also share the book to their communities, and the readers who send their feedback and in turn become authors for the next volume. I am also thanking everyone who show their support in one way or another—your congratulations make me slow down and smell the roses. Thank you for giving me the validation that this project is not only giving people something to do during the quarantine, but also creating a positive impact in a pandemic world.

Okay, back to work for me now. Watch out for **Quarantined Thoughts Volume 3!**



Cheers,

Kath

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

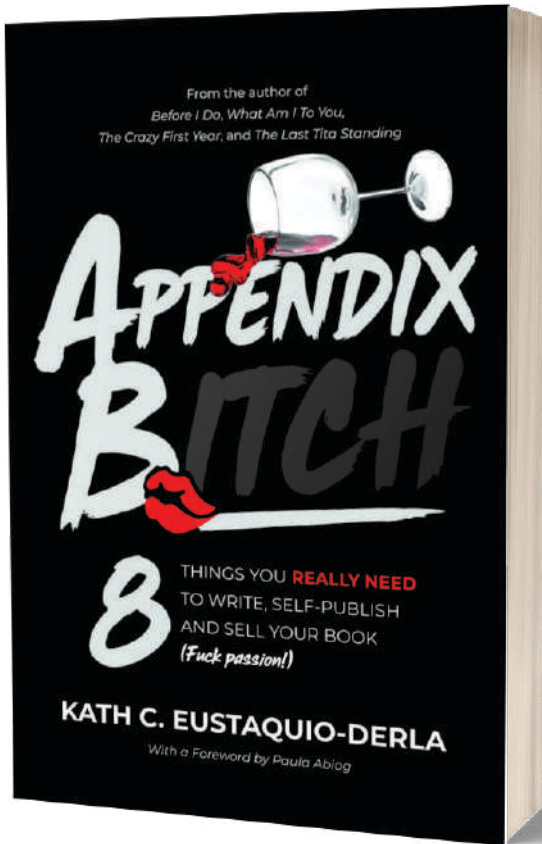
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- **Aurora Castillo Pulido**, US-based self-published author of *The Seamstress with the Sampaguita Flowers*



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Photo by Natalie Donato

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If you want to implement everything you learned from **Appendix B** and the **Learning Series**, enroll in the mentoring program. The goal is to produce a self-published book in a year or less. Let me hold your hand and guide you through the process. This is for people who want the fastest route to becoming a self-published author.

This mentoring program is not for people who are simply looking for writing inspiration. We don't spoon feed. We are looking for **ACTION TAKERS** – people who are willing to do the work and bring that book idea to life with our team's help. If you're an **ACTION TAKER**, then let's get to work.

You can read all the books, watch all the videos, attend all the seminars, but if you want to really make things happen, **get a mentor.**

*Your dream of becoming a book author
has been delayed for far too long.*

Learn More: bit.ly/All-InPKBMentoringProgram

Limited slots available because Kath is very hands-on.





Photo by Jill Chan of Copywriting Dojo Philippines

ONLINE COMMUNITY

JOIN THE OFFICIAL PAPERKAT BOOKS FACEBOOK COMMUNITY

HOW TO WRITE A BOOK & SELF-PUBLISH IT

Here, founder and CEO Kath C. Eustaquio-Derla and her team of authors, editors, designers, and book ambassadors share learning, tips, tricks, trade secrets, and awesome stories about book writing and self-publishing. Joining is free! See you online!

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

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

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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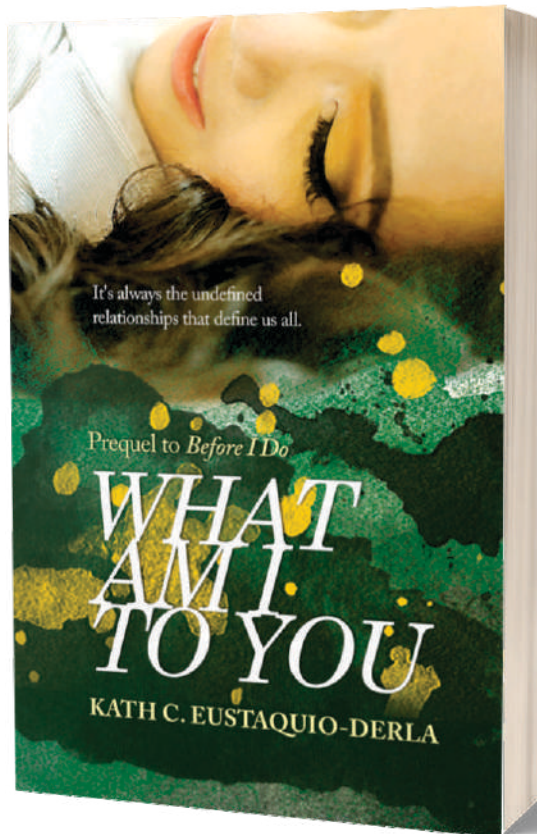
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“When you’re inexplicably
in love with someone,
not even the harshest truth
can change your mind.”



Lazada Get it here: bit.ly/PKBLazada



Read *Quarantined Thoughts Vol 1*
for free! Visit bit.ly/ccpaperkatbooks
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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) | Jill Barcelona-Suzuki | Krishna Lou Ayungao (PH)
Aurora Castillo Pulido (USA) | Kaye Angelyah Pingol (PH) | Ara D. Larosa (PH)
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