

Life Stories And Musings During A Pandemic

# QUARANTINED THOUGHTS

**VOLUME 3**

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

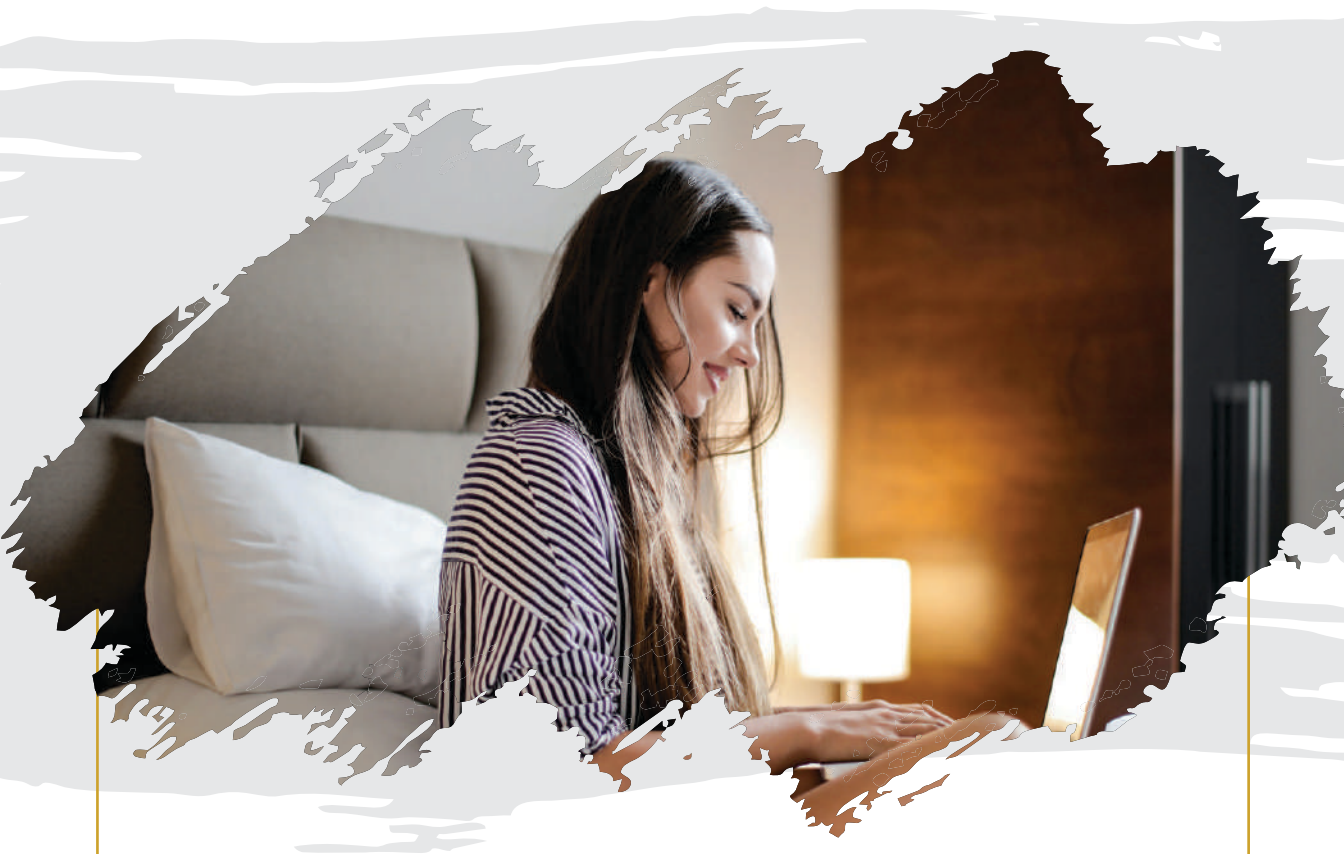
KATH C. EUSTAQUIO-DERLA,  
PUBLISHER



# 2020 SUCKS!

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

Share your Quarantined Thoughts with us!  
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# DEDICATION

This book is for 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 3

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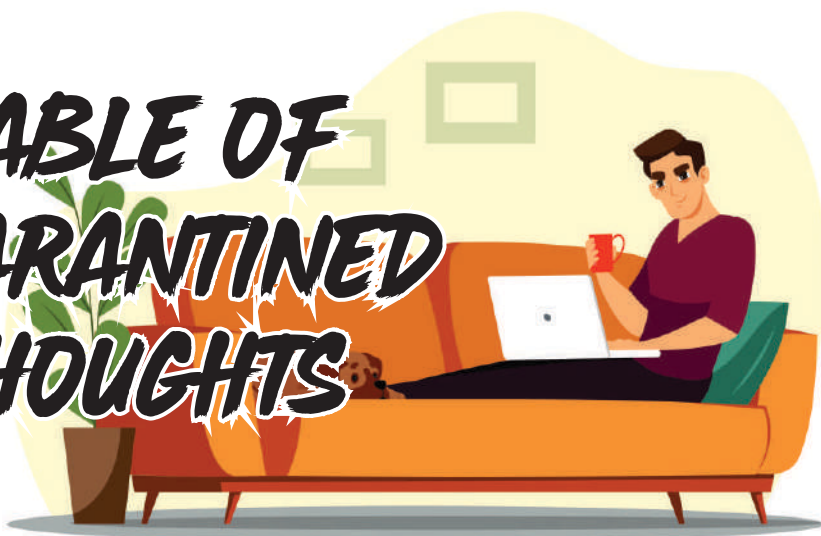
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# DISCLAIMER

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**. You can read Volume 1 here: <https://bit.ly/ReadQTVOL1>

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.

Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals, companies, and organizations. Opinions expressed here are solely the authors' own and do not express the views or opinions of the PaperKat Books and HS Grafik Print teams and its advertisers.



## INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

# CHANGES IN COVER

When the pandemic-related community quarantine/s were first imposed in the Philippines and around the world, we felt a lot of things: fear, panic, confusion, anger...

Oh boy, can you remember the madness? People stocking up on toilet paper (maybe not in the Philippines because we have the mighty, trusty *tabo*), canned goods, and disinfectants. Do you remember the time when rubbing alcohol, face masks, and face shields were ridiculously expensive? Today, they're sold for peanuts, really.

## INTRODUCTION

Do you remember the mad dash to secure a “quarantine pass” or QP and the lines to get *ayuda* (in cash and in kind)?

When the community quarantine and lockdown were first imposed in March 2020, there was mayhem, but there was also this peculiar stillness when we found ourselves stuck at home with nothing to do, well almost.

Okay, okay. I am always checking my privilege. What I’m trying to say is that during the first phase of the community quarantines, many of us tried making *dalgona* coffee, *ube* cheese *pandesal*, and...remember those memes where people sort things like 3-in-1 coffee and packs of mixed nuts? Some of us went nuts. I know because I did these. Well, not the sorting of instant coffee and nuts, but I tried the *dalgona* and bought the *ube* cheese *pandesal*. I also taught myself how to bake bread from scratch.

In some weird way, many of us were chill because we were suddenly given free time. After all, our calendared events were

wiped out. And this weird chill vibe was reflected in the cover of Quarantined Thoughts Vol 1, the one with the bubuyong shades (sunglasses).

After some time, the strict enhanced community quarantine shifted to a modified community quarantine. We were ecstatic because, at that time, we thought we could get back to “normal” very soon. Oh boy, Mother Nature isn’t done shitting on our faces.



## INTRODUCTION

During that stage, the world was still scrambling for a vaccine. The race to produce the vaccine was so intense. The international and local news were batshit (pun intended) crazy. And just when we thought the US would do something to save the world just like in Hollywood movies, Americans are dealing with issues that **\*\*seem\*\*** bigger than the pandemic. Ironic, isn't it?



And worldwide frustration and inner turmoil due to being locked up at home for months are reflected in the cover of Quarantined Thoughts Vol. 2. We particularly chose a face that embodies the rage you can feel even through a face mask.

And finally, here we are in 2021. The vaccines are made and being rolled out despite challenges in logistics and supply. The economy is slowly opening up again. But because of several irresponsible, stupid, and downright asshole people who don't follow basic health and public safety guidelines, here we are, back to varying community lockdowns with curfews.

*Apart from the vaccination updates in the local and international news, things are still not okay. We're still living in a pandemic world. The virus is still out there. And I guess many people have reached a level of apathy.*

## INTRODUCTION

Of course, we still care about what's going on—as we should. For instance, in our household, we watch the news during mealtimes and we discuss it sometimes. But unlike before where we get riled up whenever we see people on Facebook getting away with something because of connections or they think they're special or immune to the virus, today we're like "Karma will get you, fuck you." And most of the time, karma does hit them. HARD.

I know this because I've been following the social media fiasco of ingrate former acquaintances who have PhDs in social climbing and subtle international whoring. After decades of gold-digging, you'd think they're smart. But no, instead of them gold-digging another rich foreigner, the "pot of gold" turned out to be a con artist who conned them of their dignity and reputation. And all these I get to watch unfold beautifully, maddeningly on social media. Sometimes, God allows you to watch the downfall of evil people.

*But I don't get riled  
up anymore.  
Like the cover girl in  
Quarantined  
Thoughts Vol 3,  
my resting bitch face  
doesn't give  
anything away.*



## INTRODUCTION

These are the subliminal messages on the covers of our three volumes. And as we publish succeeding volumes, you'll see many more secret messages that are just fun for an artist like me.

Wow, Volume 3! Can you imagine how many first-time authors we've helped in 2020? Amazeballs!

As always, thank you for the support! :)



Cheers,

*Kath*

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

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# Beast Mode Na Ko!

---

July 17, 2020

BY KATH C. EUSTAQUIO-DERLA (PHILIPPINES)

**Disclaimer:** This rant was written and posted on Facebook at a time when different cities in Luzon were implementing varying stages of community quarantine. Two things were clear: One, it wasn't safe—people were advised not to gather in groups or travel leisurely across borders. Two, some people are just irresponsible and stupid.

## QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 3

Nearly five months of quarantine.

Five months of not seeing my family and friends in person.

Five months that my son has not seen his grandparents in person.

Five months of staying at home and celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, and special occasions (mother's day, father's day) over Zoom and Facebook video calls.

Five months of sanitizing every single thing that we bring inside our home—that includes every piece of siling labuyo and canned food that we buy outside.

Five months of rushing to digitize and automate business activities. Five months of closed and now-lesened business operations for our design-print-publish company.

Five months of very strict quarantine protocols from our condo admin, resident associations, and from my doctor brother, nurse mother-in-law, and germaphobe parents.

We live in different houses in different cities. We have private cars. If we want, we could visit each other's houses, dine out but practice social distancing, and even drive to a private resort owned by people we know for an overnight stay because we miss each other a lot.

*But we don't.*

Because we understand that the coronavirus is still out there. We understand that there are asymptomatic people. We understand that wearing face masks and observing social distancing help in containing the spread of COVID-19. We understand that it's (the pandemic) not over yet.

*Tapos may makikita akong mga tao na saksakan ng bobo at nagawa pang mag-post ng mga TikTok videos of them dancing to some stupid music at a resort with extended family?*

Imagine how many people there are—I counted 10 people dancing in the pool in three TikTok clips. And they don't have face masks because *nagsi-swimming sila sa pool* and definitely not practicing social distancing.

This is the reason why we can't beat this virus. Because there are stupid people like these who are compromising the health of the general public. Imagine if asymptomatic *yung isa sa kanila*, then *nagkahawahan nang hindi alam*. And they go home to their respective villages and infect other people just because *hindi sila makatiis na hindi mag-swimming ngayon kasi siguro mainit*.

**ANG TATANGA NYO!**

*Pwede bang isumbong yung mga taong ito sa barangay officials because they are clearly not following quarantine protocols? Ang ironic pa dito*, the one who posted the photos is an online seller of fake luxury goods who is also selling face masks and face shields *ngayong pandemic*.

**ANG TATANGA DIBA?**

And you know why I'm fucking mad? Because when a cousin and the mother of a family friend died, *hindi man lang kami makapunta sa wake at sa libing*. Because *napakadaming mga taong tinitiis ang gutom kasi di makalabas ng bahay kasi walang pambili ng face mask*.

*Ang daming tao na nagtitiis na hindi makita in person yung mga mahal nila sa buhay tapos kayong mga hinayupak kayo magti-TikTok lang sa resort? What makes you think special kayo? Pwede ba, ang pa-panget nyo!*

I am fucking angry because these stupid people went to a resort in Tanay, which is also in the East. *Eh malapit lang yun sa Taytay, Rizal, where my mother-in-law lives. And I know for a fact that some of these irresponsible people live in Cainta and Pasig areas where my immediate family lives.*

Stupid, irresponsible people like these are the reasons why we can't stop the virus from spreading, simply because *hindi makatiis na hindi mag-gettogether, mga putangina.*

*Tao lang ako kaya nabibwisit ako.  
Sige delete mo yung mga videos and posts.  
Naka-screenshot na lahat, gago.*



## 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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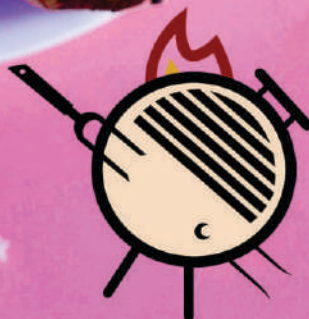
@dadsbellyroast



Dads Belly Roast



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**DADS  
BELLY  
ROAST**

From the author of  
*Before I Do, What Am I To You,*  
*The Crazy First Year, and The Last Tita Standing*

# APPENDIX BITCH

8 THINGS YOU **REALLY NEED**  
TO WRITE, SELF-PUBLISH  
AND SELL YOUR BOOK  
*(Fuck passion!)*

**KATH C. EUSTAQUIO-DERLA**

*With a Foreword by Paula Abiog*

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

Take action.”

“I just finished reading *Appendix B* several hours ago. It was really a delight to be reading an ‘instructional tool’ full of honest information and tips culled from life experiences. Your realistic take on writing and publishing will help us mentees to modify our expectations and strengthen our desire to finish our project.”

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



Get the ebook here:  
**[bit.ly/AppendixBPKB](https://bit.ly/AppendixBPKB)**



# During Times Like This, You Need A Jelly!

---

April 14, 2020

BY JILL BARCELONA-SUZUKI (JAPAN)

People around the world are going crazy. Is it because of this pandemic? Of course, what else could be worse than this? Some try to read every single news article they see and check all the channels



on TV. I don't know why, but one thing I'm very sure of is that every content is almost the same. But still, we do it. It really breaks our hearts, but we do care what the "very near" future will be like. That's why we still choose to see the same news every single day.

I just want people to see the simplest sides of things for now or, for just an hour or two a day, reminisce what we enjoyed the most when we were kids—going to our neighbor's house and eating snacks together with the other kids. Isn't it nice to find time to divert our attention to what's precious for us back then? We can do the same thing now—not only for the kids but also for the adults—since I know that some of us crave not just our favorite foods but also something that lets us feel content.

I remember when my parents told us to choose what we would love to eat for snacks when we were at the supermarket. Remember those jellies with many attractive colors? Yes, the ones that, sometimes, we had a "catfight" with our brother or sister over the ones we want to have. I remember the colors—red, yellow,



orange, green, and purple. I've often wondered why they only put two or three of that color purple in one pack. I always wanted to bring back those memories, not only for us to forget what's currently happening in the world now but to make people happy and stress-free because I know everyone is so worried about the pandemic.

This also reminds us that, in life, we have a choice: to choose the different colors—like when we choose the colors of the jellies we like and we see the beauty in each of them, especially at this time when we feel hopeless; or follow what we are feeling right now, with some people thinking that it's the end of the world. We always have a choice.

**So in times like this, you really need a jelly!**



 SFJBS2020




Scan to watch Jill's interview  
with *Our Awesome Planet!*

## About The Author

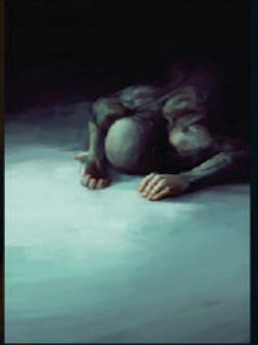
Jill taught at Xavier University - Ateneo de Cagayan from the school year 2003-2004 and the summer of 2004. She got married at the end of 2004, and two years later, she and her husband decided to live in Japan. She gave birth to their daughter Kei in 2007. Jill still lives in Japan with her family. She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



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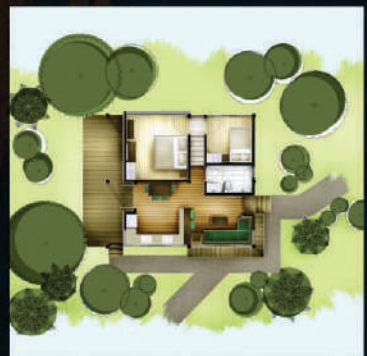
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# The Crash We Always Knew Would Come

---

May 12, 2020

BY LORI DUMALIGAN (PHILIPPINES)

I found out that my cousin crashed his car while on a drive with his girlfriend in the middle of April this year. The front of the car was smashed and the bumper dangled like an apostrophe as if

indicating it was the owner of the damage.

I imagined myself in the backseat, excited about the promise of a road trip. Music played on top volume and cold drinks passed around from a cooler box. Instead of my cousin in the car, it would be a mix and match of friends I had made over the years who are now spread out in different countries and new friends who I haven't had the courage to open up to yet.

We would be driving aimlessly in some endless countryside where the oppressively hot tropical weather doesn't bother us. And then, as if expecting it, we'd crash. Shaken into a stupor and dead or alive, we will be forever stuck in that memory. Maybe this is how I'd look back at the year I turned 20.

The excitement of the possibility of doing whatever I wanted with my time lasted only for a week. What I accepted as my new life in college lasted less than two years. What's left is my inconsistency, my bad habits, my sleepless nights, my failed plans, and my family. The strength of all my friendships tested and my insecurities repressed are coming out to play.



Maybe you are doing it too—taking on long joy rides in your head of all the things you had always wanted to do before the Enhanced Community Quarantine made you stop at a dead-end street.

Maybe you are now appreciating all the seemingly boring things you used to do. Maybe you are telling stories of the same old regrets and long-forgotten dreams. Maybe you are filling your head with all the things you never did but now you have to do after the quarantine.

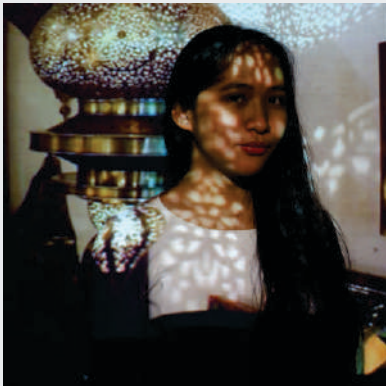
But I realized that this is a pre-COVID-19 mindset. Yes, our lives and our experiences can now be categorized in a pre- and post-coronavirus world. Old systems might not recover. This pandemic, a system's crash, means that what we used to know will never be the same.

I still mourn the loss of my routine that I've carefully protected to make my world sane and orderly. I mourn prematurely the past, present, and inevitable deaths of people, of the systems that have



tried and failed, of all the events interrupted, and more until there is nothing left in me to grieve. Are we going to become better people after this pandemic? Are we going to become people who want to create and implement better systems?

**Perform a self-check.** If pre-COVID-19 mentality detected, Error Warning: system crash! Relevance not found in a post-COVID-19 world.



## About The Author

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



You can read Lori's essay *"I'm On A Break But Can't Wait To Get Back To Normal!" And Other Illusions* in Quarantined Thoughts Volume 1!

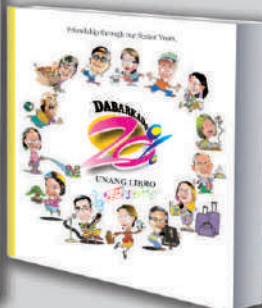
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# Feeling Unworthy

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May 20, 2020

BY REAGAN A. LATUMBO (PHILIPPINES)

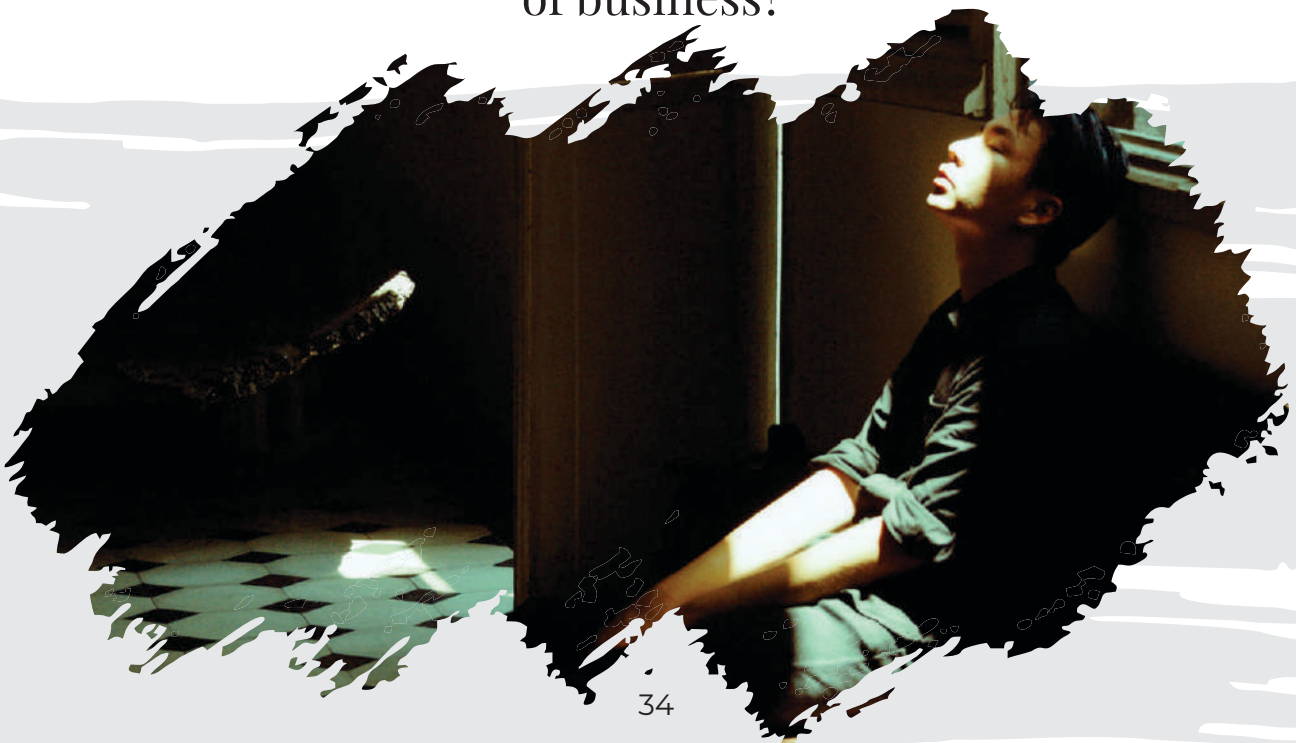
It's been 66 days to be exact since the lockdown was announced. Extensions were declared and now, a new normal has begun. And me? I am still the same person who is lacking in finances.

I have been patiently waiting for answers from my company to help me, but it took them more than a month to respond. And the response they gave me is not even the one I want to hear.

It started from the submission of my Calamity Loan to Pag-IBIG. Next was the status of the PHP5,000 DOLE cash assistance then down to the deployment of equipment for the Work-From-Home arrangement. The company failed to provide answers to me.

What do you think should I feel if the company I am working with failed to assist me? How do you think I should react if they promise to help you, but helping hands do not even reach me?

Now, I question myself. Are my 9 years of service not enough to extend their help to me? Did they just forget that from January of 2019 until February of 2020, I was one of their Top Performers in one of their lines of business?



I understand that the lives of each employee are precious in their eyes, hearts, and minds. But they should at least consider the good deeds and contributions of their tenured employees to extend help to them. I am still hoping that they can still find ways to help me and all their no-work no-pay employees.

In this pandemic, writing is my only escape to vent out my anger, to express my feelings, and to share my thoughts. Writing like this made me realized one thing:

Coronavirus may not  
intentionally kill us all, but it  
is slowly making our hearts  
grow weary.



It is hurting us all every day. While we do not know when the vaccine will be available, millions are now putting their lives in danger daily.

If we are not careful enough, it might even be too late for our frontliners to save us.



## 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.



You can read Reagan's essays in Quarantined Thoughts Volume 1.

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Being Natural



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# The New Normal Look

---

June 23, 2020

BY AURORA CASTILLO PULIDO (USA)

The first time I started to use a face mask because of the COVID-19 pandemic was on my way home from the Philippines, after a month of college Golden Jubilee celebration, local trips, very

good Filipino meals, and visiting with family and friends. The Japanese flight attendants from Manila to Narita were all wearing face masks, but only a few passengers did and, of course, I was one of those stubborn ones.

My perspective changed though when I was on board the flight carrying me home to San Diego. The airline crew was not wearing face masks and I was lulled into falling asleep until the very loud hacking cough of a passenger woke me up.

He kept going on without bothering to cover his mouth, not even with his hands, and he was not intimidated by the stares of his co-passengers. His message was clear: you all adjust to me because it was really none of my business. Several pairs of hands went up putting on their face masks! That was the end of my complacency when it comes to protecting myself.

Fast forward to the pleading suggestion of our government here in the US to please leave all the surgical, disposable masks for our healthcare workers and to start using cloth masks instead. I had one hurdle though! I don't sew, knit, nor crochet. My Home Economics projects when I was in elementary were usually done by my mother and sisters and sometimes, my classmates. I just did not have the talent nor the patience of my sisters and cousins who could produce crochet doilies, bedspreads, and tablecloths every summer while listening to the radio and conversing with each other. I just could not connect with this favorite hobby of theirs.



So, with the majority of the citizens wearing all those nice-looking handmade masks, I was left as one of the stragglers still using the regular hospital masks bearing the stares of people around me and making me feel guilty of stealing the masks that belong to the healthcare workers.

Until one day, a generous friend of mine sent me two yellow face masks. I was ecstatic because now I could start feeling “I really belong!” No more avoiding the looks people gave me the few trips I made to the grocery and the post office. I am one of them now!

But then, another challenge came when I was about to meet my family at a park with strict instructions that we would observe social distancing and wear face masks. My youngest granddaughter, I was told, is scared of people wearing masks, never mind if it is her grandma. I decided right there and there that this grandma will not be the source of the misery of her grandchild. And like a light bulb, a brilliant idea came to me.



I have this collection of so many scarves in different sizes, bought all over different cities and different countries. I could practically write a story behind each scarf, some older than my children.



But I have never worn them to cover my face before. I tested one over a cloth mask and it felt comfortable and looked fashionable too!

My granddaughter did not appear to be scared when I met them wearing my yellow-orange scarf but without the usual hugs and kisses. Plus, she was wearing her own small, pink polka dot scarf! I think we both looked cute with our scarves that day.

So, the positive side of this pandemic is the talents that got tapped by the new needs, new looks, and confinement. Now, there are numerous supplies of cloth masks, very attractive too, that complement the total look of an individual. Masks have become the new fashion statement, the new source of income, and the rallying declaration of one's advocacy. As for me, I have found a new purpose for these drawers of scarves collected over the years.



## 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 essays Quarantined Thoughts Volumes 1 and 2.

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# Bucket List, Solitude, And Wild Dreams

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June 23, 2020

BY ANNA CATHERINE VILLAMOR (PHILIPPINES)

## **Bucket List**

The minute I heard about the novel coronavirus (later COVID-19), I knew something terrible was about to happen. So, I did the things I had been wanting to do all my life. For instance, I arranged a photo shoot for my extended family. I also rekindled my relationship with my high school friends and started a passion project in my community.

During my 20-hour trip back to Metro Manila where I am working, I wrote a bucket list for my 25th year. It included trading my broken phone with a posh camera phone to capture quality moments with my family and friends. I also joined my first professional organization. And, on the eve of my birthday, I gifted myself with a new set of tattoos about growth and continuity. I was ticking off items on my bucket list one after the other until the world slowed down.

## **Lockdown And Weird Dreams**

On the fateful night of March 12, 2020, our president finally announced that Metro Manila would be placed on Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), which took effect on the midnight of March 15. Two hours before the announcement, my bosom friend convinced me to return to Bicol. "There will be a lockdown," he warned. Still, I stayed behind.

Just like most of my townsfolk who are working and studying in big cities, I chose to stay because I did not want to bring fear to my family and my community.



In March 2020, the number of COVID-19 cases in Metro Manila was growing exponentially. Back on the island where I lived, there were no confirmed cases. My cousin Charmaine, who is a medical student in Cebu, reminded us that although the Anti-COVID-19 Task Force was commendably proactive in our hometown, we only have a few medical practitioners in a primary hospital with limited medical facilities. Without proper testing, returnees could endanger a COVID-19-free zone. Hence, going home was a risk we chose not to take.

My roommates returned home after the ECQ was declared. I was left alone in a fully furnished but eerie unit. Despite the newfound time and space, I found the solitude unbearable. Since I could not go outside, I started looking for ways to get going inside the unit. I posted one artwork on Instagram every day until it became a chore to me. I tried to grow my own food until my plants died.

Despite these efforts, I felt restless during the first 60 days of the ECQ. I felt lethargic whenever I work. I could not edit nor write properly my academic articles that are long overdue. I also had vivid dreams at night where, for some subconscious reasons, I got nabbed, robbed, stabbed, and shot.

I was even frightened to death when I witnessed someone being decapitated in front of me although I knew it was only a nightmare. In the most horrible one, someone with a knife was chasing after me. Then I fell into a rabbit hole. However, unlike Alice who discovered Wonderland, I found myself in a dark crypt underneath a bank. Despite the horror, I thank the Supreme Being and the Universe for letting me wake up from those weird dreams.

### **New Normal**

On the 61st day of the quarantine, I decided to end the cycle of fear and anxiety. I tried!

First, I identified the things that were not working out for me—sleeping late, scrolling through social media, not moving my body enough, being disconnected from my loved ones, and ruminating over an uncertain future. Then, I altered the rhythms of my body by adopting the “secrets” of the Okinawan centenarians as written on *Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life* (2016).

## QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 3

As much as I can, I wake up around 4 in the morning, do some breathing exercises, and meditate. After meditating, I do some stretching and eat fruits and vegetables—something I dread before. Most of all, I reconnect with my family and peers. I even revived my mini garden. After weeks of trying and mustering the courage to live, I felt internally alive again.



Even so, there are still nights when I cry myself to sleep, days where I am surprisingly calm, and a whole day where I am unusually ecstatic. After going through either a single emotion or a whirlwind of emotions, I label how it felt, acknowledge it, and ask myself, “Can I do something about it?” If the answer is yes, I do what must be done. If I cannot do something, I send it well wishes and let it go.



Despite the distance, having loved ones who welcome my musings help me get through the rough nights and pray for better days. In my wild dreams, I am having my mom's homecooked meals with the rest of the family, finally saying "I'm home."



## About The Author

Anna Catherine Villamor was raised by a community of storytellers. Thus in her youth, she considered writing and storytelling as her predestined *ikigai*. After finishing a degree in History, she served as a Social Science Teacher at the Raya School, the laboratory school of Adarna Publishing House. Right now, she is involved in a book project at a state university.



You can read Anna's essay in Quarantined Thoughts Volume 2.

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# The Birth Of A Dreamchild

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June 30, 2020

BY ANJALI SINHA (INDIA)

What started as a brain-riddling idea for a LinkedIn post, quickly became the setting stone on which I'll carve out a publication that's absolutely me to the core.

Since I was a kid, I have always cherished and deep-dived into stories that made me feel like I'm present there in the scenes unfolding with my favorite characters, and what I aspired to produce became the rhetoric of my magazine.

My idea is to put forth stories that are hysterical, noisy, deeply moving, and empathetic to the world we live in. The crux of *The Meltdown* was formed and the much-needed beautiful sculpturing of the alabaster was done with my bare hands.



Since this global COVID-19 pandemic began, I lost two jobs. One has my pending payments that have been hanging infinitesimally since last October 2019. One client doesn't have anything to pay me.

"The utmost thing is to survive right now, somehow," he mumbled over the phone, as he planned and plotted his family's movement back to his home town through special migrant workers trains that ran haywire within the Indian continent. His laborious sigh could be felt by me long after he had hung up.

I was speechless by these long winding effects on my stability: both internal and financial. "What hope do I have now?" my brain beamed with an elegant, nostalgic thought.

**"Hey, do you remember the time back in 2016 when you always dreamt of bringing out a monthly magazine?" my brain put forward a triumphant idea.**

I licked my lips in tension and delight. "Yes! I do remember," my inner voice screamed. I knew I must do this.

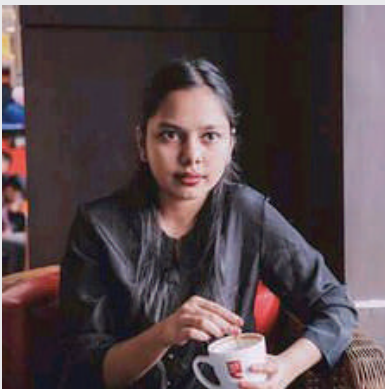
I had a war flashback standing in front of a busy main road, buying 6 magazines, eyeing 8 more, running my thumb and index fingers delicately on the rib of the glossy cover and discreetly smelling the intoxicating print smell (they have real mind-dizzying thinners, haha), and getting lost in the absolute delicacy of reading them and enjoying every moment of it. I suppose I got some sort of high that only bookaholics and fickle compulsive stationery buyers do. I was filled with a sense of royal determination.

"I have to do this!" I yelled at my mirror self, looking directly

inside my brown eyes. “I forbid you from giving up, no matter how rough gets the going!”

After my self-indulgent ego boosting, I got to work. I ran my laptop and logged into LinkedIn, and lo and behold, I was writing a rapid rambling post of how I have always wanted to “run my magazine” and “how it was a long distant dream of mine.” One thing was for sure, if I hadn’t written that post, I wouldn’t be able to live with myself. It would be difficult for me to look myself in the eye as I comb my hair and fix my appearance in front of the same mirror.

Now, I keep the promises I make to myself. No matter how big or small, everything counts. And a pandemic can never water the fire that runs deep within my magazines-breathing soul. Thus, The Meltdown was born and is up and running in the online Amazon stores worldwide.




## 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](mailto:anjalisinha666.as@gmail.com)



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# The Wandering Byte

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June 30, 2020

BY IAN BENEDICT R. MIA (PHILIPPINES)



While working on my laptop at home for the past months, I began to understand more the value of location-independent work during this COVID-19 pandemic. If people have their respective realizations during the Metro Manila lockdown, I'd say this one is the most important to me.

For one, I'm lucky and privileged to have several jobs that I can do anywhere even before the pandemic. I also have very flexible work schedules. Nothing much has changed in my work schedule or ethics for that matter. The only real thing that changed—at least for me—is that movement outside one's home is so limited, and everywhere you go, it's likely to make you feel gloomy and wanting to go someplace else.

But what is location-independent work anyway? For me, it's when you're able to bring a laptop and/or a smartphone anywhere and work wherever you want. It's when you have the kind of job or endeavor where you can burst into creative strides. Many jobs can be made "location independent" if your colleagues or bosses are up to it. The many "digital transformations" that took place during this pandemic are prime examples of that. And can I just say how it's funny that it took a pandemic for many companies to eat their own words on "digital transformation"?

The thing is, I think most—if not all—people want freedom. Whenever people hear of travel, remote work, or flexibility among others, their eyes lit up. Their curiosity sparks and the questions come pouring in. They probably imagine themselves bringing a

## QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 3

laptop to, say, Ha Long Bay in Vietnam, and work on their projects while cruising along the river with towering rock formations decorating their path. For others, it could be about finding hidden artisan coffee shops in unlikely places in the city. Whatever your guilty pleasure—there's much freedom to seek.



As nice as location-independent work sounds, however, it's not for everyone—physically speaking. Some work will still require human touch and care, like engineering and manufacturing. But I think what makes location-independent work special is the freedom accorded to you. If you work remotely, you can decide one day to suddenly book a flight to Thailand or someplace else, then work there for one whole week through your laptop. That—and still find some time for drinks and meeting new people later at night, and maybe even go on a relaxing day tour the next day.

When possible, I hope more companies realize the value of remote work after the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only does it make an employee not feel like a corporate slave—it gives them the freedom to spread their wings and explore other aspects of themselves they didn't know existed. For what it's worth, this kind of setup could even mean well for the company's overall performance.



## About The Author

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



Ian Benedict Mia



Ian Benedict Mia



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# STATE OF THE JOWABEAR NATION



BY LUIS BARCELON II AND COR CARLOS  
(PHILIPPINES)

**Manila, April 2020.**

The country ran into a screeching halt with the imposition of a sweeping lockdown, paralyzing the most basic of movements for everyone across the nation.

Amid the quarantine chaos and the fear of contracting the virus; despite all the confusion of what a lockdown is and what can or cannot be done; and behind all the uncertainties of what concepts of daily life we need to abandon to survive, an unassuming Instagram page was born.

## QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 3



jowabearnation

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Luis + Cor 🥰🥰

YouTube channel: jowabearnation

The **@jowabearnation Instagram Page** started as our way to connect—despite the distance and the circumstances—as a new couple.

We are Luis and Cor, a Quality and Continuous Improvement Manager of a well-known hotel in the city and a Marketing and Communications Professional in a local IT Company, respectively. We have been dating for some time before the pandemic, but we just got together a few weeks before the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) was first shoved unto us, unknowing and freedom-loving Filipinos.



I remember I was still eating my free, unlimited bacon breakfast treat from Luis' hotel when we heard the news of a lockdown being imposed the next day.



It was all a deep dark blur after that. The world may have been on a standstill but the people in it have to keep on going.

With both of us locked in our homes immediately after, with him in the city and me with my parents in the suburbs, we knew we had to do something to keep our 1-month-old relationship going. We knew we aren't the "*Anong kinain mo?*" couple. We are the type who would rather talk about what we learned as we went through our day or project ideas we wanted to do or as Luis calls it, we are the "continuous improvement" couple.



### **A lockdown can't hold us down.**

Luis and I have been bouncing ideas back and forth but one idea came to mind, to create daily challenges that we will both do at home to pass the time and share part of ourselves to each other. We would send our “entries” to each other and take turns to do our daily Instagram post sprinkled with stories about our thoughts and emotions during the quarantine.

During that period, the page became a daily log of sorts and was something we would both look forward to every day, coming up with new challenge ideas and daily post captions. And so, for 30 days, we posted our daily challenges that all led to our “reveal” during our finale week.

Thanks to that project, we learned so much about each other



## QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 3

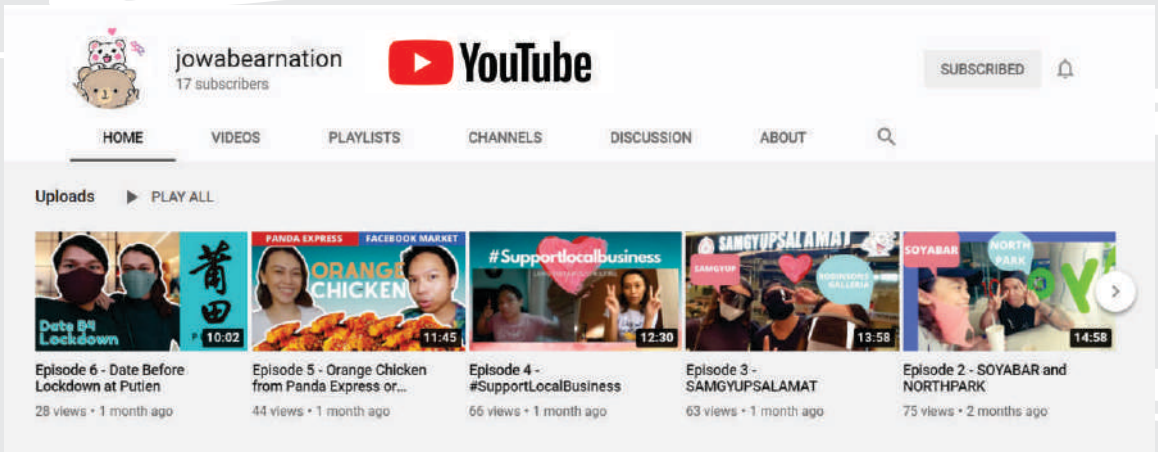
and things that he and I were good at. He was good at creating designs, patiently learning tools, and creating artwork while I enjoyed writing, editing, and conceptualizing.

The **@jowabearnation Instagram Page** also made us feel the cheap thrill of having random likes here and there with the consistent support of one follower—Luis' sister. We created the page for our own happiness, we never thought 1 or 2 other people would find it worth reading! With this new realization and the gradual lifting of the quarantine in the Metro, we knew we had to explore other things we can do together.



## And so here we are.

**Manila, July 2020.** The country is badly beaten, berated, and bruised, is trying to slowly reel in a sense of normalcy by allowing a certain capacity for economic movement to ensue. As we all figure out how we can protect ourselves from the virus we can and cannot see, as we tiptoe our way to what we can and cannot do in the so-called new normal, and as we try to establish our footing as we face a new chapter ahead of us, a humble YouTube channel was created.



## And so this is us.

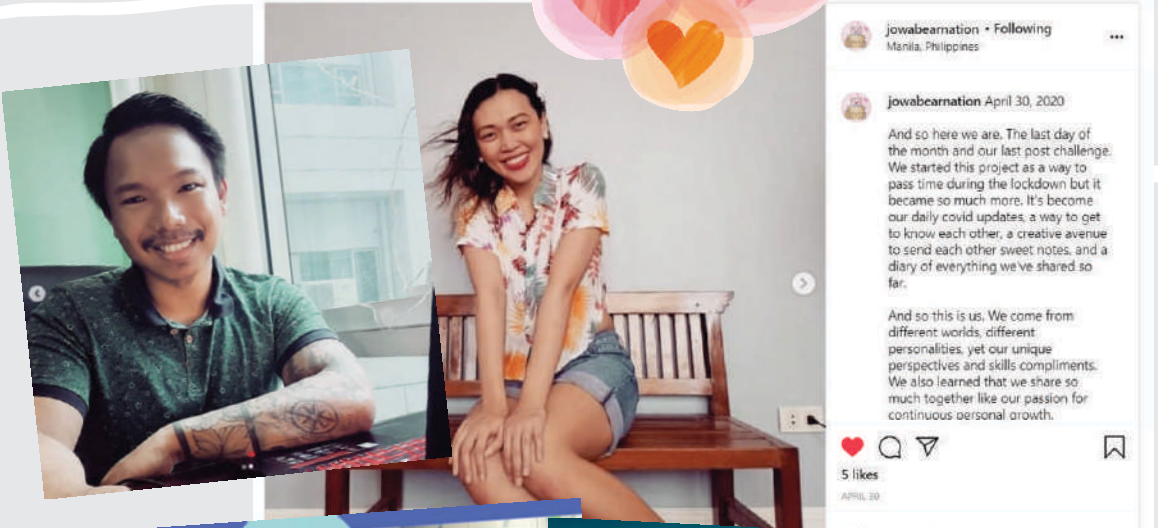
We are slowly exploring how to Vlog with our **YouTube Channel jowabearnation**. Since we could meet up and come together at least once or twice every month, we would record our meetups and food trips, practicing social distancing and following proper safety precautions, of course! We continue to plan our weekly adventures and non-adventures with caution and slowly building our tools to learn other mediums we can best express our ideas in.

**And so, this is our message.**

**Dear Nation,**

The world may not look like what it used to. The outside may not feel like what you left it last. The people may not have the same mindset anymore. The normal or basic is now anything but. In all this, never forget that we still have control of how we keep our relationships and we have what it takes to make it stronger. When we stick together doing what we love doing, and with the support of the people we love, we will all be less lonely and it's gonna be fine.

With you in this journey,  
**The JowaBears**





## About The Jowabears

We are Luis and Cor, a Quality and Continuous Improvement Manager of a well-known hotel in the city and a Marketing and Communications Professional in a local IT Company, respectively.

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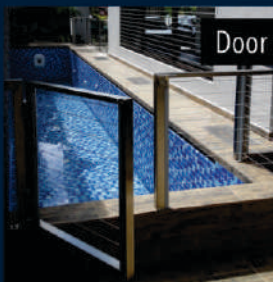
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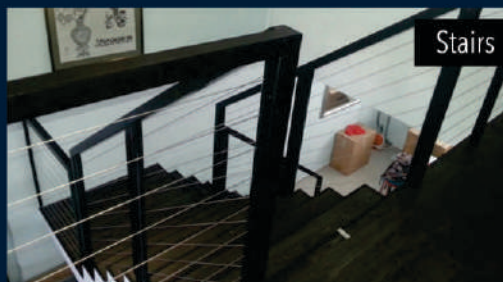
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# A Doctor's Path

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August 28, 2020

BY JOSE LUIS DE GUZMAN, M.D. (PHILIPPINES)

Hello. I am Jolo. I am a doctor who works in the Philippines. I am the pangany (first-born) and I come from a family of doctors. This is the same reason I found myself taking up medicine. And so,

I finished 4 years of pre-med, 4 years of medical school, 1 year of internship, and was blessed enough to pass the board exams.

The way I introduced myself is somewhat important to the story I am about to tell. But let me preface this by being honest, I should have really said, I am a doctor “who used to work”.

Why you might ask?  
Well, coronavirus.

### **Becoming A Doctor**

Becoming a doctor is no easy task. As already mentioned, it takes years and years to hone the craft. This road starts well ahead of medical school itself.

During my undergraduate studies, it was hard to shake off the idea of the long path I was going to take. Then I reached medical school, definitely no walk in the park. I spent countless hours memorizing human anatomy, biochemical pathways, and countless number of diseases. There was the constant fear that I have no room to store any more information. But through crawling and grinding, I was able to finish medical school.

Internship came immediately right after. It was the first time that I made consequential decisions—life and death decisions. Again, no easy feat, especially emotionally. It feels so amazing to cure one patient and so immensely devastating to lose another.



Not to mention, the 24-36 hours (...and beyond) of duty format here in the Philippines, was physically and mentally draining. But then again, by some miracle, I survived that.

Then I faced the grueling Physician Licensure Examination (also called the Philippine Medical Boards), where I crammed 4-5 years of everything I've learned. It was absolutely hellish. But by God's Amazing Grace, I was able to conquer that too.

### **The Next Step**

After passing the Boards, the next traditional step is to either go abroad or take up residency training, which is the more popular one. It wasn't as often until recently, that you hear people being ever contented in being general practitioners (GP). There are also instances when people look down on GPs, which I do hope change.

### **Which brings me here.**

In 2018, after passing the Boards, I was faced with a conflicting choice of jumping head on into residency training, a path I was



made to think was the only path, or taking a time off to regroup and to gather my thoughts so that I could be better prepared for what is to come. I chose the latter and took a year off. To summarize it quick, I was a GP for a year, and got to have a glimpse of what it was to go out of the traditional track. However, after that year of regrouping, I decided to give residency training a shot. I left behind everything I was doing to focus more on training. I took up neurology and psychiatry residency. It was 2020, I am back on track.

And we all know what happened next.

## **The Pandemic**

It was at the tail end of January 2020 when the first case of the coronavirus hit the Philippines. At first, it was downplayed. So, things continued for us in the residency training as normal.

But after the first, there was another, and another, and another. Things were exponentially escalating that by March 2020, we were already receiving a lot of suspected COVID-19 patients. Then the hospital started having a lot of its staff quarantined.

You hear news of colleagues getting sick, wards being closed, and admission to the hospital being suspended. In March 17, the government finally took measures of locking down the whole of Luzon.

Being essential workers, we were the only ones roaming the streets. It became lonely. Despite the endless praises and adulation in social media, the news, or anywhere, there was a clear sense of gloom inside the hospital. Us frontliners' resolve slowly became scarce.

The lockdown took a toll for many of us. It halted whatever

quality training we were getting. And we were stuck where we were in fear that going home can bring danger to our families. The only time you see your family is during that 30 minutes to one hour of video calls you get every day, before succumbing to sheer exhaustion.



What followed next is something I felt inevitable. There was growing fear over this pandemic that even my doctor parents became worried. And the breaking point was reached when a good friend and co-trainee of mine got intubated. Mom was worried sick. I was depleted by the mishandling of the pandemic. I ultimately resigned. I was out of a job and had to move back with my family. Yet it felt like the right decision at that time.

### **A Glimpse**

I was back to where I was a year ago, but this time I had no

income. But remember the time I told you I had a glimpse of what it was to be outside that traditional track of being a doctor? Well, here it is.

I am able to spend time with my family, bond with my sisters, and help them out with their business. I am able to hone my long-time hobby of video editing and gaming with streaming and podcasting. I am always in touch with my girlfriend, being able to share good memories with her. We are able to do things we were hardly able to do.

During our whole training to become a doctor, we were taught subconsciously of this preconceived pathway that we have to take. But life's never just one straight path. What might be true for one may not be true for another. It is that idea that we treat ourselves as square pegs when we're meant to be a round hole, that we must change.

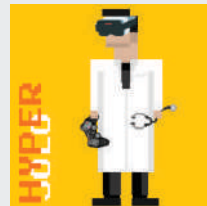
My experiences made me realize that we can create our own pathways and that is not a bad thing. Be more open with yourself and you'll be able to thrive in that idea that you can be more. And you'll get to see its beauty if you let yourself realize that there is a lot more in being human.

You may be focusing too much in one thing that you are forgetting that there are a lot more aspects of being you other than just being a doctor. Being a doctor doesn't mean that you are only that. More than that, you are human.



## About The Author

Jose Luis de Guzman is a physician, gamer, photography and videography enthusiast, and recently a newbie streamer and podcaster. You can follow his gaming page at **HyperJoloMD** and podcast page **Call From Duty**.



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# Where No One Has Gone Before

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July 20, 2020

BY KENNEDY SERAFICA (PHILIPPINES)

There was this episode in *Star Trek* that kept running through my head. In this episode, a god-like being appeared as judge, jury, and executioner of the human race.

Watching it, I got to explore some heady themes: As a species, do we cause more harm than good?

Is the world better off without us?  
Is the human race worth saving?

So, I sifted through the news, YouTube, and every other social media platform I can get my hands on—yup, even Tik Tok—to answer those questions.

I saw unrest and anger at the whiff of a possible draconian lockdown long before it was formally announced. It was followed by a general feeling of dismay when the borders of the capital were closed. For a moment, panic buying of alcohol, hand sanitizer, and tissue became a thing.

When the stores ran out of these items, resellers popped up everywhere like locusts to capitalize on the fear and panic that took hold of the capital. Social media became a breeding ground for fake news and misinformation. Sinophobia, snake-oil cures, and conspiracy theories dominated the conversations. Our irrational fears took hold of the driver's seat.

When the novel coronavirus made landfall in the Philippines, some infected patients lied about it (especially their travel history), further spreading the disease among the doctors, nurses, and other frontline workers helping them and their family members. Alleged VIP testing for the rich and famous such as NBA stars, actors, and politicians came front and center as the rest of humanity waited in line—which showed inequality in our society.



This is humanity at its worst. It is easy to be good, kind, and all the other positive traits when there is food on the table and the future is secure. If the god-like being from Star Trek were to see all of these...

At first glance, it seems we are taking advantage of others at every chance we get, but that's not all there is. Amidst the chaos, greed, and paranoia-fueled evil we do to each other, there are those among us who keep the world turning, safe, and sane.

Doctors, nurses, and everyone in between battle COVID-19 every day. Farmers and grocers ensure there is enough food in the market while knowing the dangers of social contact. We have our checkpoint specialists such as the military and our neighborhood



*tanod* to remind us of the number one rule in this New Normal: Stay at home.

We have singers serenading us every night just to convince people to stay at home. Social media is abuzz with the same messages of hope, staying indoors, and “Enrile Immortality” puns all to keep us entertained and informed within the four corners of our homes.



Companies are giving away free stuff or donating huge sums of money for the cause. Even physically away from each other, humanity is congregating in social media platforms to send help in the form of food or PPEs to our frontline fighters. We are lighting up this world even in our small ways.

Now that I think about it, I believe the Star Trek question is wrong. It is not about whether humanity is worth saving.

We are at the darkest point of our modern history. Here right now, where humanity has never gone before... can we save each other?

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## About The Author

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



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# A Writer's Bike Ride While Under Quarantine

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July 20, 2020

BY MARK MANALANG (PHILIPPINES)

I bought a touring bike. I named it Haruka, with the kanji character for “distance”. And on a whim, I went out for a ride to Manila Bay.

The heat and pain burning my arms and legs as I pedaled through the highway were just as I remembered when I first rode a mountain bike for sightseeing. The crisp morning air and the energetic vibe of the streets felt invigorating, though I wished I was more adequately equipped for riding.

I could feel my knees creaking and my feet hurting as I rode past Manila’s traffic. The sea of vehicles was confounding. The moment quarantine measures eased in the metropolis, every private vehicle and motorcycle seemed to have burst out of their garages. It was like a normal day, minus the public utility vehicles that were thoroughly blamed for Metro Manila’s traffic situation, but I digress.

Was going for a long-distance ride so soon a mistake? It was too late to ask the question.

Soon there I was, under the shade of a tree at Plaza Rajah Sulayman, watching Manila Bay from afar. Malate on a weekend is usually crowded and busy, but on this day, everything felt a bit peaceful. Not too crowded that it would feel suffocating, and not too empty that I would feel isolated from the world.

I saw the ocean again. It was nostalgic. It was all I wanted. So what am I doing, ignoring quarantine and going on a little adventure?



After my mother died, I would drive to Roxas Boulevard after work to hang out by the bay. I would spend time there listening to music, talking to myself, or just staring at the night sky and the sea lit up by the port and the ships from afar. Manila Bay was a comforting place for me while I was mourning. Heck, the sea comforts me.

Moving on the road helps me organize my thoughts and keep my feelings in check. The feeling of travel gives my mind a moment of pause and clarity, something that had been lacking in me as I struggle to get back into fiction writing. It helps that biking had become a form of exercise for me, quite fitting for one with a sedentary lifestyle. Going to Manila Bay was the appropriate way for me to get myself into biking again, as it turned out. Perhaps it will get me pumped up into writing more.

But I'm not sure if I could go riding again so soon. I spent the rest of the weekend nursing my legs and relishing the news from work that there were suspected and positive cases in our area. In such a situation, the only sensible thing to do is comply with the quarantine, clean up, and self-isolate. All while planning my next bike trip, of course.


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## About The Author

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

 Mark Manalang

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# In This Pandemic Isolation, I Found My Second Home

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July 27, 2020

ROSELLA JANE T. VARGAS (PHILIPPINES)

“I’m ready for you 2020! Bring it on!”  
This 2019 year-end celebratory remark  
in social media posts did not age well.

Who would have thought our world (and time) would suddenly stop this 2020? Today, we are facing limited transport, quarantine regulations, and stressful daily news with the continuous surge of positive COVID-19 cases brought by an invisible enemy.

Although I try my best to stay positive, everything is slowly affecting me. *Hindi lang halata. Ayoko pa lang ipahalata.*

Now that I remember it, since February 2020 I tried learning different training programs related to freelancing and copywriting because, honestly, I need a “productive escape” from the looming realities and domino effect of the pandemic.

I call it a productive escape because if I don’t hit better income goals or I struggle closing client deals, I’ll just brush it off as my excuse.

Little did I know that my attempt to run away from reality would be one of the best paradoxes to happen in my entire career or should I say, my life.

I just recently realized it. And I want to  
keep this as a beautiful memento  
of my quarantine experience.

Since January 2020 up until this writing time (around 1:21 a.m. of July 3, 2020), sweet surprises pop up one by one, unexpectedly.

I'm not new in investing in course programs to sharpen my skills further and take the fast-track proven strategies of various mentors. But this is the first time that I find people who care for me beyond the freelance network we have.

What started as random online chats on Facebook Messenger and other platforms turned to more Zoom calls with in-depth collaboration of learning. What began as just asking questions, or for tips, and leads transitioned to *chikahan* of how our day went and planning what will be our next milestones in the next months and years.



What started as a curiosity to try new things opened more opportunities, as one thing led to another, thanks to this growing teamwork.



Even my skeptic but always supporting mama is becoming more familiar with them when she saw my progress in such a short time. At present, she doesn't yet match correctly their name and faces.

But just her acknowledging that they are my new friends she can trust me with is more than enough. You see, I just turned 30 but my mother still treats us three siblings like little kids. I don't want to ruin her trust in me.

Also, my best friend who decided to take a break from work for a while suddenly gets all fired up as we help each other do more to reach our personal goals. I love that she organically grew her own Facebook page to 800+ in a few months' time. She saw me working with more of my dream clients during the quarantine period. Now that I remember it, we have known each other through social media since 2017! What a coincidence.

The second home I found online becomes warmer, more comforting, and more encouraging than what people initially thought to be a vicious world of social media.

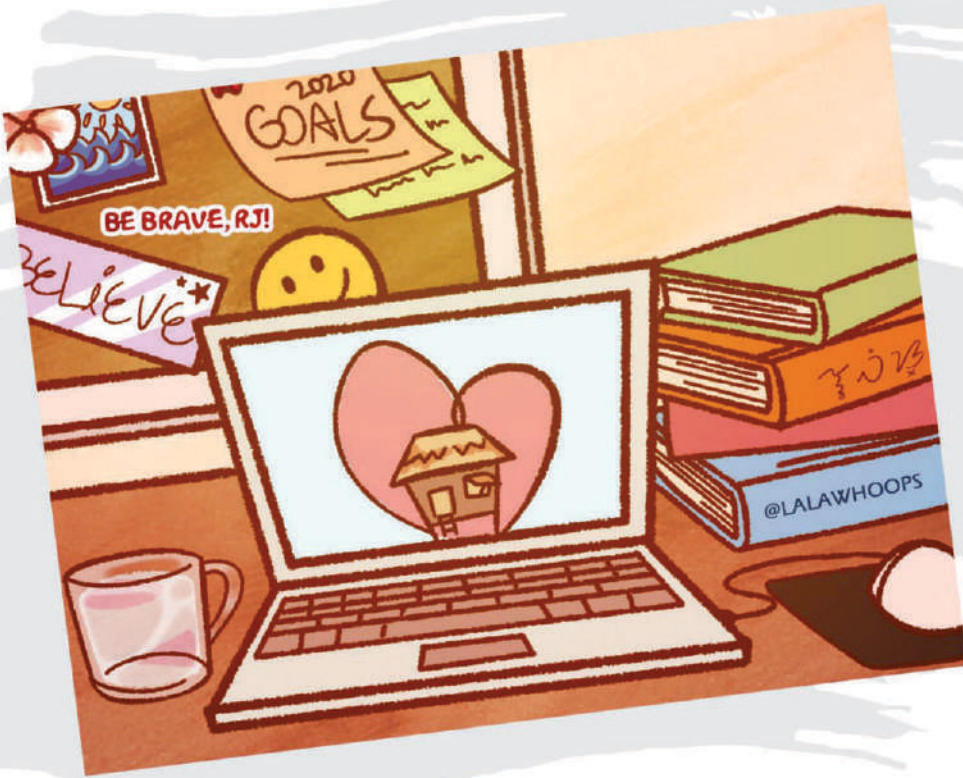
Since I became intentional with who I want to connect with, I was granted more than I wished for. Special shout out to the branding and system Panama-based mentor who teaches me world-class strategies. She cares for my well-being too. We connected through an exclusive online network of copywriters.

My heart is brimming with joy and gratitude with their support and genuine concern for me even if all we have for now is communication with our online presence. I am not related to them by blood. I am connected to them by heart. They are for my lifetime keepsake.

**Borrowing words from Mitch Albom,  
“Strangers are just family you have yet to  
come to know.”**

Despite how the COVID-19 pandemic forced me to stay at home with limited mobility, this extended time allowed me to find and be with people who have the same core values and principles like mine.

I realized that meeting the best people in my life can happen too, even if I'm just in my *preskong butas-butas na pambahay*. I realized I can do so much more during these challenging times. I should not allow the pandemic to completely stop me. I'm learning to balance my resting and productive times each day with their help.



I realized how social media and other online platforms are just tools. We decide who we connect with. We choose how we use it for our own good.

Remember, you are not alone.  
Just reach out and connect.


As for me, angels without wings come in the forms of supportive friends and the caring mentor who stay by my side. Indeed, during this pandemic-driven isolation, I still managed to find my second home.


The icing on the cake? I was recently featured in an international online magazine! But that's for another *Quarantined Thoughts* entry.





## About The Author

Rosella Jane "RJ" T. Vargas is a storyteller by heart. She found her way to make a profession out of her passion through direct response copywriting. At present, she works with clients to increase their leads and income, annoys her dogs and cats, and financially provides for her mom. Thanks to freelancing, she can do all these three simultaneously.

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# Day Will Break, Clouds Will Fly

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July 27, 2020

BY HEZEKIAH LOUIE R. ZARASPE (PHILIPPINES)

*For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.*

— William Wordsworth, *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*

Once, when you wrote poems in your journal that Tuesday morning, seated with crossed legs near the window of your bedroom that overlooked tall glades of green grass, you noticed that there may be robins nesting on top of your air-conditioning unit. In the heat of writing that was full of vigor and power, you promptly dismissed the thought; but, you soon convinced yourself of the truth: they were really there and they weren't going anywhere else.

Each time you tried to continue to figure out which words paired best with the other words to make those personally satisfying repetitive consonant sounds; each time you attempted to create rich imagery which would paint vivid landscapes, seascapes, lives, loves, and sorrows of people in your poems; each time you attempted to recreate the prowess you admire and sense so much in the poems of Richard Lovelace, William Shakespeare, D.H. Lawrence, Angela Manalang-Gloria, Edith Tiempo, and Ophelia Dimalanta, your focus faltered.

You sensed that they shifted their bodies as they hopped and skipped about. You heard their numerous talons make a clanging sound as they stepped on the steel railing and metal surface of your air-con that morning and mornings past when it's all supposed to

be nice and quiet. You supposed that they were a family of four or five. You never bothered to really know, actually.



You just thought of shooing them away at one point, but you didn't. Maybe it's because of a memory you have of both you and your older brother when you were kids living abroad in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

You lived in an apartment with your OFW parents and another Filipino family to save the cost of housing. Your family relatively lived in peace with them. You lived with them for the better part of a decade, which is an impressive feat all on its own.

Mom and Dad worked 9-to-5 jobs all those years, so you and *Kuya* always arrived home from school with no one around.

Mom would always have rice cooked. She made sure that you

and *Kuya* at least had rice in case you got hungry, which usually happened, of course. There was always that one problem of not having anything to go with the cooked rice. She sent you and *Kuya* to school with packed lunches, but she was never able to cook beyond your packed lunches given her busy schedule. So, every time you would scowl at *Kuya*, he would get one of two items from the fridge: *toyo* or *bagoong*.

Once he made his decision, whichever suited his fancy in those late afternoons you both had as young kids, you guys would either douse the rice with *toyo*, like how Catholic priests doused people with holy water, or you would spoon in the *bagoong* from its little jar and mix it as best as you could with the rice in little white bowls you had. Once both of you were satisfied with the food in your bowls, you would watch your favorite cartoons on TV in the living room.

This particular room had a terrace where your family hung everyone's clothes to dry on Thursdays. Overlooking the terrace was the rooftop of another apartment. Flocks of pigeons would gather on top of the rooftop—all day long.



You and *Kuya* took a liking to do birdwatching in that room, too, even if there was nothing to watch besides pigeons in those afternoons you had the apartment to yourselves. *Kuya* would tuck his arms on either side of his tall, slender teenage body. He would bob his head back and forth and made clucking noises. Whenever he did that, you would laugh heartily as you saw how similar he looked like as far as your rooftop pigeons were concerned.

Now that you think about it, as silly and funny as it all seemed to you, *Kuya* did all of that because it was for you—the taste of *toyo* or *bagoong* lasting on your tongue and all.

That's why you never bothered to shoo those robins away. Maybe it's because you're secretly hoping, when this COVID-19 pandemic is all over, even without a press conference or an announcement made by the Department of Health undersecretary or the president, a robin would leave the nest atop your air-con, that it would pluck an olive branch from wherever, knock on your bedroom window, and rest the olive branch on the palm of your cupped, praying hands. That will be the sign that you will leave this ark, your home, when this virus, this pandemic, this invisible flood's icy, frigid waters have receded.

Until then, you will taste the freedom afforded to you by the poems of the past and the poems you will write, which nest, roost, rest, and fly, like the robins you discovered that fateful Tuesday morning.



## About The Author

Hezekiah Louie Zaraspe is currently finishing his M.A. in Creative Writing at the University of Santo Tomas on a grant by *The Varsitarian*, the university's official student publication. He graduated with a Bachelor of Secondary Education, major in English from the same university. Presently, he teaches language and literature classes at Miriam College Nuvali where he used to be the moderator for its Creative Writers' Circle club and a contributor for its newsletter.

His short stories, *Private Mirage* and *Nirvana*, have been included in the most recent volume of *Bukad*, the institutional literary folio of Miriam College Quezon City. His poems, *Philomela's Dissent*, *A Lady in the Coffee Shop*, *Reading*, and *Paper Ships* have been featured on *Revolt Magazine's* website and are expected to appear in one of its future anthologies. He lives in Biñan, Laguna with his older brother and two faithful, furry, four-legged canine friends, Snowy and Scooby.

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# COVID-19 + ECQ: An Additional Anxiety And Burden To Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) Patients, Big Time

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April 20, 2020

BY MA. DESIREE CRUZ-BALLESTEROS† (PHILIPPINES)



Amidst fear, confusion, and uncertainty, chronic kidney disease (CKD) patients have to fight the challenges brought by COVID-19 for survival. CKD patients are people whose kidneys are no longer functioning and need a dialysis machine that serves as their artificial kidneys. Without adequate dialysis treatment, CKD patients can suffer from complications and worse, cardiac arrest, because of congestion.

COVID-19 and the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) agitate the predicaments that dialysis patients are experiencing in this time of the pandemic. It is common knowledge that it is expensive to undergo dialysis treatments. The many maintenance medicines and the injections needed to maintain good hemoglobin levels. And these cost a lot.

Many dialysis patients are dependent on government agencies like DSWD, PCSO, Senate Offices, Congressmen, and many more who give financial and medical assistance.

**It is difficult, and it is a big sacrifice for the patients to line up starting at dawn until they finish processing this assistance to get medicines or cash aid for their treatments. The agony is real when obtaining assistance from the said agencies.**

But dialysis patients who depend on the help of the said government agencies will choose to endure the difficulty in getting help from these agencies just to get aid and support for their dialysis treatment. They would rather withstand the scourging heat

of the sun, hunger, long lines, and even longer hours of waiting than getting nothing at all, like what is happening right now when many services from the government offices are suspended.



of the sun, hunger, long lines, and even longer hours of waiting than getting nothing at all, like what is happening right now when many services from the government offices are suspended.

Everyone should follow the ECQ guidelines while it is being implemented. But as much we dialysis patients want to just stay at home so that we wouldn't catch the virus, we can't do it. Dialysis patients are immunocompromised because of our impaired immune system. The risk of getting the virus is very high and when hit, there is a very slim chance of recovering.

Expenses double or even triple for many dialysis patients because of the ECQ. Some of them are forced to hire and pay much more for transportation. Food to bring to the dialysis center is a

must because most establishments are not operational. Additional payment to some dialysis centers is implemented because of additional operational expenses such as the personal protective equipment and hazard pay to the staff.

**COVID-19 and the ECQ aggravated the situation of the majority of CKD patients. Here are some examples:**

- The suspension of public transportation makes it impossible for many CKD patients, especially those who do not have private vehicles, to have access to their scheduled dialysis treatments. Many patients are stranded and cannot undergo treatment;
- The moratorium of the financial and medical assistance from some government agencies like DSWD, PCSO, senate and congress offices stopped patients from availing dialysis treatments;
- Even if they have spare cash to transfer to the nearest dialysis center, they cannot be accepted because of the lack of facilities to accommodate new patients or it's their protocol not to accept new patients at this time;
- Acquiring some medicines and injections they need most are difficult to obtain due to limited resources;
- Some of their family members got laid off, others lost their income while dialysis expenses doubled or even tripled because of the ECQ.

My heart breaks because I myself is a CKD patient who is burdened by the same difficulties, not to mention other complications we experience from the disease.



There are dialysis centers that stopped operating in this time of crisis because of many reasons. Some say they do not have supplies anymore and they can no longer operate. Others don't have enough staff members while some haven't received their accreditation. And then some need to disinfect the place for a few days, so they suspended their operations.

An abrupt stop in a dialysis center's operation can happen without prior notice to the patients who are left hanging on, not knowing what to do. No endorsement at all. The same thing happened to our dialysis center. Most of us looked for another dialysis center for temporary transfer, but many of us failed to find one. Most of them do not like to accept new patients because of the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Others do not have vacant slots and can no longer accommodate new patients.

My anxiety level rose beyond the sky above. I was thinking

that I will not die of the coronavirus, but I might pass away because of cardiac arrest due to congestion for not having dialysis for a while.

This experience worries me so much. While still on the quarantine period, this might still happen over and over again. In our case, there is a second wave of abrupt stop in operations as of this writing. I should implement strict discipline and strong determination so that I would not be in peril.

At this point, a dialysis patient is difficult to be hospitalized. Pneumonia is a common complication among CKD patients, and it is similar to the symptoms of COVID-19. Once diagnosed with pneumonia, the CKD patient will be tagged as a person under investigation (PUI). What if it is only a simple case of pneumonia?

But because they are mixed with PUIs, they might acquire the coronavirus instead of not having it at all. I believe this is one of the conditions wherein dialysis patients are even more compromised, a scenario that is not given the right attention by the government and hospitals. This gives so much fear to CKD patients like myself.

I hope that this pandemic will end soon  
so that dialysis patients could have  
peace of mind and just continue to fight  
for survival without any other  
hindrances in having a quality and  
happy CKD life.

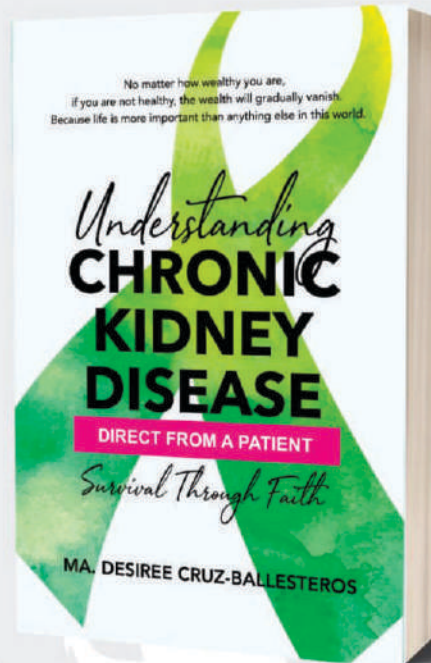


## About The Author

Ma. Desiree Cruz-Ballesteros is a content writer for US-based clients. She took her MAEd at the University of the Philippines – Diliman, Major in General Science. She is a dialysis patient whose advocacy is to spread knowledge and raise awareness on how to prevent CKD and to encourage early disease detection. She is the author of the best-selling book *Understanding Chronic Kidney Disease Direct From A Patient (Survival Through Faith)*.

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# Sentiments Of The Decay: A Typical Story Of A Concealed Affliction

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July 27, 2020

BY LINUS LUCAS A. DAYRIT (PHILIPPINES)



It is 3 a.m. on a Thursday.  
It is a mistake lying down in bed with a case of chronic insomnia. There is the consistent tossing and turning with your eyes closed, accompanied by the hope that slumber—like death—would come to you.

Alas, it is a fruitless thought. You know you are still awake. Your phone is far away from you, but you don't want to get it on your hands until you've had a decent sleep. You stay still again with your eyes wide open. You want to shed a tear and cry your eyes out, but you're too tired. You just bawl there with an inaudible scream, like the sob before the breakdown.

The cawing of the rooster masks your cries, but it's useless anyway since you have nothing to scream out loud. It's all just air and resentment that flows out. All of it—with the frustrated and momentary purge.

**It was just another day.**

Your introverted self seems glad to have this quarantine...only for a short time. A lot of things have become a daunting task. In the months that passed, a wave of loneliness and unrest stirs in the trenches of your consciousness. Anxiety and worry are unseen problems that a lot of people have not figured out. Many still cannot understand this type of problem because it is not a black and white one. Paying the bills, reporting to work, going out on your own, spending your money and time—these have been constantly circling in your head. And the worst of all? It is the dread of where you're headed in the future.



You've been working overtime for a company overseas. They pay you handsomely and give you the freedom to work at your own time and pace. As time goes by, you ask yourself, is this really what you want to do until the end?

The notion of going with your passion seems immature because you have bills to pay and a virus to keep away. You start to see the incompetence of some people. It makes you feel even more uneasy. You're far from thriving than you are from surviving.

As you heat up some water to prepare your daily diet of instant noodles, the only satisfaction you get from eating it is the memories of your childhood that it brings up.

Consuming this kidney-wrecking meal is a way to relive those memories—a time when you were happy. The thing about nostalgia, however, is that it keeps you wanting more. Then you snap back to reality. It is but a fleeting high.

The work goes on. You light a cigarette and pair it with cheap coffee to keep you up. It eases the tension of what's about to happen later or tomorrow. A makeshift ashtray is filled to the brim. The table is a mess with a sea of ashes and punched out butts. You care less and you tell yourself that you'll clean it up later, tomorrow, or this weekend.

You work overtime even if no one asked you to because life in this country is too hard for you not to work overtime. It packs your bank account with money ample enough to pay for rent and other debts or association dues but at the expense of your sanity and your mental health. No one ever really talks about that, because they don't know how to handle it. They don't know how to deal with it. It is a shrouded causal effect that is not addressed, especially among those with such illnesses before this pandemic happened.

Hobbies are out of the question. They take up too much time, energy, and money. Adulthood made you think that hobbies are mundane, so you lose interest. The one that makes you unique and gives you color—it now just makes you feel dull.

**Your passions slowly die out, and your reality becomes machine-like. You've become a lost dog aging quickly.**

Then, it happened. Your manager talked about your performance and quality of work crashing down in the past couple of weeks. They suggested you take a week off. You feel uneasy about this because of the hours of work you'll miss, or if you'll get terminated. You never really learned how to relax, since you've been living on your own and have been your own provider. This tension makes the temporary leave an ordeal rather than a time of relaxation. You have no choice but to accept the leave. Otherwise, your employment might come to an end.

You think to yourself that maybe this is better than unemployment. You value the work environment you have so much and the security that comes along with it—that it consumed you to think that your life only revolves around work, sleep, and not getting hit by the pandemic.

Alas, the unexpected happened.



You receive an email from your company about your termination. This crushed you entirely, but everything that is happening has been so numbing. You know you're not afraid to get sick. But you're afraid to live a life with no financial security or assurance of any form—you know that this is all you have going for your life until your last breath.

The passions you hold most dear have died out like a torch soaked in the rain. None of that is existent now. With everything that is happening around you, with all the incompetence and ignorance, you realize that not everything is good.

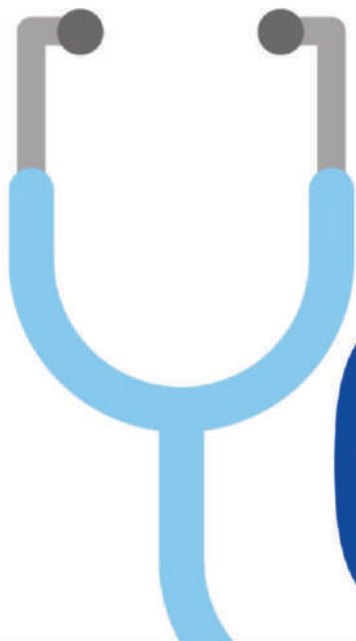
You light a new torch made of nicotine, hoping this will guide you to the peace you've been looking for.



## About The Author

Luke graduated BS in Hotel, Restaurant, and Institution Management from De La Salle – College of Saint Benilde back in 2015. He previously worked in the food industry and switched career paths multiple times. He is currently pursuing his interests in food again in hopes to make it outside of the country. He is fond of writing literary pieces as well. *Sentiments of the Decay: A Typical Story of a Concealed Affliction* is his first published piece.

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# Positivity Amidst The Pandemic

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July 21, 2020

BY SILVER RAYE (PHILIPPINES)

Nobody knew that COVID-19 would make the biggest changes in our lives and livelihoods. In an instant, we experienced a lockdown. All of a sudden, the nation became a ghost town.

Schooling all over the country stopped. Children laughing and playing outside disappeared. Neighbors became strangers to each other because we are practicing social distancing. No more calls for basketball games at night where my husband is a referee. It is our only source of income as I am still finishing college.

During the lockdown, I couldn't bring my younger son back to our home after visiting our in-laws in another town. He cried in front of the police officer, begging to go with me but it was useless. So, my younger son left with my in-laws, while the rest of my children stayed with me.

There were times when people panicked buying groceries. Alcohol and face masks became scarce. You couldn't just go to the store to buy personal items. Grocery items and rice supply are running low. At 6 o'clock, the *barangay tanods* start roving.

Every night, I pray and think of my children, hoping they are okay. Video call is the only medium we can use to see each other and talk. At one time, my older son asked me, "*Ma, makakapag-aral pa ba kami?*" and I replied "Yes, just think positively. Now let's go back to gardening." My parents, my brother, my two sons, and I planted different kinds of vegetables in our backyard.



We experienced waiting for relief goods even if it is raining. Sometimes social distancing is not followed because people are hungry. We bump each other but we still give way, smile, and talk.



My older son turned 12 years old last May 17. My in-laws prepared food, and my third and younger son sang “happy birthday” to their *kuya* before they ate. Likewise, my younger son celebrated his 4th birthday without us. He sang himself a “happy birthday” with his hands clapping while we’re on a video call. My tears flowed and my heart sank. How I wish this pandemic will vanish. I told my sons “Don’t worry, everything will be okay soon” and we will be together again.

This is not only my story, but the story of every Juan. We should never lose hope that the pandemic will end soon and everything will return to normal.

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## About The Author

Silver Raye is on her third year of college this coming school year, taking up Bachelor of Education in Elementary. Her interests in writing stories and novels started when she was in high school. She would write her stories in a notebook, and her friends and classmates are avid readers. She is also a speaker in an international seminar and is interested in Japanese culture and exploration.

**MyAvenue Wines** started in 2008 as an online supplier of personalized wines. We have been providing personalized, classy but affordable souvenirs for weddings, birthdays and other special events since then.

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# Irony

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July 28, 2020

BY CHECK SAY (PHILIPPINES)

When the year started, everyone was set to make 2020 EPIC. So it is. We just did not know then that it was going to be on the wrong end of the spectrum.

In January 2020, I was telling my family that most of my year is already planned out. All my local flights for the first half of the year is already booked. The second half of the year would entail even more traveling for work. One international trip was also brewing in autumn.

Then, the lockdown happened. What I thought was to be my busiest year ever was suddenly on a standstill. I was in full throttle to nowhere. As of this writing, I have been staying alone in my 24-sqm studio for four months now. How ironic.

Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has made me aware of a lot of ironies. I surprise myself sometimes. I am usually perceived as emotional and a softy. However, when things like these happen, my usual coping mechanism is cerebral: I plan, I list, I observe. Here are some of the ironies I noticed:

## **NEVER ALONE WHILE LIVING SOLO**

During the first week of the COVID-19 pandemic, I bugged my business partner to draw out short-term, mid-term, and long-term plans for the company (told you I was cerebral). While thinking of our travel agency, we felt for those who are in the same shoes as us.

Do they know what's coming? What are they thinking right now? Where do they get information? For us, it was an easy decision: "We should make a community!"

So we quickly went to work and a good part of our past four months (and counting) was spent building **Rise Up PH Tourism**. We work on providing what we would want to get from a travel business community ourselves.

**What I learned:** Being alone does not need to be lonesome.

## OUTDOOR LIVING INSIDE OUR HOMES

Due to the quarantine restrictions, almost everything we used to buy and do outside needed to be either done inside our homes or delivered to our doorsteps. *Plantitos* and *plantitas* brought gardening indoors. Suddenly, we resorted to baking our own *pandesal* or recreating the IKEA meatballs. We satisfied ourselves with virtual tours, lived vicariously via Netflix, and brought our meetings to our living rooms. We found ways to make the inside of our homes a busy hub of all that we used to do outside.

**What I learned:** We could stay indoors and still do what we have always done outdoors. We just didn't want to (still don't).



## **SMALL ACTS WHEN COMBINED BECOME BIG**

The magnitude of this pandemic is simply gargantuan. None of us was prepared. It was just too much. The irony lies though on what was required of us to help prevent its effects further. It meant we wash our hands. Yup, that very simple and common practice can now save lives. You must stay at home, and if you can't, you should wear a mask, not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth while you are at it.

In hospitals everywhere, surrounded by advanced technology and medical science, practitioners ask their patients to pray, and pray hard. To jump start the economy, buy from your friends who are now suddenly cooks, retailers, online sellers, and webinar experts. No product is too insignificant. Whatever it is, it needs to be delivered.

Everything is reduced to the bare minimum: company manpower, number of days in the office, resources. Suddenly, playing small was not a bad idea after all. Operations mutated to essentials: perfumeries and distilleries are now alcohol makers. Couturiers are now face mask makers. Luxury hotels are now quarantine hotels.

**What I learned:** Amid the greatest challenge, we recognized the importance of little things.

There is much to learn during this pandemic, and we are still learning. We would be squeezed for ideas, forced to tighten our belts, roll up our sleeves a bit higher, and dig deep into what we are made up of. Meanwhile, more ironies will surface.

At the end it all, there is one irony I wish mankind would be aware of: That our greatest hour would spring forth from this great tragedy. Would it be ironic if I say I am excited about the future?




## About The Author

Imelda Say is a joy enthusiast. She believes that joy makes us better people because we can only find and keep joy when we give it away. She keeps a weekly blog on this topic at <http://joyinmetoday.blogspot.com>.

She is a Training Consultant by profession, working with corporations and key government offices on topics like leadership, sales, and self-compassion. She is also a travel entrepreneur and is one of the founders of **AT&D Xperience**, a travel agency specializing on bespoke travels.

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# Quarantined Family Celebrations: Four Birthdays In A Row

---

July 28, 2020

BY BRIGIDA S. TANGONAN (PHILIPPINES)

The country went under community quarantine starting March 2020. Our place in Lanao del Norte province enforced the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) protocols and it was the very first lockdown protocol issued by the national government.

Establishments were closed except for food and grocery stores. Public transportation by bus was suspended. Classes and graduation ceremonies were cancelled. Face-to-face meetings and gatherings were prohibited. Only one member of the household with a quarantine pass can go out to buy food, medicine, and other essential supplies. Senior citizens and children below 21 years old are prohibited from going out.

Then came the subsequent community quarantine protocols depending on the risk levels of a locality. Our place went through these different phases: ECQ, Modified ECQ, General Community Quarantine (GCQ), and Modified GCQ.

But these did not make any difference. In all these phases, children below 21 years old and senior citizens are restricted to go out. Social distancing is strictly observed. Thus, gatherings and parties are not allowed.

Four birthdays in our family happened during the quarantine period—my mother's 91st birthday, my late hubby's 66th birthday, my grandson's 7th birthday, and my granddaughter's 5th birthday. Because of the restrictions, we cannot celebrate the usual way.

My mother's birthday falls on April 22. My mother lives in Cagayan de Oro City with one of my siblings. I always make it a point to be with her during her birthdays. I was hopeful then that by April, travel restrictions would be lifted and senior citizens can already travel.

Being a senior citizen myself, I am prohibited to go out, more so travel outside the province. I was sad that I couldn't be with my mother on her birthday. This was her 1st birthday in years that I was not able to be with her. I sent her birthday wishes through a video call.



Though this cannot replace the happiness of being physically present, this appeased my longing for my mother, thanks to technology.

In observance of social distancing, her birthday celebration in Cagayan de Oro City involved only immediate members of the family.

April 24 is the 66th birth anniversary of my late husband. Since year one after his demise, we commemorate his birthday by visiting his graveyard and dining out afterwards. We cannot go out at that time due to the limitations set on public transport services. For the first time, we just stayed at home and celebrated the occasion with a simple dinner.

The following day, April 25 was the 7th birthday of my only grandson Renfred. The lockdown prevented us to pursue our earlier plan to spend his birthday at a resort in Bukidnon. Forced to celebrate at home, his parents devised a way to create a festive mode. They put up “Happy Birthday” buntings in their living room area using improvised materials—bond paper and used ribbons. At this time, ECQ was still observed and establishments for non-essentials are closed. Thankfully, our printer has not run out of ink. Renfred had three guests—his cousin, his *tita*, and his *lola*. Their house is just adjacent to mine in the same compound. It was a simple celebration but an unforgettable one.

We thought that come June 2020, the situation would be back to normal. We planned to celebrate Junella’s 5th birthday on June 3 at a nearby resort. Our place was already placed under MCQ at that time. But children and senior citizens are still not allowed to go out. There was no choice but to celebrate at home.



Following the idea from Renfred's birthday, Junella's mother put up "Happy Birthday" bunting in our dining area. This time, she was able to buy decorations as some non-essential establishments were already allowed to open. It was a simple celebration. Everyone enjoyed the take-out "*handa*" bought from Jollibee and local food houses.

The lockdown prevented Junella's father, who is working abroad, to be home as planned in time for her birthday. Her *tito*, my youngest child, completed his 14-day isolation on June 2. Thus, her birthday doubled as celebration for his *tito*'s "graduation" as a locally stranded individual.

The quarantined celebrations were opportunities to acknowledge God's blessing and protection amidst the pandemic.

It is a blessing that at 91 years old, my mother is healthy. I thank God that my siblings who are with her are safe as well.

The birthdays were quarantined but our minds were not. We found ways to brighten the occasions and enjoy every moment of it. The lockdown unlocked creativity and resourcefulness. The simple home celebrations encouraged deeper bonding moments sans outside distractions.

And the good news? We were able to save money big time! For all these blessings, praise be to God!



 [bridgetangonan.com](https://bridgetangonan.com)

## About The Author

Brigida Tangonan is a licensed and professionally trained Environmental Planner with 42 years of experience in government. She recently retired; and switching her writing interest from technical to creative writing is in her bucket list. She is currently working on her blog, [bridgetangonan.com](https://bridgetangonan.com), to share her ideas and experience on financial planning and personal growth.



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# COVID-19 Affected Our Construction Business, So I Started Selling Homemade Ice Cream

---

August 27, 2020

BY JESSICA VALENCIA (PHILIPPINES)

My husband, Michael “Mike” Eustaquio,  
is a local construction contractor here at  
Pasinaya Homes in Naic, Cavite.

Pasinaya Homes builds thousands of  
housing units for below minimum wage  
earners who can afford housing loans  
with the help of Pag-Ibig.

Our business name is **MikeJessie Construction Services**. We started doing construction work in December 2017. We create fabricated window grills, gates, and steel doors. In 2018, we started accepting home finishing jobs. We accept home improvement contracts for bare house units in our community. When we expanded our services, we started to accept tile, paint, ceiling, back and bedroom extension projects.

## MIKEJESSIE CONSTRUCTION SERVICES



**MICHAEL ROSIMO EUSTAQUIO**

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When the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) was imposed in March 2020, we lost 7 client contracts. *Nakakapanghina kasi biglang nagbago ang takbo ng pang araw-araw namin, pati ng mga workers namin at ng ibang contractors and construction workers. Lahat kami parang napilayan.*

We all came from different places. We all live away from our families. *Wala kaming malalapitan.* It didn't help too that we are treated as "outsiders" (or "*dayo*" as they call it) because we all came from somewhere else originally. The COVID-19 pandemic hit our business hard, but the discrimination we received from the people who are originally from Naic, Cavite made it even harder. *Wala na nga trabaho, may discrimination pa sa ayuda, samantalang galing naman yun sa kabilang pulo. Ang hirap sa pakiramdam.*

During the ECQ, since *nahinto ang aming* construction business *dahil sa* pandemic, I started selling food to the residents of Pasinaya Homes. I also sold online food items like homemade *kakanin (maja blanca)*, pork and fish dishes, and some home essential products.

Halos lahat ng buyers ko nasa Pasinaya Groups *kaya* free delivery.

*Tapos naisip ko gumawa ng homemade ice cream. I searched on YouTube and found a food vlogger named Ms. Jho Faith who makes homemade ice cream. I did the costing and studied the procedure with her help. She is very approachable. She answered my questions about the ingredients that are not available due to the ECQ.*



On May 29, 2020, I started to make four flavors of homemade ice cream: chocolate, cookies and cream, fruit salad, and *ube* cheese. I made 27 pieces, each one in a 2.5 oz cup and sold each for PHP15.00. For three days straight, I posted about my homemade ice cream on my Facebook. *Nag-alok din ako sa mga kapitbahay ko na may mga anak. Sabi nila, masarap daw ang gawa ko.*

*Nainip ako sa sales ko kasi may stock pa ako sa bahay. Kaya nag-decide ako na maglako. Sa unang araw ng paglalako ko ng homemade ice cream, kumita ako ng PHP800.00 Na-excite ako dahil mas mabilis ang benta sa paraan na ito.*

*After two weeks ng paglalako, naisip ng asawa kong si Mike na gumawa ng trolley cart para hindi na ako mahirapan magbuhat. May welding machine naman kami from our construction business.*



Now, I have a trolley cart for my homemade ice cream business with matching big umbrella and bell! Every night, I make 128 cups of homemade ice cream. And on weekends I sell them and earn an average of PHP2,000.

*It is very difficult for us because we lost our jobs. Doble ang bilihan. Tapos PHP300 na ang bayad ng tricycle from Pasinaya Homes to Naic palengke. May oras din ng pamamalengke. You need a gate pass. Ang hirap din mamili mag-isa tapos naka motor ka. Yung mga ingredients ko for the homemade ice cream hindi*

*puwedeng maramihan ang bili.* There is a limit to the number of items you can buy to avoid panic buying. *Depende din sa brand, kapag naubos na yung affordable, ang mamahal na ng naiwan sa grocery.*

When the ECQ was first imposed, *naapektuhan talaga ang health namin* because we didn't have enough budget *para makabili ng tamang pagkain araw-araw.* No fruits, no vitamins. After one month of lockdown, *dahil hindi kami makapaglakad sa labas, nag-gain talaga ako ng excess weight.*

*Sa mental health naman, gabi-gabi iniisip namin ng asawa ko kung paano na bukas? Matatapos ba itong pandemic? Makikita pa ba namin ang pamilya namin? Si Aaron at Jaden gusto na pumasok sa school.* They can't go out to play. Every time we go out, we need to double our protection because we are scared of being infected by COVID-19. Hearing COVID-19 patients die alone in hospitals, no wake, no proper burial...*nakakapanghina talaga at apektado talaga ang mental health.*

But here we are, fighting.  
Slowly but surely, *babangon din kami.*



## About The Author

Jessica Valencia manages **MikeJessie Construction Services** with her husband, Michael Eustaquio. You can contact them via Facebook.

 [ikejessie Construction Services](#)

 [Michael Eustaquio](#)

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BONUS ESSAY!



# Simple Pleasures, Cheap Thrills

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July 21, 2020

BY ANNA CATHERINE VILLAMOR (PHILIPPINES)

The coronavirus pandemic is a wake-up call to us. It reminds us how ephemeral life, livelihood, and economic systems are.

The uncertainty also highlights a collective realization—to spend quality time with the people that we love and do the things that we love, while we still can.

And for people in isolation like me, simple pleasures and cheap thrills provide a different sense of comfort and sanity we wish we could share with our loved ones.

### **Tough Times**

On May 12, 2020, The Manila Times published an article titled, “Covid-19 to cause PH recession.”

With our state’s debt in trillions, it seems that it is truly inevitable. There is no job security in general. And for contractual employees like me, getting employed after the pandemic is uncertain.

Aside from the lack of economic security, the other challenge I faced during the first two months of the pandemic was virtually connecting with people. It was not even because I wanted to, but because my internet connection did not allow me to join video calls, meetings, and webinars. I even dropped my extramural language class because I could not connect to Zoom.

Indeed, having Wi-Fi is essential these days. Fortunately for me, my neighbor allowed me to connect to their internet last May.



### **Simple Pleasures**

Albeit my new and strong internet connection, I did not re-enroll to the extramural language class because it is expensive. I signed up instead to free language massive open online courses (MOOCs) via Coursera and FutureLearn. Besides, I can watch language tutorials via YouTube and listen to language lessons via Spotify for less. Ergo, during the pandemic, I get to learn another language for free.

Joining virtual communities also makes me feel less lonely during these dire times. For instance, I spend my weekend attending the free online writing workshop by the Penmasters League. I have also joined Moment to Moment's free meditation classes and Heartspace mini-retreats via Zoom. In addition, for only 1,000 pesos, I got one-month access to Teacher Essa Quiñanola's yoga classes also via Zoom.

### **Cheap Thrills**

I love improvising these days. Whenever I long for a steam bath, I boil some water and pour it on a pail, light up a 2-peso candle in the washroom, and have my own version of a soothing hot bath in the dark.

I used to visit the salon for eyebrow threading, body massage, foot spa, and pedicure. Now that salons are closed and physical distancing is necessary, I resort to low-budget self-care rituals such as combing my hair while conditioning it, applying moisturizer on my face using a chilled face roller and scrubbing my soles with a foot pile.

It also makes me feel good when I add some honey and coconut oil to my morning drink. Moreover, I feel less guilty whenever I add kale and tomato to canned goods and instant noodles.

Thus, with the right opportunities and resources, I get to enjoy simple pleasures and cheap thrills.





## About The Author

Anna Catherine Villamor was raised by a community of storytellers. Thus in her youth, she considered writing and storytelling as her predestined *ikigai*. After finishing a degree in History, she served as a Social Science Teacher at the Raya School, the laboratory school of Adarna Publishing House. Right now, she is involved in a book project at a state university.



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# THANK YOU FOR THE SUPPORT!

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BY KATH C. EUSTAQUIO-DERLA (PUBLISHER)

When we announced the call for entries for *Quarantined Thoughts Vol 1*, we expected that we would receive essays that could fill three volumes. Boy, were we so wrong.

As we publish essay after essay—first as an online piece and



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

later as part of an ebook volume—people started sending us more. In fact, some of the writers wrote more than one essay.

However, we had to park the Quarantined Thoughts ebook project for a while to focus on the release of our standalone books. We resumed the “QT” tasks in early March 2021. And many people are still asking us if they can submit essays even after we closed the project with a total of five volumes.

This, clearly, is a validation that we have done something amazing for many people. We have given them the chance to immortalize their “quarantined” thoughts during these challenging times in an ebook format. And who knows, we might have printed versions in the future.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for embracing this project with both arms from the very start. Thank you for trusting us with your stories and thoughts, and we hope that the beautifully published pieces will stand the test of time and can be a part of your memorabilia for future generations.

We launch and publish anthology projects from time to time because one of our goals is to prove that anyone can write and

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self-publish a book with the help of a team. Please like and follow **PaperKat Books** on Facebook or visit our website [www.paperkatbooks.com](http://www.paperkatbooks.com) to learn more about the many projects that we do and the self-published books that we create.


See you in the next volume of **Quarantined Thoughts**. 😊




Cheers,

*Kath*

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

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Watch Kath's interview  
with *Entrepreneur Show!*



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Here are 3 ways (levels) that you can work with  
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Photo by Natalie Donato

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Limited slots available because Kath is very hands-on.





Photo by Jill Chan of Copywriting Dojo Philippines

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# ABOUT THE PUBLISHER



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



**K**ath 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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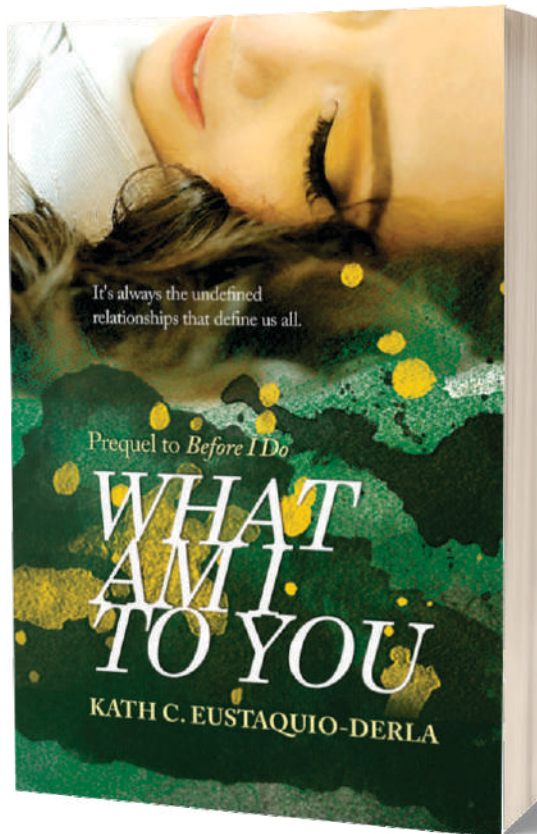
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not even the harshest truth  
can change your mind.”



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# 21 AUTHORS 21 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.**

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