

Life Stories And Musings During A Pandemic

# QUARANTINED THOUGHTS

**VOLUME 4**

From the publisher of *The Crazy First Year & Before I Do Anthology*

KATH C. EUSTAQUIO-DERLA

**VARIOUS AUTHORS**



# 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 it sucked.

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



## Quarantined Thoughts Volume 4

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### **Published by HS Grafik Print**

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

Photos: Pexels.com, Pixabay.com

Illustrations: ACworks, Freepik

Cover Photo: KC Leyco Mempin

**Published in the Philippines**







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# 2020 SUCKED

And we wrote  
about this  
son-of-a-bitch  
of a year!







# 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.

In August 2020, 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

## DISCLAIMER

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 do some good. 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

# What Are You Waiting For?

BY KATH C. EUSTAQUIO-DERLA

After some major delays in production, I am so happy to release the much-awaited Volume 4 of our Quarantined Thoughts (QT) ebook!

And when I say “much-awaited”, boy, I’m not kidding. In fact, many of the people who submitted their QT essays waited for almost a year to get published in this volume. Apart from the fact that we’ve received over 100 article submissions, we also had to prioritize the release of our PaperKat Books mentees’ books.

We are still in awe of how many joined this project since we started in early 2020. And we are very surprised at the number of people who enrolled in our **All-In PaperKat Books Self-Publishing and Mentoring Program** in the middle of a pandemic.

But the most astonishing feat of all is how many of our mentees managed to write and self-published books (ebook and paperback) despite the challenges imposed by the varying types of community quarantine that have crippled a lot of small businesses



## INTRODUCTION

in Metro Manila.

As a publisher and self-publishing mentor, I receive a lot of inquiries all the time. And it is true: for many people, it took a pandemic to finally have the guts and the grit to write and self-publish a book. Not only because many people have a lot of free time now, but because the pandemic opened their eyes to the reality that life could really change in an instant. When the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic on March 11, 2020, our lives suddenly changed.

Being stuck at home opened our eyes to how much and how little time we really have. Sure, some of us have a lot of free time at home because we won't be going anywhere soon, but there is also now limited time to see the world and do the things we've always wanted because the pandemic robbed us of very precious time.



## INTRODUCTION

This is why I understand how many people now want to check off an item on their bucket list, which is to write a book. And I'm happy that this ebook writing project has helped many people become confident in writing, even if they're not really writers.

How about you? Have you always wanted to become a self-published author? What are you waiting for?



Cheers,

*Kath*

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

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



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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

# Why You Should Chronicle Your Life During A Pandemic

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June 12, 2020

BY KATH C. EUSTAQUIO-DERLA (PHILIPPINES)

On June 6, 2021, I participated in the *Sulit-Tipid at Pinoy Homeschooling (STPH) Online Summit 2021* as a speaker. STPH's founder and CEO M Bernice Garcia was one of my event participants during my self-publishing talk, *10X Your Success Story How To Write & Self-Publish A Book*, at Estancia Malls, Pasig City last July 13, 2019. Since then, we've kept in touch and she has always expressed her intentions of doing collaborations with PaperKat Books.

So when she invited me to be a speaker at her STPH Online Summit 2021, I agree and pitched to talk about the importance of chronicling your life during a pandemic, especially for young parents like me with a toddler.

You can watch the full talk on their Facebook page of STPH but let me list down the reasons here because it is a fitting entry to the **Quarantined Thoughts Ebook Project**. Whether you are keeping a record of your pandemic life in a blog, vlog, short social media posts, or even a book, here are the big reasons why you should keep going.

**Reason #1** First of all, it is a pivotal moment in the history of mankind (and our planet). And we are living in it right now.

I read in an article that every 100 years or so, the human race experiences a form of a pandemic. While I agree that the effects, challenges, and changes are not the same for ALL, still, everyone is affected by this pandemic.

As of writing, 458 days have passed since the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic. In the Philippines, we've experienced varying stages of mayhem and different types of community quarantines. And we are still living in a pandemic world and we still don't know when it will end despite the vaccinations.

Indeed, we are living in an interesting (but also frightening) time in the history of mankind and our planet. We are living at a time that will soon only be a part of history books as text, photos, and videos. Using this line of thought, not writing about your life during a pandemic seems like a waste. After all, you'd want to share stories about this time with your future grandchildren.

**Reason #2** What we write becomes a “record for the future”. It will help future generations understand how we lived during the pandemic.





Remember that selfie you took wherein you're wearing a face mask, a face shield, and a portable hand sanitizer? That's a record for the future! Even if it's just one of the many photos you upload on social media for vanity purposes, it is still a record of how we live during the pandemic. It will help future generations understand what life was like during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Write about how the world stopped, how the economy suffered, how you worked from home or found jobs online, how our frontliners risked their lives, how we relied on delivery riders for our food, how communities came together to feed the less fortunate, and how we kept our mental health strong during this very difficult time in our lives.

The stories published in our **Quarantined Thoughts Volumes** are all records for the future in a book format. You can start writing yours by posting random "pandemic life" musings on social media.

**Reason #3** Writing can help us  
process our emotions; release  
tension; manage fear of the unknown;  
and hope for a brighter future.

Many people lost their jobs, their livelihood, their homes, and even their loved ones to COVID-19. Not only is the pandemic physically and financially heavy, it affects our mental health most, I believe. In Vol 2 of Quarantined Thoughts ebook, I wrote about the first time I felt so helpless and depressed because of the pandemic.



The sensation was surreal, I couldn't get up from my chair and I felt like a huge boulder was sitting on my chest. I was having a panic or an anxiety attack. Good thing my husband talked me through it. After writing about that weird sensation, I was able to process my emotions and manage my fear of the future.

That's why people keep journals. If you're feeling down, try writing. The grammar doesn't have to be perfect. You just need an outlet for all the angst.

**Reason #4** Writing, especially journaling, can reduce stress, provide clarity, and help with problem-solving.

Journaling is a great way to reduce stress. Writing down your thoughts can also help you with problem-solving. It provides clarity and direction. Again, don't worry about grammar. Until you're ready to publish that into a book, write for yourself first.

**Reason #5** Our kids are growing up and growing fast while stuck at home. It is up to us parents to keep a record of this time so they can read about it in the future.

As of writing, my son is #3Years7Months. Since he was born, all my posts about him have an age-related hashtag so I can track his growth (especially when the pedia asks me about it, haha).

Even if we're all stuck at home, I feel sad because we can't visit our family, especially the grandparents. And gosh, the growth spurts during this phase are so big and so fast that sometimes, I wake up and wonder why my son seemed to have grown so much in so little time.

So I make sure to document all of these, even the shenanigans because he's too young to make memories. Pre-pandemic, we co-authored and self-published a book titled *The Crazy First Year* where 24 parents wrote about their memorable firsts as parents during their first year on the job. Being a parent during a pandemic is so challenging too, especially for parents who are homeschooling their children.

So, it's something that I want my child to know and read about when he's older. It's up to me to chronicle it for him.

## **Chronicle Your Life**

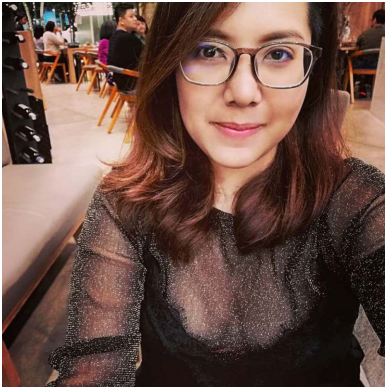
Writing about your life during a pandemic doesn't have to be complicated. Start with short posts on social media about your pandemic life and experiences. You can collate these social media

posts and create a blog. If you're video-savvy, go for a vlog.

But the crème de la crème format is of course a published book. And when you're ready for that, you can check out **PaperKat Books** and let us help you self-publish your book.

Until then.

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## About The Author

Kath is a published author, copy editor, online and offline publisher, book writing mentor, printer, and a communications strategist. Kath is 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 writers.



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



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  
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- 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)



#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

# Finding Magic In The Mundane

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October 12, 2020

BY ANNA CATHERINE VILLAMOR (PHILIPPINES)

As we traverse the unknown,  
we get to know what really  
matters to us.

Personally, after all that I have gone through this quarantine, I choose quality over quantity in terms of thoughts, possessions, relationships, and experiences—a predilection that makes every passing moment count. And after a hundred days of solitude and uncertainty, it helped me find magic in the mundane.

## **Where The Magic Starts**

The magic starts by the time I wake up. I stretch my body, place my hands on my heart center, and affirm myself “I am.” I learned this practice before the pandemic in a spiritual center called Brahma Kumaris, where the Rajyoga teachers reminded me to “choose ‘being’ before doing.” I keep that in mind and meditate.

These days, I listen to Aurora Suarez’s podcast on Spotify called *Soul Writing Workshop* before working and before sleeping. It is similar to writing on morning pages, but before letting the thoughts flow on paper, there is a guided meditation followed by a period to set intention and a writing prompt.

My favorite prompt is the one Ms. Suarez gave in the third episode. She asked, “Which part of your pre-quarantine life do you want to keep, and which part do you want to let go?”

Before the quarantine, I was a go-getter, workaholic career woman who filled my spaces with books and papers I did not get to



read and my calendar with events that overwhelmed me. In my early 20s, I felt like I was running out of time to chase my dreams. I was always doing things in a rush. Perhaps that is the reason why my body ached so hard even though I just turned 25.

## **The Magic I Lost**

When the community quarantine was declared and the work-at-home arrangement was enforced, I succumb to lethargy and anxiety. I could not do the things that I used to do. It is like I lost the magic in doing the things that I love.

For instance, opening my laptop to work seemed like a penance. Furthermore, attending virtual meetings and webinars became exhausting. In short, the fear and anxiety the COVID-19 pandemic have caused shattered my productivity. I was slowly degenerating, but the experience made me realize that after working diligently for years, I needed this time to slow down and work smart.



## The Magic I Found In Reading

I started seeking magic by reading books on slow, simple, and intentional living.

The books *Goodbye, Things* (2015) by Fumio Sasaki and *Spark Joy* (2015) by Marie Kondo fueled me to declutter and cleanse my space. For one, I transformed my storage area into a simple study nook, a space that sparks me a lot of joy these days.

The books *Life-Changing Magic: Spark Joy Every Day* (2016) also by Marie Kondo and *Lightly: How to Live a Simple, Serene and Stress-free Life* (2019) by Francine Jay inspired me to sort out my schedule and provide time for breathing and graceful transitions. They also encouraged me to minimize the use of the internet and to take social media detox every now and then.

I was also inspired to do some Tai chi, Rajio Taiso, and Sun Salutations for 30 minutes every day after reading the book *Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life* (2016), Albert Liebermann and Hector Garcia. And whenever I can, I join virtual yoga classes, meditation classes, wellness retreats, and creative writing workshops not just to re-center myself but also to feel a sense of community while in isolation.

I also started to work smart by breaking my goals into workable tasks and by celebrating small victories after reading *Atomic Habits* (2018) by James Clear. On top of it, I keep in mind what Elizabeth Gilbert has written on *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear* (2015), that “Done is better than good.” After so much reading, I learned to be gentle with myself and with others and enjoy the simple pleasures of living, and that, for me, is magical.



## **The Magic In Working Intentionally And In Multitasking**

One of the insights during this pandemic that resonates with me is that if I put my heart and intentions in an act, the experience becomes magical. For example, eating becomes intentional when I pray and send gratitude before and after the meal. Gardening, cooking, writing, and any other tasks that seem ordinary become therapeutic when I pour and receive energy from the craft. Moreover, short conversations, may it be personal or virtual, become meaningful when I listen actively to the speaker.

I also rediscovered how multitasking adds magic to the mundane. Whenever I cook, do the dishes, or clean the house, I listen to either poetry or short story reading on Spotify. I listen to *kundiman* and classical music when studying, writing, or taking a



shower. I also enjoy doing the laundry while attending webinars (that is when I am not required to speak and to show myself). Thus, doing the thing that you love while doing another task that you once dread makes an experience enjoyable, and, hence, magical.

## The Magic Continues

Now that I found the magic in the mundane, in going inward, and in living intentionally, I have become more open to the magical workings of the external forces of the universe. The Magic continues.

---



## 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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# A Writer's Creative Struggle Under Quarantine

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October 12, 2020

BY MARK MANALANG (PHILIPPINES)



## Another day under General Community Quarantine (GCQ) has ended. As soon as I get off the office shuttle, next comes the welcome monotony of staying at home.

The face mask I wear to work begins to feel suffocating as I enter my home. A glass of water or two, a smoke, a few minutes of napping, and soon my brain switches off its work mode.

I tend to the fragments of chapters that I struggled to write down for the past few days. My first draft now contains eleven finished chapters and a bunch of fragmented paragraphs and lines. They are all in disarray, like my mind.

The fragments in my mind soon take shape like jigsaw puzzles. Is it time for something suspenseful? Should I advance their relationship here? Which characters should go where? The questions pour out and jumble like mahjong tiles in my head—noisy, rattling, and doesn't make sense for a non-mahjong player (or in my case, a non-romance writer).

I then review my outlines. Just missing a few more scenes before I could move to the next climax...except nothing else is flowing out of my head. All I could see in my head is how I have no happy memories of my childhood, and how numb my arm is. What a distraction.

Lately, I find myself struggling harder against my mental illness and my weakening body. Having to stay cooped up at home for some time further exhausted my brain, and it adds to the burden of being unable to write down anything major.

But I do not see a reason to admonish myself. I promised myself I'd write a romance novel, and no matter how slow the progress, I keep my eyes on the goal. Even if I am physically and mentally tired, even if the paperwork and the assignments pile up, even if the nights get lonely to the point that I wish to off myself, I still remember my objective. And since I can still see my path, it's enough for me to continue.

The curfew alarm soon echoes, and the night grows deep. I'm getting drowsy again. I prepare for tomorrow's workday and enjoy a smoke or two while reading a light novel.

As I lie down on my mat, my thoughts begin to simmer, and my mind finds a moment of clarity. Should I add a love scene? Well, this is better compared to the previous time, when I ended up thinking of pancakes. But my mind soon decides I should go to sleep, discarding any prospect of finishing a chapter or more.



In my last waking moments, I imagine myself writing in some faraway place else other than my home. Maybe a change of scenery will get me in the mood to write more. And maybe I can decide for good regarding that love scene.

---



## About The Author

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



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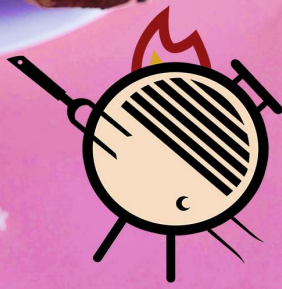
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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

# Here At Big Q, Right In Our Home

---

July 23, 2020

BY RAQUEL G. CASTILLO (PHILIPPINES)

**July 23, 2020.** As the clock strikes six in the evening, any one of us in the house would say, “What else do you do? Come on, let’s pray.”

On bended knees in front of a lighted candle, we recite the *Oratio Imperata*. In the silence of our hearts, we continue with our petitions. In soft whispering, I thank God for our lives and for sustaining our needs. Then I would name every name I remember, especially those closest to my heart, that all of us be protected from the wrath of the virus.

We do not normally do this. Of course, we do pray but we pray separately at the luxury of our own time, in our own sleeping space. This one is different! The feeling is overwhelming as we gather as one family asking God for protection. What’s so surprising is that we still see lights even when the sun goes down and darkness sets in. We are filled with hope every day. We are clothed with the security that God is with us in these trying times.

Doing this for the duration of the quarantine period had slowly transformed our worries into faith. That feeling when you know in your heart that you are covered with the precious blood of Jesus.

When you believe that the virus will not touch anyone in the family and cannot even enter our household. The virus is not welcome anyway. It may be scary but we rest on God who loves us so dearly.

For the past months, I have come to realize that prayer shouldn't be our last resort nor the option when human remedies fail. It should be our greatest weapon. It should be our first line of defense against the spread of COVID-19.

I remember the first four weeks of lockdown were a total mess. And every night was a profound silence. Perhaps the only sound I could hear are those coming from insects and animals which I believe could also sense the sudden change in the world. It felt like time had reverted when electricity wasn't installed yet on every home wherein people have to sleep early as their normal routine. Every night was a definition of chaos, where anxiety lingers.

Lying on my bed, I could hear the beatings on my chest. Dug! dug! dug! dug! I was so scared. There were nights I was trembling in fear. With news about COVID-19 seen on TV and some flooding my Facebook wall, I feel devastated. The more information



I've got, the more terrified I become.

I had sleepless nights. Sound OA (overacting) but the moment I close my eyes to sleep, my stupid imagination sucks. In as much as I do not want the thought, I feel like the world had stopped spinning for a while. Everything freezes. Then my mind would get cloudy thinking of our safety. I worried so much about life, our future. There were a lot of "what if's". My being an overthinker had returned because of everything that I saw and heard. I forgot to keep my lid on, thus absorbing the negatives and it made me sick. My mind was into a lot of things, especially when night falls. My whole being reacted so terribly.

Aaaagggghhh!!! I thought I am brave. I was mistaken. I thought I will not be shaken. I was mistaken. *Nahiyha ako sa sarili ko* for being such a coward. How is it like to be strong amidst a pandemic?

The lockdown continued for days...lasted for weeks and counting for months. It's taking us a long time to battle the crisis. Not easy but we are still fighting. That's one good thing everybody should hold on to.

At the time this was written, we are now under Modified General Community Quarantine. It is still a quarantine. I'm still at home with my father and my daughter. Stuck at home but am already out of my fears. I just love what I'm feeling. Unknowingly, I have locked myself in the prison I have created for myself. Now, I'm out! I'm free! I'm no longer a slave of fear. *Nakalabas ako sa takot.*

Sometimes, the danger is not from the outside, it is locked within us. Truly, my weakness is the Lord's strength. He showed me the key. I call it prayer. His mercy remains and has put my worrying to an end. I thank God for letting me feel the wonders of His





blessings despite horrible situations. I asked Him for strength and He broke the fear frozen inside of me. Then gradually, I have learned to set aside my worries. Anxiety was triumphantly cut. Shame on me for being so frantic. “Worry ends when faith begins”, I’ve heard it from someone. *Totoo nga!*

The threat is still around us and we do not even see it. The curve has not yet flattened. In fact, COVID-19 cases are growing in number. Alarming. Heartbreaking scenarios are all over the news. But for as long as you aren’t afraid (like frontliners do) and believe that God will protect us from any harm, my family, your family, and the rest of the Filipinos and people all over the world, are going to survive the storm.

I know one day soon, life would surprise us with the good news that COVID-19 is gone forever. That it had already vanished on Earth. And yes, the lesson will remain...to be strong in mind, body, and spirit. I think the truest of all vaccines is contained in our hearts.

We just have to let it flow through our veins. We just have to let it work through prayer. We are protected best when we get down on our knees.

Let us be still.

Let us hope for better days.

Let us keep on praying.

Here at Quintarong, right in our home, we do it at 6:00 PM.

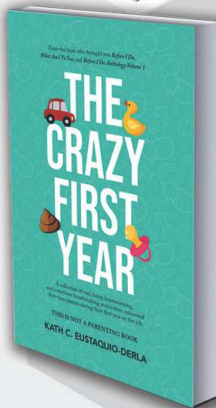


## About The Author

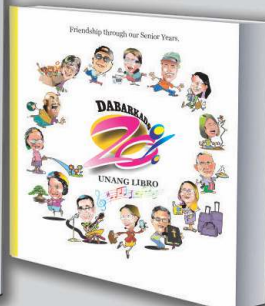
Raquel G. Castillo is a public school teacher, teaching junior high school. She loves writing. She is an aspiring writer, a dream she has since she was 10 years old. But for now, she is happy with the thought that she is a writer in her own world.



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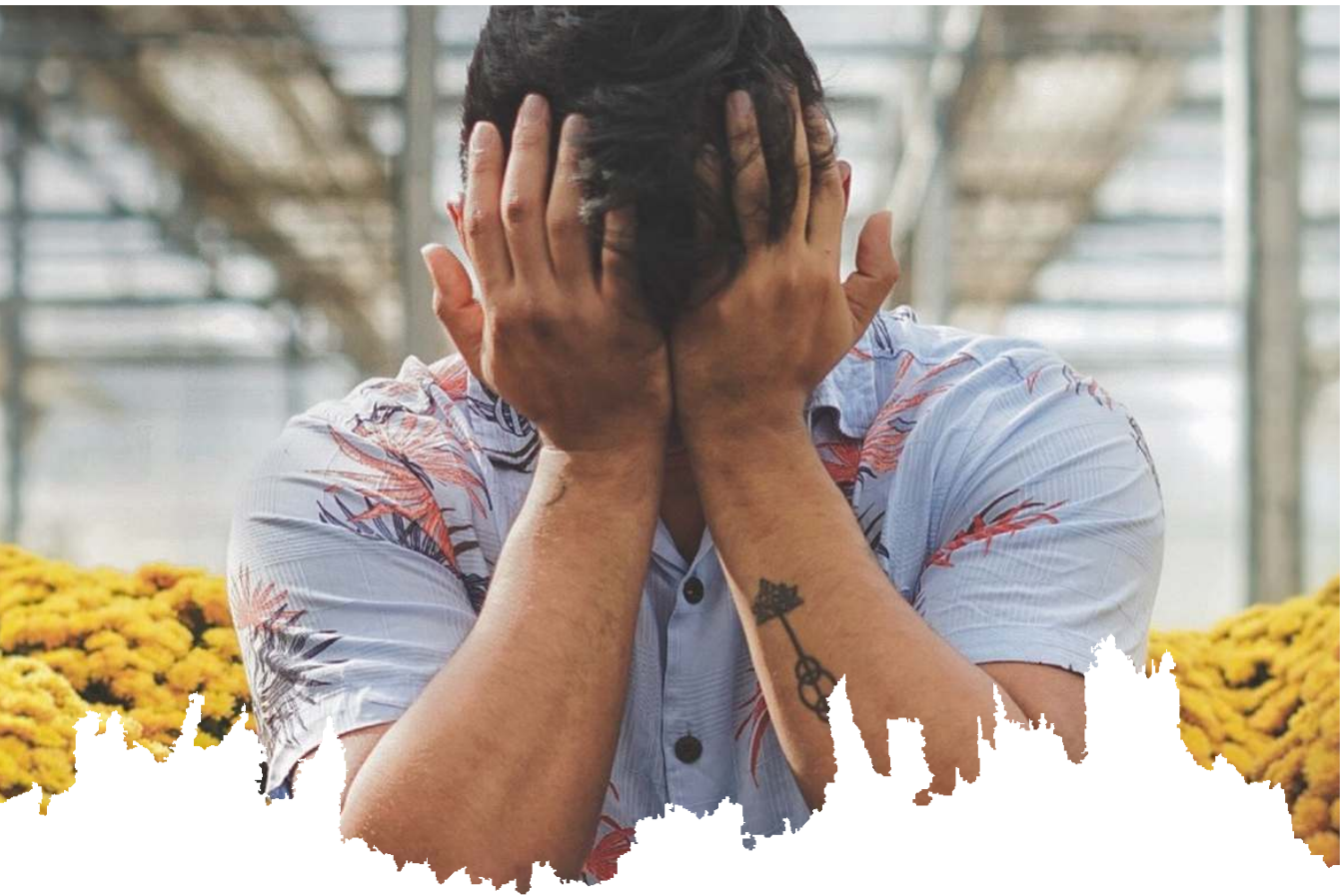
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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

# A Security Guard Loses His Job Due To The Pandemic

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AUGUST 28, 2020

BY LOLITA B. OCAMPO (PHILIPPINES)



## One month after the declaration of the Enhance Community Quarantine (ECQ), our office directed us to work from home to start enrolling students.

It was a welcome change from our usual office-based work, considering the threat of coronavirus is still high. The system was new to me and although I have not been receiving the same pay I used to receive on a regular office work like before, I was still thankful that I have a job.

After a month, when the General Community Quarantine (GCQ) was implemented in Metro Manila, some of us were required to already report in the office to oversee some preparations for the upcoming “New Normal” in the education system. Of course, we had to follow strict safety guidelines like always wear a mask and maintain social distance. When I went to work one day, the security guard who took my temperature before entering the office (another protocol for safety) was different. That same day, I saw the usual guard sitting in one corner. He was not in uniform and he looked sad. I summoned him to drop by my office before he leaves.

When he visited my office later that day, I asked why he wasn't the one assigned to the post that morning. He said that he was instructed by their agency not to report that day for work until his license is renewed. His license expired a few months after the ECQ was declared. He did not expect the announcement of ECQ. Had he known it, he would have renewed his license early because he cannot afford to standby even for a while lest his family will starve to death. Because most of the offices are closed including the

license renewal office, he cannot renew his license right away.

It broke my heart to hear that he will be out of work for an undetermined number of days.

He has been a loyal employee to the company where he has worked for more than 17 years and now he will be unemployed due to the pandemic. His wife is not working and they have 4 children who are all in primary school. Apart from being a security guard, the only job he knows is to help in construction. But then all construction projects are also put on hold as part of the protocol of the ECQ. His only recourse to make their ends meet is the meager assistance they will get from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the lead government agency of the 4Ps program.

I was moved deeply by his situation because I know that it could also happen to me. My family and I are fortunate to still have



some extra savings to sustain us and I am still working. But like this security guard, many are adversely affected by the threat that COVID-19 has brought to humanity. Many are victims of the circumstance, many companies lay off their employees to survive and try to continue to operate. In effect, the employees laid off are the ones who suffer the most together with their respective families. No one is prepared for this eventuality, so what can we learn from this situation?

For a parent, he/she should make sure that there will be a little money saved to support the family for emergencies. Children should study well and prepare for their future. Companies too must have enough reserves for instances such as this one. And most of all, everybody should be spiritually, emotionally, and mentally prepared to adjust well to this kind of situation.

What is happening now is not anyone's choice, not the rich, the poor, the famous, or the politicians. But all of us are affected in one way or another. Unfortunately, for others, it means losing jobs.



## About The Author

Lolita B. Ocampo worked as a finance and human resources manager, a faculty member, and a college dean. Today, she is working as a school director. She lives in Quezon City with her husband Gerardo and their five children.

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# The Quiet Thief

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MAY 17, 2020

BY LORI DUMALIGAN (PHILIPPINES)

A loaf of bread disappeared several days ago from our dining table.

I've looked in and out of every trash bin,  
looked down and under the kitchen  
table, and double-checked the cabinets,  
but found no sign of it.

Was there a thief or was it the usual cats  
who love to come to visit our kitchen?  
Was it my housemates? Or am I the  
culprit? Did I sleepwalk and eat it in the  
early morning hours?

The Enhanced Community Quarantine has managed to turn my love of staying in into paranoia about a missing loaf of bread. Despite being a sea away from home and my parents, I'm trying to find comfort in these walled spaces. I'm seeking something familiar in this time of change, staring at the white stucco ceiling with the curtains pulled shut, unchanging.

A typhoon passes by Metro Manila and it somehow makes me feel better as rain always does. I welcome the smell of wet earth and the freshness of cleansed concrete. I love watching the predictable rhythm of water pelleting the earth and listening to the vibrations of each metallic surface it hits. I forget for a time the layers of dirt and thoughts I allowed to accumulate inside of me in isolation. I am clean again. I am new.

But soon enough, I start to surrender to something that's creeping in and making us all go insane without us even knowing.

My body that craved the fast pace of school settles into the short distances of the living room where I sleep, to the kitchen, and downstairs to the laundry area. Everything that once used to give meaning to my routine is fading. I start to question whether my schedules that have completely fallen apart are an illusion of control.

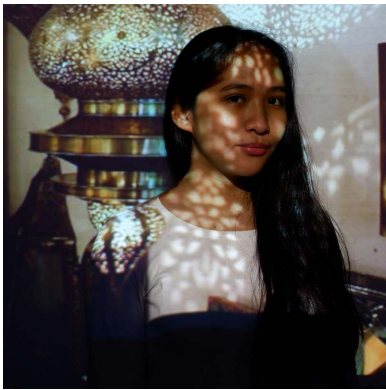
I am starting to become too familiar with my weaknesses and bad habits. Will I evolve as I discover my strengths? Did I even make the most of my time before the quarantine? My birthday arrived and I spent the first day of my twentieth finishing a school project. I consoled myself that this isn't so bad since this is a transitory period anyways. I'm not missing out on anything yet, right? But why does it feel like I am losing something?

May arrives with a sigh of relief as I'm finally done with schoolwork. I am settling into another routine. The novelty of



staying in and “playing house” has worn off. Weekends look like weekdays as if suspended in time. The possible bread thief of the neighborhood spices up our daily conversations.

I realize that the virus is not the bread stealer. It is not the quiet thief. It's time.



## 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.

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# Rekindling The Fire Of Passion Amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

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AUGUST 29, 2020

BY CRISTY MADEL L. ABAGAO (PHILIPPINES)

## The COVID-19 pandemic brought terror around the world. Imagine battling an unseen enemy.

The safest place is your home alone. You can't trust anyone but your family. Your neighbor, the vendor at the market, and even the cashier might be an asymptomatic carrier of the virus.

So you have no choice but to stay at home. And this, on a positive note, is the best chance for me to rekindle the warmth of my passions in life. It's the time when realizations hit me.

A teacher by profession, every minute for me is indeed very precious. I honestly admit that I'm struggling in finding time to teach my own kids because of my commitment to my work. Good thing that they are supportive and understand the nature of what I do for a living.

During the community quarantine, I spend more time with my family. I feel that I have all the time in the world. I want them to feel my love and care. We eat together, talk about anything under the sun, watch movies, and play. It feels really nice waking up a bit late every morning and cuddle my husband a few more minutes without the paranoia of being late since we are advised to work from home.

I realized that I had been too busy at work that our relationship sacrificed much. I feel a bit guilty about sometimes putting aside my relationship with my family. And during the quarantine period, I try to do everything to make up for my shortcomings in the past.

Two things I realized; that home is the safest refuge, and being with my family is the best thing that ever happened to me.

## Rekindling My Passion For Writing

I love writing. Being the frustrated writer that I am, I love creating literary pieces. It's my way of breathing out my frustrations and resentments. I write down every memory that I've been wanting to keep and every pain I've been wanting to forget.

There are times that the flames of writing heating every vein in my body but I'm pouring cold rejection on it. I set it aside since I'm too busy with my work. Not until this pandemic hit us that I started patching rhymes and weaving literary pieces again. My passion for writing rekindles into glowing flames and relieves my dying soul.

Having plenty of time with my family and doing my favorite





hobby makes me feel contented during this quarantine period. Stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary greatness amid this pandemic inspire me to write more and appreciate every simple thing that we have. It is true that darkness is looming due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But we must strengthen our faith in God and hope that as the sun rises in the morning, our country, as well as the whole world, will be healed and nurtured once again under His care.

It is true that this pandemic made us limp in every aspect. Our economy was dragged down in a deep pit of loss. Some companies declare bankruptcy resulting to the unemployment of many Filipinos. Our hospitals can no longer accommodate the increasing number of COVID-19 patients. Even our health workers and front liners who risk their safety were exposed to it and some, unfortunately, died battling this pandemic.

While we are frequently reminded to stay at home, we can't blame people going outside because of hunger. Food packs distributed by the local government may sustain a day's hunger but how long could we depend on it? It is not enough to suffice the basic needs since it's not every day that we receive blessings from them.

But as we strive to survive in these trying times, let's take this opportunity to strengthen our faith. Pray. We must not underestimate the power of prayers. During the quarantine period, I started to strengthen my relationship with God, which I admit, had weakened because I'm too occupied. In this time of chaos, the only thing that I, we, could offer is prayer. Prayer for everyone to be safe, cured, and healed.

We are battling an unseen enemy and the only thing we can do to win this is to get united with the goal of ending it. Hard may it

be, but if we discipline ourselves and follow safety protocols, we can at least minimize the “fattening of the curve”. Wash your hands religiously, observe physical distancing, and stay at home.

Let us keep our fingers crossed and win the battle for a COVID-19-free Philippines. And who knows, as the sun rises tomorrow, we will be able to say, “It’s more safe in the Philippines”.

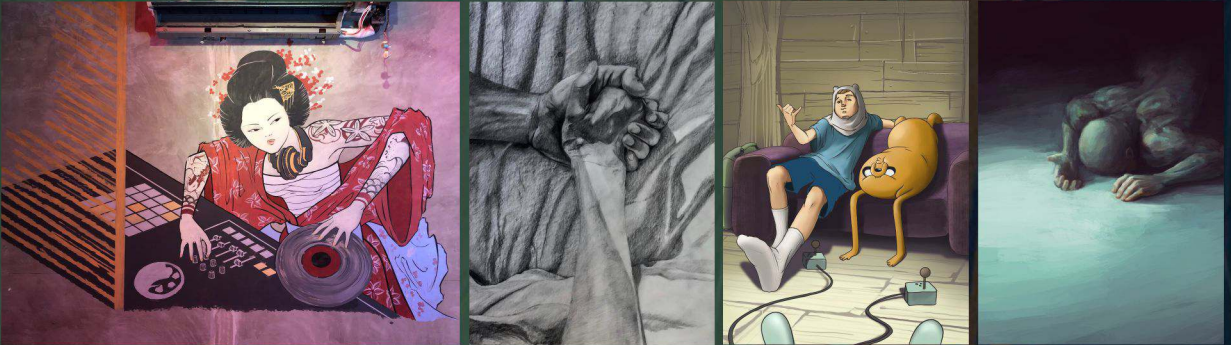


## About The Author

Cristy Madel L. Abagao is a mother of three and a teacher by profession. Though always preoccupied, she still finds time creating literary pieces since writing is her breathing space. She often writes realistic-themed pieces. Her wildest dream is to become a self-published author.



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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

# The Boxed Life During A Pandemic

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SEPTEMBER 18, 2020

BY S.J. WOLF (PHILIPPINES)



The year 2020 is a year filled with instances of me wanting to burn the whole goddamned world on fire and move on to the next planet, tear my fucking hair out, or just try to calm myself down with a nice, hot cup of coffee.

To be honest, I'm struggling, but I'm the type of person who tries to hold that struggle in because I don't want to stress anyone out.

First of all, why? Well, I live in a box. Not literally, but it feels like a box. My condo unit has no view of the outside world. The lightwell is so small that there's not much light coming through. I barely go out because I work from home six days a week for eight hours, and I balance a lot of things on my plate.

You know how mentally ill people placed in padded rooms without light and fresh air don't really heal but become more mentally ill? The same concept in my case but I don't need a straightjacket. Or maybe not yet. I'm kidding.

As much as possible, I always go out when I get a day off once a week so I can see some sunlight, breathe in some fresh air, hear the rustling of the leaves from the trees outside, hear the purrs of the cars that drive by, get away from the toxic environment where I reside, and see faces (or what can be seen from the people's faces).

I missed seeing the world, I couldn't deny that. But we currently live in a world with a lot of restraints and choices that are so hard to make due to setbacks, people who hold you hostage

from your free will to choose, the virus, and more.

I'm grateful that I still have a job. I'm grateful that I was promoted after a year of working for my current company. I'm grateful for the opportunity of being featured in an online magazine. I'm immensely grateful for the support of my friends, colleagues, and loved ones when it comes to my self-publishing journey, I'm grateful for those who purchase disinfectants from me so I can fund some money for my upcoming book, and I'm grateful for the little things. I truly am. Although, not to the point where it becomes a toxic-positivity mindset.

When times are tough, I accept that reality, and hope for the best possible outcome—I don't look at struggles as something good when it's not. What I do is try to find a way out of that struggle as best as I can to get to a positive outcome. Does that make sense? I hope it does.



Being literally trapped and having that feeling of being trapped, does crazy shit to your brain. Imagine being alone in the dark, not knowing when it's night or day, with your thoughts keeping you company. What's odd is it's not often the good or happy thoughts that stick by you when you're alone.

With that in mind, add some negative emails, bad news, fights, and people you know dying when you're working. Then you get all these unnecessary external noises and voices that make you lose your train of thought when you're trying to focus...and someone getting mad at you for no reason...it all leads to the degradation of your existence as a person when all you're trying to do is make a living and make the best out of your life during a pandemic with the time that you have.

That's my life in a nutshell for the past six months.

Shit happens. That's life. It wouldn't be interesting if it all went perfectly. But when we step on shit, let's try not to bring it with us everywhere we go. Let's make the effort to clean our shoes so it doesn't mess with our journey moving forward.

That's what I try to do on a daily basis, and I hold on to the hope that everything happening in the world right now is not permanent since, after all, change is the only constant thing.

Despite the toxic environment at home, the unlimited screen time I get due to the nature of my work, mean people I talk to almost every day, issues of other people that I try to solve, and other fucked up things that mess with my head, I try to find a little bit of time for myself by journaling my thoughts, reading a page of a book that I like, writing a poetic verse on scratch paper, or drinking a hot cup of coffee.

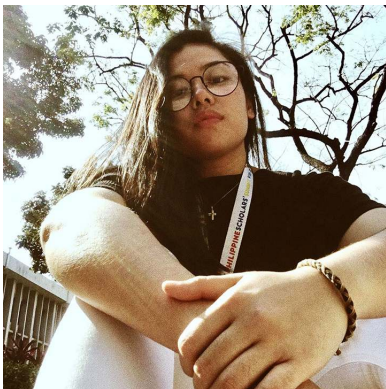
And the best thing that I could do? Making someone's day.

There's just something about making someone's day that gives me joy.

So that's what I do, and that's what I would suggest others do when things go downhill—find that little, itty, bitty light at the end of the tunnel. Everything we're all experiencing right now is temporary. Yes, it's been half a year, but time is infinite, and changes are infinite, too. I may be living in a box right now, but I may not be tomorrow.

Our tomorrows are infinite, too. The question is, which tomorrow will it be? Which tomorrow will be the moment we all heal as one? Which tomorrow will give you the chance to see the stars at night and the rising of the sun at dawn? Which tomorrow will give you peace?

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 S.J. Wolf

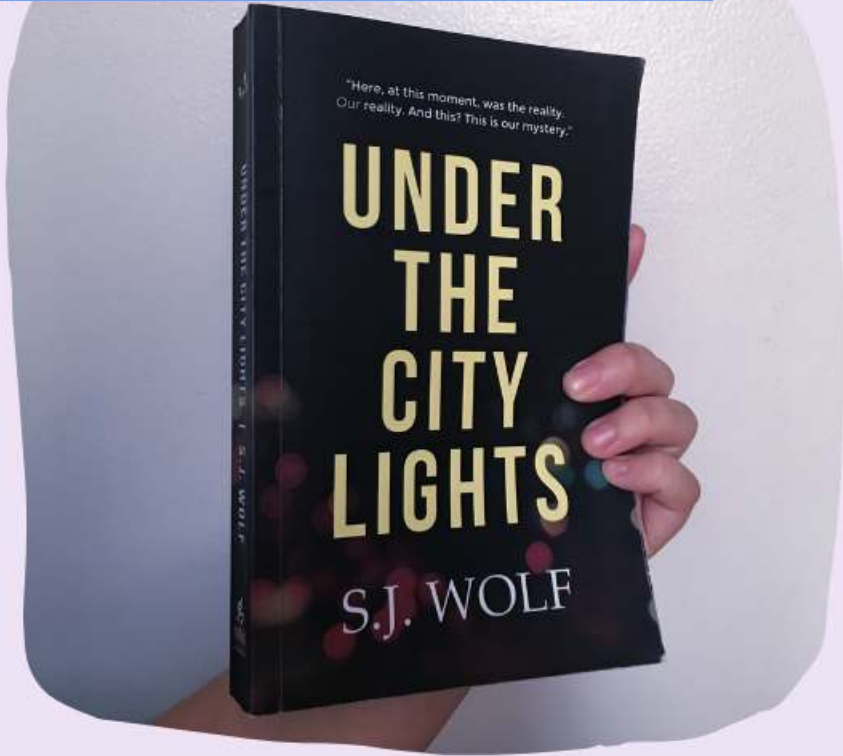
## About The Author

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





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# Trapped Inside The Box, Think Outside The Box

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November 2020

BY EARL LEONARD SEBASTIAN (PHILIPPINES)

As I write this, it's going to be around 60 days before Christmas, or in a bigger picture, it has been seven months since community quarantine was implemented in the Philippines.

The rules now are more relaxed, as long as you wear your face mask, face shield, use alcohol and there is social distancing.

During the first few weeks of the lockdown, you felt so uneasy because you hear about the number of COVID-19 cases in the hospitals and the number of casualties via the daily news. In your social media feeds, you see friends and family changing their profile numbers to black screens or candles, signifying the loss of someone dear. Days turned to weeks, and weeks turned into months. That is when you realize you miss so much from the outside world—eating out in restaurants or fast-food chains, strolling in the malls, attending mass at Church, visiting your relatives, and hanging out with friends.

On my part, I would say this community quarantine lockdown was a roller coaster ride. At first, it was the retrenchment. Although I saw it coming because of the crisis not just affecting the Philippines or Asia but the whole world.

Rather than dwell on its negatives, I took it on a positive note. What I learned from this lockdown was to not just build on my physical fitness and stamina, but also my intellectual strength. I took refreshers on English classes online, and took online and modular courses in universities abroad, most of which was on my

bucket list when I was young. It was a dream come true for me, although it was just online, the feeling was different. I also attended different webinars on different topics, much related to my line of work. This quarantine break also gave me the chance to catch up with friends from college and other organizations, all online, whether it be Zoom, Google Meet, etc.

When the government became more lenient with General Community Quarantine and allowed malls to open with few people, I remember the feeling of going out with mixed feelings and not knowing what to expect. I was able to have my first haircut in around five months. I went to the bookstore, drugstore, and some shops I used to visit.

When the community quarantine hit the six-month mark or half a year, one thing I realized was my emotional well-being and “creativity” fatigue taking their toll on me. There was a feeling of





your creative gas in your tank slowly beginning to empty. My work is all about using my imagination and expanding my creativity. Pre-COVID-19, all it would take for me to think of ideas is either to watch a movie at the cinema or listen to music outside.

In recent weeks, there were uncontrolled circumstances that went beyond my control and it affects my creativity. Being confined in my room looking at the four walls or experiencing that sensation of being “trapped in a box” sometimes drains out my creative juices. The situation we had on hand was something beyond our control anymore. The only solutions to the problem include getting that vaccine and having to live with what we have now and just be cautious about it.

One thing I learned is self-admittance that I might need help. I have been lucky that from time to time, I have been catching up with friends who have shown their moral support and encouragement. I also have been fortunate to be referred to professionals with expertise on these matters.

In 2019, I went through the distress of recovering from my physical injury and its mental aspect. This time, it was also the same but it was more of getting back on the right track to regain my creative self.

“Close your eyes. Take a deep breath. Breathe in. Breathe out. Once in a while, take a 10 to 15-minute walk. And most of all, don’t forget physical fitness.”

I have been advised by my life coach that the anxiety I was going through was a normal situation during this time of the pandemic. Since creativity was an important fuel for me, it was also important for me to have a diversion. There were times I binge-watch on Netflix. I finished several Korean series including



*Romance Is A Bonus Book, World Of The Married, Itaewon Class, It's Okay Not To Be Okay, and Crash Landing On You.* Another diversion would be downloading songs on Spotify. I also check the latest products being sold on Lazada and Shopee, especially if there are promos or sales.

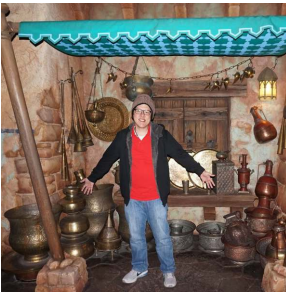
In these times of the pandemic, it is important to keep yourself sane and to be mentally in check. It is normal because we cannot do the things we did before. This is not just for our sake, but also for our families.

At the end of the day, we just need to keep praying and hope for the best that everything will be back to the way it was.

At the present, we feel like we are all trapped in a box, but to thrive and survive, we need to keep on hustling. Think out of the box, and we rest our case to whatever is destined for us.

---

## About The Author



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

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

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



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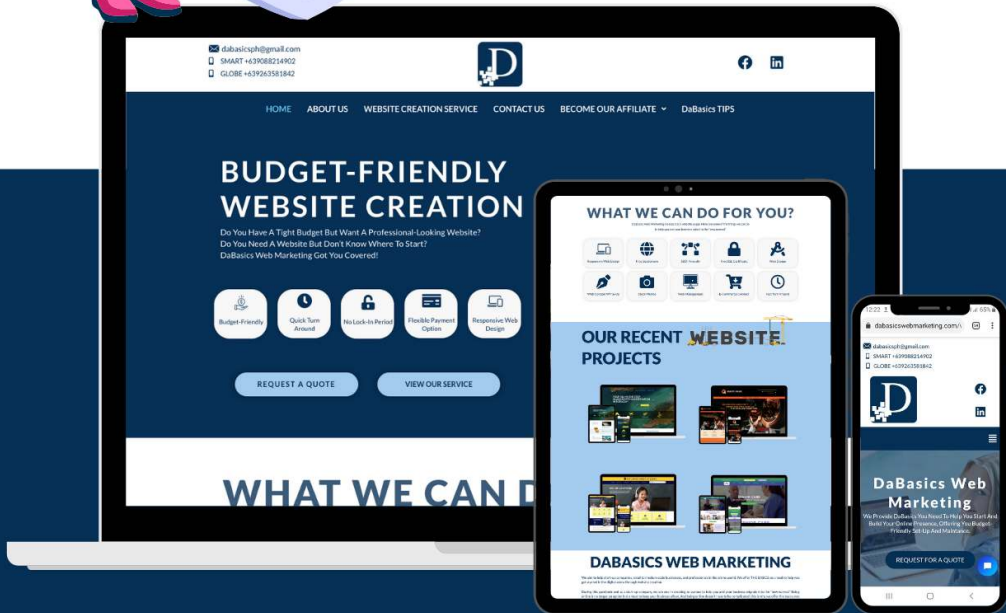
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# The New Normal Brings Out The Best In Me

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July 30, 2020

BY REAGAN A. LATUMBO (PHILIPPINES)

Distance, the uncertainty of transportation, physical tiredness, and mental stress were among the things I have felt and experienced during this ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

At first, the opportunity turned out to be mind-boggling, but it was hard, really very hard. Given the fact that on the first week of June 2020, I was financially unstable. In short, not even a single cent in my pocket was available.

Since I do not want the given opportunity to slip away and afraid of losing a job, later on, I grabbed the chance to take the risk. I sought help from my supervisor, my colleagues, and my random friends on Facebook. They were eager and willingly extended help to lent me money to get back to work.

The least expected people out of nowhere even sent me messages, asking for ways on how I can receive money to help me cope with the current situation. I was moved by their willingness. And it was because of them, I was able to grab the opportunity laid on my doorstep.

The first week of June, I never expected that I was going to face another battle in my life amidst this crisis. It was the uncertainty of transportation and distance to and from work. The availability of Premium Point to Point bus was there, but the cost of the fare was three times higher than before. It was too expensive.

Despite this, I continued to take the risk. I tried all means to save money to pay for the fare back and forth and to buy food when

I'm in the office. I even stayed for a night in a colleague's rented house to ensure that the money I owed was enough to sustain my everyday expenses. But, it was hard to stay there because I need to adjust my work schedule to him. My original shift was at eight in the morning while his schedule was at eleven. I did that to take advantage of the company shuttle. It was a battle of fear and inconsistency on my schedule.

On the second week, some regular buses were available, but the drop-off point was an hour away from the office. And the only way to reach my workplace was to walk. Yes. You read it right, I walked. Transportation from Cavite was available, but the drop-off point was at Heritage Hotel in Pasay City. For five days in my second week at work, I walked every single day without pausing. I even experienced walking for an hour and forty-five minutes from Makati to Paranaque Integrated Terminal Exchange (PITX) just to ride a bus back home.



I was used to walking kilometers or miles and miles away because, during my childhood days, walking was the only way to get me to school. It was my first time doing that in Manila. My body was exhausted, stressed, physically tired, and mentally unprepared.

During those times, my body was about to give up, but I encouraged myself. I told myself, "It's just temporary. Just understand the situation. When you're exhausted or feel that you want to give up, remember those who haven't returned yet. You are lucky to get back and you are about to start a new normal in your life. Keep going. Keep fighting. Pray hard. God has many ways to help you and the people around the world to survive this global pandemic."

And on the third week, I thanked God that my feet continued to walk through the office and back home without being infected or feel any signs and symptoms of COVID-19. I am grateful today that for the last three months of being unemployed, I received my first salary.

At present, my only concern is the availability of fleet or company shuttles. To avoid getting late, changes to my schedule were adjusted every week. Aligning to the scheduled availability of the shuttle is the only way I can avail one back home after the end of my shift. But until now, I haven't been accommodated. I knew that there were a lot of employees who needed the shuttle more than myself, so I gave up on that thought.

This last week of June, I will continue to do the same routine I have. Ride the bus, walked from the drop-off point around five in the morning to get to the office, and walked on the same routes back home. I won't mind the distance, the bittersweet of aching knees, the palpitations, the sweat due to the heat of the sun, and the



stubby situation of my rubber shoes.

This situation for me maybe tiring for others, but I have set my mind at ease positively. I enjoyed walking, my heart was beating happily each day, and I smilingly performed my task in the office.

Lastly, this pandemic brought out the best in me—being adamant, responsible, and productive. I will surely remember these hardships. And if I survive until the vaccine arrives, I will surely chuckle remembering what I did in the past.



## About The Author

Reagan A. Latumbo is a graduate of Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English. He is a man who loves singing, a responsible breadwinner to his family, and a friendly colleague to his workmates. Writing is his way of releasing stress and tension in his daily life. He may not be a licensed teacher or pursued his career as a teacher, but he is a man full of hope and determination. He dreams that one day, he can put up a cafe full of books to read.

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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

# What Begins Ends

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APRIL 4, 2021

BY ANJALI SINHA (INDIA)

When this pandemic started, I didn't believe what unraveled...I was not ready to bear the loss I was about to receive.

To put it aptly, and succinctly, I lost these things: I lost my highest paying client. I lost my uncle. I lost interest in writing. I lost my boyfriend and partner of two years. I lost stable financial income (I didn't make a single penny for about two months.) I lost my sanity.

I lost sleep for weeks. My Mondays became Sundays and Tuesdays became Fridays and Wednesdays transitioned into a whole month. The events in no quantity stopped transpiring, and for some part of my 2020 life felt like things are being thrown in my face with an intelligible quality to catch them and process them, and reiterate them to garner some sense of these supposed morbidities.

I felt unable to breathe, and I'm known for my claustrophobia and anxiety.

My best friend tells me that I give up when things get hard. And as harsh as that sounds, I'm well known for that abysmal quality through the actions I've taken in the past. I haven't shown up for myself. I haven't shown up for the things that I loved or things that I believed in, so I wasn't really mad when she called me out on my shit. Yes, I fuck up, but so does everyone, and I hate that I fuck up more times than I should, but ultimately that's how so far I have learned this much in a very short span of life.

I've learned so much about myself, and how I work, and how I react and what fuels me, and what pushes me to run on autopilot. I can tell you more about 'how not to go into investment plans' and 'how not to go into the writing industry without a mentor'.

But again, that's how I learned best, by effing everything up. And, these constant things falling apart in 2020, has only served as a reminder of things that were messing me up to the core.



I used small wins as a bandaid for parts that didn't work so well. I believed staying in a toxic relationship that was making me more depressed and unhappy by the day was definitely the way to live because I didn't know any better. Breaking up with my partner has brought me closer to myself. I had stopped caring about who I was, or what I was, or the issues that badly needed to be addressed, and be looked upon with a critical yet gentle eye. But you know, I had a partner, and I decided that's just enough for me not to fix myself, and not do the work that I needed to do to be a successful young woman.

I was madly infatuated with a part of myself that I didn't recognize. I know for a fact that things don't pan out the way you want to in the long run, not only because things ever work out the way they're supposed to, but also because I wasn't putting my 1000% in being the best version of myself.




What came as the next part of 2020 was unequally believable...There was a lot of self-growth that started budding as small flower blossoms on the earth. I finally steered to flutter my wings and grow towards the person who's the most authentic version of myself. I started writing again. I started working on my grief. I started a new indie magazine. I started healing myself internally. I started to explore my creative potential. I started to give sleeping a chance again. I started to connect with like-minded friends. I started hustling again for a stable income. I started journaling and yoga, so I could easily process my emotions.

Slowly, I'm starting to realize that perhaps not everything is this horrific trailer of my worst nightmare, it easily is for many people, but for people who've lost loved ones due to COVID or just in general, there's an aftermath or a post-period to their grief, where they are just standing there, unfurling their arms slowly at the edge of the cliff, trying to let the cool winds in. That's how I see the second part of 2020, me trying to hold everything together when there could be things that can just as easily fall apart.

**It's this glimmer of hope you see, that  
after a period of reckoning, you still wait  
for. You're always somehow waiting for  
the hope and the light to get in.  
Is that selfish to hear?**

Yes, it is sometimes. But, to have a stable sense of sanity, you have to open your arms a little bit, even when they ache for the people and memories of the past because life just goes on.



It's cruel in the sense that it does. But it has that redeeming sense of kindness, in the way that it does. Who would want to be caught in their worst nightmare of the past in every second of their present?

And I choose this redeeming quality of life: moving on even when it hurts the hardest.

To be unflinchingly honest, I tell myself: 'You got through the days that your mother passed away, and that was the hardest thing you ever had to do. So, what makes you think you can't get through today?'

Sometimes, and most of the time, in my darkest moments, it gets me through.

And perhaps, 2020 is the kind of year that exactly needs this kind of self-exploration and actualization to survive this global travesty of humanity and life.

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## 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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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

# Random Thoughts During My Quarantine Days (in ABC)

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OCTOBER 12, 2020

BY MA. LOURDES NABAYRA (PHILIPPINES)

I am 63 years old and still a productive senior citizen. I used to work with the government sector for 15 years, then I retired in 1998.

Since then, I have worked as a freelance consultant handling the licensing requirements of my clients who are in the following sectors: manufacturing, import, export, and services. In short, I'm a corporate errand girl.

I used to commute to work daily, going to about five government and private offices from my residence in Manila to Quezon City and as far as Pandi, Bulacan in the north, and Makati, Alabang, and Cavite in the south. Then, suddenly, last March 16, 2020, my world—and the whole world—stopped for some time because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here are my random thoughts during my quarantined days as well as my realizations, experiences, and learnings, as summarized in ABC:

### **A is for Airborne/Asymptomatic/Air Purifier /Anxiety Attacks**

When the lockdown/quarantine was announced during the second week of March 2020, my first move was to buy the air purifier ("Ozein") which I kept on postponing since last year. Installed in our home, for a while it kept my peace of mind. However, occasionally, I have anxiety attacks, especially with the news each day regarding

the increasing number of positive cases.

The novel coronavirus was first thought to spread through droplets while sneezing, coughing, and talking. But, based on World Health Organization (WHO) studies, experts said that it is now capable of being transmitted airborne. So practically it is everywhere and anywhere. In addition, there are reports that 18% to 30% of COVID-19 cases are spread by asymptomatic carriers, the silent transmitters. They do not have symptoms but they are carriers of the dreaded virus.

## **Bis for Bonding/Build/Back/Better**

I treasure my quarantined days since March because it was a period of precious bonding with my family after years of non-stop work. With more time, I was able to cook practically four meals a day. Instead of the usual hurried breakfast of coffee and oatmeal, I was able to prepare sumptuous breakfast meals for the family.

From April 3 to July 3, 2020, I was able to post more than 80 pictures of our breakfast meals on Facebook. I could proudly say that my breakfast posts/presentations varied daily. Features included budget meals with fiber-rich foods such as fruits and veggies.

My blog reached around 2,590 people. The super nice comments really made my day. The positive comments were from my close and not-so-close friends in the Philippines, the US, and even as far as Ireland.

On a serious note, we all have to do our share in our community. According to WHO Director General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, "You can be a leader in your community



not just to defeat the pandemic, but to build back better”. He stressed that we all have a part in protecting ourselves and one another.

## **C is for COVID-19 virus/The 3 Cs**

The dreaded COVID-19 virus crisis is like going to war with unseen enemies. According to U.N. Secretary General Antonio Gutierrez, “COVID-19 is the worst crisis we have faced since World War II”. In following the safety protocols, let us remember to avoid the 3 Cs: crowd, close-contact settings, and confined/enclosed spaces.

## **D is for Domesticity**

Somehow, during the over five months of home quarantine, I was able to embrace domesticity—cooking, washing the dishes, gardening, and cleaning the house. It’s a good thing that my older cousin who lives in Bulacan was caught in quarantine in our house last March and volunteered to wash and iron our clothes—what a relief!

## **E is for Essentials**

With this pandemic, I learned to value essentials in life (food, water, medicines for the family) and forgetting luxuries like dining out with friends, buying clothes, accessories, and other non-essential stuff. More than ever, I realized that “What is essential is invisible to the eye”, a line from the book *The Little Prince*.



## **F is for Frontliners/Flattening of the Curve**

We salute the unsung healthcare heroes, the frontliners who are out there on the battlefield—doctors, nurses, and other hospital staff members who have been risking their lives and limbs for the sake of humanity. The ultimate goal is to flatten the curve, so to speak.

## **G is for Great Equalizer/Gardening/Gratitude/Gratifying**

It has been noted that this crisis is a Great Equalizer since this has been affecting the lives of everyone—rich or poor alike. In these trying times, it is best to practice gratitude—being thankful for what is truly valuable, and that’s our life. Gratitude makes us feel relaxed and feel better physically and mentally. When I wake up, I thank God for another day, and this helps me fight the blues away.

Another way to relax is to spend time close to nature and in my case, gardening. Most of my friends also do some gardening either on their farm, small garden, or just a container garden on their rooftops. It is quite gratifying to use one's own produce in cooking—from the garden to the table. In my own container garden on our rooftop, I have my favorite malunggay, kangkong, *siling labuyo*, lemongrass or *tanglad*, celery, insulin plant, and ternate flowers.

## **H is for Home/Health/Hail Mary**

The best and safe place is in our own homes where we practice self-quarantine. The stay-at-home/lockdown orders were designed to flatten the curve or the growth of new cases. But, in our community in Sampaloc, we see a lot of *pasaways*, *tambay*, and children who are always on the streets. Some are not wearing face masks. Somehow, they still do not realize that health is wealth.



The Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) asked the Filipinos for a collective action prayer for healing via the recitation of the Hail Mary ten times at noon from August 15 to September 15, 2020.

## **I is for Immunity**

We are reminded that the best way to prevent COVID-19 is via a healthy immune system. In my case, I religiously drink two *malunggay* capsules before breakfast and two turmeric capsules before I go to bed. I drink eight to ten glasses of water, eat nutritious food, have eight hours of sleep, and for my vitamin D needs, at least 15 minutes of morning sunshine each day.

## **J is for Jesus**

In these trying times, we are reminded to turn to Jesus, our Savior and Protector. In Psalm 91, "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." In Psalm 91, we are constantly being reminded that in these uncertain times, God is our dwelling place, our shelter, our protector, and our deliverer.

## **K is for Kindness**

In these troubled times, doing random acts of kindness to one's family members, relatives, friends, and neighbors makes us feel good. I remember that during the second week of quarantine,

while the *barangay* staff was busy distributing relief food in our community in *Barangay 576*, the *magtataho* vendor in our street offered to us free *taho*. In his own small way, he was able to spread joy to our neighbors. In July, it was in the news another *taho* vendor, 52 years old, a mild stroke patient, went to the drive-thru COVID-19 testing center in Manila and offered free *taho* to those who were waiting in line. A little bit of kindness each day will go a long way in making this world still a better place to live in.

### **L is for Loss/Lives/Lockdown/Love**

There is so much loss and grief brought about by this pandemic such as loss of lives, jobs, and businesses. Others feel sad for not being able to leave their homes or simply locked down in their houses and not being able to see family members and close friends. It has been said that the Philippines imposed the longest and strictest lockdown to prevent further community transmission.

When Manila Mayor Isko was asked how he was able to secure PHP19 million donations from non-Manilans in a period of just three weeks, “Yorme” quickly replied, “Love begets love”.

### **M is for Mask**

Wearing a face mask is a must! In addition, the DOTR announced the mandatory wearing of face shields for passengers of public transportation.





## **N is for New Normal**

The challenge under the New Normal is for us to co-exist with the virus and how to live with it even without a vaccine yet. Survival instinct dictates that we adopt a 360-degree turn in our socio, economic, cultural, and political aspects of life.

## **O is for Online Deliveries**

Since the lockdown in March 2020, there has been a surge in home-based food industries and selling online. The food ranged from simple steamed *puto*, *ube pandesal*, and cupcakes to sushi bakes, seafood items, *laing*, and *sinantolan*, to name a few. The pandemic brought about creativity for some who lost their jobs and thus sought other income opportunities. I strongly support these budding entrepreneurs by patronizing their products.

## **P is for Pandemic/Protocol/Physical Distancing**

On March 11, 2020, WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic. The world has not known a public health emergency of this magnitude. We follow the protocol on physical or social distancing.

## **Q is for Quarantine/Quotable Quotes**

During these quarantined days, I have more time to reflect on some quotable quotes/sayings that seem so simple but so real/appropriate in these trying times. Here are a few:

“Health is wealth.”

“Health is the first wealth.”

“Prevention is better than cure.”

“We heal as one.”

“We are all in this together.”

“Start your day with a grateful heart. Count your blessings.”

“What is essential is invisible to the human eye.”

“Stay home. Stay safe.”

“Sharing is caring.”

“This too shall pass.”

## **R is for Reflection/Risks/Rapid Antibody Test/Recession**

More than ever, people began to realize or value time and use it for reflection, meditation, and spiritual enrichment. With the opening of the economy via General Community Quarantine in

June 2020, the risks have remained ever-present, pervasive, and ever more omniscient.

The Rapid Antibody Test is not recommended by doctors since it generates false results—either false negative or false positive. The lockdown during the first and second quarter of 2020 resulted in a technical recession—a double-digit decline in the country’s economic growth, reportedly the lowest since 1981.

### **S is for Senior Citizen/Social Media/SAP**

Stricter quarantine measures were imposed on senior citizens since the last week of May 2020. This affected me as I am used to moving around—for work and errands. So, during these times, it was my husband who went to the supermarket and drug stores. To fight boredom, I turned to social media. I became a member of the *Senior Citizens sa Panahon ng COVID*. The group started on April 20, 2020 with about 10 members then soared to 14,000 by May 18, 2020, doubled and reached 28,000 members by June 2020.

The Social Amelioration Program (SAP) is the government’s cash subsidy program for 18 million Filipino families. Under SAP, each qualified family receives between PHP5,000 to PHP8,000 per month for two months for food, medicine, and toiletries.

### **T is for Time/Test/Trace/Treat/Timeout**

According to Yorrome, in battling COVID-19, time is of the essence. There is a need for tracing, testing, and caring for those affected. To stop the virus from spreading, Manila launched a

drive-thru COVID-19 testing center in front of the Andres Bonifacio Monument and Quirino Grandstand. Walk-in testing centers were opened outside the Hospital ng Sampaloc and Andres Bonifacio Hospital in Tondo.

A “timeout” was requested by doctors as a result of the spiraling COVID-19 cases towards the end of July 2020.

## **U is for Unthinkable/Unprecedented/Unending/Unison**

The COVID-19 pandemic is unthinkable, unprecedented, never been experienced by mankind. Days passed with grimmer data, a seemingly unending surge in COVID-19 positive cases. In combating the virus, Mayor Isko urged all government sectors to set aside political differences and act in unison.

## **V is for Vaccine/Voluntary ECQ/VCO**

A vaccine is said to be the exit strategy for the dreaded COVID-19 pandemic. Several clinical trials are underway worldwide in order to come up with a safe and effective vaccine for COVID-19. Even with a vaccine, it has been said that the virus will never go away.



The effectiveness of Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) in combating COVID-19 is presently under clinical trials by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST). We hope that the clinical tests will deliver favorable results. This will surely benefit the Filipinos as well as the ailing coconut industry.

## **W is for 3 Ws/Wuhan/World Health Organization**

The safety protocols can easily be remembered as 3 Ws: Wear a mask. Wash your hands. Remember **WUHAN**:

**W**ash hands

**U**se mask properly

**H**ave temperature check regularly

**A**void large crowds

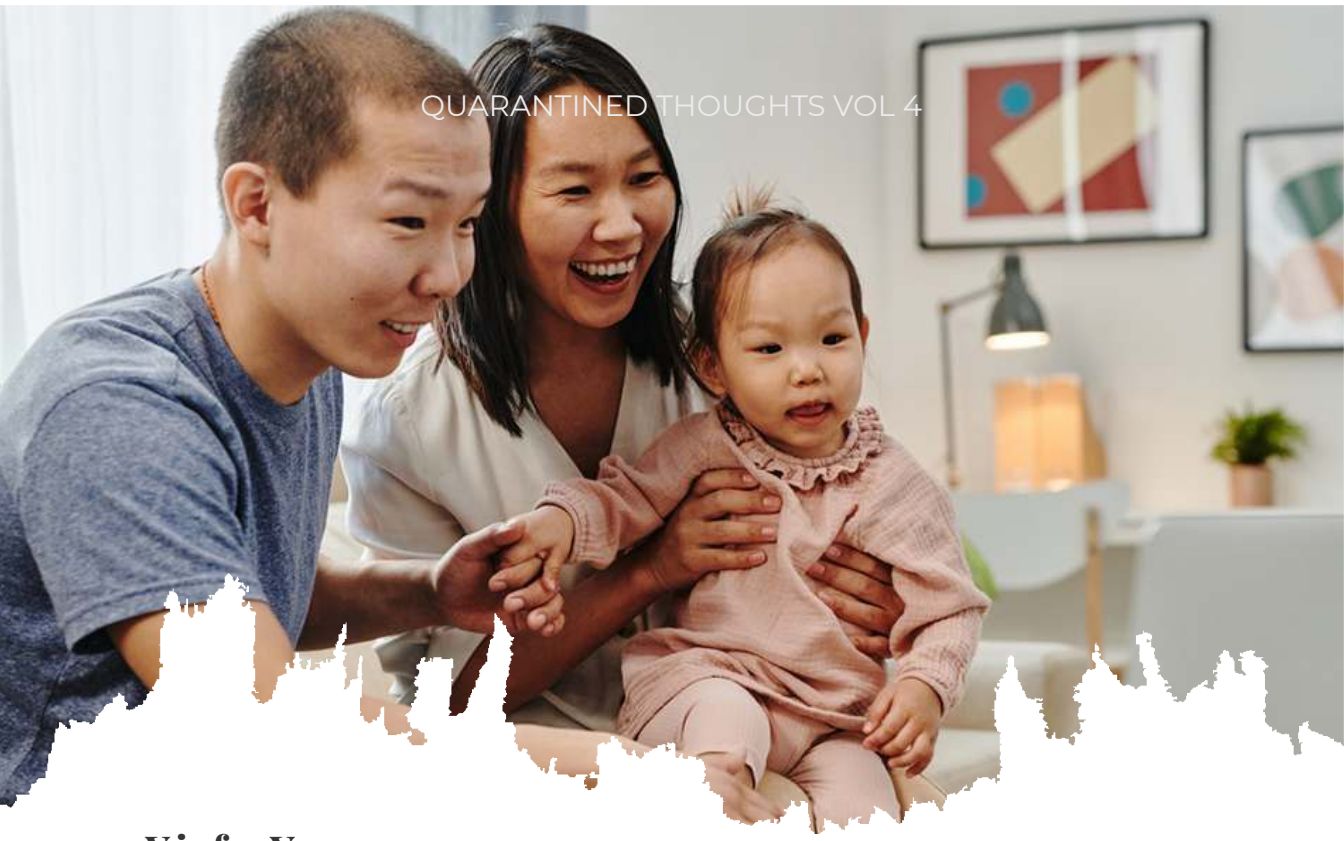
**N**ever touch your face with hands and no beso-beso.

WHO said that that there are different ways to outsmart COVID-19, emphasizing that everyone on the planet one has a role to play in breaking the chains of COVID-19 transmissions.

## **X is for 'X'tremely contagious/ 'X'traordinary**

COVID-19 is 'x'tremely contagious. Per World Bank's, "Global Economic Progress" published in June 8, 2020 (worldbank.org news feature June 2020, it stated that we are in the midst of an 'x'traordinary world economic contraction as a result of this pandemic. Need I say more?





## **Y is for Yorme**

Yorme is short for the incumbent Mayor of Manila, Francisco “Isko” Domagoso. In an interview with Karen Davila last June 2020, Yorme noted his 2-pronged approach – Buhay and Kabuhayan and is now focusing on how to defeat COVID-19 through Test, Trace and Care.

## **Z is for Zoom/Zoom In/ Zest**

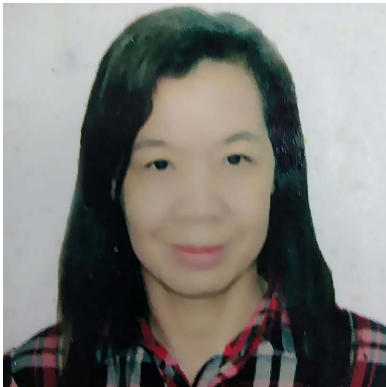
Zoom has made possible virtual get-togethers (G2Gs) with my UST high school batchmates of 47 years. About 40 plus people bond together virtually at least once a month since May 2020.

After the MECQ on August 18, we hope and pray for a miracle that COVID-19 positive cases will be reduced, if not eliminated. We hope that we can start to zoom in and move towards the New Normal, a better normal.

With fingers crossed, we, senior citizens, hope to still continue to have a zest for life in the coming “better” days.

To end these random thoughts is to quote Pope Francis: “The pandemic is not a judgment from God, but a time for us to judge, to choose what matters and what passes away. It is a time to get our lives back on track.”

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## About The Author

As they say, life begins at 40. In my case, I brought forth life at the age of 40, with the birth of my one and only child in 1997. Thereafter, my life has never the same again.

Towards the end of 1998, I opted for an early retirement with the government sector where I worked as a Livelihood Project Officer.

In 2000, I stepped into the freelancing world, which opened greener avenues and, at the same time, gave me the much-needed flexibility so I could cope with the demands of motherhood. I have been working as a freelance consultant, servicing the needs of my business clients. I praise and thank God that I have been blessed with a growing clientele base, even in these pandemic times.

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# Leaves From The Pages Of Corona

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AUGUST 30, 2020

BY JASPER CAESAR JAMPAC (PHILIPPINES)

**5th of March, 2020**

Dear Diary,

The last time I saw mother was in that summer she heaved her last breath. I was only seven, a few weeks after I earned my first scholastic honors that gave her the longest smile I could ever remember. I folded my knees in front of her and sat on the cold floor as I showed her my report card that indicated my achievement. Third honors, it says. She smiled with a twinkle in her eyes but it somehow defied her own sadness.

She held me by my face and gently patted my cheeks.

I opened my eyes and saw the light of hope.

Two middle-aged mothers, calling me by my name, and patting my face, were bringing me back to consciousness as I collapsed from excruciating pain running from my lower back to the sides of my belly. I sweated profusely and I just blankly stared back at them, who were ecstatic to see me awake.

She was all that I saw in that instant. It felt real to return to my childhood with the reassuring gaze of my own dead mother—moments after I blacked out at the doorstep of my condominium unit during that cold fateful evening in March.

**JC**

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**10th of March, 2020**

Dear Diary,

Still in agony and distress from my own state of health, I stretched my neck and moved a little from my bed to peer outside my window. Ten storeys down, the last leaves of the *narra* tree fell on the stream beneath them that thinned with the drying up of its waters. Everything looked old and barren from where I was: the dressed trees somehow resembled the bony hands of a scrawny hag, and the dry stream that seemed like thin lips with cracked skin of a fairy tale witch.

The young boys who love to play in the swollen stream during stormy days were nowhere in sight. However, I saw a familiar woman sweeping the yard that afternoon and burned the dried leaves and twigs below the *narra* trees.

I coughed from the smell of smoke and drew the curtains in before I drank my Shi Lin Tong capsules. I wished I would feel better next week as my new job starts for this reputable Catholic university. I've always wanted to be an educator just like my mother.

**JC**

**16th of March, 2020**

Dear Diary,

It was supposed to be an exciting time for me—new beginnings, a new career, in a new year. But it was not meant to be.

Last Thursday, the evening newscast was abuzz with the headline of a lockdown. I wondered what the matter was as I had been nursing myself back to health and had been in bed under medication for days. They called it Enhanced Community Quarantine. Lockdown for short. It was announced by the President to prohibit the movement of people and to follow stay-at-home orders to address the worsening of this global health crisis we are in, and perhaps minimize the impact of this novel coronavirus pandemic.

How unimaginable to experience this worldwide tragedy! I never expected a textbook health case to come into reality.

If that isn't enough, the school called me in to say that hiring is put on hold for the moment. Here I am unwell, alone, jobless and this specter of death haunts us all. But until when? I wonder.

**JC**

---

**28th of March, 2020**

Dear Diary,

I'm clinging to the last vestiges of my sanity. Will I ever survive? I dread falling into slumber. The entire time last week, my dead friends and relatives visited me in my dreams one after the other. I wonder what that meant. While they offered me no words, their sympathetic smiles welled me up in my sleep. I woke up in the middle of the night in tears, whispering prayers in between sobs.

I had not notified my family and friends about my condition and circumstance, too shy to let them know. For they, too, must be carrying their own yoke in this time of widespread crisis.

I received a call from dad, who always had that intuition whenever I'm in the gutters. As sure as he had felt it, dad asked about my situation and told me that he had a bad dream about me. For a few seconds, I had no words. I felt my father's love and genuine concern.

That's how my family learned of my health condition.

**JC**

---

### **3rd of April, 2020**

Dear Diary,

It had been a month since I passed out and left social media. It had been over 15 days since the start of the lockdown. Perhaps it had been over a week since I've seen a neighbor in my building complex.

There are over 3,000 COVID-19 cases in the country today and the growing fear of the unknown enemy has become apparent. It feels like a movie of a dead city where only the eerie howls of the wind punctuate the quiet sadness of the place.

I hardly see people around, not even those I see near the *narra* trees. The foreign medical students from my apartment building who dominate the complex have gone back to their respective countries. The streets are empty. I see no movement from my window. I feel the coldness in the heat of summer.

**JC**

---

### **30th of May, 2020**

Dear Diary,

God's goodness is immeasurable. There is no better time to believe in His existence but now. The pain I've been dealing with has finally subsided. Praise Him! My confidence and sanity have all been

## QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 4

reinstated. I have returned to my daily routine of being productive and hopeful amidst this relentless virus around the world.

There is so much to thank the Lord for. I am grateful for my life and the existence I am blessed with. The goodness in humanity shone through. The outpouring of love, help, concern, support, and guidance is everywhere. I benefitted from all that: from my family, my dad, my siblings, my old friends, my former colleagues, and even my community. They have all helped me to withstand the challenges that I went through. How beautiful that my family prays as one again, and old friends offer prayers for me as I pray for them as well.

I feel their love that, in turn, I must share with others what I have been blessed with. In my own little way, I paid it forward.

The scare of the pandemic still hangs in our heads, but this has also given us a new lens by which to see the world and our relationships with purer eyes. And purer hearts.

I suppose in times of trouble, we turn to God, and we seek our families and friends for strength and support. That sense of gratitude rings loud to call us back into. Nothing has been

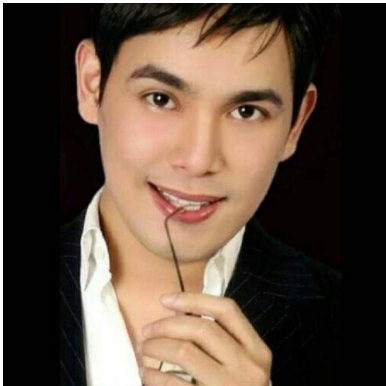




reinvented. We are only reminded of what truly matters in the end: life, prayers, our environment, relationships, humanity, and Our Creator. Faith, hope, and love, for the most part.

As I peer out of my window, I see a healthier and cleaner world, an unhurried pace, a friendlier place. I am glad to experience this life-changing global phenomenon because it left me with a better purpose in my own existence.

I smiled and closed my eyes. And there she was—my mother—smiling reassuringly back at me. When I opened my eyes, I saw the light of hope in the world shining brighter for us all.



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## About The Author

Jasper Caesar believes in the power of words and its transformative characteristic in moving people to action, inspiring humanity towards a meaningful existence.

He once built a library for schoolchildren in a depressed area to instill their love for reading and to dream bigger. His extensive work with Philippine Indigenous Peoples, the Muslim Filipinos, and the Marian organizations in the country has introduced him to many stories of hope he wishes to share with the world one day.

Jasper Caesar is a Class Valedictorian from the University of the Philippines Diliman and had been an ASEAN scholar at the National University of Singapore. He headed the Marketing Department of a local financial institution and will soon join government service.

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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

# Of Girl Boss Hat, Rage Cleaning, And Lechon Kawali

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OCTOBER 12, 2020

BY KATE S. SIM (PHILIPPINES)

Efficient people, innovative solutions,  
and excellent results—the corporate  
world either eats you whole or toughens  
you up. I chose the latter.

Years after, I mastered faking the air of superiority reminiscent of a girl boss, only occasionally tripping on my high heels. Having to wear the girl boss hat almost ten hours a day for at least five days weekly, it became difficult to take it off beyond business hours.

Before the community quarantine was announced, I have been frequently doing remote work. Except when there are meetings, I was mostly at home. While I was physically around my family, I was barely ever-present. Aside from my regular job, I kept accepting side hustles too. My older sister and my mother who usually stayed at home have gotten used to seeing me working in front of the computer and taking phone calls almost the whole day.

When COVID-19 was announced as a global pandemic, our lives took a turn. My older sister's wedding, scheduled for April 2020, was moved to the following year. My brothers' classes were canceled. My dad who is based in Laguna for work came home. Suddenly, it was no longer just my mom, my older sister, and me in the house.

At first, I was able to tolerate the noise and the mess of having six people at home since I was still doing my routine. Eventually, though, my regular working hours were reduced due to financial losses; my sister moved out of our house and stayed with her fiancé; and the local government enforced a rule that only one person per

household can go out (in our house, it was my mom). These made me shift my focus to the responsibilities that come with being the second eldest instead of filling my time with freelancing jobs.

Being at home, I discovered how deeply embedded the corporate mindset is in my system. Ordering people and being assertive always got me my desired results, but apparently, it works on everyone except my family. Without my older sister to mediate between us, I was left to deal with a kind but stubborn father, an organized but paranoid mother, a moody college-aged brother, and a naughty pre-adolescent brother.

Almost every day, I had to control my temper because household tasks weren't being done correctly, especially by my siblings. One specific incident stood out. It was Chores Day Saturday, and my sister stayed for the weekend. Everyone was in high spirits because we were finally complete again. My mom had just arrived from the grocery (a tough feat because of the long lines that exhausted her), and per our established routine, I was in charge of lunch while my brothers were to disinfect and put away the groceries.

It was past noon so I asked my brothers to set up the table, but when I emerged from the kitchen, thirsty and sweaty from cooking, I saw that it wasn't done the way it was supposed to be. Placemats weren't aligned, and dining utensils weren't matched properly. To top it off, nobody has put away the groceries. Everyone was busy talking and playing. Then, it happened. I snapped.

*"Ako na nagluto, ako pa ba mag-aayos ng mesa?"* I said. I fixed the table setup, carefully aligning each utensil, albeit a little forcefully. *"Kumain na kayo, hindi ako kakain,"* I declared. With a liter of bottled water in hand, I went to my bedroom and placed it on



my desk. On my way to the bedroom, I caught a glimpse of our shared bathroom on the second floor.

A common habit among the women in our family is rage cleaning. When we feel emotional, we clean. Frustrations were channeled to scrubbing, wiping, and washing. By the time I finished the bathroom and my laundry, it became clear to me that it wasn't the table set up that bothered me. It was the lack of control, routine, and plan which I equated with instability. I wanted to wear my girl boss hat and my high heels again. I also wanted to go out with my family without worrying about sickness. How I wished there were proper solutions to the problems we were facing! If only everything could be fixed through project management and alignment meetings. Unfortunately, everything was beyond our control.

With my realizations, I locked myself up in the bedroom. I slept and missed meals. By ten in the evening, my stomach was growling. Do I go down for dinner or not? My pride and embarrassment weren't willing to let me go but my hunger was making me waver. I was running low on water too. Why didn't I think of getting at least a pack of soda crackers?





In the end, I succumbed to hunger. I went to the dining room table, and there it was, dinner set up for one and a bowl of *lechon kawali*. How does one resist the crispiness of deep-fried pork? The answer: they don't.

Nobody approached me while eating despite the dining table being only a couple of meters from the living room. The whole family was watching a show. At that moment, I knew I was being silly. Everyone has a role in the house but I didn't need to be so frigid about getting things done and accomplishing anything. I only needed to support everyone. We were all trying to cope in our own ways.

After eating, I cleared the table and washed the dishes. Then, I curled beside my mom in the living room where everyone was huddled in a *banig*. "*Masarap po iyong ulam, mommy,*" I said. She patted my head and smiled wordlessly.

The times were harsh. We owe it to ourselves to be kinder. Even when we get a little cuckoo from stress and anxiety, our family will brave through the tough times with us. We might neither have the girl boss hat nor the high heels, but at least we have a bowl of *lechon kawali* to get by.

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## About The Author

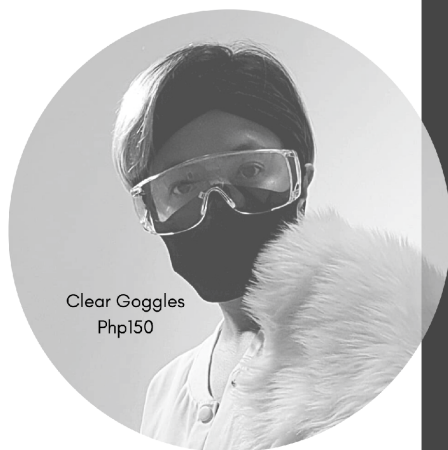
Kate is a marketing professional moonlighting as a writer and educator. She has worked in various industries such as publishing, manufacturing, and education while telling brand stories. She believes that she is a work in progress, so she continues to strive for growth while enjoying literature, music, and a cup of coffee.



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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

# Inner Musings During Quarantine: Thoughts And Realizations

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OCTOBER 12, 2020

BY BEATRICE GOPELA (PHILIPPINES)



Nine o'clock in the morning.  
I remember that was the last time  
I went out earlier this year in 2020.

I will never forget the experience of getting help from a stranger who offered to carpool during this difficult time. A group of commuters like me struggled to get home because the car used by the *barangay* to help the villagers to and fro the village wasn't there.

Some of my neighbors and I were starting to worry about how to get home. Some decided to walk while some of us decided to wait for the *barangay* vehicles. I can't imagine myself walking back home as it was exactly noon and it was really hot. Plus, I didn't get to have breakfast before I went out and I was worried that I might pass out on the road. I was already feeling faint from walking from the highway back to the plaza where the car was supposed to pick us up.

Yikes.

The good thing was we were saved by the guy who used his car to help the villagers. He shared how he realized that the *barangay* can't possibly accommodate all the families, that's why he decided to use their private car to extend some help. He was really generous as he can only transport three people at a time, so he had to go back and forth throughout the day. I really can't imagine the situation if he wasn't there to help us.

I saw some people carrying boxes of groceries walking on the road under the blazing heat of the sun. It made me appreciate more how things were like back then. The thought of how the tricycle and

*jeepney* drivers were coping with the lack of passengers also crossed my mind.

*How are they supplementing the lost income?*

*How are they coping with the quarantine?*

Those are some of the questions whirling in my head as I looked back at how things changed drastically in just a few weeks.

I also remember the last time we went to the grocery as a family before the lockdown happened. It wasn't that intense at that time but there was already a shortage of goods in the supermarket.

There were no vegetables available. No bread and the biscuits were running out fast. Good thing we were able to get some before it totally sold out. The lines were long at the counter. Families were stocking on food supplies while some guys are buying out alcoholic drinks and junk food as their *pulutan*.

After that time, only my brother would go out to buy food. The *barangay* officials were giving out quarantine passes house to house to make sure that only one person in the family goes out. It was really strict.

They also checked his age to make sure that he's not a minor as it's not allowed for them to go out, especially kids as they are more susceptible to acquiring infection.

This quarantine made me realize that I should also give importance to growing myself as there was ample time at home. I still remember seeing the post of Dan Lok where he said that if you haven't learned a new skill when you have so much time then it's not the time anymore that's the problem, it's you.

That's why I sought mentoring and did what I could to learn. It was scary as heck as 2020 feels like the year when I'm literally starting all over again. I've had previous businesses which didn't

work out and it's taking a toll on my mental health and added pressure in my life.

And what made the quarantine worse was the time when our internet connection was acting up. It went out for two to three weeks. It did not help that there was only a handful of staff from the company that is working and they also had to limit going house to house.

If I had to describe the experience, it's like getting cut off from the rest of the world. And that's saying a lot for someone like me who doesn't even spend so much time on social media.

I can't connect with anyone and my learning progress slowed down. I was panicking internally yet I tried to remain calm. And most of all, we can't connect with my mom who's working as a front liner abroad.

The news about the COVID-19 pandemic and knowing how





bad the situation is really made me scared. She was supposed to get back earlier this year but because of the flight problems, she can't get home. I remember that she also shared on one phone call that her roommate got infected.

Thankfully, her housemate was confined immediately, and their interactions were limited before that. There were also limitations with transportation there when it first began so there was a shortage of food.

Good thing that my mom's workmates would share food with each other. Though we still reminded her of the importance of taking good care of her health and limiting her interactions, especially for those who are handling COVID-19 patients directly.

I can say that a lot of families are affected by this quarantine. Whether the impact is small or big, all of us are affected. We don't know when things will go back to how it was supposed to be, but one thing is certain: the situation won't be like how things worked

before. There were already a lot of changes that happened, and we can only integrate that into our “new normal”.

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## About The Author

Beatrice Gopela is a freelance social media manager. She is also the founder of SHE Hustles Ph (@shehustlesph) which aims to help and inspire female entrepreneurs succeed in business so that they can do what they love here in the Philippines without having to go abroad.



SHE Hustles Ph



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In her free time, Bea enjoys reading novels and listening to music.

Bea's available for social media projects and collaborations. You can reach Bea via email at [beag.freelance@gmail.com](mailto:beag.freelance@gmail.com) and on Instagram @beegopela.





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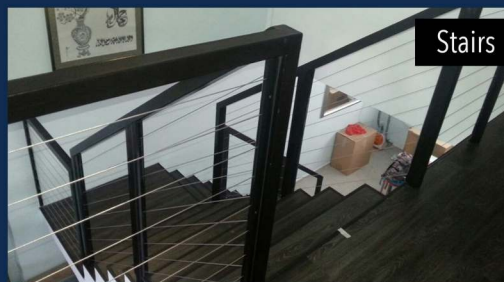
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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

# The Non-Frontliner Frontliner

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SEPTEMBER 2, 2020

BY DR. RAYMOND OLIVER A. CRUZ (PHILIPPINES)

I am a physician. But I am not exactly on the frontlines. That's because I have a choice to avoid being exposed. Some of my fellow doctors do not have that privilege.

Is it a bad thing? Sometimes I get to think of situations where I may actually be there in the thick of the action. But then again, this is no time to play the hero. What if I do get sick? What would be the consequences of my actions?

Truth is, there are various reasons why frontliners stay in harm's way. One is financial. Some of these professionals do not have any other means of earning a living. And so, they risk life and limb to do what they do best.

But some are not in it for money. Some really do love what they do—and I salute them. These frontliners have dedicated their lives, like soldiers of war, to save humanity. And believe me, I know some of them may have passed on, but even in the afterlife, their inspiration remains. Theirs is a legacy that will stand the test of time.

Some are there because it is really part of their job to be in the frontlines. Again, they may not like it, but they continue to serve. The doctors in training, the training officers, the hospital staff. These people may tend to complain (and they do!) on every possible occasion. But still, they are frontliners – listen to their whims and suggestions, at the very least. They know what they are doing.

What does that make of a capable physician who chooses to watch from the sidelines? Are these onlookers useless? Have they turned their backs on the Hippocratic Oath? Must they be

condemned for their inaction?

It may hurt them if people say that yes, those who do not contribute to the crisis when they could must be castigated. While others are getting tired and sick, here they are cooling their heels. What good is studying for years if nothing comes out of that expertise? Doing nothing but staying home should not be an option. Or are they really doing nothing?

This brings us to the question: Why do we “stay at home”?

In a war, Generals stay on the sidelines for tactical reasons. Does that mean they are cowards?

Think about this: if all doctors were ordered to stay on the frontlines, and they get sick, who would be next in line? What if all those who are capable of treating the sick get sick themselves? Who you gonna call? Ghostbusters?

There are so many ways to contribute to society these days. One is to heal the sick. But equally important is NOT TO GET SICK, so you do not overburden the system.

Some physicians who do not heal the sick are the ones teaching a future generation of physicians in school. Some are strategizing for new methods to fight this plague. Indirectly, they may be in research, or the academe, or are





administrators formulating guidelines to be disseminated to treatment centers.

Speaking of research, there are those doctors who are locked in the laboratory looking for new diagnostic and treatment modalities. If you ask me, these silent people are our true hope in this war. If they succeed, we will all live.

Some counsel people who are sick through telemedicine. They may not be directly exposed to the frontlines, but they are doing a great service to the medical community. They decongest emergency rooms by making themselves available for online consultations.

Some continue to work, outside of the frontlines, and pay the government much-needed taxes to fund efforts for disease management. These workers, like those who are also non-medical personnel still earning a living and paying taxes, indirectly contribute to the overall effort for recovery. Think of what can happen if the services come to an end because no one pays taxes anymore.

Folks, this is a concerted effort. There is no need to be a frontliner to contribute. I love these medical workers from the bottom of my heart. I worked with them. I spent sleepless nights with them. They were classmates, friends, schoolmates, acquaintances. Some have died. The pain remains. But it does not mean I will go to war myself. For now, I choose to stay on the sidelines.

Now, if all else fails, will I go to war? The simple answer? Oh yes! **I WILL, WITHOUT HESITATION.** But now, that can wait.

So, if the non-frontliner frontliner is not an anti-hero, who are the true antagonists in this war?





First and foremost is the devil-may-care man on the street not wearing any protective gear. These are possible “super spreaders” of infection. Stay away from them. The merchant selling overpriced goods like masks, alcohol, and medications deserves a dirty finger. It’s not a good idea to take advantage of your fellow human being in this time of need. The wonderful politician who is all talk but no action. You have had your share of publicity. If all you have is propaganda without results, better zip it. Don’t act like a fool. Finally, my favorites are the corrupt officials who stole from the people’s money that was supposed to go to health care services. How can you go on profiteering in this most difficult time?

Then again, there is still time for remorse. Please change your ways. Humans, not to mention our God Almighty, are very forgiving if you show true repentance and sin no more.

Let us all make our contribution to this one big fight. Frontliner or not, we all have our duties to fulfill. The whole world needs our

tender loving care.

To our medical frontliners, and those on the frontlines of this pandemic, thank you so much for your dedicated service to humanity. We may never repay you enough. But Someone up there surely will. And to those who risked their lives to save others, may you find peace and comfort in the company of your Creator. We who are still here will miss you, love you, and pray for you.

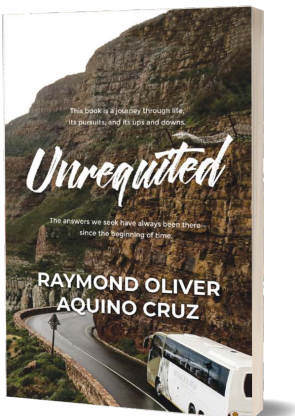
**Always.**



## About The Author

Raymond Oliver Aquino Cruz is a family physician. When not seeing patients at his clinic or during house calls, you may find him at a basketball court, a beach front, a public park, or at a karaoke bar. Writing is his passion, and he hopes to deliver a message of hope and love to all humanity through his book, *Unrequited*.

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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

# Quarantine Days In The Life Of A Lost Soul

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SEPTEMBER 2, 2020

BY BEA DAWAL (PHILIPPINES)

I am Bea, a 22-year-old woman working on her dreams. Being in my early 20s, I know I have so much to learn in life and I may not figure it out in a snap of my fingers...

...but I also know that I'm not the only young adult who wants to figure out her purpose in life. I know who and what I wanted to be, but somehow I don't know what I wanted.

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.

A month before the quarantine period started, I got hired on my second job as a Junior Copywriter. Well, to tell you frankly, I still don't know if this is what I wanted. Being a writer is one of my dreams in life before I settle, but is this the kind of writer I wanted to be? Nobody can answer that, not even me. I wanted to inspire people with my work, I wanted to make them feel like they belong and their emotions are valid.

Even if I'm currently working as a copywriter and my works are being read and appreciated by different types of people, I still feel lost and confused about what I really want.

When the quarantine period started, I was so happy to finally



reunite with my family 24/7. I also get to work from home and being at home, I enjoyed making different recipes for our everyday meals because I am fond of cooking.

After a month, my job became shaky and I was lost for words for the brand I was holding. I feel so frustrated because I can't seem to take the right words out of my mind and suddenly, I am lost again. I asked myself the words that kept repeating in my mind. *What do I want to be? Where do I want to be? Who do I want to become? Am I going to be a scriptwriter, an inspirational writer, or a chef?*

Quarantine months passed and I finally decided to put up a small online food business. I guess the start was always the most thrilling part where people wanted to try something new. After a month, people would seldom buy from me, maybe because the hype of baked sushi died down after a while.

I found myself losing connection with what I enjoyed doing in the first place. There's that same question lingering over and over, waiting to be brought out. *What do I want to be? Where do I want to be? Who do I want to become?* Again, nobody can answer that,



not even me. *Will this feeling ever fade away? Will I be able to find myself again? I feel so lost.*

During the first six months of being in quarantine, I've learned a lot of things. Let me jot it down for you.

**1. Family always matters.** Nobody can ever change that fact and nobody can ever replace the people you care about the most.

**2. Life is short,** make sure to enjoy every minute and make the most out of your time.

**3. Time well spent is a time well cherished.** As I've said, life is short. Don't let stress and negativity hinder you from spending each moment with a smile on your face.

**4. I know deep in myself that I am a lost soul.** I wanted to do things my way even though I know that it's not entirely what I wanted in the first place.

**5. While I know that I am lost and I don't understand the path I am inevitably taking,** I have to fully understand that I won't be able to figure everything out in a snap of my fingers and that's 100% okay.

**6. Your dreams will always be where you left off,** but don't let yourself be too complacent. This pandemic turned the world into a full stop, so many dreams are paused for a while, so many future plans and travels are being postponed for who knows how long. But we can always pick up where we left off. This pandemic teaches us to take a short break from the hustle, to breathe, and feel that we're humans who need to take a rest sometimes.



Living and hustling are not always the most productive part of our everyday lives. Sometimes, just being able to breathe and taking a while to let things sink in is equal to working hard.

We may not appreciate this break because it halted our dreams to a stop we've never expected, but it's an essential part to focus and improve on other things too.



 Bea Dawal

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## About The Author

I'm Bea Dawal, a 22-year-old woman working as a Junior Digital Marketing Specialist in an advertising agency located somewhere in San Juan City. Aside from writing, I also want to follow my passion and dreams to become a chef, that's why I put up an online food business.



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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

# At The Park... So Near And Yet So Physical Distancing

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AUGUST 4, 2020

BY AURORA CASTILLO PULIDO (USA)



I was the first one to arrive at the park to celebrate Mother's Day. There would be a lot of "firsts" today. Our Mother's Day tradition has always been in a restaurant or somebody's home with cards and gifts and plentiful food. Today is going to be different.

My daughter and her family drove in a few minutes later and parked very far from where my car was. This is their first time to do this. They usually find a space near my car for convenience, especially if they have something to give me. This time, there was nothing to hand to each other and nothing to unload like food. My son and family came after and, like her sister, found a space where it was far from our cars. We were the only three vehicles in that park.

The two kids started to get out of their car and for the first time, reality hit me. They were wearing masks like us! I could see them so excited to see their grandma and the rest but prepped by their parents, they did not rush towards us. That was a first! For the last several years, these children were used to being hugged, kissed, cuddled by all of us and now the physical distancing has begun.

We settled ourselves in the middle of the road while the kids started riding their bikes and mini cars. Three sets of families talking and catching up while sitting on the pavement across from each other, separated by this concrete road. The two kids went round and round with their vehicles, approaching us every now and then,

never forgetting the physical distancing. That was another first—for these very young minds to have restraint, to have control. Their parents did a good job explaining the reason why the usual hugs could not be done anymore.

I went back to my car to get the goodies I brought for the kids. They were consciously chosen by me, everything should be in a package, commercially prepared, store-bought. Gone was their favorite corned beef that I usually cook for them when they spend the night at my house or when I visit them. That was another first!

On my way back to join them, it suddenly hit me, that this unusual gathering to celebrate a very special holiday should be considered a blessing. My resourceful family thought of an alternative way to gather all of us, in a safe, clean, open-air setting where we could all be together and still observe the physical distancing. My son even asked his best friend, who is a police officer, for the safest and cleanest park in San Diego that his Mom would approve.



And so, I said to myself that I should savor this day, should take lots of pictures to show these grandkids later. I want to show them that the lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic did not prevent their family from celebrating a special occasion. That they have a resilient family who could roll with the punches, who would rise above all these challenges.

And I hope they will smile when they remember that there was a time in their life that everyone was wearing masks but it did not diminish the love they got from their family.

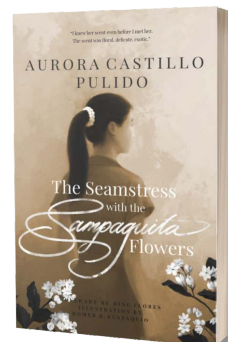


## About The Author

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. *The Seamstress with the Sampaguita Flowers* is her first novella. You can email the author at [aauroraac@yahoo.com](mailto:aauroraac@yahoo.com).



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# Quarantine Story: Growth Amidst A Pandemic

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OCTOBER 21, 2020

BY NIKKI MENDOZA (PHILIPPINES)



It's the end of October today. Just two more months to go. Christmas is coming, and we are already ending this year. What really happened this 2020? Where did the past eight months go?

Every New Year's Day, people would always say things like "this is going to be my year!", "let's make things happen!", and "let's travel this year!" Little did we know, everything could not go according to plan. Well, at least for some. Businesses closed, the economy is down, employees were laid off..

In short, everything just turned around in a snap.

Life is uncertain at the time of a pandemic—and all we have to do is survive. But how do we survive it when life seems so cruel to us, especially in this time of crisis?

I am working in our family business, so I did not have a hard time transitioning to a work-from-home set-up since it is our own. Luckily, the security industry was not one of those that were affected with closing down or ceasing operations for a while since protection is essential to people. Thankfully, we were spared from a financial setback.

What I did at work felt like a routine and everything was done at my own pace and time. We also had employees who we can count on and who helped us a lot.

I have been working in our family business for almost two years now and my relationship with my family has been tested

## QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 4

through time. So being stuck with them for eight straight months at home was not something new to me anymore or big of a deal in terms of adjusting to my personal space and work.

Although, sometimes, it is quite suffocating just dealing with the same people over and over again, day in and day out. That's why I had to do other stuff that would divert my attention to more interesting and exciting activities that would take care of my sanity. That being said, I thought of trying new things. And so I did...

I've always been dreaming of playing the guitar one day and lo and behold, last May 2020, I was able to purchase one through Facebook, but I had to learn the ukulele first since it was easier. *Ang Huling El Bimbo*, an Original Pinoy Music (OPM) song by Eraserheads was the first one I learned because the chord progression was easy to understand and the way I positioned it on the ukulele was not confusing at all.



The strumming pattern was mostly the same for the whole song, so I didn't have a hard time. The only challenge was that I could not possibly sing along while playing the ukulele, and that was what I needed to work on. All in all, I felt really happy because I was finally able to finish playing a song with me learning everything from scratch. And I can't wait to play more songs in the future!

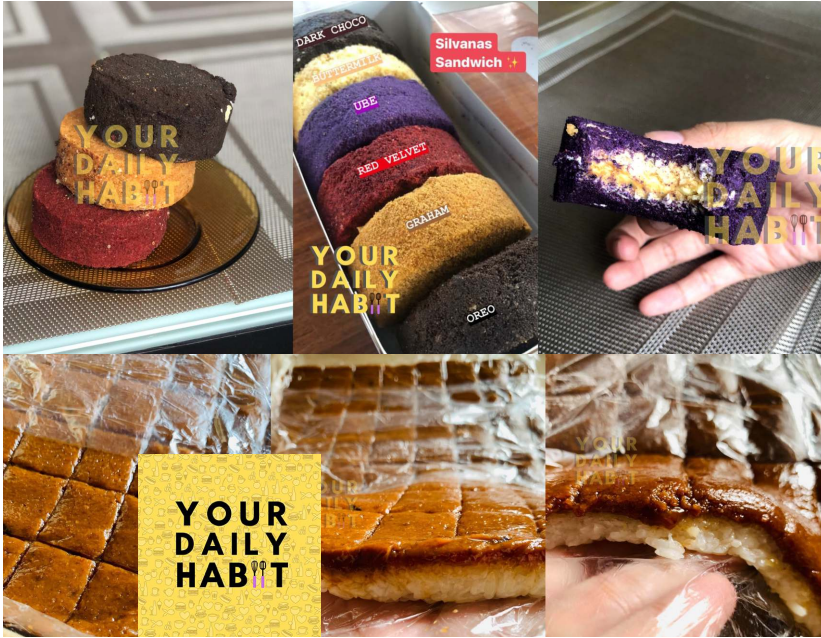
Another thing that I surprisingly have done this pandemic was to work out. Working out on a daily basis was dreadful for me if I were to go back to my old self since I am that type of person who does not like physical activities or in short, getting tired, haha. But the pandemic was a gamechanger. I had to prioritize my health, and working out is one way to make sure I'm fit and healthy. And voila, I lost weight. I am always motivated to exercise, and I couldn't go on a day without completing my workout routine.

Funny how this pandemic changed our lives drastically but still helped us grow differently.

The last and most remarkable move I have done this time was launching my online store. This was a big milestone for me. I started selling desserts last April 2020 as an additional source of income through the help of my brother. To my surprise, it yielded a big profit unexpectedly and a big chunk was added to my savings.

At first, I was hesitant in opening my shop or just creating a page on Facebook since the fear of not being noticed and liked was there, but I did it anyway.

With the support of friends and mostly strangers, we are doing perfectly fine. As of writing, we have 500+ likes on Facebook. Thanks for continuously supporting **Your Daily HabEAT.**



Who would have thought that we'd all be entrepreneurs and bakers and cooks? This is something we didn't know we had or thought we could do. And thankfully, this pandemic opened our eyes to these possibilities.

I learned to cook along the way as well and tried different recipes. I spent my birthday cooking for the family and my boyfriend, and it was one of my happiest days. I never expected I'd be cooking for them since I usually just take them out to dinner or just order from a restaurant for my birthday celebration.

Look at how we all grew when we thought our lives were miserable already. Look at how our perspective may change despite a depressing situation.

I had my share of lows too and until now, I am still waiting for something to happen by the end of this year. We are all waiting for our plot twists hoping that soon, a life-changing miracle can still happen despite all these. I've experienced a lot of breakdowns during this quarantine and there were a lot of times when I wanted

to give up... but I didn't. I had to keep going because I had dreams and I know that they are put on hold for a while, so I had to make things happen for me differently for now.

I wanted to share how sad my life was during this lockdown, but I wanted to be a source of hope to people and not to add more negativity to our lives.

When this is all over, we will rise again. For now, let us continue dreaming. Small steps will lead you to that dream in no time.



 Nikki Mendoza

 Your Daily Habeat



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## About The Author

Nikki is a licensed professional teacher and at the same time, an entrepreneur. She worked in an international school and is now working as a businesswoman. Her food business is named **Your Daily Habeat** and it aims to brighten up your day with a piece of sweet treat made especially for you. She's as sweet as what she sells.

She continues to learn through her experiences and believes that everyone is a work-in-progress. She has always wanted to share her inspiring story someday and this is what she did which helped her grow during a pandemic. Nikki is a woman who is always willing to learn and who aims to instill goodness in individuals by making a difference in their lives.



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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

# Alone With The Cat Squad

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DECEMBER 21, 2020

BY ALEX ALCASID (PHILIPPINES)

When the lockdown was first announced, I thought that I would have to make no change at all to my lifestyle. I was already a lazy, introverted homebody, working from home, comfortable and secure in a kingdom of isolation.

I was living alone in a house that my family was renting while we waited for our house to be built. With the lockdown announced, the construction was stopped and my hopes of moving to a better neighborhood without having to pay rent were shelved indefinitely.

I found myself enveloped by a cloud of anxiety, forced to wait in an unsure limbo. How long would the lockdown be? Was this week really going to be the end of the lockdown? Would I be able to see my family and my fiancé again? The weeks rolled by and the lockdown kept getting extended. What had started as quiet hope quickly turned into unending despair.

I thought I would be okay. I hardly went outside even before the pandemic, and I had always opted to stay in if I could get away with it. Once I had no choice in the matter did I realize what I was missing.

I missed my fiancé dearly, now that he could no longer visit me every other day like he used to. I couldn't go out for lunch with my family every week like we did, and have our mini-reunions and catch up over coffee and laugh the hours away.

Thankfully, as devoid as I was of human company, I wasn't completely alone. I had my cat, Horus. He is a 7-year-old Himalayan





cat, spoiled as anything, and I am sure that if I didn't have him with me I'd have spiraled into despair months ago.

Horus had always been a quiet cat, hardly ever meowing unless he really needed something. And, because he was so spoiled, the cat kept me on a schedule.

Horus would wake me up at six o'clock every morning, every day, every week. He would sit on my head and purr and nudge me with his wet nose till I woke up, or he would start licking my hair with his rough tongue. Once the cat perched on my head, I knew it was time to get up and feed him his breakfast.

Then, later in the day, he would meow loudly at me while I was on the computer and alert me that it was dinner time—always at six every evening. Without even trying, the cat kept his human on a life-saving schedule. I was his entire life, locked up as he was with me in a hot box of a house during a pandemic lockdown. I needed to care for him, as without me he would have nothing. Little did I know that

the number of furry saviors would increase in the following months.

As Horus ate his wet food in the morning, I noticed that he would leave leftovers that would stink in the summer heat. To cut down on food waste, I began moving his leftovers to a small pet bowl to leave in the tiny front yard for the street cats.

After that, I would find Horus at the window watching a street cat eating from the bowl. At first, it was always the same cat: a grizzled old tom who had obviously seen better days. His eyes were gummed shut and his fur was coarse and dusty. I tried several times to coax the cat into coming closer so I could pet him, but he would always run away.

It rained once, and I saw him sleeping on a bench my family had put in the yard. As carefully as I could, I set out some leftover chicken for the old cat and noticed with great joy that he stayed to eat and sleep the rain away in my yard. After a few days, he trusted me enough to clean his face of gunk, and he looked like a brand new cat.

Soon after that, more cats started showing up to the yard to eat or sleep. I had regulars in the yard who would consistently come to visit for breakfast and dinner, even trusting me enough to let me pat them, and recognizing me when I would come home from the groceries by running up to greet me!



Even Horus seemed livelier as he had gained new friends, and he would always meow at me during my morning coffee to let him go outside for a morning walk where he would sit among the street cats.

I have moved out of that house since then, unfortunately leaving my Cat Squad. By my last count, I had seen and taken pictures of 14 street cats who came to the yard! Perhaps word got around among them that a human nearby was kind to cats and gave out free food and shelter, which attracted more visitors to my yard. One of the regulars even moved her kittens into my yard from her home across the street!

I can't say when I realized that I was living for the cats, but that's certainly what kept me together during the lockdown. These were street cats with no owners, no home, no one else to take care of them. I figured that maybe if I could make a difference to anyone in



my life, it could start with these ignored and forgotten street animals, and my own spoiled fuzzy son.

If I didn't have these cats to care for, I don't know what depths of darkness I'd have ended up in during the pandemic. They gave me purpose, a reason to get up every day, a reason to go out and do the groceries, a reason to actually take care of myself, and a reason not to shake myself to pieces with anxiety and depression.

In short, these cats saved my life. \*\*\*



Alex Alcasid

## About The Author

Alex Alcasid is a writer from the Philippines, specializing in creative writing in fiction. She primarily writes short stories in the fantasy, horror, and speculative fiction genres. Some short stories of hers have been published in the Philippines Graphic magazine, and she has self-published her debut YA Fantasy novel *Dream of Dragons* on Amazon.

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#CoronavirusChronicles #QuarantinedThoughts

# Caged

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DECEMBER 21, 2020

BY ODESSA REYES (PHILIPPINES)

I spent the whole day binge-watching Grey's Anatomy, covering my phone screen with my hand now and then whenever a gory scene comes up.



## QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 4

Some say that staying in bed for the entire day is a sign of depression. I don't believe I'm sad. Maybe, I feel more trapped than sad.

However, since I've been at it for the entire day now, I mustered the strength to beat whatever downing force is keeping me from getting up, and finally sat up. Then, I stared at the window for about five minutes. This is what I found.



It doesn't look much in the picture. I know. Just a beaten-down roof that may need replacing and a bunch of trees. It's not visible, but there are a lot of birds flying around the tree. They're communicating, too, I think. It calmed me for a bit. But then, I started to envy them. You see, they're free. However, there's an upside to being caged. Months of being trapped gave me more

time to think.

It also made me appreciate the littlest things about the nature around our home. Every morning, birds would fly towards the aratilis tree, picking its fruits while making incredibly beautiful sounds. The bees would fly over the flowers of our squash, moving from one flower to another until they're satisfied. The neighbor's pigeons would fly in circles around the *balete* tree near us, and I'd stare at them for a few minutes, free of thoughts. I love waking up to this.

Being trapped for a few months now leaves most of us with little variation in the things we do. So, just like most, I would spend my weekends binge-watching shows on Netflix to de-stress.



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Yesterday, I watched David Attenborough's *Life on Our Planet*, and I felt alarmed rather than de-stressed. This 1.5-hour documentary shares David Attenborough's eyewitness story of the natural events of the planet. It's a must-watch, especially for the youth and the unaware. If you're too busy to watch it, allow me to summarize it for you. If you're planning to watch it, better stop reading now. **SPOILER ALERT!**

The documentary explains that, if we don't change our ways:

**By 2030:** There would be an altered water cycle because of forest degradation. There may be ice-free arctic.

**By 2040:** There would be increased production of methane due to forest degradation and the burning of fossil fuels, leading to an accelerated rate of climate change dramatically.

**By 2050:** There will be more acidic oceans due to coral bleaching and increased global temperature. Coral reefs would die, and the fish populations would crash.

**By 2080:** There will be a crisis in food production due to the overuse of land. The pollinating insects would disappear and there would be more unpredictable weather.

**By 2100:** The global temperature will be four degrees warmer. Large parts of the earth will be inhabitable. Millions will become homeless. It's predicted that Earth will have its sixth mass extinction.

In a few decades, we have managed to reduce the world's forests to just about 30%. Imagine that. Our forests are 70% less than before, and we have directly and indirectly caused it.

We have transformed thriving rainforests into dead palm plantations or coconut forests (or subdivisions). Thousands of animal species have been driven to extinction and more and more animals are being driven to extinction.

The arctic ice is getting thinner by the hour. The marine diversity is incredibly decreased. Coral reefs are undergoing bleaching due to increased ocean acidity.

This is because we humans thought of ourselves as the most important species on the planet just because of our complex way of



thinking. What we fail to realize is that the planet will be so much better without us in the picture.

For example, as explained in the documentary, Chernobyl, which used to be a thriving city, is now taken over by nature because of the absence of human beings. It's clear evidence that nature is capable of surviving without the human population, which means the planet will survive after we're gone. And, if we don't act now, it may be too late to reverse the damage.

### **The Good News:**

We have stabilized the global population and are continuing to do so. Family planning has become better in most countries. More and more countries are turning to renewable energy sources like solar power and geothermal energy as primary sources of electricity.



HOWEVER, this is obviously not enough. There's a lot more we can and we must do to slow down the planet's decline and halt our extinction.

### **What We Can Do (According To Sir David):**

- Raise the standard of living in the world by providing proper education and health care to its inhabitants won't result in drastic measures (like poaching) to live.
- Have more designated no-fish zones to allow marine life to thrive.
- Continue stabilizing the world population to just within its carrying capacity.
- Have a less meat-based diet to reduce the need for livestock and poultry and reduce the annual anthropogenic GHG emissions globally, which is one of the causes of global warming.
- Have smaller farm spaces and reduce land grabbing to give wild animals more space to inhabit.
- Protect rainforests and halt deforestation immediately and ONLY farm on lands deforested long before.

If I may add, small changes can result in great things collectively:

- Imbibe the reduce, reuse, and recycle mindset, and if we can, the zero-waste lifestyle.
- Educate our youth at a young age to appreciate and protect all living things.

- Have more discipline and respect for fellow humans and other species.
- Train ourselves to be better consumers.

**More generally:**

“Establish a life on the planet in balance with nature.”

“Move from being apart from nature to being a part of nature once again.”

If we change our ways, there's an alternative future where the planet isn't chaotic as predicted.



- We discover ways to live while allowing the wild to thrive.
- We find ways to fish without depleting the ocean's resources.
- We harvest our forests more sustainably.
- We work with nature rather than against it.
- As Sir David said, we have to remember that the living world will endure (without us). We humans cannot presume the same.

Instead of focusing our energy on finding a new planet to inhabit (and eventually destroy), I hope we'd be able to keep the planet we're in and find a way to nurture it before it's too late.



## About The Author

Odessa is a licensed professional teacher and an environmental protection advocate. She recently moved to a work-from-home job to have more time for blogging. She dreams of writing her own book and inspiring others to share their thoughts with the world through stories. She has her own blog, **On Finding Momentum** where she mostly shares her motorcycle travel stories.



On Finding Momentum



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BONUS ESSAY

# The Virus And You

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AUGUST 27, 2020

BY RAQUEL G. CASTILLO (PHILIPPINES)

The old you says, “This is a mess!  
We are doomed. We are fighting an  
enemy we couldn’t even see!”

In between quarantine shifts, there, you find yourself stuck in the house. Your limited movement has gotten you bored, so bored it led you to a lot of apprehensions about the present situation. And since there's not much to do, you tend to exaggerate things, and probably your feelings, too!

As COVID-19 cases started to surface one after another, you start losing hope. Your heart becomes weary of the unknown. And a picture of you, like a candle slowly fading in the dark, comes to mind. This has brought your willpower to weaken in despair. You want to go out. You're longing to see the sun, but you just couldn't. Thanks to yourself, you know what safety means, though you've been feeling like detained in a prison without railings.

On most days, you just find yourself staring blankly at the ceiling, only to look at the emptiness. Because there is nothing else but nothingness.

You don't watch TV anymore. You just take glances because it irritates you when you see people who do not even know what discipline and safety mean. What you see on the news, those criticisms, side-by-side arguments, the ranting of some, countless demands, and almost unending complaints annoy you so much.

But I think it doesn't end there. I suppose there is more than what you are seeing, there is more to your feelings. Why? Because I see little changes...and yes, little but loud. Didn't you notice that something emerges? And if I am right, despite the uncertainties, a new you emerges.

If before, you always think of fame and money, spending most of your day bragging about what you've got, now your heart is filled with love and compassion to those who are crying in distress during this pandemic.

## QUARANTINED THOUGHTS VOL 4

If before, you always think of yourself and what you will get, suddenly you are minding of what else you can spare for others.

If before, you only pray solely for your own good, now you are praying for others, even those you do not personally know. And you are beginning to recognize God and that only Him holds the future. That no matter how famous we are, how rich we are, or how strong our bodies can be, we, humans, are still vulnerable especially with the presence of the virus around us.

If before, you were hesitant at helping the weak, the disadvantaged, and the so-called "*nasa laylayan ng lipunan*", now, you learned to share the little that you have. You've learned to give even when you are struggling yourself. You've learned to divide the only PHP1,000.00 cash in your wallet, give half of the amount to your neighbors without thinking you are losing something.

If before, you can't live without your favorite whitening soap, makeup, and some beauty products, now, you've learned to live without those for a while. Instead, you allocated the money that should have been for that purpose to charity works.



If before, you keep on complaining about having no time for your family because of the demands of your work, now, you are temporarily freed from the hustle and bustle of daily living. The rest days or time off you've been requesting and demanding from your boss a long time ago is finally in your hands. No rush hours. No chasing of time. No worries about being late at work. No hassles choosing what to wear because, inside your house, you can wear that *sando* or *camison na maaring niluma na ng panahon subalit presko pa rin*. Good to note that you are into home cooking now. Careful enough what healthy dishes you can put on the table. No "boughts" this time but purely home cooking. And surprisingly, you may be cooking from scratch...some sort of food recycling.

If before, you were emotionally blind, finally you have opened your eyes to the misery happening in the whole country. The pangs of poverty have slapped you in the face. Blindfolds were taken off automatically. It is now clear to you that there are people drowning, with empty pockets and hungry stomachs. Obviously, they are in pain and are terrified.

The virus that seems unseen to the naked eye is horrible. Has another portal opened and made you see and hear the saddening truth? Perhaps it is a good way to hear the wailing of those who are really having a hard time coping with the new normal because it moved you so much that your capacity to love was put to test.

The hero inside of you came out naturally. You didn't even know it. Filled with empathy, you woke up with the truth that real happiness is found in reaching a hand for others. It came to you clearly that material things cannot protect you from catastrophe. Rubies, diamonds, luxuries of this life, they're nothing but ornaments.



With a little pressing due to COVID-19, you have grown to maturity and in faith.

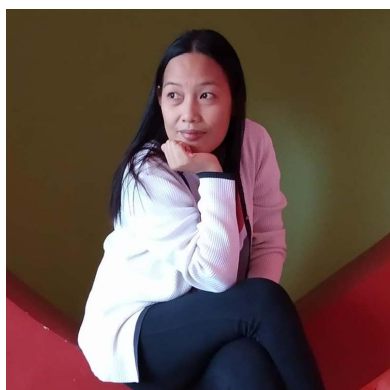
Somehow, the virus had distracted you from earthly cravings and has led you closer to valuing the “now” and the ordinarily wonderful moments in it.

Letting yourself feel the embrace of the Almighty has made you embrace the needy. The delays have become opportunities to awaken your soul and the experiences during these difficult times have turned into treasures worthy of keeping.



There is peace in giving. Finding peace in your heart made you realized the true meaning of life...and this has brought you to a higher level of discovering ANOTHER YOU, despite the crisis.

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## About The Author

Raquel G. Castillo is a public school teacher, teaching junior high school. She loves writing. She is an aspiring writer, a dream she has since she was 10 years old. But for now, she is happy with the thought that she is a writer in her own world.

Mouths may be **covered**  
but minds are **racing**  
with thoughts...

# QUARANTINED THOUGHTS

Life Stories And Musings During A Pandemic





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Photo by Natalie Donato



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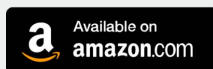
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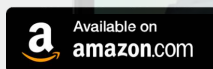
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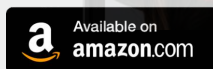
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# About The Publisher

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

Kath C. Eustaquio-Derla is a published author, copy editor, online and offline publisher, book writing mentor, printer, and a communications strategist. Kath is 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 writers. She won the **2018 Best Editor (English Category)** and **Best Printing Service** during the Gawad Parangal Sa Mundo Ng Literatura Awards of Penmasters League.

Kath is also named Marketing in Asia's 70 **Rising Personalities On LinkedIn 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)**.



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# 21 AUTHORS 22 STORIES

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

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

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

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

## *WITH STORIES FROM*

Kath C. Eustaquio-Derla | Anna Catherine Villamor | Mark Manalang  
Raquel G. Castillo | Lolita B. Ocampo | Lori Dumaligan  
Cristy Madel L. Abagao | S.J. Wolf | Earl Leonard Sebastian  
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