

Disharmonious Solidarity

The clay cleanser in the bathroom smells like old Christmas... it reminds me of the days where we used to go to parties and celebrate together. When we were younger. Smells like a random new person who comes around. Like... like memories. I just miss the days where our only worry was getting in trouble while doing the innocent childish things we did. When we were young and when our world was no chaos except who rode shotgun. When we actually had fun. Gosh, I can't even remember the last time I actually had fun. But it's not about fun... I miss the days where our only contemplations were what pizza toppings we were ordering. Now we can't even go out for our entertainment. Now I have a different opinion on not getting what I wanted for lunch. Every plate in this house has to be appreciated even more than before. I've come to a realization that most days I feel alone. That most days I eat alone... I feel so trapped sometimes. So isolated. But maybe I'm just exaggerating. What really matters is that I'm safe, and that my family is safe. What really matters is that those around me are safe.

As an individual in this situation, we could only do so much as to be told what to do. To wait around like a puppet for the next show. But people need to understand that the only way to make things better is by being that patient puppet, waiting in the corner of the little house. If they care so much, looking out to the audience. In this case, the audience is the fool. Why are they watching me? Why aren't they moving the same? Why am I the only one stuck in this little house,

with the little table that has no meal? Why are they working their mouths? Their lungs? Their noses? Even the solitary eyes behind the masks are fascinating. Ha. They should be the puppet.

It's so ironic to think that the puppet is more conscious than the human.

As a society, we were kept away from the reality of the chaos. No one knew how serious this situation was, until it was pronounced a world pandemic. The last day I came from school, I was happy because I thought I would finally get a break. Outside, the sky was gloomy and the ground was wet. The streets were busy with everyone hurrying home. I took a deep breath and softly inhaled the petrichor in the air. I find it thrilling how different smells bring me different memories. My peace was suddenly disrupted when one of my friends came to me. She was excited as well, ready to head home. But I didn't know then how consequential it was to stay at home.

It's been four months since the start of quarantine. We are forewarned to stay secluded from others, even from our families. Now the skies are sunny and bright. They appear to be a complete contrast to the genesis of our confinement, when the ether was cleared of clouds and just a blotch of grayish-blue. The curtains on the living room remind me of that bittersweet day. "Ve a llevarles comida a tus hermanitos." My mother had rustled up a typical Dominican meal: *arroz blanco, pollo al horno y habichuela*.

"Yo no e huido afuera desde de que serraron la escuela." As I wear my blue mask, I get mentally prepared to see the outside for the first time since quarantine. The sun hits me with a warm ray of life. I took a deep breath and remembered the last day of school. So much but so little has happened. I feel like exploring this "new world". But as I look to the streets beyond,

3

there are no people walking by like they used to. There are no running cars turning for their destination as there used to. And then tout de suite, I felt all alone again.

For the next two months, all I hear out of doors are the rushing emergency vehicles. They are trying their best to keep sufferers alive and convince others to stay out of risk. They spend countless days with little to no sleep. We can silently show them our appreciation by following the precautions that were provided to us. Working together by keeping away from each other may sound ridiculous, but it has proven to work. The local super markets and the churches are trying their best to support families in need, so we should too.

Waiting at home as the numbers of contagions rises makes me feel useless. But I don't think I should feel useless; I'm doing my part by completing my quarantine. Waiting at home as the numbers of contagions fall makes me feel like I did my part.

“If we work together we can make a change!”

“If we work together we can end this stage!”

“If we work together we can break the chain!”

“If we work together we can all be sane...”