

A Journey Through Quarantine

I grabbed my keys and a sweater and pulled my shoes on. *Finally! A break from this house!* “Mom, I’m going out!” I yelled. “Okay Angela, but don’t forget your mask!” she yelled back. I sighed. I started thinking there would never be a day when we didn’t have to wear masks or social distance. After glancing at the clock that read 9 am, I opened the door and walked to my car, that was still as red and shiny as when I washed it yesterday.

As I pulled out of the driveway and started to the hospital, I turned up the radio and began to listen. *So much to be thankful for, oh this is a crazy world, living in our own world, so much to be thankful for* the song said. I began meditating on those words and contemplating what had happened in the past six months. The ways the world changed, grew, and became different. A whole pandemic hit the globe, causing millions of deaths, and many to fall ill. I was forced to stay inside the four walls of my house, living the life of the prisoner. Of course I was safe from the virus and from death, but I was just surviving, not truly living. double

I was in a haze, forgetting what my friends looked like in real life, Facetime was deceiving me into thinking they were only a pixelated figure on my phone screen, pretending to talk to me. I began thinking if life would ever be normal, whatever that was anymore. If this was life, what was the point of living? What was the point of doing a bunch of assignments? Would I even make it to college? I pondered these thoughts day and night, wondering if life was worth living.

So I decided to do something that I hadn’t had time to do before this stage of quarantine, to somehow pass the time that life was giving me. I began baking again, rediscovering my love for it. When I was stressed, I would use precise measurements to feel in control, and when I was

bored, I would test and tweak new recipes with my imagination. It calmed me, like a massage for my mind, kidnapping me from reality and the world, and into a world made with turmeric, cinnamon, and chocolate. I began feeling a little bit of peace, and I began finding small things in life that made it worth living. I started spending more time with my family, watching shows I like, reliving childhood memories. I began being grateful for the things I took for granted such as my health, food, and everyday luxuries.

I started to live again, redevelop my personality, and discover myself. I rearranged my life, my priorities, my perspectives. I stopped obsessing over my weight, and began taking care of my body for my health that I had taken for granted. I realized my family wouldn't be there forever, so I used the time I had with them for good. I stopped wasting my energy on trying to always get a 100% on tests, and began accepting my grades as long as I worked hard. I realized that the things I was obsessing over didn't measure who I was, my personality, or my worth. I shut out other people's opinions, and began living for myself. I wore and ate what made me feel happy, without worrying about what others would say. I was filled with joy and happiness and peace. I filtered my life in more ways than I ever had.

I slowly zoned out of my thoughts as I drove into the hospital parking lot, and the lady in a green-patterned mask matching with her green vest guided me to my parking spot. I grabbed my black cotton mask and I prepared myself to see Grandma. Thankfully, she tested negative for COVID-19 twice, but she was still recovering from her kidney surgery. I sighed as I opened my door and walked steadily to the hospital entrance with a big poster reading SOCIAL DISTANCE on it. I walked inside and navigated myself to Grandma's room, passing by busy doctors and nurses with full protection, looking hungry and tired. I knew they were very tired as hospitals got busy with COVID-19 and many patients were dying. I thought about how even though they were

tired, they kept pushing on, never quitting. Once I reached Grandma's room, her face lit up with excitement like a child who had been given a new toy. "Oh, Angela! How are you? I've been waiting for you to come!" she exclaimed, and the nurse that was there glanced at me with a smile. I realized that both grandma and the nurse might be hungry, so I grabbed the granola bars I had packed in my bag and tossed a few to Grandma. "Here you go Grandma, I thought you would be tired of all the hospital food here."

"Yes I am! The food here tastes like.....nothing!" she said as she scarfed down the bars. I looked at the tired nurse and gave a few bars to her. "Here, you look really tired, and I really want to thank you for everything you are doing during this crazy time, and everything you have been sacrificing. It means a lot." She smiled at me, a real and genuine smile that didn't even need words. I smiled back as I thought of how fortunate I was to stay at home and not deal with what she was dealing with. As I walked to the chair next to Grandma, I realized all the new things I learned, changed, and thought *maybe this whole quarantine isn't so bad after all.*