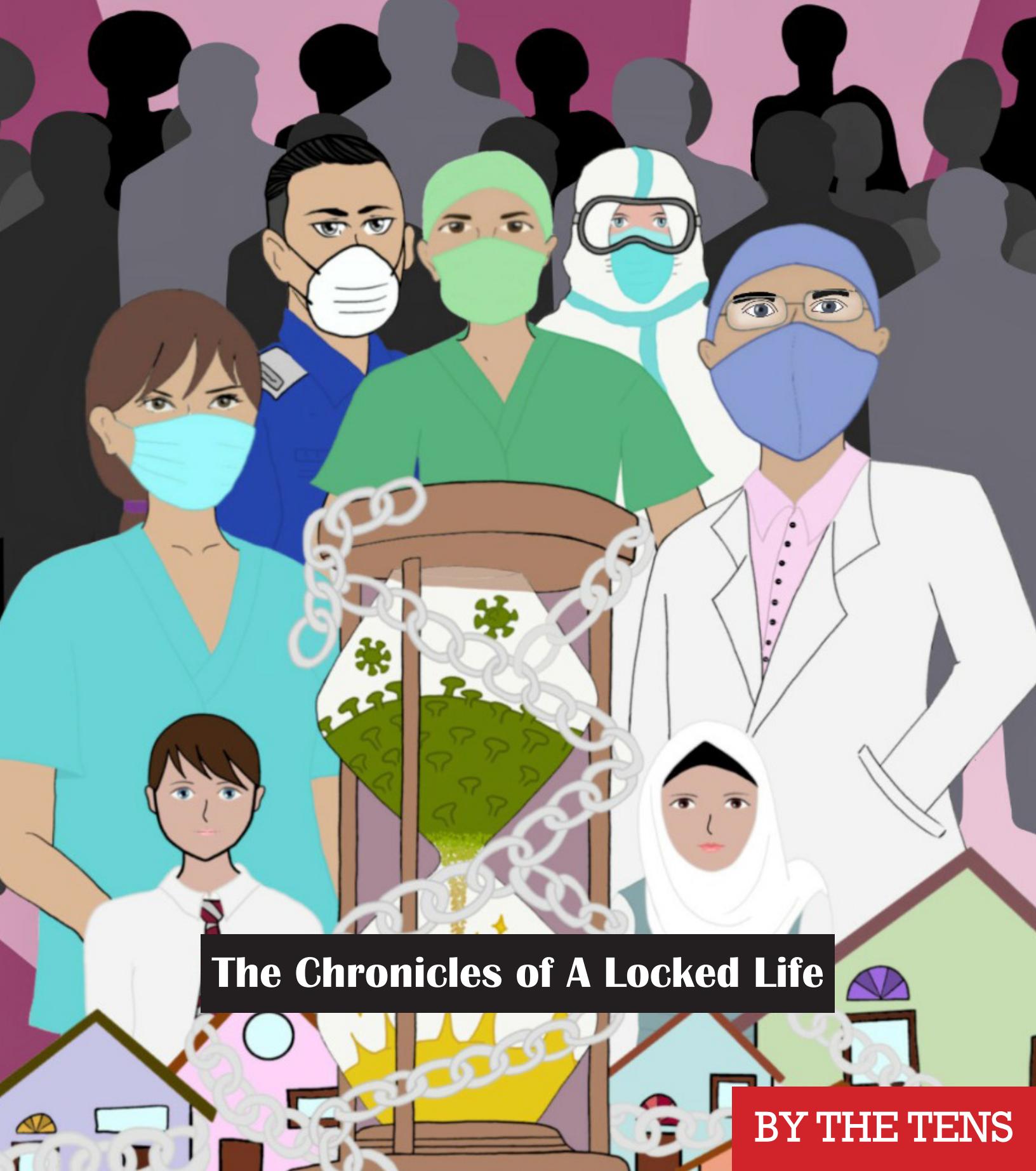


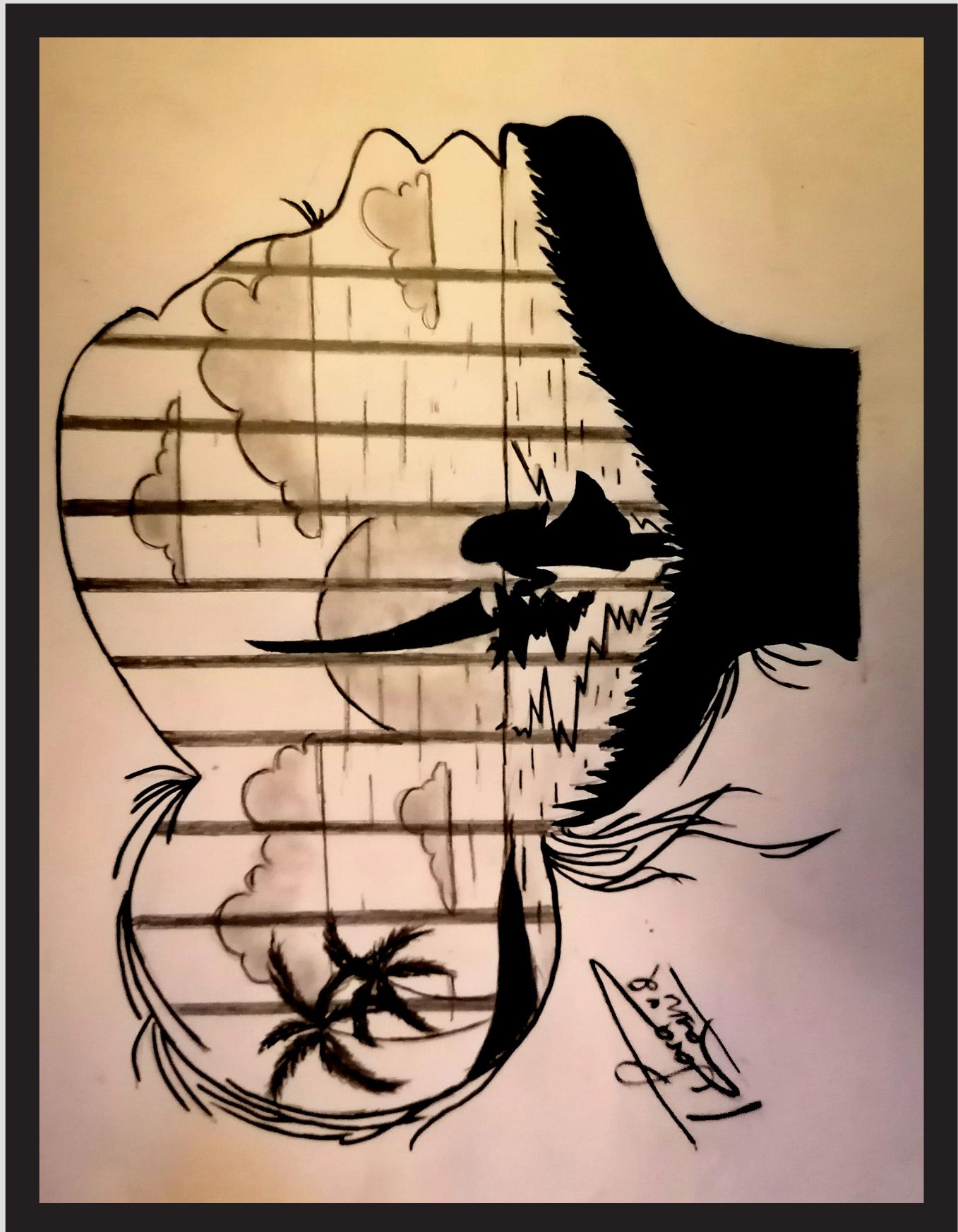


# RIVAL TO THE RECKONING OR BLESSING IN DISGUISE



**The Chronicles of A Locked Life**

**BY THE TENS**



-SARA RASHID

# **“Fear, feel or flee...?”**

This is the story of an ordinary juvenile, Cody, who lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the year 2020. He lives with his two loving and concerned parents, and a younger sister who always lightens up his day even when it appears impossible. His dad works in one of the leading hospitals in the country as a finance manager being the only breadwinner for his family. As the world was about to enter the ever-spoken and well-awaited year of 2020, things didn't go the way people had planned it. Year 2020 was all about flying cars, AI robots, and so many other high-tech revolutionaries. Some of these milestones were even yet to be achieved but just as humans became extremely mindful of the future, the present was not even to be thought of. 2020 then became a rough start, with everyone's worst nightmares drawing closer towards reality exclusively with the evolution of an incurable virus that started to spread like wildfire across the globe.

Cody loved going to school every day, enjoyed hanging out with his best buddies, and treasured his daily cycling time. He would pick his sister right after school was over and walk her to their house which was just about one lane away. Cody's mom would have then prepared lunch in which the family would sit around the dining table and happily enjoy the food. All of this was only possible way before lockdown began.

Months later, as things changed around the world, Cody was reluctant just as any ordinary soul, to sacrifice his daily routine to the bitterness of the lockdown. Cody's school closed down a month ago and all the days of having fun with his friends vanished. The streets that were once full of playful children, roaming pedestrians, and scattered cars, transformed into a barren, desolate area with a sort of dystopian look in it. People across the world began facing difficulties with unemployment as businesses went bankrupt or just couldn't operate with the current situation. Cody's mom feared for her husband as day in day out, he worked in a hospital environment. Many offices started to operate through online facilities with VPN access, but Cody's dad remained going to work every day with a curfew pass in his hand. One night, Cody overheard his mom and dad talking in the living room, and just as curiosity got into him, he eavesdropped on the whole conversation.

“Can't you stay at home and work online, honey?”

“Darling, my office doesn't work that way, as it is a leading hospital”

“I know, but... I fear that you might get infected!”

“Don’t worry, our office has taken all precautionary measures, besides I’m fortunate enough to receive my monthly pay, am I not?”

“Yes you are...”

“Come on now don’t cry, we have to be strong in the eyes of our children...”

From that day onwards, nightmares clouded Cody’s head as he worried that his father may be just another mere victim of this Corona virus. His paranoia further grew as he came to know that all of his other friends’ fathers stayed at home and worked online, while his dad kept on being cooperative with his employers at this time of pandemic. This was the fear that Cody masked within him ever since.

As days became weeks and then months, the number of daily reported cases began increasing tremendously, and this was a real nightmare to see on the news headlines. Cody’s mom had a selfless personality as day by day the concern of her neighbours grew. Our neighbours lived across our house and they had a little child. Sadly the father of the house had lost his job due to the current situation, in which the poor family faced a financial crisis. Cody’s mother opted to lend a helping hand in terms of rations without a second thought, but just as then, Cody’s dad reasoned with his mom. He mentioned that helping and feeling for one another is an exceptional human virtue, however, with the present-day condition, Cody’s dad had an apprehensive mind and didn’t wish to take a chance in which the meal provided by their family would cause some sort of illness to the neighbours.

With each passing day, things exacerbated forcing the lockdown to be extended, and one day, Cody glanced through the window and caught glimpse of a man. This man seemed to be searching for something or someone perhaps, and on the way, he sprained his ankle and collapsed on the pavement. With no one to help, he laid there, possibly waiting for an “Angel” to help him up. Cody had no option but to remain at home and so he could not be this man’s angel. Cody waited, and watched, if there would be any passing pedestrian to help him up. Instead, Cody thought to himself, “Will anyone help him by giving a hand?”. Again an epiphany struck him, “Who would do so by giving their hand to a complete stranger?” The meeting of hands were put to an end some time back as shaking hands ceased, with the fleeing of hands taking its place due to the ever contagious virus. So will a human help a man in need or flee from a man in need, keeping in mind the current crisis?

The choice of fleeing from another or feeling for another was quite conflicting, Cody pondered upon. The nefarious virus had decided everything from what will happen to us to what has happened to us. All we have remained are the supplications and prayers of the entire human race and a child’s dream to come true.

-Thaabit Raziq

# QUARANTINED

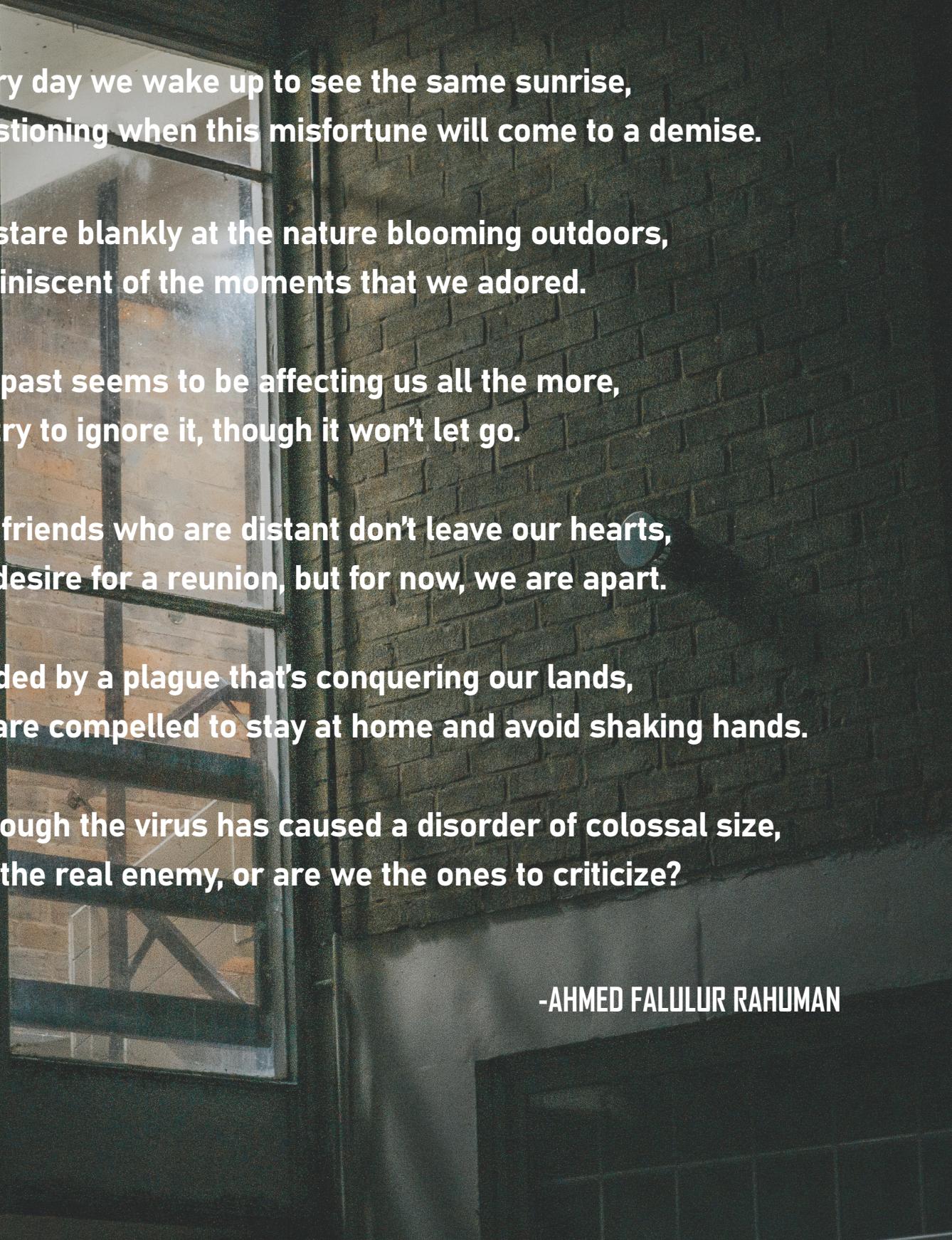
While in real life, the world feels paralyzed in a suspenseful state of anticipation of the dreaded future. It's eerily quiet, with almost no one outside out and about, the only sounds that can be heard are the occasional birds chirping, the soft drops of the spring rain, and the wind whistling through the trees. Despite the crystal clear blue skies from the lack of traffic, the future couldn't be more obfuscated and befogged as everyone waits anxiously in isolation hoping for the pandemic to pass. The coronavirus has changed how we work, play and learn, Schools are closing, sports leagues have been canceled, and many people have been asked to work from home.

While they may seem radically different on the surface, they both share an underlying root of fear that drives both of their reactions. Fear floods the internet with so much information that it overwhelms everyone on it, causing chaos and panic. While on the other hand, the unknown and highly contagious nature of the virus causes almost everyone to be scared straight and stiff in their homes, with nearly no one even daring to leave them even for the essentials. For the first time in history there was a theft taken place in order to steal masks and toilet paper, and this shows the values of things that we usually don't care about.

The streets which were filled with colorful lights and chattering of people were no more. No more public transportation, no more socializing and people had to maintain a social distance. It was a year where people had time to socialize with their family and also taught the value of having a family and made them spend time together, it was something that never happened before the virus had spread, people doing their own work, not caring about the family rather only on worldly possessions and the definition of HERO has changed instead of an athlete or celebrity It's doctors, nurses, front line workers, teachers and scientists.

-AASHIF AHMED

# **CONFINED**



**Every day we wake up to see the same sunrise,  
questioning when this misfortune will come to a demise.**

**We stare blankly at the nature blooming outdoors,  
reminiscent of the moments that we adored.**

**The past seems to be affecting us all the more,  
we try to ignore it, though it won't let go.**

**Our friends who are distant don't leave our hearts,  
we desire for a reunion, but for now, we are apart.**

**Divided by a plague that's conquering our lands,  
we are compelled to stay at home and avoid shaking hands.**

**Although the virus has caused a disorder of colossal size,  
is it the real enemy, or are we the ones to criticize?**

**-AHMED FALULUR RAHUMAN**

# The Harsh reality

“IT IS OKAY IF YOU WERE HOPEFUL LAST WEEK BUT ARE AFRAID THIS WEEK. NEITHER EMOTION INVALIDATES THE OTHER, AND NEITHER MAKES YOU WEAK OR VULNERABLE.”

## How did it start?

The first time it was detected in Pakistan was on the 26th of February 2020, when a student in Karachi tested positive upon returning from Iran, and by the 18th of March, multiple cases had been registered in all four provinces.

## What preventive measures is Pakistan taking?

In all honesty, not much but there are some basic ones like how the country has been put under a nationwide lockdown which lasted till the 9th of May, and this was first initiated on the 1st of April and was extended twice but on the 7th of May, the Prime Minister, Imran Khan, announced to ease the lockdown. Also, all schools and universities, both public and private, have been ordered to stay closed to slow down the spread of the virus. And, lastly, all public gatherings (much to everyone's dismay), are banned with immediate effect.

The place that is the most affected in Pakistan is Punjab, with a whopping of 10,033 plus cases.

*“The coronavirus has proved that everything around us is so temporary. Things our lives revolved around work, gyms, malls, schools have all been thrown away as we are learning to live without them. It has taught us that in the end, it's our own home and family that keeps us safe.”*

## How does it generally affect the public?

On the 2nd of April, the government announced that the Pakistani economy had lost 2.5 trillion rupees due to the pandemic. And as for the unemployment situation, the Ministry of Planning has estimated that roughly up to 12.3 – 18.5 million people will become jobless due to the widespread of this atrocious virus. What this concludes is that more people are going to suffer to provide for their families on account of the lack of resources and jobs, resulting in scarcity of necessities and hunger. The virus is now virtually present in the whole world. Each at different stages of the pandemic, there is a sense of foreboding that for many, the worst is yet to come. As the number of cases in fragile contexts begins to rise, we are starting to see the impact this will have on the most.

- Malikah Zaheen

# **Hope and pray**

**When the time came to self-isolate, I was quite in dismay.  
As we dwell on the past, I never thought life would be this way.**

**As life on streets started to disconnect,  
the busy lives turned their concerns to disinfect.**

**Heroes frontline, fighting against an enemy too small to  
acknowledge.**

**As unity is strength, their aim was to demolish.**

**During our time in confinement,  
it seems as if our busy lives had gone into retirement.**

**A creative mind could not fail to impress,  
especially during these times of distress.**

**Friends and family have been estranged,  
But our bonds and love will always be the same.**

**We hope and pray for a cure to be found,  
As we turn to our gods to turn this thing around.**

**- PRAVIN**



# **Diagnosed with Covid-19**

Tears shed, and mortalities were overabundant, by what news reporters claim, “a speck that annihilated the world.” Covid-19, a calamity that catapulted lives into a realm of possibilities (or lack thereof). In May, almost everyone is observing self-quarantine, predictably, to protect others from this pandemic. Paradoxically, stargazers contemplated hitting Mars in 2020, yet many can’t even step out of their residences. Can we help the NHO or the community?

Firstly, as time passes by relentlessly, civilians are locked up like frantic doves and encounter frustrations due to a plethora of financial instabilities, and mainly lacking employment. Secondly, the world is facing its worst currently, demises that scars loved ones and soaring of essential commodities that people in their multitudes cannot handle. Restaurants are also closed down because of this dire situation. According to the Economy Policy Institute, the labour market is lacking 10.9 million jobs. However, statistics show that personages have found “hundred thousand” new jobs.

Moreover, these poignant words don’t give justice to the sheer amount of people starving. Why cannot humans be cooperative to those who are in need, by conserving resources and prevent wastage? Adding fuel to the fire, researchers reiterate that severe consequence of 265 million people may face acute famine at the end of 2020. Hallucination is a side effect of Covid-19, since the skyrocketing of prices for a significant reserve water.

On the contrary, some have stepped up their game and are showing individuality by projecting ways to improvise delicacies. Thirdly, challenges, attempts and inspirational words are all about the grapevine, resulting in many to adjust their endeavours to support themselves and the society to eradicate this virus once it for all. It can predictably be the solution for our devastation: subsequently, are you ready to lend a helping hand? To further elaborate this, thirty per cent of Americans today work from home, which in return entails more cooking from home. This sacred act has put lives out of misery; yet, others many contend this, by stating the leap in prices of dough, wheat and rice. For instance, Nigeria’s charges for rice in retail markets leapt exponentially around 25% in the latter part of March. For all what we know, this value remains theoretical by the time you are reading this and definitely could have risen or

declined as scientists are on the verge of identifying a solution (god forbid if there is at all one). Are we equipped to be the keys that sacrifice ourselves to allow the world embraces its shine?

Furthermore, this has enticed particular residents to cope up during this contagion and virtually create new connections, igniting forgotten ones and exterminating solitude. Besides, folks are tuning in on the shindig via the internet. Additionally, YouTube and Netflix are observing a mild increase of 15.5%.

Fourthly, the internet's influence is rather staggering, as such, many can forget and portal themselves from reality. This medium enabled professional to highlight their expertise, being proactive while transpiring in the safety of their home. Attributable, countries have begun local production of food, and this prevents the spread of the virus and boosts the prosperity of the nation.

Lastly, there are those lunatics who meander their way through supermarkets and hoard stacks upon stacks of certain products.

Conversely, hoarders are selfish and inconsiderate greedy heads; history would perceive. The main reason behind this phenomenon began when some pedestrians decided on buying numerous things and created a stockpile and a stockpile they collected. This unfortunate verdict led every Tom, Dick and Harry to sweep through stores. Why cannot we be considerate? Does someone need this much food supplies? Also, it is due to these frenzied people many lives are in stake.

These are typical beings that come and go every generation: enjoying their lives and including others in a catastrophe. In actuality, 19 million Americans hoard, which is roughly around six per cent of the U.S population. Despite this, forty million Americans face hunger each day, according to Wikipedia.

Nevertheless, the globe's protectors are the people who live simple and considerate, to be the ray of light in the dark abyss [Covid-19]. In hindsight, we were able to change the world before and can unquestionably be the difference today. People are humane in these precarious situations, like never seen before: we remain as one and work as one, to destroy this virus. Should you think we would succeed, unite humanity by holding hands and rise like air, for I believe that this pandemic isn't eternal nor is our deaths.

-Shabbeer Imtiaz

# CODE WHITE

Inside the human body, roughly 37.2 trillion cells work energetically, all day, every day.

The story begins in a deserted tissue of the windpipe. A Naive T Cell, an immune cell that has never encountered a pathogen before, was patrolling the place. Not a single ordinary cell was to be seen, but then he heard a groan, and no sooner, did he see it...

He saw regular cells; peculiar ones that had slimy green headwear. An infected cell! The Naive had one option: to run. Unfortunately, he was soon surrounded. "Somebody! Help me!" yelled the Naive T Cell. Just then out of nowhere, through a crack in the walls, a neutrophil jumped out and battled the virus-infected cells until there was none in sight. Neutrophils are white blood cells whose task is to eliminate foreign substances.

"Hey, are you okay?" the neutrophil asked. "Yeah, never mind that. How did you get here?" asked the T Cell. "It's called migration, the ability to move freely through the system." The commotion caused by the neutrophil attracted more infected cells and soon the neutrophil was in a bad situation. He couldn't deal with all of them alone, and the Naïve cell wasn't any help. A pretty girl in a white dress happened to pass by, and all Naïve could do was warn her. He was about to yell at her to run until he noticed the massive sword she carried on her back. It took the pretty girl a few minutes at most to exterminate the infected cells. "I owe you one macrophage" commented the neutrophil. "Just doing my job Neutrophil," she replied. Macrophages are white blood cells that kill foreign substances, they find and send immunity information and cleans up dead bacteria.

The Macrophage bent to squish one of the headwear of a dead infected cell and concluded that it was a coronavirus. "This is Macrophage. It seems the coronavirus has invaded this body." the Macrophage informed a dendritic cell through an intercom. The dendrite, in turn, passed the antigen information to the commander, The Helper T cell.

"Rest assured neutrophil, the killer T cells will soon be here to assist you" Macrophage informed them.

With wide eyes, the naive T cell exclaimed, "What?! Killer T cells?! Please tell them I brought down at least one of these viruses or else ..."

"Cha! Where are those damn viruses? The killer T Cells are here to wipe them all out!" barked the killer cells. They had a black military uniform and a cap with "KILL" written in bold.

Killer T cells, also known as cytotoxic T cells, are immune cells that mobilize under orders from helper T cells. They kill virus-infected cells, cancer cells, and the like.

"Humph! So, you're here too neutrophil." Just then the killer T cells spotted the naive T Cell trying to crawl his way out.

"Hey, Naive! You let someone else do you work for you again huh? Hey there's still a whole horde of them over here. Let's see you slaughter at least one of them this time, you little punk!"

So, the killer T cells, neutrophils, and macrophages went on to battle the virus-infected cells.

“Kill them all, don’t allow any more common cell casualties!” yelled captain Killer T- cell.

Petrified by the virus, the naive T cell ran away screaming. “Hey, naive! Get back here! Ugh just forget about him Lets deal with the virus first.”

During his escape, he bumped into a dendritic cell. Dendritic cells notify other immune cells about invasions. “Hey! Are you struggling in battle? Don’t worry I’ll call for help” the dendritic cell asked.

“No, I ran away from the battle. I’m just not as strong as neutrophils, macrophages, or killer T cells.” wept the naive T cell.

“That’s not true naive T cell, you’re not the only one. Nobody starts powerful, ya know. Here, take a look at this.” The dendritic cell handed a photo album containing pictures of the killer T cells back when they were naive T cells.

“That’s right! Long ago, your seniors were just like you. They all were naive T cells too.”

Back in the battlefield, the resilient killer t cells sensed something. “I’ve got the chills! It’s like the dark past that we kept sealed has been released” cried the killer T cells.

“Don’t worry naive we’re all here for you, see? You have all these friends working with you, so you know what you have to do, don’t you?” comforted the dendritic cell.

A piercing bright light was starting come from the naive T cell. He was turning into a herculean muscular-looking cell; he had undergone T cell categorization. T cell categorization is a process when Naive T Cells get activated and turn into effector T cells.

“I guess you could say that’s my job.” thought the dendritic cell to himself. Dendritic cells can activate naive T cells.

On the other hand, the killer T cells were facing the short end of the stick. They were driven into a corner by the infected cells. Just then, the newly reformed effector cell returned. “I apologize for behaving in such an unsightly manner earlier, but I have conquered my past weakness and returned.”

“Hey, so he finally did it freaking naive! This gives us herculean strength.”

“Hey, I’m here too, sorry to keep you waiting, I’m B cell! And I made some antibodies.” exclaimed a young guy in a green uniform. B cells are lymphocytes that fight pathogens using antibodies.

The efforts of the immune cells and the hard work of other cells were put, to eradicate the disease. However, it has caused discomfort to the body through symptoms such as fever, sneezes, coughs and decreased appetite.

Fever helps the body reach the optimum temperature for immune cells and suppresses the multiplication of the viruses. Sneezes and coughs are reflex actions that expel any foreign substance like a virus. Decreased appetite occurs as a result of the immune cells using energy that is usually used for digestion.

A fortnight later, the efforts of the immune cells and coordination of everyone, the virus had perished from the body.

-ADEEL FAHIM



Amane Yusuf

# The Silent Cry

My heart hurts  
With your turns  
In your attitude  
With no latitude

You once asked for my answer  
Wanting to be my life dancer  
Once again  
Forgetting the past life of pain

My heart shouted a yes  
But you weren't able to guess  
Thinking it's a no  
You left before I could say so

You say something  
Next day it means nothing  
I believed in them  
But it was a worthless gem

I waited long  
With no song  
Hoping you'll see  
What you did to me

-Ayesha Omar



**BY: Dr Ramali Mashoor**

**Q. As a doctor, which category of people do you vision to be most at risk?**

A.

- 1.Elderly patients
- 2.Patients with other diseases like Diabetes, Heart disease, Kidney disease and patients taking medications to reduce their immunity like Transplant patients.
- 3.Obese patients

**Q. Treating patients infected with covid-19, how has it affected you mentally as your putting your life at risk?**

A.

My anxiety levels are high, obviously as this is a new disease with no definitive treatment. Sleep patterns were disrupted too. Also we are frontline staff with the maximum exposure. As we prepared for this well before we actually got patients, the risks were minimised. We had sufficient Personal Protective Equipment. Once we had a few patients coming in, we got used to it and our confidence level went up too. Long term mental health effects will be known only later.

**Q. What is your experience treating patients tested positive different from treating other infections-related diseases?**

A.

We learn new things as we go along. We did not know if these patients would survive on the ventilator. Sometimes we were the last people in their life to talk to.

When some were nearing the end of their life, we were the only one to hold their hands. No relatives were allowed.

Lot of research is happening with covid-19 positive patients too.

**Q. Is it possible for patients who have recovered from covid19 to get natural immunity towards the virus?**

A.

We don't know for sure. Most probably yes. Only doing antibody tests will tell. We are not there yet.

**Q. Do you think that these clothe masks used by many people of developing countries are actually effective in controlling the spread of corona virus?**

A.

Masks are most effective for patients who have the disease.

For non-infected people the scientific evidence is weak. It would be good practice to wear masks in public places.

**Q. How has quarantine isolation and the lack of socialization affected the psychology of people of different ages especially children?**

A.

I think the worse affected are the old people and children. The elderly, unfortunately are at risk of mental health issues like depression after a while without social interaction. Although various programmes have been introduced to keep the children occupied,

nothing can replace school. They will suffer from educational poverty.

The working group of people will have both mental and financial impact due to job losses.

Also there has been an increased incidence of domestic violence.

**Q. As you know their various kinds of medicine all over the world. Yet governments from all over the world have been spending billions of dollars to fund the western medical field. Do you think any form of indigenous medicine would be the cure to this virus?**

A.

Indigenous medicine or western medicine, the truth is there is no treatment for this disease. The most valuable medicine at present is Oxygen. We support all organs when they are critically ill. There is lots of research happening.

**Q. Politics has been great influence to the field of medicine during this pandemic. Some decisions taken by politicians over the recent past has been to an extent both successful and unsuccessful. Do you think it is important for politicians to interfere with this crisis?**

A.

Politicians are the ones who have the power to make decisions. The only

way they can make good decision is to be guided by the science.

**Q. The lack of protective equipment in hospitals has led to huge setback in fighting this virus. Are there any alternatives or is the idea of manufacturing the equipment needed in the hospital practical?**

A.

It has been an issue due to the very high volume of patients.

I don't think there is a short answer apart from planning well ahead.

**Q. What is your opinion on the progress scientists are making on developing a vaccine?**

A.

There is good progress made on developing a vaccine. Oxford University has already started trialling them on humans. This is the most effective exit strategy.

**MBBS MD FRCA FICM**

**Consultant in Intensive Care Medicine and Anaesthesia**

**Colchester general hospital -NHS**

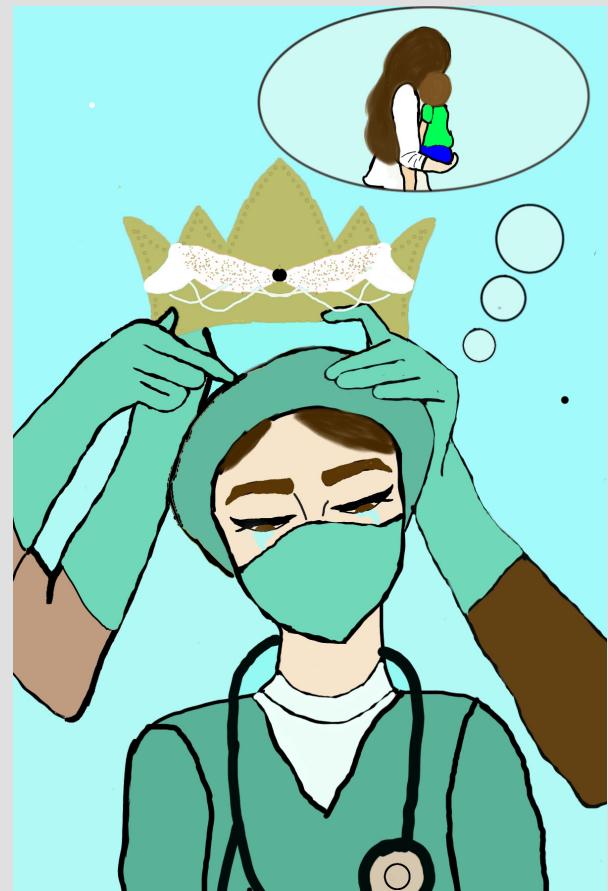
**UK Colchester**



-AMNA ARSHAD



-SWEATHA



-MERINA DISHANI SILVA



-ZAINAB RIZAAN

# A MYSTERY AFTER ALL

Looking at the window

Waiting till the sun hits my face

Waiting till the memories pops up into my

Reckless brain

The way we students “ no matter boys or girls ”

prank our teachers

And end up in the principal's office

Day after Day

The day we wake up and drag ourselves to

school because of the faces we love to

see everyday

Remembering the days, we distributed other  
classes and end up in the VP's office everyday by

Singing in our beautiful and melodic voices

The day I Wish, I Wish I could scream from my school

Windows again, scream from the rooftops again

To make the memories I lost to came alive

Again

The way I Wish I could scream to the world and tell  
them that this lockdown

Was never

Is never

And will never

Be a mystery at all

-SALMA CASSIM



Joseph  
Carroll  
5/5/2020

# A smooth sea never made a skillful sailor

## 1st Jan 2020

"Happy new year everyone" Those were my first words of this year. Which seemed to be just like any other new year. But this year just felt different. New decade? No. New resolutions? No. What could it be?

## Feb 2020

My friends and I just came back from a successful event where we ran a two day bookstall. It was a great start to the year and we wondered what could go wrong now? This year seems to be a big deal as it was the start of a new decade. The best part for me personally was the announcement of the 4th season of "Stranger things"! I was overwhelmed with joy that the start of the year just got better with this announcement.

## March 2020

Talks about China and the Covid-19 were being chattered through the hallway and all around my school. A day later, it was the 9th of March when we were struck by this life-threatening news. "The COVID-19 is now a worldwide pandemic". I couldn't hold the emotions of joy when I heard that there won't be school until further notice. It took me a few minutes before I realized how serious, uncontrollable and uncontrollable this virus could get.

## Today

That brings us to today. All of us forced to stay indoors to help reduce the spread. Getting closer to friends and family, thinking about how I would spend my time going out with my friends and family when these tough times are over, but in order to achieve this we need to do our part in helping to flatten the curve.

This brings me to my next point,

What have I done so far? What has this lockdown taught me? What can I do to help our world heal faster?

This difficult time has taught me the value of time, the value of how important your family is and to never take anything for granted. None of us expected for something like this to happen.

To tell the truth, this lockdown hasn't taught me much yet but I'll tell you one thing, never let a crisis like Covid-19 go waste. A crisis, as unprecedented as this one, will not leave until we have learnt the very important lesson that it's probably here to teach us.

It is our job to do our part, listen to media, follow restrictions, and take precaution (Not just stockpile toilet paper). I urge everyone to stay indoors, do our role and help the front-line workers, who are working tirelessly to save lives every day, to reduce the weight on their shoulders. You can help flatten the curve in the shadows as well by donating to those who are in need.

It is our job to do our part, listen to media, follow restrictions, and take precaution (Not just stockpile toilet paper). I urge everyone to stay indoors, do our role and help the front-line workers, who are working tirelessly to save lives every day, to reduce the weight on their shoulders. You can help flatten the curve in the shadows as well by donating to those who are in need.

We were so obsessed with speed, that we lost our sense of direction. It's time to change. The lockdown may be extended. This pandemic has affected us all. But don't let this get past you and stop you from achieving what you dream of.

As the days pass by and the more I talk to my friends and family, is bringing us closer than it drives us apart. Friends who have been with you from your childhood now almost feel like family. This quarantine has helped me to build a better relationship with my colleagues. If you're ever stuck with one of them in quarantine, consider yourself the luckiest.

### **Whenever this is over**

"Is this it? Is this the end? Can we go back to our normal same old life, where walks in the parks were more than a memory and chilling with friends are just one call away? I rush into my room and get my mobile. "Bro we can finally meet!" The next minute - 15 notifications. I switch on my television and there it is. It actually says in the headlines, "It has indeed ended. We have done it." I go back to my mirror and look at those cheered and tearful eyes. "We've been through it all. For now, let's just live this moment." I then proceed to my front door. Quite a while since I've seen the sun. Take a deep breath. "Hello, world. I'm back!" - This is how I would expect the events to unfold when all of this is over.

### **Back to today**

These tough times that we are going through are the periods of growth. The times we can learn who we are. What we can do and will learn to do. Now take a minute to think back on your past, think about these tough times and learn from it as I hope they will never be anything like this pandemic in the future.

This pandemic has indeed taught us a lot. This prepares us and gives us the confidence and strength we need to fight better in the future.

I would like to take a moment to thank some people. These people were not only saving lives but are leading by example.

Dear doctors, nurses, grocery store workers and the many that are helping in the shadows, the whole world is praising the efforts that are being made by corona warriors to ensure everyone's safety everywhere. You people had been tirelessly working to deliver essential services. Thank You SO Much.

The world as we know it will never be the same, and I hope neither will we. If we are privileged enough to survive this, let's hope we break from the past and enter the world a new, carrying a fresh perspective and a greater sense of appreciation, for everything we have.

To conclude, and hopefully this pandemic, this right here is what I would call a World War. A war that can bring us all together. A war that could finally mean something to us and our future generations to come. Something to remember, a pandemic which we can overcome, a war worth fighting.

-Daniyal Thaslim and Hammadh Ruxshan

# Dear Humanity...

Thank you.

**Thank you for giving me a home in a species as abundant as you. A super-host of eight-billion; walking, swimming, and flying.**

**Thank you for allowing me to travel across Horizons, one that stretched across oceans and seas through the North, East, South, and West.**

**I thought my habitat was a rainforest, away from humankind. In the far dense regions, I thought humanity was yet to occupy.**

**All my life, I thought I was confined to the lands that the trees occupied. Slowly but surely, I saw it fall apart, and my brothers like SARs were lucky enough to capture a large home, but somehow, I naively thought that'd show you. I guess that wasn't enough...**

**Then followed the floods, acid rain, and bush fires, all of which were trumpets meant to wake you up, and realize the destruction of your own kind, as revenge for destroying my lands, taking away my friends and leaving many of them obsolete.**

**However, you remained asleep.**

**Amidst your slumber, I crept in. When you were fighting amongst your own kind, pledging millions to the one who brought your friend dead or alive, meanwhile, I was pledging to wake you up. When you prepared your nuclear weapons, I was preparing my scheme of attack.**

**We viruses are kept in check in diverse and abundant wildlife, but when you rip forests and capture billions of species due to your insatiable wants. You bring viruses like me out of our natural quarantines.**

**As you drive our natural hosts to extinction, I want you to know it is not my goal to wipe out my hosts, and just like you, we too do need other life to survive. So please understand me, I know I'm smaller than your building blocks, but I possess a loud scream that echoes the all-encompassing message of your roommates in this shared planet.**

**I find it funny how you call yourselves, 'Homosapiens' meaning wise man and yet you were so blind to our signs, deaf to our screams and overall ignorant to our sirens for help. You are willing to give up your home for something as valueless as money, and your power-hungry mindset fakes intelligence, while you remain heedless to the fact that without our shared home, you wouldn't exist.**

**I'm sorry, but all of this makes me question, 'Are you really that wise?'**

**I know there are a few of you human beings that can understand this. Joel Henrique Ellwanger and 13 co-authors published The paper, which is entitled "Beyond diversity loss and climate change: Impacts of Amazon deforestation on infectious diseases and public health," which shows my exact thinking as he says 'Deforestation brings people into close contact with wildlife. Both simple proximity and human consumption of bushmeat can allow animal pathogens to "jump" to humans.'**

**You bring me to you by capturing my original hosts and then question me, 'Why are you here?'. It was you and solely you. Your illegal trafficking and disruption of wildlife are what caused me to jump to you.**

**You use more animals to feed yourselves than wild mammals and birds in their habitats, and yet you curse me for coming to you when you clearly welcomed me into your own abodes.**

**I'm here to let mother earth breathe again, to allow our fish to swim in the ever-flowing rivers that you filled with your garbage, I'm here to allow our birds to chirp harmoniously as they fly across our skies.**

**I wasn't here to foster hatred but simply bring awareness. I see you coming together to defeat me, your nurses, doctors, and chemists work tirelessly as the voices of the rational begin to be heard.**

**I now see the millions you pledged to bring your friend dead is what's now being used to cure my victims, and I see the power-hungry of you, realize your worthlessness without the assistance of our shared planet.**

**I now slowly begin to see how much you miss our home, dear mother Earth.**

**When you look around and realize you as a species are in lockdown, remember it was me who was meant to be locked up.**

**Coming out of this, you as a species will never be the same again; you will treasure those long warm hugs, the deep conversations, and those smiles from your friends.**

**I've destroyed your happiness, ripped many of your hard-earned money, crushed your relationships, demolished your sanity, and crashed your economy.**

**Out of all this, I still have one question.**

**Am I enough?**

**If the apocalyptic fires weren't enough, if vanishing glaciers aren't enough, is the excruciating pain I bring to you and your loved ones enough?**

**Am I enough to wake you up from your long slumber and realize the prospect of your own extermination?**

**As you struggle to find the antidote to my existence, I would like you to know:**

**I truly believe in your wisdom, please find the antidote to the deeper sickness: the slow demise of our shared planet.**

**Please come together and realise; war among you isn't going to make the situation any better.**

**As I hear you singing out of your balconies in isolation but very much so together, I on behalf of the planet have a straightforward request:**

**Please live up to your name. Be a Homosapien and think wisely.**

With love,  
Your enemy,  
SARS-CoV-2

-Nabeela Faumi

# Covid-19, the enemy that assembled the whole of humanity together

“It is during the darkest moments in life, we must focus to see light.” Malls, streets have been abandoned friendships have been broken and the darkness has overshadowed life. Streets that inundate with people have turned into a warzone. Ambulances, military vehicles, tanks, AK-47 guns, and fire trucks. Lockdown here, lockdown there, and lockdown all over the world. All we see is trauma, affliction, misery, and suffering. All we hear is COVID-19 and quarantine. All we feel is fear.

I believe fear is the most dangerous word in the dictionary. If we allow fear to control our feelings it would end in hatred and our actions would end in destruction. This is the reason for this detestation and divide, between religions and races. Often as human beings, we tend to victimize one race or religion. We sit in our comfort zones, watching televisions seeing people suffer but do we ever feel any compassion towards them? Whether it is Africans, Asians, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, any other religion or race. Now when we are in this together as one we start pointing fingers at each other as if some race or religion is responsible for this devastating virus. When you discriminate someone have you ever thought why did you do it? What did he or she do to me? This virus doesn’t care about

your race or religion it is going to hurt you.

We all have heard or seen millions of stories worldwide during this pandemic. All of them involving pain, suffering , and death. Yet mine is different. Living as a teenager in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, life was simple until this mysterious virus appeared to haunt me from daylight to moonlight. Moreover, I thought my family and I was invincible from this virus. Just like any other family mine too would sit in front of the television watching the broadcast on the mayhem the virus was causing in China. My mother would use the term. “Reckless,” to describe the Chinese government of handling the crisis. “Don’t even think about visiting Uncle Lee Chang upstairs.” My mother ordered me in a very grim manner. She would think that anyone from China would have this disease and unfortunately, I did too. “Italy reported approximately five hundred deaths today,” reported the television broadcast. “Did you visit Uncle Adriana from Italy to borrow the tennis racquet?” My father asked me in a serious tone. “No, no, no, I didn’t the tennis tournament was canceled.” Likewise, my parents restricted my communication with many of my friends and neighbors. In no time this invisible enemy was in my territory. “Now who to blame?” I asked myself. I was like a blind pessimist who had no idea of what he was blaming. I was scared to such an extent that I avoided texting or calling my friends. In my brain, my virus could spread through a simple phone call too. “Now am I going to be cornered by my friends back in Sri

Lanka? Why should I feel guilty for this irksome virus?" My mind was boggled with questions. The tables have turned now, I was the bad person. I thought my friends and relatives would stop contacting me. I felt left out from the rest of the world. Yet as time passed on the virus spread to each and every country. The whole world was in the same situation as I am. That's when it woke me up from all that fear and hatred. When the Chinese were the victims I would blame them when I was the victim the rest of the world blamed me but when the whole world is a victim of this gruesome virus who to blame? I got in contact with my neighbors who were Chinese and Italian whom I didn't speak for months. My relatives back in Sri Lanka contacted me frequently to check my wellbeing. Even though this devastating virus stole my freedom thanks to this virus I have built a strong community around me that I wish to call it a family.

Therefore my dear friends now it is your turn to reconnect with the world. We all have friends from different religions and races from whom we stopped interacting at some point in life just because their community did something wrong. Now it's time to start a conversation and build a strong relationship. Your story during this crisis doesn't have to end in suffering. If you start to think optimistically and look towards the bigger picture, you could too understand the true meaning of humanity. Then your story could too have a happy ending. We can already see this effect. Wars are being halted worldwide, protests that promote racism are being deserted and

scientists from all over the world are coming together to carry out research to find a cure to heal the whole world. Remember the day that you close your eyes to depart from this world all you will remember is the friendships and relationships you have made. This horrendous virus is going to haunt humanity for a long time more people will eventually lose their lives. Yet don't lose hope a cure will be eventually found. One main reason for the failure of governments around the world of controlling this virus is hatred between the varied communities. Each community blames one another for the spreading of this deadly virus. Now it is the time to end this. Let's us use love over hatred and unity over diversity. This way human's worst enemy will be destroyed. Now it's your turn to make this change. Since nothing is impossible if we work together. This way the infantry from all over the world will assemble together and corona will be no more. The decision is in your hands.

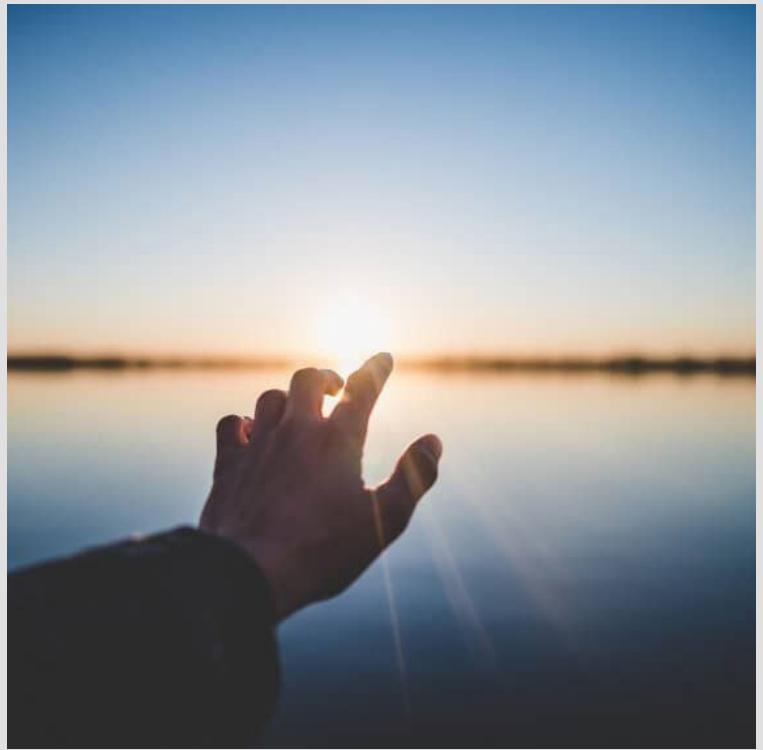


**-DEWMITH WARANASOORIYA**

# LIVE IN THE MOMENT

The trick is to enjoy. Do not wish away days waiting for better ones ahead.

207k deaths from a deadly disease directed at tarnishing human as a whole. Did any of them know their turn was coming? If they did, were they prepared? I do not think so, but let us be prepared if our turn comes. And the only way of doing that is living every moment of our lives to the fullest. Do not let go of the present expecting a better future, you will regret.



The lock down of the country is a chance for families to get together with each other, for parents to children to spend some time with each other. The love of a family is the greatest treasure one could have, and now most of us are lucky enough to own it. Fathers and mothers busy with work, children busy with school and university works are all free. Make it the best time of your life, time spent with family is worth every second. We have time for our friends; we could all rebuild those lost friendships and get back together with them. Friends are the foundation of the rest of the fun things you may want to do.

This has become a chance for people of different religions to pray for the same miracle, that of curing the world. This is the best time to spread love and care. And the best of doing so is by staying at home and staying safe. Prevent the spread of this deadly disease by wearing masks, gloves avoiding close contact with people, washing hands often and using sanitizers. Let us all keep praying as corona virus will not come near our loved ones or us.

With all this, it is honestly disgusting how some people earn from this. Some countries sell Ayurveda products; some sellers increase the price of necessary goods in the country; price of protective items is increased. We have all fallen into the same mud puddle. Why can't we come out together, holding hands? Why push some down and try escaping? Children face the biggest disadvantage of this virus. Our education has been paused for quite a while, those kids used to outdoor games maybe affected psychologically. For those who think this is bad, it is going to ruin our lives. My advice is, yes, it may ruin our lives. But we cannot let it!

Something the society today has to understand is that Mother Nature is a living organism too. If it weren't for the fertile soil, many people in especially the Asian countries would have starved to death. Many countries have learnt to live with what their nature provides them rather than the imported ones. Have confidence in your country, trust the leaders and believe in Mother Nature.

Our turn could be tomorrow. So, we need to learn to live happy today and hope for tomorrow. There is no time to waste, spend your time on things that make you happy. Let there be no regret. "Today or never", let that be your motto.

-Kalinga Promodh Madushan

**US: WE CAN'T SHUT  
EVERYTHING DOWN BECAUSE  
OF CLIMATE CHANGE!**

**MOTHER NATURE: OH  
REALLY? HERES A VIRUS.  
HAVE A LITTLE PRACTICE!!**

# *Caught off guard... I am at the border!*

As a schoolgirl, I always wished that there would be a day when I would never have to go to school anymore, never do homework again, stay home, and do whatever I feel like doing. I thought when that day comes, and I would undoubtedly be the most blissful person on Earth. And to my consternation, I am living those days now, but I am not the happiest person on Earth...

I am free, but I am in prison. I have no burden, but it still feels heavy. Something entered my atmosphere, and I am to live the rest of my days with the horror of its existence. Something million times smaller than me, yet I am scared to death of what it will do to me - and I am not the only one fearing. It is a virus. It started small, and now the world is under its control. It is called "COVID-19".

First and Foremost, Coronaviruses are a large group of viruses that are known to infect both humans and animals, and in humans cause a respiratory illness that ranges from common colds to much more severe infections. The most well-known case of a coronavirus epidemic was Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

COVID-19 first started in Wuhan, China, and spread to nearly every country in the world ever since. More than 4.66 million people are known to be infected and more than 312,000 deaths have been recorded- including 34,466, in May, in the UK. The exact number of infections and deaths is likely to be considerably higher. This disease has already taken hold in Europe, the United States, and South East Asia. It is beginning to wreak havoc in Africa and South America. No matter how many countries out there are well-developed or under-developed, it doesn't make a difference because no one so far has come up with a cure to eradicate this life-threatening disease. The World Health Organization is particularly concerned with the ability of the poorest countries in the world to control the disease. What started as an epidemic mainly limited to China has now become a global pandemic. "Pandemic is not a word to use lightly or carelessly. It is a word that, if misused, can cause unreasonable fear or unjustified acceptance that the fight is over, leading to unnecessary suffering and death." Said WHO's director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

On the whole, our Earth is in trouble, and us earthlings are all to blame. I, as a sixteen-year-old am afraid to touch anyone or anything because I might get infected, I am afraid to hear because all I hear are innocent people being helplessly trapped by COVID-19, I am afraid to see because all I can do is watch people get infected and there I stand, staring at defeat by a minute creature.

In conclusion, all I can say to everyone in the face of today's Earth is, we are all caught off guard... we are at the border. But let me tell you this, Challenges are what makes life interesting and overcoming them is what makes life meaningful. So, if you can stay positive in the face of negativity, you win.

**-Dania Rizvi**

# ANOTHER BEGINNING

Hours and hours that pass by,  
Resonating in a mountain of isolation and melancholy.  
The light of, once a day, became an anthracite of another sigh.

The joy of one's eyes runs with lies;  
For the plinth of joy, runs amok with cries,  
With hours and hours that pass by.

Now the door appears front to be an obstacle;  
For it to be locked abruptly,  
For every effort now made to flee would result in life  
being fleeing anarchically  
So again the light of, once a day, became an anthracite  
of another sigh.

While the slumber of pain passes high,  
And nature heals thoroughly,  
With the hours and hours that pass by,  
For the light of, once a day, became an anthracite of  
another sigh.

-ALAA

# SCARS TO REMEMBER

It's almost dark. You can feel it coming. The world holds its breath because there's really no guarantee that the sun will rise. That there was a yesterday doesn't mean there will be a tomorrow.

Sometimes I think I might be the last human on earth. I know that's dumb. They can't have killed everyone...yet. I see how it could happen, though, eventually. And then I think that's exactly what "they" want me to see.

Life no longer shared the same hues. I sit by the window and watch the sky fall down every day. The sun drops in the ocean, splashing browns and reds, and yellows and oranges into the world outside my window. A million leaves from a hundred different branches dip in the wind, fluttering with the false promise of flight. The gust catches their shriveled wings only to force them downwards, forgotten, left to be trapped by the soldiers stationed just below.

It was as if "they" had locked us up in an asylum for something out of our control. This was what life on earth has become since its arrival.

During the outbreak, most of us, ALL of us, had been sent into quarantine with the goal of protecting other citizens.

Quarantine is considered as the separation and restriction of movement of people who have potentially been exposed to this contagious disease to ascertain if they become unwell, reducing the risk of them infecting others. This term differs from isolation, which is the separation of people who have been diagnosed with the virus.

Imagine if there were no awakening after what had happened if there wasn't a tomorrow. With false hope, we would still be blindly walking into an uncertain future, wouldn't we?

Now, as for me, being a 16-year-old with anxiety issues, I can feel it devouring me. This pain.

I've struggled with occasional anxiety over the course of my life, but I've generally been able to manage it. But the older I got, the less powerless I became.

I don't know how to save myself this time.

WE don't know how to save ourselves this time...

Italy, one of the most impacted by the corona virus spread, which I know as one of the most extraordinary places on earth.

In hospitals there, there's a community of nurses, physicians, and scientists that have been quietly battling the current deadliest threat to humanity in decades. But these individuals risk their lives to

protect the individuals in their communities, and by doing so, protect us all. We often tend to forget about them. Forget about how much they have contributed by sacrificing their lives for the diseased. Sometimes, it's not about how much we have lost, but about how much we have left. It's time we look out for each other. This is the fight of our lives.

However, on the bright side, with all this going, there is a silver lining that can be seen in terms of unidentified benefits of

this lockdown. The world health organization is starting to refer to this as physical distancing to emphasize the importance of being far away enough to avoid infections from the respiratory droplets that carry the virus.

Life under lockdown brings many challenges, and there have been many instances of people flouting advice in social distancing or isolation. But the more people abide by it, the more effective it will be. Few of the countries that have implemented full lockdown are committing to a date when they will lift restrictions, however, because they will need to see how the pandemic evolves.

Most countries are waiting to see how their lockdown and quarantine measures are reducing cases of the virus. China has just lifted lockdown in Wuhan, the city where the pandemic originated, two months after it was clear that the number of cases had dramatically reduced. It seems plausible that once other countries start to see such a reduction in cases, they too will begin easing restrictions, even if only temporarily. This removal of restrictions is also taken into consideration in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where it is dangerously increasing.

It's hard to plan what comes next when what happens next is not what we expected for. If this pandemic comes in five waves, at the end of the fifth wave, we will have learned five lessons; we were taught courage in the face of hardship. We were taught when everything was lost. We were taught perseverance when the path seemed dark. Staying at home, we were taught to protect humanity. By seeing what we have lost, we were taught to appreciate the smallest things. The price we had to pay for these lessons was far more than we could afford. The world has changed, and none of us can go back. All we can do is our best, and sometimes the best what we can do is to start over.

-Fatheena Furqan

# Facts & Myths of covid-19

## What is COVID-19?

Covid-19 is a contagious disease caused by the newly discovered corona virus. The virus gets this name because of its circular body and tiny spikes shaped like a crown. It contains a group of RNA viruses that is responsible for the disease. It is a non-living organism as most viruses do not have the 8 characteristics of a living organism, they can reproduce in a host cell only.

## Why is COVID-19 contagious?

Covid-19 has now become a life-threatening virus. Initially starting off from a wet market in China and now becoming a global pandemic. The reason for this is because covid-19 can spread when an infected person coughs or exhales. These small droplets contain the virus and if it lands on the surface of the other person then he is very likely to contract the virus. Unlike other harmful viruses like AIDS, corona has an easier transmission method because coughing and exhaling is something people do very often. Therefore, corona can be easily passed from one human being to another.

## Is COVID-19 a threat to a particular age group?

Yes, according to researches by doctors most of the victims of the virus are the people in the region of 60 years and above. This is because as people get older their immune system becomes weaker, their WBC is no longer working in an efficient manner, their response to the virus may be much slower, in turn slowing down the healing process. As such older citizens are more likely to fall into the category of fatalities if they have contracted the virus.

## Is COVID-19 a threat to a particular gender?

Recent studies and researches prove that women are more likely to recover from the virus once they have contracted it unlike men who are having bit of a struggle to overcome this battle. Although men are physically and mentally stronger,

women have the XX chromosomes which acts as two swords and boost their immunity but for men who have XY Chromosomes, the y chromosome makes the response slower and makes our immune system more lazier therefore men have to go through a bit of a hassle to recover.

## How effective is the use of thermal scanners?

Thermal scanners can be used to detect people who have a higher than average body temperatures as it is one of the symptoms of the contraction of covid-19 virus but the people infected only develop symptoms like fever a few days after the date of infection. So, it cannot detect these people at the early stages making it rather not a 100% foolproof solution.

## Is using antibiotics a method of curing the covid-19 virus?

No, this a misconception that some people have. Anti-biotics is only effective against bacteria not virus. So as the COVID-19 is a virus anti-biotics become a very unreliable solution to this ongoing pandemic. Although antibiotics are not used for the cure of covid-19 it is still given to infected patients this is to reduce the chances of the person contracting any bacterium related infections.

## Does Wearing Face Masks actually prevent you being infected from COVID-19?

There is no proper evidence that wearing face mask prevents you from being infected. Medical and surgical masks are better if it was used by people who are sick so they could prevent others being infected with the disease. Moreover, Medical Doctors and assistants are advised to wear masks as they have a high chance of being infected as they are actively interacting with the infected patients.

## How Long will it take to develop a vaccine?

It is predicted that it would take months or a few years before a vaccine will be introduced to the virus. Preparing vaccine is not an easy task as it requires a proper study and research about the virus and then even though we get through this stage easily the vaccine needs to be tested with a group of people to check whether there are any side effects that this vaccine can bring about. After undergoing multiple revisions and test will the vaccine be available in the

market for use.

Are the symptoms when you contract COVID-19 similar to that of Common Cold?

Yes, some symptoms such as Fever, Cough, Runny Nose, Headache and becoming fatigue are common symptoms of both the common cold and the covid-19 virus. If you are experiencing these symptoms it would be better to consult a doctor to prevent your loved ones and the ones around you from contracting the virus.

Will the intake of fresh juice, Garlic and honey help prevent covid-19?

Fruit juices, Garlic and honey will not prevent you from COVID-19 but rather is required to boost your immunity. This is essential to help you fight against the virus after contracting it. Therefore, it is better continuing with the uptake of these substances and is a “must do” for all to overcome the battle against the virus.

What is the best method to prevent COVID-19?

The best and most effective methods of prevention is to Practice Social Distancing and Washing hands with soap affectively. When you keep you distance from one another you reduce the risk of the transmission of tiny droplets from a person who is infected from COVID-19 that is responsible for to cause the disease in others around them. Further more washing your hands with soap will disinfect your hands and make it clean from any germs or infectious particles that is present in it and prevent it from moving inside the body.

-Zeeshan Ahamed

# If I ever could...

If I ever could relive the past one more time,  
And cherish those moments of joy,  
With laughter dominating the pleasant morning sunshine,  
Children running about their usual play in the wide-open area.

If I ever could be in the hands of my grandparents one more time,  
And hug them for a bit longer,  
Help them in their day-to-day activities,  
Knowing that this will be the last time,  
To ever lay eyes upon them.

If I ever could bolt into the future of our existence,  
And be aware that we will survive this pandemic,  
And relieve the world from its anxiety and trepidation,  
So that we can once again return to normal.

A normal where peace and harmony,  
Will come back for the entire human race  
as one united whole.

If I ever could encounter an antidote,  
And be the one to stop this global rampage,  
Allowing cities to open up their borders once again,  
Letting children who lived abroad to  
reunite with the worried and vexed faces  
of their isolated parents and loved ones.

If I ever could fast-forward time to where  
the sufferings of the victimized were only an illusion,  
and let happiness no longer be in siege.

Then and only then,  
Would I be the happiest on this planet?

-Thaabit Raziq

# I STILL BELIEVE

There was a hypothesis that seemed to turn out to be a meme. It went something like this:-

Little did we know that something major would happen in 2020 becoming a global issue, a pandemic fulfilling the 100-year pattern!

Clearly nobody cared about this or it wouldn't have become a meme in the 1<sup>st</sup> place and if people did really care about it wouldn't have become a pandemic in the 1<sup>st</sup> place.

Why would it not? According to another prediction by the renowned CEO of Microsoft, Bill Gates said the same thing but with reason. He said that because the world has evolved at a slower pace we cannot be ready for the next outbreak. And if we had to be prepared we would have to play "germ games" in the sense that we would need to run simulations and find hundreds of treatments. He also said we needed to strengthen health systems in weak areas, form the medic corps who are people ready to risk their lives to save the infected and associate the corps with the military team and of course advance the research & development team in areas of vaccine and diagnostics so that people would be prepared for what's to come

But it's clear no one cared about his words or otherwise COVID-19 wouldn't have become a threat as of now.

But we can't completely blame them for carelessness if we haven't cleared the fear struck in our hearts. Because fear is not something that can be easily fought. It is not something that can be conquered with a touch of a fairy godmother magic.

It's something that puts you to a test, to wake up and forcing you to become the victor in a battle with a better version of yourself. It doesn't scare you, it makes you a better person.

And this year, when COVID-19 has spurred and spiraled out of control while we're at home sending out of positive thoughts, I from somewhere in this world know that you are crouched in a corner crying tears of sadness with fear struck in your heart not knowing whether you will survive or not.

And if you're not, the point is you're scared, I just know it. But you didn't crouch and cry that's all.

The year 2020 has been disastrous and we can all admit that. Millions are suffering and hundreds of people are dying, and the small thing without life has become the world's greatest fear.

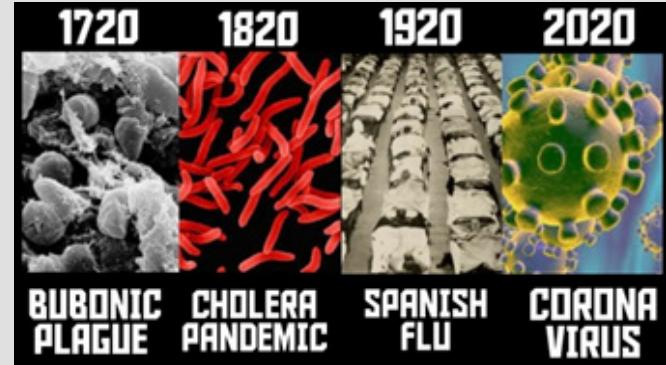
No one knows whether it is obstructed or not but now isn't the time to fight over these when we don't know how to cure it.

And this causes more fear.

And there is no point in believing in a cure if we are crying our heads off.

For those who really look forward to positivity let me remind you of a renowned story. A story that isn't lies.

A story that motivated the person to write a song, which made people to direct a movie released in 2020.



**The title of the song, the movie, in fact the theme, what was it called... “I still believe”!**

**Now for those who watched the movies would be pretty much annoyed and be like, “why am I bringing up a Christian movie, I mean there are other movies as well...”**

**And yes I agree with you there are movies that are widening in thought, movies that have hit a higher rating than I Still Believe.**

**But rarely these movies are about the trust you should have on one another, have faith to be precise.**

**And there is never a possibility that these movies on having faith will be a non-fictional movie, trust me.**

**And for those who haven’t watched the movie, let me share with you a spoiler placed in the least annoying way.**

**The protagonist Jeremy Camp, gets married after finally convincing Melissa to do so. Later on it has been learned that she has cancer and to cut it short she dies. But he being a Christian singer decided that he would go on with**

**life and bounce back stronger**

**My point isn’t the tragic death it was the stronger comeback. Something that we all have failed to do during the pandemic.**

**I would also like to point out a line from his comeback song, “I still believe.” It went like, “...even when I don’t see.... I still believe.”**

**That is the strength that we need, that is the belief we need in this time. That during failures and hardship we can still believe that things were still around.**

**That we still have to believe that if we can still survive and beat this virus**

**And I believe that if we are able to have faith during these times we would be able to fight this pandemic and making it not.**

**Meaning that there will be no carelessness scenes.**

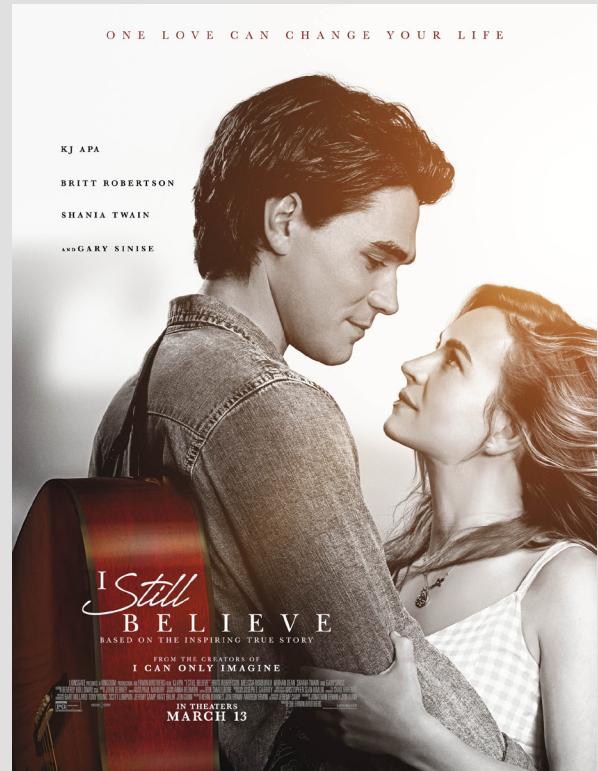
**And there is things to look positive towards fighting COVID-19 because there is chances for surviving COVID-19.**

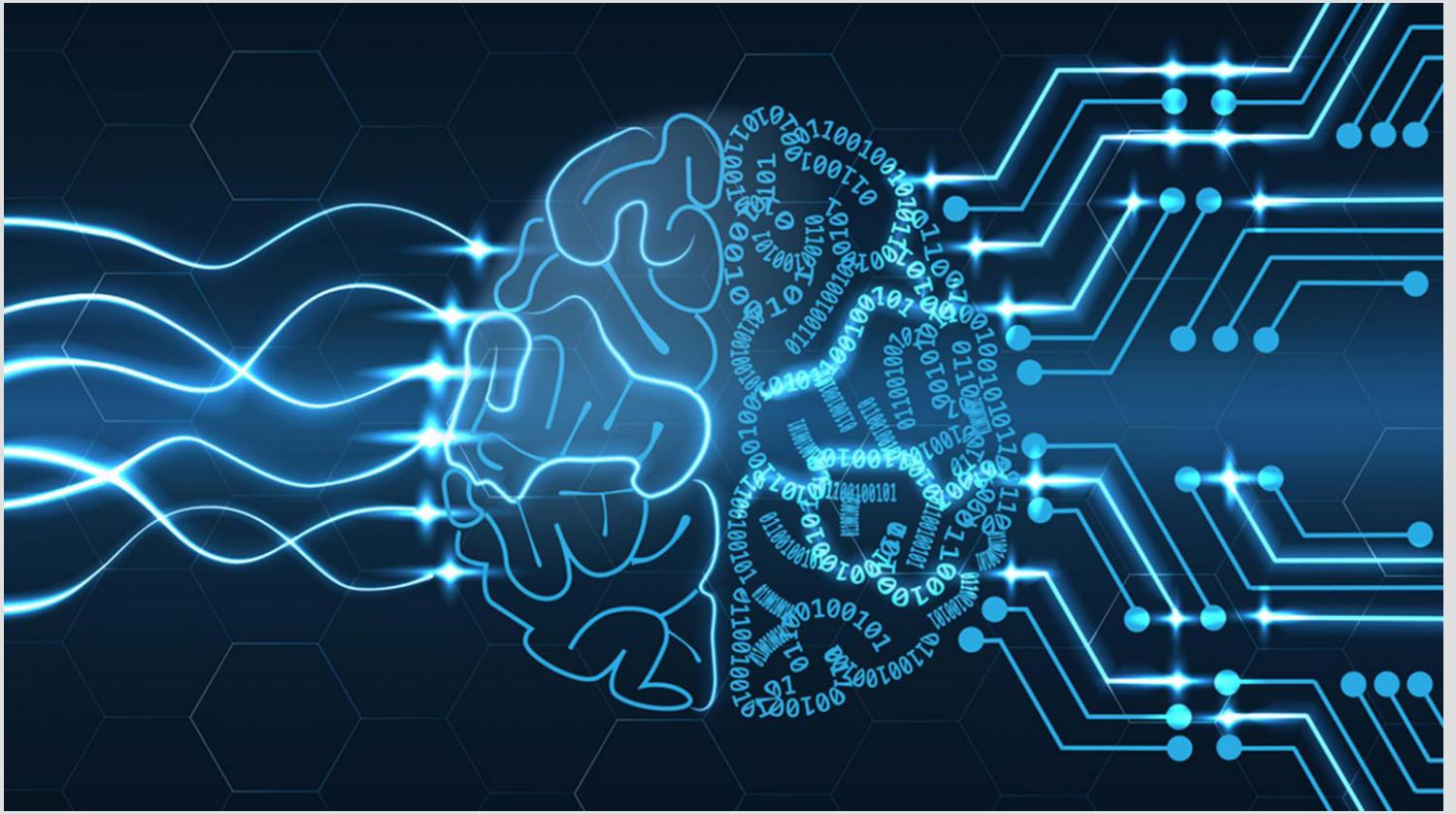
**There is recent studies of cures with 8%-10% success, although unfortunately the success rate is for monkeys and not humans so we don’t know whether the same rate of success will be for humans as well**

**Moreover though we have advanced at a slower pace than expected, we still have a valuable treasure in our hands that if we use it in the right way we can find a cure**

**Most people would have already guessed what I am talking about and yes I am talking about artificial intelligence**

**According to various studies it has been said that A.I has better accuracy in conducting diagnostics, analyze data and detect signs of COVID-19. This means that there is more chances of the cure spreading. Moreover since Artificial Intelligence can control the minds of robots, they can further prevent the spread of infections as robots can be used to deliver goods.**





**Unfortunately they haven't realized it yet.**

**They've spun into chaos instead**

I mean it is clear when you've learned that Donald trump fires the lead vaccine doctor and why the rest of the world is in a lockdown.

Now don't get me wrong but the lockdown does seem to be the most effective way, obviously other than finding a cure.

Being in lockdown means that keeping social distance is checked, and you have all the necessary equipment with you like big bottles of hand sanitizer, water to wash and toilet paper and masks and all that needed things.

So with all those things you know for sure that the chances of the virus dying within you is increasing and the chances of the virus being spread is reduced considered the fact you are at home.

Moreover the chances of something happening like this again would reduce. Though the world is developing at a slow pace it is still developing, it can still develop and be prepared for another pandemic which according to the hundred-year theory would be 2120.

But the most important thing is to believe. Believe that you can survive the virus, believe that there is a cure that will come, believe the world will be in great shape even after the pandemic.

If you believe, that could be more than enough to charge into a war with half of war materials yet you would emerge out as victorious.

So to the people of 2120 and people living in future pandemics, one word: - believe.

**-SHEHAN NITESH**

# Invisible but Excruciating

Almost around 4 months has passed ever since the start of the pandemic because of the outbreak of a virus and has infected more than 4.06 Million people and has unfortunately taken the lives of around 208 Thousand people world-wide. Now as a result of this all those people who were once very boisterous and packed together in the streets are all now quiet and isolated and all those roads which were once busy with cars moving around are all now empty with the cars parked on the sides or inside garages, all because of something that is invisible to the human eye but excruciating once encountered.

Well the reason as to why this has occurred needs no explanation or introduction because it is the reason as to why all of us are trapped inside between four walls. It is the Covid-19 Virus which is recorded to be the most dangerous virus that humanity has ever experienced because of the unendurable pain it puts humans through. As a result of this it has led to everyone around the world to panic and isolate themselves so that they can prevent getting the virus. For me personally at first I felt like as if I was secluded from Earth and placed in a remote Galaxy so that I would not make any contact with any form of organism in order to stay safe and prevent getting the virus. Eventually as time passed it felt like as if I was an animal who was trapped inside a cage with a display that shows the number of people who had been infected by the invisible and excruciating virus. Now for the entire world as well me, the days weren't getting better instead they were getting more atrocious.

But in reality if we think about the pandemic more vividly we are able to understand that it isn't just evil but a blessing too to humanity. It is a blessing because after the pandemic within just around 4 months the pollution rates around the entire world has decreased by 20% , all the animals who were once trapped inside are all now free to move, plants which were once dark are all now greener than before, the sky which was once polluted significantly is now being polluted less and is more brighter, everyone around the world are now more united to help overcome the pandemic and the atrocious days and finally all those families who were once spread apart and busy are all now together. Although this virus might be invisible and excruciating to us it may still be a form of blessing to the entire planet as it provides a form of redemption after the activities of humans and all what we can do is try to stay safe and keep hope that it would all be over.

-P.A. Chathula Losara Perera

# Red crown

15.7.2020 |

08:24 AM |

The colorful drawings that decorated the grey, brick walls of the shadowed alleyway caught my grey eyes as I trudged through the alley. I'd never seen such a place before, and it left me awestruck. Fourteen long years of captivity had taken away chances to see such places, but now, I was set free.

All thanks to COVID-19.

The name of the disease was often mentioned with so much venom and hatred, but in my eyes, it was my savior. It had killed my parents whose pride was so high they refused to go to a hospital and had died at home. It had gotten one of my brothers shot for stepping out during curfew in a desperate attempt to get aid for our parents and had struck such fear in the heart of my second brother that he'd fled with all the money and food he could take. His actions didn't surprise me; the way my family had treated me taught me that in this world, it was every man or woman for themselves.

I'd never loved my family. They were rich, proud, and old-fashioned. They never wanted a daughter, for she couldn't carry down the family name, and so my very existence was a good enough reason for them to have me locked up all my life. Covid-19 was, by far, my knight in shining armor. A blessing behind a more sinister mask.

The officials would stop by at our house soon enough to check why our family hadn't submitted the obligatory two-week blood samples that were used to determine whether we were or were not sick. They'd find the two dead bodies, the empty house, would look into our family details, get to know one member had been shot and taken away and would notice two kids were missing, one of them being me - Ida Wilkins.

Then they'd be after me.

I'd been confined with two sick adults for over three weeks, and the officials would kill me instantly should they find me. These dreary thoughts weighed down on me as I continued to trudge through the alley, kicking away stray cans as I did so.

Entirely out of the blue, I felt something shove me to the ground from behind and quickly flipped onto my back to see a man towering before me. My eyes flittered down to his jacket, where a laboratory's logo was present on the shoulder, and fear shot through me, mixing with my blood like a drug. They've found me!

I opened my mouth, but the man quickly clamped his large hand down over it to muffle my cries for help. Managing to pry his hand away ever so slightly, I bit into it hard, causing him to let go with a cry of surprise and pain. Stumbling onto my shaking feet, I tried to run away but felt a sudden sting at the back of my neck before I could get very far. Why isn't he killing me quickly?

And the whole world turned black.

18.7.2020 |

16:43 PM |

The whispers of the conversation taking place outside my room drifted in towards me. I could hear enough to understand that the operation they were about to carry out on me was going to be fatal.

When I'd woken up after having been knocked out by that man, I'd found myself in some kind of hospital or

laboratory. A woman - who I'd presumed was a doctor - had narrated the whole, seemingly fictional story. The usual tests on the blood-samples had revealed that my own blood was different, due to the presence of an unknown chemical, and further tests had revealed that it was capable of actually destroying Covid-19 particles.

So, each day they'd extract blood from me before dishing out the antidote to infected people across the world. No one seemed to care that I'd lost my freedom again after having been able to enjoy it for less than a day. They'd had me strapped down to the hospital bed after I'd knocked over their precious equipment and kicked a nurse when she'd tried sticking a needle in me. I'd hoped that perhaps once they'd finally had the world in a better state, I'd be let free.

But now that one wish was whisked away, like dust in the wind.

The virus had mutated yet again, and they needed a more potent extract of the chemical. But the only place they could get it was directly from my brain. An operation I would never wake up from.

I didn't want to do it. I didn't care what the problem was, and surely there should be another way! I found myself half-wishing that Covid-19 would kill all the people in this wretched laboratory so I could get out of here. It was strange how much I regarded this virus as a good comrade, but I was being used to destroy it.

Eventually, a doctor entered my room - more like confinement - followed by two medical staff. She proceeded to tell me about the operation they would be performing, how I'd save countless lives, how grateful everyone is for what I've done so far, and what I was about to do.

It all enraged me.

"I'm sorry, but your speaking like I'd asked you to kill me." I spat.

"It's like you want the human race to just kick the bucket for survival." She stated, irritated.

"The only thing I want to kick right now is your face."

She merely sighed. "You'll be a hero at the end of all this, Ida."

"I'll be a queen. Heroes are fictional, and this is reality."

She just shook her head and ordered her staff to prepare everything. The metallic clinks of equipment being shifted had me panic like never before, but there was nothing I could do. I didn't want to die. It was only in stories that the protagonist bravely sacrifices themselves, but this wasn't a story. Not for me, for sure.

I felt a sharp sting in my neck, and in due time the world around me began to darken. Please, no... I looked up into the hazel eyes of the doctor as she gazed down at me with admiration and glee. You can't kill me...

"We all appreciate this, Ida." She whispered.

My voice was slurred when I spoke, and the anesthesia was already working on me. A spark of discomfort appeared momentarily in her eyes when she heard my words, a look that filled me with satisfaction.

"You can't kill me... I'll live on in your blood."

-Nuha Mohammed

# My 15th in the eyes of the world

As her mom screams,  
“Keep your hands clean!”  
She missed a party,  
the day she turned fifteen.  
As everyone is in quarantine  
She’s always awake till six  
And has binged everything on Net-  
flix.  
It’s seven in the morning  
she’s yawning.  
But little did she know out there  
some were crying, some were pray-  
ing  
They tried to be aware of the  
“Cheese touch”  
More deeply, they wondered,  
“Who is going to be corona’s next  
meal?”  
As she and all stayed inside,  
everything began to heal outside  
The masks soon fell away,  
As all flights no longer remained  
lain  
People hugged and kissed just like  
their old ways.  
Watching the Earth breathe again.

-KHADIJAH NADIR

# WADING THROUGH A PANDEMIC

In a time where every news is terrible news, staying optimistic and flooding your brain with nothing but positive thoughts is imperative. People are forced to focus on worst-case scenarios as economies are crashing, countries are on lockdown, death toll rises, and new conspiracy theories every day, which adds fuel to the fire.

Negative news that floods the internet causes depression and anxiety which is hard to cope up with so let's take a second, take a deep breath and look at some of the positive things going on in these strange times; the death rate in the number of cases which had an outcome was 17% while the recovery rate was 83% which is not the side of the pandemic that the media shows.

This pandemic has allowed the environment to take a break as there has been a slowdown in the production process, and less traveling has caused a reduction in pollution. Perhaps, the most promising news at the moment is that scientists all over the world are rushing to come up with a vaccine that is currently under development and will probably hit the market soon.

If you are struggling to make sense of everything that is going on in the world right now or just need some encouragement to help you see a better tomorrow, here are some strategies that will help you to nurture positive thoughts and allow you to seamlessly wade through this pandemic. Put your masks on because this negativity is severely toxic to your health!

Finding optimism amid a pandemic can be difficult, but it must be done. To do so, you can start by reducing your media exposure. The fear is worse than the virus. This is an opportunity to change fundamental habits that will ultimately increase your life happiness. It is your responsibility to pour uplifting content into your mind. Don't fall prey to an oversaturation of fear. This does not mean that you should completely isolate yourself from the world; you can use the media to catch up on exciting shows to distract yourself from the tedium of isolation or overwhelm of negative news. This would also

be a great way to relax your mind.

Moving on, if you think about it, this lockdown is a blessing in disguise for us. We can use this time as an opportunity to strengthen our bond with our families.

Since most of our family members are working from home, we can spend more time with each other and improve communication. Think about this season as a bonus memory-making time with your family. Use your free time in these challenging circumstances to increase your connection with your loved ones by having deep and interesting conversations.

Often you lack a sense of creativity because you are constantly doing routine things over and over again. In a time like this where everything is locked, you can unlock your creative side by trying new things that you are passionate about like painting, organic farming, redecorating your room or simple things like baking, reading inspirational books, and more. You can also stay productive by starting to work on projects that you have been putting off previously.

If you want to overcome those negative emotions and get back to your hopeful self, you must take care of your mind, body, and soul. This is your chance to connect deeper with yourself. Many people stay busy with their bustling lives that they do not have time for essential self-care and also fundamental self-exploration. This can be your time to get to know yourself deeper so that you can be yourself.

At the end of the day, this is an opportunity to practice leaning into the unknown without overwhelming - you can learn how to train your thoughts so that they do not spiral negatively. We need to control the power of our thoughts and try to find happiness in every single day. This is a new way of life, a temporary one, but we do not know for how long, so we should embrace it. Acknowledge the hopelessness you feel, wear a mask of happiness, remember that nothing is permanent and that clinging to anything - whether it be hopelessness and despair or our plans to change the world confines us to suffering. Remember that worry does not change anything; it only gives away the hope you can have today.

-ESHAL KHAN

# ISOLATED, SEPARATED, YET SURROUNDED

Suddenly and without warning, the world switched off its lights, leaving its residents in the dark...

I looked up from my terribly written assignment to be greeted by pitch black. A power cut... ‘This won’t do,’ I thought to myself as I got up, the slight creak of the old wooden chair beneath me echoing throughout the house.

I stood there for an aeon as my eyes slowly but gradually adjusted to the uninvited darkness. I could finally make out the faint outline of the room with my closet overflowing with clothes and my eclectic bookshelf about to erupt. The slightly open door was accentuated by the silvery moonlight that peeked through the shutters of the high, grubby window.

Cautiously, I made my way to the door, making sure not to knock into anything, but my mess of a room wasn’t making things any easier. I dilly-dallied around the house in search of a candle because, lo and behold, my torch was out of batteries. Life was playing a terrible joke on me. I finally found a red, strangely scented but untouched candle somewhere deep in the troves of things we thought were pretty but useless.

“Mikey, what is happening? I am scared”, I heard my five-year-old sister, Kathy, ask as I debated the success I might achieve in my future - I had managed to light up a candle all by myself! She was in her nightgown, her unusually long bangs obscuring her eyes. She was holding on to her old, hideous teddy bear. I could not understand how it never gave her any nightmares because it definitely gave me some.

“Don’t worry, it’s just a power cut, and don’t move around. You might hurt yourself.”, I said as I scooped her up into my arms and put her down on the sofa. “I am scared,” she repeated as her eyes brimmed with tears. “It’s okay... just wait, it will be back any time now”, I falsely claimed as I calmly comforted her with a gentle hug.

I wanted to give her hope, but I felt myself despairing inside ...

I had heard it on the news yesterday; the power cut was imminent given how many workers had gone on strike due to the pandemic!

The pandemic!

It was the pandemic...it had changed everything.

The once ever so crowded streets and shops now craved the breath of a human. Everyone - prey to lockdown and curfew - was now afraid to step out of their humble

dwellings. Every day an ambulance would flash by, carrying yet another victim of the deadly creature.

The pandemic had muted down the world, and no one was willing to break this pact of eternal silence. But this silence wasn't peaceful. Beneath it, if you tried long and hard enough, you could hear people screaming and shouting, you could hear loved ones leaving, and you could feel the earth bleeding, and no matter how hard I tried to be positive about life... I just couldn't get my mind off the horrors that were slowly taking over the world.

"Mikey, I am hungry.", Kathy said slowly in a low voice.

"Just a moment." I walked over to the kitchen and opened the fridge...empty!

It had been well over a month since mom and dad left us with a well-stocked fridge and a tidied-up house for a two-day business trip. Soon afterward, the flights were all grounded, and they have still not come back. Slowly but surely, we were running out of food. I looked around the kitchen for anything edible and finally found a small packet of cookies. This would do...I guessed.

I handed over the biscuits to the now-satisfied Kathy and resumed my search for extra candles around the house. I didn't want to think about what I would do after this one went out. It's fine, I assured myself. This couldn't get any worse. But back then, the naive me hadn't yet to realise that I wasn't really one of God's favourites...

That night, I was woken up to the humming of my phone. My heart jumped with excitement as I picked it up. DAD? Was he finally going to come home? Were they already here? Were they going to surprise us? I immediately put the phone to my ear and screamed, "Dad!? How are you? And Mom? Are you all coming ba—"

"Michael...", my dad interrupted, his voice breathless and tired.

"Dad?" Oh God, what could have possibly gone wrong?

"How is everything back at home?" Dad enquired. I could hear someone crying softly.

"Dad, what happened? Is that mom crying?"

"How is Kathy?"

"She is okay, Dad. What's wrong?"

"And you?"

"Dad I am okay, please tell me what's wrong?", My hands were trembling, and my heart was hammering. I didn't let the phone slip from my now-sweaty hands.

"Listen, Michael, remember the tests we talked about?" his voice broke.

"Yeah?" I knew what was coming. I knew what he was about to say. I wasn't

prepared. I wasn't...

"The results came out today. And both were positive. I am so sorry. Please be strong Michael and take good care of your sister-"

And that was it. That's all it took to break me down.

"I love you both!", Mom wailed between tears.

My father's words burned down my world to ashes. Any hope I had for a better tomorrow was now shattered. What was I supposed to do now? HOW WAS I EXPECTED TO BE STRONG WHEN LIFE HAD SHUT ALL IT'S EMPTY DOORS ON HIM?

I was angry. Angry at them for catching the virus. Angry they left us here. Angry at my rotten luck. I felt betrayed by everyone and everything and I wished for a swift end to my wretched life.

I hung up the phone and collapsed on my bed.

I felt so isolated from the world, so separated from the parents I loved, yet surrounded by this merciless predator.

I wanted to give up. I had had enough. What with all the chaos surrounding me...

A virus spreading, complete lockdown, parents in another country infected, a power cut, a hungry sister who will have to cry herself to sleep, a candle almost melted away, and a young fourteen-year-old boy drowning in a pool of tears.

I wanted to give up.

"Was that Mom, Mikey?" my sister asked, entering the room.

I didn't reply.

"Can I have another cookie?" Where should I bring one from?

"Why are you crying, Mikey?" She asked, now concerned.

"It's nothing," I whispered, wiping away my tears, "Let me see if I can find you a cookie."

I couldn't give up just yet. I had a sister to care for.

I had to keep this tiny light flickering...

-AAIMAN AMJAD

# FIGHTING COVID-19: THE GLOBAL EXPERIENCE

Many countries around the world have faced a global threat from pandemic. While some states made the right decision to act fast and restore the safety of their citizens, some countries were deprived of their primary needs amongst the rise of money-hungry politicians. It is now a basic fact that countries who promptly acted towards the virus experience a far less adverse effect against the increasing cases of COVID-19 globally. These countries that have taken the utmost care of their citizens prove to show that PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE.

The countries mentioned below are each grouped into categories. They include:

- Safe
- Strive
- Impuissant

## SAFE: Vietnam

Amongst the many countries that took prompt action against the rising pandemic, Vietnam was one of the first. Their government lead by the leader Ho Chi Minh with their timely response, decisive decision making, and proper compliance was able to lead their citizens to a safer path amongst the declaration of war against COVID-19. As of any government, their main objective had been to safeguard their citizens and rightfully so, in the initial state, they began quarantining tens of thousands of desperate civilians for testing any symptoms of the virus. Furthermore, the government took into consideration suspending the issues of visa to all foreign arrivals in the hope of preventing any infected foreigners or citizens from spreading the virus globally. A significant stride to success in Vietnam was due to strict decisions made by the government, for instance, from March 28<sup>th</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup>, the government had banned any social gatherings that included more than ten people. Not to mention all non-essential services such as salons and restaurants were also closed until further notice.

Additionally, the government assured the availability of masks to all citizens.

Amongst all this, the majority of their nation was not star-struck by the governments' new amendment, mainly considering the fact that the country has had enough experience from a global pandemic that hit them in 2003, stripping away many Vietnamese lives as doctors battled to save lives against the SARS pandemic.

## Strive: South Korea

As of now, South Korea is experiencing its second wave of COVID-19 and is under a worse consequence with rising shortages of beds and medical equipment. However, they have adapted swift fixes by implementing COVID-19 testing tents

for drivers to test without needing to step out of their car. Furthermore, the citizens receive constant updates of the presence of any COVID-19 patients and their whereabouts by the use of apps.

In order to avoid economic downfall, the government has been reluctant to implementing lockdowns to major cities around the country, allowing small scale businesses to continue trading.

The culture and traditions of the people of East Asia allow protection such as wearing masks to seem less intimidating than those living in the western hemisphere who are generally brought up with fewer restrictions.

### **IMPUSSANT: America**

America, on the contrary to Vietnam, experiences a staggering death toll due to a lack of prompt decisions made by the government.

As the government continued to deny allegations of the WHO during the initial cases of COVID-19, they faced a significant obstacle in passing regulations that required the public to abide by the laws of safety, leading to many riots on streets in uplifting the lockdown in major cities. The situation worsened with “panicked buying” and the public continuing to overlook safety guidelines. It was during this time that the number of deaths reached its peak.

However, until early April, the government had granted greater interest over the economy and the so-called “Human Rights” of their citizens through which they faced major complications with rising death rates across the country.

So as of now, even though the economy has not been affected dramatically in comparison to other countries, their total workforce has taken a hit with the numbers reducing over a period of time. The safety of the nation is still uncertain and will continue to be if the government does not take strict action against the violators.

### **WHAT CAN WE LEARN?**

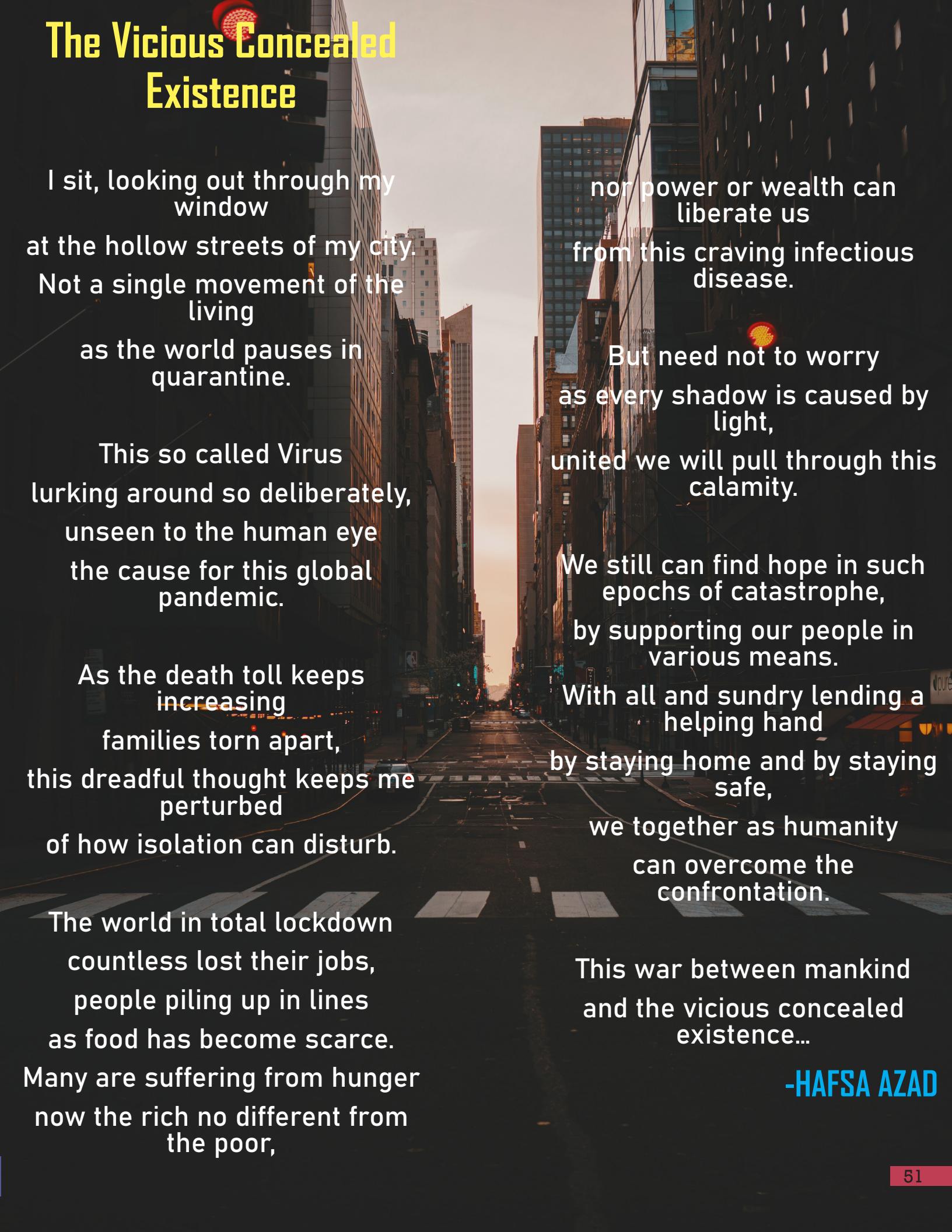
Given the situation of these three countries, the role of the government and the code of conduct of their people play a major role in protecting their country during this harsh unprecedented time.

The integration of world leaders and scientists may save us from a reckoning virus. Still, if we are to understand the lesson taught during this time, it could save even the upcoming generations from another inevitable pandemic. It is clear to see that countries that treat their citizens strictly about the pandemic are far ahead of countries that don't.

While thousands voiced out their human rights, thousands more lay in their death beds wishing to reverse their mindset. But it is too late. COVID-19 has presented to humanity a unique challenge that requires us to improve ourselves, our values, and our ideologies to make this pandemic a blessing to a new life instead of an enemy to the reckoning.

**-DEVMI PERERA**

# The Vicious Concealed Existence



I sit, looking out through my window  
at the hollow streets of my city.  
Not a single movement of the living  
as the world pauses in quarantine.

This so called Virus lurking around so deliberately, unseen to the human eye the cause for this global pandemic.

As the death toll keeps increasing families torn apart, this dreadful thought keeps me perturbed of how isolation can disturb.

The world in total lockdown countless lost their jobs, people piling up in lines as food has become scarce. Many are suffering from hunger now the rich no different from the poor,

nor power or wealth can liberate us from this craving infectious disease.

But need not to worry as every shadow is caused by light, united we will pull through this calamity.

We still can find hope in such epochs of catastrophe, by supporting our people in various means.

With all and sundry lending a helping hand by staying home and by staying safe, we together as humanity can overcome the confrontation.

This war between mankind and the vicious concealed existence...

-HAFSA AZAD

# Masked, meal and marooned

Masked, meal and marooned, Kevin lay in his infirmary bed struggling to breathe, he knew that in no time he would find himself in the next world. He could hear the cries of people watching through the window seeing their loved ones die. He knew that he was next. Tears rolled down his cheek as he pictured his Mother weeping on his lifeless body.

Kevin was a victim of SARS\*. He was an ungrateful man, who complained about everything he got. When the epidemic began, he disobeyed the guidelines set by the government and left the safety of his home purposefully to show that he wasn't happy with the new rules, almost immediately he collapsed to the ground while finding it hard to breathe. Then came the ambulance picking him up and finally Kevin found himself isolated in his infirmary bed, an oxygen mask keeping him alive.

Kevin lay there breathing heavily, recalling all the good memories he had and realizing that he had a decent life, he didn't want to leave this world ungrateful to his maker, so he uttered a prayer," please god give me more time, I promise to be more thankful for everything, good or bad". Then he heard the words that made him cry not tears of sorrow but tears of joy...

"The ministry of health has just announced that the cure for the virus has been discovered and all medical complexes will receive the medicine shortly!" he was flooded with tears of joy. Moments later

a smiling doctor entered his isolated chamber and without a word he gave Kevin a pill which he gratefully took. A week later he was cured.

Years went by and Kevin was living a happy life, but then came the year 2020 and the outbreak of COVID-19 a pandemic that threatened life, forcing people to stay indoors, Kevin was frustrated, ungratefully he shouted “Seriously, again?” then he darted outside to show his unhappiness of having to stay at home.

He heard a voice, “I gave you a chance, but still you are ungrateful. This time you are not going to escape!” almost immediately he collapsed to the ground while finding it hard to breathe, when he opened his eyes, he saw himself Masked, Meal and Marooned. Then the watcher of his pulse seated outside took fright as he saw, little, less, nothing...

\*SARS-Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (an epidemic that took place between 2002-2004)

The word "CORONAVIRUS" is spelled out in a row of ten white letter blocks. Each block contains a single capital letter: C, O, R, O, N, A, V, I, R, U, S. The letters are bold and black, set against a solid black background.

# QUESTIONIARE

By: Fathima Shamila Khaleel

- Co-founder Mashaail Muscat Private School, AlSeeb, Oman.
- BBA – University of Colombo
- PGDE – Open university of Kandy

**Q.The Covid-19 pandemic has left an impact on pretty much every aspect of one's life. In your perspective, how has this pandemic affected a student's educational career?**

A.I don't see much of an effect in the educational career of the students who are around me (in Gulf) as they are equipped with electronics and unlimited Wi-Fi. The online teaching is doing its fullest and mostly satisfying the majority.

But for sure the students who are coming from the lower class as well as village schools are pushed back. Their studies have come to a standstill and no doubt that they are going to suffer due to it. Especially the children who are in grades 11,12 & 13.

**Q.In your opinion should this be considered a mental health break or should students still engage in their academics?**

A.Most of the students are not matured enough to understand the depth of it. So, you can't call it a mental health break unless for their social distancing.

Children who are sucked by gadgets don't see any difference and in fact, having a very happy time as they can spend more time on them now.

However, the children who were spending their leisure outdoors will definitely have an impact.

I don't consider it as a mental health outbreak in order to keep them away from their academics. In fact, it keeps them occupied to a greater extent during this stay home time frame.

**Q.Do you think students can effectively learn**

**the content and understand the materials required without putting a strain on their upcoming class and what measures have been taken by schools and teachers to minimize the strain?**

A.I would like to reframe the question as it brings a greater impact on the teacher than for a student. Most of our teachers are into the traditional classroom centered teaching and very less exposed to modern teaching methods as well as gadgets. Most of them are pushed into this new system of teaching without adequate knowledge or any training. Mostly, students are smarter than the teacher when it comes to technology. So, what I see is the struggle of the teacher more than the student.

As per the question, our school has grouped the students according to their understanding capacity and teaches them accordingly. At times involve the students to teach via presentations, games, dialogs, projects involving all the family members etc.

**Q.Due to the pandemic most schools and universities have taken the approach of online education. In your opinion is online education effective for students who have been traditionally schooled? If so, what are the benefits that have been reaped from this form of education?**

A. What I personally feel is at this point we don't have any other option other than this. So, why we talk about the drawbacks of it?

**Q.One of the problems of this system of education is discrimination of the underprivileged.**

## **How can the underprivileged students cope up with this system of education and what measures are being taken to limit this?**

A. So true and unfortunately nothing has been done so far

## **Q. Many exams all over the world have taken the approach of awarding predicted grades to students. Do you think using these grades as a deciding factor for a student's higher studies and university entry, as done in the past, now reliable?**

A. There are many educational bodies relying on modules and assignments for higher education even before this. So, I don't think it will bring about a big impact on this situation.

And higher education is a market where affordable take the chance. So, I don't think it will bring about any major changes.

## **Q. Continuing on with the theme of exams, many exams like the Advanced Placement exams in the USA and various other term tests are held online. Do you think this is a reliable way of testing students?**

A. It's up to the student to showcase his/her character. Parents too play an important role here. Are we going to teach our child to be honest or else.... Again, why we come around the bush? Is there any other way to do these things now? If not, are we going to wait for a year or two until things settle down to have a fair move? Let's be practical. Let's be optimistic.

## **Q. How has the pandemic impacted your life as a teacher? How long did it take you to adapt to this system of teaching?**

A. As a teacher, my day starts with lots of smiling and greeting faces. Even some hugs and flowers from my innocent students. I dress up to impress my students. This motivates me throughout

the day which I miss the most.

Still, I am struggling with many things. I don't think that I will get acquainted to the system that soon as every day there is something new popping up.

## **Q. Since doctors as well as Health organization staff are being affected by this disease, what do you think is the best way to educate the younger generation about the precautions that should be taken in order to prevent COVID-19?**

A. So far what I have seen is that from country to country the instructions and definitions are different. So, I leave it to the health organizations to deal with.

## **Q. As you are aware your profession is the root of other professions. What do you think is the best advice that you can give to everyone who is in the face of this pandemic?**

A. First thing is, get closer to your creator. May He bring ease in every life every house.

Try to get the maximum out of the situation. Many people who have put all their asserts and build a house have got an opportunity to live in it. People who worked day and night to satisfy the needs of their loved once have got a chance to live with them with limited resources. So, cherish it. We will never get a break like this again in life.

Most of All, remember that teachers are the only ones who have started a new job and expected to be perfect. We too have a family sitting 24/7 at home to be taken care of. Along with that we are expected to learn the new methodology and gadgets to teach online. I would call it act out online. So, don't expect things to be perfect. Be cooperative and try to get the best out of what they give.

# Four Walls

Here we stand, in isolation.  
Separated from one another,  
And now united by sympathies but divided by entities.  
Handshakes have been transformed to an elbow touch,  
Hand sanitizers has been transformed to body lotion,  
It has made an unpredictable catastrophe that history could imagine.  
The death toll rises so does the curve,  
And hope it flattens.  
The virus,  
Demolished businesses and derelict relationships.  
Everyone scrambles to find solutions,  
But maybe it is found in the empty grocery shelves,  
Or maybe in the fear of feeling the fresh air.  
Our compassions cannot travel elsewhere than the walls of our rooms.  
But what about our dreams?  
It is no longer about dreams, it is about being alive.  
And the definition of HERO has changed,  
Instead of an athlete or celebrity  
It's doctors, nurses, front line workers, Teachers and scientists,  
Are the people who keep running the world.  
Our fingers are crossed as we hope for a cure,  
A cure to make things get back to normal.

-AASHIF AHMED

# **YOU HAVE NO PLACE HERE!**

We relaxed that late summer break, on our cushions with a cup of coffee on our hands, deeming every day would be the same. We didn't realize we were laughing at 'a certain Chinese weapon,' which would have ultimately gorged humanity. We watched as the clock ticked, and it was the turn of our friends, our neighbors, and our relatives and then what we were afraid of, us.

We were too busy greedily stacking our already filled shelves with sanitizers and soaps, believing it would save us, us only, but back outside, it was spreading. Our fellow mates were dying because you hid all the essentials. Then later did we realize, for us to be safe, all of us should have everything equally. We needed to understand what society was. We learnt all of us are having the same fragile heart and soul. So COVID-19, thank you for taking a look into our reflection, which we couldn't do it ourselves, we realized we were hypocrites of our own soul. We have realized that someone else's life is equal to our loved ones; they are also someone's grandmother or someone's parents, someone's annoying little sister or brother, someone's best friend.

We were too occupied hunched back in our seats with our busy schedule, looking forward to our boss's comments and promotions. Still, we didn't realize we were fading in the hearts of our cherished ones, once again they wished for your accompany.... you were not smart enough to understand you are demoting yourself. This crisis has bought all of us together. We started understanding the value of the one sitting in front of you, started seeing each other's misery, began sharing your laughter. Thank you for making us realize that we are shackling our self into an abyss. You bought together shattered families on to the same dinner table, helped them feel the warmth. Now we know the importance of an unknown blessing.

Every ride was luxurious for us, but not for our dear earth. We were too engaged building another plan for another industry, and the earth was too weak to share its burden, as all brightness and hope covered the blue skies; still, it didn't complain. You made me realize the beauty of nature with my bare eyes. We watched amazon forest burn down to crust. All we included in our so-called motivational speeches," it's never too late to save it." You proved to us that action speaks louder than words. Thank

you for saving our dear planet returning life to nature. You reminded us of the importance of the other fellow creatures.

You still have no place here because you brought along with you a curse that will forever remain as scars. There were too many who paid for this, and there are some still paying for their actions. So please stop! We learnt how it feels to hurt, what comfort is, especially what life is. You taught a lesson that history would forever remember. When those memories and blemishes, turn into pages, each turn would be of lessons, and each turn would be a remembrance of a loved one. You'll still have no place! You charged too much from us.

I have one request from you, COVID-19. Please disappear.... But leave behind the love, understanding, and equality. The cost was too much for your lessons. Once you leave, we can once again relax back on our cozy cushions this summer break, pondering on our past blunders.

We will fight together, and we'll look at the end because it's decided, you have no place here!

**-Zainab Rizaan**

# **The lock-down and the lives around me...when we come out of it...**

6<sup>th</sup> April 2020. The day it all goes down. It was the beginning of a sequence of funerals followed by the stress applied by my parents to follow up on other courses. It was a disaster. I tended to release my stress with short outbursts and a lot of screaming, followed by an intense workout. It didn't help that we had an outdoor space though we usually tried to play outside.

But thinking about it now the 9th May of the same year I kind of like it. I know... I'm insane. Currently, I think it's the effects of quarantine. Still, lately, I found that my busy father had more time to spare, and my mother was able to share her burden among the family so that we could get things done in record time. Our school had seized to function. It was granting me more time to watch movies and play video games. This, to me, was a relief as I now had time to follow up with my extra activities. Further, I was able to reignite the past hobbies that I had to ditch due to my o levels. I was ready to leave behind the initial weeks of gloom and started to think of ways actually to enjoy quarantine.

I got in touch with my best friend, and she decided to a hangover at my place. This became frequent habit, and we began to have barbecues, watch movies and have sleepovers. It was like the light at the end of a tunnel. I decided to keep myself occupied with one thing or the other. It proved to be productive as I learned something new almost every day.

Although quarantine is fun, I still look upon those days at school where we goofed off and had fun. I still am counting down the days to when I will finally meet the rest of the gang.

It's been almost a month since I had seen them and I knew we wouldn't be able to see each other for a couple more. It was unfortunate all those months wasted on us planning our summer vacation together. Alas, it's all the past.

I had never been more interested in the news, not because of the fear of the virus but rather because I wanted to know the day this all was to end. True, I must first survive to see the light, but my hobbies and discoveries could only entertain me for a little while longer. The constant struggle of my parents' attempts to keep the fridge stuffed was amusing to watch, fully aware of the fact that I had a significant role to play. I fed myself for entertainment and not for hunger. Pathetic as the definition of my current situation. Funny to think a few weeks ago, I was determined to score well in my O levels, and now I seemed to have no plan ahead of me.

Nonetheless, it also amuses me how one must be entrapped in the hopes of being free of the virus. How a microbial being has turned the way we have been living for decades is also stunning. My teenage mind reminds me though how cool it is to be leaving through a pandemic, a tale to share with the future. Maybe this is the earth's way of cleaning itself up to keep itself alive. No more fossil fuels being burnt, and the ozone layer is healing up.

In conclusion, this is not the end of the world but the beginning of a brighter greener future. Then again, I'm still stuck in quarantine.

- SHAVONNE MILROY

# A Bird's Eye

Emotions are a very fruitful and divine aspect of being human. The crevices of your mouth widened by your smile, your face wrinkled by the sheer thought of joy, the light ricochetting off a pearl trickling down your cheek when you meet up with sorrow. But have you ever wondered about describing an emotion to someone? What it feels like to shed tears of joy, and to shed tears of sorrow. For most people, words are both audible and visible, words bring out emotion, Words give emotion its voice, a single-sided relationship, just like a fruit and a tree, one would survive without the other, but one could not, yet with them both they are whole... and meaningful.

Having lived 10 years of my life being victimized by high-functioning autism, I could not even begin to fathom why people would just break down, their eyes start gushing with so called "tears", flooding their whole façade. I would not cry under painful circumstances because I did not know how to; my heart not governed by emotions, my mind propelled by rational thought, instead I was an avid thinker. This is my journey to understanding emotion.

The most influential person of my life was my father. He was a doctor, a specialist in respiratory illnesses so he had some knowledge about my condition, and he was quite experienced in handling me. My mother being quite sentimental, I could not wrap my head around her persona, yet I could see her effort to comprehend my feelings. Cracking jokes that ordinarily would drive a preadolescents laughter but instead I would just give her such a confused gaze which would sometimes frighten her; her image of me was quite ambiguous. So yes, I was quite close to my father, no matter what he did he would always make sure to set aside some of his time for me, whenever, wherever.

One night, a Tuesday, the coldest and busiest of nights, I was sitting atop my bed in my white-walled room, fading away to a soothing blue colour, which during the day blended elegantly with the vibrant blue sky; dressed with modern-art and family photos. I was gazing at the stars outside the door that lead to the terrace. My mind as calm as the breeze but sharp as its coldness. My eyes shift their gaze to the streets, alive and breathing, the uproar of the busy streets resonating throughout the hollow, motionless sky, the clouds caressing the thin strands on my head, it was a bird's eye view. I get off my bed is a jerky motion and made my way to the door which secluded my room from the house. I cautiously traversed the polished, fluorescent flight of stairs, dimly lit by lights that creviced the corners where the wall and floor met, guiding me to safety like a guardian angel. My eyes instantly crinkled hard as soon as I reached the bottom as my sight was blurred by the unsuspecting glare

of light that devoured the room. Curiosity drove me to the living room as I perceived some ambient noise. It was my father, eyes glued to the screen of the T.V as I watched him from the corners of the door frame, his back arched and leaning forward, like a lion about to pounce on prey. I sneaked into the room... careful and cautious not even my breath to be heard, like a robber in my own home. I looked over his shoulder to get a view of what he was doing, he gazed upon the screen like a dog looking at a piece of meat; he was watching THE NEWS!, I locked my eyes onto the brown and gold clock, it was an antique, a prized possession of my father's. I always wondered do not they all show the same thing. It just struck twelve midnight.

I moved further, a bit closer to him to get a better view of the screen, and this is what I heard, "This is breaking news coming to you live from the Downtown, Central Detroit. Thousands of patients are being rushed to the Central Detroit hospital with severe respiratory difficulties, it seems to be some sort of virus according to the reports, the number of patients are greatly outweighing the doctors, it has been two weeks since we have been receiving such a large amount of patients overnight. The government has ordered a complete lockdown throughout the whole of Detroit, stay calm, stay safe and self-isolate."

For the next few days, I almost never saw my father, I would sit around wondering what had happened to him, and for the first time I felt... FEAR, a hollow feeling in my heart and stomach, I felt aroused, at a state of unease, I was confused and for the first time I shed a tear that had a meaning. I rushed upstairs, skipping a step each time, barged into my room, and flung myself onto the bed. I clinched onto the window frame, my head hanging out the window I watched the streets, slowly and painfully as people became obsolete, the once lively Detroit, is now a no man's land, devoid of its right to be called home, and the air consumed by an invisible force, the streets, conquered by the fauna and flora, not a single human soul to be seen.

The fate of my father to this day is still unknown, it has been so long since I have seen him, that I almost do not remember what he looked like. I did not feel agony, nor were I in distress, as I was still a stranger to emotion, yet my mind zoned into a state of flux, my stomach in a constant flutter, I was estranged to the one man that loved me ever so dearly. For all the days he wasn't there, I finally had a definition for emotion, I had learned what it means to cry and laugh, as I observed the people outside how they shift their moods according to their situations, when in pain, a groan or a cry, when in joy, laughter, when in fear, a shriek. I had learned to inculcate my knowledge of emotions into the books I read, it was a revolutionary experience, I had discovered why stories can be empowering or why they can be disastrous. All because of emotion. What I have learnt to accomplish, while in isolation, I could not have done without my father, regardless of his presence..... then I rose to my feet, went back downstairs, and glanced at the gold, brown clock, the clock struck TWELVE!.....and then there was an abrupt knock at the door! All I could see was a silhouette of a man, not any man, but a father.

-PRAVIN JAYASOORIYA

# Real life heroes

This is a story of the real-life avengers  
A group of people that had multiple super powers  
One that defined the world's history  
to the cost of their own liberty  
A team that wasn't accompanied by bombs nor planes  
But just their unwavering humanity and intellectual brains

Armoured by surgical gloves and N95s  
They shielded the world with their intelligence  
Using ventilators as their greatest weapons  
applauded on their way back from missions  
with the normality of keeping a 6ft distance

Fighting a creature so minute,  
that takes out even our most "powerful"  
while the powers of superman and batman had no use  
these heroes were our doctors and nurses dressed in blue

When our future generations are asked who their heroes are  
Tony Stark and Peter Parker will unfortunately not make the cut  
However, those hands who used testing kits  
to ensure the world wouldn't fall into pits  
And those hands that drove ambulances across streets  
ensuring the ill will not be put into coffins

These are the heroes that deserve the most credit.

While the whole world is stuck in quarantine  
getting to spend some time with their families  
these heroes venture out amidst this treacherous apocalypse  
not knowing whether they are going to be taken down  
just like their colleagues, as the next victim.

With a debt so hard to repay,  
the best we can do is to stick to what they say

From us they require a simple thing  
to Stay home; stay safe, for the greater good...

When you must go out don that mask  
and keep a safe distance two metres as you should!

Lift up our front-line workers in the midst of despair,  
Who are selflessly giving our elderly care!

Cheer on and show love for the scared doctors, nurses, and hospital  
workers,

Who show up and work doubles in sacrificial services! These are the  
real-life heroes, who deserve recognition,

While we stay at home in a lock-down safe position!

**-Mahadiyyah Rasheed**

# TOPSY TURVY

Topsy turvy, by definition, when what is expected, isn't what reality portrays. And in our case...

The great plague of Marseille in 1720. The cholera attack of Asia in 1820. The Spanish flu in 1920, and the coronavirus outbreak of 2020. A constant 100-year loop discovered recently, shook us all. Reflecting upon the impact the seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen hundred had, it's not a wonder that our entire world quaked with fear.

While the everyday news talks about the dangers, and awareness, and hardships, and every aspect of negativity to worry about, we forget that it doesn't always have to be dark clouds and demons.

For instance, let's take the lockdown. It has forced each and every one of us into our homes, leaving the outside world into an eternal bliss. With cars constantly not blocking the streets, many countries, including China and America, which used to be the top two most polluted, have seen drastic pollution level decreases. Some in Wuhan even stated that they could finally 'see the sky'. But it's not only the skies we're talking about. Now that people, pets, and strays aren't walking about, there has been a dramatic fall in the amount of trash we see every day. Therefore, I think we could all safely agree that the environment couldn't have enough of it.

Now, as the days progress, we learn to continue our daily work through other means. And thus, many online businesses that used to be at the bottom that offers video calls, chat rooms, games of all sorts, and even day to day necessities, abruptly skyrocketed, reaching new levels of success. Whether it's online meetings and work, or shopping through the aisles of a website. Even something as simple as spending time, like playing games or scrolling through social media. During these days, many rely on the internet and its facilities to survive.

But if we focus on the points that really do matter to us personally, when every one of us is locked in our homes with our family, we begin to learn how family bonds work. Since they are the ones we see every minute of our entire day, gradually coping becomes a habit. Family nights with board games and dinner at the table, to movies in the living room with popcorn and snacks. Or even an effortless chat. By the end of this quarantine, we will all be knowing the history and secrets of each and every member of our household.

Finally, if we look deeply into every aspect, we realize that there can be many factors to benefit from. Yes, not everything is all rainbows and ponies, but nothing ever has been. Yet, I still do stand by my statement that the pros shouldn't just be lashed out. It might be pros to you or to someone else, either way, and we have to accept and move on. You know what they say, 'don't make a dim room even dimmer'. Even if no one actually quoted that, I quote it myself. Because although it might not seem like it, this pandemic might be a wave of a better than a horrible chapter in life.

- NABEELAH FALEEL

# THE QUIET SCREAM

It was a new year that would almost certainly be filled with joy and fun. Admittedly, we didn't expect that, at this time of year, it would be seemingly over—the time I regretted the most when hundreds vanished in the grave. I lived in the streets of Melbourne, Australia, where I mended shoes so that I could earn some money for my family. However, it got a lot worse than expected when the virus began to take over the world.

'Excuse me, sir, I demand that you please find yourself home, and if you don't move, it won't be looking very nice,' said an agitated police officer.

'Dad, what are we going to do?' said Alice, my younger daughter.

I thought for a bit, feeling like a profound lunatic, and finally decided to build a home a few miles away from the city. It was in the Yarra Ranges Forest.

'Justin, are you sure this is going to work?' asked my beloved wife, Lucy.

'Yes, definitely,' I replied, remembering there is always a solution.

Alice and I started building the hut with bamboo sticks and pieces of wood. Lucy, on the other hand, was doing what she does best, making us a cup of tea from last month's supplies.

It was October, and we had a fine-looking house. I would bring them fish from the lake across from our hut for Lucy to heat. However, after a couple of days, something unexpected got caught on my fishing rod: parchments of medical science and much more scientific stuff.

A strange sound made its way into my brain; it sounded like the type of music you'd hear in a ghost town.

'Ahhh!' I moaned loudly. The piercing cry that fled into the Yarra ranges was something

I'd never heard before. Medical trucks and cops were abundant on the horizon, filling the world with anxiety and stress. I took the papers back home, which seemed like a good idea considering how thrilled Lucy was when she saw our future in my hands. Weeks had passed, and it was almost a month until Christmas. Everything was going well. I acquired a cleaning job at the medical clinic. Although taking such a job in a rather desperate situation was considered a risk, it was a risk I had to make to feed my family. The virus wasn't helping; it was doing its job fiercely, like a pit bull terrier munching the flesh out of a poor buffalo.

Life couldn't get any worse, and that was when reality struck me. The howling, raging storm smashed everything in the air, the violent massive drops of hail hit the city and village, and the sirens kept wailing louder and louder. Every day was a horrible mess: patients were lying in places they weren't supposed to be, doctors were suffocating from the torture of treating the infected, and the thought of getting contaminated was like a stinging bug in my brain.

Now I was starting to regret my job. Alice was anxious that I was physically in a dangerous place.

'Is Dad going to die if he waits too long?' sobbed Alice.

'No, sweetheart, he'll be fine,' replied Lucy. Lucy and Alice were having a good time, enjoying what life had for them. They would go rabbit hunting or take a swim in the lake. The experience couldn't have been better, but eventually, it all took a turn.

It was a busy shift on Monday, and I had arrived home late. I had forgotten to tell Alice's bedtime stories, and when I came to her room, I was shocked.

'Dad ... isn't it getting late? I don't feel very well.' Alice coughed.

'Wait, sweetheart, let me check ... check what's going in your body,' I stammered. I plucked the first aid kit, opened the white latch, and removed the thermometer sensor out of its place. I scanned Alice's eyes and watched in despair as the numbers began to rise. I dreaded the sickening thought that hit me every so often: 'She is going to die.'

'What's wrong, Dad?' sobbed Alice.

'It's nothing, dear, you've just got a mild fever,' I replied.

'I think it's best if we took her to the hospital,' replied Lucy.

'No, Mom, I don't want to. There are too many sick people out there,' sobbed Alice.

'But dear, we have to. It's better if we treat you now,' replied Lucy.

'Okay, Mom, I'll get ready,' replied Alice.

We took off on Tuesday night, and driving to the hospital was not an easy task. The plunge of cold air hit my daughter's face right at the moment we entered the frosty hospital lobby. Her eyes glistened at the bright lights above her. It never occurred to me that hospitals would ever be a fire in disguise. Alice was not having a great day today and had trouble coping with the many patients who cried every so often.

'Alice Miguel, Alice Miguel!' yelled the nurse.

'I'm here, Miss,' said Alice softly.

After a couple of minutes, the doctor appeared to be somewhat wary and puffed air into my face in despair.

'You must be Alice's dad,' replied the doctor.

'Yes, Doctor, that's me,' I replied.

'Well, I have some bad news.'

'No, Doctor, it can't be,' I replied.

'Alice is infected and needs to be taken care of in the hospital.'

'Doctor, please let me see my daughter,' I sobbed.

'Sir, I do apologize for Alice, but she has to stay in mandatory quarantine in the hospital.' Lucy was listening to all this, too, and had a hard time absorbing the devil's news. It was after a few moments that Lucy and I were back on the road; the thought of Alice never being able to see us again struck our hearts with immense sorrow.

Alice was facing a far trickier situation. There had been hours of check-ups, with many people in white custom clothes walking around as if they had four legs.

She had decided to stay calm for the next few hours, but things got stranger when she was dumped into a locked room painted bright white. There were many people of different ages in the room. Still, they were separated from each other by glass frames to maintain social distancing. The next morning, a strange buzzing audio streamed into my unconscious mind. It was the call day for all patients.

'Hi, sweetheart! How's it going now? I hope they took good care of you,' sobbed Lucy.

'Yes, Mom, they did take care of me. They came every half an hour to check up on me. They also gave me some candy to cheer me up,' replied Alice.

'Oh, dear! That's good to hear, but I miss you, darling.'

'It's okay, Mom, but I missed swimming with you in Drizzle River.'

'I know, darling. But soon they'll let you out, and we can spend the Christmas together while Grandma and Grandpa come to visit.'

'Can't wait to prank them.' Alice laughed.

I went back to my shift, as usual. Alice was not able to see my face for almost a week. So I had to somehow bypass security and ask the doctor about her condition, hopefully without getting caught by my boss, James Thomas. A few moments later, I got the chance to see

my sweet angel. I had the urge to weep, but I held it in and waved goodbye to her. I was about to return to my workstation when I had the fortunate opportunity to speak with the doctor.

'How's my little girl doing?' I asked.  
'She's doing fine and can leave the hospital within the next few days,' the doctor replied.  
I was so thrilled by the news that I had to take an early drive back home. Lucy was exhausted and always looked sad, which filled the house with an unpleasant atmosphere. When I returned home, I spluttered out the news to her, and it seemed she ran down to hug me.

'Finally, our baby is coming home, Justin,' Lucy said.

'Yes, honey, let's decorate the house for Christmas to cheer up Alice,' I said.

Lucy and I got many things done. We did a complete makeover of Alice's bedroom with her favourite unicorn. For Christmas, we prepared turkey with stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, cranberry sauce, and vegetables, along with Alice's all-time favourite dessert, chocolate pudding.

On Friday, December 11, Alice stood on the doorstep with a few men dressed in white.  
'Excuse me, sir. Your daughter has recovered remarkably well, but please ensure that she wears a mask most of the time. Also, you should be well aware that she doesn't indulge in any playful activities.'

'Yes, definitely, I will take care of her with all my heart. Thank you so much for your help.'

'You're welcome, sir. Have a good day.'  
Alice was delighted. Her golden eyes started to brighten again, and the city and the village looked far cleaner. Although she witnessed few vehicles in the roadways, it did seem to be very quiet and peaceful.  
The Rainbow Lorikeet, the Painted Bunting,

and many more were all soaring up into the atmosphere.

Alice immediately switched on the telly, and this is what the government had to say to protect the numerous lives out there:

'ATTENTION, CITIZENS OF MELBOURNE. THE CENTRE IS IN A STATE OF QUARANTINE AND ISOLATION. THE GOAL OF THIS IS TO PROTECT OUR CITIZENS. ALL SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES WILL BE CLOSED UNTIL THE CURRENT PANDEMIC VIRUS HAS PASSED. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES ARE THE RESIDENTS ALLOWED TO LEAVE THEIR HOMES DURING QUARANTINE.'

'Honestly, Dad, this quarantine movement is a blessing. Otherwise, just imagine the chaos it could have caused. Maybe it could have even ended social existence. Ooh, that would be scary.'

'I know, dear. At least you're here, safe and sound.'

A few weeks had passed, and Justin was having his first enjoyable moment. Alice had picked up technology skills to chat online with her cousins and learnt a lot more than she had in school. Alice was able to witness a new creative world out of that very darkness, perhaps more than the everyday routine of going to school. She, too, was an incredible author after a few weeks.

I love Alice with all my heart. She has been an angel in these vulnerable times, cooking for her parents, speaking a trickle of French, and most of all, having hope in her very soft heart. Christmas had finally arrived, and Alice had the family gathering that she'd been waiting for.

I know my profession is dangerous at this time, but I acknowledge that it's time to help others heal. No longer apart, we are all for one and one for all.

-AMJAD ILHAM