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Coronao

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Covid19 Early Quarantine Thought Log

March 19, 2020

It's difficult to be imaginative while in survival mode, or is it? Isn't imagination itself my go-to survival method?

Here I am, living in the apocalypse. Maybe this can be a time to reconnect with my truest self. I knew her at one time. Maybe this time is meant to be a sort of cleansing – for me, for us, for the entirety of the earth. Not knowing what is to come strangely fills me with a sense of excitement.

Things are about to be broken apart. People will reconnect with what it means to be in community with one another. Money will become less essential, as will notoriety, fame, and achievement.

Today, in this moment, I am looking forward to seeing God's plan unfold.

Today, in this moment, my faith is carrying me.

I am willing to be reborn. I am not afraid for my plans to be altered or transformed. I know how it feels to be broken apart so that I may be molded once again.

March 20, 2020

Day 9 of quarantine. 17,000+ cases of covid19 detected in the US. 600+ dead in Italy in 24 hours. They do not have enough beds, enough masks, enough equipment. Neither do we.

California, New York, and Illinois are ordering a mandatory shelter in place. No one can leave their home unless they are essential employees. 220 deaths in the US. So far.

I do not know what the future holds. Do not know if I will be able to move to Canada in the fall as planned. I am quarantined with my grandparents in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and right now, my only concern is staying well. Making sure they stay well, too. I am lucky enough to have a job where I can work from home. Blessed is more correct a word. I am blessed enough to be riding this out in New Mexico, a sparsely populated state that is seldom visited. We have 43 cases. So far.

The only reason no one is comparing this to the Black Plague is because we have WiFi. The Plague feels like something historical, something that happened in black and white. I think they are one in the same, covid and the plague. In Italy, they cannot keep up with counting their dead. Coffins line the floor and pews of churches. Burials cannot be performed out of fear that coming into contact with the body will lead to infection. Those who are dying are increasingly younger. It hasn't gotten here yet, but it will. It will.

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Is it sick that part of me is excited to see what's to come? I don't want anyone to die, but the possibility of this reality being altered permanently, for better or worse, is intriguing. Part of me hopes that this system of social recognition we've created, where we are meant to constantly produce and achieve, comes crashing to the ground. No more needing to be famous. No more desperate desire to be recognized. No more being asked, 'what are you working on now?' or, 'what's next?' In the time of mass death, it would be enough simply to survive, provide for your family, and keep them safe. What a relief that would be.

Grandma is convinced we will be out of the woods by May. Everyone has their own predictions. In my heart, I believe the damage and change caused by this virus will eat up the entirety of the year. Some are already calling this the 'lost year'. Loss of some things, maybe. Loss of production, of profit, of industry. There may be gains, too. Gains in connectedness, simplicity, family, reflection. Millions may die. In their stead, will we have more air to breathe?

I may die. People I love may die. That is an easier truth to accept than I thought it would be. The truth is, this is bigger than me. It is global, perennial, cosmic. It unites us all. We are all rendered vulnerable. When I think of it in this light, I can't be angry. All I can do is deal with what is in front of me, what's in my control.

Maybe it will end here, but I doubt it. This is the result of a chain reaction of events, increasing in intensity and consequence. We are, maybe, in the beginning-middle of what is to come. I hear it in the cries of the birds, the groan of the wind through the trees.

Nothing will ever be the same, but then, who would want it to be?

Come what may. Come what may. Come what may.

March 22, 2020

Day... 10? Cases keep rising. People keep dying. It's the end of the world as we know it, but I feel fine.

The key words in the previous sentence are, 'as we know it'. This is not the end of everything. Life as we knew it is dying, but the world will prevail. What will come forth is something foreign and new. Part of me is excited and hopeful. That part gets bigger every day.

Maybe what this means is, the life that I was living before this, while ordered and vertically mobile, was not bearing much fruit. Maybe what this means is that I crave something more. Or at least, something different. What that could be, I have no idea.

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The sky outside my bedroom window is blanketed in grey, but the sun finds ways to shine through. Even now. Even today.

Why is it that whenever an airplane flies overhead, I am convinced that it comes to drop bombs, decimating our entire civilization? Maybe it is because we are vulnerable now. Such chaos is the perfect breeding ground for totalitarianism, fascism, or insurgency. Each day is filled with uncertainty. Today, we have surpassed Spain. We are in third place for having the most cases in the world. 33,000.

It is interesting how, as time passes, I become increasingly less interested in knowing myself and more focused on understanding the world. I want to read books. Want to learn new things. Want to open doors that will, in turn, open doors inside of me. The birds outside my window sing songs, the clearest marker I know of spring.

If something can collapse after a mere two weeks, maybe it was never meant to survive in this world at all. There is no excuse for boredom. No excuse for feeling a sense of lacking for entertainment. This world is replete with distractions. To be truly entertained is to ignore them all and see what can be found in the silence.

I am my best self when I am as I was as a child, playing in the backyard with the dog at my grandma's house. Content with the sound of wind chimes through an open window and the imaginative thoughts in my head. After all, aren't we all just trying to return to Eden?

Don't need to buy things to be happy. Don't need to wear makeup or false eyelashes to feel beautiful. Don't need to eat to feel full. Don't need to be distracted to be at peace. All that matters is what remains. The silence. The expansive nothing that must be present for me to be present.

March 23, 2020

Day 11 of quarantine. 43,000 cases in the United States. Governor Lujan-Grisham has issued a shelter in place order, meaning that New Mexico residents are not allowed to leave their homes other than to get groceries, go to the hospital, or unless they are essential workers. We will see if they're able to enforce it or if people will listen.

In order to visit the grocery store on Friday, we have come up with a long, complex plan. Grandma will call the store beforehand to ensure they have the things we need. Lately, people have been hoarding toilet paper and disinfectants. Then she will drive me there and I will go in to shop using the list we wrote together. She cannot go into the store because she is a member of the 'vulnerable population' due to her age. After we get the groceries, I will unload them wearing gloves and disinfect them all using our waning supply of Lysol spray. Then we will discard the bags.

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These are the lengths we must go to, to keep the virus away and out of our house. This is life now.

I haven't been anywhere other than on a run once and to the grocery store in the last eleven days. This shelter in place will be in effect until April 10 at the earliest. My grandma, David, and I have taken bets on how long this will last. Grandma bet by mid-April. David thinks by June. I think by September. So far, it looks like grandma will lose.

This will be a long, lonely spring indeed. Graduation ceremonies have been postponed. My birthday, which is in May, will most likely be spent indoors and alone. I will be working from home until April 10 at the earliest. A month indoors. A month at home, performing the same routine, more or less, each and every day.

20,800 cases in New York.

2,100 in California.

100 in Oregon.

2,100 in Washington state.

50 in Idaho.

700 in Colorado.

83 in New Mexico.

600 in Texas.

32 in North Dakota and 28 in South Dakota.

64 in Nebraska.

82 in Kansas.

81 in Oklahoma.

200 in Minnesota.

100 in Iowa, Montana, and Arkansas.

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1,100 in Louisiana.

400 in Wisconsin.

1,200 in Illinois and 1,300 in Michigan.

200 in Indiana.

100 in Kentucky.

500 in Tennessee.

200 in Mississippi.

100 in Alabama.

700 in Georgia.

1,100 in Florida.

400 in Ohio.

10 in West Virginia.

300 in North Carolina and 200 in South Carolina.

87 in Delaware.

600 in Pennsylvania.

800 in New Jersey.

100 in Connecticut.

83 in Rhode Island.

600 in Massachusetts.

200 in D.C.

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78 in New Hampshire and 75 in Vermont.

56 in Hawaii.

29 in Alaska.

I don't know what else to say. This type of global threat creates a mental shift. A present-mindedness. There is no space for dealing with anything bigger, anything abstract. I have goals, but maybe there is something more important at work. Something else I'm meant to pay attention to. Something deeper, yet simpler.

If I'm not moving forward, do I still matter? Or do I cease to exist?

March 25, 2020

Day 13 of quarantine. There are now over 53,000 cases in the US.

They say that once this settles down, around mid-May, there will be another surge in cases in the fall. I will most likely be moving to Canada in the cooling down period between surges. The idea of being there, living alone and not knowing anyone as quarantine is again initiated, fills me with anxiety. What if I do not know how to get to the grocery store? What if I am living in an apartment and have to evacuate? Where would I go? Who would take me in?

Come what may. Come what may. Come what may.

God, strengthen my plans and willingness. If I must spend one more year here in New Mexico, I accept that. Thy will, not mine, be done.

All I ever wanted was to be a writer isolated on a hill, writing things all day and night. Isn't that the life I could be leading now?

March 26, 2020

Day 14. Two weeks in quarantine.

Today grandma and I accomplished the arduous and anxiety-inducing task of going to the grocery store. We set out at 8am to make the senior hour at Costco to purchase toilet paper, paper towels, paper plates, and coffee. There was a line when we arrived, so I had grandma wait in the car as I held a place in the queue. I got a cart and disinfected it with Lysol wipes we brought with us, all while wearing a protective mask and latex gloves. We were instructed to stand six feet apart, but no one in the line was heeding this precaution.

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Inside the store, it was chaotic. People running around in every direction to find what they needed. Grandma directed me to where the items we came for were, and I was in charge of picking them up, putting them in the cart, and unloading them in the car.

The next place we went was the local grocery store. While she waited in the car, I went in by myself with our list of items and her credit card. When inside the store, I had to call her many times to inform her of items that were out of stock. Like everywhere else, there was no toilet paper or tissues.

When we returned home, I got each item out of the car one by one, removing them from the bags and disinfecting them before bringing them into the house. Once the items were disinfecting, I brought them inside where grandma put them away. I then disinfecting the car, washed my clothes, and took a full shower. This is what we do now to get groceries, in the age of covid19.

Over 83,000 cases have now been reported in the US, surpassing China and becoming the country with the most cases in the world. In New York, I hear they are experiencing the beginnings of duress caused by mass hospitalization. Here in New Mexico, we have had only one death. We have not yet felt the full impact of this pandemic, but I have no doubt that we will.

It will come in waves.

March 27, 2020

Day 15 of quarantine. 100,000 cases now in the US.

Grandma is getting on my last nerve, always telling me what to do, when to work, how to behave. This much time in close proximity, and her without any hobbies to distract herself, is causing her to direct all of that pent-up energy and attention onto me. For my part, I am trying to do what I need to do to stay sane. Writing, fantasizing a bit, making art, watching TV, exercising, sticking with a routine.

Reading, too. Listening to the audio book version of 'Brave New World.' Why is it that, in times of tragedy or confusion, my tendency is to lean in, taking in as much information I can about the current situation? As if consuming dystopian fiction will give me insight into the present situation.

No, that is not the reason I do it. The reason is, I want to intensify this unique, unusual feeling. Fortify its existence as an aberration in my life rather than allowing it to become usual, ordinary, mundane. Because, if it becomes usual, that will mean I am growing used to it. And if I grow used to it, I will be unable to conjure from it any meaning or significance. It

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will stop being horrifying, confusing, unsettling, and instead become typical, dull, dead. And from dull things, what transformations could possibly take place?

At the core of my being is a desire for a visceral, complete dissolution. Something that tears from bottom-up. Something that alters every aspect of reality.

I know it is unusual. I remember when, at the end of my job as a facilitator at my university, my cohort took turns making wishes for the entire group. When it was my turn, I wished for 'the kind of experience that transforms us all entirely.' No one gave any response. No warm smiles, nods of understanding, or sounds of affirmation. Instead, they stared at me with either blank or uncomfortable expressions. It was then I realized for the first time that such total dissolution of the self was not a goal shared by everyone.

Even so, I was not sorry for wishing such a change for all of my colleagues. I still believe that such transformation is the most beautiful and exciting thing that could happen in our lives.

So then, is this what we are experiencing now? Isn't this transformation I so desired now taking place on a global level? If it is, how do I feel about finally getting what I always wanted?

This may be a time to lean into destruction. A time to discover what lies deep within, buried underneath the trappings of consciousness and ego. When all of that is stripped away, what remains of us? What fuels us, comforts us, propels us forward? What do we cling to for security, for certainty, for hope?

This is not my first experience being pushed out of my own skin. Not the first instance in which I reached the limits of my self and discovered the ends of my own willpower. If nothing else, addiction has afforded me the special, bitter awareness of being finite.

Yet this is different. This sort of global destruction inadvertently create openings, not only within myself, but throughout the world. It touches every person, every government, every institution and nation. Nothing will be spared the upheaval created by this virus. This should scare me, unsettle me, and it did for a time. Now, that fear has been replaced by something more central to my being: curiosity.

I want to see what openings are created by the blows dealt from this pandemic. Want to witness the cracks it exposes in our relationships, our governments, our economy. Want to observe who is lost, which leaders fall and which surface. Want to see what I will be made to endure and suffer because of it. Of course, I do not wish death for anyone, but I know suffering. I know it well.

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Each time I've been made to suffer, I have emerged anew. My life has been comprised a series of tiny little deaths. Each time I died, I was certain I would never recover. In a way, I was right. I did not recover. I was reborn.

That feeling of anticipation, dread, excitement mixed together is one I do not want to forget. It is what I yearn for: the feeling of adrenaline that comes from the primal motivation to stay alive. The anticipation of not knowing what comes next, but being open to all of it without exception.

Come what may. Come what may. Come what may.

March 29, 2020

Things fall into a strange rhythm. They do so without my knowledge or consent.

Day 16 of quarantine.

When I experience that suffocating feeling of being trapped, I open my window. It reminds me that I might be able to escape, that there is always an option to run. The windchimes jingle and ring outside my bedroom window. A weird feeling hangs over the house today. It darkens and distorts reality, like looking out at the landscape through a hunter's blind. Everything in my view is narrowed. I am separate from it all.

Cases are well over 100,000 in the US. I sense the next week is when we will experience the first wave of death. Everything feels precarious and flimsy, liable to blow away with the next great gust.

Come what may. Come what may. Come what may.

I possess the same sense today that I had before this all began. I remember it clearly. I was walking to the nearest bus stop after hiking the Sandia mountains. It was a nearly two hour walk, but I didn't mind. The weather was warm and it was a Saturday. I had nothing but time to enjoy walking as the sun set over the Eastern mountain range.

As I gazed out at the sunset bleeding over the desert sky, I sensed something. The clouds were strangely lit by the sun as they rolled gently by. Colored, unusually, with violet and light pink hues. I knew they didn't foreshadow rain. In my gut, I sensed they had another, deeper significance. There was this electricity in the air, not unlike the current felt right before a storm. As I walked, it burrowed into my heart, and I was filled with that rare but familiar feeling of existing in the quiet, eerie calm within the eye of the tornado.

In that moment, I knew a storm was coming. I felt it in my scars.

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Looking out of my bedroom window, I am overcome with much of the same feeling. The sky is spotlessly blue, there is not a cloud in sight. The sun shines ordinarily, yet something in the cadence of the breeze, as it undulates through the trees and reaches my skin, is not of this world.

If we pay close enough attention, God gives us signs. If we are quiet enough, still enough, we can feel Him communicating with us through light, color, wind. Once again, I receive that sense of other worldly calm. Calm I will soon recall, wondering if life will ever return to how it was in the moment I experienced it.

The storm is here, but it intensifies in intervals. Crashing as do waves, increasing in strength, naturally waxing and waning as does the tide. There has been a period of ebb for several days. We know the next wave is coming, but we do not know when, or what destruction it will bring. The undulating breeze seems to indicate the next wave will be upon us sooner than we think, and when it ultimately breaks, it will take with it much of what we have known, cherished, and held dear.

Come what may. Come what may. Come what may. Come what may.

My heart, expanding and retracting in my chest, exposes my own uncertainty. My own feral, fearful humane-ness. Of course, I am afraid. Of course, I am uncertain. Never before have I – or any of us – resided in such a place of enigmatic unknowing. Never before have we been so explicitly called to let go and let God. I ask each day for my faith to be strengthened, for I know that without it, I will feel as if the ground is sinking beneath me.

I am not okay with sinking, but I can withstand free-falling. Because, when you are falling from high enough, it no longer feels like falling.

It feels like flying.