**COVID 19 Readers’ Theatre, Fall ‘22**

He looked tired, like he hadn’t slept for days.

Talking, and talking to avoid work like he always does.

He told about the antigen test he had taken earlier and how it come out

negative.

How he just had bad allergies that day and the rest of his family was healthy, so

his illness couldn’t be contagious.

So then, why was he so nervous? Why did he try and speak from six feet away

and why did he have two masks on?

I did the same thing when I was worried that I had the virus, and I did. So not only

did I know the physical symptoms of the virus, I knew the verbal ones as well.

So, I kept my distance that day.

The next morning, I got an email reporting that someone on yesterday’s schedule

had tested positive for covid.

I feel like a bank robber

trying to coach and talk to the players with my neck gaiter pulled up so high covering my face

The players don’t wear masks

only in the dugouts or during team meetings during practice.

My neck tan line is getting out of hand,

spending my days locked in my house in class or on the baseball field

but I’ll take it! Anything to get back on the field

even if that field was the one we built in our parking lot

Anything is better than losing another season with the player, better than hiding in our facility

Getting shutdown time and time again by nosy neighbors

We are back on the field almost back to normal

 **Carlos**

At first it seemed impossible,

it sounded made up.

But it was very real,

and we were unprepared.

Each day the numbers went up

The hospitals were overfilled,

there were stories of staff being overworked and exposed.

Mask up, governors pleaded

No! Our body our choice some claimed

The vaccine was made, get your vaccine, city officials pleaded

No! Our body our choice some claimed

It seemed like it would never go away.

It seemed like we would be stuck on Zoom

And somehow, some survived

Others did not, may they rest in peace.

But we can now say

We got through it.

Nearly two years later.

They said it would be two weeks.

Public opinion--the killing force.

How many people demanded

Their right to die? How many demanded

Their right to harm all those

That needed protection the most?

Nearly two years later.

“But the economy”

They said.

The economy--that incorporeal thing,

Is it worth the lives? Over 700 thousand

Lives lost.

Is the economy worth 700 thousand lives?

Nearly two years later.

And what has changed?

People still demand

Their right to die. **Fatima B**

A teacher regarding COVID-19 would tell students: “you don’t have to wear your mask,

but I highly encourage you to. There have been no new cases in San Jose today, but throughout 7

days, the average is 182 people with the virus.

 **Esmeralda**

During Covid 19 times,

fear and panic ran rampant throughout schools

Rules about sanitizing, wearing masks, and also about talking

I was not only using gallons of sanitizers, finding disposable masks

but also, very cautious about the talking

I was not afraid of getting affected by the virus, but getting into trouble at work about talking

I think the mask helped me dramatically with keeping my mouth from any talk

during the pandemic, I practiced hand washing but also talking

 **Fatima F**

Senior year has been awesome so far

Some people were wearing masks today at school

It didn’t make any sense to me

Isn’t that kind of weird to be wearing a face mask, like the doctors, in school?

I remember hearing talk about a virus

I think it was called COVID?

It’s probably just like Ebola when everyone freaked out but nothing happened

It’s been a couple of weeks now and I’m kind of getting worried

I heard some schools are shutting down because of cases

Lucky them, they don’t have to go to school

I breeze through the week and it’s Friday the 13th

Nothing ever happens on Friday the 13th... or so I thought

The principal tells all of us we need to go home immediately

They say it's because of Covid and we don’t have to come back for two weeks

This will be the greatest two-week vacation ever!

 **Mahtab**

We listened to the radio and the news station

Never was the house silent,

except for at night,

when the loneliness crept in

Time felt like a standstill.

Everything would be back to normal they said.

So, at first all we did was puzzles, watch movies,

Bake banana bread, and color.

All while counting the minutes till it was normal again

My world became as colored gray as the bottom of a puzzle

I felt like I would never be normal again.

I went on endless walks with my earbuds,

With my friends,

With myself.

I walked to the ends of my Earth,

Until I could not walk anymore.

And then the clock ticked, the news shut off,

And I could breathe again.

I keep walking, because

There is a world I need to see.

 **Alyssa**

Yo, spring break!!!!

See you in 2 weeks!!!

Animal Crossing!!!!!

So wholesome, so distracting!

Shit, my dad's in the hospital.

 **Justin**

I was scared because so little was known.

I live with my grandparents. I wasn’t scared for myself.

I’m healthy.

But my grandparents aren’t and my parents are older and could easily be unhealthy.

They still can.

So, I washed my hands, and sanitized, showered right after I came home (though I didn’t go out

often). I waited impatiently to be vaccinated. I would have vaccinated myself if they’d let me.

Even though I was scared, I can’t say I don’t look back on my time in quarantine fondly.

My life was calmer. The school was online and my family was always home, and my boyfriend

and I could spend so much time together, and my dogs were happy. It was all so simple and

relaxing...

from me.

Everything scary was on the news. Not in my home.

I know we got lucky.

 **Monique**

Today feels colder than normal

Cold like the skin from she who will never wake

Why won’t she wake?

They said it was nothing,

She’ll be all right in no time.

The time came, it stopped, and she went.

It hasn’t started again.

Not for me, at least.

I miss the heat.

I miss the warmth from her skin.

The way her skin crinkled in the corners of her eyes as she smiled.

Be a big girl, now

You aren’t the only one.

 **Hayden**

I’ve been a homebody my entire life

Always wanting to stay inside and catch up and the things I want to do

I can do that now

But

Why is it that now I want to go out?

 **Paul**

I wasn’t worried about anything yet.

Two weeks off school that sounds cool, I need that.

Two weeks turned into months and those months were never ending,

I wanted to get out so badly.

To see my family.

To see my friends.

To live my life.

Hopefully when all of this is over the world will be okay.

 **Isabella**

COVID 19 was a difficult time. It seems so surreal to think about. Every time I look back

at it I keep replaying the same question in my head, “Damn did we actually go through this?” It

was definitely a year of disappointment. I had just turned 18 a month prior to everything closing

down and it was my senior year of high school. There was so much I had been looking forward

to: graduation ceremony, senior trip, seeing my grandparents so they could see me walk the

stage, and college. Most of it got cancelled. My ceremony and most of my college experience

was online and being at home was just arguments. The news everyday was so tragic and sad:

people getting sick and dying. I knew the world wasn’t going to be the same after this even now

it does not feel the same.

 **Rosa**

When you are given unmitigated free time, what do you do with it?

First, you watch every show known to man,

Then you make and bake bread

Then you start to notice things that you hadn’t noticed before.

Cobwebs.

Cobwebs everywhere.

The most interesting thing about my grandparent’s house

aren’t the thousand knick-knacks lining the walls

Or the five hundred baskets tacked up on the cupboards

It was the cobwebs that hung off everything.

Cleaning wasn’t something that my sister and I were incredibly keen to do

But when all you have is time

Then, as they say, there is no time like the present.

We cleaned all the cobwebs,

Sent the spiders running for their lives

Wiped and cleaned every knick-knack

Dusted and rehung every basket.

All we had was time

Time and an ever-loving urge to eradicate every cobweb in our path.

 **Sara**

I’m not gonna die

The government is trying to scare us with this dang virus

You don’t know what’s in those vaccines, maybe poison?

I have a higher chance of dying with the vaccine than I do with the virus

No one can tell me what to do

Uncle ends up dying in the hospital.

 **Evelyn**

I caught the plague once.

They say everyone will eventually. I don’t buy that because some who catch it have a good

chance of dying. My grandma, for example, she hasn’t caught it. She can’t.

I made it two years without the plague. I dodged it every time, watching as people I didn’t know

fell sick. As some died. As some came out the other side with scars on their lungs and their heart,

and blood clots in their arms and legs. My father-in-law caught the plague too, but I didn’t.

April of 2022, I caught the plague in a cottage in Ireland. My partner sat beside me as I laid on

that comfy, familiarly unfamiliar bed and shook so badly I thought I was going to die. It crossed

my mind, once or twice, as I fell in and out of consciousness. Am I going to die?

But I didn’t. I am still here, and after my plane ride home, twelve more people on that trip with

us tested positive for Covid.

 **Arielle**

Isolating.

My experience with the COVID-19 pandemic was isolating.

That first week in March 2020,

When all the news outlets were reporting the same story.

Whole countries were shutting down.

My community college classes moved to Zoom.

I lost my job that same week.

My job doesn’t exist anymore.

I missed my graduation for my associates degree.

It was isolating.

 **Mariah**

I remember watching the shutdown of Wuhan on the morning news

Looked to my wife and said it is only a matter of time before we are going to go through that as

well

She looked at me, with her optimistic eyes

that’s why they are taking precautions

in matter of weeks, it spread like wildfire

one country to the next, we saw this virus take hold of its people

We were forced to isolate

We were forced to take extra precautions when leaving the comfort of our own homes.

In my own home, I fell into a depression fueled by my PTSD and insecurities

Days became weeks wondering if we would ever go back to normal

Seconds became minutes wondering if I would ever see my son again

See anyone, the way life use to be, would we ever go back to normal?

 **Raul**

In March 2020, the pandemic was

such a Twilight Zone experience

I see myself standing in line – 6:30 AM--

in the Safeway parking lot

a shopping time reserved for senior citizens.

The rationing of Clorox wipes and

 paper products

Paul was in his final months of

 his struggle against his rare lung cancer

I was consumed with grief and loss

 not directly related to the pandemic

Months passed – isolating, missing

 trips to MN to see family

frustration with those who could get vaccinated

 but didn’t, but wouldn’t

And the months passed

I wonder if there will ever be a

 time

When I don’t feel the need to wear a

 mask

in crowded places, in stores, while I teach

 **Dr. Warner**

get the clorox wipes that strip anything biological

and the blue lysol spray that leaves everything smelling of antiseptic decay

and the 99% alcohol sanitizer that stings my hands

and the latex gloves that leave a rubbery smell for days to come

and the thick n95 mask with the disposable surgical mask with the homemade cloth mask.

all right, I am ready to fetch some milk from the store.

 (used the lower case style of Karen Hesse) **Lupe**

When the pandemic started, we sort of played it off as a joke.

“Ayyyee let's go, we get two weeks of school off.”

Who could have known that two weeks would turn into years?

The lives it ruined, the people it killed,

The world it broke.

Fortunately for me, my life was still the same.

Wake up, do what I need to do,

spend HOURS on any screen I could get my hands on.

And go to sleep.

Oh yeah and eat.

“What about going outside”, one might ask

What about it?

Why go outside when I have everything that I need here.

My friends are the faces on the screen that I could talk to for hours

I know everything about them and yet they don’t even know I exist

But I’m okay with that.

Replaying every perfect moment over and over and over.

It’s better than memories, which fade over time.

But anyway, my life has been the same since even before the pandemic started.

And I guess that could be a little sad.

 **Eric**

i remember those long nights after staring at talking black squares

only to talk to more black squares while playing games until 3 in the morning

who knew that the loneliest time

was during the day when we’d stare at a professor with no words left to say

i’d stick my face in another small screen for hours

in silence

then i’d shut my eyes to close the shutters of my mind

and do it all over again

i remember when i couldn’t breathe

who knows whether it was COVID or not

i was suffocating either way

a homey sarcophagus

 (used the lower case style of Karen Hesse) **Tony**

**Me:**

Mom says I’m crazy for over-obsessing,

Taking too many pre-cautions,

That Univision is always exaggerating every affair.

But I’m just like her.

**Amá**:

They’re trying to scare us.

As long as we stay home,

We’ll be alright.

**Apá and Amá**

Apá says to mom:

You have to stop buying so many canned foods,

What’s the use of all those tomato cans,

Beans, and rice?

**Mom**:

 Cuando te enfermes y no tengas ni pa comer,

no quiero que estés con tus cosas

(When you get sick and you don’t even have with what to eat,

I don’t want you complaining).

Hasta el último frijol vas a querer

(Even the last bean you’ll want).

**Me**:

I start off by losing my sense of smell

And soon my sense of taste.

And then amá follows.

That’s when my worry starts.

I thought I’d almost lose my amá.

She can’t breathe

She’s afraid she’ll end up with tubes down her throat.

I have to pay for her medicine

Because dad is laid off.

That’s when I realize,

Damn.

¿Mucha ayuda del gobierno, huh?

People do forget about us,

Not even the state remembers the undocumented,

Not even when people are dying.

 **Alma**

All alone in my room

No friends to see

Nowhere to go

Stuck at home

My fingers are tired

My eyes are red and itchy

I crave sleep, but I have to keep working on that assignment due tonight.

Due to the pandemic, all classes are online.

The professors are giving out many more assignments compared to before Covid 19.

Every week is a quiz and discussion post.

It feels never ending.

Even when the semester is over or I am on break, I can not be too excited since I can not

celebrate until the pandemic is over.

Who knows when it will end or if it will ever end?

On breaks, I am bored at home being stuck doing chores.

The only thing I look forward to on break is sleep.

**Brenda**

The constant zoom classes

has been nothing short of a failure

If i could only hug

My best friend again

that would make this whole hell

more bearable

if only i didn’t have to deal

with these numbskulls who make it hell

to force to wear a mask

I officially hate hockey players

I would have quit if it wasn’t

For the people that made this job

actually fun

Other than that

rewatching dcom movies

made it all go away

 **Ricky**

There I sat on my dining room table, staring blankly at my Stats class Canvas homepage.

Not knowing a single thing about statistics. We had a worksheet due today, but I had no

motivation to want to do it. My professor said that we would start meeting over zoom, since it

was finalized that we wouldn’t be coming back to campus. What is zoom? Apparently, it’s some

sort of video call software, kinda like skype, where we meet, and it would almost feel like a

normal classroom. Except it wasn’t. Nothing about this was normal. I’m sitting at home in my

pajamas, while there is a pandemic going on outside. No toilet paper anywhere, (wait but what

do I use if we run out?) food was low, and I was not allowed to go outside. I just sat in the

dimness of my room, not moving from my bed. There was nothing else for me to do. Except

school of course. I think I’m going to drop out of my stats class though. There is no way I can

learn this at home. I’ll just wait for next semester to take the class in person. The pandemic has

to for sure be done by then.

 **Ana**

I’ve spent many nights alone

At first it was fun

Video games while on zoom meetings

But the nights

Those got to me

It got so bad

That I... uh,

I slept next to a bottle of

Whisky

Like a baby

I needed a bottle to sleep

I couldn’t sleep

Thoughts about... rather not say

I always have family around

But the nights

Plus, the distractions like TV shows

Movies helped but

At some point watching life isn’t living

Two years... fuck

Plus, the news only intensified

My emotions

I was angry

I was sad

I was happy

And at times I was passionate

I took up a lot of

Art

But the nights

Those robbed me of my accomplishments

Thoughts about... rather not say

Then the hate

Asian hate

Police brutality

Violence

 **Angel**

I open my eyes only to be met with the same ceiling that I have seen time and time

again. An appropriate beginning to represent my situation, our situation. The

convenience and comfortability of being in my room has lessened in value with each

passing week. I never better understood the meaning of, “the relativity of time” up until

now. The repetition of each day within these restricted confinements has only made the

seconds feel more like minutes, the minutes like hours. The friends I would hang out

with for the better part of the week are only available to me through a screen, a

saddening substitute to the authenticity of social interaction. Time is of abundance

though nothing more. Scratch that. Except for the virus. Time and the virus.

 **Dillon**