

**Covid-19 in the time of Anxiety**  
**By Ruth McCuen**

My mind is trapped with the fear of getting sick. Horror stories from the news bombard the inner works of my mind without end. The twenty-four hour new cycle is now twenty-five hours, each hour more depressing than the last. MSNBC is ringing in my ears on a TV that can not be powered down. My limited trips outside come with a side order of two weeks of hell. My mind counts down the days since I've last left. Since I've last made contact with another besides my parents. Since my house has brought in an item possibly covered with the dreaded virus. A virus that preys on your immune system. That attacks the organs needed for life, the lungs. A virus set to delete the cells from your lungs. Delete. Delete. DELETE... That word plays in my head with no end. Always on constant repeat. My body. My lungs. Delete.

The days have all blended together. I'm unsure if I'm on Day 56 of quarantine or Day 23. My hands crack from the excessive washing I force onto them. Brittle and bone dry. Cuts and scrapes cover them with no end. The constant fear of the virus has worsened my OCD. I live in fear that my girlfriend living 2000 miles away could come down with the virus and grow helpless. I live in fear that I may be an asymptomatic carrier, and could infect my family without knowing it. Friends become enemies. Anyone and everyone is a possible threat. Introverts are thriving, but extroverts are slowly falling into troubled waters. Our president says he wants to open states back up, but he's not looking at the consequences. Opening back up an economy doesn't stop the virus from spreading. It doesn't wash away the pandemic we're all suffering through. It only makes it worse. It allows for the spread to continue. In Michigan, our shutdown won't end until May 15th, one day before my 20th birthday. Even if the stay-at-home order is removed by then, there's no way I can leave this house. My home is one of the few locations that provide me shelter from the virus. The quest to leave it becomes a never ending game of anxiety within my mind. I stay in this house, craving an escape, but at the same time terrified to leave for even a minute. I know the best thing I can do for the world around me, and for myself, is to stay home.