

Short Description: A stream of consciousness rant dissertation about my experiences since the beginning of quarantine in Arizona.

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I look back to that day, months ago, when the news had not broken. I did not know how bad things would become, or that the virus would kill more people in this country alone than the Vietnam War could in decades, or that my sister, the x-ray tech white sheep of the family, would be at risk every day when she walked into work while I sat at home completely useless, impotent in the face of this huge, faceless, seemingly endless threat and worried if I could get sick or if any number of my friends or relatives could be gone before this is over.

I lose all semblance of a sleep schedule, as never going out and panic attacks over slipping grades compound on each other until my life is nothing more than a loop of sleep, schoolwork, stare into screen, sleep, weep, stare into screen, school, stare, stare, stare, weep, then drift off. I barely push myself to get out of bed each day, loathing myself for taking this so poorly when essential workers are putting themselves at risk just to keep the wheels of society turning day by day while all I have to do is sit on the couch and watch the next distraction on a streaming service. I eat nothing at all some days and gorge myself on ninety nine percent of the kitchen in the middle of the night on others.

This dread builds as I put on the mask of a smile for phone calls and zoom meetings and discord chats with friends, belting out lies like "Yeah, it's crazy but I'm fine though" and I look them in the eye through this webcam and laugh and joke like I'm just the same old snarky Me and there's nothing to worry about. I don't want them to worry, I know they probably have it so many orders of magnitude worse, and I can't be a burden on them. I just can't.

I hold a knife and think of putting it to my arm and just ending the constant panic. Then all I can see is the image of my mother finding my lifeless body on a bloodstained bed and never being able to look at this room again and I take a shaky breath as I dial a number from a song I heard in high school and pour my heart out about my fears to the woman on the other end of the line and she talks me down, just trying to keep me safe. I am a stranger but she was there anyway. Maybe this is what we can all be.

I write this as I think about how I owe every second of my life from that night forward to a stranger who helped for no other reason than because it was the right thing to do. I went down into a dark place and for a time I thought that I would not be able to climb out of, yet here I am. I got through all of that and started healing because of one person, and just knowing that gives me hope for everyone to recover from this pandemic. Or maybe I wrote this all in one stream-of-consciousness sitting at three in the morning and I'm just looking for a hopeful conclusion to the story of my mental breakdown.

Goodnight, world. We'll all get through this.