

Quarantine started innocently enough. The day my school shut down, everyone was happy. Me and my friends all joked around about how we'd "never have to see each other again" or how they were "serious" and that I legally had to stay at least fifteen away from all of them. I miss their silly jokes so much, and if you told me that day that that was the last time I would ever see them again, I would not have believed you.

Walking home that day was oddly comforting. The rain fell down as hard as my grandmother did before her last visit to my house five years ago. The clouds, soft and gray, like stained pieces of cotton. And most importantly, school was canceled! It felt like summer started early, a snow day in California. There was an air of joy and youth and disease, and nothing could bring down my mood that day. Even getting pelted by rocks by the neighbors didn't sting as much as usual. I went home and immediately told my mom the good news. She broke down and wept, asking, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why are thou so far from saving me, so far from my words of groaning?" I thought the same thing she did: this was the perfect opportunity to get together for that mother-son bonding time that we had been lacking.

The first week of quarantine felt almost exactly like Thanksgiving break. The first day, everyone was extremely excited about how they were going to spend their break. It seemed like so much fun back then. How naive and young we were. So alive, so full of life. We had hopes. We had dreams. We had permission to walk. The first day and the first night passed. On the second day, people started going for swims in their backyard pools, and admiring the sky for its beauty. As for me, I had to settle for showers with the hose, breathing in the smog-filled air. On the third day, I helped tend to the farm. I planted carrots and potatoes in preparation for harvest season. My stone tools were on the verge of breaking that day, but I knew that this would be one of the greatest harvests yet. On the fourth day, I was so excited to go stargazing with my family. I whipped out my telescope and looked to the stars. The stars seemed awfully polluted. On the fifth day, nature started to heal. The fish started to return to the seas, washing out through the manhole covers. When you looked up and squinted very closely, you could see animals returning to their natural habitats. The frogs went to the seas. The cows and sheep went back to their farms. The locusts swept through the local Ralph's. The flies settled back into my mom's famous beef stew. And the lice settled back into my uncut hair. On the sixth day, the dread settled in. We couldn't see our friends. And when worst comes to worst, you have to settle for family. On the seventh day, I napped. It felt like the seventh day for a very long time.

Two entire months passed by. I didn't even realise it was May until people started posting poorly made Star Wars memes. We get it, you watch Star Wars

and it's May 4th. It was only due to my unbridled rage that I felt like something was off. I was still inside. In May. This wasn't just winter break or even summer break anymore. This was agony. Thus began my slow descent.

Here is a list of bad habits I developed during quarantine:

- Walking around my house and beating my chest like a gorilla for no reason
- Saying "eekum bokum" every time something mildly inconvenient happens
- Saying "eekum bokum" while beating my chest
- eating dirt ironically, and then eating it unironically
- Jumping really high on my wooden floors and making a loud thumping noise
- Kicking small objects and yelling "goal"
- Drinking unhealthy amounts of water
- waking up at 3 AM and standing at my door, looking at my bed
- Sleeping in my closet
- Learning how to do a flip at 2 AM (I am still too scared to flip)

Clearly, I was experiencing life to its fullest. But I knew I was not experiencing life to its safest. So I locked myself in my room, rocking back and forth. I have not been outside for months now. I don't remember what the sun looks like. What are clouds? What are trees? My family no longer hunts wild animals and gathers berries for food. Instead, I rely on cheap Vienna Sausages and canned corn. My family tries to coax me out, telling me that everything will be okay, that I can come with them to Target to grab supplies. Deep down, I knew there was no longer a place for me at Target. My unkempt hair flowed down the side of my face, because there was no way it could grow any longer in just a few months. My ravenous eyes scoured the ground for crumbs and were accustomed to darkness. I had become an animal. I felt an immense wave of disappointment. I read *Lord of the Flies* just to turn out like this. It is so cold in my room. Why does my mom keep turning the AC on? I have resorted to building daily fires, relying on the gradual buildup of Amazon boxes to fuel my warmth. This was not living. This was surviving.

It's getting harder and harder to see in here. The smoke clogs my room with its noxious stranglehold. I have run out of sausages, and my corn supply runs ever lower. I can feel myself fading. Grandma, I'm ready. The metamorphosis is long and painful, but the form they have promised me is more beautiful than I can fathom, for tonight, I shall ascend from the mire of man's bestial hubris.