

March 2020. I am a barista working for Starbucks, living with my friend in the countryside of Oregon. We've been watching the news and private reports on Youtube, there is trouble coming in a form we weren't ready to handle...an invisible foe, a virus.

We were some of the early few who decided to start wearing masks. Our first crack at it was a homemade design, using a vacuum bag as a filter -which actually has a fairly high rating for filtering! People looked at us weird in the markets, but we didn't care much. And after a few months, everyone was told to do it anyway.

During lockdown in Oregon, my friends and I leaned heavily into online gaming. It was the only way we could hang out safely, but it didn't seem quite enough to hold everyone in the group over. A few of us were becoming increasingly distressed over not being able to see our friends face-to-face (on top of dealing with the fact that we could get sick just from going to the grocery store on any given trip).

One thing I did to help alleviate some of the building tension was turn to what I knew would help: yoga and physical activity. Did I get out every morning and go for a jog? No. But when the anxiety became a little too much, I'd pull out my mat or go for a quick run. This opened up some time to think and reflect on my inner life, a more secular glance at my yoga practice than teaching classes not three months earlier had provided. I'm a spiritualist at heart, dabbling with everything between new age paganism, to the calling of Hindu based practices. My connection with any version of the Divine has always been more personal in practice, and the sudden, jarring stop of the world gave me more time to enjoy that.

The last few years have been a hell of a ride, and I will never forget them as long as I live. The odd blessings that arose from it, the loss of certain things taken too early, the social anxiety that came during the reentering society phase...all of it. Not all generations get to experience something like a pandemic, which is why I'm writing this. I feel that as someone who can recall the churning line of events from 2020 to, at current, 2022, it is a public duty to help archive what my personal experiences were. There were many panic attacks over the state of the world and its public health. Long nights spent wondering what would happen if a loved one got sick and died. Moments of calm in a world that had gone quiet. Sheer rapture when you get to see someone you haven't for a year. And to finally be able to hug your grandparents, instead of talking to them from the edge of their lawn.

I am saddened and honored to have lived through this experience. But I'm ready for it to be over.