

Something Wicked This Way Comes

March 16, 2020

Quarantine Day: One

Location: Pennsylvania.

Statewide shut down.

“All non-essential businesses in Pennsylvania to close, including non-essential stores, bars, and restaurants, except for takeout offerings. Drug stores and grocery stores are among the businesses deemed essential, and which will remain open. Gas stations will also remain open.” – Governor Tom Wolf, tweet from KDKA.

Chaos had consumed the country. People bulldozed through grocery store doors as if Black Friday deals had come early. Panic filled the air amidst the pandemic. The fear was loud, but the streets were quiet.

Cranberry Twp. was a ghost town.

Movie theater parking lots were empty, restaurants had many empty seats because they were forced to close and only open for carry out or delivery. Gas was the lowest I had ever seen it because no one needed it right now. No one was on the roads. The world was somehow very still for a beautiful spring Saturday.



No one knew what to do. College students were lost, bored, and kept in the dark.

We were not going to return to campus. The spring semester was done, and classes were to resume online which I was not thrilled about. I was looking forward to seeing all of my friends after spring break.

The stock market was plummeting. Stocks fell like comets, fast and hard. Numbers were dropping more and more every day. News reporters from KDKA kept saying that this is the fastest it had ever gone down. The damage was severe, but there was nothing that could be done to stop it. The economy would go into recession even though no one had explicitly said it yet.

This was the most I had ever seen Trump on TV since he was elected president. Speech after speech, instruction after instruction, because the whole country was in devastating destruction. Nothing he said held any significance anyways. He just repeated the same things

over and over again like, “we’re doing a great job” or “we’re going to win this war against the virus.” I just also hated looking at him because he was so ugly.

Maybe this was the world ending. Maybe this was the be-all, end-all apocalypse the Bible spoke of. Maybe this was to wipe out a chunk of the world’s population. Survival of the fittest. Maybe this was a sign to do better, to be better. Did I think humanity was going to listen? Absolutely not. But at least the waters in Venice had cleared up remarkably.

Everyone kept saying, this too shall pass. Would we be here to see the passing of this point in time? Would this fear-stopping pandemic pass? What would result in the passing?

What was going to happen?

What was happening?

March 25, 2020

Quarantine Day: Nine

“How to prepare for scheduling for classes remotely” article released by The Rocket

I was getting ready for online classes. I cleaned off my desk, cleared away piles of random stuff in my room, and I even dusted for the first time in probably five months. If my bedroom was going to become my classroom, I needed it clean. Anything to ease my anxiety about school and the virus.

My sister on the other hand was not handling everything well. Especially since it was her senior year. Local high schools had extended their hiatus. They intended to be back by the thirtieth, but that wasn’t happening. Prom probably wasn’t going happen, and neither was graduation. It was a touchy subject, so we rarely brought it up.

My sister was in denial about it. She just wanted to have a prom and graduation. I felt bad for her. I mean I didn’t care much for my prom, but it’s the experience.

“If I don’t have a graduation at the school, then I am having one here. You guys will dress up and clap as I walk across the driveway.” She said.

“At least we didn’t buy your prom dress yet.” My mom said from her make shift work area. She now controlled half of the living room space because our computer was there. She had a bar stool, a pop-up table, and the computer desk all in a corner of the room with boxes of files and folders everywhere. She was a biller for Allegheny Health Network, so she billed and scheduled appointments for people with different types of cancer. As much as she hates working from home one income is better than no income.

Kenzie rolled her eyes. “Don’t get me started about prom.” She stalked off to her room to paint her feelings out.

April 4, 2020

Quarantine day: Nineteen

“#BREAKINGNEWS: The Pennsylvania Department of Health announced 1,751 new cases of coronavirus, bringing the statewide total to 19,979. The state health department reports 416 coronavirus-related deaths.” –KDKA twitter post

It had been getting harder and harder to stay inside. It was already the beginning of April which means it had almost been a month since this whole thing started. Things were still just as scary. However, my family and I could at least get bread and milk at the stores now, but I knew some people still aren't that lucky.

Butler County hadn't been hit hard yet, although, all the counties surrounding us had. I tried to keep up to date on how many cases there are every day. KDKA's twitter would always post the state's total as well as a breakdown of each county. Butler was at eighty-nine, and the state total was almost 20,000.

The only time anyone left the house was to go to the store or for a walk. The walks were so my mom and I didn't go insane. She hated going to the store not that I can blame her; I hated going to. I only tagged along because I needed to know people still existed beyond the other two I lived with. Also, so I knew civilization was still standing and nothing has burned to the ground. Three days ago, I left to go to Giant Eagle and *everyone* was wearing masks and gloves. I kept my hands in my pockets because I didn't have gloves with me. There was a surprising amount of meat on the shelves still.

Every day around noon, I walked with my mom around the neighborhood. It was a nice break from online classes and homework, and it was a break from work for her. This was her third week working from home.

“I don't understand how people can work from home. I hate it.” She told me.

To be honest, I had no idea what my sister, Kenzie, did during the day. She slept in till noon and then stayed in her room and either painted or watched *Grey's Anatomy*. She would spend hours painting different album covers, portraits, or cartoons. And if she wasn't painting or watching *Grey's*, she would be making TikToks. She had been learning all different kinds of short dances to catchy songs. Occasionally, she would come out and bother me. I knew she hated being stuck in the house, so why did she confine herself to one room? I wish I knew.

Another way we had been keeping ourselves sane is by playing games. We had a bunch of tournaments going on. There was one for Scrabble, Sorry, and Phase 10. Phase 10 was the favorite and most played; it was a super fun and intense card game. I liked playing my mom in Sorry; I won most of the time which she wasn't too thrilled about. The games were fun even when they get super intense and had us screaming so loud, we had to shut the windows so the neighbors didn't yell at us.

April 6, 2020

Quarantine Day: Twenty-one but who cares.

Today was exactly like the past three weeks. I, at least, had a routine to help with online classes. But I had just realized the other day that I wasn't even excited for the weekend anymore because every day was the same. The only difference was on Saturdays and Sundays I slept in for an extra forty minutes.

Kenzie and I went outside right as the sun was about to set. We laid down on the cold, hard ground and just stared at the endless clear blue sky.

By now we were used to staying in the house and not going anywhere. We weren't any less bored though.

"We should go hiking to that one place everyone goes." She said.

"McConnell's Mill?"

"Yeah, we should go."

I nodded even though I didn't know if she saw it. Today was going to be the last nice day for a while. Then the rain was going to come and god knows when that would end. But it was easier to stay inside when it rained.

"What if we just fell into space?" Kenzie said.

I looked over at her looking up at the sky. "What do you mean?"

"There's this theory that when you look at the sky you are actually at the bottom of the Earth. As if you were looking down onto another world. Gravity is the only thing holding you, tethering you to the ground. If it wasn't there you would just float up into the sky, into the galaxy and float away. You would be falling into stars instead of reaching for them."

I didn't say anything for a while. I thought the silence would be enough of an answer.

"It's kind of like how maybe my color blue isn't the same as your color blue. We just understand both of our colors to be blue."

She didn't say anything after either. The silence was enough. It was comfortable and laid over us like a blanket.

April 10, 2020

Quarantine Day: I want this to be over.

"The best thing you can do to protect other people during the #COVID19 pandemic is stay home. The second best thing you can do is wear a mask if you must leave your home." – tweet from Gov. Tom Wolf

I ventured out to Walmart today with my mom. It was time for our weekly trip to the grocery store. The Governor is highly encouraging people to wear masks when they're out.

"Here, grab the masks Grandma made. I need to get gloves for you." My mom said as we were getting ready to leave.

Most stores, including Walmart and Giant Eagle, were now keeping track of how many people were inside at a time. Honestly, it was about time. Before that announcement the only store that was being extra cautious was Costco. Giant Eagle also just installed glass dividers to separate the cashier and customers better. In my opinion, that was a good idea. When I was working at HomeGoods before they temporarily closed all I had was a bottle of hand sanitizer. Our Walmart had about five different entrances and half of them were blocked off. There were carts turned over to block off entrances and to make a pathway to the only usable entrances.

The good thing was all the products and foods that have been sold out for weeks were finally stocked. There was chicken, milk, steak, eggs, etc.

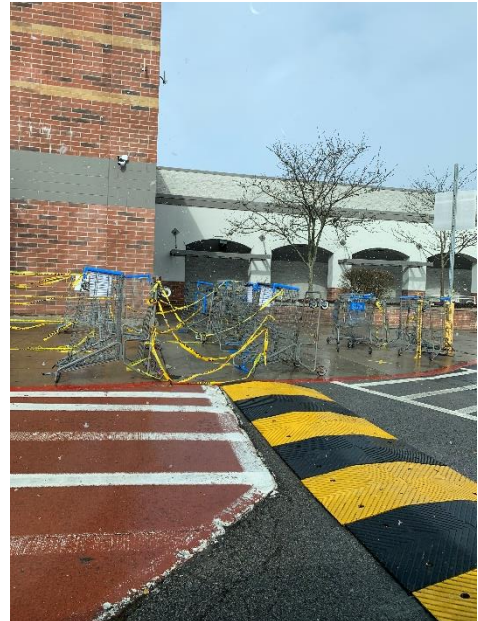
"Wow, holy crap, they're stocked." My mom said as we passed the paper products section.

"When do you think this will be over?" I asked her.

She reached for a carton of eggs then said, "I don't know. Probably mid-May."

"Mid-May!"

As we came to the meat section my mom stopped, "I should get a ham." As she was looking, I saw some dude dressed in a white hazmat suit and a black gas mask. He was dressed like this was World War II or something as if someone was going to come in here with toxic chemicals or diseases and infect everyone. Oh wait...



Oh my god.

What if this never ends?

I had been hearing of some colleges already thinking about going online in the fall. I don't...I can't...

I came to the conclusion that I was able to cope with the idea of this lasting until mid-May, but anything after that was off the table. I wanted a summer. I wanted to go out to eat with my friends and play mini golf. I wanted to go to Target for no reason but just because I could. I wanted to actually be able to see my friends. But all of that was in constant question, and I

hated turning on the news because it was depressing and spiked my anxiety to level one-hundred.

I pulled my mask forward, off my face, so I could actually breathe. *This sucked.*

Some dude was wearing a gas mask like this was WWII, and some lady behind me was *not* six feet away from me. Was this what the world has come to? Social distancing and gas masks?

What was happening?

April 21, 2020

Quarantine Day: I've lost count

"My colleagues and I are very much aware of the frustrations with the state's unemployment system." –Tweet from PA state rep Ben Sanchez.

The spring semester was almost done with just about two weeks left. I had no idea what I was going to do after school was over. Homework and assignments are what kept me busy and passed the time away. Without them who knows what I was going to do.

I didn't work anymore so there's nothing I could do with my job at the moment. I was furloughed for the first three weeks of the pandemic. Then my company had to stop. I work(ed) for TJX company specifically HomeGoods. This summer was going to be five years; I had been working there since I was sixteen years old. I grew up with the people that worked there. I missed my co-workers, and I also missed working which is something I never thought I would say.

Since I was not getting paid anymore, it was time to file for unemployment. I had never filed in my life because there was never a reason to until now.

"I couldn't even tell you how it works or what to do. It's been way too long since I've done this." My mom said while starting her laptop up.

"Have you filed before?" *This was news to me.*

"Only once. When I was around your age."

I already knew this wasn't going to be a quick and easy process. Nothing involving the government ever is.

"What if they run out of money?" Kenzie asks.

"Then you're screwed."

My sister and I just look at each other. *Great.*

We had already filed for unemployment around the end of March but we accidentally filed for regular unemployment which we were both denied. So that sucked. All this time we

could've been getting money had been wasted. So, we had to start the process all over again this time for the pandemic related unemployment.

Then there was the whole thing with the stimulus checks that my sister and I were also not eligible for because apparently, we are considered dependents even though I was in college and paid my *own* bills *myself*, and my sister was going to be in college. I think that was the first time the government let me down and made me so incredibly mad I could have stormed off to the capital. I never really cared for the government or politics, but this pandemic has brought to light things I had never understood before. Such as, the president is not doing a good job with handling the virus nor is he a good leader, I had no idea who the PA governor was until the pandemic, and no one can tell the public straight, honest facts about anything.

Anyways, as well as a stimulus check, some families got an extra \$600 because their kids were under the age of seventeen which my sister and I are not. So, that was another loss we had to bare. It also didn't make any sense to me. What about college students...the people who actually needed that money because rent hadn't been put on hold. Bills still needed to be paid. I was a college student who had to pay for everything herself. My mom couldn't afford to help me with tuition, books, etc. It was all my own money or loans.

Most colleges, however, did get relief money under the Care Act, I believe. So, I do get some money from the school because of that. I also was refunded for money I paid for the spring semester that the school couldn't keep because no one was there. It wasn't a lot because I live off campus, but it was better than nothing.

April 25, 2020

Quarantine day: When is this going to end?

"I can't believe I have to say this, but please don't drink bleach." –Tweet from Joe Biden.

"Did you hear what Trump said during this conference the other day?" my mom asked while washing her hands.

"No, what?"

"He said we should be injecting people with bleach and cleaning products."

My mouth fell open. "You're joking."

She shook her head laughing. "No, I wish I was. Look it up on YouTube."

I put down my breakfast sandwich and immediately opened the YouTube app on my phone. It didn't take long to find at all because it was trending.

Sure enough there was Trump on what was live TV asking a coronavirus official if we are/should be injecting patients with cleaning products because "they work with cleaning surfaces."

I had never been so appalled by something in my life. This was the president of the United States...are you kidding me?

May 1, 2020

Quarantine day: Is this Groundhog Day?

“On May 8, 24 counties will reopen—moving from the red phase of #COVID19 response to the yellow phase. More businesses can open with safety guidance in place, telework must continue where possible, and Residents should social distance + wear masks to avoid an outbreak.” –Tweet from PA Gov. Tom Wolf.

Today at 2pm Governor Tom Wolf made an announcement to lift some restrictions to 24 counties in PA. Other states were already in the process of trying to reopen as well. According to officials, the country was flattening the curve. There were still over a hundred cases being reported a day in PA. I didn't think it was safe enough to try to reopen. The last thing I wanted was to have to do this all over again, and the last almost two months to have had been a waste. But with the warmer weather and summer approaching it was going to get harder and harder to keep people inside.

The only counties that have opened were all up north. Butler county, my county, was not one of the ones allowed too open. Which I already knew that was going to happen. My friends and boyfriend wanted to started making plans before the announcement aired about what we were going to do May 9th when the stay-at-home order had been lifted. I knew better than to get my hopes up...and I was right to.

Butler was too close to Allegheny county who had way too many cases and deaths reported. However, the governor did not announce when he would be reopening other counties. So, the stay-at-home order was still in place unfortunately.

Although, I had convinced my mom to let my sister and I go on car dates. That way we got to see our friends while still practicing social distancing. We weren't allowed get out of cars, but it was more human interaction than we had been getting.

Schools and universities still hadn't made any decisions about what they planned on doing for the fall. I just hoped it wasn't more online learning. Not when it was going to be my last semester, and trying to run a sorority from home was not going to be ideal at all.

I hoped with the state reopening somewhat that meant things would start to get back to normal.

Nobody knew what was going on still or why all of was happening, but in the end, it was better to focus on the positive rather than the negative. It couldn't last forever, nothing ever does.