

“Lockdown Diaries”

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Dear Diary,

A few months ago, if someone told me he had the habit of writing diary entries, I would probably think he was weird. Yet, here I am, writing my first ever diary entry. Isn't life full of surprises?

Having spent yet another afternoon lying on my bed staring at the ceiling empty, I couldn't help but let out a deflated sigh – the faces of my classmates, the orderly rows of tables and chairs and the metal gate which I would pass through every day before, all seem as if they were wisps of distant smoke. Worse still, my weekly clarinet lessons and voluntary visits to the childcare center have all been suspended. What should I do now? My mother came up with the suggestion of starting my own diary to kill time, and so I did. After all, is there anything else I can do?

I'll be updating here every once in a while. I hope I can keep this habit going, at least until school starts!

28th February 2020

Dear Diary,

Back in January, e-learning was still nothing more than filling in a couple google forms or playing the occasional Kahoot games during lessons to me. Who would have ever guessed that a month from then, we would all be facing our screens the whole day having virtual online lessons?

Every morning, I'd wake up with ruffled hair and heavy eyelids, reluctantly flipping over my tablet, before slumping right back to sleep a few minutes into the lesson. In fact, things were rather chaotic the first few days – a faulty microphone, a malfunctioning camera, an unstable Wi-Fi connection... It was not until the third day when things finally started to get on track. In fact, online learning isn't really as bad as I've imagined! Without having to be squeezed in a sardine can, and spend ages plodding under the unbearable sun with a hundred-ton bag on my shoulder before finally reaching home, I can now spend the afternoon

on my comfortable sofa going through the piles of books which I previously did not even have the chance to touch.

Also, online learning has produced many enjoyable moments – yesterday, someone forgot to mute her microphone and the teacher’s monotonous voice was disrupted by a lively, energetic tune from *Aladdin*! She had no idea that her microphone was turned on and continued humming until she realized that the teacher had gone silent. It turned out to be a welcome distraction though, since the singing woke half the class up from the dull tedious lecture we were having. This hilarious incident is sure to leave us all grinning from ear to ear upon mention even years from now!

With the advancements in technology, ten years from now, we may all be looking at our screens every day, replacing face-to-face interaction. If this really happens, perhaps the ‘digital’ dinosaurs in our society will be permanently replaced by ‘social’ dinosaurs!

7th March 2020

Dear Diary,

Opened the news this morning only to have my heart shattered once again. In the blurry footage, an Asian student was casually walking down the moonlit cobblestone avenue, snuggling in his feathery coat, when five dark shadows approached him. They punched him in the face and threw around hostile words like ‘diseased’. The student’s nose was distorted, with blood trickling down from his nostrils, and his eyes were swollen and bulging like a rotten egg.

It’s absolutely heartbreaking to see how people are being discriminated against because of their skin colour. I have a few relatives in Canada and the US, and they all agree that the xenophobia is indeed on the rise. A few days ago, they saw an Asian being called ‘coronavirus’ in public.

I recently listened to a TED talk by Chimamanda Adichie, a Nigerian writer, during an English lesson, on the danger of a ‘single story’, which left me thinking about it for the rest of the week. According to Chimamanda, ‘single stories’ are created by the media showing people one thing over and over again. They create stereotypes and the biggest problem is they are incomplete. Indeed, in various reports and articles, the media has addressed the coronavirus as the ‘Wuhan virus’ or ‘Chinese flu’, attributing the coronavirus to Chinese people, or to Asians in general. This has aroused the misconception that all Asians are ‘carriers’ of the disease, yet, obviously, it is not the reality.

How long will it take until people start realizing that there is only one common enemy to fight against?

27th March 2020

Dear Diary,

Know how it feels like when you're finally reaching the final level of a video game, but you accidentally hit the wrong button and have to start all over again?

This is exactly how we are all feeling now. For the past few weeks, people have started awakening from their 'hibernation'. The isolated restaurants have been filled with the sounds of people chatting, chairs screeching and coins clanging once again. Crowds have started overwhelming the streets, and districts like Causeway Bay have returned to their usual hustle and bustle, with cars wriggling through the streets in an endless stream. However, with the abominable virus blanketing and infesting the entire globe, the influx of residents and students overseas has caused the situation to deteriorate – with the number of cases spiking to a record-high of 65 today.

Every time I open the international news, scenes that I thought would only appear in apocalyptic movies swim into my vision. Against the bleached walls, blue gowns wriggle across the seas of white linen, on which patients writhe in agony, gasping for breath. Doctors and nurses run frantically here and there, their thin layer of protective gowns fluttering in the air, their faces solemn and melancholy.

Recently, I read the book *This Is Going to Hurt*, written by Adam Kay. As a doctor in the NHS during ordinary times, Adam Kay already had to face great stress, constantly working overtime and attending midnight shifts. Looking at these flickering images in front of me, I honestly cannot imagine what healthcare workers all over the world are going through right now. Somewhere out there, these heroes are working day and night, surgery after surgery, fighting against time to save as many lives they can. Their masks have been reused for numerous times, their protective gear dotted with blood, and their eyes sore from the blinding light in the hospital. Yet, there is simply no way for us to understand fully the horrors and nightmares these frontline doctors are experiencing.

White cape warriors grasp
Onto fleeting wisps of smoke
Leaving trails of hope

To these silent heroes I salute. Their unparalleled bravery has reminded us to hold on to the spirit of faith, hope and love even during these somber times.

16th April 2020

Dear Diary,

Woke up to a beautiful morning, soft sunlight lazily drifting in through my bedroom window. I stood up and glanced out of the window – perched on the windowsill was an elegant bird, its song of seemingly never repeated notes cascading through the air. As it noticed me staring, it cocked its head sideways, fluttered its wings in the air and took flight into the baby-blue skies.

Yes, this pandemic has hit us hard. Every time I glance at the news, I can't help but notice the death toll escalating from a few hundred to a few thousand. Not only that, but it has even sparked conflicts between nations and communities. These are times of darkness, of despair, but hear me out:

If you ever find yourself trapped within four walls,
If you ever fear what the future has in store,
If you ever feel like you do not belong,
Look out the window –
Our world is remarkably beautiful.
Know that you are never alone.
Out there, people are fighting,
Fighting for our world, for you.
Hold on to the spark of hope.
Even when all seems futile and hopeless,
Even when the darkness seems impenetrable,
Believe that one day the sun will rise.
Then we will spread our elegant wings.
We will meet at the land reborn.

~End~