

## *JANUARY 2020-*

*The new year and so much to look forward to, or so we thought. It is the end of the first month of the new year and a new decade and people are already on the topic of "world war 3". Tensions are rising between the United States and Iran after a United State's airstrike targeted Qasem Soleimani who is a Major General in the Iranian military. The General public is making a mockery of these events, claiming to get ready for the war and be prepared for the draft. Social media has become an escape for most people, perhaps a way to vent their emotions or even to throw their political ideologies around. The idea of being drafted did not really scare me, I have seen death working in the medical field and serving my time in an ambulance. I suppose the only thing that would bother me is the idea of having to take another's life. In other news there is a new disease that is spreading around the world, matter of fact the United States just confirmed our first case of it. "Corona" is the layman's term, and what the majority of people are calling it, as compared to its scientific name "Covid-19". We do not know much about Corona, as to how it spreads, how lethal it is and how the world will react if it continues to get worse. I truly am worried for the state of the world, I'm fearful of war, of disease and for my family.*

## *FEBRUARY 2020-*

*I am Lonely. The Governor of Wisconsin has been talking about closing the borders around Wisconsin. Out of fear and being financially unstable, my love has decided to move back to her hometown in Minnesota. I long for her, I pray that soon we will be able to see each other, especially as it will be our one year anniversary in the middle of March. I believe it will be impossible to celebrate. Coronavirus is the top headline every single day of every single news source. The word pandemic is the talk of the town. The United States has suffered our first death from Covid-19, and to nobody's surprise there has been a massive overreaction. People have begun the hoarding, the "prep phase" of the pandemic quarantine, if you will. Yesterday when I walked into work I was given a document that signifies that I am an "essential worker", my boss told me "If you are stopped by the police on your way to work and they are asking you why you are breaking quarantine, give them this paper as a voucher to come to work." And today we were all issued masks that will be required to wear while we are in the building. This is crazy, I barely know anything about this disease, every person you will talk to tells a different story about Covid-19. Some people are saying the disease is no more than the common cold or a mild flu, while*

*others are saying if you get it, you will be bed ridden until you are forced to go to the hospital for doctors to ventilate you. I don't really know what to believe anymore, I feel like all of this is just a dream.*

## **MARCH 2020-**

*I have broken quarantine, and it was the best decision of my life. My love has crossed the border to see me for our one year anniversary. Stocked up on food and wine for the weekend we spent together. We cooked every single meal together, slept together, showered together, there wasn't a moment that we were apart. On the night of the 20th we cooked a special meal, a chicken and shrimp gnocchi with a heavy white sauce, garnished with spinach leaf. The lighting was dim, only 2 candles lit the room, I think we tried our hardest to make the best of the worst. After dinner came the dessert, a sweet white wine, which we undoubtedly had one or two too many glasses of, especially when we came up stairs the next day to see that the bottle was completely empty. Love is a unique feeling, it made me forget everything that I was drowning in, the stress of work and political tension. When she had to leave me on the following Monday, I was devastated. A single memory plays in my mind, the second before she left, she looked down at the ring on her finger, she said "I love you, this will only make us stronger." As I kissed her goodbye I felt a pain in my stomach, I closed her car door and saw the tears run down her face as she drove off. I walked back inside my apartment collapsing to my knees, bawling like a child. The next day I returned to work, struck with surprise, an armed guard at the door, he was explaining to people trying to enter that they are required to wear a mask. As soon as I showed him my badge, he allowed my entry, my manager was waiting at the front door for me with a lab coat and a no-touch thermometer. "Bryce you have worked on an ambulance before right?" to which I responded "yes.", He proceeded to ask questions such as "Are you still licensed to practice medicine?" and "Are you willing to take people's temperatures prior to them entering the building?" which I responded with "yes.". I thought it was really weird that they were asking about my medical license as an EMT, I suppose it's for liability reasons. I can imagine people are going to attempt to sue the company if we refuse entry, and they want a real medical professional doing the exams on people.*

*Nonetheless, I am getting paid significantly more now than I was as a regular employee, My normal wage at \$15 an hour, plus two dollars for "hazard pay", plus the company's "Covid-19" pay which is another dollar, and three dollars on the weekends if I decided to work them. That's not even including my Overtime. So on weekdays I make \$18 an hour, on weekends I make \$21 and*

*overtime on weekends, which is the only time I get overtime is a tremendous \$31.50 AN HOUR!!!! My bank account is starting to think this Covid deal isn't all that bad. But then I look around and I see straight faces and dull eyes.*

#### *APRIL 2020-*

*Over one million cases and 57,000 deaths in the United States. More news is coming out that many people my age are asymptomatic, strictly carriers of the disease. My company has offered unpaid leave that will not be punished if you are afraid of the pandemic. I would say approximately 25% of the Store has left on leave. We are overwhelmed with the sheer volume of customers, and lack of employees. I am still taking temperatures at the front of the store with my armed security sidekick. We are becoming good friends actually, it's amazing what happens when you put two total strangers together in a hostile environment for 8-10 hours everyday for a whole month. We have encountered some real weirdos, anywhere from people refusing to wear masks or have their temperature taken to people screaming in our face that we are violating their rights. To which I very kindly and calmly respond "This is private property you are welcome on IF YOU FOLLOW THE RULES OF THE STORE! This is no different from a fancy restaurant requiring a collared shirt and a tie." Most people do not like when I treat them as if they were whiny toddlers, but some people need the message dumbed down to comprehend that everything isn't about them and the mask is used to prevent the spreading of a disease which has killed thousands. I am so frustrated with the general public, I have a true sour taste in my mouth all day every day. I noticed that I am drinking more than I usually do, which frightens me. I know after I stopped working on the ambulance I drank more to cope with anxiety and Post Traumatic Stress... I do not want to go back to those days. Although when I get home from work the taste of Irish Whiskey soothes my mind and my heart. I know I'm not the only person to be thinking this way either, I saw a statistic today that 3 of 4 adults are drinking 15% more than they did in 2019, this means the average adult is drinking one more day a week than they were the day before. Maybe the stay at home orders are turning the United States of America into the United States of functioning alcoholics.*

*MAY 2020-*

*It's my birthday, and I usually enjoy it with a few friends and a game night. Not this year. This year I am at work, and when I got home I played video games and drank alone in my room. You might think this is a depressing day, and don't worry I also think it's depressing. I have been spending a lot of my nights like this, and I now understand why the suicide rates are increasing at such a rapid rate. I would never pull the trigger on myself, as I have nightmares of the ones who did in my past occupation. Although, I may be able to see where they are coming from now, to be alone, on a day that is usually filled with happiness, smiles, drinks, food, and laughter... Filled now with sorrow, lonesome, and depression. I wish my lover were here to comfort me in these times of stress and sorrow, it has been a little over a month now since I have seen her. We call almost every night to talk about what we did, but the conversations about taking temperatures and getting screamed at, and her going for a walk with her mother on the same route every day is getting old very fast. I know whomever reads this is going to be thinking to themselves, "This pandemic is awfully boring" and you would be right. Most days the happiness in people's eyes are silenced by the mask on their face. I have talked with a few of my friends that I play video games with, some have been laid-off until further notice, and I am thinking to myself that I have never been making more money, it's really frightening to think that as most are suffering around me, I am financially booming.*

*JUNE 2020-*

*My love, my love is back home. I have convinced her to return home, I am now able to provide for the both of us! With the increased pay at work and the amount of overtime I put in, we may be able to live a comfortable lifestyle for the rest of the pandemic. It also doesn't help that the entire urban populations around the United States are literally burning the country down. Riots and protests over police brutality are raging rampant in Minneapolis, my lover's parents felt that she would be safer with me, As I am a well practiced gun owner in a smaller city that has experience with violence. The message of these protests are often unclear, some just want to take revenge for the death of George Floyd as they chant "ACAB" or "all COPS are BAD". Some are calling for police reform and to get our police officers better trained and equipped for problematic situations. And others are rioting just for the sake of stealing and destroying property that is not their own. I personally see all of these protests very hypocritical of Covid-19 measures. Many of the people that are out protesting are the same people that are screaming "social distance" and "mask mandates".*

*Today I saw a news article which stated no private gatherings of more than 10 people and no protest gathering over 100". Now can anyone explain how the hell that is supposed to work? I am 100% for police reform and social justice, but it seems like the whole goddamn nation forgot we are in a global pandemic. The damage that is being caused from these protests both in a human health standpoint and in a economical standpoint is outrageous. And I know I am not the only person that is thinking this way. Almost everyone I talk to agrees that sometimes police don't do the right thing, but to burn down your hometown, your police station, to purposely cause damage and pain in the lives of others is not the way. I feel like the whole nation is falling apart, we are becoming so divided.*

### *JULY 2020-*

*Now that I am living with another person, this quarantine isn't so bad. We have been watching a lot of really good movies lately. The most exciting part is we have connected with a group of friends that work strictly from home, and they decided that they want to come over now twice a week to hangout, even though I could be putting them at risk of covid infection. It's starting to feel like people care a lot less about getting sick. I can sort of feel things getting back to normal. This week we threw a party and had card games and we played darts. It was the most fun I have had in months. Everyone being upperclassmen at the university, other than me, who went to the Technical College to Get Certified to be an EMT, are all worried about the school year though. Our little "Party of 7" was just a glimpse of what the new university year would look like. All of us are very responsible adults at this point in our lives, and we know that when we were freshman, we were not exactly responsible. We fear that as soon as school starts again the cases are going to skyrocket. I had not told my friends yet that I was recently accepted at the university and I would be attending again, so everything that they were saying was kind of scaring me as well. I have never done virtual learning, let alone at the university level.*

### *AUGUST 2020-*

*I have told my friends that I plan on attending the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, I am very excited to see where this path will take me. I always knew I wanted more in my life, and I feel the best way I can achieve that will be to teach the youth about the past. I have declared a History major, with an emphasis on Education of Social Studies. My friends were thrilled to hear that, most of them claiming that I will make the best teacher, and "It's about time you do*

*something with all that trivia knowledge, you can't expect to get picked up in the cash cab living in Eau Claire.”. I have started receiving emails, about student life, orientation, and the first day. The only thing that is worrying me is that we are required to take temperatures and wear masks everywhere on campus. I was honestly hoping that Covid-19 would be a little more relaxed at this point, but no. I think that college might not be how I imagined it to be. Most of my friends are all seniors and they are so disappointed that their senior year is being ruined by a pandemic, and I think it's both selfish and understandable. To us as students and young adults our lives are being negatively impacted by covid, but at the same time we don't want people to get sick and maybe die because of our reckless decisions. Nevertheless, life feels simultaneously boring (because we are still in a pandemic, forbidden to do our regular activities) and exciting (to start a new chapter in my life).*

### **SEPTEMBER 2020-**

*Life at the University is... How do I put this? Very ehhhh. I have been in classes now for 3 weeks and I think I have talked to 2 people on campus. One was my professor to ask a question, and the other was saying “Thank you” for holding the door for me. Class is not difficult yet, I have been staying on top of work, which is really easy to do when you have little to no social distractions. I feel like the most positive thing about going back to the university, is that I have another thing to worry about in my free time. I never am sitting in my apartment thinking to myself “Man I really wish I had something to do.”. I do really enjoy the vast majority of my Classes, I just really wish we were allowed more activity. I can see it on the faces of all my professors as well, they long for the normality of teaching in person. I see that they miss the interaction with students other than emailing questions that can be answered with a little paragraph. I sent an email to my Political Science professor and when he responded, I could feel the excitement he had just in the email about a student reaching out wanting to know more and understand the subject on a deeper level. On another note my older brother just got married, I was able to see my whole family and had the honor of being the best man, I think I gave an excellent speech. Even through all the troubles, Sometimes light can pierce through the clouds and brighten our lives. That day was needed, it reminded not only me but everyone that was there, life and happiness still lives on through these hard times.*

## OCTOBER 2020-

I HATE Halloween, I always have. I was the kind of kid that would prefer to stay home and hand out the candy rather than dress up in some silly costume and go door to door. I think in College it is so much worse, now you dress up as something silly, and you don't even get candy, instead you get a pounding headache the next day. "Luckily" for me, I came in direct contact with a person who tested positive two days before halloween. This was my get outta jail free card. I went to get tested on Halloween day therefore I could not attend any of the holiday festivities, instead I was able to study and take an exam without having to stress about it too much. I wasn't worried about getting sick either, I live with one other person, both of us are very healthy and young. The statistics that are out now are more accurate, people with no prior health conditions and between the ages of 20 and 30 have a 99.something% survival rate. When I got my results back later that week, I found I was negative for Covid-19, and all was well. I was able to get a 96% on my exam and I got to skip out on Halloween festivities.

## NOVEMBER 2020-

Is it Christmas yet? If you walked into my apartment you would think it was. Within the first two weeks of November we had Christmas trees, lights, garlin, and beads all around. Within my home, life feels normal, the cold feels good when you step outside, even with a mask on. Covid cases are spiking like crazy, and the school is going to be closing down after thanksgiving. I Can't blame them either, Everyone is gonna go home and come back with the germs of their whole family from the holidays, hopefully by the spring semester things will start to calm down and go back to normal. I don't really remember what normal is like though. Everyone in school has fallen into a routine which is amazing, as we are creatures of habit. I have gotten so used to online school, I am certain it will make me a better student whenever things start to go back to how they used to be. As soon as break is over and we finish out our finals week I can only hope for a happy holiday and a relaxing break. I think I need to take a breather, my Lover has told me I am shaking a lot more than I usually do. My hands will sometimes tremble for no reason, Most days I don't even drink coffee. I think it's just a combination of stress from school, work and the election. The Election was the only thing people were capable of talking about for some time. I know the importance of our civil duty to vote, but I wish people could keep their opinions to themselves.

## *MY HOPES FOR DECEMBER 2020-*

*I can only pray that December will be a happy month. Life has been stressful. The bags under my eyes only get larger each day, and the pain in my neck and back increases. My hands shake and my ears ring. I just want life to feel normal, maybe holiday cheer is what I need. But soon I will be with my family and with my friends again, maybe the world won't come to an end.*