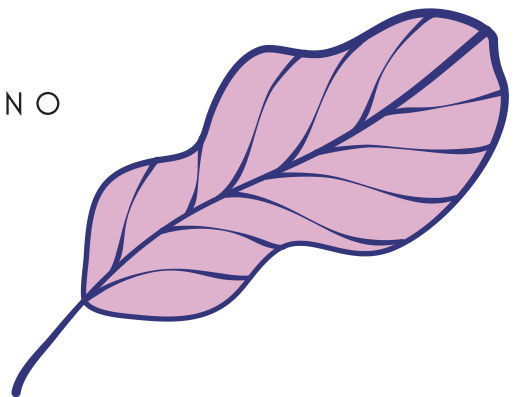


*THE*  
*LONGEST*  
*LOCKDOWN*  
*IN THE*  
*WORLD*

BY JING LEJANO



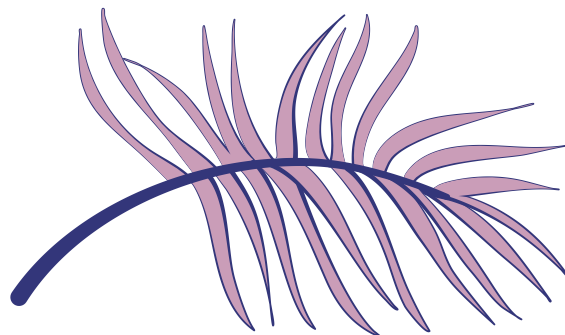
On March 17, 2020, the Philippine government placed Luzon under enhanced community quarantine in response to the threat of Covid-19.

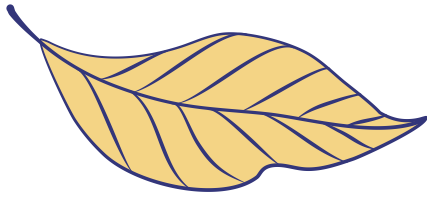
This is what happened next...

# DAY 1

And so we are off to unchartered territories. My sister said it best the other day, we are a rudderless ship drifting off into the storm. Last night's pronouncements did not help either, seeing how many of our questions were left unanswered. While I am well aware of the urgency of the situation, I just wished that many other factors were taken into consideration. We can take this, but what about the rest of our countrymen? What about those who live hand to mouth, earn day by day? Where are the safety nets for them? Shouldn't we be thinking about the least of our brothers? My daughter is a small business owner, and she has had to close her store temporarily, giving what she could to her employees whom she has to let go, at least for now. It broke her heart. Sigh. Fortunately, things look better in the morning. One by one, we're seeing local governments, big corporations, and private citizens rising up to the challenge. There is hope. There is hope.

*March 17, 2020, 187 cases*





## DAY 4

It has been frustrating to watch the national government give broad stroke proclamations lacking insights on how everyday Filipinos go about their lives. What was more alarming, however, was to hear them point towards local governments and barangays whenever they find themselves without an answer or a solution. But now that local governments are stepping up to the plate, they are being threatened with administrative cases? Really? At this time?

Stand down, they say.

While they were addressing LGUs in general, it was plainly obvious that they were talking about Vico, the mayor of Pasig City who seems to have earned the ire of the powers that be for the logical and compassionate way he has responded to the crisis.

I work for a local government, and I have to tell you that it is all hands on deck at the moment. Work never stops, most of which you'll never see on social media. Now is not the time for division, we need inspiration. We don't need threats. We need empathy, compassion, and clear strategic, scientific thinking.

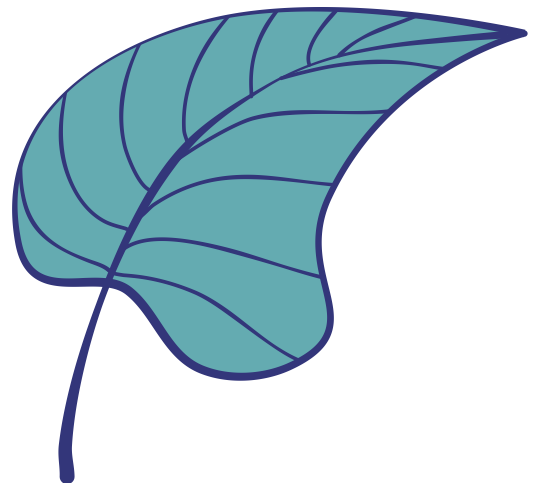
*March 20, 2020, 230 cases*

.

# DAY 7

Working from home is nothing new to me. Since I resigned from my full-time job almost a decade ago, I've worked mostly from home. And my home is my haven with a giant of a mango tree out front and my secret garden out back. These spaces give me comfort and warmth specially these days. But I can't help but feel guilty somewhat. I am lucky, and extremely so, but what of my fellow countrymen, those who live on the edge? What will become of them while the politicking and power grabbing continues?

*March 24, 2020, 462 cases*



## DAY 9

So Senator Koko Pimentel, who tested positive for Covid-19, violated protocols on social distancing, quarantine, hygiene, and God knows what else when he accompanied his pregnant wife to Makati Medical Center, endangering the lives of everyone he came in contact with.

What an asshole!

*Ang ordinaryong tao, kinukulong agad-agad kapag lumabag sa curfew. Etong senador, lumabag sa protocol. Apply the full extent of the law to this reckless lawmaker!  
March 25, 2020, 636 cases*



Dear P. Diggy,

*Nakapagluto na po ako ng hapunan at nakapaghugas ng pinggan. Binabad ko na ang mga madumi, at nag-mop ng sahig. Tinatamad na akong manood ng TV kaya binabalak ko nalang mag floor wax naman ng sahig. Sana po magparamdam na kayo.*

*Naka-quarantine,  
Jingle Bells*

*March 30, 2020, 1,546 cases*

# DAY 15

Dear P. Diggy,

*Napuyat po ako sa kahihintay pero wala namang bago. Hindi po shout out sa China ang gusto kong marinig. Ang hinihintay ko yung report ninyo, yun pong listahan ng ginawa at gagawin pa ng gobyerno. Saan po banda yon? Baka namiss ko.*

*Wala ba tayong strategy. Lockdown lang po, ganon? Tapos, nganga?*

*Hindi ba ninyo napag-usapan ang mass testing? Or sige na nga, in the words of Daddy Atom, targeted testing. Hindi ba gets ni Duque 'yun? Simple lang 'yan. Kailangan nating ihawalay ang infected sa hindi. Sa paglalaba po, kailangang ihiwalay ang puti sa decolor. Kung hindi, mantsa mantsa aabutin nating lahat niyan. Please tell me na hindi ganyan ang plano ninyo.*

*Inaantok,  
Jingle Bells*

*March 31, 2020, 2,084 cases*



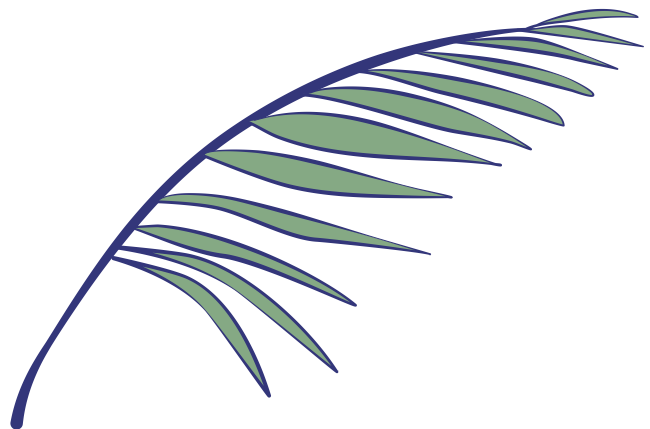


# DAY 19

My temperature went up to 38.5 last night, but it was gone this morning. Perhaps it was because I spent too much time in the bathroom, putting on body scrub?

*April 4, 2020, 3,094 cases*

.



## DAY 28

At about eleven in the evening, a couple of days ago, someone woke me up. I was sick and it was time to take my meds.

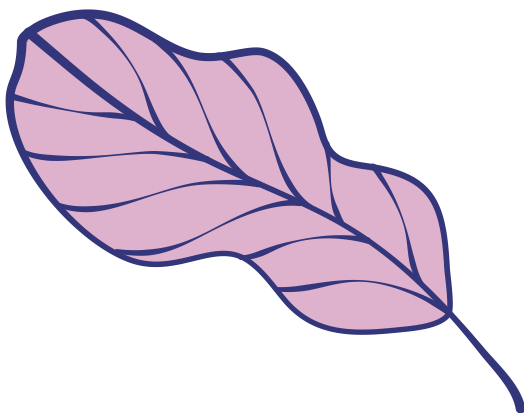
There was nobody, of course, as I sleep alone and I was by myself in the house having imposed a self-quarantine protocol the minute my temperature went up.

Three weeks into the lockdown, I got sick, as in really sick, and I hardly ever get sick.

Fever, chills, listlessness, way too many trips to the bathroom, and a day before my sister decided to call our doctor, a bit of a cough every hour or so.

Of course, I don't know whether that was it or not. There are no drive-through testing centers here like those they have in South Korea, and going to the hospital was not the most attractive option.

I was very nonchalant about it though. I don't know whether my sense of calmness was a form of denial or induced by the sickness. But I was calm. I took everything in stride as I watched Chris Cuomo talk about night terrors. I wasn't having night terrors, so perhaps this wasn't it.



But I hardly had any strength in me, which again was unusual. Putting away the pieces of puzzle that my granddaughter and I had planned on finishing during the lockdown was tiring. I had to push myself to sweep the floor just so I had something to do to get me off my bed.

The most unusual part, however, was the feeling of listlessness. Days after the fever had subsided, after my stomach had stopped working overtime, I'd stare at the walls for ridiculously long periods of time. I'd feel a gust of wind and raise my hand to catch it somehow. I'd put on a movie, and not remember what I was watching or why. It was weird.

In the midst of all this, I thought of Dad. I always wondered how he felt during the last few months, when he got so sick that he could hardly move.

That's how I felt, and when somebody woke me up at eleven in the evening to make me take my meds, I swear it was him.

Maybe. Or maybe I was sick. It doesn't matter.

*April 13, 2020, 4,932 cases*

## DAY 36

Winston Ragos, who served in the Army's 31st Infantry Battalion under the 9th Infantry "Spear" Division headquartered in Camarines Sur, was gunned down twice near a quarantine control point along Maligaya Drive in Barangay Pasong Putik, Quezon City. Master Sergeant Daniel Florendo, Jr, shot him supposedly because he appeared to be trying to pull something from his bag.  
*April 21, 2020, 6,599*

# DAY 39

Dear P. Diggy,

After 40 days and 40 nights of quarantine, *marami din naman akong natutunan.*

*Kahit magwalis ako araw-araw, may alikabok pa rin. Why kaya?*

*Kapag nilagnat ka in the time of Covid-19, isa kang taong tuliro. Lukring ka na dahil may lagnat ka, tapos praning ka pa dahil baka Covid-19 'yon! Eto yung panahong gusto mong may test, kahit ba bagsak ka.*

*Kailangang mag-astringent ni Roque. Oily siya.*

*Natuto na ko, P. Diggy. Hindi ko na pinapanood mga video ninyo kasi bumubugso lang ang emotions ko every time, from anger and disappointment to shock and outrage. Palagay ko kaya ako nagkasakit. Dapat may nakalagay sa chyron: "Warning: The following program maybe dangerous to your health."*

Fail ang TikTok ni Nograles.

*Masarap palang maglaba. Or siguro wala na kasi akong magawa? Mwahahaha*

.

I admire all these people who are baking bread, making elaborate meals, staying active, etc, etc. All I do is write all day, okay *na 'yon!*

*Bilib din ako sa mga entrepreneurs natin!*  
When there's a will, there's a way *talaga!*

A public health issue should be addressed as such. *Tigilan na yang usapang* martial law, focus on the critical issues: targeted mass testing, protect our frontliners, food security, safety nets for the disenfranchised. *Oo, may ambag po ako, huwag na nating isa-isahin.*

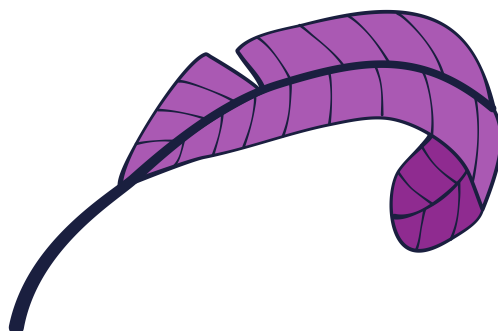
*May kakaibang kalma yung nakatunganga ka lang sa ilalim ng puno ng mangga, tapos biglang hihirit ang hangin.* I highly recommend it.

I feel guilty for witnessing all this from the comfort of my home while many of my fellow Filipinos are struggling to survive. I hope we come out of this with kindness and compassion in our hearts.

*Wala pa ring kapantay yung makita mo nanay mo, kahit saglit lang!*

*Naka-self-quarantine,*  
Jingle Bells

*April 24, 2020, 7,192 cases*



## DAY 44

I've gotten to know my neighbors rather well on lockdown. I've discovered, for instance, that one is a frustrated pianist who would start practicing early in the afternoon. He, or she, would twiddle around the piano, starting one piece before moving on to another, but not quite finishing anything. I enjoy listening to him, or her, nonetheless, and have been tempted a number of times to go over the "bakod" and send in a request.

Another neighbor plays a couple rounds of basketball late in the afternoon at his backyard court. I could only hear the basketball hitting the ground, and have no idea whether he's any good at it. But kudos to him, or her, for staying active during this life on lockdown.

Another neighbor occasionally writes letters on a mechanical typewriter. Yes, I know what a mechanical typewriter sounds like; it was my first love! Clickety-clack, clickety-clack, clack, clack, music to my ears! He, or she, doesn't type too often, and his pieces are not too long, so I gather that maybe he's just making letters or invoices. I'm dying to ask him where he got his typewriter, and how he's maintained it for so long!

.

Another occasionally goes on karaoke marathons, singing only songs which would make Sarah G cringe with envy, and still another sweeps his front yard every morning without fail, making me embarrassed at the state of ours.

I'm sure they've gotten to know me pretty well, too, because they could hear my everyday routines as much as I could hear theirs.

Life on lockdown has its simple pleasures.

Enjoy!

*April 29, 2020, 8,212 cases*

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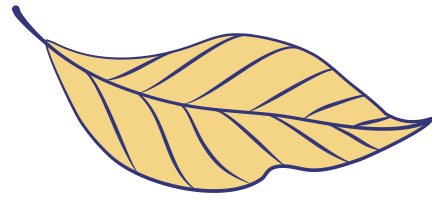
# DAY 49

I didn't like cooking when I was younger. I saw it as a chore more than anything else. I have four kids, so ten thousand years ago, my days were devoted to cooking for them, feeding them, bathing them, singing to them, and so on and so forth. I had barely finished cleaning up after breakfast when it was soon time to cook lunch. I had just woken up from my siesta when I had to prepare for dinner. It was a never-ending affair.

These days, I treasure my time in the kitchen. For the hour or two that I prep our meals, I don't have to think about the pandemic, the quarantine, or the future. And I get really excited when I ask myself: "What am I going to cook today?"

I like the smell of galunggong frying to a delicious crisp, just the way my mother likes it. I am thrilled when my suki brings slices of tanigue which I'll let simmer in garlic and butter.





A handful of Baguio beans, half a carrot, and a cauliflower almost frozen, all half-forgotten in the crisper, I throw in a pot together with some cream of mushroom and macaroni.

Mussels I made into a soup with mais na puti and dahon ng sili. The same mussels, because they were extra big and way too many, I would toss in the oven for a couple of minutes with garlic and cheese. I still have some lapu-lapu and pusit in the freezer, and am happily Googling for recipes.

I read somewhere that we shouldn't be posting photographs of what we're cooking at this time, but I beg to disagree.

It's not about pride, it's about love. We can't all nurse the sick. We can't all make masks. But hey, we can cook our family into happiness and wellness. That's love. That we can do, every day.

*May 4, 2020, 9,485 cases*

# DAY 50

ABS-CBN goes off the air.

*May 5, 2020, 9,685 cases*

## DAY 52

Joseph “Dodong” Jimeda, 58, a fish vendor from Barangay 31 in Caloocan City was arrested for violation of the ECQ at the Navotas Fish Port.

Authorities said he lacked a valid quarantine pass in Navotas. There were several hundred people with him in the detention facility, detained for various ECQ violations.

*May 7, 2020, 10,343 cases*

## DAY 53

Dozens of National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) cops had a mañanita to celebrate the birthday of their chief, Major General Debold Sinas, in Camp Bagong Diwa.

The law enforcers violated any number of lockdown protocols foremost of which is having a mass gathering, not to mention taking off their masks with Sinas blowing out the candles on his Voltes V birthday cake and having a beer or two.

Nobody arrested them.

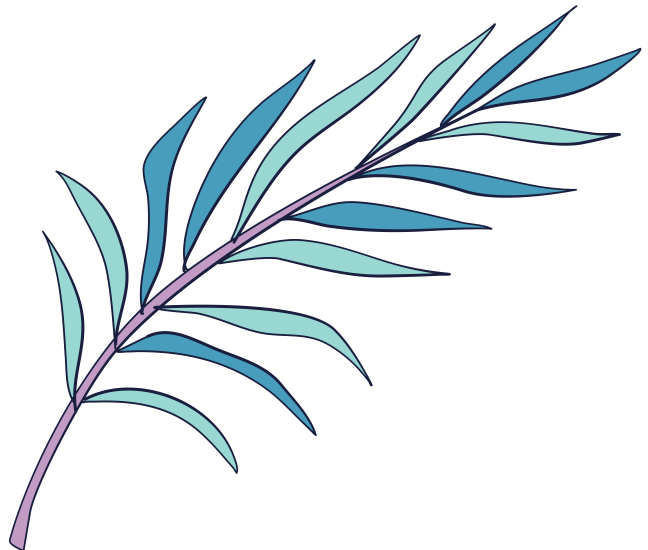
*May 8, 2020, 10,463 cases*

# DAY 56

Of course, you don't want to cook every day, and most definitely not on special occasions; that's what restaurants were supposed to be for, pre-quarantine days anyway. The challenge therefore is to find a reliable supplier, which I thought I did. She came through for my son's birthday. The steak was cooked right. I loved the pasta, and the kids raved about the cheesecake, which I did not get to taste.

A few days before Mother's Day, I placed my order, thinking better be safe than sorry or end up cooking before a hot stove in one of the hottest seasons in history! Unfortunately, my order was turned down; she said some of her helpers were in a total lockdown area so no go.

I was disappointed. I was already thinking of having the truffle mushroom pasta again, with the pancetta on top, the simple joys of quarantine life. I thought I'd finally be able to taste the Nutella Cheesecake, but it was not to be. I tried looking for another supplier but my heart just wasn't in it.

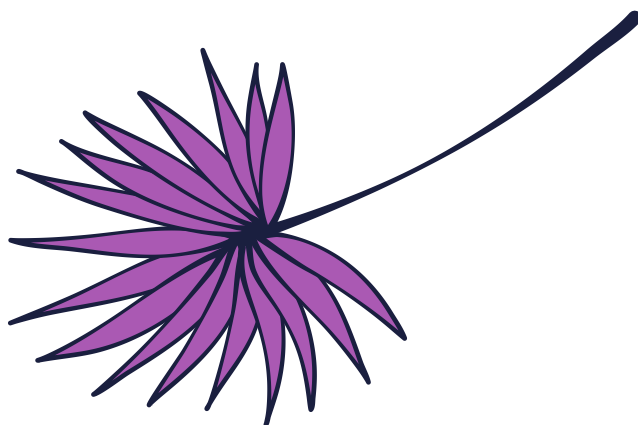


When my daughter said she'll take care of things, I acquiesced. Okay, she'd probably end up ordering Yellow Cab but it's the thought that counts.

As it turned out, I was in for a happy surprise. When I finally saw last night's dinner spread, it came in the familiar trays of my supplier! They had been talking to her. They told her not to accept my order because they wanted to take care of things this time around. A conspiracy of the highest order! Mwahahahaha

So yes, I did end up eating the truffle mushroom pasta, which Sophie and I could not get enough of, and the baked salmon and the Hungarian sausage, and oh my goodness, the mashed potatoes were so creamy, and the Nutella Cheesecake? Heaven! My tummy was full, but my heart even fuller!

*May 11, 2020, 11,086 cases*



## DAY 59

Sorry, not sorry!

After NCRPO chief Major General Debold Sinas apologized for allowing a surprise birthday party for him, he insisted he did "nothing wrong."

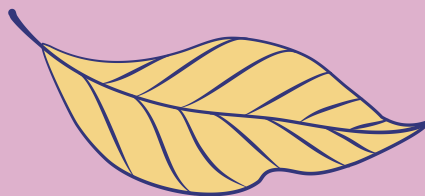
*"Wala pong mali doon...It would be ungentlemanly kung 'di ko sila hinarap at pinauwi ko sila."*

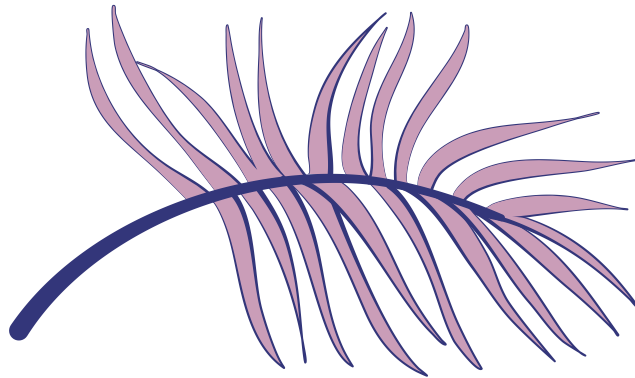
*May 14, 2020, 11,876 cases*



## DAY 60

I've lost a few pounds. I cut my own hair. I went on a big beauty shopping spree the day WHO announced the pandemic so my skin is actually better. I know where to get the best seafood in the village. I sleep seven to eight hours, then work all day. Scrolling down Twitter is fun. I have still to learn a new thing. Video chats are a blessing. I just bought 30 kilos of loam soil, hoping to grow a vegetable garden. The boyfie lives in another city, which is like saying he lives in Mars. I am lucky to be alive and happy and healthy, but I hope karma kicks in for those who have done such a slapstick job of addressing this pandemic.P.S. Mom sent the alimango, so my sons and I, all three of us, had our own version of an ECQ approved "party" or did we? Mwahahaha!  
*May 15, 2020, 12,091 cases*





## DAY 61

Wow na wow! My son Kyle made  
sourdough bread, and it is yummy! We  
christened it the UFO!

*May 16, 2020, 12,305 cases*

# DAY 61

On the very first day the lockdown was eased, Duterte flies to Davao.

That's the kind of leader we have.

*May 16, 2020, 12,305 cases*

## DAY 63

We were to sleep in tents off an island in Zambales. It had been a long day, and somehow sleeping with the ground on my back did not seem at all appealing. I thought that the only way I was going to be able to whisk off to Neverland was if I got contentedly drunk. And so, armed only with flashlights, my companions and I traversed a couple of rice fields under a bright moon, thank God, to tap on the door of the nearest sari-sari store, which was already closed, and get a couple of bottles of beer. It was a work trip, so I didn't know a thing about my companions at all. Of course, after that night, I knew plenty.

Ah, the pleasures of drinking with strangers and friends, of bringing bottle to lips, making them loose and rip-roaring.

I Have let loose, quite a number of times, sometimes breaking into song like during those weekly karaoke sessions we used to have at work which inevitably end with someone singing "Through The Fire" or "I Will Survive."

At times, it inspires foolish antics like when a bunch of schoolmates and I went around campus on top of the hood of someone's moving vehicle, giddily wasted, every single one of us. None of us got hurt, thankfully.

More often, it brings forth meandering conversations, most of which I could hardly remember the next day! Mwahahaha! I do recall though having a particularly pointed one about New Wave music with a bunch of millennials in Calaguas. That was a blast.

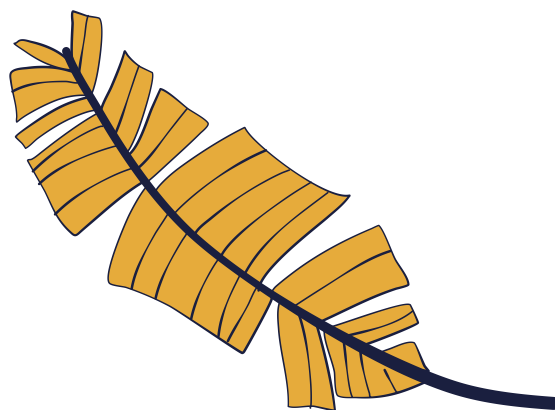
In recent years, I've taken to drinking with my kids, which is good and bad: good because we always have a great time and bad because I can't misbehave; I'm supposed to be the adult.

To say I miss it is of course an understatement. I mean, we could all use a drink these days! But I miss more the person who taught me how to drink and who would have, I am quite sure, raised a raucous about the liquor ban, or may have had the foresight to stock up, like I didn't!

I'll be sure to have one soon, Dad!

Cheers everyone!

*May 18, 2020, 12,718 cases*



# DAY 64

Same shit, different day

Good morning, PILIPINAS!

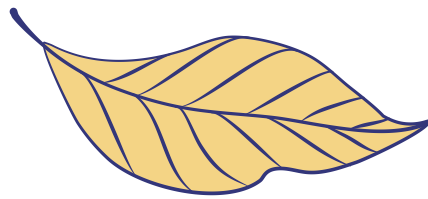
*May 19, 2020, 12,942 cases*

# DAY 71

After the rain, life has blossomed in my secretgarden. Various seedlings of I don't know what, the fruit of throwing veggie cuttings into pots, have grown wildly in my garden. Spending this Sunday transferring them, excited at what they'll turn out to be. Cats running around, Ella warbling, the wind keeping us merry company.

This was a good Sunday.  
*May 24, 2020, 14,035 cases*





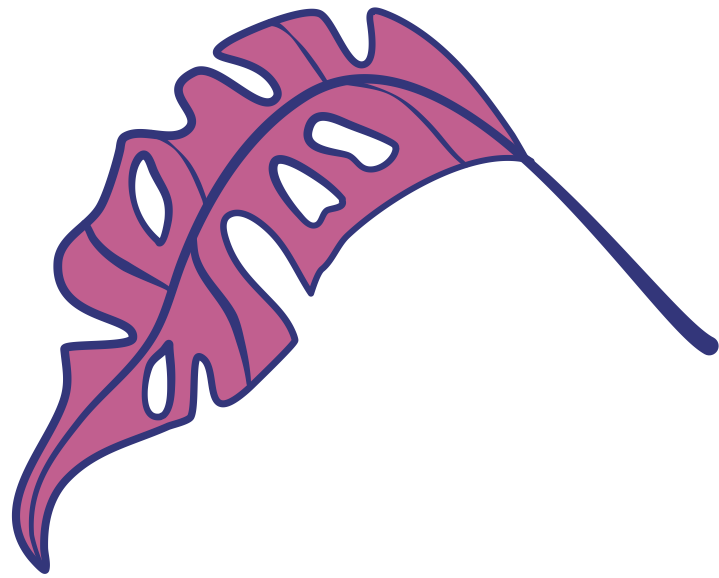
## **DAY 75**

My son made pandesal, and it is delicious!

We are so ready for the apocalypse!

*May 28, 2020, 15,588 cases*





## DAY 76

I finally caught sight of my basketball playing neighbor. He's a gray haired senior citizen, the kind you see in television commercials for Ensure, and he was wearing long shorts and an orange jersey. He was shooting hoops for quite some time, but then got tired and sat on one of those vintage garden sets.

I'm looking out from my second floor window, if you should ask.

He is now done for the day, and I am confused as to why I am so excited to have finally "seen" him! Mwahahaha

It has come to this.

*May 29, 2020, 16,634 cases*

## DAY 80

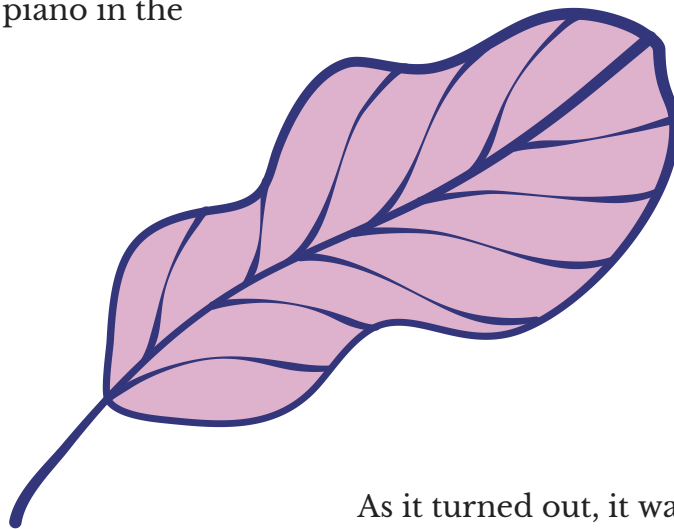
Six jeepney drivers were arrested in Caloocan City for allegedly gathering en masse and violating social distancing protocols after staging a protest to call for the resumption of jeepney operations in the National Capital Region (NCR). They were identified as Severino Ramos, 59; Wilson Ramilia, 43; Ramon Paloma, 48; Ruben Baylon, 59; Arsenio Ymas Jr, 56; and Elmer Cordero, 72. They would be identified as the Piston 6.

*June 2, 2020, 18,997 cases*

# DAY 81

So had our mango tree, the tree which keeps on giving, harvested for the fifth time this season.

Since my neighbor was up and about, I asked the boys who climbed up the tree to give her some. She, in turn, gave me a lovely avocado. Seeing that she was in a good mood, I asked her about the person who would play the piano in the afternoon.



As it turned out, it was her husband who managed to find some chords and was teaching himself how to play. I was floored. I thought he already knew how but only got rusty from years of not touching the keys. How cool is that?!

I asked if I could request a song, and she got all excited. “What would you want him to play?” I wanted to say, “Would he know the one Hyun Bin played in *Crash Landing?*” *Kaya lang nahiya ako bigla.* Mwahahahaha

*June 3, 2020, 19,748 cases*

## DAY 82

Stepped out after more than 80 days. Things were the same but somehow different. People walked around with invisible bubbles. Avoided the elevator, climbed up the stairs. Parked myself in a corner, and stayed there. Didn't want to touch anything, didn't want to be touched. Whenever someone wandered onto the radius of my invisible bubble, alarm bells started ringing inside my head. And of course there was this constant reminder not to touch my face. The experience was so unnerving that I fell asleep the minute I finished disinfecting myself when I got home. It's going to take sometime before I get used to this New Normal. Maybe better to just stay at home, with my secret garden, until I don't know when! Mwahahaha Good news though is that I tested negative.

*June 4, 2020, 20,382 cases*



## DAY 83

Seven individuals were arrested by the police in UP Cebu for participating in a mass protest against the passage of Anti-Terror Bill. Collared by the police were Al Ingking, a UP alumnus; Jaime Paglinawan of BAYAN Central Visayas; Joahanna Veloso of National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP); Bern Cañedo of YANAT Cebu; Dyan Gumanao of Kabataan Partylist; Nar Porlas of Anakbayan UP Cebu; and Janry Ubal, of local group “Food Not Bombs Cebu.”

*June 5, 2020, 20,626 cases*



## DAY 85

Wuhan virus, coronavirus, novel coronavirus, Covid-19, positive, negative, frontliners, WHO, DOH, RITM, flatten the curve, lockdown, the kit is the kit, handwashing, face masks, PPE, ventilators, disinfection, bleach, VIP testing, Makati Medical, S&R, Koko Pimentel Resign, compassion, shoot them dead, IATF, Tiktok Nograles, Duque Resign, Martial Law, Social Amelioration Program, DSWD, Vico Sotto, tricycle, DILG, Marikina, community quarantine, enhanced community quarantine, modified enhanced community quarantine, general community quarantine, modified general community quarantine, WFH, ube pandesal, mango graham, Zoom, urban gardening, liquor ban, mental health, quarantine pass, sex for pass, Winston Ragos, planted evidence, contact tracing, self-isolation, home isolation, Duque Resign, mass testing, mass targeted testing, targeted testing, expanded targeted testing, mass gathering, mañanita, happy birthday, Debold Sinas, Mocha, may pasok, walang pasok, first wave, second wave, new wave, fresh cases, old cases, fatten the curve, Balik Probinsya, OFWs, Duque Resign, public transportation, bawal angkas, travel authority, okay tricycle sa highway, hindi okay tricycle sa highway, modified number coding, no modified number coding, Terror Bill, Piston 6, UP 7, Chel Diokno, online selling, itapon sa Pasig River, JUNK TERROR BILL

*June 7, 2020, 21,895 cases*

## DAY 86

*Hindi pa rin makakauwi si Lolo Elmer kasi may kapangalan siyang may kaso. In the meantime, masarap ang buhay nina Pimentel, Sinas, Mocha, at si Zamora nakapagpalamig pa sa Baguio!*

*Compassion, understanding, nasaan ka?  
Makapagtanim na nga lang ng kangkong!  
June 8, 2020, 22,474 cases*

## DAY 87

Michelle Silvertino, 33, died at a footbridge somewhere in Pasay City. She had been waiting for a bus to take her home to Camarines Sur for five days.

Michelle, mother of four, died, waiting for a bus.

*June 9, 2020, 22,992 cases*



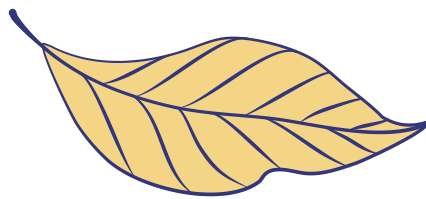
## DAY 87

Vicente Sotto III of Wanbol University and Alan Peter Caldero Cayetano signed the anti-terror bill and sent it to Duterte.

Among other questionable issues, the bill allows suspected persons to be detained without a warrant of arrest.

Yes, amidst a pandemic this is what the government has designated as urgent.

*June 9, 2020, 22,992 cases*



## **DAY 97**

Dear Pepe,

Hiyang-hiya kami sa 'yo. Sorry ha.

Jingle Bells

*June 19, 2020, 28,459 cases*

# DAY 101

The thing about being locked down is that mercifully, there is always something to do.

Today was a particularly bad day. I shouldn't have listened to last night's pronouncements which only affirmed what we had long feared: The wait was for nothing. I can't wrap my head around it. They know what to do, but they are not doing it. I cannot fathom it. And so I move. I wash dishes, stained with remnants of the chocolate cake I devoured the night before to comfort myself. I sweep dried leaves, fallen from the duhat and mango trees, both pregnant with fruits in this season of hopelessness. I water the papaya seedlings, seeing how they've grown accustomed to their new home. I write or at least attempt to, stringing together words, trying to find meaning somehow. And I pray, desperately, because I just cannot cry anymore.

*June 23, 2020, 31,825 cases*

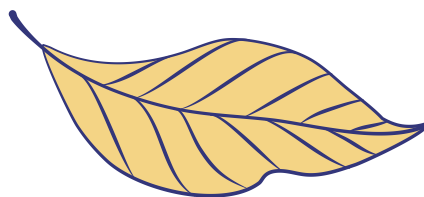


## DAY 102

If you had told me six months ago that I would be spending my work breaks taking care of papaya seedlings while warbling Amy Winehouse, I would not have believed you. I could believe the Amy Winehouse part, but shovelling soil, picking rocks, and talking to seedlings weren't exactly part of my 2020 agenda. But hey, we all had other plans. Yet, here I am giddy happy whenever I have time to steal away in my garden. I putter about, watering plants, picking off weeds, and inspecting seeds like Justin in *The Constant Gardener*, only he's way sexier and much more mysterious.

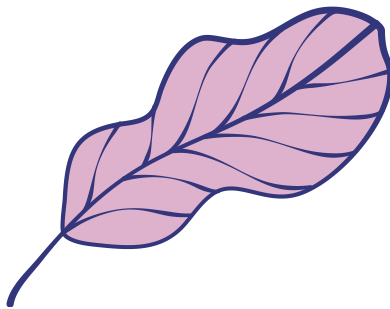
It did not come naturally.

I would throw seeds of papaya I'd eaten on our pot of pomelo and thought nothing of it. When it started raining, baby plants started growing like weeds. Curious, and with nothing much else to do, I waited. In a week or so, they grew into papaya seedlings. When I transferred them babies into a bigger pot, they grew even more prolific.



Encouraged, I started growing kangkong as well after watching a video on YouTube. My first attempt was a bloodbath with only a single stalk of kangkong surviving. But I had all the time in the world, and my second attempt was much more successful with dozens of kangkong, green, strong, and sturdy, growing bit by bit every day.

TIP: I first left them in empty beer cans filled with water before transferring them in soil. That seemed to do the trick.



My pots of *kangkong* now have a couple of eggplants, calamansi, bougainvillea, kamuning, rosal, pomelo, and, of course, the papaya seedlings as company, together with the ants, insects, butterflies, and birds that occasionally drop in. It is a world onto itself really, and every day there's something going on. One morning I found the eggplant leaves drooping so I figured they might be getting too much sun. It took a couple more rearrangements before I got the positioning right, and now there are actually little flowers on my eggplant plant.

One kamuning had its leaves eaten by insects. I placed a citronella beside it. I mean, citronella's a natural insect repellent, right? Wrong. Insects are still feasting on the leaves. Mwahahaha.

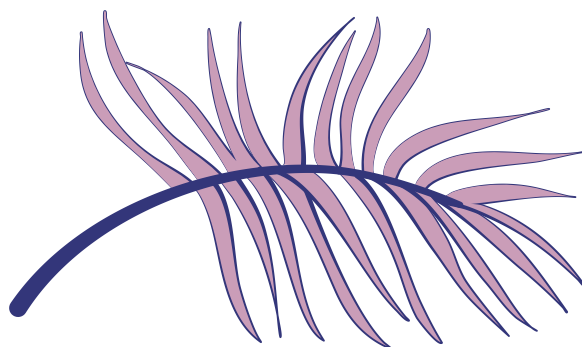
When my gumamela started growing a bud, and a flaming red one at that, I got all excited. I woke up every day anticipating how much the bud has grown and when it would finally open up into a flower. No dice. A bird flew in one day, and literally nipped the bud. I was heartbroken.

No time to despair though. I just got half a dozen pots of lavender, thinking I am now a better gardener than I was a couple of months ago and could grow these babies.

Hopefully. Maybe.

Let's see.

*June 24, 2020, 32,295 cases*



## **DAY 103**

Mang Elmer, village handyman, knocks on my mom's door, asking for help for his daughter's dialysis.

*June 25, 2020, 33,069 cases*

## DAY 105

Joint Task Force COVID Shield  
Commander Police Lt. Gen. Guillermo Eleazar boards a helicopter supposedly to take an aerial survey of Cebu City. It's a virus, idiot! How are you supposed to take a survey of virus infection a thousand feet off the ground? For the umpteenth time, this is what happens when you bring in the military to address a public health crisis.

*June 27, 2020, 34,803 cases*



# DAY 111

Duterte signs the anti-terror bill into law.

*July 3, 2020, 40,336 cases*

# DAY 113

Dear Pepe,

*Wala talaga kaming mukhang maihaharap sa 'yo. Ang dami ninyong nagbuwis ng buhay makalaya lamang ang Inang Bayan. Pero heto kami ngayon, malapit nang mag-back to zero.*

*Nakakalungkot, nakakagalit. Sa sobrang galit ko nga kahapon, nalinis ko yung bodega, sabay nakapagtanim pa ng sili at kangkong.*

*Tama ka, nasa edukasyon ang solusyon. Sa kasamaang-palad, marami pa rin sa ating mga kababayan ang salat sa kaalaman. Kaya hayan, nadala sa fake news. Hinayupak talagang Zuckerberg 'yan. Nasadlak na naman tayo sa dusa.*

*Pero huwag kang mag-alala, hindi kami nawawalan ng pag-asa. At feeling ko ngayon, hindi kailangang may barilin pa sa Luneta o sa tarmac, kaliwa't kanan na nga ang nakakalaboso. Hindi kailangan ng isang bayani para iligtas ang Inang Bayan. Tama na yang personality politics. Ang kailangan mamulat ang barwat isa, para maligtas ang kalahatan. Pandemya feels ito, Pepe. Ganon na ang labanan.*

*Naka-lockdown pa rin,  
Jingle Bells*

*July 5, 2020, 44,254 cases*

# DAY 121

Dear Pepe,

*Wala talaga kaming mukhang maihaharap  
sa 'yo.*

Jing Lejano is a writer and editor who lives in Manila. She is a single mother of four and a lula of one.

Manila is still in lockdown.

