

March 25

Weather: light rain, gray skies, 45 degrees out and little wind. Some birdsong, mostly blackbird, chickadee, and sparrow. Crocuses, hyacinth, daffodils all in full bloom. The cherry blossoms are open in the quad and along the streets.

I have decided to keep a daily record of what is happening here. There is probably no real call for this - it is hardly an exciting time, however strange it may be. Nonetheless, there seems to be some value in having a record or two of this unusual period (although I would never call our epoch an unexamined time) and of course, I am bored stiff with no one to talk to. So here we are. Much good may it do you. The format of this will be as follows: first, the weather, because for some reason I have the compulsive need to begin all journals with a description of meteorological conditions; next, a summary of notable events since my last entry; third, an overview of the global situation; fourth, my mood and thoughts on the future. Each will probably consist of a paragraph or so, with the exception of the weather report, which will be characteristically brief. I suppose that none of it will be of much interest, but maybe the Library of Congress will pick it up someday. Maybe the National Archives. Maybe this will feature in a third *National Treasure* movie. Maybe I can get my friends to watch *National Treasure* with me. Who knows? Our present is characterized by consummate uncertainty about the future.

So. Notable events. Two days ago, the Governor issued a “stay at home” order, effective for two weeks. No more social engagements, no more meeting Zoe to run. It is a reasonable step, however stifling I find it, and I am grateful mostly that I am still permitted to run at all. The streets are essentially empty, and there is scarcely a soul in the parks, with the exception of Greenlake and the Burke Gilman, although I am glad to report that foot and bike traffic on those routes has been greatly reduced, probably due to the weather as much as the legal situation. God bless the Seattle rain. It will, I suspect, be saving lives over the next few weeks. Jason has gone to Bellevue for the next several days, so I have been shambling about my home slowly going mad, cleaning every surface, and calling friends and family. It is a blessing that my kin are not all trapped together. We made it roughly half a week communicating civilly over email, and then my Uncle Danny, that strange and reprehensible man, advised us to carry our guns or large, sharp knives whenever we left the house. (I’m not sure he understands how viruses work - does he think a rifle blast will kill the germs? How big does he think the coronavirus is that he expects to be shanking it in line at the grocery store?) He then said, “Save América, kill a demoncrat [sic],” to which Barb responded, “I am sad to see that you are actually advocating my murder,” and Sean, in an email huff, said “Take this argument offline, no one cares,” which is more or less true. Thanks, Sean. I think we would all have split into rival murderous tribes by this point if stuck within ten miles of each other, in a *Lord of the Flies* sort of situation. Others seem to be doing quite well. The girl I am maybe-maybe-not seeing, Chiko, is apparently still alive and sane after several weeks living with her family. I’m horribly impressed, and will be frankly astounded if she makes it through to summer like that. I’m happier alone than with my parents, horrible as it is. Much as I love them, and glad as I am to be able to talk on the phone with them, I know that I am ill-suited, at least at this point in my life, to living with them for more than a few days. It is not my environment, my spirit withers, and I end up facedown in the forest dirt trying to befriend ants to soothe my sudden resumption of adolescent angst. The ants never want to be my friend. I don’t think they like me. It’s fine, I have human friends. I did a crossword puzzle with Chris last Sunday evening, and this morning joined the rest of Janneke’s lab for a virtual coffee hour, which was quite pleasant. I am glad both of the social contact and of the opportunity to know them better. I’m excited, too, to join Jennifer

Ruesink's lab meeting this upcoming quarter. Chris and Elena will be taking part as well, along with Mo and Robin, of course.

More broadly, nothing has changed and everything has changed. Of course modern life itself has been turned upside down. Courts are closed, restaurants are closed, no gatherings, groceries all doing delivery. The folks at the Seven have been chatty, I suspect because they are happy of the company. Two days ago, when I went to buy butter, the fellow behind the counter said they would stay open until "Big Brother" ordered them to close, and for some reason I thought, *Ah, an anarcho-capitalist*. God knows why. I think I've been reading too much Orwell. They still sell beer and cider, and I've been staring longingly at it whenever I walk in, but there's no one to share it with. Anyway, I must get rid of the beer in my fridge before I go around buying more, and of course, again, there is no one to share it with. (*Update from March 2021: I still have some of that beer.*) Italy is closed, and presumably still singing patriotic songs. The UK has finally decided to close schools and begin widespread testing, to which I can only say, better late than never. Canada still seems mad to me, though the border is closed. They do know that the sickness is spreading within provinces, right? If BC doesn't go through some evasive maneuvers, they'll end up like Washington. Yet businesses are open, folks are out, the schools are, to my knowledge, still in person. Campus is wholly shut down, although some researchers are still going in to feed their critters or attend to cultures. The libraries will, I think, be closed until the end of time. I cannot complain. As for myself, I have been ordering books online to fill my time. I suspect quite a few businesses will go under as a result of this mess, and I am doing my best to ensure those that I value will not be forced to shutter. The Dow continues to plummet. I heard Jason screaming slightly the other day when it dropped ten points, and I must say, the graphs are a bit fun to see, even if it means a bleeding wound in our economy. It's like a rollercoaster.

I am doing fine. I'm a bit antsy, since my daily steps have been cut a bit, but I work out the shakes with a run each day, and my loneliness abates with virtual meet-ups and endless reading. I am not precisely bored, not always. There is rather the sensation of half-anxious waiting, a suspense that one despises but whose abatement one dreads, like the terminal diagnosis of a loved one. Yes, that is similar, but it is a strange comparison. I know, I suppose, that in all likelihood things will get worse. The next news I receive will probably be bad. Yet as much as I fear the outcome, I hate also the waiting, the shuffling around wondering what will happen, the pause on life, the stillness of a world stopped. What will happen? No one knows, and I of course have no predictive ability. Precognition would indeed be a gift with the world changing each day as it is. What will happen? I don't know.

March 26

Soft, cloudy skies, 45 out again. I woke up at 4:30 this morning to some mad bird singing needlessly ornate songs, and thought, *At best, I can probably only hear one-tenth of that song's true complexity.* I don't know where one-tenth came from. Certainly not a peer-reviewed source. Alas, sleep was not to be, for some strange shouty men a few blocks down seemed to be repeatedly beating a metal sheet with a baseball bat, or possibly summoning small thunder. Maybe they were smashing mailboxes. I suppose that this is not a report of the weather. Yesterday I saw that the bluebells were up. Presumably this has not changed in the past ten hours.

Last night, I entertained myself by watching *Clue* with Lexie. She greatly enjoyed the slapstick moments, and I had my usual fun picking up new puns. Then of course we talked. I discovered, first, that the camera on my laptop is of miserable quality, and second, that one can adjust quickly to only seeing friends through a screen. I am grateful for every drop of contact with those I love and appreciate, and it no longer bothers me that this cannot entail their physical presence. Jason came home in the midst of it, singing loudly and tossing down his things. He commenced a deep clean and reorganization of his room. I retreated into my den. I cannot tell yet whether it is more pleasant to have him around, or to have my own realm. I expect he will help me maintain my sanity and social skills. He just wandered out and asked, "Haleh?"

"Yeah?"

"Just checking if you were alive."

That was it. So there you go.

This morning was a continuation of the nothing-doing that is now my life. I drew some dragons, based off a picture of a bat, and have decided to work on my drawing skills by practising every day. I must improve.

China has closed her borders again. I was a bit surprised to see this, as I had not realized they were open to foreigners. I suppose only Wuhan was isolated. Funny how a complete unknown has become a household name - I doubt many of the people saying its name could locate it on a map, or offer one fact about it besides the virus. I certainly have no good idea where it is. It's odd how cities arrange themselves in their rough geographic locations, but province boundaries, besides the obvious ones like Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Yunnan, waver around like so many mirages. They have reported a reduction in new cases. Good on them. For ourselves, we still find the time to scrap around and throw the old punches. Texas has decided that no abortions can be given so that medical resources can be diverted to fight the crisis. I'm not sure they understand how pregnancies work; it's not as if one can be delayed indefinitely. Ohio is apparently trying the same. It probably does violate *Roe v. Wade*, but it will take years to work its way through the courts, given that they are all closed, and I hope that the legislature in those states has the good sense to realize that, for many women, abortions are a medically necessary procedure. These folks will find a way to get one regardless of the traps set to stumble them. It certainly does seem like now would be a bad time to force them out of their county or state in search of one, or, worse, resort to questionable, unsafe means.

Nothing much interesting is going on. It's a bit stultifying, but such is life. I am debating whether to run or not today. I would, at least in part, like for this to be my day off and to just do abs, but I shall have no cause to leave the house if I do not run, and besides, will get no aerobic exercise if I don't. I suppose I shall have to.

March 27

Cloudy, light rain. 48 degrees out, and very springlike. Few folks on the streets, of course, and not much going on. I saw a duck waddling through Ravenna, and a sparrow chirruped at me, but that was it.

Today is a particularly dull report, as I've done almost nothing but read. I've devoured *The Priory of the Orange Tree*. It turned out to be a much heftier book than I assumed, and I showed it to Jason, who deemed it "thicc." From the hour I received it, all of yesterday was devoted to reading the book, and anxiously waiting for the gay parts. It is not the finest novel I had read, nor the most transporting, but it is good enough, and I enjoy it more than its close relatives, *A Game of Thrones* and *The Fellowship of the Ring*. One can readily detect much of Tolkein in it, down to the evil volcano. Its mythology and world are well-crafted and thoughtful. There is a sulky and determined dragon rider, a stealthy fire mage, and, to put it generally, the sort of folk one would expect one's D&D friends to dream up. Plus, all the names are fairly pronounceable. I always got lost halfway through Tolkein's names and had to fudge the ending, but I can handle two syllables well enough, although I am a bit thrown by *Ead*. I'm nearly to the end now, and somewhat stressed. The author also has an odd knack of setting up mysteries only to reveal the answers in surprisingly nonchalant ways. Her protagonists certainly do encounter loquacious folk. It is unsatisfying, not merely because the reveal is robbed of its glamor, but because the mysteries never somehow seem that important anyway. Well, who knows. I am not a writer. I cannot criticize.

The US has passed the 100,000 mark for cases. We now officially have the most. Huzzah for American exceptionalism. Our president has said he intends to have the country back to normal by Easter. He has also faulted several governors, including Governor Inslee, for failing to do enough to stop the virus and for asking for federal aid to combat it. Nonetheless, we will have an Army field hospital set up in the stadium to handle overflow from the hospitals. I wish there was more I could do. I have no real medical training, no particularly useful skills. I have longed for much of my life to serve the world during a time of universal struggle, but now I am left with my books to do nothing. Perhaps there is some way I can be of help. If I could sew hospital masks, I would. I regret that I cannot do more. Anyway, Boris Johnson, along (ironically) with his health secretary, has tested positive for the virus. The president has signed the largest stimulus package in American history into law. Jeff Bezos was among those who had advance word of the cataclysm and sold his stock before the market dropped. It is unfortunate that so many sought to make a profit off this, using illicit sources.

I am doing well. I will probably always be doing well. Two of my toes itch, but I asked Jason, and apparently that is not a symptom of anything. My parents are walking daily, and have their first teleconference tomorrow. We are talking most every day, just a few minutes to exchange news and go over our lives, and for my mom to tell me to wash my hands and stay away from other people. I feel a bit smug that I assumed the worst reasonably early on. I have switched back to optimism mode. It's more fun. My wrist hurts inexplicably, but probably it will fade soon. I have been shaking it like a dog shakes a rabbit, and stretching it back and forth, although I have no idea if this helps or only makes it worse. I will ask Makayla tonight.

March 28

Light rain all day, increasing as it wore on. 51 degrees, with a brisk sharp wind that sent the cherry blossoms shaking through the air like spring snow. The scent was perfect, the sort that makes you feel alive and in love with every inhalation. The city seemed like a garden, its gray buildings and green grass a strange reflection of heaven. I sat by the lake on a dock, beneath the tresses of a golden weeping willow, and felt the shift of the wood in the waves. Redwing blackbird calls. Little else, but nothing more needed for contentment.

Last night, another movie night, and tonight too. I watched *Austen Powers: International Man of Mystery* with Makayla. It was actually better than I expected, and had not aged a day. I mean it was not any more offensive now than its quirks would have been then, although one still cringes a bit. I had forgotten Seth Green was in it, and was shocked to see his short frame. Afterwards, I settled into bed and watched *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, and texted Chiko about it, since our last big possible meetup was going to be to see it. (She has excellent and discriminate taste in movies.) I enjoyed it, although no one had told me that it was a) in French and b) a lesbian romance. A few pieces struck me as artificial, although I recall always Kundera's claim that life itself carries motifs, when we are awake to them. Yes, it does, I think, but still, the whole Orpheus thing seems a bit overblown, even if it serves to clarify the narrative. In some ways, I think it is a weaker choice. Myths are deep in our blood and bone. We hear the myth and we know the plot, we know the old story and its morals, its ambiguities. You can build on that foundation, of course, and *Portrait* did so beautifully, but something in me dislikes its use. Maybe I am being harsh. I felt that the movie focused more on the concept of the observer, and less on the idea of fear of loss, which is what, to me, the Orpheus myth has always symbolized. Loss and lack of trust. Certainly there was loss. More, I think, was gained, but obviously the movie argues here that the same could be said of Orpheus. Tchh. I don't know. I'll make Chiko talk with me about it. I like the maid girl, whom I immediately named Punk Kid. (I never figured out any of their names. I dubbed them Girl Who Should be in a Horror Movie, Painter Lady, and That Other Woman.) What else? I had a wonderful moment halfway through where I suddenly thought I understood French. All of a sudden, *Sì, la conosco*, and I thought that all my old teachers had been right, and eventually if you listen to a language long enough, you'll get it. Then I realized they were just speaking Italian. Still, it made me realize how tiring it is to watch a movie when you have no clue what the words mean. They're just susurrations. Probably it is Spanish, English, and (apparently) Italian films for me here on out. Today I read and read, and eventually went to the grocery with Jason to buy vegetables. All in all, less stressful than last time. The store was quiet, with people moving slowly and at great distance from one another, and no memory of canned music sticks in my head. Outside, along the empty shops, tinny pop still played along abandoned sidewalks.

The world is unchanged. Death rates in the British intensive care units are at 50%. We stumble through. Probably the most exciting news is that our president may cut a thick segment of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut off to travel. It is unlikely, I think, but you know how he goes on.

As for my mood, I think I ate too much chocolate. My wrist still hurts.

March 29

Sunny, 51 out and warm. Too many people out on the Burke, but not too many on the sidestreets. I ran down 50th to Meridian, from Meridian to Gasworks. There are flowers beginning to bud outside my window. I think they are hyacinth.

Makayla and I have embarked on watching all the *Austen Powers* movies. I woke up this morning and decided to make something using that Moroccan saffron, and settled on paella. I bought white wine and a few ingredients from the Seven to make my dream come true, but because I mistrust recipes and dislike spending money, I did not purchase all the ingredients, and thought instead that I would make do with whatever was lying around as I always have before. This was a mistake. I briefly became very stressed out by my inability to execute any - like, any - of the steps I found online. So I guess I'm not making paella. I'm going to make chickpeas and rice with roasted vegetables and a dose of seasoning. Apparently, I am dismissive and afraid of cooking recipes in turn, but good enough at cooking itself to get by, so we'll probably be fine. I'm excited to use the white wine and saffron anyway. If nothing else, it makes me sound very rich and classy.

Apparently the timeline for a vaccine is currently around 18 months They've (whoever they are) have expedited the process, and I imagine it can't be hard to find grant money for this research right now. New York has us Washingtonians solidly beat now in new cases and deaths. Of course I wish that there was no increase at all, but it is reassuring to think that we, at least, have got it somewhat under control. Anyway, they haven't had to deal with their state burning down every summer. Various primaries have been delayed, which is why voting by mail is such a bright idea. It's ridiculous that one has to go to a polling station in 2020 to vote, and don't get me started on caucuses. Nonsense. And unfair to the elderly, the rural, and those without easy means of transportation. The November election will be an odd affair, I think. The whole thing's been eclipsed by the pandemic, but it must go on; we cannot live in an America that postpones its elections, although I suspect Trump would be more than happy to avoid renewing his mandate. He doesn't seem like the sort who really wants his power to stem from the citizenry.

What else? School starts tomorrow. I am not really ready, but no one is. Several of my professors haven't emailed out plans yet. Two of the Canvas pages haven't been published yet. It's a wild mess. Good lord, but we're all wandering lost.

March 31

Partly cloudy in the morning, excellent weather for a rosemary hunt. Slight breeze from the south, 45. Some steady rain about a half hour ago, but the promised thunderstorms never appeared, so I'm a bit miffed. The bluebells are opening, the tulips gaining color, the hyacinth are left to fall and rot. Grape hyacinth at their peak. Rosemary blooms beginning to show in subtle blue. I stopped along a green alley to watch chickadees, golden-crowned sparrows, and yellow-rumped warblers chitter and spin in the branches of a cottonwood.

Yesterday was my first day of class. All perfectly acceptable, if a bit underwhelming. Now I watch lectures, take notes, answer questions, wonder how frightened I should be for exams. Terra incognita here. One of my professors, for the honors chicana feminism class, muted her mic at one point to swear at the screen. In another, I was one of three students to talk in a class of 11. We'll see how my Arctic class goes. What else? I went for a run in a pink tank top and blue sunglasses, the better to enjoy the lovely sunshine hanging over my home in Ravenna. Of course, by the time I hit the Henry, a chill wind was blowing from the west, and just over University Bridge it started hailing. I spun in circles looking for shelter, tried behind a fence, no luck, under a scraggly half-leaved tree, no luck, curled up against a telephone pole, no luck. Short of invading people's porches, I was stuck in it. I waited two minutes for it to turn to rain, then kept on running, trying to enjoy the downpour. Several times the hail returned, and I was forced to take cover under little ornamental trees just beginning to bud bright green, their thick branches passable shade from the storm. As I write this, it starts to hail again, on and off. I decided to cut my run short to save myself and took off for the lake down Boyer, to head back over the Montlake Cut. My shoulders and elbows were cherry red and stung with the cold. When I got back home the weather was fine, if a bit cloudy. Seattle in the spring is perpetually indecisive. I decided, upon checking the weather report this morning, not to run today. Besides, I felt generally lazy. I went out for a brief walk instead to cut some rosemary, and ambled over Ravenna Creek, down alleys, around the neighborhood, chin tilted up to stare at birds. At one fence, I heard a scratch and scrabble, and looked down to see a curly-haired brown dog pawing at the fence and wagging its tail. I let it lick my hand, but the slats were too close-packed to let me pet the wee beast, so I went on with a little regret in my heart. After my return, I made rosemary lemon tea cookies and watched some physics lectures. Having no lemons, I decided a mixture of grapefruit and lime zest would approximate the flavor well enough. They turned out tasty, but too sweet. I'll have to fiddle with the recipe next time. An uneventful, pleasant day.

New cases in Seattle have leveled off. As of this morning, there were only six deaths since Saturday. New York is shaking in hell right now, but perhaps there too the tide will turn. The *Comfort* arrived there yesterday, I believe, and the pictures made me jealous. It is a gorgeous ship, and I wish I had the chance to see its sister docked in Elliott Bay. While my reason is trivial, I still think LA has less need of it than us. In the bubble maps they make of the pandemic, we're a fat red blob, whereas they have a little dot. That still sounds petty, I think. Oh well. It seems, at least, like the shutdown is good for nature. Emissions are down because of limitations on transport. A literal breath of fresh air. On the other hand, President Trump has suspended parts of the Clean Air Act for unfathomable reasons of his own. It hardly seems prudent to allow increased air pollution when fighting a respiratory disease, but what do I know, I'm just an environmental scientist.

I think I ate too many cookies earlier. This is becoming a theme.

April 2, morning

Despite repeatedly thinking, *Yes, I must remember to write all this tonight*, I clean forgot to record yesterday. So we shall have two today, one in the morning to cover yesterday's news, and another in the evening for whatever thrills occur during the daylight hours.

The weather yesterday was mild, mixed rain and halfhearted sun. April has moved in with the archetypical April weather, capricious, bipolar, ambivalent. Probably tomorrow it will snow. That joke would hold more water if the past few days hadn't seen hail. Sounds like there's a Stellar's jay outside my window. It keeps going hack-hack, like someone abusing an old violin.

My morning began by watching the QSCI lecture. I'm afraid I'm inexplicably miserable at finishing in time. I'll set up earlier in the future. Then I stumbled out, very reluctantly, for a run to Greenlake and back, after spending a little extra time hunting around to see how feasible it was to buy a dozen donuts from Mighty O's. The answer, I decided, was not feasible. Heaven knows how I would run back with a dozen donuts under one arm, or strapped to my back. If it were a mile or some other short distance, I wouldn't mind, but it's unpleasantly far. Besides, I will likely have to swallow my guilt and go to the grocery again this weekend, so there is no point in adding more trips to the list. I already feel bad enough about going out to buy kale. I wonder if the mushroom folks are still on the Ave on Saturdays. And speaking of farms, Anna and I began a shared farm on *Stardew Valley*. I have decided to support us by fishing, notwithstanding my incompetence at that act. She is pumped to mine and fight.

The afternoon brought my first Arctic 401 class, one of three, apparently. It's all about Inuit education, and looks to be interesting. Sam Bergstrom from Hansee is in it, unexpectedly, and Katie Hearther of course. The professor is out on Prince Edward Island, I think, although I am not sure. Her status as a "visiting professor" is purely virtual, regardless. No Seattle vacation for her. She pronounces Inuktitut with just a trace of the characteristic hesitation, stepping over the strange dark syllables with a hurried grace, much as I do (or aspire to do) with Spanish. I have learned a new word for what I am: Qallunaat. It remains to be seen how this knowledge will be of use to me.

While I skipped Janneke's lab meeting that morning, due to generic busyness, I joined Jennifer's lab in the afternoon. Chiko was there, to my surprise, along with the expected faces. Mo is currently fostering truly adorable kittens, two wee squirmly females, one orange and the other muddy tortoiseshell. A fellow I had not previously met, Bryan, was in Ecuador and reported on the situation there. Government corruption inflating the price of medical and hygienic supplies, dengue fever sufferers turned away from hospitals and told to stick it out at home, deaths and deaths. I am lucky to have been born where I was, to live where I live. This provides a nice segue to the news of the world, which consists mostly of: more deaths. A truly horrifying quantity of more deaths. The UK, Italy, Spain, the unknown numbers in the Americas. We lost count, and are stumbling to catch back up on how many citizens lie dead on makeshift hospital beds. Someone will probably know soon, and announce that number with mixed pride and horror.

Afternoon:

The weather was fine today, light rain, 42 degrees. There was indeed a Stellar's jay out, and he barked at me when I went out on my run. Rain and sun battled it out. I spent most of the day inside, happily coding away for QSCI, reading Miranda July, and ordering essentials online. Barb offered to ship me flour to make muffins, an offer which I politely and regretfully turned down. I sent her a photo of the cherry blossoms in thanks. I will say, one upside of this crisis is simply that my family has grown closer.



We talk almost daily, and I spent long stretches on the phone with my parents, ironic as there's nothing really to talk about. They have told me about the dog innumerable times now, and about their walks, and how careful they are to keep at least six feet away from Phil and Michelle when they meet up. I listen, because it is genuinely interesting to me, and because it is good to hear their voices. My mom requires few conversational prompts from me. My dad rarely speaks, but I am glad to know that he is there. I love them, and I do miss them.

Things have heated up since this morning. Jay Inslee has extended the stay at home order until May 4th, four more weeks of self-reflection and teleconferencing. He has, of course, cautioned everyone that May is a soft deadline, and conditions may force it back even further. Currently folks at UW are predicting the peak of the outbreak to be on April 11. If trends continue, we should have enough ventilators to handle the serious cases. So that's a success. I dearly hope that what we are doing is saving lives, not out of a petty irritation or a fear that this could all be for naught, but simply because I would like the majority of people to emerge from this OH MY GOD I should text Abby.

Done.

Man, I have missed Abby. She's such an excellent and loving soul, and a damned funny person. She must be in the thick of it, with a nurse mom and a nurse sister and being a CNA herself. I hope she's OK. I hope everything with her is OK.

6.6 million Americans filed for unemployment. I can't help but think that the total number furloughed or fired must be far higher, since there are no doubt plenty who considered that it was not worthwhile to do the paperwork, or who, like Jason, can't file because they are dependents. No other nation has this problem, which I suspect is due to the fact that they have more rational welfare systems in place for catastrophes like this. Our system was not set up to deal with extraordinary events. It was hardly set up to deal with ordinary events. Where other countries are placing the burden partly on business owners to provide for their dismissed workers, we have decided it is exclusively the task of government. I think one way of describing government in America is to define it, at least in part, as those duties necessary to society but which society itself (specifically businesses) has no desire to do. In short, the government expands and spends money simply because businesses are unwilling to. And ironically, many of those same companies would wither and die, I suspect, should the government stop offering payments to their ex-employees. The economy is already in enough of a bind. It is true that many small shops will struggle to survive over the next several months, but Amazon could afford to throw a few more bucks to their workers. The fighters are on the front line of this, after all..

Abby is doing OK. Her mom is busy as anything, of course, but it is good to hear from her.

April 5

Sunny, very warm. About 50 degrees out. The harebells outside my window are in bloom, but the magnolia down the street has dropped half its petals. They rot in a very lovely manner. I begin to think daffodils are the eternal flower - the damn things have been in continuous bloom since February, and show no signs of slowing down. I don't understand why they stick around so long. They don't smell good like hyacinth, they're yellow, which is the worst color, and I never see any bees trundling in or out of their corolla. Nonetheless, they endure, and I can't complain that much. A flower's a flower. The redwing blackbirds are full calling out on the marsh, flashing their shoulder badges and puffing their chests. Beyond that, no great seasonal changes have transpired. It keeps snowing in Bellingham.

My own life these past two days has not been noteworthy. I avoided my work and played a lot of video games. On Friday, I had the privilege of watching a movie with the old marine ecology gang, Chiko, Chris, Jordana, Paige (plus Paige's girlfriend), and Elena. Anna Lank was there in spirit, in reality absorbed in a book. A fine night, a fine waste of time, and one to be repeated each Friday now. Saturday, yesterday, I watched a moderately OK horror movie with Alexi and Morgan, the first MusCATEers reunion since the start of last summer. Alexi has a boyfriend, Morgan is starting grad school, I'm still me. Oh god, I'm too tired for this. I'll add more in the morning, but unfortunately, I discovered a mess of homework rather last minute and just spent the last two hours doing that. It got dark. I am shocked to discover that my Chicana feminism class has so many reading each day, and stuff due on the weekends. I was ill-prepared for our rigorous study of Mexican-American feminismo(a?).

April 6

Sunny, 60 out. Lovely weather, warm and lazy, and a gorgeous day for a run out the Arb waterfront trail. Yellow-rumped warblers out.

Today, in my Chicana feminism class, the hip hop artist Maya Jupiter joined us and talked at length about her inspirations. An admirable woman. Frankly, I'm more ashamed than anything, since I spent yesterday and today stumbling to catch up on all the thinking I missed. She was a hopeful person. She said that we have to take this crisis, this dark time, and use it to change our world for the better. She said that it revealed what was true and what was superfluous in our society, what things really matter in the living of one's life, and she is right. Wise, but of course, most artists are. They must understand the world, good enough to explain pieces of it to others in their chosen medium. Afterwards, I ended up the last in the session, accidentally and anxiously one-on-one with the professor. I started twitching afterward from the residual stress, like I'd just flunked an exam or ashamed someone I respect. The liberal arts frighten me. Still, it was fascinating to hear her talk about Gloria Anzaldua's poetry and writings, about how her poetry deals with terrible dark topics but is inevitably hopeful. And I think that the act of creating is in itself hopeful, that even if it were all grim, the fact that beauty and poetry exist to commemorate it would be hopeful in and of itself. She also recommended to me a conference, or something like it, that was going to happen in Manoa about the intersection between borderlands and island feminism. They do seem similar to me. Both come from a root of powerful women, both draw intensely on the land they are linked to, both arise from the confluence of cultures and both are utterly transformative for the individuals caught in their currents. Both demand that art be created in multiple tongues. You could not tell the story of the borderlands in just English or Spanish, or for that matter, just standard English and Spanish. They

demand their own language, one with the power to strike some understanding into the strangers who hear it.

Today, or perhaps yesterday, the UK Prime Minister was admitted to the ICU. He's on day 10 of his diagnosis, the worst of the illness, usually. I wish him a speedy recovery. His country needs him, even if he did screw up the early response with his waffling and everything's-fining. Someone asked Donald Trump about it, and he had some response recommending his own weird medicine again, then said something like, "But what do I know? I'm not a doctor." Thank you, sir. You are not. For ourselves, we are hopeful. The governor sent 400 emergency ventilators to New York, which is quite literally dying. The city is considering burying its dead in a public park or potter's field out on Hart Island, where prison labour can dig the graves. The morgues are full, with 600 people dead in one day, and the extra refrigeration trucks they drove in are at capacity. They described mass burials not as a hypothetical, but as their temporary solution, something they will go forward with unless the situation changes dramatically in the next few days. In my head I can't help but think of the plague carts: "Bring out your dead!" I wonder if we will ever be able to return to life as it was before. Will the future hold crowds, public concerts, farmers markets, classes in Kane, dance parties, weddings, wakes? And I wonder who I will be on the other side of this, whether some subtle alchemical change is transpiring in my being as I write this, as I adjust to this brave new world I live in with its distance and uncertainty. This is not a short term thing. This is months at least. Can our world survive?

Aside from that vague anxiety, I'm doing quite fine.