

Hullo!

Please find enclosed a few pieces of reflection on the Covid19 (level 4 in particular)
pandemic put together by members of the Olive Estate Writers group.

Kind regards
Julie Meagher

Life in the bubble

My lockdown started on the 24th March. The previous day I'd bought a digital thermometer, in case I had to seek medical advice from Healthline¹ and they requested my temperature. With enough food for a fortnight, I was ready to do what was asked of me and all fellow New Zealanders, we were in this together, in Jacinda's words 'A team of 5 million'.

My desktop computer was included in my bubble. He never complained of my relentless need for his company, and my emotional outbursts as I reluctantly cancelled my travel plans for May and June. He froze once, after rather excessive use of my credit card but I booted him back to reality, by telling him I needed some reprieve, from the unforeseen circumstances I found myself in. He learnt more about my life as copious emails were sent and received, Facebook browsed, and Zoom used to socialize with family and friends overseas, I would no longer be visiting. He learnt my taste for entertainment via TV On Demand and YouTube and was receptive to my weekly dabble in gambling, as I negotiated buying Lotto online.

My faithful computer was my lifesaver, he allowed me to research digitized records held in the National Archives of Scotland, a small compromise to what would have been a fortnight spent in my ancestral homeland. My nocturnal habits were not a problem he was available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. He went to sleep when I read an ebook on my tablet or used my iPhone for WhatsApp and texting. As time went by he accepted as a mere human I needed sustenance and he guided me through my first online grocery shop, stopping me buying in bulk by refusing to accept a numeral above 2 on any one item.

As the news on the site covid19.govt.nz became more encouraging the drain on his memory and use of the keyboard and mouse became less. Searches for the cost of a car battery and what shops and cafes were open, took precedence over a 2 hour movie. After he had caught up on sleep he began to feel rejected, so he searched his archives and made random assumptions about what I might want to buy, and in order to gain attention sent emails which clogged up the inbox, even personalizing them by calling me by my first name ! He sent through suggestions on what I should watch on TV OnDemand and what new books had been released, paying little regard to what I had requested in the past. Slowly the table turned and I became the slave to my computer, spending time deleting emails and unsubscribing from sites.

The day level two of lockdown was announced on covid19.govt.nz my bubble burst and the unthinkable happened, I switched my desktop computer off. He was replaced by my iPhone, onto which I loaded a new app called NZ COVID Tracer. Now my iPhone will be my companion, as I leave my bubble and venture out into post Covid New Zealand.

1 Healthline A telephone advice service (manned by medics) heavily promoted as being the first contact, should you have symptoms of Covid-19.

Brenda a 66 year old, living alone.

Day 502

Today is the 01st June . I know that because my friend told me it's her birthday tomorrow , and her birthday is the 01st June.

I rip the month off the calendar . Except I need to rip off April and May too .

Why didn't I notice my calendar was still showing the month of March ?

I was home almost 24/7 so why didn't I notice .

I lost my job on the 01st April (it was no April fools joke) .

I had no need to have any sort of plan in my day any more.

In the space of a few short weeks the business of my employment was no more.

International and domestic travel was stationary .

I had been cut lose by the mother ship to drift aimlessly through this strange twilight zone.

I couldn't even remember what day of the week it was , yet alone what month of the year.

Time though I did very well with .

Each day was either before 1pm or after 1pm. Lunch was planned around the television and our new hero Dr Ashley Bloomfield, and his sidekick the prime minister , both of who were going to save us from the fires of hell.

We watched the news at 6pm. Glued with a morbid fascination to the carnage in New York and the UK. It seemed the Prime Minister of the UK was going to succumb to this dreadful disease sweeping the globe. People were dying in their thousands.

We watched the mass burials and the make shift tent hospitals.

I heard a friend in the UK was battling for her life. She is 40 and was a fine athletic, healthy young woman. That hit home a little more strongly than the corpses being carried from one side of my TV to the other.

I still had difficulty grasping the enormity of the situation.

I did what everyone else did . I wore a mask and gloves . I queued with everyone else at the supermarket . I left groceries at the gate for my sister. I walked the required 2 metres around anyone I met.

But.. I still didn't quite get it . I wasn't scared of it because it didn't seem real. I'm not sure what more I wanted in the form of information, to make it 'real'.

I was bombarded in all forms of the media. That same media tells me we are now in level 1.

That means that mostly we are back to normal. People are going back to work , people are dining out, schools are open .

It is a relief not to have to stand in a queue anymore, and be summoned (by a sometimes power hungry individual) as to when you can pass go.

It is a relief not to have to stand in a yellow cross on the floor.

It is a relief to not have to wash and spray and clean vegetables with quite the same intensity as before.

It is a relief .

Julie . Olive Estate Writers Group