



## 236 Days of Solitude

*Victoria Tenbrink*

March, 2020. Oh boy. I'm panicked! Don't go out. Don't keep appointments. Don't shop. Don't breathe other peoples' air. Wash Wash WASH your hands!!!

April, 2020. Oh boy. I've got this. Free grocery delivery. Wipe down all the boxes and cans with Lysol. Lucky me, I snagged the last bottle off a grocery shelf in March! Hah!! Not only that, but I have a three month supply of toilet paper. So smug.

May, 2020. Overdue for dental cleaning, eye appointment, general wellness exam, and two immunizations. Luckily this will be over soon. Numbers are going down.

June, 2020. Numbers are going up. Stupid Memorial Day holiday weekend! People don't can't won't follow rules! I miss Church. Cancelled through 2020. Do they know something I don't know? Zoom will have to do. Yeah, Zoom. A word that used to mean go fast. Now it means to pretend that video is as good as being there. So stay in, meet on Zoom, take a long walk every day. Life's not so bad. The introvert in me is reveling in newfound isolation. Not to mention new tech skills.

July, 2020. Isolation is for the birds. Memorial Day weekend was just a warm up for the Fourth of July. Is it true that to be young is to be foolish? And to foolishly put society at risk? The Buddha counsels compassion. The devil in me wants to wring rule-breakers' skinny little necks! Take the beach, for example. I've never seen so many no-mask-wearing football-tossing beach-blanket-sharing revelers. OK, I have, but not in the middle of a PANDEMIC. Life goes on. Time to buy toilet paper. Instacart to the rescue! No more wiping with Lysol. That fell by the wayside about the same time I learned that masks really ARE important. I'm squarely in Dr. Fauci's camp. He's is the best science man since Carl Sagan. Billions and billions of COVID 19 particles!

August, 2020. This month is my birthday. I was supposed to celebrate with my extended family Down Under. Australians think 35 cases in one day is deplorable. For the entire country. A country that is an entire continent! Australia has roughly the same population as San Diego County. My County. A County that records nearly 10 times Australia's infection numbers each and every day! Those Aussie rule-followers are way too smart to let the likes of me put another shrimp on their barbie. Too bad, so sad. My losses are mounting.

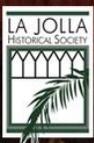
September, 2020. Labor Day weekend. By now, I know what to expect. No progress on the numbers. Significant backsliding. And I'm officially fed up with practicing my introvert skills. I'd kill for a hug.

October, 2020. Nothing but dread for the future. This month, Halloween and Dia

de los Muertos. November, the election of a lifetime and Thanksgiving. December, Christmas, followed immediately by New Year's Day. An entire week of partying! It will take months for the extra cases to burn out. I don't have a plan. Plan-less. There can be no plan. Except breathe in, breathe out. Work on tolerance for the human condition, warts and all. Keep faith in the future. Show compassion for all of us sailing together in these uncharted waters.

I can do this. I must do this. I will see this through to the hugs. To the travel and the joyful gatherings. To the sorrowful gatherings. I will see this through to a live, in person Padres game, which can be both joyful AND sorrowful.

Everything ends. Even this. Even this. 236 days, and counting.



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