

My Lockdown Diaries

by Srija Sinha

One fine day, I just finished my lunch of egg curry and rice, the doorbell rang. We, i.e my caregiver and myself had been categorically told never to open the main door in the afternoon. So without giving it a second thought, I settled to see my favourite soaps, please read Bengali serials here, and my caregiver, just took some chewing tobacco to settle for a quick afternoon nap, the doorbell rang again. This time it could not be ignored, my masi(caregiver) went up sluggishly to check who was the imbecile to disturb us at this hour.

The change in her was noticeable; she went from lethargy to energy efficient human and ran to the door. My Ma walks in with a big smile on her face, “ Potas(that’s what she calls me) my school is shutting down due to the pandemic. It will be shut till the end of the month.” I didn’t realise that I had a silly grin on my face. The next thing that came to my mind was “oh God, no TV”.

That same day my Baba came in from the office beaming, and made another statement. He called my Ma and said “ I have been asked to work from home.” The look of apprehension, horror and shock all rolled into one, was worth watching on my Ma’s face.

You know, I like my parents staying at home. Especially my Baba. He always helps me and supports me but my parents together is another story. They are like oil and water. They don’t mix and if they do, it becomes highly volatile. So the combination of both of them at home spelt catastrophe.

Next day morning my Ma tells me that she has arranged online classes for me. I was so happy that now I could be myself and share my anxiety of having both parents at home with my friends and teachers. Then I remembered that the class was going to be in front of both of them and on my Baba’s phone. This is called a frying pan to fire.

My Ma is a teacher and so she is doing her online classes now. She immediately took over my room, saying that she needed absolute peace and quiet. I lost my peace, quiet and my privacy. But do you think I dare say that? Never mind.

While my Ma was closeted in her classroom, I continued my online classes in the sitting room. The room with the TV. As soon as my classes were over I would get back to my favourite series, yes, I think I have won this round.

Who discovered bananas? I wonder. I distinctly refuse to accept bananas. They have strange taste. But what can be done? Ma’s standing instruction, bananas for breakfast or evening snack, the choice was mine. What a choice! When Ma came home from school, she would be very tired and I used to get snacks like chicken roll, magi, egg chop and such mouth watering titbits. Now, when she is at home, and all the time at home, only healthy food. I sincerely dislike

bananas. Once in a while it's fine but everyday, it's absolutely tragic. Have to stop now, as I can see her coming towards me with a big smile and a banana. For next ten minutes it is going to be torture for my eating senses.

My school has decided to celebrate Independence Day, virtually. I have been given the task of creating a craft. The next world war was about to begin. Ma is generally a creative person and so is Baba. So you can understand the reason for the war. Both are like Americans and Germans facing each other like conspiracists with snarling smirks. Disaster. My craft will never see the day, it will be unborn. My parents with this kind of loving attitude towards each other embarked on the journey to keep their face and my prestige with my school. I was propelled to my room and asked to sit quietly. Baba went on to draw something and Ma decided to cut and paste. Everything was going on smoothly and I was very excited to see the progress when everything fell apart. Ma had just finished cutting and ready to paste when Baba came up with something that was not in the plan. My parents decided to exchange a few polite words, not for my or your ears. Ma leaves the room and Baba keeps on staring after her, liquid fire dripping from his eyes. Doomsday is here. All was quiet for some time. Ma waltz in again with another idea. Things take an ugly turn after this. It was very late into the night and after all that war, no dinner. I put in my inquiry about it and my parents realised that I was still there. Now Ma goes to boil rice and lentils and Baba decides to finish the craft with no enemy lurking around the corner.

I am feeling very down. I have not stepped out of my house for the last three months and it was getting to my nerves. Together with ever loving and ever present parents, it was getting out of hand. I needed a break. So I raised the issue. My parents started talking about it and we all felt alive, again. We decide to go to Santiniketan for two days. Next, Ma announces that an important meeting has come up on the very day of travel, although it was in the afternoon and we had enough time, if we decided to start early. We started early and it was really very hot. Ma judged that the fresh air would do us all good so no ac in the car. We had our masks on, Ma covered my head, put gloves on and you can imagine my condition. Did I remember to tell you that I am a wheelchair user, I am. My wheelchair was piled on top of the car and we were off. We were travelling for some time when Ma got stung by a bee. Another wave of alarm bells. Baba was singing with the radio on when the bee decided to taste Ma. Ma said it was my Baba's responsibility to see that no bee or anything for that matter came near her. Baba with his usual elan said that he was hardly the Dussanto type. That lit the fuse and after a short skirmish we started on our way. Who is Dissanto, I asked. Ma is a storehouse of knowledge, but today she ignored me altogether. We reached Santiniketan. This time it was so different from the last time. The hoteliers were ready with sanitizers, digital thermometers and talking to us from so far away that we had

to shout to carry on a conversation, literally. I was wheeled to our favourite room by my parents. We also carried our own luggage. Now starts another episode of premonition, as Ma was unable to get any network in the room. Baba tried to get the hotel network and logged in successfully, Ma could not, so please understand what followed. The hotel people came running to our room as we were the only guest in the hotel and we could be heard everywhere. They requested Ma to come to the reception area to log on to their wifi. When Ma left for her meeting, there was absolute calm. I decided to stay awake to keep an eye on Ma. Baba decided to sleep as there was no more commotion, hogging the entire bed. I used this time to enjoy nature at its best as it was raining. Ma comes back. Baba still spread out on the entire bed, the situation foredoomed. Ma slaps her laptop on the bed, Baba rises up like a top. Baba decides to make tea and Ma now hogs the bed. This pandemic has taught me to look only to the brighter side of life. Ma is the sweetest person in this world and when we dance together, sing, share stories, it's just wonderful. My parents ,although always ready to battle but only for my best interests at heart. They are my best friends and my best entertainers. What would I do without them, I don't know and I don't want to know. I know they are the best in this world and they are both mine. But I wouldn't mind them going back to work, from their respective offices !

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IICP - Junior Academic 2

Age - 14 years