

## The First Lines of Emails I've Received While Quarantining

By Jessica Salfia, April 2020  
Martinsburg, West Virginia

In these uncertain times  
as we navigate the new normal,  
Are you willing to share your ideas and solutions?  
As you know, many people are struggling.

I know you are up against it:  
the digital landscape.  
We share your concerns.  
As you know, many people are struggling.

We hope this note finds you and your family safe.  
We've never seen anything like this before.  
Here are 25 Distance Learning Tips!  
As you know, many people are struggling.

Feeling Fiesta today? Happy Taco Tuesday!  
Calories don't count during a pandemic.  
Grocers report flour shortages as more people are baking than ever!  
As you know, many people are struggling.

Count your blessings. Share your blessings.  
Get Free Curb-side pick up or ship to your house!  
Chicken! Lemon! Artichokes!  
As you know, many people are struggling.

How are you inspiring greatness today?  
We have a cure for your cabin fever.  
Pandemic dial-in town hall TONIGHT!  
As you know, many people are struggling.

Mother's Day looks a little different this year.  
You're invited to shop all jeans for 50% off!  
Yes, buy 1, get 1 free!  
As you know, many people are struggling.

Call us to discuss a loan extension without penalty.  
ACT NOW: tell Congress Charters should Not Line their Pockets During the COVID crisis.  
Now shipping facemasks as recommended by the CDC.  
As you know, many people are struggling.

Take a deep breath in. Let it out.  
During these challenging times, we're here for you.  
This is not normal.  
As you know, many people are struggling.

## **Waiting Out the Virus**

**By Mark Defoe**

We sit listening for Covid-19,  
that black dog who slinks, sniffing for weakness,  
licking up our tears. We stare at our walls,  
where we imagine the tally of the lost.

They are alone, wheezing, gasping. We take  
on their pain, their aching sorrow, but their  
suffering reminds us of how weak we are,  
how hopeless, how numb, how helpless.

Safe behind our window, we watch petals  
sprinkle the lawn in a tender rain. Merry,  
mindless, Spring waltzes in, slap-dash, arms  
full of daffodils. The Great Orange One points

his tiny finger. Withered Seniors pile  
the Rose Garden, that altar of his ego.  
The young cluster the voluptuous beaches.  
The evening news features true believers

chanting for normalcy, toting M-15s,  
rallying the flag. Above the stifling  
N-95s, from behind their face shields,  
doctors and nurses stare out, their eyes calm

with devotion, glinting with defiance,  
steady with compassion. They are warrior angels,  
faces creased and sweat-steaked, haunted with  
the wisdom of those who must face the truth.

To stay our fear, we read, cook great dinners,  
share corny jokes, conjure up summer trips, bore  
ourselves with board games. We ease into morning,  
praying softly, saving our breath for those we love.

## **COVID-19 Beauty Lessons**

(by: Cheryl Denise)

My stylist smiles warm as the sun  
and smells of lavender after the rain.

When I first moved here  
she gave me advice on cooking venison  
and getting to know my neighbors.  
I trust her with more than my hair.

She's the only person in town  
I told about my brother-in-law,  
how he chose to live on the street  
those last few months,  
how he died on Mount Mackenzie  
in winter, a Bible in his hand.

She streaked my hair young  
for that photo on my last book.

While straightening my hair she'd laugh  
and swap stories with other customers,  
longtime friends talking high school, inside jokes.

Once I wrote a mean poem about her.  
Now I realize I just felt left out and awkward.  
But at my last hair appointment  
I didn't tip.

Today her shop's empty.  
In the window a tuxedoed teddy bear  
a homemade mask over his mouth and nose  
a giant paw raised in hello.