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Up until recently, my morning ritual involved going for a walk and grabbing coffee with a friend followed by a few hours spent responding to emails and preparing for class in the Oaks Room, a campus cafe in the Raymond Folger Library. I was sitting in the Oaks Room on Wednesday, March 11, when I got a Facebook message that quickly turned into a phone call.

Only hours after COVID-19 had been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization, a friend of mine heard through the grapevine that the University of Maine System had made the decision to partially close campus and transition to remote online learning after spring break. Within minutes the news was shared by BarStool BlackBears and the Bangor Daily News. I got to watch as the information spread quickly from student to student and the air of the room shifted.

My peers and I have never lived in a “wartime” America. While I don’t think the current pandemic is quite comparable, with modern technology allowing us many often taken-for-granted privileges, we haven’t experienced anything like this before. There is no pre-established knowledge on how to navigate such a swift societal shift.

As a fourth-year student studying Journalism and English, the two days following the announcement felt like an expedited end to my senior year.

On Thursday, every class was repurposed into a Q&A session about the pandemic and online instruction where there weren’t many clear answers. As Editor-in-Chief of the Maine Campus, our school newspaper, I felt a call-to-action for my community but also for the almost forty employees I manage who didn’t know whether or not they would have jobs after spring break.

On Friday, I got to watch as a dazed community came together for “Coronamencement,” an honorary commencement ceremony for graduating students. As I stood in the crowd of attendees, I realized that this would be our last moment of communion. That was the first moment I grieved for what we were all losing.

I left that week with many more questions than I had answers. Where does goodness go when we are all left powerless against something? Where do we find joy? What will happen to the old

and new relationships we are fostering? And arguably my most naive question: When will all this be over so I can return to my normal routine?

While not many answers have surfaced, these questions are tied to my fingers like ribbons, reminding me that it is my responsibility to make the best of this situation and find ways to make it better for others.

Now, having returned to classes and running the paper, my mornings commences with a walk around my neighborhood, after which I return to my room to sit at my desk. I video call my friend to replace our habitual coffee date to the Store Ampersand, and then I get to work. I miss my old routine, but at least now I can wear a costume cowboy hat to class.