

WRITING

The Escape from Quarantine

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TYPE

MEMOIR
NARRATIVE

GENRE

GRADES 11–12

Like everyone else, I was trapped in my room forced to attend daily online meetings for hours. I was tired of this mandatory prison breaking me down physically and mentally. As the world recovered, I longed for a purpose beyond being indoors.

Satisfaction came in my sophomore year when I ventured out to start volunteering at a program called Heart in Motion (HIM). HIM is a youth volunteering development program. Within HIM, I participated in events to contribute to the community and collaborate with peers on labor-inducing tasks.

My favorite events were marathon-related ones because watching all the runners finish the race is thrilling. Succeeding in HIM events demands communication from workers and dedication to stay on their shifts. I enhanced my communication skills by working collaboratively with peers on various tasks. For instance, I took on the responsibility of distributing t-shirts to participants and needed to

communicate with them.

Occasionally, I would request help from peers on distributing t-shirts due to the overwhelming number of people. I proposed strategies like pre-organizing resources based on anticipating the crowd size. I became obsessed with organizing my environment to be more efficient. This experience allowed me to emerge from my room. Somehow, I enjoyed this foreign feeling of going outside with peers to finish tasks so I kept on going. As each event passed, I improved my ability to listen and communicate with peers, resulting in more effective teamwork. The motivated runners inspire us, so we, the volunteers, prepare our stations and organize the necessary supplies like water, electrolytes, fruits, and medals. The runners and my co-workers have all been so kind to me, making the experience more wholesome. Volunteering in HIM has encouraged me to volunteer at my school to help my community.

At school, I participated in the Eco Club. They held events to gather students to clean up trash in our school and surrounding streets. Events involved friendly competitions to clean the most trash as a team of five to get a prize. I recruited four friends and we ventured into our school's filthiest corners. We would go around trying to find the best spots for litter and junk.

Once, we went down a stairwell in an alley. We had never seen any students walk down there before, but we were in dire need of trash. The floor was made of cement, but it

seemed to be covered in misplaced soil. The soil smelled rancid and was uneven. We started digging out the soil into our trash bag when suddenly we discovered the corpse of a dead rat. Its hairy pink body laid there with its limbs out. We were spooked for a bit, but eventually, I stuffed it into the bag with everything else. This experience encouraged me to clean more around my house and volunteer with friends. Whether it was forging new friendships or deepening existing friendships, even dealing with dead rats, volunteering has always been enjoyable. Volunteering has been an experience that allowed me to escape from the online prison.