

**Alison Calderon Lopez - 7th Grade**  
*Stuart Middle School; Norristown, PA*

## **Part 1**

Quarantine's rough, watching time fly is a new hobby,  
Hearing disasters struck by minute, just waiting for peace to  
arrive.

Nothing fun, having people at the edge of death,  
Not knowing they could be gone within seconds, waiting is  
a new game.

Apart from another catastrophe, the only thing that relieves stress  
is having fresh air under the cool sun and brushing the tips of your face.  
Just every problem fade away as you ride your bike, having the air rush to you,  
An adrenaline pump through your veins is a feeling that can never be replaced.

Hope is something at the tip of your fingers that you can't quite grasp,  
Wondering where in life I can finally grab it.  
Not knowing if the people you love are fine but only hope for the best.

The waiting game finally revealed the true ones at this point,  
Friendships end, and promises aren't kept.  
Hurting came into action and took over the toxic-ness bubbling through my brain,  
Learning to accept is something all of us aren't ready for

Yet all this is happening in quarantine, how's life people still ask while  
Kids are loaded with homework rushing to do it.  
Teachers say this is a rough time for all but give us homework while  
family members are out here dying.  
Supposed to be worrying about other things while kids are worrying about when their  
homework is due.

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## **Part 2**

A flower is supposed to bloom, not wilt.

So please tell me why I won't blossom like the cherry trees do in the spring.

Why are these thoughts coming to me at such a young age?

This is what the year of 2021 looked like to me.

The sudden urge to cry every hour, sleeping until night like a bat when they cave in and cover their bodies with their wings. Why can't I just be pretty and skinny and happy like the girls on my screen? I kept telling myself. It came to a point where I skipped lunch, and I liked how I looked when I did, so I skipped dinner. It was a never-ending cycle that came to a point that I didn't eat at all.

The homework is piling and piling like how leaves fall onto each other on the ground in the fall. "You don't matter; only your grades do" is something that I kept telling myself over and over again. I drilled it into my mind. The computer screen was my everyday object. Eight hours every day, with two extra hours trying to catch up and another five hours on my phone. So, a week was 105 hours; a month was 420 hours. How many hours was I looking at a screen in a year?

Screaming and shouting in a place you're supposed to feel safe is an underlying stress that you can't escape. It's a feeling that takes over your body, making you feel paralyzed. Every thump, screech, yell, or scream causes goosebumps to crawl all over you.

I thought that maybe I had anxiety, but when I confronted my mom about it, all she told me was, "*No tienes nada, para de meterte esas ideas en la cabeza.*" It might not seem all that to you, but it suffocated my brain.

It might seem all bad from all the things I'm writing about, but it wasn't all spice. There was some sugar too.

"I'm here," the message read aloud. I ran down the steps and opened the door to see a bundle of joy named Zoey. We went up the stairs and filled my room with laughter and memories. During the school year, I stuck with her most of the time because although I had problems myself, at least I could distract myself with her. I spent most of my time trying to dissect her. It was almost like she was a scientific discovery to me. I was aching to find out what she was feeling, what she

was going through, what she was thinking. She was my only distraction. She was the sugar in all the spice.

Mental health, for me, was a big struggle. I dealt with so many things, and every time I would cry about something, my parents would scold me. One of my dad's sayings was, "*Si no hay sangre no hay dolor.*" That saying messed me up, especially since I've been hearing it and going by it since I was five. I learned from my parents to always keep your feelings in and never let anyone know what you're going through. That always stuck with me and probably is the most challenging thing to try to get rid of. As the years go by, I don't blame them for their actions. The reason why is because they too have gone through a lot, and sometimes parents don't know any better. So I forgive them.

I wanted someone to listen, comfort, and validate me during the online year. I wanted to express myself without being judged or criticized or being told that I can't experience or feel these strong emotions that I'm feeling. I want people to realize that I CAN feel the same sentiment and think the same things as people who are way older and different from me.

I had wished for this pandemic to stop and blamed everything that had happened to me on it, but in the end, I can't blame anyone, although it would've been nice to get mad and condemn them for everything that has gone wrong.

Last year was tough for a lot of other people and me. I could go deeper and deeper, but I would only end up digging up a hole too big for your understanding. 2021 made me realize so many things about myself, and I'm grateful for that. It also showed me a taste of rocky roads and hardships.

At the beginning of my conscience stream, I mentioned not being able to bloom and only wilting, but as the days go by, I think I'll end up being the flower I imagined.