

CHAPTER-3

LOCK DOWN: LIFE WITHIN FOUR WALLS



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You never expect to be in the middle of a storm. It's always something you hear of happening to others. You are only a spectator. However, 2020 had different plans. This storm did not differentiate between people. It took over everyone and everything. It was in February that articles about COVID-19 became more and more frequent. With every passing day, it inched closer to home. A few weeks later it was right in the neighborhood. The fear of 'this time it actually could be me' took over. My company and especially my team were one of the firsts to allow their employees to work from home. I packed a tiny bag with only my essentials and headed to my parents' home the very next day. While turning off the lights at my place, I expected to be back in a week. While sitting in the bus, I had my first ever 'Is he/she infected' thought. Suddenly, I was conscious of everything or person I was coming in contact with. Even then, I had no idea what was in store for us. Before I knew it, a lockdown was declared. However, sitting in the house for weeks together seemed very doable. Being a person who

always enjoyed staying back home to read, binge on TV shows and to eat some comfort food, I believed that this was something I could even enjoy. I immersed myself in books. Reading them transported me to another world, a world where going out for a cup of coffee did not seem risky. With my nose buried in books all the time, it seemed like a nice change of pace; doing it in my pajamas only made it better. When books did not seem to hold my attention, I always had various streaming platforms come to my rescue. The art out there sometimes makes me giddy. So many things to watch and such little time – but not anymore. Slowly but surely, I stopped missing the outside world. It came as a relief to be able to have a break from the constant honking and terrible pollution. I found time to work on myself – both physically and mentally. As a family we were always tight-knit. However, the demands of our jobs had us in different states and spending time with family was just about weekends. With the lockdown, we were all together again. The conversations over dinner table or on the couch were

back. Card games and movie nights were back. This would have never happened, had life not given us this jolt. The one thing this lockdown made very obvious was how far we had come in terms of ensuring that comfort was everything to us. Anything you could ever want was just a click of a button away. You could actually lead your life within four walls and have everything you need delivered to you. Everything but warmth and affection, which only comes from socializing. Humans are social beings. Having to stay indoors for months together – even if it is for survival – does impact your physical and mental health. I began to miss the honking and the pollution even. Soon, days merged into each other and there was nothing that would differentiate one day from the other. There was no end in sight. It was too much to think that maybe this is what life is going to be like. Being right in the middle of a pandemic is not something anybody expects. So, there is no blueprint for you to follow. Taking every day as it comes, gets old really soon. Having my baby niece at home, who was taken out

only for Doctor's appointments, had the entire family be extra cautious. This meant that the roadside stalls selling some of my favorite food were also off-limits. Eating clean for 7 months was never a plan but I'm glad it happened some way or the other. Months passed and things changed a bit. Going out for fun was not an easy option anymore, but the rules were relaxed, and everybody was expected to make smart decisions. Finally, as a family, we decided to go out for drives, every Saturday evening. Seeing people out on the streets created an illusion of things being back to normal. Although the masks that people wore always brought me back to reality, it seemed like a small price to pay. Getting some fresh air, meeting friends while maintaining some distance, reminded me of the life we all used to have. It gave me hope that things will get better and that we will survive this. The entire experience with this pandemic has also taught me gratitude. The fact that I am coming from a place of privilege does not elude me. I have the luxury to see the silver lining. I have a sense of security. There is

nothing I have to worry about, except the virus itself. I have a stable job, a home, and the resources to lead my life in the most normal way possible. I am painfully aware of the things we took for granted, on a daily basis. To meet new people, to catch up with old friends, to sit in a crowded restaurant and still enjoy the food – these opportunities do not come by easily anymore. However, people really experiencing pain are those who lost someone to this pandemic, some who never even got to say goodbye. Also, the ones that lost their livelihood, their homes, are among those to have seen the worst side of this pandemic. So maybe in some way, this storm does discriminate. It is harder for some people. Having to battle this virus has taught us to always be cautious and prepared. Dealing with loss and instability has made us stronger. Now, we do have a blueprint to follow in case history is to repeat itself. The health professionals, who have given so much to the society already, will have a better chance of winning against this. Although we are trying our best to get back to the lives we all were suddenly pulled out

of, this is not the end of it. Some things have changed forever. However, humans have been through similar and maybe worse situations and we always find a way. We are in that phase right now – going through the maze, finding new ways to reach our goals. Maybe a reboot is indeed what some of us need.