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### An Extended Vacation

Trizha Loren Aquino

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# An Extended Vacation

Trizha Loren Aquino '21  
Student

“International Flights Suspended in the Philippines” was the title of the article I saw on Twitter.

I pretty much expected it, just a week before the UK government announced that they would stop all international flights and a number of other countries followed suit.

But still, my heart dropped from seeing the news. Two weeks ago my parents had left for the Philippines to visit my lola (Tagalog for “grandmother”). I immediately went to call my parents, I expected them to be asleep because of the 13 hour time difference, but my mom picked up.

“Did you hear the news?” I asked.

Completely ignoring my question she responded, “Anak, they blocked off all the roads” she continued to explain how roadblocks have been set up throughout the province to prevent people from traveling in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID. “We don’t know how we’re going to get home.”

For the next couple of days, my family and I worked together to find a way to get them on the last international flight back to America. It took my parents two flights, a bus, and a boat to get to my lola, but the roadblocks made it almost impossible to make it back to an international airport. My mom was continuously calling the airport and the U.S. Embassy to find available tickets while I constantly checked a bunch of travel websites for flights that had vacant seats.

My parents and I would continue to update each other with our progress. I tried to lighten the mood by saying they could take a longer vacation, but the uncertainty of the pandemic at the time made it hard for us to accept that as an option.

Eventually, my mom got in touch with the secretary of the Department of Transportation in the Philippines. With the help of the U.S. Embassy and the DOT, my parents were able to pass all the checkpoints needed to get back to the airport and I felt like I could finally take a sigh of relief.

Unfortunately, it was only the beginning of their extended vacation. My parents needed to self isolate for 14 days, so they stayed in my aunt’s AirBnB. For two weeks I had to drive back and forth between my house and their temporary home to drop off new clothes, appliances, and groceries. I’d leave what my parents needed at the doorstep, knock on the door, and quickly run back to my car before they opened it.

“We’re so close yet so far!” my mom yelled at me from the entrance. “I know, it’s like some kind of TV drama or something!” I yelled back.

We continued to joke about how their two-week vacation became two weeks and two days, then three weeks, then a month. Although everything worked out in the end, the beginning of the pandemic was the most exhausted I’ve ever felt. I needed to balance taking care of my parents and little sister along with trying to finish all my finals.

After their isolation period was over and their tests came back negative, my parents finally came back home safe and sound. I wish I could say that I powered through a tough time in my life, but after a year of being in the pandemic, I still feel tired.

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