

The Next Adventure?
#4 –Genre: Christian fiction, 936 words
Barbara Ertl

Barbara has been a scribbler since grade school days in Wisconsin. Later she wrote feature articles for the local newspaper and published a monthly newsletter for the medical auxiliary of a Milwaukee hospital.

Transplanting to Texas after retirement she took many of Jan Seale's writing classes and joined Seale's writers' group. She has been published in one of Seale's anthologies.

Currently she has written two books for her own sense of accomplishment and is now writing short stories in the Christian genre.

She is a member of Roda's RGV Writers' Connection. She decided to do this because she enjoys the challenge to blend her talent with other members of the group. She found it fun and good practice.

After learning as much as she could from TV, Mary decided there would be no safe place next to a swimming pool for her. The safe place would be home after every precaution had been taken. Images of gowned and goggled people rushing through hospitals swam through her head. Long lines of people seeking unemployment compensation, seeking food outside grocery stores, seeking tests for the virus were frightening to her. Nothing in her life had prepared her for this; a pandemic, as it was being called. She liked new experiences and often called them adventures, but wasn't sure in which category a pandemic would fit.

Struggling for calm she grasped for a simple, everyday activity to soothe her. Coffee! She hadn't had her morning quota yet and she would certainly think better after she did. Breakfast was out of the question for now but brought up another question. How was she set for groceries?

Quickly opening one door after another, checking the cabinet's contents, she decided her situation wasn't bad. A check of the refrigerator was also reassuring. What else? If she was going to be here for two weeks, or a month, or whatever, she had to be prepared.

Remembering her earlier thoughts, she didn't want to hide, and had to accept she was not the type to be cooped up either. She was used to working, being busy which meant she had to find something to do besides listening to podcasts and the news. After all, she was young, healthy, and reasonably intelligent.

She headed to her laptop to begin a search. For what? What logical need could she find now? Volunteer somewhere? A hospital? A nursing home? She cringed at those thoughts. Old people were not exactly her thing, Mrs. Vargas notwithstanding. She again pictured what she'd seen on TV. How could she, with no training, find a place in the confusion at a hospital?

Maybe she was kidding herself. Maybe staying right here was the best thing to do.

Her phone sang its happy, answer-me song and she reached for it gratefully, anything to give her something else to think about. Her phone identified Sylvia as the caller.

"Good morning, Sylvia. What's new with you?" Mary filled the coffee maker with water as she spoke.

"Are you nuts? What's good about it?" Sylvia's frame of mind was obvious.

"It's good we're here and able to talk on the phone this morning, don't you think?" Mary spooned grounds into the maker's basket.

“Have you seen the news this morning? It’s horrible. We can’t work; we can’t go anywhere, especially not San Antonio on any sort of vacation. We may have been exposed to a terrible virus without knowing it.”

“I’ve seen the news and I agree getting into a car and driving anywhere would be irresponsible. I was just beginning a battle with myself as to what I could do which might be helpful.”

“Helpful?! You mean leave your safe home and go to expose yourself somewhere? Staying home would be most helpful. Sit on your hands and be scared like the rest of us. I repeat, you’re nuts if you’re considering anything else.”

“Thank you for those kind words. I am checking my laptop as we speak for something to be done at home. Maybe I could call old folks to see if they’re all right or need anything. I don’t know what I can do but there must be something.” Mary took a deep breath, waiting for her coffee maker to give a final burp.

“I’m sure there is but do you want to get involved?” Sylvia’s voice was harsh.

“Involved? Well, why not? I’m young, strong, healthy; who better than me to want to help?”

“You sound like my mother. She’s writing up a list for me to make a grocery run. I’m not looking forward to it.”

“Maybe check with your neighbors before you go and see if you can get something for them, too. Your hunky boyfriend, Zach, could help. I’ll bet he’s not working.”

“You’re right. Now my conscience is beginning to bother me,” Sylvia’s tone of voice had changed and become hopeful. “Let’s keep in touch, right?”

“Of course, we will. You have a good heart, Sylvia. I know you’ll do some good. Take care and keep safe. Bye, now.”

Mary poured the much-needed coffee and started reading the web page she’d found. It featured an article on making your own mask, instead of searching fruitlessly at Walgreen’s. Ha! She had her mom’s old sewing machine and some leftover material from her mom’s quilting days. She would need elastic but thought it might also be in her mom’s box of sewing notions.

Her dear mom—three years since she died and Mary still missed her like yesterday. Leaving the coffee, she hurried to her guest room closet where she found the notions box. Kneeling on the floor, she pulled it out and easily found elastic and several yards of heavy cotton material. She would print out the instructions and start calling around to find those who could use masks.

Mary smiled thinking her mother would approve of what she was going to do and fondly recalled her Mom’s mantra, “Trust in the Lord and don’t fret, He ain’t let me down yet!” It would be her new mantra!

Mary remembered how her Mom had also said, with a cheeky grin, to face life with a sense of adventure because who knew what was around the next corner.

She clearly heard her mother’s voice from the ethers. “And where will this new adventure lead you?”