

Letter from a Virus

Dear citizens of earth,
I need you to stand, sit or lie down -
to listen to my voiceless words.
You have seen me appear
as a whisper and then flare up like
an inferno across a dried-out grassland.
In days, weeks at most months,
your lives have been upended,
the existence you have known,
all but dismembered.

Charts that track my passage
look like split drops of deep
red wine, spreading, blurring
and blotting out counties,
countries and continents.
Wuhan, then Wellington, Wyoming -
even Waterval Boven.

Some of you have started
by disregarding me -
'It's just another flu, it will soon pass'.
You will soon be invited, begged and then
finally ordered - to stop connecting,
communing and coalescing.
Your stubborn pride will make
some of you resist, until my
irrevocable passage becomes clear.
Only as those around you start to
suffer, some even to the point of
passing away - will you finally start

to hear me.

You will realise that I'm here
to challenge, question and redefine
what relationship and connection
mean in your existence as humanity.
You will be ordered into lockdown,
because you don't take me
seriously enough at first.

So predictable as a species,
you will reject, rebel and re-reason
what is right in front of you.
Some nights you will weep, or rage
or curse, but none of this will deviate me
from my truly intended purpose.

Yet finally, once you heed me
and your doors, gates and cities
close down, strange things will occur.
You will, tentatively at first, start to
genuinely reach out to those around you.
Family members you have ignored,
friends you neglected, children or
parents you vowed never to speak to -
all the reasons for these, long forgotten.

You'll start to question the systems,
societies and institutions you have
simply subsumed yourselves into.
As parents you'll wish you'd
spent more time with your children,
instead of chasing security and sustenance.

As children you'll regret how your own lives had begun to matter more than, stopping to remember and honour the parents and elders, who'd conceived you and made your existence and identity even possible.

Whatever your age, WhatsApp, Skype, Zoom and an endless procession of acronyms will become your new ways of meeting and bonding. Strangely, these digital conversations will be occur with much more meaning and sincerity than many of those you had face-to-face.

As team members you'll look at screens of faces during digital meetings and truly see, listen and connect in ways you never could before. You will start to wonder about and care for how your neighbours really are. You will leave your houses, when permitted, to gaze at the bluer sky, smell the trees you never could before - and sense the beauty of silence around you.

Satellite pictures of polluted cities will look like they'd been scoured clean. Fish will begin to swim in seas, rivers and waterways they had vanished from - even under the empty canal bridges of Venice. Forests will begin to breathe again,

their trees reaching up from their
cowered forms, to embrace the sun.

Organisations that sold ego and other poisons
will collapse, replaced by those that
serve community and build meaning.
You will begin to honour the forgotten
professions of farming, nursing
and teaching - including those called by
their souls to clean your houses and streets.

Music, poetry, reading and art will
be remembered as sources of inspiration,
rather than just investments.
You will truly understand that you
are not individuals but part of a much
greater whole, that you never saw before.
In weeks, months - or years, the earth
will become another World.

And then, as silently as I came -
like a previous cousin of mine, Spanish Flu -
I will vanish. You committed when
that pandemic came, to change,
yet soon afterwards you drifted
into a societal amnesia.
I just hope that you don't forget
what I've been sent here to teach you.
Don't disremember who I am,
or why I was born.