

Notes from a Quarantine

by Joey Delgado

Enzymes

I enjoy learning about enzymes. In the human body, they're catalysts. They interfere, breaking substances down so they may be sent on their way to accomplish a task. Imagine a cluster of construction workers; shit-talking, cat-calling dames, engaging in mildly (or not-so mildly) homoerotic roughhousing. The construction workers of my mind seem to be lifted from the machismo portrayal—or what passes for it—in musical theatre. Okay, *you* picture a group of construction workers; skilled, sufficiently equipped, but accomplishing nothing. Enter the foreman. He delegates. One is sent to hang drywall, one to the circular saw, one to a Village People cover band, and before you know it you have properly hung drywall, evenly cut 2x4s, and a terrible rendition of 'Y.M.C.A.' Enzymes are not unlike foremen.

Most people are familiar with the Coronavirus' structure. Magnified, it looks like an orange studded with cloves. As it happens, a clove-studded orange is something medieval people used to mask the smell of a decomposing body, one ravaged by that notorious 14th century whore, Bubonia. (Look at that, I'm just another man negatively anthropomorphizing a tragic world event into a woman, making that woman a whore, and making that whore into a destructor. Perhaps a few months quarantine-influenced self-reflection is exactly what I need.)

The physiology of the Coronavirus is also interesting. You see, those “cloves” are actually two-pronged spikes which allow the virus to attach to its host. As you may have read, there are different strains of Coronavirus. Some give you the sniffles, some total respiratory failure. What makes this novel Coronavirus so novel is the ease with which it proliferates, and it all has to do with the cloves, er, spikes.

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The bond holding the prongs together is quite unstable, easily broken by an enzyme called *furin*, which sounds so much like *fury*. The breaking of the spikes is what allows the virus to replicate. Unfortunately for us, furin is ready and waiting at every level of tissue in the human body. So, with this little bastard, this virus, our mutual fiend, we don't get properly hung drywall or evenly cut 2x4s—we get a horrifying cover of 'Y.M.C.A.'

[Author's Note: I make no promises regarding the accuracy of the science in this writing. This is 2020, however, and accuracy is not required, and on several occasions, not wanted.]

Sex

None. No interest.

People are expecting a Boomer-esqe baby explosion to come out of the quarantine. It's probably true, but I don't understand it. I've never felt less sexy or less interested in sex in my life. Boredom may be a powerful aphrodisiac, but I'm more worried than bored, and worry does nothing for me.

Aren't Boomers the product of a kind of celebratory sex? Soldiers came home and bedded their partners and were promised education and affordable housing and family values. The resulting babies were born into a world somewhat prepared for their arrival, born into a country where the government was building their futures. What will happen to babies born in a future we can't even fathom with a government who couldn't care less?

...which brings me to **Politics**

"We shouldn't politicize the moment. We need to come together, separately, and that'll make us stronger, and we'll beat this invisible enemy," says every Pollyanna you're friends with on Facebook.

When there's so clearly a political divide in the response to the pandemic, and no doubt a political divide in how we rebuild in its wake, what good is it to not acknowledge the politics of it all? A person's politics are not like their race, their gender, their sexual orientation. It's not some implacable human characteristic developed in utero. It's learned and malleable; influenced by parents and peer groups, by education and information and history. We always include a person's creed to a list of things—race, gender, creed—which will not be used against us when we're pursuing our own personal happiness. But what do we do if a creed is harmful? Destructive? Selfish? I'm not suggesting anything drastic like violence or mistreatment--nothing like that. I'm suggesting acknowledgement. This crisis will, hopefully, change the way we look at health care, the economy, and the importance of science. A universal healthcare system may have been useful. Government spending on a safety net for a future that isn't war may have been useful. If we instilled in everyone at an early age a respect, or a kind of secular piety, to science instead of mythology there might have been less spring breaking or Sunday morning congregating.

“We shouldn't politicize a tragedy,” says Pollyanna.

The fuck we shouldn't.

