

Lockdown

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This rain fits. It fits the dull, bleak swarm of Melbourne winter. It fits my growing bitterness and sits well with the anxiety that this time, it will be worse.

I live in a place without education. Yellow vests, tacky tattoos and dark eyes live all around me. The local supermarket carpark has old potholes, misplaced beer bottles and anger.

This writing, this time I'm taking from my kids, from moving house, from my own life is borne out of this mute rage from visiting there to buy the essentials. My lockdown pantry is terrible; prefab, packaged shit. Grab it and eat it stuff. I don't do daily walks. I've started smoking. Like most of us, the standards of daily living have slipped a bit to make room for our dogged perseverance.

I drive very slowly in the carpark at my supermarket. If someone cuts me off, I don't react. If the bawling of people with deranged hair cuts my walk, I don't react. I never engage in potential danger.

It seems though, that those who are the least imbued with the necessary knowledge to manage a pandemic are those who carry the greatest weapons against our efforts. Their hot, steaming bilge spewing out in protests, in stores to frightened assistants, in places where the elderly are trying to simply buy the paper, cuts through the managed calm with viral efficiency. It is more dangerous now than ever.

Through the calm procession of people trying to get home to kids, they fester themselves on all the things that protect us, breathing on our collective poise, the time we need to gather the information necessary just to go to the shops.

Many of us now dread going into crowded spaces. The planning and things we need are so new; wipes, sanitizer, masks....I never seem to remember the coin for the trolley anymore and quite frankly, a basketful is enough. The time to make choices, to choose nice cheese or select a decent loaf of crusty bread is gone. White bread, Cocoa Pops and like many of us, wine. I occasionally leave my kids in the car with iPads and ten-minute promises as they don't understand that right now, touching things could kill them or others.

I hear about the planned protest on the 24th of July and I wonder- how many of these vigilantes go home to young families or sick parents? Do they have a child with cystic fibrosis? Do they use their asthma preventer medication before they go? I feel like the people who attend these are the lone wolves, surrounded by their pack, calling us others sheep because we fear this disease. They themselves have zero insight into how hard this is. How could they? They're out, whilst we stay at home protecting our families.

My growing anger I'm sure is shared with others. Before it was frustration and bemusement, but now I feel angry. These people are killing our chances by infecting social media with cherry-picked anecdotes and memes. They use derision and contempt for not only this illness, but the families of those who are vulnerable. They call science a thing of profit, of agenda.

In time, of course, they will learn. The herd will thin out as they see the awful disease slink through Melbourne and into their homes. They will go quiet. In the meantime, though, this rain fits. It hides the sun and dampens nice things. We will get through this, we just need to drive with care.