Message From the Bubble

Love in the Time of COVID19

A fine pal suggested I offer some strategies for Boredom Immunity as we endure our varying degrees of lock down and isolation. I doubt I have anything useful to suggest, but why let that stop me, right?

It hardly seems real. Unless you are one of the people on the front lines of our current predicament, the whole thing has a fuzzy cast to it. Like a piano slightly out of tune, just off enough that is not quite cringe-inducing, but far enough from harmonious to make it a little hard to take. Occasional moments of wincing at wave forms that do not quite align, the urge to stop and play a passage or chord over again to try to determine what is wrong. And then over time, the off notes start to sound more or less okay, what was the problem anyway?

We have been locked up for how long now? A week or two, for most, maybe a month for the more anticipatory/paranoid among us. Time goes mushy: Is it Friday or Tuesday? Sunday, you say. What difference?

For us – me and my enfeebled immune system and Stanwyck and the dogs – life under CV19 is really just a sharpened continuation of the practices of the past year. We have been practicing social distancing since before it was cool. Or cruel. A tad more intensely diligent, but really just more of the same. Keep your distance. Wear your mask if you have to go

out. And really, do you need to go out after all?

I know things are different now. Our friends in the medical world – including the heroes who helped keep me alive over the past year – are up against some serious trouble. A few scattered friends have been sick, or are very sick, or have even died. Our kids are scattered from mid-Florida to north Vermont, riding out the plague in their own fashion, afraid to come home because they are afraid they might kill me. (This alone cuts with so many sharp edges.) My elderly parents face isolation and uncertainty along with the litany of medical issues they brought with them to this era.

Aside from phone calls and Zooming (a new verb for our time), I am not much use to any of them. We talk, commiserate, hope for better times.

And yet…

A friend posted a lovely drawing on Facebook today with a comment that she had a wonderful day yesterday, and that fact made her feel a tad guilty. Piffle, says me, the world needs joy to survive, so have as many good days as you can. Good days had may serve as counterweight to the blazing shit show raging around us.

Or so I like to believe.

Because lo and behold…Most of my days over the past month have been good, some even very good. We are in the blush of Spring, the best weather of the year here America's most penis-shaped state. I have a nice home – free of mold, bless you all! – and a pantry full of food. I have books and music. And dogs. And most of all, Stanwyck.

Lou and Mimi

I spent the past year saying “Rob is the luckiest boy in the world”. And I meant it. Now, I feel even luckier. Most folks don’t have it so good.

People living alone or living with one or more people they do not really like. Having toddlers who need care, feeding, stimulation, and someone who can explain what is going on in a way that reassures, yet is honest and real. All while trying to not lose the proverbial shit in the face of what is probably the single biggest crisis most of us have ever seen.

Teens – and their parents – who are sick to death of the four walls and however many family members from which they cannot seem to escape. I cannot imagine how dire it must feel for everyone involved.

Worse: People stuck in toxic and abusive conditions. People who were at best day-to-day survivors, now out of work and money and wondering how to survive. People still at work and

risking exposure to a potentially-lethal virus doing the jobs we need them to do to keep the barest level of society functioning. People who were largely considered unskilled workers until all this happened, people who are now deemed “essential” to keeping the machine running.

I think about these folks every day, feel grief and despair for their plight.

And yet…

I still enjoy my days in semi-solitude. I revel in the absence of schedule and deadline and hurry up here and there. I am content to sit and stare at the sky for long stretches. After a year in which it was often all I could do, I have come to appreciate such a simple, basic activity.

But it is not for everyone. Stanwyck, bless her, has a dozen endeavors underway. The house is a maelstrom of sewing machines and laptop workstations and studio projects. She meets with friends via Zoom nearly every day, calls her Mom every day. I think she has mostly good days.

But the weight from ‘out there’ exerts force, creeps into dreams, disrupts easy slumber. We do not try to deny it. But given the measure of control we have in regard to the creeping beast, we try to not dwell and brood.

We do the best we can. It’s all any of us can strive for.

So, maybe a few ideas for how to build up some immunity to the tedium?

1. Avoid watching the wall to wall coverage of the crisis, especially if the criminal president is speaking. Read a few decent news sources every day and set it aside. Nothing is going to change in the course of an hour or a day or between a show’s A block and B block.
2. Try to establish a relationship with quiet and

stillness. If you can, cultivate Silence as a friend, whatever that might mean to you. Counter-intuitive tip: You can experience Silence even when your environment is howling like a tea kettle.
3. Read. Or write. Or draw/paint/play an instrument. A little goes a long way.
4. Move your body. Anything helps: sit to stand from a chair ten times and stretch your arms overhead. Or dance. Or jump up and down. Just move.
5. Eat well, drink moderately (or even not at all, if you wish). You do not have to be a fanatic. Just take it easy if you can.
6. If you can't, and you go on a spree, don't sweat it. Forgive yourself your transgressions.
7. Notice. The stuff that you like and the stuff you don't. Just pay attention. The blog contends that if you are bored, it means you are not paying attention. Find something worth paying attention to.
8. And most of all, and you know what's coming next doncha, you've been here before and it seems to still be the key for getting through whatever demented plot twist the cosmic scriptwriters throw our way…

Love Each Other, Motherfuckers!

It matters a difference.