



## The Coronavirus Collective A Perfect Storm

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It was apparently a perfect storm.

A virus, a seeming nonentity with no sign of life, only recognisable by its genetic code, ever-mutating to perfection. It assumes a deadly sequence that wins the top prize for evolution- a successful mission of self-preservation like no other. Inevitably finding its way from wildlife into humanity, learning from the mistakes of its predecessors and mutating to ensure it survives. Nestling in the throat, undetected for days, enough to allow the hapless human to spread it around and then proceed in full throttle to attack its benefactor, till the very last breath is squeezed out of their hypoxic, inflamed and congealed bodies.

The deluge of victims matched the deluge of ideas to combat it - stories of scientific valour and rigour, of international collaboration and back breaking work so doctors learnt what to expect, people learnt how to behave, nations learnt how to prepare. And yet, nothing prepares you for a pandemic. Faced with a killer virus that creeps into unsuspecting victims and spreads like wildfire, people and countries did glorious and despicable things.

Humanity showed itself at its best and its worst. Some countries rattled their sabres to get the lion's share, others decided to defy convention, some others simply sped on rudderless, with self-serving narcissist leaders who should have known better. We heard stories from the East where societies came together with expediency and humility to protect their peoples. We heard stories from the West where learned experts

were ignored, lies were propagated, and morgues were overwhelmed.

And yet, for all its grand sweeping reach, the virus is personal. To me, it started with news from China, stories of stifled voices and whistleblower deaths. Then came the Italian and Spanish stories of full ITUs, the gasping elderly and infested care homes. And finally, it arrived closer to home. And the stories got worse. The death-collage of smiling faces on TV expanded daily, mostly of men not dissimilar to the one I love. Every morning's goodbye before work felt like it might be the last.

And then, suddenly, I was struck. It came unannounced- no familiar prodrome of known viral illnesses. And while I lay in my sick bed, with drenching sweats, back pain and heavy breath, days passed, more deaths announced, and yet more heart-breaking stories of personal loss emerged.

I have lost 6 weeks of my life to the virus. Nothing more. And for that I am grateful. Grateful that I am allowed to live, grateful that I did not pass it on my more vulnerable husband. I am saddened by the misery it has brought to billions. I am angered by the ineptitude of callous governments driven by self-interest. I am awed by the selflessness and hard work of countless ordinary citizens risking their lives and carrying on serving against all odds. And I am hopeful that we will emerge from this with more humility and respect for everything we share our precious planet with.