

“Noisome Pestilence”

by Chiamaka Emezie

*“Any moment might be our last. Everything is more beautiful because we are doomed. You will never be lovelier than you are now. We will never be here again.”*

*-Homer, The Iliad*

The noisome pestilence comes without warning the way death doesn't knock when it comes to take breaths away. It comes into our lives and suddenly everything is on deadline. Everything starts and ends on its say so. *This is the last day you will come here until further notice. This is the last time you will see them until further notice. You are here now and will not know when you will return.*

With it comes the serpent. The serpent snakes its way into you, wrapping and curling itself against your mind. It digs its teeth into your head and pulls at all the emotion. It reminds you how helpless you are, how the things you thought you had control of are now uncontrollable. It says you are weak and useless. That *this* is life now. You trying to run away when there is nowhere to go. It's causing a ruckus in the kitchen to drown out your own thoughts because the symphony of glass and metal is preferable to the dark that sits with you. It's locking yourself in the garage during a nasty, anxious-filled breakdown so your mother doesn't hear you moaning, *“Oh my God, I feel like I'm falling apart”* over and over again because it feels like your prayers aren't making it anywhere past the roof.

If love could fight the wars of pestilence would there be enough to win? In this apocalypse eyes have been washed and we all see how the minuscule things aren't loved enough. *Leaving your home every morning, a kiss goodbye, a secret smile in the hallway, hugs, seeing your family and friends.* The noisome pestilence waves what we now reminisce before our eyes and it whispers, *If chivalry was to save the world, we are all now breathing our last.* Now, I go where food is sold to eat and the sun hits my skin from the windows of the car and I love its warmth. The way

the light hits my brown skin so that when I look down at it I see gold on gold. I go hold my mother more. I eat slower to savor every sweet, bitter, or spicy taste because I am still alive although everything looks to be ending. And in the night my eyes water because it is when I ache for the world the most. *I am still alive*. Loved ones are dropping dead as I sleep and the noisome pestilence is swimming into their insides as I rise awake. *I am still alive*. And when correspondence or phone calls come from the people I love most I cry because it means that pestilence overlooked them. And I cry because it means that it has found someone else. Someone who, in another life perhaps, I too could have loved. Each moment is a moment we may never get back again.

The pestilence will be taught to my children one day. They will learn of the people who risked their lives each day to save the lives of others and that selflessness is a risky, deep love. They will learn the way their mother cried for the world and learn that when she loves she loves really hard. They will learn the numbers of deaths that rose each day. They will learn that when we are alive in any moment that we are only alive then because we don't know if the next moment will welcome us.

The noisome pestilence shows us with the serpent and darkness what Mark Samsonovich meant by "*Nature Knows No Kings*". The king of the jungle doesn't even know that he's the king of the jungle because he doesn't know what a king is. He knows blood which is universal. The pestilence is taking lives all the same now just as it has done in history before. Just as it will one day do again.

*And I suffer for it.*

*My loves suffer for it.*

*The whole world suffers for it and aches.*

*And here I lay, alive.*