

Cruel

Some things in life are a nuisance. They get under your skin and make you want a flame thrower for your birthday. Some things are inconvenient and cause you to lose entire seconds in your busy day. Some things are disappointing and nobody wants to be disappointed, especially in these disappointing times. Other things are disgusting or infuriating, like finding a hair in your potato salad. Still others are confusing, like a government website. And some things are just plain cruel.

Cruel.

We normally associate this with human behavior. It implies a conscious act to hurt or in some way cause distress to others. It could be one person taking something precious away from another person or a group of people exterminating another group of people. It's the opposite of kind and it's in the realm of human nature...a feeling about feelings.

Forces of nature though, like hurricanes and twisters, devastate large swaths of land indiscriminately. Earthquakes devour entire towns and villages with no apologies. Floods wash away homes and lives without looking back and a volcano took out Pompeii.

Wind, earth, water and fire. These are the things of survival and doom.

But we error in calling them cruel. That insinuates that they've *consciously* caused all this pain and suffering rather than being tossed randomly onto life's crazy game board by life's crazy game.

Natural catastrophes scatter our lives *without* intent even though, at times, they seem purposely spiteful like the twister that takes your house but not your neighbor's, the flood that washes away the house you moved into last week. But there's no blame to be placed, nothing to point a finger at and say, "That twister had it in for me."

A twister is a twister...a temporary condition of the wind.

Until we make it more than a twister...until we give it a *will* to harm by turning it into a creature. And once it's a creature, it can *feel* our fear and anguish. It's not just a random unfeeling object passing terribly through our lives. It's almost like we have something that's suddenly accountable and deserving of our blame. Something we can point at and say, "You bastard."

I'm seeing this more and more with COVID19 as it disrupts, kills and paralyzes people's lives with a vengeance. See that? I gave it a human characteristic: the act of revenge. But a coronavirus doesn't feel anything like revenge. It's just a really lousy guest that sickens or kills its host.

But it's a living organism, not a mindless tsunami pushed by a mindless underwater earthquake. It has genetics...cells and ticky-tacky...the stuff of life. The stuff of a creature.

It's alive.

So we can call it cruel because we like to think that living things have purpose and intent. It kills our loved ones because it's an asshole. It puts us out of business because it's a jerk. It raises the price of food and housing because it can. It gives us permanent scars and generates fear and mistrust, turning otherwise normal people into blathering suspicious idiots. It isolates us as it produces bad politics and bad leadership.

And it's everywhere, jumping on planes and buses and cruise ships like micro-crusaders out to convert the world to germ food, and it sounds like a lot of intent in there, especially when it has a travel plan through all the things that bring us together like airports, trains and celebration.

And some would say, "That's cruel."

Others would say, "That's life."

And still others would say, "Then life's cruel."

So there is it...life is out to kill us.

Just joking, Life isn't out to kill us...just the *things* in life.

There's both an attraction and a terror generated by the randomness of things, and maybe that's where the cruelty lies: no matter how deep you build a shield around yourself, that ten thousand pound weight is always there, hovering above you, trapped between attraction and terror, waiting for a random moment.

Or so it seems.

There's nothing cruel about it dropping on your head...you would just be in its way. And how cruel is that? You bastard. You're going to get in its way. But not really. There's no ten thousand pound weight and nothing is going to drop on your head. Unless you happen to accidentally walk under something that's randomly falling...something heavy, like a ten thousand pound truck.

But that's not going to happen. What's more likely to happen is...your printer will break down and give you an inexplicable error message and you'll see the printer as the enemy and destroy it

with a metal bat...while it's still plugged in. And they'll say you were killed by a printer, as though it were a creature waiting for you...venom sacks dripping with error messages.

Naw, that's not going to happen either.

I don't know what's going to happen. Nobody does. Some people think they do, but they're wrong. Ten thousand pound trucks will drop on all their heads and their last thought will be: *I was wrong. Biff was right.*



The coronavirus isn't cruel. It's just here...maiming and killing, isolating and turning us against ourselves like an ocean of sorrow washing away the best we can be.

And yes, *that's* cruel.