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creative writing
workshops

Genius!

by Saffron Swansborough

A 20 minute timed exercise

I've seen it time and again. They walk in from the lab in white coats stinking of sulphur, wiping down their special spectacles, taking them rubber bits off their shoe soles so they don't set fire to themselves in there, peeling off furnace-proof gloves and unlatching their nose-and-throat helmets. Then, without even a tea-break, they're projecting X-rays on the walls, dozens of them, looking for a fluorescent white glow so they can see how far it's spread and who by, cross-checking each other's patients' scans, overlapping the pictures where they think they have a match. Sequencing it: who's got it benign, who don't know they've got it, who's going to keel over.

That thing with air corridors last summer was genius. A cesspool for infection research. My scientists are now track-and-tracing it in the bodies because we can see the bloody thing now, flood the body and irradiate it. Mind you, you've still got to pay for parking at Brighton Hospital and it's a nightmare trying to get near the Radiation Unit. Still, it's amazing what they've done in a year.

I like to think I do my bit. Sterilizing all the door handles and punch door code units, that's my contribution to humanity. It takes a lot of time to do it properly, thoroughness, that's why the agency kept me on. Mind you, they don't know I'm a super-spreader. They keep blaming the youngsters. But some of us older ones want to build up a bit of resistance. When I'm here at night on my own, I dip my fingers in the test tubes before I go to the pub or supermarket. I'm helping my clever colleagues to get harped as geniuses for slowing down this odd mini-pandemic in Shoreham-by-Sea, where even a full Lockdown has had no effect.

So when my scientists get the Nobel Prize for the most accurate Coronavirus detection system in the world, I'll sit back and say to myself Thank You! Thank You! It was really nothing.