

THE ATTACK OF THE COVID MONSTER

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I should've known that there was something strange about the week of March 13th, 2020. There was an eerie and sinister feeling in the atmosphere as I made my way to school. I couldn't really put my finger on it, but I just knew that something unexpected was going to happen. And then at last! On Thursday, March 12th of 2020, schools around the city began to shut down due to the coronavirus. It took a lot of my classmates by surprise. We were all aware of the virus, but we didn't know it was this serious. My school, Academy at Palumbo, was one of the schools in the city that remained open on March 12th. The chatter of discomfort and concern ran rampant through the halls of the crowded school building. People were taking the seriousness of the coronavirus too lightly. A lot of students were only upset that we weren't one of the schools who had off, rather than caring about a virus rapidly spreading. By Friday, March 13th 2020, many were hoping to not have to go to school, but some schools still insisted that it was a mandatory school day. I wish I could say that being safe from the virus was the only thing on my mind, but all that wandered around my brain was disdain for the fact that my chemistry teacher was absent and my class was unable to complete our lab. I was complicit in undermining COVID-19's consequences and took after those completely ignorant about the situation. When school was let out that day, the feeling of uneasiness crept its way back as I had to endure the fact that March 13th, 2020 was my unofficial last day of school.

I was hurt, confused, upset, and angry all at once. Is this how serious COVID was? I wasn't the only kid feeling perplexed about the current actions. Teens across the nation let out their pent-up frustration through the app TikTok. It was there we were able to all reassure each other that we weren't alone in this. We were even able to make jokes about the situation. For example, the graduating class of 2020 had lost their privilege of prom, graduation, and more. It was more disheartening than funny, but the humor masked the true feelings of the situation well. After being snatched away from the rest of our school year and having everything be moved online, it's safe to assume that Generation Z became numb and wanted to be doused in humor. However, it didn't matter what we wanted.

COVID was a wake-up call and how everyone first responded spoke a lot about character. In China, the government responded quickly with extreme lockdowns to help mitigate the chance of the virus spreading. South Korea quickly built hundreds of screening clinics to successfully test their citizens. New Zealand dealt with the vicious gene strand by hurriedly banning flights, restricting flight returns, and undergoing immediate self-isolation upon arrival. Meanwhile, in America, we have a president who, like many of his citizens, undermined the seriousness of COVID and implemented too lenient restrictions on flights and lockdowns. In the United States, we have to deal with those that don't want to partake in lockdowns or wear masks because of their "constitutional rights" and disdain of having to participate in "tyrannical practices." Ultimately, these are not the voices of most Americans, but it is certainly because of these people and others that don't want to believe in coronavirus' seriousness, that we are left as one of the top countries with the highest COVID cases. Many aren't being tested so the true number is even higher and seeing all this happen globally has left a lot of Gen Z teens feeling embarrassed that this is the current state of our country. Not only do we lose complete normalcy of going to school, we also have to deal with unnecessary defiant "constitutionalists," and an inability to know who truly has COVID and who doesn't.

It's safe to say America has responded horribly to the monster of COVID and it says a lot about our character as a nation. I was right to feel uneasy about the week of March 13th. It was the beginning of a lot more shocks to follow. P-ebt cards, stimulus and unemployment checks, online schooling, online AP tests, cancellations of summer jobs and programs, etc. There's a lot to take in and respond to with COVID. Who knows? Maybe America's recklessness will do us some good in the future? Or maybe the change in school setting will remain permanent? There's so much to unfold and so much to learn. Maybe then, America won't be afraid of the COVID monster that awaits under our bed.

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