

Unprecedented

Airports always bring out the worst in me. Even in the before times I would get riled up and aggressive, pushing past the zombie-like idiots and their slack-jawed kids on the auto walk, griping at waitstaff about the price of drinks, muttering darkly at any dawdling fool that crossed my path. Now, looking back at the small inconveniences I then perceived as monumental obstacles, I marvel at my intolerance. What I would give to go back to the day when the worst thing about travel was overpriced Chardonnay and slow service in the Duty Free. Wasn't I precious, whinging about a long queue for the toilet? What a luxurious complaint that seems compared to now, when all toilets in any public building or transport are closed due to the virus.

Lining up for the health check, I try to see if the testing will be done by human or automated. I am hoping for the human test which takes more time but is usually a bit more gentle. The "Robutt" was faster and impersonal but the mechanical error in Chicago had everyone on edge. Who wants to be anally swabbed to death? No one speaks in the queue, lost in their own thoughts. As we shuffle forward, I can hear the crinkle-crinkle sound of everyone's diapers.

It's a necessary indignity, these diapers. If I want to travel, or indeed do anything in this brave new world, that's the price I pay. I remember balking at the thought of grown people accepting these regulations in addition to filtered respirators, but as Noro 27 plowed through communities and was even found to be passed through flatulence, the new carbon paneled diapers were required by law. Even 2 years in, I am still not used to them, though they have made advancements to the design and fit. They still leave indents around my thighs and itch terribly, not to mention the discomfort of having to sit in your own mess for hours, but what else can you do on a 10 hour flight with no toilet.

I open my phone to get my code ready to scan, and scroll through the latest news. The falling birth rate numbers are the crisis du jour, and experts project an "elderly bulge" across the planet- an inverted age structure never before seen. Numb to another catastrophe, I shrug and switch over to a video of a cat in a sombrero doing the macarena. Who can blame the young people for not having children? How can you date in a diaper? How can you be sexy if the wrong fart from a stranger can kill you?

We all trudge forward in the line. I can see the cubicles now- it seems they used the old toilet stalls as partitions. It's a Robutt test- there is only one set of feet in each stall with pants around the ankles. I'm up next, and I grumpily start to unfasten my belt in anticipation.