

FRIDAY  
NIGHT

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#269



Well, that escalated quickly. Last week I wrote a zine by hand in a cabin in the woods and it ended up being about coronavirus rather than the other stuff that had happened that week, like going to see Dry Cleaning at Village Underground and going to see Robert Glasper at Lafayette. This seems to be something that's happening a lot at the moment, that all your conversations end up being about coronavirus whether or not you intended them to be, and whatever other exciting stuff is going on. Things seem very different this weekend. I guess it started at the studio on Tuesday, where A was coughing and sneezing a lot and eventually T, L and J all just left the studio and went to work somewhere else and were all pretty annoyed that A had decided to come in, which I'm not sure would normally be the case but maybe it would and I was just hyper-aware of it. On Wednesday at work, S told me that she would probably be working at home next week as she's in the high risk group and

was googling dongles as she doesn't have the internet. At my Pilates class, I found myself wondering about the yoga mat and when it had last been cleaned, even though I know that R, the teacher keeps them very clean. Then things stepped up a gear on Thursday. Work seemed to be ramping up towards closing and it was difficult to keep coming back with the party line that the college is following guidance from the government and NHS England to people who are concerned about coming in when there's no trust in the government and our prime minister is a massive bullshit artist. Planning for switching a bunch of stuff over to make it virtual instead of in person was a bit tricky too as I had a day of holiday the next day as I was doing this screening event. Actually, I thought, I hadn't heard from the organiser of the screening for a while, so I sent her a message asking if it was still going ahead and a few hours later I got an apologetic email from her saying that they

were sorry but they were going to cancel because of all the uncertainty but hopefully we could reschedule at some point down the line. I was a third disappointed, as it's been really difficult to try and find an audience for this film and I could see this one vanishing before my eyes, a third understanding because I had thought myself that it maybe it should be cancelled and that probably not many people would show up anyway? And a third relieved because it would mean that I didn't have to expose myself to the certain humiliation of public speaking. I decided to keep the day of holiday I was taking as who knows when it would be rescheduled, or what's going to happen and my throat was feeling a bit scratchy but maybe not enough to justify a sick day so I could just have a nice relaxing rest day. My boss told me to take my laptop home in case the campus was closed next week and I packed up my ergonomic mouse whilst I was at it. J, S, F and I had tickets to go see Moses Boyd at

the Electric in Brixton. We met up in the same bar that we'd met in before we went to see Sleater-Kinney a couple of weeks before. It was totally desolate but that could have been because there was some kind of party going on outside which turned out to be an event run by a charity where they were handing out trays of wine, so maybe people were just getting distracted by the free booze. We got something to eat and then as we were about to head over to the gig, J, who had been unusually quiet suddenly got really upset and tearful and went into a panic that she had a cough and by being out might be unwittingly putting people at risk. It was more anxiety than a concrete fear but we all understood it (I'd been thinking the same about my scratchy throat and trying to reconcile the two voices in my head that told me I was overreacting and the voice that told me I was being selfish and should go home and isolate myself) and when J said she couldn't go to the show, we

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came back with her, to keep her company. I hoped on one level that the show wouldn't be too empty (F's mum J was meant to come too but ended up having to do some virus contingency planning for work, and had a cough) but also that maybe Moses Boyd wouldn't mind too much if it was. At least we'd already paid for the tickets. J drove us home, with me and S trying to be reassuring about how she shouldn't feel pressured to go to work if she was feeling worried about her health or passing on anything but it's difficult for freelancers or people in jobs where you feel like you're putting people at serious inconvenience if you're not there. Hell, it's difficult for so many people, people on zero-hours contracts who won't get paid if they don't show up for work or people, people who are self-employed and don't get sick pay, people who's businesses could go under if there's no punters...It's OK for people like me, who can just work from home and who's workplace has committed to

paying full pay if you need to self-isolate but different if you have a dodgy boss like S and work that you can't do from home. We got home and watched a couple of episodes of this horrible reality show about the cabin crew on a super yacht and J felt a bit calmer and the next day arranged with her boss to do what she could from home and find cover for the things that she couldn't. I had a relaxing day of holiday, doing chores and cleaning round the house, going to the library to stock up on pulpy novels in case we end up having to spend a lot of time at home and watching a soapy drama about the complicated love lives of divorce lawyers. G and G came over for dinner and S was celebrating getting some money back from the student loan company and had bought a big bottle of tequila so we could make margaritas which was a discombobulating experience - a soft, relaxing semi-sick day drinking green juice and taking it easy and then drinking some tequila in a

jolly, celebratory manner. I excused myself earlyish and went to bed. The next day, S and I were meant to be going to Southampton for his mum's 69th birthday but as we were both feeling a bit under the weather and not sure who to trust about what is and isn't safe, we decided to cancel, especially as P still has an Italian student staying with her who is currently freaking out about what's going on back home, which I felt bad about ~~as it sounded awful~~ and P kept saying she didn't mind us coming but meeting up for a coffee is one thing but staying over in the flat for two days is another and I don't want to end up being responsible for putting people at risk if avoidable. Instead we decided to do our monthly online shop. Our friend K was sending doom-filled prophecies from a ransacked Sainsburys where she couldn't buy any nappies that the online shoppers only had biscuits in the crates as everything else was gone but I decided to give it a go anyway. When I got to the checkout, it

turned out there weren't any delivery slots for over a week. Nerds! So we had a house conference and decided we'd go to the supermarket at night as we were pretty much clean out of food and as going in the dark would make it a bit more exciting and avoid having to go in the middle of the day when it's hell on earth in normal circumstances, let alone when people are fighting over toilet roll. We set off for the giant Tescos at Elmers End at 8.45pm and I put on a pumping car playlist to get us in the mood (much Vengaboys). The car park was alarmingly full and there were a load of people in BMWs driving like lunatics swerving around us as we tried to get in. Inside the shop it was busier than you'd expect for night time but the fresh produce aisle seemed pretty well stocked. It was when we moved into the aisles with canned food, pasta and rice that we were confronted with the empty shelves that you see on social media. There was literally one small sad box of

Uncle Bens left. People had gone loco. It was annoying to think that all the cans that had been snapped up would probably for the most part end up sitting in cupboards unused for the next 10 years. What about the vegetarians whose main diet is cans of chickpeas!? But seriously, we are in a privileged position and can just shop little and often locally if we're well and eat more fresh stuff (and our local corner shop has fuckloads of cans at the moment) but what about foodbanks, where cans (and nappies) are the bread and butter? The cleaning aisles were like the wild west, with people crowding like zombies around staff opening up boxes and in some cases, trying to open boxes themselves and being fought off to avoid them damaging the structural integrity of the tower. We managed to piece together a decent normal big shop and went to queue for the tills, where there was a mixture of people shaking their heads in disbelief that shopping had gone weird and teenagers

buying loads of crisps. We saw the teenagers huddling around outside with the crisps, passing around a bottle of vodka, obviously not too worried about Covid-19. Were they just going to hang out outside Tescos? Or were they trying to avoid being too early to a party? Or getting supplies for the train ride into town? We put the shop in the car and drove home, blasting Papa's Got A Brand New Pig Bag.

SOLIDARITY TO  
ALL FOR WHOM  
MERE FEW  
MONTHS ARE  
GOING TO BE  
PARTICULARLY  
STRESSFUL.

I WROTE THIS WHILE  
LISTENING TO PORRIDGE  
RADIO'S EXCELLENT  
NEW ALBUM 'EVERY  
BAD' WHICH YOU  
SHOULD CHECK OUT  
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BACK ISSUES OF 'FRIDAY NIGHT IN  
WEST EATING' ARE AVAILABLE VIA  
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