

11-1-2020

Immune Boost, Early Pandemic

Lisa Richter



Part of the Poetry Commons

Follow this and additional works at / Suivez-nous ainsi que d'autres travaux et œuvres:

<https://scholars.wlu.ca/thegoose>

Recommended Citation / Citation recommandée

Richter, Lisa. "Immune Boost, Early Pandemic." *The Goose*, vol. 18 , no. 2 , article 39, 2020,

<https://scholars.wlu.ca/thegoose/vol18/iss2/39>.

This article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Goose by an authorized editor of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

Cet article vous est accessible gratuitement et en libre accès grâce à Scholars Commons @ Laurier. Le texte a été approuvé pour faire partie intégrante de la revue The Goose par un rédacteur autorisé de Scholars Commons @ Laurier. Pour de plus amples informations, contactez scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

Immune Boost, Early Pandemic

1.

Take a good-sized knob of ginger, say, the size of a swollen thumb. Search for your peeler among the many drawers where it could be, finally locating it on the kitchen table, in the exact spot you left it five minutes ago. Peel the bark-like skin off the root, revealing the biting yellow flesh beneath. Keep telling yourself that this tea will boost your immune system, whether or not you believe it. Visualize that strength, the field of defense that will supposedly armour your body.

2.

Take a small dish, say, one of the mismatched saucers that you and your beloved found on the side of the road or at Value Village sometime, proving yet again that despite the fact that you are both in your forties, Real Adulthood (as defined by external measures) remains an elusive destination. It comes so easily, it seems, to former schoolmates with mortgages and guest bathrooms and car payments and backyard barbecues. You wonder what the Real Adults see when they look at themselves in the mirror, if there lies a shimmering gap between their images and their inner selves, a gap they long to squeeze through, if they could only shrink themselves down to size.

3.

Once you have peeled the ginger and you have the small plate close at hand, grate (don't chop) said ginger into it, ensuring you do not grate your own flesh in the process, though you may envision yourself coming close. Ponder the meaning of *grating* as irritating, *grating* as annoying, *grating* the voices that zigzag through your skull, a crackling static, needling you about your occasional lethargy (is it a symptom of coronavirus?) your headaches (are they a symptom of coronavirus?), your pounding heart (is it a symptom of coronavirus?), your lifeless hair. WebMD answers yes to all these questions.

3.

Take the little heap of grated ginger that has now accumulated in your dish. Scrape it into a saucepan of water, then boil the living fuck out of it. Boil it until your beloved hears it bubbling on the stove and wanders over, wondering if you had meant to leave a pot open on the stove, looking as if it were about to explode. Assure your beloved that you have, in fact, meant for that pot to be on high, then calmly (preserve your dignity) make your way over. Turn that shit down to a simmer. Squeeze in a couple of lemons (the lemon juice from concentrate that you know is probably full of preservatives will do just fine).

4.

For the hell of it, throw in a couple of cinnamon sticks. They will make your hands fragrant, making you think of the Michael Ondaatje poem you loved as a nineteen-year-old, imagining yourself swimming naked with a lover whose hands could turn your thighs into cedar, into balsam, unadulterated spice. Toss in some spiky bits of clove, recalling those sweet-smelling Djarum clove cigarettes so popular at goth clubs in the nineties—worse for you than regular

cigarettes, you have since learned, and perhaps the reason there are nodules in your lungs from a past respiratory infection that you can't remember.

5.

Add some cardamom seeds, whose earth-green smell will always remind you of the thick coffee in the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City. The smell that beckoned from cafés with white plastic tables in dimly lit stone streets. Twenty years ago you were a fresh-faced backpacker, sleeping in a three dollar-a-night hostel bed. In local kiosks you bought olive oil in plastic water bottles, a single egg, a single cigarette. Freshman-aged soldiers checked their cell phones, the butts of submachine guns brushing against their thighs. You remember: it was not you they were looking at, though you did nothing to earn their confidence but look like them.

6.

Let the whole mixture simmer for twenty minutes, giving you enough time to nestle into your beloved's chest, breathe in his smell, the smell of assurance that for now, at least for today, you are both still alive.

LISA RICHTER's latest book of poetry, *Nautilus and Bone*, is forthcoming with Frontenac House in Fall 2020. She lives, writes, and teaches in Toronto.