It’s Conditional

August 30, 2012 By David Weiss

There was a law student named Schwartz

whose face was all covered with warts

But in his interstices he had a much worse disease

That he caught from a teacher of torts.

\- *Anonymous*

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Thirty two years ago (a rough reckoning based on risk behavior) I managed to infect myself with a virus that came to be known as the cause of “Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome” - HIV. I was not yet thirty years old.

Left untreated, HIV the virus causes HIV disease - the slow, steady and irresistible apoptosis of the cells that defend us from god-knows-what is out there in the world, trying to move in to our flesh and quite literally eat us out of house and home.

I will soon be sixty-two. In the half-life that I’ve now lived with it, I’ve probably experienced many of the same feelings and fears, heartbreaks and hopes, that you have, as well as those unique to my personal journey. The one thing that we all definitely share, no matter how much we may deny it, is of course, the experience of being thought of by the non-infected as “tainted”.

Disease.

It’s such an ugly word. Among the entries that you’ll find if you use a thesaurus are “sickness”, “pestilence”, “contagion”, " - and everyone’s worst nightmare, “plague”.

It’s no wonder that we are stigmatized. Nobody wants The Plague in their house. Sweep it out the front door. Lock your doors. Hide the wimmen and chil’n!

It doesn’t, and shouldn’t, have to be that way. There are better words to describe us. Words that are less...dirty.

I prefer to think of it as a “condition.” Half the human race has one condition or another, and if we see our HIV as just one of the many such conditions that exist, it can make a difference in our interactions with other human beings, or at least those whose consciousness isn’t limited to the

Cliff Notes version of life.

So henceforth, if you ask me if I have a condition, I'll just say "yeah. I do, what about you?"

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