

Ten Minutes, That's It

by Benjamin Kral

They tell me I'm crazy. I say I'm just keeping up. Actually, nobody tells me that, that's just what I tell myself people would tell me if people ever talked to me. I walk through these streets in the hot rain and see thousands of ashen faces, and no one's talking to anyone. They're all bustling by each other, eager to get some place for some reason, and if they don't get there five minutes ago, there will be hell to pay. I walk in my worn canvas shoes, leather duster, and admittedly shabby clothes and I'm moving against the human tide. Maybe I should walk on the other side of the street. No, crossing that traffic would be suicide. I thought we were supposed to have flying cars by now. At least that's what I gleaned from my grandfather's comic books I read after he died. Even at the turn of the 21st century they thought they'd have flying cars by now, and look. Somebody sold them a bridge.

Damn, this rain is hot. And I'm dumb and wearing this heavy leather coat. But if I don't wear the coat, I'll catch cold from the rain, and it's the only coat I own. Woe is me.

I wish these people would stop pushing. I was never one to buy a story, but why society is ordered the way it is astounds me. That people consent to it is even more amazing. I remember reading about the feudal system in elementary school, and being told that things are so much better now. I don't see how. Sure, I'm not starving, nor is there a rat carrying plague eating my food (as far as I know that rat eating my cereal last week didn't carry the plague), but we've really just replaced lords with banks and bosses and corporations, and we're basically indentured to them. If you don't work for them, they'll take your house and your job, or freeze your account so you can't get your money. I fucking hate banks. They're on the list too. I should probably write all these down; I have a lot of shit on my list.

Humanity has lived like this too long. They deserve better, and I sure as hell have no idea how to make that happen.

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I step out of the rain and into a greasy spoon. Instantly, I'm assaulted with smells. The cigarettes, the coffee, the imitation pork, and the unmistakable smell of bitterness that clouds everywhere more than ten people gather at one time. If I'd ever been to a church, I'd bet that smells worst of all. I grab a seat, which is dirty, and look at my table, which is also dirty. Of course, looking at the toast crumbs makes you not pay attention to the sickly green that the table is colored, but since it's far away from the old guys and their tales of broken dreams, hey, it's fine with me. I pull out my note pad and pencil and hurriedly write down the thoughts that were going through my head on the walk over here. But then I discover that I'd already written those thoughts down at some other point. I need some new thoughts. I'm thinking this when the waitress walks up and GOD DAMN DOES HER NECK LOOK LIKE LABIA. Well, it's a new thought, for better or worse. Yeah, coffee and toast, please. I only have like four credits to my name, and I'll be lucky if that pays for this meal. I'd offer to wash dishes if it'd get me some bacon, but I look back towards the kitchen, and I'm pretty sure I'd never walk out of there again, since the people back there look like the walking dead. Hey, I should write a zombie story. If people still read fiction, they might read something like that. I guess Uncle Ralph is just too entertaining, since he's effectively pushed all other genres into oblivion. Stupid fucking comedian and his phrase-turning songs. I'd strangle him if he had a neck.

The coffee tastes like they've used the grounds about four times. It's better than the rusty water in my apartment. Of course, urine is probably better than that.

Why did I not have a better skill set? Maybe I'd actually be making some money instead of thinking about washing dishes for three strips of imitation bacon. Why do I keep calling it imitation pork? It's not like I ever had the real thing.

I think I'll go by the storage unit where all my grandfather's stuff is, and then maybe to Len's. It's not like I have anything better to do today. I'll go as soon as the rain lets up. You know what sucks about this part of the world? The fucking rain never lets up.

