Nemesis' Rainbow

by Smiley McGrouchpants, Jr-Esq-III

Lucy stopped down.

Leaving the board with co-chair, there was the usual rumblings about the Importance of Not Just One Leader and How Could We Let a Single Day Go By without Giving This Our Full Attention . . .

Luckily, though . . .

Philip came back to town.

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WE INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM WITH A POP-UP AD THAT, ANNOYINGLY, YOU MUST CLICK ON BEFORE YOU RESUME THE NARRATIVE FLOW:

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. . . having been gone for a while,

"No, wait, let me start again:"

He'd sworn, inwardly, that he'd had enough of the infighting, and, while he put it much more gracefully (to all but a select few) when discussing the matter to his contemporaries ("Mm-hmm," they'd say, not all of them *quite* buying it) he was surprised to discover, having been gone for a while —

"DING-DONG!"

"Why I set my cell phone to this, I'll never know . . . Hello?"
"Hello, Julia?"
"Yes?"
"Where were you on the night of Daniel's party?"
"At *home* . . . ?"
"Oh. So you didn't hear about — nothing."
"What?"

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“Nothing. Never mind!”
(*click*)
(doooooo — if YOU'D *like* to-make-a CALL, *please* HANG UP and DIAL AG—)
“*Huh*.”

for a while, that bygones *could* be bygones, if only the *right* amount of time had passed, in the *right* wa —

“DING-DONG!”
“Julia!”
“Wha.”
“Adam just call you?”
“Yah. (*Why am I talking this way? I'm irritated.*)”
“What'd he say?”
“Not much. Something about the party — ”
“ — holy shit. DON'T ANY ANYTHING!”
“Uhh . . . (*Why? Who cares.*) . . . okay.”
“Thanks! Knew I could count on you.”
“Yup!”
(boop-boop)
“My other line.”
“Okay, Julia! You're a lifesaver.”
(boop-boop)
“Julia?”
“Huh-*huh*? (*I know who <u>this</u> is.*)”
“Can you do me a *fav*-or?”
“(*That same, lilting tone of voice.*) What? (JULIA GRITS HER TEETH.)”
“Do you know . . . that *guy* . . . at the — ”
(*Be patient. Be patient.*)
“ . . . *laundro*mat?”
“(*This I didn't expect.*) Which . . . (*racking brains, here*) . . . laundromat?”
“The one on 7th?”

“That one's closed.”
“Oh. (*surprised*.) When'd *that* happen?”
“(JULIA PUTS HEAD IN HAND, STARTS MASSAGING HER TEMPLE) Last . . . summer? I don't know.”
“*Oh!* (GIGGLES; DRIVES JULIA BACK INTO TEETH-GRINDING MODE) Not *that* one, then . . . ”
“Um. The one on 37th?”
“Yeah! (‘Who are you on the phone with?' ‘Julia!') Julia, Ron's here!”
“Hi, Ron!”
“She says hi Ron.”
“Well, I'll talk to you later.”
“Yeah. You know. About *work*!”
“Bye!”
“Bye.”
Slut.

. . . if only the *right* amount of time had passed, in the *right* way.

(Things had shifted, too: the World, in the form of Western Civilization, had feared and transited 1984, then 1990, then 1999, 2000, 2001 . . . by 2006, the year of our story, “futuristic” dates on the newspaper had become so commonplace, and no-one had predicted *how* certain things would stay the *same*.)

Enter the Internet . . .

“John, are you still toiling away at that thing?”

“Yes.”

“*Why*?”

He drummed his fingers on the consoletop. “I don't know . . . *yet*.”

“Better hurry.”

He arched his eyebrows at her, a shift of focus that required gargantuan effort, so focused was he on his task. “Thanks.” There was a world of weight in that deadpan tone — call it a metric ton — roughly equivalent to that scene in *Jaws* where Roy

Scheider gives Richard Dreyfus a look, shutting him up, pouring himself a big fuckin' glass of wine (“No, wait — you should let it breathe”), since the mayor didn't want to close down the beach, but the shark ate another kid, and a shark's been *eating* people, and he can't swim, and he has to wear a lifevest, and their only hope and savior is a goddamn nutcase who drags his fingernails across a blackboard at a town meeting and reeks of fish and has a tin case, if that, to confront the Great White Shark with.

Great.

“*Great*!” Thus chastened, Marissa willed herself — *suppressed* the impulse — not to look at the clock on the wall, the minute hand sweeping past the twenty-minutes-to-five readout, all too clear.

“Great.”

She beat a hasty retreat.

She could already hear the tapping halfway down the hall, when all of a sudden —

——————————————————————————————————

BUT, NEVERMIND.

YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT HOW THE INTERNET CAME TO BE — FROM DARPA TO *NEUROMANCER* TO *WIRED* — AND ALL THE THINGS THAT CULTIVATED IT ALL ALONG THE WAY, SO WHY BOTHER HEARING ABOUT ONE ISOLATED, INSTRUMENTAL INCIDENT?

HI, JULIA.

IT'S ME.

I'VE HACKED YOUR MAINFRAME.

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>Sarah?

>>What?

>It's Julia.

>>OMG, hi. I didn't recognize your nym.

>I had to change it.

>I had the weirdest dream last night.

>>Follow your dreams!

>What?
>>Sorry. Making a joke.
>>I didn't know you were a pre-cognitive.
>Not usually . . .
>>??
>Two or three times before.
>The third time, I wished I'd heeded it.
>I came to regret it.
>Never again!
>>What happened?
>Well, you see . . .

The moon has a cloud pass before it. The strop has a razor pulled up-and-down, up-and-down, up and down against it. The woman's eye is held open, and the razor is s—*lash*—ing it open, across the iris.

Julia awakes with a start, the Pixies song screaming “I am *Un Chien* — *And*-a-*lu*-sia!” in her ear, reassuring Kim Deal intoning, “Debaser,” “Debaser,” “Debaser” . . . hypnotic. The drums like architecture, like engine, like hydraulics, keeping the beat. *Nailed* down, like a car point to hit the next painted stripe . . . painted stripe . . . breadcrumb trail.
She anticipated the movie before she saw it in film class.
Why?

>>That doesn't sound like a *bad* thing.
>>What else?

There wasn't anyplace to *sit* in film class — already weird, because you'd think there'd just be room for the people who were *taking* it. Odd. Worse still, Julia had a heedful of caffeine (*too* much!), and the sort of sluggishness that can set in, randomly, with college students some Tuesday or other maybe due to the weather which changes while the alarm goes off merciless and indifferent to

whether your papers need to get written this week or the next or (*gulp!*) in Just Three Weeks . . . what, was she supposed to be *alert*?

Anyway . . .

>>Julia, I'd love to hear this story, but I've got a *lot* of code of write if I'm going to make deadline this week.
>>O.K.

THE END
(to be continued?)
(Nah!)