

# End of Wendell

*by* Gabriel Orgrease

In two years, four months, seven days and fourteen hours after the completion of this story Wendell O. (Oyster) Pearce will be dead.

He will step out of a white-painted metal bathroom door at the rear of the Shell gas station, Greenhill Boulevard Northwest in Fort Payne, Alabama and the State Troopers massed in the nearby poplar scrub, the door frame will rattle in it's sockets and worn hinges squeak, and amid the otherwise unremarkable red pine wood along Route 11, somewhat concerned for their own protection with the harshness of morning sun in their eye, will open fire. No question asked. When all is clear Wendell will have been shot a total of 57 times, the quantity not so important to him as the configuration of integers, within the span of a 40-second encounter.

It will not later be seen as much consequence that as Wendell charged the law forces that he had only one bird-shot shell left in his 12-gauge shotgun that he mistakenly expends into the air as he falls forward, tripped over an itinerant cinder block. His life may flash before his eyes, but it is doubtful that any of this was his life passing away, yes, something flashes but nothing like ownership. His last conscious thought is a loose sneaker lace that though in reality it is a dirty white with brown splotches now appears to him as a fluorescent green garden snake.

Writhing, it smiles at him.

Wendell always had to clean his room -- anti-dust and anti-clutter -- and that was the usual reason why Wendell's mother Bethany would say that as a teenager Wendell could not be let out to play. Allergies, asthma or there was homework. Always there was homework. Wendell never appeared particularly frail or sickly. He was quiet, I can say that, very quiet and it took effort to get to know the shy and

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socially reclusive boy. Yet, he was obviously going somewhere, to some strange and forbidden intellectual hierarchy that the rest of us would never have a hint of.

An early model geek. It was like there was always something Wendell had to do to make the world a better more important, more structured place. Salt and pepper shakers on the booth table had their specific location relative to the area of the surface. On a square table, or a round one. When I saw him do that with the ceramic rooster and hen it felt compulsive to make another move and that is why I placed the little vinegar pig on the table. It is the quiet saying around that hurts. Intelligent enough, yes, but it was not from within him that there rose up any motivation toward an enhancement for the betterment of humanity.

He was never exactly the Peace Corp type.

Not from any inward urge or sense of mission on his part; it was the pressure of an expectation from the outside, an external pressure tank that molded his individual path, or more approximate, a vacuum mold machine for fabrication of small electronic parts and/or pill bottles. In seclusion, important paradigm shift discoveries are made in seclusion but within my friend Wendell there was no inside seclusion for him to know or be secluded with. Some people stand out and when you look at them they look different. Where his parenting had not succeeded to wipe a slate clean then his frequent and heavy use of acid completed a Technicolor erasure.

It was not to a place that we would follow. We came together, we knew each other, and then as suddenly it was over.

Wendell's father William Pearce, primarily absent from his troubled son's life, owned an electronics company that made surveillance and encryption equipment for governments of small but wealthy nations. Secretive business to this day in existence under a long sequence of

morphed and relatively mundane names, it was a start-up from a two-car garage as it said, and did not say much more, in the brief obituary posted for him and Bethany in the Kracton Journal.

