

Moles & Scraps

by Javed Hayat

A starved hunchbacked figure covered in blanket gently steers a one eyed dog along with him. A four legged shadow serving as his longtime companion against the all-consuming vacuum of the universe. A friend for all times.

A thin scar runs from his cheekbone to his lower lip, bludgeoning an otherwise neatly-shaven and lean facial appearance. His short hairs are white as snow, with a pair of wire rimmed glasses allowing for a severe, old fashioned appearance.

His eyes have grown weary wandering against the light for too long, against the close-cropped lawns across the streets and neatly aligned houses that shine golden in the daylight. Time and again, he has wondered if in the beauty of this world is withheld the secret of a new universe.

He has lingered against the quiet of the suburbs, hoping for a sound of latch to break the rhythm, a door to narrow down slowly towards the inside.

He has rapped his knuckles raw against the long lines of doors shut and windows bolted, while feeling like a stray cane toad wreaking havoc on their suburban ecosystems. But no hand from heaven has reached out in his direction.

'They can probably smell us through their doors.' He spoke in a slow, heavy voice, taking a moment's respite against the wall of one of the buildings, looking a thousand years old.

He whispers on. 'They can smell the fossils on us.'

The dog continues to stare back at him. Herein lingers a promise, a

familiar whisper that he will not endure the darkness alone.

'Good', he said. 'That's good.'

His hand begins to hurt. Something throbs. He remembers the note he found on the palm of his hand while waking up this morning. Carved and embossed in dry blood. His eyes narrowing down and failing to make out the alphabets. For someone who is just a number on a Social Service Providers logs, a bad statistics, alphabets mean everything.

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Against the setting of the sun, the hunchback walks deep into the tunnels, into the maps and mazes of the underworld. The less privileged labyrinthine models of society that exist beneath the glittering lights of every metropolis.

His body illuminated by the descending shafts of light on the damp walls. Graffiti art stays visible against the spot-lighting effect serving as an enduring advantage, bringing to limelight the whimper and the grandeur of the universal underdogs. Clawless, defenseless creatures missing a spine, for years feeding off the regimented droughts of restaurant leftovers dumped each night around the neighborhood above their forbidden enclosures.

Soon, he finds himself walking down the isle of discarded bottles of liquor, cramped spaces, schizophrenic neighbors, starvation and enchantments of heat and cold. He finds himself at home, tired and without food in his belly or a penny in his pockets.

He can hear the blind feet rumbling of mad scavengers roaming the structure. As he trudges along, there are faint sobs of the things that weep in the dark. A silhouette of a little blind girl holding the hand of her mastectomized mother struggling to light a fire. Lonely hearts copulating in faded sleeping bags with zippers that barely close halfway.

Their collective show of affection against the night forms an invocation of its own, a humming of the night life where shadows with varying intent and purpose roam the damp alleys.

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His next door neighbor has hung himself this morning. Nicknamed the King Rat for his penchant to trap down the raccoon-size rats and bash them against the hard concrete walls come every night.

The hunchback notices the door to his room ajar and resists the temptation. Grudging the body of his neighbor now restful against the magic end of the rope. The wear and tear of death settling him down once the little struggles have dissipated.

He enters the crudely made settlement that is his room, with an old mattress and logs, while his companion yelps, its tail wagging, and prefers to stay outside for now.

There are clumsy artworks done in charcoal against the walls of his room. Dark lines of convictions. Serving as mathematical hieroglyphs deconstructing the very nature of existence. There are running commentaries on life and death, Darwinian impressions, Genesis, dreams of blonde hairs and mortgages paid.

He fumbles against the seemingly battered, barely functional old fashioned set of stereo system in his room, till it submits to playing off a ghost of Bach in four-voice fugue in the background, made up entirely of sixteenth notes.

He keeps the volume low, barely audible, to serve as an unobtrusive accompaniment to many thoughts of the day running loud in his mind.

The hunchback lies down on his old quiet bed and stares at the ceiling. The throes of sleep gently enveloping him, rendering his body numb, and allowing his soul to transcend beyond time.

