

Soon, and for the Rest of Your Life

by Kathryn Kulpa

Something's going to happen to you. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow. You don't want to believe it now. You won't want to believe it then, but there you'll be, sitting in an ugly gown made out of crinkly tissue-like fiber, a bit like party napkins, and your doctor will tell you he's disappointed in your T cells. You'll fixate on the word *disappointed* and how it makes you think of your T cells as some once-promising youngest child who ended up squandering his college fund on fruitless attempts to become a yogi or an integrative nutritional therapist but instead ended up as a dog-walker. Those damned irresponsible T cells.

Or that won't happen, but you'll be late to work one day, stuck behind a flatbed truck full of logs, and you'll be cursing the log truck driver because he won't go any faster and there's no room to pass him and just as things finally speed up, one of the logs from the flatbed, a log that was obviously not secured according to federal highway transport codes, will slide off the truck at an approximate relative velocity of 120 miles per hour and smash through your windshield, and the last thing you'll smell will be new-cut pine.

Or that won't happen, but the stranger you gave \$10 to at the bus stop, congratulating yourself for being a truly altruistic person, will follow you home and puncture your throat with a corkscrew and steal your down parka and a box of hazelnut biscotti and go back to stand at another bus stop with a sign saying WILL WORK FOR FOOD.

Or you won't meet that stranger, but your girlfriend will leave you after she finds out about you and that teenage boy you met online

and you'll buy a handgun at the local big box retail store and place it, quite gently, between your lips. Or you'll reach your hand into what you thought was an empty corn crib and a rabid raccoon will bite you, just like Old Yeller, but having never seen *Old Yeller* you'll wash it off with alcohol and think nothing of it until five weeks later when foam is coming out of your mouth and your muscles are cramping from lack of fluid but you can't drink.

Or you'll walk into a bar and order eighteen straight whiskies, you believe that's the record, or you'll spin out on the highway in your Porsche Spyder, or you'll take too many pills and pass out in a bathtub, or you'll pry open a bottle of aspirin with your teeth and choke on the bottle cap, or you'll be standing on the street corner and someone will call your name and you'll turn round to see who it is and hear the blast of a shotgun.

Or none of this will happen, not to you, because you'll be the One. The Sandman and his sister will give you a pass. You'll find the way out, the way no one knows, the secret game code that will let you rewrite the rules, because you've always hated the rules and you always break them and you can break them again. Can't you? Fairy tales do come true. It could happen to you.

But most likely, it won't.

