The Avenues Of Occupation And Other Short Stories

by Kevin Army

story2

The Avenues Of Occupation

He was hallucinating animals again, animals lurking and preying, animals shape changing and species changing. These adaptations, these reminders wandered in and out of consciousness. That afternoon, a lioness was sitting on a high chair behind his friend Pam.

The lioness listened intently, wrote everything down, made a document and transcription, a film and a recording. Then ate it all. Later, the lioness changed into a wolf, and transported itself into spaces formerly his, an occupation of landscape and soul.

He paused for a moment, tried to recall if he was supposed to be on medication. What had happened just this morning? *Where is the calm, the overabundant nothingness that carries us some days?*

Agitated, he looked Pam in the eyes, slowly, quietly said “I don't think we should speak. She's listening.” Pam thought nothing of his hallucinations, she accepted him perfectly as he could be. She sat quietly drinking her coffee, pondering over the pictures she had taken that afternoon.

She wrote him a note. “The disenfranchised are good for business.” He laughed, and somehow, that made things clear up. They stood up and left, the lioness gone and vaporized.

There were signs everywhere. *Dear 1 percent. When will you help us. Pray for the little guy.* A dog wandered up, sniffed Pam's right

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foot. He wasn't sure if the dog was real, or another work of fiction from another damaged corner of his mind. His wounds hurt, he needed to sit down.

He looked around at the tent city, at the ruined lawn, at the childish art installation left by an opportunist artist, hoping to join into the attention. He had to admit, he was here for attention too. *So many kinds of attention. Protest. Hallucination. Proclamation. Getting sick and almost dying.*

These are some of the avenues of occupation, he thought. A two way street of greed and poverty, of our bank accounts and souls. A vanishing of something we never got to see. All we've been left with are impressions, imaginings. Mutually beneficial parasites, what do they call them? He'd forgotten long ago.

Pam could see him disappearing, something she's good at catching. “I won't let you fall.” “I know.” “Are we done?” “I think so.” They go, paying $18.00 for parking.

He sees a deer just past the federal building, standing in the middle of the street, right in front of them. He stops the car, the deer is gone. *For what it's worth. These recyclings of things. A passing of hypothetical objects, an endless changing of things that look shiny and new, things that break in the night. And then we're left with nothing.*

In his soul, he holds his friend's hand. It all comes down to the people he knows, the people he trusts. There are so few of those. The rest are wild animals, and he is not sure what to think of them yet.

story3

Occupy The Heart

Franco walks on the sand eating McDonald's fries. A seagull starts to circle overhead, like a vulture, but like a seagull too. Soon, there's a flock of them, he can hear a vibrant swooping sound

whooshing around his head, he can feel the air moving around him. He holds a fry up, the first seagull comes and takes it from his hand.

There are imprints in this sand that match something in my heart he thinks. *How many sand castles were built right over there, and then washed out and destroyed?*

Franco has been on a mission of self reparation for several months now. He had been here before, with a wound his past can't shake. *The occupier*. The thing that wouldn't leave his heart. The thing that moved in, battered him, and refused to leave, even once abandoned and half destroyed.

The first seagull moves on. Franco takes the rest of the fries, tosses them in a semi-circle on the ground. The birds land, take all they can, fight among themselves, make some strange sounds and leave.

He's alone. It feels good.

story7trees

Occupational Hazard

“I've seen it all now” Randall says out loud, into the emptiness. There are pieces of things all around Randall, things unshakably real. He's been cutting them out of papers, making a random collage on the floor. “They'll get theirs.”

It's just a statement in a string of statements he makes, which are really just thoughts he can't contain, mostly because he doesn't understand them himself.

When he was a child, Randall would follow his father to the canning plant. The smell of fish made him sick, he misses it now. He thinks he misses his childhood, but that's just an illusion that grew into him through the sadness of the years.

“I am weary. I need to stand up for something.” He's done cutting, now he glues the images on a sign. They don't really connect or

make sense, and somehow that makes it more bold, more uncomfortable to look at.

He goes to the event downtown. He watches the people walk around him. A few people take his picture, he's not sure if he likes them. A woman stops to interview him.

“Why am I here you ask? It's a long story. I was in the great war between soul and people, and that's when these things began you know? Have you seen the ships that came and took her away? It's dreadful really. That's when I got this scar on my neck, right here.”

As he points to it, the reporter takes the opportunity to say a condescending thank you, which means you aren't worth my time.

Randall sits down, watches the people passing back and forth, listens and closes his eyes. All in a days work he tells himself. All in a days work.

story6sky

Enclosure

They see these things. A walkway hastily built, a sign asking for quiet. The sculpture still stands there, oddly more beautiful now that it's ruined. The light through the buildings, reaching out in rays as if from some older religious painting, a Jesus reaching out in the sky painting, a time passed, before these particular wounds began.

He forgives them all, the preying animals, the homeless, the artist, the broken lovers. He walks around the tent city, wishing that were him, brave enough to sleep on weeping ground, through long nights surrounded by strangers he will never be comfortable with.

He has no sign. The cause is his too. He goes home. He sleeps, he writes, he reads, he dreams. He does what he can. He prays for a better future for us all. He feels a bit less wounded, at least for now.

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