

Downtown

by Larry Strattnr

This story has no actual end. It's like those schmaltzy Disney movies about the cycle of life; they never show you the lion eating the zebra.

I'm in what's left of downtown the other day when an altercation breaks out. First comes yelling, then bad words, then shots are fired (as the police would describe it.)

Many additional shots are fired and it seems the shooter has a 15-round magazine along with a bagful of backup magazines he carries for extended discussions.

As I am in the wrong place at the wrong time bullets are making sharp snapping noises going by my ears. They also make little snowflake designs with a hole in their middle, as they go through plate-glass store windows. It's like a Fourth of July celebration in a Folger's coffee can. If the combatants would only stop shouting phrases using "fuck" as a modifier we could bring the kids, get some ice cream cones and enjoy ourselves.

Absent ice cream, the shooter swiss-cheeses several storefront windows, myriad "fucks" are bandied back and forth, and then, as the shooter ejects an empty magazine and is inserting a replenishment, the other "fuck"-shouter nails him with a tire iron.

Most people with half-a-brain don't go downtown these days. Even if there's no active shooting in progress, crime-scene tape from the last active shooter makes detouring around taped-off areas a pain. Plus, if the main event is recently over, EMTs may still be cleaning up the losers and this might upset your stomach, making shopping difficult.

