

The Forsaken

by Marc Nash

Every town has one. Or one at the very least.

A patch of unhallowed ground. Some forlorn stretch of shattered tarmac. The pockmarked wasteland.

Terrain once staked out by man, now ceded by him. Bereft of signature jetsam, the condoms, syringes and empty rotgut bottles indicative of an agonised withdrawal.

Yet within an urban jungle, Nature does not make so bold as to reassert her dominion. Dereliction's removal men seemingly having thrown petrifying dust sheets over these fixtures and ill-fittings. The mosaic of the pulverised concrete, akin to the pebbledash cast of the surrounding building walls. As if the scene has been turned on its side. Even rootless litter appears to have been nailed down in permanent display. Blown from pillar to post, this particular spot has been deemed refuse's final blotching place. A potters field for the non-biodegradable. Devoid of potters and any living organisms at all.

Notionally delimited by the chain-link fence. But the border is indeterminate, for the fence has been trampled down. The negative space between the twisted metal links presents the only barrier now. Bayonet reeds jutting through these apertures. Chlorophyll halberdiers, braided with nettles and brambles sagging under their load of barbs and thorns. Sapper tripwires for where no feet ever tread. Tributary Nature's token conscription all present and correct, yet unable to advance any further. Held in suspended animation, just like the metal and brick all around. There is no nourishment to be derived here.

Wooden palettes charred from hosting obsolete fires. All colour long bled into their black hearts. Yet still this is not the predominant

hue tugging the eye's apprehension. Jagged scars of livid brown rust uncannily funnels all sightlines. Oil drums, drainpipes, corrugated roofs, each a corroded excremental brown. Shed flakes like metal dandruff speckles the ground.

A brick building with entrance boarded up and all its windows put through. Thick gobbets of crystallised glass, a sheet laminate atop the torn up concrete. Razor wire lines the low roof. Strips of fabric and plastic bags snagged on its barbs ought to billow in the disdainful drafts, but they too are pinioned fast.

Aloft the building, a boxy metal housing. An air conditioning unit or electrical generator. Here where nothing respire, nor is any drawing of energy invoked. The caged blades are fossilised, like silted anchors dredged from the sea. Clamped to the building's walls, some outsized toy duct piping. Terminating in a chimney of simple geometric lines, a scaled down version of a watchtower at Auschwitz.

In among all this stasis, there is yet one outpost of movement. At the very verge of vision, something flaps fitfully, with just the faintest of feathery deviation from the rigid and the upright. Playing breeze-borne peek-a-boo from behind an unencumbered fence post, a bouquet of cut flowers. Desiccated. Mummified. Lifeless like everything else in this rubblescape. A fitting tribute to that other importation. The murdered little boy dumped here yesterday, today or last month. The forsaken living memory here can't quite recall.

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