

The Arrival

by Nathaniel Tower

Everybody knew it would happen. It didn't happen exactly when or how they thought it would, but nonetheless it happened.

"I told you it would happen," a bearded man told his wife.

"Of course you did. Everyone knew it would happen," the wife responded while thinking he could use a nice shave. He would be a lot more handsome with a shave.

"Well, I knew how it would happen, too," he said through the massive piles of wiry brown hair that surrounded his mouth.

"No you didn't. No one did. If someone had, then it could have been delayed," she said, trying to picture his face hairless.

"Well, at least I knew when it would happen," the beard said.

"No you didn't. No one did. If someone had, then we would have been prepared." All she could see now was a giant mound of hair talking to her.

On a certain level, everyone was relieved when it finally did happen. They had been waiting a long time for it. Finally, they could relax. There was no reason for anxiety anymore.

Some had doubted at first, but the source of their doubt was likely rooted in denial. Everyone came around eventually. Luckily, by the time it did happen, no one seemed to doubt it anymore.

"What should we wear?" the wife asked the beard.

"It doesn't matter," the beard responded.

"But it might be the last thing we get to wear." She was genuinely concerned, both about her outfit and her husband's raggedy appearance.

"Then wear something you like," spewed out the parted patches of brown hair.

There was a lot of variety in dress that day. Some chose to look their finest. Others sought clothing that they found comfortable. Still others tried to make one final fashion statement that set themselves apart. Regardless, everyone changed clothes when they found out it

had happened. The bearded man had been right though. It didn't really matter as long as you didn't show up naked.

"Should we eat before we go?" the worried wife wondered.

"The impression I get is that the food shall be plentiful. We shan't ever hunger again," the beard spoke as the stomach below rumbled.

"Should we have a snack just in case?"

"Perhaps we had better."

She hoped that no crumbs would stick in the mess of mouth hair.

Most people ate a snack before they left. It happened halfway between lunch and dinner, and people were starting to get a little hungry. The snack would tide them over until dinner. Most assumed dinner would be served a little late. With all those people, it would be difficult to serve everyone efficiently. No one considered that dinner might not be served. Everyone just expected it. Just the event itself, they weren't sure when or how, but they knew it would happen.

"Should we bring anything with us?" the beard parted to ask.

"I'm not sure. I don't think we need anything, but perhaps we should bring a few essentials just in case," the wife said, adding *Perhaps you should bring a razor* to herself.

"What are the essentials?" the beard wondered, hoping a razor wasn't among them.

"Well, we need toothpaste, deodorant, soap, clean underwear, makeup, and..." she paused. "Maybe a razor and some toilet paper. You know, the things we can't live without."

"Can we really bring all that?" he wondered.

The wife didn't respond. She was too busy putting all the essentials in a bag.

No one was really sure whether or not they should bring something. It seemed likely they should.. They would likely never return to their homes. Some people brought practical things. Some brought sentimental things. Some, those who were very confident about their fate, brought nothing but themselves.

"What time should we arrive?" the woman asked frantically as she ran around the house filling the bag.

"I think we should try to arrive early," the beard flapped.

"When should we leave?" The bag was overflowing.

"Probably now," he said before she had had time to pack the razor.

Everyone arrived early. None of them knew what exactly to expect other than huge crowds and hopefully eternal happiness. They stood in throngs, barely room between each other to distinguish where one life form ended and a new one began. They talked among themselves, but the conversations were mostly meaningless and found themselves lost in other conversations

They waited for a long time before the man they could hear but not see spoke to them. "All who are presentable but not magnificent, hungry but not empty, prepared but not equipped, early but not premature may enter."

The crowd looked amongst itself, each member wondering if he or she met these requirements. No one spoke with their mouths, instead just offering each other puzzled looks.. The silence of death hung over the crowd.

They were still looking at each other two hours later when the gates closed.

