

# The Nature of Things

*by* Randal Houle

I waited at a bus stop for my muse. BTW - Just in case she shows, I'm typing this post in Bookman font. The margins are an attractive one-inch all around. Not 1.5" or 1.2" (who writes with 1.2" margins — cheaters, that's who — lesser writers with margin envy — who want to extend their prose, or make it feel like it reads faster) Anyway, where was I?

At a bus stop, plugged into an ipod and listening to Tiesto manipulate synthetic themes — a string of melody and harmony carried on a million little legs that marched in an electronic cadence ordered by an atomic metronome. My body is slack, still — and I am somewhere far off: in a dance club, or in the clouds, or swimming near a tropical reef. If my muse found me, she would see only my body and continue on the route. The music melded into a dissonance of tempo, a perfectly timed chaos. My ears swallow the earbuds. A sack of human flesh with musical IVs stuck in his head.

She's not coming today. She didn't come yesterday either.

I gave up waiting for my muse and fished instead. I sat on the bank of a manmade lake that is regularly stocked with trout. Not fed by a stream, so no current. My floater sat out a ways, but the weight of the line pulled it toward shore creating slack. My ipod battery went dead and I pulled the earbuds out of my ears. After a few minutes, I heard birds, the trees, and somewhere on the other side, children jabbered about their latest catch.

After putting it all away, I settled on a short hike. The "world" and its unreality, the ipod music, the cars on the highway, the manufactured nature of my failed fishing expedition fell away. I settled into my body. My feet felt the dampness of the soil underneath the soles of my shoes. I breathed in the surrounding life,

---

Available online at *«<http://fictionaut.com/stories/randal-houle/the-nature-of-things>»*

Copyright © 2011 Randal Houle. All rights reserved.

and death - it was all there. All together beautiful in its complexity and beyond man's collective manufactory skill set. At least, for now.

I placed my hand on a tree's trunk, its deep-grooved bark intertwined with my fingers. I closed my eyes. Invisible tendrils dug into the soil. I was part of it. That was my purpose: nature's recorder.

I listened.

