

When the Time Has Passed to Do Good

by Tiffany R. White

"See the cat with the ginger fur?" Tommy asked me. He had been on a 'gingers are bad' kick since watching that old episode of South Park. I picked the lint from my belly button and studied it.

"What about it, Tom?"

"I wonder if I stick a fire cracker up its ass," he stopped and tilted his head toward the sky, winking, "if some angel will come down and rescue its ugly ginger self before I light the damn thing and blow it to bits."

Tom was violent like that.

He was a fat kid who walked around with a tennis racket under his arm. "For bullies" he told me once when I asked him about it.

Both his parents saved their pent up Puritan pasts to fill his ears with brimstone clichés.

"Idle time is the devil's playground", he would tell me, scrunching up his face, stuffing it full of meat lovers pizza.

Tom often walked around with a surgical mask on. His parents felt that the air was full of the germs of sinners, sodomites, and liberals and that one couldn't be too careful when out and about. Tom would always take it off once we were three streets down and by the bus stop we often sat in, watching people go by.

Today Tom was stuffing his face with brownies his mom made for the church bake sale.

"See that ginger girl over there? Watch this."

I wasn't certain whether to look or pretend that somewhere there was something better to do, noble, and get up and run as fast as I could to whatever it was.

I closed my eyes and nodded. I kept them closed as I heard the little girl say, "Stop!" I forced them tighter when I heard her scream. I curled myself in the fetal position once I heard her stop and a couple adults yelling at Tommy. I pretended that I couldn't hear him as he ran past me screaming, "Let's go!" I opened my eyes and pretended not to see the red puddle pooling around the girl's head just 10 feet away.

I looked up and rubbed my hands across my lap. The sky opened quickly. A seagull flapped its lighted wings against the pavement.

