

*there they are the old things moving slow and through the streets with metal braces hips walkers things that help their disgusting bodies crawl. and they are thinking thoughts that are brown and slow and awful to behold because their thoughts are things that are not worth thinking like remember when the cost of onions was only three for a dollar and that was a good day at the market that day we bought those onions but now they are thinking these brown things and they are slow and liquid like dairy but moving about in an evergrowing circle like spilled milk and they are white hair and white skin because the blood doesn't pump through them anymore no it is through their veins that only whiteness runs because they are old and white and empty inside and they are blank and devoid and this is the truth because i see it.*

This was what Frederick saw as he waited on the park bench in Sidney. He was waiting for his rehearsal at the community theatre to start and before that he had been waiting in line at the Subway. Now he was eating his Subway, though, and thinking about all the things that were wrong in the world. Frederick was eating his Subway on a park bench in Sidney and waiting for his play rehearsal to start when it happened.

He didn't know quite how it happened. One moment he was content and happy to be waiting and eating and watching the people as they milled about, doing their daily tasks. Then the next moment his thoughts were consumed with anger and rage and disgust at all that had gone on before him. But for some reason, he couldn't make them stop.

He looked down at the second half of his sandwich. It was a footlong Subway sandwich on Wheat bread. On it was ham, mustard, lettuce, pickles, olives, and a little bit of chipotle sauce. Frederick liked things spicy, but not too spicy. He always left off the onions because he was worried he'd offend someone with his bad breath. But after it happened, he really wanted to eat an onion. His sandwich, typically his favorite, began to disgust him as he sat there and stared at its stupid fillings, which were leaking out onto the cheap paper. It was just too plain and boring and ugly. He hated it.

Before it happened, Frederick had been playing the role of the father in a community theatre production of *My Three Angels*. No one had even heard of that play, but the rights were cheap and so the community had decided to put it on. The role of the father wasn't a big one, but Frederick was approaching middle age and needed to accept that he was probably stuck there, working in Sidney at the Liquor Store and rehearsing the play on the weekends. That was, until it happened.

After it happened Frederick was overwhelmed by discontent with his surroundings. He hated his life in Sidney. He hated working in retail and serving booze to old people. He hated playing the father in the play and he hated his wife and his two teenage children, but most of all he hated that no one recognized his acting talent.

*they are all a bunch of lazy stupid slobs with nothing better to do*

Thought Frederick, as he sat staring disgustedly at his sandwich, thinking about his life.

*they spend their days at school and work and they do not realize that i am working to give them these things that they want and they are not having them anymore because they are lazy and stupid. my children are black and blacker still their ungrateful hearts that plead and beg and want and want my daughter a little slut the cunt the bitch with her oozing moist between her legs who wants to get it on with every pubescent cock that firms up for her display of skin and skin and that little pink thong that pokes out of her short too short shorts and their pimpled faces twist and groan as she moans and pounds down on their undersized cocks and my son is no better with his pimples and his moans and the stolen pornography he keeps in smut silence hidden down in nasty corners underneath the mattress and the bed and the pornography that is saved on the computer in files named things that seem to not be bad but he is dirty and smutty and nasty and depraved and i have one hell of a bitch of a sorry excuse for a wife if she raised them that way and by that i mean by way of example the whore the bitch the slut*

With that, he got up and grabbed his sandwich. He stared at the garbage can a few yards from where he was standing. Instead of walking over to it and disposing of the

sandwich properly, Frederick hurled it towards the busy street that cut through the centre of town. He hurled the sandwich at the traffic.

The sandwich flew through the air. It spun and lettuce streamed behind it in a tailwind of vegetary fluttering. It was as though in slow motion the sandwich twisted and spun through the air, into the street, and landed smack on the windshield of a passing police cruiser. The ham popped out of the bread and smeared itself across the windshield, leaving behind a mustardy trail. The olives punctuated the scene like the mouths of the elderly bystanders-- agape, shocked, open in round black holes. The police cruiser turned on its lights and stopped.

Frederick stopped too. It was as though after it happened he had lost control of his muscles and his mind. He had lost all control whatsoever. Frederick no longer had free will. The policeman who was driving the car started to get out.

In his head, Frederick thought the following:

*there is a time to run and there is a time to go and man you need to go and get out of here that is there is no place to stay in this place there are black mouths that are staring in wideness and they are going to consume you and they are approaching you because they are black and darkness and anger and they want to take you into them to make you like the white milk that courses through their black souls and you are going to become empty and nothing like they are and get out of here*

But his legs would not move. He just stood there, his hand still raised to the point at which he had thrown the sandwich, his fingers stuck in the position of release. He had one leg back and one forward, for he had used proper form when he threw the sandwich and he was bent at the knee. The officer approached Frederick.

*Excuse me sir*

The officer said. He was tall, probably six feet, and in good physical shape. He was wearing a police uniform, but had left the hat in the car. His hand was poised, ready to

reach for his weapon if necessary. The sight of the frozen man who had thrown a sandwich at him was unsettling. He didn't know what to think of this man who was so clearly acting without thinking.

*May I see some identification?*

Frederick stared at the police officer.

*keep it cool man don't say anything they are blackness darkness waiting to consume give him nothing he is one of them the lazy stupid fat and they will consume you you need to stay away from this thing that is coming here it is not white but it is not undark it is not unblack*

The police officer put his hand on his weapon.

*I am going to ask you one more time sir, please show me some identification or I will have to take you in.*

Frederick remained frozen. His thoughts remained out of his control. He could feel the fear in his chest, but could not understand what it was. He could only hear the voice in his head, his only thoughts were those in his mind.

*the body is a nasty thing you know it is a dirty thing and this man uses his dirty body to do dirty things he picks up the confused old people and they are disgusting and made of dust and milk and black and white and he picks them up and they are brown and black and white inside with nothing and he is lonely nights on the shift so he picks them up in his cruiser and drives them behind the cinema and he parks there with the confused old lady in the back seat and she is gross and dusty and clouds of soot fly off her skin as he forces himself onto her and his body is hard and heavy for it because he is a nasty dirty perverted raunchy thing that is made of filth and bile and dark*

The officer withdrew his weapon from his hip holster. He held it steadily out in front of him and started to approach Frederick. He took one step forward. Frederick did not move. The officer took another step forward. Frederick did not even do so much as blink. In fact, he had not blinked for the last several minutes. The officer stepped toward Frederick one more time. Frederick had not blinked since he threw the sandwich.

*Sir, please place your hands above your head and get down on your knees.*

The officer approached Frederick one more time. His foot was in the middle of taking the final step toward Frederick when something else happened.

There was a loud crash from behind the officer. It sounded like metal breaking and falling to the ground. The officer lurched around and without thinking, he fired his weapon. He fired his weapon and the bullet hurtled through the air.

The bullet hurtled through the air with all the force and speed one would expect, except that it played out in slow motion. It spun and the officer and the elderly people and Frederick could see the wind as it gave under the pressure of the bullet's head. It flew through the air in a straight and true line toward the source of the loud crash. It hit its target. The officer's bullet had pierced the heart of Evelyn Mae Sanders.

Evelyn Mae Sanders was, until the moment of her instantaneous death, eighty-three years old. She relied heavily upon a walker to get around Sidney. Her hair and her skin was white. She ate onions; she loved onions. Sometimes, she would eat upwards of three onions a day. The best day of her life was when onions were on sale at the market for three for a dollar – she bought fifty that day and stored them in the root cellar where they rotted because she forgot about them. She had been using her walker since she was seventy-seven.

The sound of the crash came from Evelyn Mae Sanders walker as it miraculously crumpled to the ground. It had happened suddenly. Evelyn Mae Sanders had simply gone to take another step towards Frederick and the officer and the walker had buckled beneath her. But without the walker, Evelyn Mae Sanders did not buckle. In fact, she stood up straighter than she had been in twenty years. Her foot hit the ground and she

felt no pain or stiffness. She was walking without the walker when the bullet pierced her heart and killed her instantly.

*Oh shit,*

Said the officer, as he saw what he had done. Evelyn's husband, Gary, looked over at the body of his former wife. She was bleeding on the ground.

*Hey! You!*

He shouted. He took a step toward the officer. His hip was shaky. It was made of metal. But when he took that miraculous step the metal brace in his hip crumbled. Bits of metal were pushed out of his skin and fell to the ground through his pant leg. His hip was no longer metal, but flesh and bone and tendon and ligament. It had repaired itself.

The officer, seeing all this in tandem with Frederick, who still could not move or control his thoughts, turned and looked at the scene around town. Everywhere, pieces of metal and plastic, once used to hold people together or to prop people up, were snapping and crumbling before his eyes. Frederick took it in from his one angle of vision, still unable to move. Glasses were breaking and falling from the eyes of elderly women. Men who were once stooped were standing up straight. Hair was growing back on the bald, and growing dark in those whose hair was once white. Bits and pieces of metal were pushing themselves out of people's skin and dropping on the ground. For miles, all that could be heard was the sound of twisting, groaning, crushing, breaking metal.

The police officer stared at this amazing scene. Frederick stared straight ahead. He continued to stare as the people transformed from elderly to middle-aged. They began to move backward, from middle-aged to in their forties, then thirties. As he

watched this, it began to dawn on Frederick that he was waiting again. The black thoughts had stopped. He shifted his eyes and looked at his hand, raised above his head. He wiggled his fingers. They popped from their frozen sandwich-throwing position, and started moving. He had regained control of his body. When he realized this he had only one thought:

*Run.*

And so he ran. Frederick ran past the police officer, who was too stunned by the scene in front of him to notice. He ran past the police cruiser, where the mustard had begun to drip down the windshield in big yellow teardrops as it melted in the sun. He ran past Evelyn Mae Sander's body, the blood oozing out and coating the soles of Frederick's shoes. He ran past Gary Sanders, who was now in his late twenties and was standing staring at his once-liverspotted hands, a look of amazement on his face. He ran past the formerly elderly people as they de-aged all across the town.

Frederick ran straight down Main Street. He ran toward the ocean. His legs kept carrying him and he wasn't sure whether he was in control of them anymore or if it had happened again. He didn't try to figure it out. He just kept moving. He could see the pier at the end of the street, with the boardwalk leading out into the deep water, where people launched their boats and the local ferry ran to nearby islands.

Frederick looked to his left. He saw women that were once in their nineties rapidly approaching teenage years again. He looked to his right and saw men that were once stooped and bent and broken standing straight, dancing, celebrating their youth.

Frederick's feet made contact with the boards that led out a hundred yards onto the water. He could hear the pounding of his feet as he raced across the wooden

planks. All around him people were getting younger at an alarming rate. Those who had started out in their thirties were now small children. Those who were once small children had disappeared completely. Frederick did not know where they had gone. He wasn't sure whether they were going to come back. Everywhere, all around him, people were getting younger and younger and then just disappearing.

He knew what he needed to do.

As he approached the railing at the very end of the pier, Frederick climbed on top of it. He stood still. He waited, the last time he would ever wait in his lifetime. He let it happen to him again. He let it wash over him and fill him and before he could think the first black thought that he felt growing in his brain, he jumped.

Frederick's body froze. It did not float.