

Nothing But Flowers

I see the body on the ground and it takes me a moment to realise it is mine; I look around for my head. There it is, on the bonnet of that blue and now, very red Toyota Qashqai. It seems to be in a good shape. It's a shame they don't sell a neck protector made out of the same material as the helmet I was wearing. My face is facing the driver of the Qashqai and if this had been a comedy no doubt the driver would have received a severed-head wink that the audience would have loved; instead I see her behind the wheel, mouth open in a frozen smile of horror, her eyes open wide, the white visible all around the dilated pupils, involuntarily taking the scene all in. I look with sympathy at her and see the empty child seats in the back seat. Not what you expect to see on the school run, at least the kids weren't in the car. I reach for my head to put it back with my body and find that I cannot lift it. I strain harder and harder, the cords in my neck looking like a ship's rigging, my cheeks puffed out, I give up, it's not moving an inch, I can't even turn it around to spare the driver any further sight of the wild expression on my face. I look like Ed Miliband eating a bacon sandwich while having a hairdryer blasted in his face, all quivering lips, bared teeth and nostrils flaring. Not the best look I have had, it even beats my driver's license picture and that was blown up and displayed in my work's HR department office for the first four months of my employment before James, my boss, finally showed me and it was taken down to expressions of dismay amongst my colleagues.

It occurs to me that nothing around me is moving: the lady in the car; no one rushing out of their vehicles to come to my assistance or take photos of the macabre event; the scared looking girl who caused me to swerve my motorcycle into the oncoming lane by rushing out after a raggedly old tennis ball; the balding, pale yellow tennis ball itself; the truck whose

wire metal cage containing sofas, mattresses and other unwanted items was the reason for the separation of my parts; my body certainly isn't moving; the back wheels of my motorcycle. Everything has stopped, frozen in time and this moment. There are no sounds apart from an irregular, muffled thump of vibration, like the distant bass of a wannabe gangsta's souped up speaker system in their Corsa, which travels its way up my body and nestles in the top of my head, flexing its presence.

I am surprised at my lack of emotion and even that surprise feels false, like I think I should be surprised at what little I am feeling and am trying to live up to that feeling but failing. I seem detached from what has happened and not just from the neck up. I have a physical form and can feel the touch of my clothes against my skin, the movement of my muscles, and the ache in my hands from the effort of trying to lift my head off the bonnet. I realise I am not wearing my helmet or my biking leathers like my twin on the floor, with the absurd bikers back patch, displaying a bandanna wearing skeleton holding a bottle of JD and the motto 'Born Free Ride Free', that I picked up in a rundown store in America during a Route 66 biking experience I did a few years ago. Instead, I am wearing smart dark, almost black trousers, black leather shoes with a mirror shine I can see my face in and a white shirt that wouldn't look out of place in a Meatloaf video, all flounce, frills and new-romantic fashion. Normally, I would be appalled but for some unknown reason it feels appropriate.

The womp... womp... womp... of the bass is annoying me now and I circle to locate the source, I find it is stronger depending on the direction I am facing and at its peak a compulsion comes over me to head towards it. I decide to follow the urge as there doesn't seem like there is much else going on in frozen land to hold my interest. I walk past my embedded motorcycle in the truck's grill, force myself to ignore the instinct to kick the cursed tennis ball as I pass. I follow the pulsating sound down unfamiliar streets, the identical

houses blending into corridors of conformity, bland walls of a maze with me as the mouse searching for the cheese.

The intensity of the pulse feels as though it is reaching its zenith and I have to walk on my tiptoes to contain the powerful tremors. Suddenly it stops as I see the church ahead of me. The sudden silence gives the church an ominous presence and I wonder if this is where I state my case to St Peter to avoid going to hell. I reflect about my life and feel quietly confident that I haven't done anything bad enough to warrant eternal damnation. A thought quickly strikes me that at least I'd find out if music piracy really is theft or not. The building is in the typical grey stone colour, as I get closer the sheer size of the building begins to impress itself. The main doorway could easily accommodate a double decker bus and I am dwarfed by its magnificence. In the doorway there is an ornate solid looking oaken door and it opens smoothly in front of me, welcoming me, ushering me in.

Inside, my eyes slowly adjust to the relative interior darkness and I begin to be able to pick out details, the large main hall, three or four stories high, a giant font at the entrance adorned with sculpted faces with expressions of joy and ecstasy, leading to, what I kind of remember from Sunday school as, the nave with rows and rows of chairs, not the expected and traditional wooden pews, but wooden chairs, all with cushions on the seat that I assume is to be removed to kneel upon when praying. There are enormous stone columns on either side of the nave, separating the main hall from the rest of the church, with colourful and cheerful banners displaying images of God and Christ hanging from them. There is a statue of Jesus on the cross in the centre of the hall, just before the nave is cut-off by a wooden arched frame, leading to the chancel, which from my teenage years onwards always seemed like the VIP area of a club, only for the most believing of attendees, the most devout, the most generous, which was far from being me.

The statue of Christ is over-proportioned and expansive in its magnitude, it stands on a plinth and the statue itself is over nine foot tall. Even from the entrance the face of Jesus is terrifyingly detailed as his anguish and pain on the cross is etched in grave detail and realism. I am staring at the statue when colourful light from the stained glass windows around me strike the statue, the colours swirl and undulate, covering Jesus, the light intensifies and becomes too powerful to look at. As I tear my eyes away from the incandescent statue I see the aisles of the nave slowly open outwards away from the centre, the imposing columns appear to be changing as they move away, changing from stone to some sort of organic material, looking like fallen giant redwood trees. Ivy and vines start whipping across and under the surface, like dark green and brown varicose veins. The wooden chairs start to dissolve into the carpet they are standing on, the carpet changing from a deep red velvet to a mossy, fern green, here, there and everywhere small plants and flowers and colours shoot up, from where I am standing at the entrance to the great hall I can see the wooden archways stretch towards the high vaulted ceiling, twisting, turning and curving, flowers bloom across its body in a riot of colour. The light around the statue at the apex diminishes and I see the statue of Christ has gone and in its place is a cavernous fissure in the wooden structure, an opening, almost oval in shape, with beckoning pink rose petal-like folds surrounding the introitus.

A voice from the heavens, with a rich, deep, but feminine, earthy tone says ‘Come my wandering seed, your time here is finished, return to your mother, return to me... to Gaia.’

I take an unhesitating step forward.