

Option Three
by
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It is a strange world in which we live, our days and eves filled with wonderments and frights both real and imagined, but as strange as it is and as strange as we are, nothing can prepare us for the strangeness that awaits beyond. Except the strange world in which we live.

Tom woke feeling good. The day was full of promise for peace and good cheer. It was the first sunny day in what was promised to be a long stretch of sunny days and, that made this day particularly special, being the rain hadn't stopped falling in six months.

He didn't waste a moment of the luxurious light and opened the blind that covered the only window in his tiny studio suite apartment. The sunlight broke into the room and flooded it with its life force. Immediately, he was rejuvenated. One day like this would have been perfect, but there were three to come. Three days of mother's milk from the mother of all matter. It was to be a good day in the strange world.

He went to wash up and prepare for a day of lounging in the park. The bathroom was down the hall and shared with six other tenants. Armed with soap, towel and toothbrush, Tom walked the dirty trek to the equally dirty toilet only to find it occupied.

"Hey, hurry up in there. I don't want to miss a moment of the sun." Tom shouted to the locked door.

"Fuck off." the door answered back.

Just as Tom was going to respond, he heard the familiar crack of thunder.

"No." was all he said as he hurried back to his room.

"No." he continued to say as he watched the grey sky spill its load onto the city like it had done everyday for longer than Tom wished to remember.

"No. No! NO!" he screamed, throwing his towel at the wall.

"Bastard shit piss goddamn motherfuhhhK! I can't take this anymore. I can't. No more." He closed the blinds and let his robe slip from his body and fall to the floor.

"They promised." he said, crawling back beneath the covers from where he had emerged only moments before, his own grey sky clouding up his eyes and staining his face with toxic tears.

"They promised. Bastards."

In a tiny house at the other end of the city lived a man named Daniel Delorme. Dan lived in this tiny house with his wife of twenty five years, Ruth. A small man with a small life, Dan had no enemies. But he also had no friends, a fact which he attributed to Ruth. While Dan posed no threat to anyone, he would have gladly paid someone to 'get rid of' Ruth.

However, Dan didn't have much money and would never have enough to pay someone to do the deed, so instead he fantasized and took liberties with his newest career venture to let out the frustrations marriage to Ruth had stuffed down his gullet in the last twenty years (the first five were okay).

Dan came across his new job by accident. A weatherman in the traditional sense of the title, Dan controlled the weather for a hundred mile radius. He acquired the position when he happened by an alley where a man was being mugged and beaten. When the culprits fled (and not a moment before) Dan went to aid the victim. The victim had been the weatherman for the sector and passed the weathering rock to Dan, though Dan didn't know at the time what it was for. The victim died at his feet while Dan was busy examining the rock and wondering what it would fetch in a pawn shop.

While many people hate the rain, Dan always found pleasure in how miserable it made everyone else feel. It also gave him a chance to splash the occasional pedestrian. So it stood to reason that the weather would have turned from a clear night to a rainy one the minute Dan had the rock in his possession. The weatherman-cum-mugging/murder-victim never knew he had passed the rock to the wrong person.

That was six months ago. Dan came to know what he possessed in the latter part of the first month when he was contacted by the Weatherman Society, a group whose membership list was even more secret than that of the North American Man/Boy Love Alliance. They had found out about the demise of the former weatherman and had tracked down where the rock had gone by locating the pinpoint center of the hundred mile radius it affected.

They explained the rules and laws governing the usage of the rock. The rules consisted of specified breaks, like most union jobs, and the laws were simply not to make green slime or something like that fall from the sky. Sunny days would happen naturally, the Weathermen controlled rain and variations thereof. Dan hadn't been given the skills of some of the more weathered members, but his stone acquisition wasn't by usual procedure, and he had been allowed rain. And that was all he needed.

That, and Ruth dead.

He lay in bed thinking about his comrade in sector 8, three north of his sector, who, just a month ago, had called to brag about how he offed his wife with a tornado and would be soon rolling in the free insurance money. (He never lived

to see any, however, as guilt got the better of him and he shot himself because, while the tornado did kill his wife, it also killed twenty innocent others.) If Dan could get the nerve to make even a little tornado, one that would pick up just Ruth and carry her far and away to be crushed beneath Dorothy and Toto's house, now that would be perfect. His manhood began to grow as he slipped back into slumber and the thought came to the forefront of his brain. But neither the extra sleep nor his erection lasted very long.

"Jesus H Christ, Danny. Aren't you up yet?" Ruth bellowed from the kitchen downstairs.

"Yes, dear." Dan lied.

"Well, friggin' well hurry up!"

"Ya, so you can get back to bed when I leave." Dan said, nowhere near loud enough for Ruth to hear. Then he added, even quieter, "Bitch."

It was going to be miserable today and people were going to be even more choked with the rain because of the morning's tease and the false promises of the prior evening's forecasts. It was going to be a good day. Good and miserable. For awhile to come.

Tom was awakened just short of eleven by his phone ringing. In his sleep since the morning, he had had a dream. In his dream, he had met a little man with a funny face and a big smile, despite the fact that a giant was standing above and urinating on him. Tom asked why he was smiling when he was getting pissed on by the giant. The little man replied, "Because if I let him see it bothers me, he'll crush me with his foot."

Then, the phone rang and woke him.

He hated being roused like such almost as much as he hated rain. By the end of the second ring, he had decided he wanted nothing to do with whomever was calling. His friend knew not to call before noon, having dared to defy once only to get his head verbally chewed off as he learned some people are morning people and Tom just wasn't. (He never called a second time.) By the third ring, Tom was unnerved by the ringing of the phone and the pounding of the rain. The fourth ring, and he was seeking the chord with his hand. The fifth was cut off halfway through as he tore the phone's chord from the wall. It was when it rang a sixth time that he thought maybe he should find out who was calling.

"Hello?"

"It's only weather."

"What?" Tom asked.

"It's not worth it." said a husky airy voice.

"Who is this?"

"The first option is love or hate."

"Who the fuck is this?" Tom demanded.

"The second option is indifference."

"I think you've got the wrong number."

"No, Tom. I have the right number. It's only weather, Tom. Don't take option three."

Then, the line went dead.

This was too much for Tom.

He had just talked to someone on a phone that had been torn from the wall. He didn't know who it was or what the hell he had been talking about, but he had seemed to know Tom.

"Option three? What the fuck is option three?" Tom screamed into the disconnected receiver in his hand. "Hello? HELLO?!"

But the voice was gone.

Tom threw his phone which smashed through the window. Now rain poured into his apartment, soaking his books and stereo. But he no longer cared. About anything. He had no woman, no kids, no job, no future, absolutely no reason to have to care.

And that's when option three came clear to him.

Breakfast had consisted of burnt toast and tea for Dan, as it had for twenty years.

Ruth liked her toast well done, like she was afraid of catching food poisoning by eating it undercooked. But Dan didn't want to think about breakfast now that lunch was coming on, it would ruin his appetite.

Up until six months ago, Dan had been switching between jobs at a rate of one every year. But the rock showed him his true destiny, and he planned to keep the job for the rest of his life. The pay was decent and the job consisted of nothing more than driving around watching how the weather was affecting one's sector. In Dan's case, it was made that much more interesting by splashing the occasional pedestrian. People so poor that they have to walk on rainy days deserve to get splashed, he always said. And that very thought was what went through his head as he splashed some "geek" in a bright red trenchcoat three sizes too big, covering the "geek" not in clear rainwater, rather muddy runoff from a construction site. The last thing Dan saw in his rearview mirror was the red coat turned brown and one very pissed off welfare bum. It made a big smile come across Dan's face.

And as Tom stood letting the rain wash away the insult thrown at him by some asshole, and as his trenchcoat once again became as red as his face was with anger, he fingered the gun he had hidden beneath his coat and smiled. He knew what he had to do. There were no more options.

Tony's Coffee House was a little hole in the wall. Dan knew of it from a previous job as a coffee salesman. They had always chosen his premium brands and always had fresh pie and sandwiches made on homemade bread.

Dan parked around back and made a hurried dash inside. As much as he liked the rain for the way it pissed in everyone else's morning cereal, he still disliked getting soaked himself. There were about a half-dozen patrons frequenting the coffee house that lunchtime and Dan took up a booth in the middle. He was on his second cup of strawberry coffee when the front door opened and a man in an oversized trenchcoat came walking past. Dan knew who it was and tried to stifle a snicker, a task easier thought than done.

Tom heard the snicker escape Dan's lips and stopped. Without removing his soiled coat, Tom slid into Dan's booth.

"What's so funny?" Tom asked, looking straight into Dan's eyes.

"Everything." Dan answered, returning the stare.

"That so."

"Just about."

"What about the rain?" Tom asked. "Do you think all this rain is funny?"

"You know, it's a good thing we have weather." Dan said. "Otherwise, people wouldn't have anything to talk about."

"But do you think it's funny?" Tom persisted.

"I think it's funny how people let themselves get worked up because of something they have absolutely no control over." Dan said.

The waitress brought Dan the BLT sandwich he had ordered and asked Tom what he wanted, to which Tom answered,

"A fourth option."

The waitress didn't understand and was in no mood to pursue the topic (she hated rain), so left the men to themselves.

"What do you mean by that?" Dan asked.

"There are three ways to deal with things." Tom said. "The first option is to love or hate it. The second option is to be indifferent towards it. Then, there is the third option."

"Which is?" Dan asked.

"To destroy it."

Dan mulled this over quickly and liked what he surmised.

"But, I need to know, before I act on my options." Dan said. "Is it free-will when the only choices I have are the options others present?"

"I suppose so." Tom said. "So long as the options are universal."

A moment of silence and Tom smiled.

Then, Dan smiled.

And, somewhere on the other side of the city, a freak funnel cloud touched down and destroyed a lone house among many.

The sun came out before lunch was over and stayed a long time after.

The End

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