

*‘She tried to forget him, but never could.’*

It was 33.5°f. Even though the weather app poorly predicted the rainfall each day, the temperature was about right. It didn’t really have much bearing on her life, but she checked the temperature frequently, anyway. It was something of a nervous tic for her most of the time, but more so in the tightly-packed bus in the congested traffic of rush hour.

The smothering condensation from the expelled breaths, and perspiration excreted by the myriad of winter-clad passengers began to mist her phone. Irritably and with more than mild discomfort she returned the device to the pocket in her parka, and glanced nervously at the passengers sitting on the opposing side of the bus.

Amongst the trio was an elderly Caucasian woman with chubby hamster-like cheeks, who was apparently - hopefully - dozing. In the middle sat a man with a short, tightly curled beard, half covered by a sports team logo she didn’t recognise, of green and white markings. Neither of these figures replaced the dopamine hits she received from cycling through the five social media apps on her phone.

Before her eyes began to move - but as soon as she made the decision to focus her attention upon, and rotate her eyes towards the third individual - it hit her. ‘Hit’ is an inaccurate descriptor, as its meaning is measured in the physical world. This was in her soul. In her very being. The deepest slopes of her cerebellum were now filled - and with the psyche-equivalent of a freight truck slamming into a lake at the bottom of an icy mountain trail. She, in this metaphor, would have been the lake as well as the thin layer of ice this force broke through.

A description of this man was impossible, because it would be akin to the dead experiencing life, or darkness experiencing sound - it was an impossible, jarring absurdity. A real-world glitch of other-worldliness light entered her eyes, but her neurons cannot process further.

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Whether measured in years or in the tens of thousands of dollars, therapy did not remove the permanent fixture in her conscious mind. Time passes linearly for all souls on earth but for those asleep and for her. Time does not pass, sleep does not come, rest does not exist, only the absurdity. This would not be so bad, if it weren’t for slight slip of sanity left in her otherwise enfeebled, restless sentience. For that sliver of humanity only the fatigue and terror of partial existence reigns, while the absurdity gnawed at the last of her, and so she tried to forget him, but never could.

Ken Reid, 2019