

The Day They All Went Away

An adolescent sits in front of his computer in a dismal basement, his face illuminated in darkness by a soft blue glow. His black-rimmed glasses reflect mathematical algorithms and computer code while he stares at the screen intently, busy computer keyboard fingers typing, code and number mind thinking. The tips of his fingers quickly click across the keyboard as he inputs information.

The adolescent breaths through his blood congested nose as he pushes on the bridge of his glasses. Another drop of blood slides down his face. It lands on the pocket of his white shirt leaving a brown stain. The adolescent whimpers in a cracking voice, “why?” Another drop of blood slides down from his nose, this time getting caught in the pimply craters of his face. His concentration is broken.

The clock on his computer shows 4:00 am. He closes out of the algorithms to reveal a monochrome desktop background, not the fancy photographs most people use. Photographs make the entire screen discontinuous, causing a lack in contrast between the icons and the ground. He preferred something simple yet effective with only the word “linux,” displayed.

“What did he ever do to them?” he wonders as he walks to a table in the corner. He catches his reflection in the mirror. He can barely see the black eye and swollen face in the dim light. “It doesn’t matter,” he says as he picks up the black handgun and puts it into his backpack. Tomorrow they will all pay.

Brazilian Gold

A white and green cup made out of recycled paper sits on a table in front of me. A brown, spongy, cardboard wrap serves as a trendy cup-holder bearing the slogan “eco friendly.” Black coffee fills the cup, steam rises from it twisting upward in a spiral, like smoke from an industrial factory.

I take a sip from the cup. A wave of acidity hits me like a colonial ship crashing against the shore. Portuguese and Spanish conquistadors swarm about the shore like angry bees stinging. They seek silver and gold. Soon they replace their search for metal with more lucrative industries. They build giant plantations for the harvest of sugarcane. Later comes coffee, it is called Brazilian Gold.

Slave ships bring slaves from Africa. It is cheaper to buy a new slave than to fix an injured one. I hear a plantation owner speaking. “If a nigger breaks his leg he has to be put down. Not like a horse. Horses are valuable.”

I take another sip from the cup and look around the room. The walls are brown like recycled cardboard. The trim is dark green. For the first time I notice the table in front of me. It’s made out of hardwood and has a dark glossy varnish on it. Everything is cast in a friendly incandescent light as trendy eco-tourists and sophisticated corporate traders fidget around like disturbed wasps. I set the cup back down as the flavor of Brazilian gold floods my senses and I savor the taste with an awkward feeling. My mind drifts away.

Soon slash and burn agriculture replaces rainforest. It depletes the soil of nutrients and plantation owners search for new ways to use the land. Cattle ranches replace coffee crops as plantations move farther into the forest. Greedy white men kill millions of Native Americans in a quest to expand. The survivors are forced to labor while erosion eats away at the Earth and pollution from agricultural runoff fills the water. First come the insecticides like DDT, then the nitrates from fertilizer. Soon there are less trees to filter the air. Species go extinct but product is exported to nations quickly industrialized.

The reliance on one single product causes economies to crash as the global market becomes saturated. Slavery gives way to indentured servitude. Indentured servitude gives way to the underpaid working class. A system of brutality built on Brazilian Gold hinders progress. Fully developed nations exploit; banana republics,

secret wars, Iran contra affairs, murder genocide, NAFTA, FTOA. Soon Starbucks populates every city in the world; monoculture. Bitter.

I spit the coffee out of my mouth and light a cigarette watching a cloud of smoke billow into the air. It rises upward twisting in a spiral, like smoke from an industrial factory.

School Time, the Students Are Back

A college student walks down Third Street. He's wearing brown sandals, tan shorts and a white t-shirt. Printed across the front of his t-shirt are letters of the alphabet. Letters of the alphabet are symbols that people use to communicate ideas. The letters on his shirt say, "Silly Faggot Dicks are For Chicks." A blue hat with an embroidered picture of a lion rests upon his head. The lion is a symbol that represents a football team called the "Detroit Lions." Football is a game played by men who undress together.

The college student walks with a bounce in his step. In his right hand he carries a red, white and blue cardboard box. Red, white and blue are colors of the American flag. Many people think the colors are symbolic of freedom and justice. It might be more accurate to say they are symbolic of fervent patriotism, blind nationalism, and war for economic gain. At the moment the college student's country is fighting a war against terror. George W. Bush, the president of the student's country, declared the war. The college student didn't vote for Bush in the last election because he wasn't old enough but he intends to vote for him in the upcoming election. The college student is going to vote for Bush because he agrees with Bush's political positions. Bush once said, "So community colleges are accessible, they're available, they're affordable, and their curriculums don't get stuck. In other words, if there's a need for a certain kind of worker, I presume your curriculums evolved over time." The college student didn't know what it meant but he was glad that Bush took a stand on academics. That's what interests the college student, academics. The word "Bush," however, is not printed on the cardboard box the college student carries in his right hand. The word printed on the cardboard box is pronounced the same way, but it is spelled differently. On the box are the words, "Busch Light." Busch Light

is not the president of the college student's country and Busch Light did not declare a war against terror. The college student isn't going to vote for Busch Light either. However, he would if it was on the ballot.

As he approaches me on the sidewalk I see that his mouth hangs slightly open even though he's not talking. As if he's trying to catch flies in it, it just hangs open. He has fly-catcher mouth. The smell of stale beer and sausage emanates from the gaping hole, the fly-catcher mouth. As he passes me on the left, the college student talks at me, "Party bro." More stale beer and sausage. I'm certain now, it's the same guy who wanted to fight me a week ago. Had he been calling me a faggot or something? I can't remember.