

The Naked Man

One day – and it was an extraordinary day in a very ordinary place in our great nation-- a naked man came to town. He arrived in a taxi, driven by a local hack who was more interested in making a fare than in living up to any code of moral conduct. And though he at first feigned resistance to hauling such improper cargo, the naked man paid him a large enough sum with his smallish, well-manicured hands that the driver delivered him, as requested, to a famous hotel located in the town's main square (a town which shall remain anonymous), on the main street (which was not christened Main) and, afterwards, made sure to sanitize his vehicle after dropping off this most unseemly of clients.

It was a clear, pleasant day – as pleasant as it could possibly get in a typical American town in which almost everyone was feeling off kilter-- yet there was an aura of uncertainty hanging thick in the atmosphere– an uneasy feeling that had been growing for some time among the citizenry -- a feeling that things were not quite right, a feeling that things had gotten out of hand and needed to be rectified. The streets, though regularly maintained, were in a state of disrepair, and prices for most services and commodities continued to rise. Moreover, certain segments of the population were in a state of unrest. And it was all blamed on the mayor, a Mr. Dennis Doolittle, who had tried his very best to govern, who insisted that his administration was the finest the town had ever had, who was incapable of addressing whatever situation he was faced with, and who was up, as it were, that very month, for reelection.

Now in this anonymous little town, there resided many decent individuals – those who paid their taxes and went about their business, going to church and working as hard as anyone could expect. Such as Mrs. Beezewater, who volunteered at the local Women's Society and who

was considered by all a pillar of uprightness with her hair of puffed-up hair and her distinctively turned up nose. And Mr. Barclay-Filtch, the local banker, who was quite generous when it came to lending, especially to friends and family and other persons of obvious means. And then there were the Crumpacker's, the Breezeways's, the Goodenough's and even Mr. Falsetto, the undertaker who, though his services were to be avoided at all cost, was considered a respectable, if not glum, individual whose services were eventually sought after by all, regardless of social status.

And, of course, as in all towns, there were many less respectable individuals as well – undesirables, some might say. Those who lollygagged about and whose purpose in life it was simply to make trouble. Those for whom God and the Law were simply not concepts to be concerned about. Like the –

But it would not be considered in good taste to publicize the names of such folk, though many are already quite well known. It would be best to direct yourself to the courts or the local news organizations to learn about their history. Let us just say that, despite what one might think, they too were all good people, in their own egregious ways, some with values that might be considered dubious and others who were, shall we say, outright shady for, as we all know, there are always good and bad in every rung of society no matter how you look at it.

Regardless of their place in society, the good citizens of this nondescript town who had, for some time, been subject to the vagaries of Mayor Doolittle's rule, were ready for a change – for someone to shake them out of their complacency, even if it meant crossing lines that they had never before considered crossing.

Into this atmosphere entered the naked man like a whirling dervish ready to mesmerize each and every one of them. With a contrived air of self-respect, he exited the taxi, held his head up high and, despite his bare buttocks swaying from side to side like those of an angry cow trying unsuccessfully to find its way home, strode into the lobby of the famous hotel as if he were a well-known celebrity.

Now the naked man was not a bad looking chap. He had wispy blond hair which refused to stay in place, even when there was no breeze, an eternal tan that some thought was not quite real and, though we won't describe his private parts, which were in plain view for all to see, we will note that they did dangle from time to time as he moved about – those times, at least, when things were not frozen in place – and did, occasionally, cause him discomfort whenever he sat and crossed his hairy legs, though then he would squinch and squirm until everything was settled as it should be.

As the naked man walked into the lobby of the famous hotel, he was observed, as could be expected, by a gaggle of onlookers whose voices buzzed like a flock of curious flies. Ignoring the stunned look on their faces, he stepped up to the check-in counter and said to the clerk, who stared in astonishment:

“I'd like a room.”

Now let it be said that the hotel clerk, a young man who had just recently started work at the famous hotel, had not yet become accustomed to dealing with the wide range of clientele that one might encounter when working in a public setting, let alone the questionable type we are dealing with here – which is to say that, while one may get used to the oddities that life often presents, there is always something even more absurd to be had.

And so the poor hotel clerk, who had stared incredulously at the naked man as he paraded through the lobby, his mouth gaping and his eyes opened wide, not knowing where he should look and where he shouldn't or whether he should even deal with such an outrageous individual, lowered his eyes in embarrassment as the naked man spoke and, for a second, considered whether to turn around and walk into the back office to hand in his resignation. For this, of course, was beyond what one would consider acceptable human behavior. But before he could fully formulate his thoughts, the naked man looked him straight in the eye and continued:

“A room for one night.”

So the poor hotel clerk simply turned to his computer with a look of uncertainty, searched for a single for one night and, after the usual formalities which accompany such transactions, handed the naked man his key and directed him to the hotel elevators.

Word quickly spread through town, like an uncontrolled disease, about the shocking individual who had suddenly arrived on their doorsteps, and it soon became apparent that no one knew who he was, He had materialized out of nowhere and had no recognizable name – what his name was, in fact, no one knew, even those at the famous hotel, for he had simply registered as John Doe. And though some claimed to have heard of a John Doe before, none could actually confirm to have known anyone by that name. Yet, while his claim to fame seemed to be the accoutrements he lacked, this deficiency was more than made up by other assets, for there was something about him that seemed to attract everyone's attention. It was the way he carried himself, wardrobe notwithstanding. It was the way he spoke and the way he interacted, so that there were those who wondered whether in fact they had ever encountered him before. The

women found him charming, the men, many of whom seemed envious, found him charismatic, and those who manipulated the levers of power felt he had some wit about him that they needed to tap into. As for those at the lower rungs of society, strange as it might seem, they saw in him someone they could relate to, someone they could admire, someone, even, they might emulate, for this was certainly no run-of-the-mill personality. And anyone who flaunted his goods the way he did was, in their eyes – well, enough said.

Soon, the naked man became the subject of intense speculation. Some said he had come on business -- a very special kind of business that required the utmost discretion, for what better way to hide one's intentions than to openly attract attention to distract from the very thing he was trying to conceal. Others thought he was some sort of crackpot whose only purpose was to make a name for himself, no matter how outrageous the means. There were even those who felt that the naked man simply lacked what it took to survive in today's world, including a good set of clothes, though there were others who disputed this – how, they insisted, could he afford to stay at the famous hotel if he did not have the means? The one thing they could all agree on – at least those with some modicum of sense – was that this was someone that one should not get too closely mixed up with.

Regardless of opinion – for no matter how high or low, people will always have one to express --- the naked man became quite a figure in town. The newspapers were quick to interview him. The local television station set up their cameras, though they were careful as to where to focus, and even the mayor, who was not averse to following the wind down every backstreet and alley, contemplated an opportunity for political gain, depending, of course, on the general opinion of the public.

Soon the presence of the naked man in this otherwise unremarkable town became accepted, even, after some time had passed, celebrated, for what other municipality in our beloved country can lay claim to such tolerance, such openness, such unabiding amenability. It was, as the local minister, the Reverend John Crallwell, put it, “the only Christian thing to do” – to accept all, even as Jesus had accepted “the rabble” He daily encountered. And, as this highly respected preacher put it, the arrival of the naked man was, in his eyes, a sign from God – he was, quite possibly, a prophet in disguise, a messenger sent to carry out God’s plan in mysterious ways. Besides, as many claimed, the fact that the naked man was becoming a celebrity and had chosen their humble town over any other possible municipality in the whole of this great land was something to be proud of.

And so, the naked man, who had managed, with very little effort, to become the talk of the town, soon became highly sought after.

This became apparent several weeks after the naked man first checked into the famous hotel (for upon noticing the attention his presence was generating, he decided to extend his stay). Shortly thereafter, and after much deliberation, the mayor, a man who had been up and down the block more than most and who rarely made unannounced visits, except when he was in full electioneering mode, decided, upon studying the reaction of his constituents through news reports and opinion polls, that the time had come to find out who this naked man really was and to either forge a relationship with him if it could somehow be beneficial to his campaign -- for the poor mayor’s numbers were dropping precipitously and the election was quickly approaching

– or, for decency’s sake, to send him off packing though, as the mayor noted to himself, there really wasn’t much for him to pack.

And so on a day when the weather seemed most auspicious, the mayor marched into the lobby of the famous hotel, announced himself at the front desk and, after waiting for quite some time, was told that he had been granted an audience. Feeling self-satisfied though somewhat annoyed at having been kept waiting, the mayor boarded the elevator, made his way up to the top floor and knocked briskly on the naked man’s door. After some time had passed (ten to fifteen minutes at least, for the naked man, it seemed, was one for dramatics), our naked hero opened up, greeted the mayor with an air of general pomposity and led him into his sumptuous suite.

There’s no need to describe the lavish décor of the naked man’s rooms for it was the best the famous hotel had to offer. And while some might label the furnishings ostentatious, even, one might say, garish, others would simply consider them opulent. There is, after all, no accounting for taste for, as they say, one man’s idea of trash is another man’s dream of treasure.

Likewise, there’s no need to reveal what was discussed between these two esteemed individuals, for such meetings are always kept in strict confidence such that even the participants are often unaware of what has been said or what has been agreed upon. And even if some innocent individual – a bellhop or a housekeeper, for example – had somehow been present and had eavesdropped enough so the information could be leaked, the leaks would be so muddled as to render what had been said not only useless but easily deniable as well. So we will leave such speculation, leaked or otherwise, for political scientists to scrutinize.

Let us just say that the mayor left the naked man’s apartment with a smug look on his otherwise drab face, and the naked man took his seat by the window, rubbed his hands with

sanitizer and watched with a contented look on his cleanly shaven face as the mayor stepped into his car and was driven off to the town hall by his trusty chauffeur where it was announced that the naked man had, after much discussion and negotiation, endorsed the mayor's reelection campaign.

Now who, exactly, you might ask, was Mayor Doolittle and how had he come to preside over this nameless little town? Well, truth be told, he had very little experience in politics – had, in fact, very little experience in anything at all. A total failure, some might say, though there were those who simply thought of him as a dimwitted genius. As a young man, he had barely made the grade, though his father, a rather wealthy gentleman who had made his name in shady real estate deals, managed to fenagle an acceptance for his rockheaded son into a rather prestigious university. And while the soon-to-become-mayor accomplished very little during his tenure there, refusing to attend class and passing with a less than minimum score, he was finally awarded, in a secret ceremony, a degree of dubious worth which served as his entrance into the professional world. There he floundered for several years, borrowing large sums of money from his well-heeled father and squandering it all on investments that never panned out. Throughout these unremarkable years, he managed to make a name for himself -- a name which, though dubious in nature, gained him entrance into some of the highest echelons of society.

Now it just so happened that the former mayor of -- had a sudden need to fly south, so to speak, after absconding with large sums of public funds which he invested into lucrative offshore accounts. "For the public's benefit," he insisted just before his abrupt disappearance. A special election was called and Doolittle, sensing his chance for greatness, tossed his tainted horseshoe

into the ring. With his infamous name and enough funds to pull the wool over everyone's eyes through his unorthodox campaign strategy ("I will win regardless," became his campaign slogan which he would proclaim to raucous applause), he managed to eke out a win. It was all done fair and square, he would constantly insist throughout his tenure, though there were those who doubted it. And while the numbers did not quite add up (for as anyone with the least intelligence will tell you, two plus two can, under certain circumstances, equal twenty-two), there was nothing that anyone could do except to succumb to the results. For as we all know, democracy, like religion, works in enigmatic ways, and while it seems at times to only benefit some, we cherish it nonetheless.

Mayor Doolittle, as could be expected, was not very effective at governing. In fact, he was an utter failure. He could not speak in public without twisting his body as well as his words. With his unconventional style, he was unable to gain the confidence of the local town council or any other public official for that matter. He was of the type to insist that up was down even though he might be pointing in the right direction. And when he did speak, he was apt to do so in short, mangled phrases – some of which resembled sound bites he had attempted to memorize throughout the years – which often bore no relationship to the topic at hand and which would leave everyone in utter confusion – everyone, that is, except those who were simply left in awe. So thick was the fog he created that even he would often wonder where it would all lead.

In short, after a very brief time which seemed to some like an eternity, the good mayor of – was in desperate need of assistance. And the naked man seemed just like the right man to help.

The mayor's announcement created quite a stir, even among the most taciturn of citizens. The newspapers decried his decision as erratic while the local television station branded it "an assault on the values of the good citizens of --." Even the local radio commentator – a Mr. Brusk Limbo --an individual who was known for his bellicose, poorly informed pronouncements and his sycophantic support for the mayor -- expressed his disapproval in such terms that even his most loyal listeners could not help but blush.

Meanwhile, some of the most prominent citizens of --, as could be expected, had much to say about Mayor Doolittle's shocking decision. Mrs. Beezewater, for example, had found the news so utterly contemptible that she could not refrain from exclaiming, while pruning her eyebrows in the mirror, "Well, I never!" -- though, in fact, she had, as anyone who knew her could attest – and she promptly made her way to the kitchen, put on a pot of tea and called an emergency meeting of the Women's Society.

"I'm simply flabbergasted," she exclaimed as everyone gathered. "Shocked to the gills!" she insisted, as the muscles on her neck pulsed. "And to think that Mayor Doolittle wanted our assistance with his campaign!"

"But Patience," Harriet Goodenough said. "Weren't we ourselves considering inviting Mr. Doe to address our members?"

"Really!" Muriel Crumpacker interjected. "I wasn't here for *that* decision. How could we? I mean it's unspeakable."

"It was my idea," Florence Barclay-Filtch said, blushing as she spoke. "I mean how many times do we have such a – a stimulating personality visit our town? And my husband thought—."

But before Mrs. Barclay-Filtch could complete her sentence, the room erupted into such a commotion that Patience Beezewater found it quite impossible to call them to order and simply stared at them in indignation until they all got up and left before allowing her the courtesy of calling for adjournment.

But it wasn't just Patience Beezewater and the good ladies of the Women's Society who were up in hives. Soon, the whole town exploded into an uproar as citizens of all persuasions tried to come to terms with the new political reality. Committees were formed, some supporting the mayor's reelection, others opposing it unequivocally. There were those who questioned the morality of the mayor's decision; others, meanwhile, including the Reverend Crallwell, justified their support by combing through the scriptures and offering up carefully selected verses to support their claim. Soon, in every nook and cranny and on every wall and signpost, fliers appeared, some with catchy slogans such as "Too Little Doolittle," others bearing the phrase "Vote for The Naked Truth."

Meanwhile, the mayor's phone lines buzzed constantly as citizen after citizen exercised their digital rights, some expressing support, others declaring that, while they had endorsed him in the last election, they simply could no longer do so under the current circumstances. Even the daily newspaper, after much hand-wringing and consternation, managed to muster up a hearty thumbs up, but not for Mayor Doolittle. Instead, they championed a highly qualified candidate, whose name has since been relegated to the dustbins of history and who had vowed to clean up the town and make things right. Mayor Doolittle, the newspaper concluded, had failed to restore the town to its former greatness and had simply managed to make matters worse. Besides, accepting the endorsement of the naked man had, in their opinion, crossed a red line.

Meanwhile, on the other side of town, where the disgruntled made their beds and the deplorables sought any excuse to express their discontent, support for the mayor was on the rise, despite the fact that none of his policies were even vaguely meant to benefit them. But, as is often the case, they were blinded by reality and saw in the Mayor a commitment to – well, what it was they couldn't say and, when pressed, they pointed to the support of the naked man whose unadorned appearance, they reasoned, made him more transparent than anyone had ever been. And though he himself was not running, the fact that he was backing the mayor was enough to win their support. Besides, they claimed, during his short stay in town, he had managed to turn every norm upside down so that, for once, they felt there was someone who, at last, might represent their interests. And while a good set of clothes might be the mark of a respectable man, the lack of such trappings made him seem more like them. In short, this was a public figure they had been yearning for all their lives.

While everyone in the town of – was raising Cain over the mayor's reelection tactics, the naked man was busy ruminating over how he could best use his influence to sway the election and how he, himself, might benefit, for why lend one's good name to someone else's ambitions without expecting something in return? And so, day and night, he plotted and planned, contrived and schemed, pondering how he could best influence Doolittle's dubious campaign and how it would, in the long run, benefit his own unvarnished ambitions.

Then, one morning, after a long night of tossing and turning, he awoke to a most unusual dilemma, for he found himself unconsciously scratching an itch which had manifested itself in a place he was quite sensitive about. Immediately, he jumped out of bed and looked in the mirror

where he discovered a dark splotch staring back at him, a splotch that was situated conspicuously in the middle of his pale posterior, just above the crevice where his two great mountains of flesh merged together.

“Well I’ll be damned!” he exclaimed.

Gazing at the brazen blemish -- a large discolored pustule affixed to his lily-white skin -- he exclaimed:

“It looks like a pimple!”

The naked man rushed over to the window and opened the drapes to let in the morning light and set his eyes on the nasty brute, hoping it might just disappear.

“Damn!” he shouted. “It *is* a pimple.”

Now the naked man was not one to dither when it came to conjuring up explanations and, in fact, was a most imaginative person, prone to wild fits of fancy and delusional deliberations, for no dilemma, big or small, was beyond his ability to reconstrue. And since he had to make a public appearance that day in support of Mayor Doolittle’s campaign, he got to thinking about just how this sudden arrival of an unwelcome blemish could be refabricated into something more acceptable, for no matter what one might think, there is always a positive spin to be had regardless of the circumstances. And so after much thought and consideration, he decided that it could not possibly be a pimple at all for the simple reason that pimples did not run in his family.

“It’s a beauty mark!” he declared out loud, with a bumptious smile on his face. And he reached down and touched the spot with reverence until a sharp pain suddenly erupted and he was forced to remove his hand with a grimace.

“Dammit!” he cried. “It’s a pimple all right.”

He glanced once more in the mirror, squinted his eyes to get a better look, but the horrid looking thing remained in its place as if it had nothing better to do than to taunt him.

“Damn! How could I possibly have a pimple!”

And then, as if an epiphany suddenly descended upon him from the heavens, he exclaimed:

“The hotel will pay for this!”

So the naked man promptly called down to the front desk and demanded that someone report immediately to his room. though why they were needed remained a mystery.

“Urgent!” he simply repeated. “I need an urgent manager! Urgently!”

Now the manager that morning just so happened to be a Ms. Faithful Bhut, a cantankerous woman who was known for her grating voice and her uncompromising approach to resolving conflicts. Her employees avoided her whenever they could and those who frequented the hotel were known to keep their grievances to themselves, for even the slightest complaint could lead to an unnecessary confrontation and unspecified surcharges on the final bill.

Within minutes, Bhut arrived, scrutinized the naked man from head to toe and exclaimed:

“My, my, my! Aren’t we looking dapper today!”

Then, glancing at the mirror, she spotted the inflamed blister on the naked man’s blubbery rump and said:

“What’s that you got there?”

Now the naked man was not one to admit to anything, let alone something the least bit compromising so, without so much as a wink, he said:

“A freckle. It’s a very tiny freckle.”

“A freckle?” Bhut responded. “You call that a freckle? That a pimple. A big ol’ pimple.”

“It’s a freckle,” the naked man repeated. “Runs in the family.”

“You can call it what you want, mister, A pimple. A boil. A zit. But it sure as hell ain’t no freckle.”

“It’s a freckle,” the naked man insisted. “And you are a very nasty person.”

“Well look who’s the picture of perfection! It’s a pimple, plain and simple, sure as the nose that sits here on my face.”

“It’s a freckle. A big beautiful freckle.”

“It’s a pimple or my name ain’t Bhut.”

“A freckle.”

“A big fat pimple.”

There’s no need to go further into this dispute which continued for quite some time for, like so many of its kind, it ended up with no meaningful resolution. Let us just say that the naked man insisted on his way of seeing things and threatened to sue the hotel for unspecified damages

for a freckle he suddenly seemed quite proud of, while the manager maintained that the hotel could not possibly be responsible for the naked man's genetic disposition.

“Zit or freckle,” she concluded. “You have contaminated the sheets and there'll be a charge for that.”

And she promptly vacated the naked man's room, ignoring the invectives he hurled at her, and returned to her office where she made sure to append a hefty surcharge to his account.

Election Day in every suburb, town and city in our great country is always a cause for wonderment. Citizens interrupt their daily routine for a chance to stand in long lines to register their support for their chosen candidate, individuals they often know very little about but whom they are convinced will best represent their interests though they don't always know what those interests might be. Schools and other public buildings cancel their regularly scheduled activities and open their doors for this annual pilgrimage, while poll workers eagerly await the chance to volunteer their time to earn a paltry sum for their troubles. Chads fly, pencil points snap and polling machines swallow up everyone's carefully concealed intentions. All this to choose someone who promises the world but never delivers, if elected, even a smidgen of what was pledged. Such is the exercise of our democratic rights, enshrined in a document most have never read, rights we treasure almost as much as we treasure getting our blood drawn or going to the dentist for some painful procedure we're not sure we actually need.

And it was no different in the town of – when election day finally arrived. In fact, the town was in a such a tizzy that both candidates put on their best façade and rushed from polling place to polling place, shamelessly begging for everyone's vote.

Mayor Doolittle shook hands, which he sanitized whenever he could without being seen, patted babies on the head and made promises in such a way that would make any boy scout proud. And he was accompanied by the naked man who was now covered in a loin cloth that looked very much like a diaper, for the poor man's pimple had quickly turned into a giant carbuncle which needed to be hidden so as not to raise everyone's disgust.

"Freckles," he would say when asked. "Need to protect them from the sun."

This new yarn, however, caused quite a stir, even more so than when he had first made his appearance in town, for people began to feel as if they had been had.

And so it was with Patience Beezewater who, upon hearing the news, declared:

"Well I never! First, he shows up naked. Now he covers everything up as if he has something to hide!"

But then she mulled it over as she blasted her beehive with hairspray, and decided that it was, when all was said and done, a matter of good taste.

"After all," she admitted to herself. "Some things should just not be exposed to daylight." And she quickly phoned the ladies from the women's society declaring her now unwavering support for the mayor who, she declared, had demonstrated, through his surrogates, the need for discretion.

"Such a relief," she said as she patted her hair in place. "And to think that everything was so—so out in the open! No, we simply can't have that."

As is so often the case with an electorate that can be, shall we say, somewhat fickle, individuals abruptly change their minds and vote for the candidate they had previously sworn

they'd never support. And so it was with Mrs. Beezewater as she promptly ticked off the mayor's name on the ballot and left the polling place with a look of contempt as she passed the information booth of Doolittle's challenger.

But not everyone was as easily swayed as Patience Beezewater. Mr. Barclay-Filch, for example, felt betrayed by the naked man's sartorial flip-flop and secretly voted for the mayor's opponent though he openly claimed, even at the last minute, that the mayor had his full support. The Reverend Crallwell, once again citing the scriptures, found ample support from the heavens to no longer support the mayor for, as it says in that great book "Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your disgrace shall be seen" – a reference to – well, we're not quite sure what the good reverend had in mind but it certainly did make an impression on his followers. As for Mr. Falsetto, who was more interested in tending to the dead than in caring for the living, he decided, after grave consideration, to support the mayor's opponent, for someone, he reasoned, had to champion a moribund campaign.

Not everything, however, went as smoothly as one should expect for, in some parts of town, polling stations were ill-prepared to handle the swell of voters and, in others, utter confusion reigned, for the mayor had closed down a number of polling places in an effort to save taxpayer money. "For the public's benefit," he insisted. It was not surprising then that riots nearly broke out and the disgruntled remained – well, disgruntled. For some people will never appreciate the efforts made on their behalf.

And so the election proceeded as all elections do in this beacon of democracy. Exit polls were conducted, pundits made predictions and the good citizens of – returned to their lives satisfied that they had done their civic duty. Life went on as usual. The roads remained in

disrepair and prices continued to go up. For, as is always the case, one candidate loses while another wins, and life goes on no differently than it had prior to all the hubbub. Such are the blessings of democracy.

So it is really not important to declare who the winner was though, after assessing the facts, it would be easy enough to guess. Let us just say that, afterwards, life was no different than it had been beforehand. Those who had the means maintained their esteemed roles while the rest continued to struggle in their everyday lives. Patience Beezewater remained chair of the Women's Society though her tenure was fast coming to a close. Mr. Barclay-Filch continued to lend money and pocket fees, and Mr. Falsetto went on burying the dead and the Reverend Crallwell comforting the living, each earning large sums of money for their troubles. And no one, living or dead, was in anyway the worse for it.

As for the naked man, who is, after all, the focus of our story – well, his carbuncle continued to spread, forcing him, little by little, to cover up until, eventually, he was no longer naked. And because it was so gradual, people failed to take notice – or, at least, failed to acknowledge what their eyes were telling them. Eventually, he became an impeccable dresser and a pillar of the town's society. And while no one ever really forgot his former appearance, it seemed such a faraway occurrence, that, as is often the case, it simply became the stuff of fable.

The End