

Under The Bridge

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By: Jim Gleeson

I didn't start thinking about the man under the bridge until later--after the unusual disappearances. I guess sometimes memory works like that. It needs a key to unlock the puzzle--and there was no key; just the tingling of the hindbrain. Call it the brew of gestalt, spidey sense, or the spark of serendipity.

The first time I saw him, he was walking up the street to my apartment building. He walked barefoot, pounding the sidewalk, ambling like a sumo wrestler. He stood six foot easy. he was without a shirt, and only a pair of white tattered shorts, and this was in sixty two-degree weather.

He walked like there had been chafing. His belly was the color of Hershey's chocolate. And it was the belly of a man who had eaten well, or at least suffered a lingering thyroid disorder.

He had dreadlocks stuck up around his head like a lions mane that had been scourged by a fire. I could hear his heavy breathing as he drew closer.

Shit.

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He was coming at me with all the speed of a glacier. But there was still, despite the smile plastered on his face, and his walk, an almost menacing intent; a golem conjured by a wizard to do his bidding--or a guy locked out of an apartment looking for a change of clothes and a bottle of Shampoo.

He was smiling, coming in my direction. As I began to smell him, I decided it was time to head on my way, down the street, towards my port of call about eight blocks away, the California Pizza Kitchen.

I forgot about him two blocks down, as I slid into the twilight between real and ideal world listening to my iPod. The song was "Tiny Dancer, I downloaded from the iTunes music store recently after watching the "Almost Famous" DVD.

#

The next time I saw him, it shook the memory loose, which had been folded neatly into my mind as a bill slipped in that fold of a wallet you use in case of emergencies.

I'd passed by his lair in the car on many occasions on the way to Jack In The Box, the SaveOn, and just about anytime I wanted to hit I-10 for a matinee in Alhambra.

During the day the lair appeared paltry, like an after-thought; a mattress half visible among bags of clothing cluttered debris of Coat Hangers, coupon sections of the LA Times, and shoes that had lost their mates. It reminded me of the corner of the room that seemed to attract lint and other debris left by human habitation. I thought it was simply a dumping site for all things discarded.

At night, the lair appeared more purposeful, or permanent, less transient. The white of the mattress and the differing hues of the bags shone bright the amber darkness.

#

One such night, scant minutes after sunset, I decided to walk to Beaudry and grab some things from Save-On before

Thursday night's line-up started. It was the thirtieth Anniversary Happy Days Reunion and the third week of the new Season of the Apprentice (the night Danny got kicked off). I was going to pick up a couple Diet Mountain Dews to see if I would win a couple songs I could download from the online store (I got two out of four).

And that's when I spotted him again. This time, shirtless he sat among the mattress and bags like a semi-animate Buddha. He smiled at me as I passed and his eyes seemed to carry a secret. A secret he knew, and was amused that I was at a loss of knowing. I walked passed, not slowing, and if he said anything to me it was lost in the morass of my iPod.

The song, conjured by the alchemy of shuffle was "Dark End of The Street from the Commitments Soundtrack. I felt a prickling sensation, the words sounded to me less the romantic musings of someone hungry for love, and more a veiled threat.

But as I moved on, I started thinking. Who fed the man under the Bridge? He wasn't about panhandling like those up and down Figueroa on any given day. Those tramps and bums wore clothes that were loose upon them and faded. The waifs of girls also seemed supermodel thin, and thus it made it easy for someone with a hunk of change in their pockets to wave them over and hand them something in order to get a burger, or whatever else it was they craved: alcohol, recreational pharmaceuticals, or maybe, just maybe, a shower.

This guy was different. He was clearly on the plus side of emaciated, appeared healthy, and aside from lack of clothes didn't seem to want anything from anyone. He simply presided over his cluttered kingdom with an almost serene smugness.

"If we should meet...just walk...walk on by...."

"Hello." I nodded passing him. His mouth never opened, but the same smile lasted like the sculpted smile of the golden icon sported in many Chinese restaurants.

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After that night, the memory stayed with me like gastro-intestinal discomfort. And I guess it was then I began to notice some things. The missing pet signs for one.

Usually, in the elevator on the south tower, were moving signs and the spoils that were offered up for a paltry price.

The signs would state:

Moving Sale

Entertainment Center - Glass Clear \$20

Couch - Green Mottled - \$30

DVD's CD's - 2\$ a Piece

The list would go on. Numbers were at the bottom, some ripped off, others dog-eared hung there like orphans, or kids waiting to be picked for kickball.

Now the elevator was a mobile shrine for missing pets. Bad Xerox copies hastily made at Kinko's and taped to the inside of the elevator."

Missing

Terrier - Answers to the name of Scooter

Last seen Friday night - Wandered off

Call Katie

A couple nights later in addition was posted.

Missing "Cleveland"

Dachshund last seen on the corner of second and Figueroa

Call Luis if found

\$\$\$ Reward - Mom's Dog

As Days went on more signs came up; none came down. All seemed to be subtle cries of loss. It even attracted minor press and police attention. It was thought that perhaps tainted water might be the culprit, or some such. Many owners were urged to keep their pet leashed, or indoors.

A week later reading another sign concerning the loss of a Feliz, the Siamese cat, I thought of the serene grin of a cheshire cat, or the man under the bridge.

I don't even know where the thought came from, but I eyed the shrine with newfound suspicion. It was easy to buy the tainted water idea, but something else was going on. This was looking less like a shrine, seemed more a post-mortem food diary.

There are a lot of asians here, maybe their opening up a covert restaurant...I've never see a pig with a frizbee in it's mouth....

#

I was on the elevator the following Friday when an asian girl red eyed stepped into the elevator holding a collar. I asked "What's wrong?"

"They found this...this belonged to Francesca."

"Who was Franscensca?"

"She was my Shitsu." she said. I decided not to tell my joke about what they call a mix between a Shitsu and a bull Terrier. She said "Someone found it down near the 110 overpass."

"Near the man under the bridge?" I asked. I wasn't sure why I asked it, but in my mind it made a certain kind of sense.

She looked confused. I didn't elaborate.

"They think she's been taken."

Well, of course she's being taken." I said and asked, "what happened?"

"One second she was there, doing her thing, then she was gone."

"You see where she went?"

"I was talking to my boyfriend." Damn cell-phones, the

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world could crash around you and a lot of people wouldn't pay it any notice. Instead they are too busy taking camera phone shots of one another and downloaded ring tones of the latest J Lo song.

She walked out. Red eyed and I never saw her again--another on the list of the missing, another added piece of the puzzle.

#

The papers were intrigued with the story for about five second's then back to talking about the death of Johnny Carson, Arthur Miller, and the 24 finalists of American Idol.

For me though it was beginning. The memory was like a big foot wedged in the door. I couldn't close it, and I wasn't about to open it. I mean, once you open the door to the kind of thoughts, there is no telling where they will lead you. Still I squinted through the peephole now, and I was about to peak through the crack between door and jamb. The human spirit is such that it always desires to enter the door that says "authorized personnel only."

#

My long walks take me usually up and down Figueroa St. It's well traveled and not nearly as abandoned as it might look in a movie like Collateral. On every corner just about from first to twelfth street there are panhandlers. Familiar faces behind the scraggly beards, the loud talking, and styrofoam cups. We'd gotten into a healthy rhythm of them talking to me with my iPod on, and me responding either by dismissive hand gestures, or the word "no."

Now though, the familiar panhandlers were turning up missing. The first of which was "loud talker guy." this was the guy who usually parked with his empty cup on the corner of third and Figueroa. It was a high traffic area because a lot of people had to cross there.

Usually the guy was waiting for me or hanging off the curb talking into cars with open windows. He was gone. The corner

was empty. I'd seen him sick as a dog, vomiting in the trashcan on the corner, but still he was there, waiting for the odd lump of change, depending on the compassionate ebb and flow of humanity. He would have dragged his ass out her even if he'd managed to get hit by a car.

Then there was the girl with the dirty hands, the faded blue tee shirt with the rock band "The Who" on it, and the tattoo on her neck. She was gone a couple days later. I was beginning to think that perhaps she simply moved on.

I knew better though. Since for the past month and a half, I saw her nightly. I thought to dismiss her anyhow. Maybe she had contacted family back east or midwest, or rolled back to whatever small town she migrated from. I found out different a couple nights later.

#

The song was "Hungry like the Wolf" when I passed by the concrete Park" It's a small area under the Grand Avenue overpass. It's a concrete park complete with benches, graffiti, and the asphalt area dappled with a sea of carts and bikes that could only belong to the panhandlers. I imagine initially it was a place where people could hang out and eat lunch in the open air, but you wouldn't catch a person in a business suit anywhere nearby now. It was overrun with the panhandlers vehicles.

As usual, the one minding the store was Gandalf. I called him that because of the long albeit matted grey beard, and despite his disheveled grey pants and loose fitting shirt, he had the mystical look of a wizard. His face almost completely smudged with dirt, and soot. He could have been a chimney sweep. He sat on the bench, munching a hamburger wrapped in yellow wax paper.

The song ended and battery died as I walked past Gruff Park, otherwise I would have missed completely what he said.

"Who?"

"They're scairt."

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“Who?”

“You know, those you pass each day without a word.”

“Well I shouldn’t have to speak if I’m simply out to stretch my legs.”

“Damn rude if you ask me...but you notice us anyhow, and I’m just saying that they’s missing.”

“Who?”

“Clarence for one, Sandy for another.”

“Clarence is who?”

“You knew him, the one on Third Street, he makes all the noise made the people laugh that one.”

I was silent.

“Who else is missing?” I asked.

The man smiled, eyes looking at me, or through me rather. I wish to god my iPod battery hadn’t died.

He said, “You know.”

I asked tentatively, “The girl with the tattoo?”

“Stacy.” he said, taking another bite.

“Stacy” I said. Sometime it made it sad to hear their names. Damn if I didn’t like learning their real names, because somehow it made me feel guilty.

“You sound like you think they are dead.” I said.

“They are.”

“What makes you so sure?”

The smile was grim and hidden be the matted beard, but ii could see it in his eyes.

“We look out for each other and other things.”

“Like how?”

“Well no two to a street for one.” He smiled wiping some catsup that dripped on his chin.

“And?”

“Timers get the pick.”

“Timers eh?”

“Don’t be laughing your college boy ass off.”

I clammed up. He seemed a little more threatening now; standing up, wiping his chin, presiding over the sea of steel and possessions.

“We also are family,” he said. He said it like Stacy was his girl, his daughter. His lips trembled. And he wavered for a moment, then seemed to diminish in size again.

“What do you want me to do about it?”

“You know what’s to be done,” he said.

Then he sat down, carefully opened mound of tinfoil, and started eating what looked like something that had been through a state of mutation.

Damn if my iPod flashed the apple icon when I fished it out of my sweats. I slid the headphones back over my ears and grumbled about the sometimes “iffy” nature of the hard drive. I probably shouldn’t be jostling the thing so much.

Whatever Gandalf was eating, I didn’t want to know. I walked on; thought that would be the end of it. Gandalf turned up missing a week later. I suppose the real answer I should have been looking for was...what’s eating him.

#

The door was getting pushed open farther. Fingers of memory whipping around it like dry ice in a b-horror movie. It wasn’t like I casually wanted to know what was going on, I HAD to know. I wanted to wipe the damn smirk off the face of the one under the bridge.

So, I asked some of the panhandlers about him.

Ken was a guy who looked like a member of a rock band, in his twenties, walking around in baggie shorts a tee shirt and a backpack. He would try to get people to hand over change by claiming he was out of gas. That was the line he used on me when I first ran into him across from the “Pantry Cafe’.”

Ken looked worried when I found him.

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“Not even a fucking dime.”

“You know you are blowing wind up the wrong tree.” I said, “I’ll buy you a hamburger steak if you want one.”

“I don’t eat meat.” he smiled.

I smiled back. I’d seen him a couple nights out in front of a liquor store drinking from a paper bag. It didn’t take rocket science and seeing his scrawny body to know that McDonalds wasn’t his poison.

“You hear anything else about Stacy?” I asked.

He said, “Not a damn thing.”

“What about Gandalf?”

He smirked at the name, knew who I was talking about and again his eyes turned glassy.

“You see the man under the I110 Bridge?”

He cocked his head like dogs do when you tell them that it’s not polite to piss on the rug.

“Who?” he finally asked.

“Big Guy--looks like a bronze Buddha.”

His brow furrowed as if smelling something bad for the first time.

“Sits under the bridge among a bunch of bags on a mattress.”

Still nothing, but now he looks kind of afraid of me, like I might be nuttier than he is.

Knowing their code, I didn’t like the answer I was getting. That frightened me, because the panhandlers read us/society like books. They could spot the easy mark, which is why I was constantly barraged.

Finally he said, “You better keep your money, your starting to sound like your going soft upstairs.”

He pointed to his temple and said “McDonalds custard.”

I said, “Then why talk to me at all.”

Ken smiled, “You got one of them faces. The whole world

could shit on you and still you'd be singing.”

“I don't feel like singing now.”

#

I started asking more about the man under the Bridge. Those I talked to seemed to not “see” him.

“There's nothing there.” they would say distracted.

“There's a whole pile of shit right in the middle of the underpass.” I offer.

“There's shit everywhere. The rains come, it gathers there.” They shrug.

“I'm telling you.”

“They're homeless for god's sake, there are hundreds of them.”

A couple of cops said they went by there every day and didn't have a clue what I was talking about. When I tried to explain about the mattress and things, they seemed to drift away as if distracted.

What the fuck was going on. This is like the dream every kid has where they find out their parents are really monsters, and that everyone around them is hoodwinked (or monsters) as well. So, the kid ends up running for his life in a sea of molasses as their faces transfigure, because they have told their secret and now he/she are the next entree.

#

The door to my desire to find out what was going on, was wide now. I was obsessed. I walked along the road with iPod running, but it was on mute. I was listening for anything, or anyone to tell me either I was going nuts, or that what I was thinking must be true. I wasn't sure which knowledge I wanted to hear more or less.

I did a couple web searches and I noticed the disappearances continued. Here and there stories about missing animals usually plugged into Usenet groups, forums, and blogs.

I took a walk up to the Sav-On on a Tuesday night after

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another spat of rain. There he was sitting on his ass smiling at me in serenity.

What is it your so fucking smug about?

Wouldn't you like to know. His smile seemed to answer

I didn't know what to say, but my anger was dissipating as I walked by. Those smug reptilian eyes followed me under the bridge. In my minds eye I imagined him licking his lips.

Lick your lips all you want, I am not an entree.

#

Two more panhandlers were gone by the end of the week, the rest were edgy. They didn't want to talk to me at all anymore. Seems they thought I was hard luck. A couple of times I was even asked if I would walk somewhere else. The capper was that Ken was missing.

I went to the police, but their wasn't a damn thing they could do. I was talking my way to Milestones Ranch or some other facility if I wasn't too careful. They told me they checked out the place and it was clean.

I didn't sleep well at night. I felt this undercurrent of guilt when I rolled over. I guess it's how Jonah must have felt smelling of bleach in the whale, or Roy Scheider did before he came after the shark.

So, in the end, it was up to me. I didn't like it. And maybe that was the man's secret. Only I knew about him.

I made the decision to talk to him if I had the chance. I got my fanny pack, and iPod together. But it was all a pretense. I was going to talk to him and get to the bottom of it all.

I turned right on Second Street. It was twilight. Somehow it felt safer then, though I would have felt much safer walking in broad daylight. But I knew that he wouldn't be there in the daylight.

Halfway down the bridge part of me started to protest. After all, if I didn't see him then I didn't have to talk to him right? I

could just go on and pretend like everything was okay. Part of my mind wanted to do just that. But I knew there would be no sleeping if I continued the charade. I had been holding my own personal interrogation, I was already two third of the way through. I had to finish.

He was moving shit when I saw him. He dragged and moved the bags. And at my approach turned and had that same smile on his face; serene, content, like the cat that ate the canary. I said, "What are you up to?"

He seemed to stop at that. Although there was that same shit-eating smile on his face, his eyes seemed to reflect another emotion. Was it fear?

"Yes, I see you. What's your story? You want me to bring you some food?"

He didn't answer. Maybe he couldn't answer. Maybe he was just some deaf mute who couldn't speak his piece. But my heart went still when he opened his mouth.

The voice didn't match the face. It was like something creaked in an old door, or the rumbling of the stone of a long sealed crypt.

He then turned and moved a sack closer to his abode. And sat in it like a soldier sits in his foxhole, waiting to blow the shit out of anything that walks in his way. The eyes said to me something I didn't want to read.

"Don't make me make an exception--you see nothing, now move on."

But I did see something, and that something was beginning to make a feast of the people and pets in the area.

I began to have this feeling then that he wasn't human at all, but something hewn or sculpted; something not right, or driven by the same desires as men. It was simply created to eat, and to watch--a ward under the bridge preying off the weak and easily forgotten.

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But I had seen him. Somehow, I could see what everyone else was missing. I wished for once I WAS like everyone else. But then if I was, was I not also...one of the easily forgotten? That made me shiver. I had to get proof. I doubled back around the block and to my apartment.

#

I decided to stake out the place during the day when it/he slept. It was a long arduous process, but I dug myself in foliage on the other side of a fence that surrounded the I110 underpass.

I brought my video camera. I wanted to see, get some evidence. Something that would not only prove this things existence, but also prove to me that I wasn't having a few nuggets loosened.

I had eight rolls of DV tape and three batteries I could swap out, though I knew for the most part I was going to turn on the camera once every fifteen minutes or so and let it run for five minutes at a time. If I had read the manual, I probably would have been able to program it.

At dusk he appeared like a prairie dog, in his nest. And I guess that's when I realized he presided at the entrance of some place underground. Of course he did. I filmed it and waited. He seemed content, almost statue like as he waited for whatever (or whoever).

And something did come; a couple rats, scurried down the curb. They moved with purpose, like they'd been called, or summoned. He watched them serenely, eyeing them with the stone acceptance of a god awaiting its sacrifice.

As they approached and hopped over the lip of the nest, the illusion broke like a rain cloud.

He grabbed them and I couldn't see much in the darkness. I did hear bones crack, and something that sounded like chewing. I could playback the tape later since I had the camera on night vision. Whatever the hell he did, I would be able to spot it.

My battery was running low, but I wasn't about to risk

being seen by him. I put in a fresh battery, taped, and waited. I finally fell asleep about three in the morning. Sparingly. I awoke a couple times, then around dawn...I heard metal against concrete and he was gone.

My muscles ached from sitting still so long. I got up and stretched, then making sure no one saw me, I crept out of the bushes and through the fence opening to my apartment.

I was transferring the tape to the VCR when I noticed the damndest thing.

It looked like it was bad tracking, nothing but horizontal lines of light and static. No sounds, voices, nothing.

“Shit.” I spat, but was not surprised. Of course this would be the result. This thing wasn’t new to the world, and it managed to keep its secret. Bigfoot probably also makes the same sort of distortion. Or I am going nuts.

So as far as what I could do, I was screwed if I was going to pass the buck to the police, and probably would end up with non-toxic crayons in a rubber room if I talked to anyone about it. But, I had to do something--David, had his Goliath, Beowulf had his Grendel, and I had the man under the bridge.

Whatever it was, it didn’t like light, I was sure of it. It hunkered in the shadows; it lived in the darkness, never being seen during daylight hours. So, I did what I knew I had to do.

It took me most of the day and early evening to grab what I needed. I bought some equipment. I bought a 3M full Faceplate gasmask, a Black diamond headlamp, Samson 3 strand black pro master rope, some chemical gloves, and a couple wrenches and a welding torch.

I also accessed the sewer system maps on the internet, made some notations, and began to finalize a plan. I felt like those parts of the action adventure film where you see Stallone or Swarzenegger gearing up for the final assault. I thought about how surreal it felt.

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#

I had done a couple run-throughs elsewhere, taking measurements of time and distance, knowing when sunup was, and gauging all the planned entrances that he would take.

I slid a crowbar out of the bag and found a manhole cover and pried it open. The smell as expected made me gag. I slid on the gas mask, and tasting the plastic air, I grabbed the rungs of the ladder and trembled.

You are fucking nuts.

Replacing the cover gingerly, I crawled down a few rungs, and turned on the headlamp. I breathed easier now that I wasn't engulfed in pitch darkness save for the little pinpricks of light that shone from the cover above.

The rungs were dry and crusty, it hadn't rained in quite awhile, typical for LA. I thought about bringing my iPod on this little journey, but thought that I needed all my senses, despite my need to be distracted from the nastiness.

I dropped to the floor and splashed. The small layer of water was green and mungy. I didn't spend much time exploring it. I checked the schematic printouts and walked, swatting bugs away from the front of my helmet, smudging it. Shit.

There were markers underneath, which made my job a hell of a lot easier. Street names sometimes were scribbled on pipes and arrows pointed to their locations. I double checked it with the schematics and followed on.

It was slow going in spite of the fact that I was close.

Finally, gingerly, though the morass of shit and filth, and I sloshed my way below the entrance.

The ground felt different. I wasn't sloshing through water here, and I felt like I was on an island of sorts.

I looked down I cried out, backing towards the wall. The floor was covered with bones, clothes, wallets, and gold/silver fillings. It looked like someone had razed a tomb. There were

leashes tennis shoes, baggy clothes and a couple cardboard signs. Also there were Batteries, Walkmen and CD players of many types and descriptions, discarded relics of countless victims.

I gagged, nearly threw up. But held myself together.

I wanted evidence.

I was breathing heavy like the astronaut from 2001 Space Odyssey when Hal had locked him outside the spaceship.

Gradually I grew angry. How long this piece of shit thing had been feeding on LA residents was beyond me. Chances are it moved around, and when it met someone like me, it moved on. Well if I was to have anything to do about it. This was it's final destination.

I crawled up the ladder, my boots sliding on the sleek metal surface. And as I reached up to where the thing was no doubt sitting. I felt my chest in my throat. I carefully clipped the rope to the ladder to secure myself, as I had done elsewhere. I was exhausted. I secured myself to the ladder using the rope, and brought out some bolts and the socket wrench.

My hands trembled as I finished it. two lock bolts on either end did the trick. I checked my watch and saw I had little time to lose. I disconnected the rope and froze.

Something moved above. I heard squealing. Sounded like a dog. I wasn't sure. Then that same rumbling voice the thing made when it opened its mouth.

I just hoped it hadn't sensed me.

I took one last look at my handiwork and thought

Take that you fucker.

Slowly, I climbed down the ladder. I jumped down into the stream of raw sewage and gagged seeing the bones and debris floating about its nest. I gathered up wallets, and whatever else I could find. Stuffing them into the bag I cried picking up the leashes and collars of the animals. They were now mere footnotes in the feast of a rabid god.

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Filling the bag with the evidence needed, I hurried away.

#

Sealing up the first entrance, I now double checked the schematics and followed through with the end game of my plan.

I bolted all the sewer entrances within one mile of the original. Yes, the thing under the bridge was slow, but could that be guaranteed. I never actually saw it eat, but I imagined it had to be quick. By the third entrance, I was exhausted. By the sixth, I was in tears. But I didn't want to wait until the battery died on the headlamp. It was already growing dim, and it strobed off for a second when I whacked it on a low overhanging pipe.

5am I was done.

I popped up and out.

I stood there, surrounded by a fence in an abandoned lot a couple blocks from home. I lifted the scum covered faceplate and breathed in the fresh air. I leaned over, and replaced the cover, and like with all the others bolted it down.

Shedding the gas mask and outer layer of clothes, I placed them in a black hefty bag. Then I walked down toward the fence, used some cutters to get through it because my bones and joints were crying now, and I threw the bag into the LA River.

I looked around warily, thinking that I would be scooped up by the police in minutes, no doubt. My arms ached, and I breathed heavily as I hobbled toward home. I started glancing at my mud covered watch. I wanted to be in before sun up. I dropped the backpack full of wallets and debris in the concrete park.

Making no move to check what lie inside it.

#

I was too tired to do anything else so I put on my iPod listened to the song "Lights" by Journey, went up to my room and collapsed in bed.

Right around sundown I woke up, muscles screaming and

flipped on the news. It was all over it. The city which had slept, now seemed to wake in a rush. Wallets and leashes from what appeared to be hundreds of animals/people were seized. Some of them dating back over a ten year period. A number of the homeless were gathered for questioning. I thought Chances are that means they will be given warm food and clean clothes.

I turned off the news.

I slept soundly. I didn't even realize how much I needed it over the past couple of weeks. I had been wearing weariness like a cloak, but now I was letting it ebb away.

Taking my long walk on Second and Figueroa, I spotted it immediately. There was a bit of a stir about the new statue on the corner of it. Facing towards the south tower, looking up at the apartments.

I had been lucky it waited to the last minute. And no doubt it stood there in wonder at how it had been bested.

As the sun came up there was little else it could do, but stand and wait. A look of surprise and anger covered its visage. I smiled; anything to knock that shit-eating grin off its face. A pigeon landed on its head and took a nice shit on it. I smiled at the ironic punctuation of justice and went on my walk.