

The Dump Man by Leonardo G. Luccone

When I descend the slope where the grass lets you think of but a gathering of discards, he stands there, on his throne, frighteningly, and snarls.

I wish I could say something more about Dump Man, but I'd be afraid of imprisoning him with a melody that would not resonate with the consistency of his presence. I am sure there's no past tense in his eyes. Not to share with us. A new language is needed when you're talking about Dump Man. What I write here is the evidence of my mouth's limitations.

Dump Man examines the transgressors at the entrance, he judges as we pass through. He seems to be calculating something—the value of things. He's the supreme discriminator of faults; he only needs a nod to indicate where you should be thrust to. We all fear his rejection: what could you do with the refuses you can't eliminate?

Those of us fortunate enough to have dump access tried to act casual, but as soon as he appeared, we couldn't help but gather around him. After a polite nod of respect, we waited eagerly for his next words.

We cry in silence for his verdict. We are naked in his untrembling world, longin' for the judgment. When it's finally our turn we speak our trembling words, decipher his face and then proceed. We—heavy from our discards—hope to return home with the fulfillment of relief.

He's still a handsome man—his beard bristles with the atrocity he comes under without any magnifying glass. Everything about him is old except his eyes, even if they are the same color as the dump. He has no place for levity, only pride in his duty.

He seems to suck strength from this broken place, but there is nothing noble in being superior where memories have to wait.

People ignore thriftiness, they prefer the corrosive burn of accumulation—people sicken out of urgency to get rid of things, pretending that their situation would become clearer.

A dump is nothing but a deposit of rubbish, but if you see through a dump you will see the perfect portrait of humankind. The dump is much more than our dead archive.

It is the first time for Rachel, her initiation. She's got a small sack. She can't be separated from anything she owns.

She needs to duplicate almost everything she considers vital. Two cellphones, two mattresses, two coffee machines, two toothbrushes, two refrigerators, two bicycles, two iPads, two twin cats. It seems like there's no intelligible scheme in her duplication, but the result is an overaccumulation of indecision. Sometimes she uses one object until it's ruined and then she uses the new old one (and hurries to buy another second one). She has to be sure she won't run out of anything; it happens that she uses them simultaneously (as in the case of the coffee machines or the shower heads—she swaps them every week—or, of course, the cats. A friend of hers said: you have two cats, not one cat and a spare cat).

No one knows how many lampshades, portable AC units, irons, running shoes, pencils, ukuleles (you can hear her playing and singing loud) Double Rachel has.

They're her duplicate tools. Just-in-case-tools. Water for her invisible burning anger.

She became the princess of duplicates after her divorce. She doesn't need Dump Man to know that duplicating is the logical result of bifurcation.

"Why?"

"..."

"I really can't find the reasons for all this."

"I told you."

"I don't like it."

It means he finds her motives impure. It means he thought/thinks there was/is no cure, no antidote. No coupling for Double Rachel.

"It's vanity! You know, it's only for vanity."

"How dare you—"

He meant she was insane.

The divorce rubble is spread over the backyard, no one will spend a pleasant morning there, no one will take care of the wisteria, longing for its bloom.

I haven't mentioned that Double Rachel always uses a double space when she writes her documents. She can't get used to one space after a period ("stupid modern stuff"). She finds it absurd.

I got a passage from her secret journal of 1991-1992. "Professor Winston refused to read my essay because it had double sentence-spacing I didn't use the computer at the lab. I love Dad's Lettera 22. One space after a period is crazy, completely wrong, utterly unacceptable. I need more room; sentences need to breathe. Why does he want to cram the words like Chinese on a train? You know, words move continuously, they vibrate up and down, but they dolly in and out on the track. Let them move, they're fragile."

A jumble of objects lay before me: coins, a stick, a keychain, a quick lock, notes that no one will ever read, playing cards, a chessboard, and a book with pages that had turned violet with age. The book, a monument to an unforgettable and forgotten evening, held secrets that I would never know. These objects, like tacit slaves without eyes, served us in strange secrecy, and they will last beyond our forgetfulness. They will never know that we have left them behind.