

West Mechanical Chase

AT ADOBE SYSTEMS, INCORPORATED'S headquarters in San Jose, California, at 345 Park Avenue, on the floor below the topmost, there exists an employee named Benjamin. Benjamin is six foot one inches tall, has black hair, is of Spanish descent, is approximately 14.5 pounds underweight for his height, has an I.Q. of 120¹, is uncircumcized, and drives a 1997 Honda Civic. He does not have facial hair.

It is the day before the first day of spring.

Truth be told, Benjamin is unsatisfied with his adult life. He often sits in his office, feet propped up upon the window sill, and gazes out at the hazy California skyline.² He is, really, a successful man. He has a home in the upscale part of town, has a wife, and has a seven year old daughter who—so help him God—will attend the finest schools he can afford.

Benjamin, in his young adult years, had been shy to say the least. His jaunt through college had been mostly uneventful, and although he graduated with honors and had gotten an MBA afterward, he was always more or less carried along by the system, never taking any risks, never really making any close friends, never falling in love. He met his wife, name of Clarice, two years out of school. If anything, the two of them had simply settled for one another.³ Sex between them has been infrequent and mechanical.

Benjamin listens mostly to Tony Bennett.

¹Unmeasured.

²The sight of which, especially in this part of the state, seems to give him an inexplicable terror, in his gut. It's not anything he's ever been able to define; he could say that it's simply his fear that the human race, in the postindustrial age, has gone too far with the environment, and that it is indeed falling apart. He doesn't know it, but this fear actually stems from a trip he and his family had taken to Pismo beach when he (Benjamin) was fifteen. It was a fairly pleasant trip through and through. His mother had refrained (to Ben's delight) from drinking too much, and his father did not become enraged during the activities he (Ben) and his little sister had engaged in. At some point little Benny had gone off alone, and had come across a deceased cat that had been struck on the nearby road. The sight of the cat was unpleasant, to say the least, since the insects and the July heat had gone to work. Probably most revolting (which Benjamin is not sure he remembers seeing, or whether he just made it up in the meantime) was the sight of the little red plastic tag—heart-shaped—that hung from the ex-tabby's now festering neck. Ben, being a fifteen year old boy, was understandably more thrilled than fearful of the tiny corpse, but as they drove home again, the late afternoon sky was that same sickly yellow/gray, and Benjamin had, then, his first taste of what mortality really meant. To be more precise, it was a general feeling of incompleteness in life, that things are always less than beautiful.

³Of course, that is not to say that either one of them are at all unattractive, or, for that matter, uninteresting. Just some people are never quite as lucky as others, you know?

Sitting in his office, watching the smog slither across the sky, Benjamin usually reflects on these things. He is forced to wonder why he is who he is, whether or not all the meetings, reports, memoranda, and so on, really amount to anything real. Whether or not he is just another hairy, smelly beast that cowers in fear as the universe twists and explodes before him, and that all he's done in his life is rearrange a few rocks into more orderly piles, then passed on. Nobody would remember him, he would have no effect on others, save for the messes he'd left and the corpse he would leave.

He feels either angry at himself for being so sorry for himself, or simply feels guilty for wasting this *fine corporation's* precious time and money. He is having an affair with a female co-worker, who is, herself, just a failed power fucker.

The drive home is always hellish. There is more often than not a fatal wreck on California's highways, or in the least aggravation and fear for all involved. Benjamin spends his forty-five minutes (or more) trying his hardest to not become blindingly enraged as he saw his father do on many an occasion, whilst waiting for the thousands of cars to creep along the gray pavement. Benjamin cannot get his mind around how many idiots there are on these roads, and cannot understand how all these fucking cattle can just sit here and slowly be herded along.⁴

Benjamin arrives home, says hello to the family, and settles in for a relaxing evening. He goes to sleep after a modest and quiet meal and after masturbating to one of his wife's underwear catalogs.

Benjamin has one of those dreams where he is naked, in public, and everything seems to just run as normal. Except, he's naked, and can't decide whether he cares or not.

Upon waking in the morning, on the first day of spring, Benjamin finds that he has grown, overnight, a pair of fairy-like wings. He is understandably disturbed at first, upon seeing them in the mirror, but is taken aback by the beauty of them, and forgets quickly the initial shock. The rising sun splashes against their gossamer surface, sending beams of spectra in all directions, covering everything in shimmering rainbows.

He finds, after a moment of testing them, that he can fly easily with the wings. It is as natural as breathing, seemingly, and he does loops and spirals in his home's high-ceilinged living room, spiraling through the rays of the nascent day's sun, sending sparkling beams in every direction. In his acrobatics, he decides he must show his family this magical thing, and goes speeding towards their bedrooms.

In his haste, however, Benjamin hits his wings upon the top of the doorway that leads to a hall, and breaks them off.

⁴What he, and in fact everyone else on the road, doesn't realize, is that not one of them is really such a moron, and that just about every single one of them has the same thoughts and fears on the road—that this whole thing is just ridiculous, and that everyone simply tolerates it. Nobody here is special because every one of them believes they are special.

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