

## A Single Man

The senses became more clearer, and every muscle stretched was commanded by the central cortex. A single man named 'George' is finally somewhat awake. He cleaned himself in front of the mirror and ate a poached egg as breakfast. He killed a swarm of ants on the floor but brooded over his action. The living room has a small library, but these books did not make him nobler, wiser, and better. He grabbed the Ruskin and thought that it would be suitable for five-minute read for the toilet.

When George was sitting on the John, holding a book, he looked out of the window. He saw the town changed and the change was due to the vets coming from the World War 2 and their wives. When George and Jim found the house, they fell in love immediately despite knowing the changes in the town.

The street that George's house situated was filled with different voices and different people during the time of the day. In the morning, it was the voice of Mrs. Stuck, scolding and teaching her kids how to behave. It lasted till noon. When the boys came back from school, the street was filled with boys playing balls. It lasted till their fathers came back. Then, it was the hour of silence, as either Mr. Stuck or other husbands who had a rough day do not tolerate any noise. In the weekends, parties were held, teens were together while adults desperately tried to relax.

All the time, George was sitting on the John, thinking all about it. Then he heard a phone call, it was a shame that the cord provided by the phone company is not long enough to reach the bathroom. So, he picked it up, while wrapping a trouser in his neck, unwiped. It was from Charley, asking him for a talk tonight for one of her crises. George was in no mood to listen to her, so he cut her off, saying that he had an urgent thing tonight.

George was proud of his country's freeways. He was driving on the highways, and after some time, his whole body relaxes, and another separate entity emerged from him. This entity was dividing deep inside of him, thinking about the mountains.

He dived deeper. He thought about ways to kill three quarters of the population by having a rocket war with Cuba, having a secret under-ground organization with ultimatum, and other ways like deodorant. He wanted to dive deeper, but his

consciousness became conscious of the fact that in ten minutes, he will arrive campus and become the George again. He exited the freeways and entered the Tomas Avenue and saw the same types of houses lining up the hills.

The center of all this was the college campus. A construction's noises had taken the voices of the professors. George became sure that he was George again as he put his card in the parking meter. He went straight to the office in the English department, and did a small errand, and went out for the cafeteria. He heard the groans and moans of students who have not finished assignments, nor has the fear of their professors. Dreyer saw him and came to him, and they had a small chat near the coffee machine. Dreyer invited him to visit his home again.

George vaguely accepted the offer for the second time. They both walked on, and George's attention was shifted to the near-by tennis court. Two boys were playing fiercely, one Mexican and one Marble boy. By watching a few hits, it was sure that the Mexican boy was lithe and cruel in playing and will beat the marble boy. Marble boy was obstinately following the rules, making him easier to lose. George tried to shift the attention of Dreyer to the court, but he was just too focused on him.

George shared an office with Dr. Goelib, a teacher in metaphysics. He went into his office, and found that Dr. Goelib was not there, for his wonder. He stayed there for a while and entered his classroom. His classroom has two doors, one on the front and one the back. Most students entered via the back door, but since the number of students exceeds the capacity of the classroom, most late arrivers had to sit in the second or so rows. The front row is usually filled by the usual, Dreyer, Kenny, a nun, and Yamaguchi. Kenny is an opposite of everything; he seems to understand the nature of life. A sister was just trying to get a certificate for teaching.

The Asian girl sat next to Kendy, as she was his girlfriend. George waited for four full minutes, and he was triumph at last. The class got become quiet, and those who were talking were shushed by the others. George had to speak and reveal himself. He said with a line by Yeast. Then asked the class whether they read a novel by Huxley. It was called "Tithonus". He scanned the whole room and saw some of his students shrugged their shoulders and dismayed. So, he tried to make up with a story about Tithonus, who was kidnapped by Eos and cast away after he became old and frail. The class

responded with laughter during the narrative, but the end left a mark, where he became an insect.

Alexandar Wong broke the ice by telling the frank synopsis of the novel by Huxley. The class burst into laughter with some asking follow-up questions. George was glad of it. He started explaining the reasoning behind the novels. He mentioned that everyone hates someone for a reason. He went on talking about liberal and their heresy, the push and pull between the majority and the minority, and the importance of being frank rather than living in liberal heresy. George was speaking with passion so full that he did not notice the time. Everyone in the classroom was looking behind him: the clock. He dismissed the class. Some students came to him for a chat.

He took refuge in his office, and found Dr. Gottlieb, who was excited about a book he had received. George wanted something to eat, so he went out. He saw Kenny and Lois sitting on the newly planted grass. They saw each other and chatted for only a few minutes. To respect the privacy of each other, George went on to the Tennis court. Then he heard footsteps behind him. It was Kenny, and he was following him. Kenny told George that he never expressed or explained anything to the fullest in the class. He gave an example of George's today lecture about Huxley. George was glad to have this conversation with Kenny, who almost never talked in the class. Then Kenny asked George about a drug and if he sees things like gods and magical stuffs when on drugs. George told him that he felt like seasick at first, then things took a turn. Kenny bought a blue pencil sharpener for George.

George went on to the college cafeteria that does not look like a restaurant. It was way too clean. He saw Grant, a physics teacher, who write poets. They talked about the nature of politics in comical and argumental sense. Cynthia Leah joined them, and it lightened the conversation for a while. Her husband, Andy Leah, saw them and joined the conversation. George left them as the circus became monotonous and usual that he no longer felt any need to cast a single glance. He went to the parking lot.

The hospital stands tall in the city. George went up to the Doris' room. He thought about Jim and his hate for the smell of hospital. He thought about Jim getting smashed in an accident and never been to the hospital to perform their usual rituals. Doris was lying in her bed. George was thinking of the way Jim would have felt if he saw her in this

condition, will he still love her or still want to put his lustful flesh into her? George once kissed her on the cheek, when he does not know she was with Jim. Doris was dying and it was a thin line between what is real and hallucination. She saw George and said 'Hi'. George talked about a pier and roller-skating rink beside it. It was being torn down. Doris cursed that the nurse is not coming to give her a shot and asked George to stay beside her, till she came. As soon as the nurse arrives, he left her. She said, 'Goodbye'. Does it mean that she will go soon, George also found a bible near her. He tried to look back one last time, but it felt nothing, sees nothing.

He drove along the boulevard and saw the shops decorating with Christmas trees. He stopped at a gym, even though it is not his usual routine. He changed his clothes, and saw two other people, Rick and Webster. Rick knows everything about show biz and was telling about the boxing. George tried to do sit-ups near the Webster. Instead of focusing on himself, his focus was concentrated on the muscles of Webster. So, he went beyond his usual limit of forty sit-ups, and reaching near a hundred. George did not use to like going to Gym. But he felt that he was happy at the Gym, people seem nicer here and does not hide their appearances. He had a good mood when he left gym. It was towards sunset.

He did not want to disturb the good mood, so he went to the mountain to keep it up. But even the windy road to there seemed dangerous and when he arrived at the top, all his good mood had disappeared. A few houses had been constructed here and there. So, he decided to stop at the supermarket. At there, he felt wanted and even loved, as everything seemed to be asking him to take it. Every item seems to love him. But as soon as he got back home, he would be eating all alone. The thought made him sad, so he called Charley from the phone booth. Fortunately, she was still free and gladly accepted him. He cut off the call as soon as he could, so that he had no time to change his mind.

He went back to his house first and changed his suit. Then he heard a knock. It was Mrs. Stuck, who came here to invite him for a drink. George wanted to spend some time with her, but he had to go. So, they decided that they should spend some time very soon.

Where Charley lived was usually busy at night. So, George left his car some blocks away and walked about five minutes to reach her house. There were pictures and the smell of stew inside her house. She was about forty-five, and younger than him. She said that she had been trying to cook from the new recipe book and told him about her two new year resolutions.

Charley already had some drinks before George arrived. They had a great talk. Charley talked about his son, Fred, and thought of cleaning her son's room. It was hard for her to raise Fred alone. Then she started crying. George tried to soothe her by mixing some drinks. He thought about Jim. He wanted to know what Charley was trying to lead, so he asked if the room is for rent. But there was no clue from her answer. Then she asked him about a story he used to talk about a house.

The house was built in 1649 and was renovated recently. Charley did not like it having renovated and told Geo that there should be a law against doing such thing. Geo continued to talk about the pub. They were quite drunk during these talks. And the chat moved towards Charley going back to England. She asked him if she should go back, and if there was a reason against doing so. Geo told her that she should, if she wanted to. He went back to the kitchen to fix another drink. Charley continued talking about going back and catching the cold and facing Nan. Geo then said it was time to bed. Charley did not want Geo to leave, so like a child, who asked questions before being tucked in the cot, she repeatedly asked questions about buying a pub. Then she kissed him hard on the mouth.

George fumbles on the stairs but was saved by a single grid on the handle. Fortunately, Charley did not see it. Otherwise, she would have asked him to stay there for the night, and there were many incidents like this before. George drove along the bay and entered a bar. He saw Kenndy writing something. So, he sat beside him and asked him what he was writing. Kenndy answered it was nothing but a poem. Kenndy said that Lois drove him here, but George sensed that something was wrong, and his inner voice is telling him to invite Kenny to stay at his house. But he did not invite him yet. George asked Kenny to move to the table that is far away from TV. Then they got drunk and chatted about past, present, and future and what those things mean for Kenny. Kenny, out of blue, asked George to go swimming.

George agreed blindly. So, they paid and run for the Ocean. They stripped naked and dived into the body of water. It was cold and wet. They can see the lights from the highway, and George felt that the waves were too big and scary for him. They were two lonely water-creatures in the mind of George. They got out of the water after some time and walked back to George's apartment. Kenny told him that he could go back to the town, but George insisted. The chat was changed to the Lois. Kenny and Lois made out once and tried to do it again today, but Lois hated the motel. So, it was how Kenny ended up in the bar.

Then George started talking like a general, telling Kenndy that his room will be empty on the same night as he will be visiting a friend of his, who he just had a supper tonight. George went on ordering Kenny to fix one more drink for both. When he woke up after a half hour, he saw a note from Kenny. Kenny had already left but changed his clothes and put him back to bed. George went to the bathroom to empty his bladder and fell asleep. During his submerged state, he made some decision to go visit Mexico for Christmas. Then his mind dissociated from his body. The minds are like water in the pool; they all came from the same water from the Ocean. His body already had an Atherosclerotic plaque, and tonight, it caused the blockage in one of the major arteries, leaving his mind nothing to associate with.

Summary Written by Thura Htoo,

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