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The End

William S. Burroughs

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The End

William S. Burroughs

You couldn't say exactly when it hit familiar and dreary as a cigarette butt ground out in cold scrambled eggs the tooth paste smears on a wash stand glass why you were on the cops day like another just feeling a little worse than usual which is not unusual at all well an ugly thing broke out that day in the precinct this rookie cop had worked a drunk over and the young cop had a mad look in his eyes and he kept screaming

"Let me finish the bastard off! He's passed out on some kinda dope I tell you!" I've seen that look before and I know what it means: 'cop crazy'. When it hits they'll rush out search, sap, arrest, anyone in sight. We try to cover for them. 'Son, if the cop madness come on you find an old drunken bum just as quick as you can and let yourself go'

Well it turned out the rookie has picked the wrong drunk he was a big ad exec on a spree such a stink goes up we toss the crazy kid to the wolves and he draws a stretch and some con beats his brains out in stir. We can cover for individual cases or write them off but next day is worse the madness would seize whole precincts for a few minutes during which any one in the tank is beaten to a bloody pulp then the madness drains out and their strength goes with it.

"Double whisky, Martin."

"You're a cop kinda early aren't you Clancy?"

Now that Clancy gulped his whisky and wiped his mouth with a shaky hand. "I don't know Martin something is happening to me maybe I'm going nuts just to do *anything*, Martin, like get up shave and dress well it *hurts* see? I tell myself Clancy anymore form your sap what's all the fuss everyone does these things every day been doing it for years so who am I to start complaining but strength sags from the work I'm doing not blood left in me to sap a sick junky takes everything I've got to make it to the bus stop and one thought in my mind please God let there be a seat a warm leather seat by the window and when I get to the corner by the precinct and have to lug myself out of the bus."

"Covered you like the white stuff, Clancy?"

"Eh what's that? Give me another, Martin."

Martin fills the cop's glass. He leans his grey junky fore arms on the bar. He doesn't care if Clancy sees the needle marks. He doesn't mind shaving and dressing. He speaks calmly.

"Yes it's hitting all of you cant find a taxi in the street or so many they chase a fare up the sidewalk and jerk him in that's another way it hits people go crazy to do something can't just sit here moping gotta DO SOMETHING. I can see it s coming on now Clancy. Yeah you're a cop and you gotta DO SOMETHING. No that gun wont do you a bit of good. Better put it away. You don't believe

in that gun any more, Clancy. . . . You dont believe in that badge neither nor the work you're doing. What kept you doing it Clancy? It was the feeling you were *on set* knowing you had a part in *the film* and the film covered you just like the white stuff covers a junker he dont mind shaving and dressing. And you didnt mind doing these things so long as the film covered you why you were on the cops. Well the film isnt there any more Clancy the spring is gone from your sap strength sags from your good right arm cold and wooden your fingers. And what has happened to your pigeons, Clancy? You used to be quite a pigeon fancier remember the feeling you got sucking arrests from your pigeons soft and evil like the face of your whisky priest brother? Where are your pigeons gone to Clancy? Where are their junk rotten souls? rags and tatters of old film. . . . Sure Clancy we remember the men you sent up came around later to thank you and the watch the chief gave you when you cracked the Norton case. Time to turn in your cop suit to the little Jew who will check it off in his books.

"Won't be needing you after Friday. Pick up your check at the gate."

It was the film held you together, Clancy you *were* the film all the old cop films eating his apple twirling his club. . . . The sky goes out against his back."

Unpaid bills unanswered letters each simple task an agony to perform every day a little worse and the worse it got the less was happening as the structure quietly foundered whole apartment blocks phone in to say they wont be coming to the office that day and nobody is there to take the calls. The writer flinches from his typewriter the cop turns sick with the sight of his badge. Tools fall from slack hands plows gather dust in ruined barns. Fanatical sects spring up wrecking whole districts in whirlwind riots. A few minutes later the rioters sit in the wreckage stirring blood with a stick or staring into space with dead hopeless eyes. Last twitches of the dying west.

A little fat man was standing by my desk. "I know you. You're the little fat man who gives the explanations in science fiction stories."

"Yes that's me, Bill. Guess you could write my lines for me most of them. You want out of present time do you? Well that's tougher than you thought a whole lot tougher. Time hits the hardest blows. Well I can give you a few hints no more than that mind you and that's against the rule oh yes we have rules. As soon as you work for any organization you have rules and its a rule that anyone working for any organization cannot be allowed to know the reason for the rules not the real reason . . . present time . . . right now . . . agony to be just here isnt it? Well to begin with lets take a look at people who dont mind being in present time . . . Indians in South America setting fish traps . . . hunting . . . cooking . . . making canoes . . . Well I could go on but you get the picture . . . every object has its place not many objects you see these so called backward people are *on set*. Present Time is a film and if you are *on set* in present time you dont feel present time because you *in it*. Well no use trying to duplicate a set like that in a city of course you can approximate it in your apartment weed out all the objects not on set but even if you get your apartment on set where no object jumps out and kicks you in the stomach sooner or later the objects move back into random positions and there is still all outdoors to contend with you

trail it back in with you all those words and sounds and images that have nothing to do with you. . . . All right lets look at some one else who can make out in present time. . . . A man having breakfast in bed reading letters. . . . He dictates into a dictophone. . . . See what I mean? He is *rich*? He can buy padding. Some one else will type the letters he is dictating and pay the bills and see that the heating works. He can buy exemption from present time or at least he could until the film jammed. Now here is some one else doesnt mind being where he is. . . . Martin there cooking up the white stuff grey shadows on a distant wall. . . . So what is the film made of? JUNK. The more you use the more you need. And where does that end? Where would it have ended if we hadn't decided to end it right here in these United States of America?" He gets up and paces the room. "What after all is your God? Seen from a galactic standpoint a little tribal chieftan weak corrupt a drug addict. Sold out his people justlikethat." he snaps his fingers "Yes there is some ground for the provincial egotism of earth peoples. the planet is remarkable in many ways . . . the more or less equitable temperatures, vegetation *water* this can be very important to planets where there is no water like Mars for instance . . . minerals, oxygen, animal food. To put it country simple earth has a lot of things other folks might want like the whole planet and maybe these folks would like a few changes made like more a carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and room for their way of life. We've seen this happen before right in these United States. Your way of life destroyed the Indians' way of life. Gave them reservations didn't you? Now my own position is ticklish. I'm with the invaders no use trying to hide that and at the same time I disagree with some of the things some of them are doing oh we're not united any more than you are the conservative faction is set on nuclear war as a solution to the personnel problem. Others disagree. Now I dont claim that my motives are 100% humane but I do say if we cant think up anything quieter and tidier than that we aren't all that much better than you earth apes. How many of you people can live without film coverage? How many of you can forget you were ever a cop a priest a writer leave everything you ever thought and did and said behind and walk right out of the film? There is no place else to go. The theatre is closed."

The End