

The Human Statue

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THE STATION WAS busy that morning, but Gary had found a spot to stand and enjoy a cigarette with his coffee before taking the train. He was feeling a little wobbly, the way you feel when you enter a room and forget why. He took out a reassuring packet of cigarettes and lit one. As Gary exhaled, his soul fell into the cloud of smoke and he started to rise. He looked backwards and down at where he was standing, a vacant expression across his face.

Oh shit—Gary thought, now an expressionless cloud of cigarette smoke.

The cool wind caught him and he drifted out across the city. The train station with all its worry was left behind. The locked doors gave way to open windows as he rose and rose. Gary was thinning out and spreading. He wondered fleetingly about what might happen when the wind caught up with him. He tried not to think about it. He thinned and thinned and his wobbly feeling started to fade. The violent grunting of the train cars below reached up and reminded him that his body was going to miss his dentist appointment.

Fuck the dentist.

With no teeth to worry about, he tried to take inventory.

He could see in and around the whole city. Thin wisps of essence trickled out and across almost every building on almost every street. He could hear the sirens rowing back and forth through rivers of cars and buildings. He could feel every cat digging through every dumpster. It was almost too much, but not yet.

He felt stabs of pain pushing out from the streets. He gathered his focus and gazed into the spots, a child hit by a car while his mother

looked at her phone. A college kid, beaten and robbed. A girl, praying that her father forgot to pick her up from school.

Gary kicked non-existent legs and screamed with non-existent lungs. If he had his arms and legs he could have done something. He could have done anything.

He slumped into himself, defeated. He remembered his body, standing alone down on the street. He never really liked his body and so he drifted off without a care.

An old woman stood for a while, staring up into Gary's unblinking eyes. She turned to her daughter.

'Amazing, isn't it? How do they stand so still?'

Her daughter dropped some coins into the cup in Gary's hand.

'Come on, let's head home.'

By that evening a crowd had gathered as word spread across the city of the most incredible human statue. A teenage boy, jealous of the attention, pushed his way through the crowd and kicked him in the shins. Gary didn't blink an eye. The crowd went wild with applause. Never before had they seen such commitment to a performance. The teenager, encouraged by the crowd, slapped him hard across the face. Again, Gary didn't blink an eye. The crowd roared with delight.

Gary was a star. He had gained more recognition from a few hours of doing nothing than a lifetime of doing something.

A news van rolled up and started recording.

Gary's cup overflowed with cash and people started tucking notes into his pockets and the brim of his hat. A young woman, dared by her friends, ran up and gave him a kiss on the cheek. The crowd exploded with laughter and the news reporter was drowned out by the noise of the crowd.

A short train ride away, a dentist dropped his fork into his dinner as he noticed the man on television.

'Hey honey! Look, it's Gary!'

His wife's voice came from the kitchen.

'... Who?'

'The human statue.'

'What?'

'Gary's the human statue.'

His wife poked her head around the wall.

‘Who’s Gary?’

‘Forget it.’

The dentist turned back to his dinner, annoyed with himself for getting excited so easily. He looked back up at the television.

Behind the reporter, the teenager had returned. He held up a pigeon feather for the crowd to see, and begun to tickle Gary’s nose. The teenager spun towards the crowd.

‘He moved!’

The crowd gasped and silence fell as they leaned in to see for themselves.

Gary’s body had begun to lean forward. The crowd hurried to make room as his body fell. His head landed with a hollow crack that echoed around the station. A small trickle of blood began to spread from Gary’s forehead.

Somewhere in the crowd a young girl started crying. A siren blared in the distance.

The crowd watched as Gary, the human statue, was loaded into an ambulance and taken to the hospital.

High above the crowd, the real Gary was flying alongside a pigeon and having a marvellous time.