

Roderick had died. Just last night, the fourth of July. The last firecracker cracked and he was gone. In his bedroom, darkened save for his bedside lamp, a pin-dropped silence prevailed. The lampshade drooped. The history of his life sat at the foot of his bed.

Roderick's history didn't know now what to do. Now that, apparently, there was no longer a life to which to be tethered.

Now. What a concept. His history's existence was nothing but an accumulation of nows seemingly organized by a rather slip shod system of before and after. The truth of the matter was that all of these nows existed together at the same time. Time. Don't get him started on time. Speaking of which, what time was it now? How was it passing in relation to other events out there in the world? Maybe the world's time had stopped in this darkened room, like this now that his history felt was a perpendicular vector heading towards some other place. Fuck.

And what made matters even more strange, Roderick's history seemed to be no longer *living* all those events in never ending loops, but was *remembering* them, that they were in a *past*, that those events now (fucking "now" again!) existed within him in a different, nostalgic, even sentimental way, implying that his own existence and purpose had somehow changed. For the moment, all he could think to do was to continue to spin those memories of Roderick's life.

In life Roderick was boisterous and loud. With groups of people, he would wear his happy enthusiasm like a fine wool coat. Always stories. Sometimes boasts. His charm would often smooth any unintended offence. He was fun to have around.

He was raised in a comfortably lower middle class household, his father a civil servant, his mother a stay-at-home mom who cleaned and cooked and baked and did crossword puzzles and read paper back romance novels and dreamed about her childhood growing up on her family's farm. She was happy in her life.

His Dad worked in an office, reading spreadsheets, writing reports, answering phone calls from angry citizens. At home, he liked to do woodworking, gardening, vacuuming the carpet, and sitting after dinner watching tv, a cup of coffee and a cookie by his side. Presumably happy in his life as well, although, being naturally taciturn, he never said much of anything one way or the other. At least he didn't complain.

Roderick, called Roddy in his youth, was a happy, carefree child who liked to build mountains in his sandbox and dig tunnels in them through which his toy cars could pass. (You had to pack the sand just right to get it to work.) He liked to swing on his swing and sing at the top of his voice for hours until the neighbors would politely complain. Most of all, he liked to draw. Later in art school, he would remember his sandbox tunnels and would turn them into a motif of dreaming and dread that would begin his ascent into the first phase of a promising art world career.

Roderick's history relished this re-spinning of these life events, entering them as if they never stopped happening. Which, of course, for him, when Roderick was alive and he, Roderick's history, and Roderick were one and the same, they never did. (And why, Roderick's history thought, am I a *him* not a *her* or a *they* or an *it*?)

The spinning continued. There were all the various jobs Roderick had to do, the pre-career gauntlet required for adulthood. Digging ditches as a plumber's assistant, screwing on cabinet doors as a builder's helper, swamping freight for a trucking company, driving a laundry truck for a linen service company. (Huge rolling bins of dirty hospital sheets picked up at 4:00 in the morning.) Later in life, job-doing would return: sitting in an office, reading spreadsheets, writing reports, answering phone calls from angry students.

All these tasks that he never wanted to do but did anyway. His history chuckled at the comingling of all these remembered events. Now taken together they seemed like they were all the same situation played over and over. And, being outside of Roderick's life now, this was something he could clearly see.

There were all the happy events, the early intoxicating loves, the heart swelling marriage, the joyous birth of their daughter. There were triumphs, the first big review, the first solo New York show, the first major museum purchase, the tenured teaching appointment. Events that elevated his ego to a princely state.

But there were also great sorrows. His daughter's drug addiction and estrangement. The collapse of his marriage into spiraling divorce. The slow loss of his art world prestige. (The early bold innovations eventually giving way to pedestrian collages of famous monuments created solely with photos of women's bras and underwear. Just enough professional activity to meet the requirements of his academic appointment. Needless to say there were no more big reviews or big shows.)

What is all this reminiscing, History thought. What am I now, some God-damned Ghost of Christmas Past for Christ-sakes? What's with all this nostalgia, this melancholia crap? But the show went on, the events kept playing, endless loops.

Roderick settling into a comfortably mediocre middle age. Always presenting his colleagues a garrulous demeanor as much to fill the void as to entertain. There he is, life of the party. There he is, boor of the party. There he is being generous to a student while there he also is being a real jerk. Here, another attempted romance, there another indifferent heartbreak. Continuing in this way until that final and sudden burst grapefruit of an aneurysm that took his life last night at the too young age of sixty-two. Except it wasn't *final* either, the end didn't end, it kept playing over and over.

But something was different for History now. When he was alive, Roderick's living meant an ever growing bag of Nows, all of them endlessly repeating on History's chalkboard (and all of that awful scritch noise had started to drive him crazy.) But here now, (what the hell is it with all these *nows*?) Roderick was dead, the bag was full, the bag was closed. A closed sphere continuously rotating about its own inner core of eternity. (Motherfucker!) But not being tethered to a life meant that History could see this ball of nows for what it was and History began to wonder what its role had been.

I had been spinning in the accumulating endless loopings of Roderick's life, thought History, and now, in this now outside of time, I miss the little shit, the washing machine of his existence. And here where I now seem to be, I can see that there are other spinning balls, and endless number of them, each of them endlessly deep, infinity times infinity times infinity squared, it blows my fucking mind! And I didn't even know I had a mind! I don't know, man, there's this weird void I'm feeling, and where the hell is Time? I could never figure that asshole out. Maybe I could start to spin again or find some small whirlpool that's just getting started. Bring some of Roderick with me. Spin some new events. Become the History of someone completely new and different and unique. Just like all the others.

And so what once had been the History of Roderick's life began to spin anew.

And the great voidless void of the universe was glad.

