

OVUM.

A SHORT STORY BY LEE DODSON

It starts in a small city in the midlands.

I worked at Saunders Electricals, a small repair shop on an industrial estate near a block of flats. A Cafe stood opposite.

Almost every morning, I'd go and get a coffee before work.

I liked the girl that worked behind the counter. She had a nice smile and always gave me free biscuits. She probably smiled at blokes everyday, but I don't think all of them got free biscuits. Her laugh and the coffee gave me a buzz before my shift started.

On that morning she was tying her hair back and eating a bourbon. I asked for a coffee and when she handed it to me, she offered me a biscuit from a torn packet beneath the counter. She smiled as I took one.

'You work on the roof above Saunder's don't you?'

'Yep' I said.

'What you doing up there?'

'They've got no room for storage on the shop floor, so they put us in the caretakers hut on the roof. There's a fair bit of room up there'.

'Don't you get cold?'

'Yeah it's freezing in there.'

'Aww.. that's dead bad.. don't they let you have a heater or anything?'

'No, the managers a dick-head...'. I laughed and scratched the back of my head. She smiled and said 'What do you *do* again?'

'I'm a spark', I said.

'Do you sell tellys?' She said.

'Oh yeah, Tellys, Radios...'

Two brick layers walked through the door and sat at a table by the window.

'That wind's got up out there', one of them said.

She smiled at them. "Are you the two egg and bacon?" she said.

'Yes duck, thanks'.

She turned back to me. "How much are the tellys"?

'They're all different, you'll have to come over and see if you like the look of anything' I said.

She smiled.

I leaned in closer. 'We're not really supposed to do this, but I get a discount, so if you want one, I could get it on my account, save you a bit of cash?'

She looked a bit stunned.

'Really? Erm.. I dunno.. I'll have a think 'cos you don't wanna get in trouble..'

'Well, no one'd know'.

'Hold on a minute', she said and moved into the kitchen out of site. I turned and looked at the bricklayers by the window. One of them read the paper, the other watched the rain. 'Argh look... it's gonna piss down' he said. The other peered over his paper, 'Bloody weather ainit'.

She appeared with two white paper bags and polystyrene cups. I flinched a bit when she shouted 'Two egg and bacon' .

The two bricklayers oohed and made their way over.

'Cheers duck, that's great stuff'. One of the men took their sandwich out, opened it on the counter and poured tomato sauce over the snotty egg.

They paid the girl and walked out of the cafe.

'I'd better get off, but if you wanna have a look at the tellys...?'

'I don't think I'd.. ya know.. it wouldn't be right.. doing that would it? I don't even properly know ya. Do you know what I mean?'

'What you on about? I'm Scott'.

She frowned and her eyes darted.

'*Your* Mam, knows *my* Mam from when they used to work at the printers. They say hello to each other when she goes for her milk', I said.

A look of recognition played across her face.

'Oh, *I* know your Mam. Has she got blondish hair...?'

'Yep'.

'...Down to about here'. She made chopping motions around her neck.

'Yep' I said. 'Just come over on your dinner break and I'll help you out okay?'

She smiled and nodded her head.

There are worst ways to start the day.

The sky went black and a storm rumbled above me. I managed to get to work just as it sheeted down.

One of the cleaners collared me. Her name was Carol but everyone on the shop floor called her Back To The Future because of her frizzy hair.

'The switch has gone on me Hoover' she said.

She clicked the red switch back and forth.

'Could you have a look at it for me?'

This happened twice a week. I walked to where her hoover cable lead.

'Have you plugged it in?' I asked.

'Yes', she said.

I followed the cable. 'You did this yesterday Carol. You've plugged it into an extension lead, but the extension leads not plugged in', I said.

'What's that mean?'

I took a deep breath and tried not to swear.

'You've plugged your hoover into an *extension lead*, but the *extension lead's* not plugged into the *wall*'.

'Is that dangerous?'. She said, looking genuinely worried. The Hoover droned as I plugged it in.

'Thanks ducky. Eh, this is probably that storm they're going on about'.

'Probably'. I said, over the drone.

'It was on the radio this morning. They reckon there's gonna be loads of lightning. I hope it stops before I have to go. I'll look like a right state.'

I looked at the white frizz.
'You wanna be careful up on that roof', she said.

I caught Saunders out the corner of my eye looking at his watch.
'See you later then', I said.
I made my way past the appliances, through the back room and up the steps to the roof.

The view went on for miles. The cemetery. The canal. The flats. The field by the old people's home. I usually stood and took it all in before work, but it was pelting down. The workshop was a shithole. Machines everywhere. Nothing worked. We even had to share a soldering iron. Vince was at his bench, unscrewing the bulb from a table lamp. The radio was playing Johnny Cash. I noticed he'd stuck another picture of a topless girl to the wall.

'Alright Scott.' He said without looking up. 'Fuckin' Pete Swifting it down out there innit?'

'Yeah, it's just started.' I said, and took my coat off.

'There's a coffee-machine on your bench that needs to go out at ten, mate'.

I closed the door and looked over at the machine. It was brown and decorated with mustard coloured birds.

Vince wiped his jaw with a paper towel and looked up at me.

'The auto drip's fucked. Should only take you half hour'.

The Johnny Cash song ended and was followed by the news and weather.

'High chances of heavy rain all over England and Scotland today, somewhere in the region...'

He rolled a cigarette and opened the door. It was pouring.

He arched his neck and looked down at the car park.

'You seen this woman in the Toyota?'

'..sky gazers are polishing telescopes in preparation for tonight's annual Perseid meteor shower, if we're to believe the predictions...'

Vince interrupted, 'Mate, seriously, I'm not being funny right, but you've gotta come and look at the jugs on her.. a lot of blood in *them*...'

'... could possibly be the celestial event of the year astronomers say..'

Vince pulled on his cigarette. 'Couldn't drive a greasy stick up a cow's arsehole' he said. 'She ain't never gonna get that parked in there, surely?'

I sat my coffee down on the bench, pulled on my overalls and started on the coffee-machine.

An hour passed and the rain got heavier. The workshop roof was leaking and an empty can of paint caught the steady drips. Every so often, one of us would open the exit and throw the rain onto the flat roof. Vince was prying the back off of a cherry veneer TV set. The radio played The Specials.

'Is that for pick up?' I asked.

He pulled around with the wires in the back, 'Yeah but not 'til tomorrow. One of the tweeters has split'.

'Do you know if there's any in the shop? TV's I mean? You know the girl who works in the-'

A loud rumble of thunder, literally rattled the workshop.

Vince looked at the water pouring through the hole in the roof. 'Jesus Christ almighty, it's pissing down out there' he said and tossed his screwdriver onto the bench.

He opened the door to the roof.

The sound of the storm filled the workshop and a gust of wind almost pulled the door off of it's hinges.

'Fuck's sake...!' he shouted, '...this is ridiculous.'

'I don't think this is right..' I said, '... us working up here in *this* Vince, do you?'

He walked out and shouted something, but I couldn't hear him over the storm. I walked through the exit and out onto the rooftop.

The shower hammered down on us and we were soaked through in seconds.

The dark sky flickered every so often, throwing a strange light over the wet city.

I looked down onto the car park and saw a young woman; completely drenched, pushing a pram through a small pool on the road. A group of teenagers piled out of a Fiat, and into a house with a barking dog. Car horns blared. The sky throbbed at such a depth, I could feel my ribcage almost vibrate.

Then I saw something.

'Woah... Vince, up there...!' I said and pointed toward the clouds.

He looked above him, 'What?'

'In the sky' I said.

'What?'

'Keep watching...'

A white streak shot across the sky.

'...There. Did you see that?'

'Fuckin' hell. That's a shooting star ainnit?'

'I dunno? I reckon.'

Another tiny light curved across the sky.

We waited for another star to fall.

It did.

Then another.

And another.

Soon, a tube of shooting lights spiraled in the sky, blinking like fire-flies. It should have been beautiful.

A sinking feeling grew in the pit of my stomach as we watched the freak spectacle. Black clouds formed like ink in water. The birds stopped singing. The dog stopped barking. The traffic had gone. The sky was a black cloak of fog. An unnatural silence fell over the city.

A deep grumbling resonated above the clouds.

It was loud.

It got louder and louder. It shook the ground and rattled the fire escape, the sound growling and rumbling, louder and louder and the inky fog became thicker and heavier, the boom reaching an unbearable volume and a piercing whistle cut through the air making my head throb...

A brilliant white flash from beyond the clouds.

A gap in the fog opened above the spiral of lights, and from it, a speck fell.

I watched it fall silently, hurtling through the fog leaving a blinding streak behind it, getting nearer and nearer, the high pitched whistle getting sharper and louder, plummeting past the block of flats and the cooling towers, closer and closer, moving toward us at great speed, the rumbling drowning out my voice when I shouted to Vince, who was standing mesmerized at the dark sky, I told him to come in as it shot over the canal in an arch and headed for us. I lost my bottle and left Vince on the roof and as I ran into the workshop and hid beneath the bench, something hit the roof so hard, it punctured the tin, smashed a light fixture and plopped into the can of rainwater. The radio went haywire.

Vince burst through the door, 'Scott?'

'I'm here', I said.

He helped me to my feet.

'What the fuck was that?..' I said.

A loud hiss sounded through the radio speakers; a harsh mixture of quivering radio waves and fuzz. The needle on the amp meter rose and fell and the amber backlight flickered. I turned the dial clockwise, then back again. Nothing but white noise.

'What ya done to that?!' He shouted.

'Nowt. I haven't touched it!' I shouted.

'Turn it off then Scott, fuckin' hell!'

I turned it off. The workshop fell silent, albeit the sound of the rain on the roof.

'It probably got wet or summin'? I said.

Vince walked over to it and kicked the can of rainwater.

The water splashed up his leg. 'Jesus Christ almighty. That water's scaldin' hot', he said.

'Somethin' landed in there...' I said '...Maybe a bit of the roof'. I pointed to the paint can.

'What ya on about?' Vince said, as he lifted the can and placed it on the bench.

We peered over and looked inside.

Underneath the ripples of shitty rainwater, something lay at the bottom.

'It's.. it's a.. doorknob...?' Vince said, and I could see what he meant. '...Looks like solid silver'.

He plunged his hand into the water. 'Blimey...' he said, '..this water's... warm...'
He pulled the shiny lump out of the water and laid it on the bench. He wiped off his hands and inspected the object in his cloth covered palm.

'What is it?' I asked.

'God knows...summin' off the roof, it looks like a bit of lead or nickel', he said.

'I heard it hit the roof, it came through it... it's definitely made the hole bigger', I said.

'I reckon it could be part of a turbine from a bloody jet engine...' He said and stared at the silvery white object for the longest time.

It's strange beauty was amplified next to the dirty rag. Vince weighed the object in his hand. He threw down the rag and tossed it from palm to palm. 'It's pretty heavy'.

The object cracked and sprayed a fine vapor into the air.

He looked at the thing, confused.

He sneezed.

Another puff; this time it seemed thicker, almost dust-like.

'Vince?' I said.

He inhaled and closed his eyes. A red tinge coloured his cheeks. He stood there, open-mouthed, like he was plastered all of a sudden and he slumped to the floor, tee-heeing and sweaty.

'Vince, mate?'

His head rolled around on his neck. His eyes looked through me and in a voice I hardly recognised, he said 'Make way...'

'What?... Vince? Are you fuckin' havin' me on or what?'

I looked down.

He was rubbing himself.

I stepped away.

The silver egg was in his hand. He brought it up to his face. He slowly poked out his tongue and gently licked the tip of the object.

This was fucking weird.

I noticed a tremble in my voice.

'Jesus Christ, Vince... what ya doin?'

He started tonguing the silver egg eagerly, tasting and lapping at it with his sloppy lips. He rubbed himself harder.

I felt myself blush, embarrassed and repelled by what I was seeing and yet somewhere, a jealousy stirred deep within me.

The silver thing twitched.

A thin prong sprang out and a watery stream trickled down it.

Vince continued licking, eyes closed, enraptured by the object, but with every flick of his tongue, the prong slashed and scratched and stabbed and slit.

Thick strings of blood and drool, hung from the side of his mouth.

Through the rain, I heard a girl's voice outside the door.
'Can ya let me in please? They said I could come straight up'.
Vince stopped. His eyes shot open. He glared at the door.
'I'm on me dinner so I just thought I'd come and have a look...'
Vince crouched and tilted his head.
'Hello? Can I come in please? It's pissing down out here'.
Vince pounced at the door, swinging it open.
The girl from the cafe stood in the pouring rain and I watched as Vince advanced towards her. She yelped as he grabbed her throat and marched her toward the edge of the roof.
I floundered and ran outside.
'Woah, Vince..' I shouted, '...fuckin' hell'.
He continued to force her by the throat and although she was putting up a fight, kicking his shins and slapping him around the head, Vince marched on.
Before I knew it, I was on his back, pulling him, yanking his clothes and jarring his shoulders back and in that voice again he repeated the words 'Make way', over and over and she was panting 'Help me, please, help me' and I grabbed a pole from near the bins and I screamed as I pounded the pole around his skull and although he bled, he didn't flinch and he grabbed me by the scruff of my overalls and with both of us, fumbling backwards at arms length, he thrust us toward the edge. I skidded and fell loose, my foot plowed into his shins as he slipped on the wet, oily roof, tripping him forwards, sending them both tumbling over the edge.

Her scream was silenced by the dull heavy thuds.
I looked down, shuddering with fear at the two bent bodies that laid by the skips.
My stomach squirmed and I retched.

I heard a snigger.
A woman was mocking me.
I wiped my mouth and opened my eyes.
The snigger again. This time clearer. Right by my ear.
I looked around and saw the silver object sitting in the middle of the roof.
A searing pain shot through my skull. I heard the woman whisper..

Make way...

I looked around and sounded pathetic as I whimpered.
It sniggered again and the ice cold pain was like a spear to my temple.

*I laugh at the fear and wonder in your simple little thoughts.
I see what I will you to see... an intelligence and a will far beyond your feeble understanding.. as far above you...as you are, above the scavenging insects that still must crawl in your refuse..*

The earth thing has made way. He is the first. He has destroyed a queen ... You shall be next.. soon all earth things will make way..

"Make way?"

Surely, you, simple thing, cannot think that in you, creation has reached the ultimate. You saw how I came. I willed myself to reach your earth through space beyond your furthest conception, many of my species have tried.. I am the first to succeed... meteors are the means we have used to try and reach this haven of plenty..I am the first, I will be considered The Significant amongst my species... a new mother... now, others will follow in the pursuit of rejuvenation ...

'Stop.. please..stop..'

I'm from an old world... old beyond your understanding... a world grown cold in it's age, empty with passing years, we must escape to a young fertile world... this world... listen to the voice earth thing.. only the voice... the Ovum... feel it in your hands.. touch it.. taste it...

I stared at the silver egg. A fine spray blew across the roof toward me. I felt a strange stirring inside my thighs. I moved closer. My head spun. I wanted to run a mile away from the thing and yet, it felt as if I was being pulled towards it. I heard the police sirens below but I was too drunk to care. The desire to touch the object overwhelmed me. It looked smooth and silvery. My lips began to tingle. It sprayed again. A thick, dusty vapor coated my nose and lips. A strong musk filled the air. I salivated. The taste of warm milk filled my mouth. I sneezed into silent darkness.

I saw an ocean of endless nudes floating and loving each other. Cleaves of plumped flesh and hard muscle. Legs coiled around one another. A river of ample curves flowed and sighed. My body hummed. The fleshy pulp writhing now, twisting, squirming, muscles tightening, shrinking, dwindling into foul smelling meat, riddled with maggots.

All that you think... I know, the most profound thought any earth things have ever thought is to me as the buzzing of insects.. reproducing like a disease... a cancer...

The slippery larvae crack. A swarm of flies.

You will make way. Taste me. More Ovum will fall. We are driven by a yearning..

A woman wearing red lip gloss pushes the silvery egg passed her lips. A pastry chef stands in a kitchen. He slides his hand into his trousers.

Taste me..

In a farm park, a class of children watch a horse runs it's long tongue along a silver egg.

A yearning that has brought me here...

A massacre at the tea rooms.

A yearning that would make my kind in metal, flung into space... in the hope, that chance would bring the first... through the fire and the air of yours. I am the first. You will make way.

People scream as the horse bucks and kicks.

The farm park is a morgue.

A silver egg on a roundabout. A child's slide covered in claret.

A pilot smokes a cigarette outside a terminal. Something silver in his hands.

This world is dying..

Half an airbus drifts in a sea of bodies.

You exhaust and devour..

Underwater, another egg bobs, as a school of lifeless fish sway in the ebb.

Consume and destroy ... waste and ruin...

In a forest, a horde of red ants eat each other as they fight to carry an egg back to their nest.

Earth will grow weak.. so much destruction..

Two Pigs sink their teeth into a pregnant Deer in a stagnant lake.

We will disinfect... we will cleanse... we will fertilise ... you will make way...

Come closer...

An ambulance smashes into a policeman, pinning him to a wall.

The woman with red lips slumped behind the wheel.

Closer... touch me...taste me..

In a valley, a Grizzly bear sniffs the silver thing in the long grass.

Closer...taste me...make way...

A silver egg in a nest of fledglings.

The Grizzly devours a pack of wolves, they chomp at each other, a Bison charges the pack.

Extinguish the carriers, murder the queens.. what younglings have been, will be no more...

An Osprey stamps and tears at her fledglings, it swoops down to the Bison and bats it's crooked wings. A mess of teeth and talons and blood matted fur.

A fly buzzes and lands on my forehead.

The police stand with a man in a tie.

I'm lifted and held.

On the street now, the public gathered, scurried and swarmed, the sweaty policemen sat in their cars, lights blinking, and a dog pisses up a metal bin, and the pimpled youths smoking, chewing fried animal legs and tossing cans of lager on pavements and the rancid, old, bearded men putting the same cans to their mouths and the children, full of ice cream and violence, pointing plastic revolvers at their mothers and the transit vans spewing out smoke, horns blating at the large group of photographers flashing and crawling around the bodies near the skips and the swearing and shouting and jeering and a father shouts at me as his son jumps on the bonnet of a car and I saw the stream of small specks falling from the opening in the clouds and I saw why we had to make way.. I saw it and it made sense.. and it's funny...

I almost welcomed it.

End.

