

## *Adult*

by Jeff Wyrick

A dull creek echoed through the morning air as the man slowly placed his white feet on the porches cold, wooden beams. The porch resembled a giant tree house, with a circular hole cut in the middle, allowing a tall pine tree to grow through. The branches of the tree were at eye level, when standing on the porch. The man liked to climb up the thick branches to get a better view of the ocean. The beach waited silently, less than a mile away. The beach was the temporary home for a few romantic couples, sleeping around little black pits of coal that had been campfires the night before. On the outskirts of the beach, where it bordered large black boulders, were small camps of homeless people, stirring now in the dim morning light.

The man sat down in a squeaky chair and shifted his weight to get comfortable. He looked at the branches of the pine tree with his blurry morning vision. He was an architect. Creating and designing had come natural to him, and he was the most respected architect in his firm. He designed the house he now lived in. The man always liked to say, "life is like a blue print you make as you go." It was his version of the Garth Brooks song, "Life's a Dance."

"Rough! ... Rough!" a dog barked irreverently in the still morning air, shattering the silence the man had begun to lose himself in. He knew the dog was barking at the mailman who came this time every morning. The blue figure walked rigidly, stopping at each mailbox to inspect for outgoing mail. At some of the stops he would dip his hand into his sack and deliver a letter or two. Mornings

were the highlight of the man's day. The ocean seemed so peaceful when the morning sun, rising at his back, cast its purple garments over the still water.

The man was in a reflective state this morning as he plopped his white feet on the sturdy railing. The chair squeaked a little as he did this. His mind drifted to memories from the past; it surprised him how far back the memories went. It seemed to him like it was just yesterday that he was in high school, dating cheerleaders and playing football. He looked down at his hands and was amazed at how grown up they looked. The thick veins curled their way around, under the tan, thick skin. He heard a faint noise from inside his house as his wife changed positions in bed. She slept on her side now, her abdomen was big and swollen. Inside her womb, their first child rested quietly, knowing nothing about oceans or mailmen. She pulled the excess covers around her warm body, forming a cocoon from which a beautiful butterfly would hatch, hours later. She had never been a morning person.

The man looked at his watch, glanced at the pine tree, then back to his watch again. He wondered where mailmen live as he stood up from his chair and went inside. Moments later he was pulling down their steep driveway, a cup of coffee in his right hand. He glanced over his left shoulder, checking for traffic, and almost spilled hot coffee on his tan slacks. On the street, he stuck the coffee in the now-level cup holders and speeded away to work. Several blocks down, the mailman stood on the side of the road, sticking a large envelope in a mailbox.

As the man drove by, he waved quickly to the mailman.

The light gray building that the man's firm designed, and now ran most operations out of, was tall for a small beach town. Built in the same lot as a pharmacy, funeral home, and health fitness club, was this hippo gray, triangular, circular windowed thing which only could have been designed by architects. His office was on the fifth floor. He had a good view looking through the bottom corner of a circular window, that arched itself across the wall. He swerved to miss a cat before pulling into the empty parking lot. He pulled the green SUV next to a handicapped spot, so that no cars would pin him in while he was at work.

"Hello Mr. Daily."

This startled the man as he swiveled his head to see a young blonde woman waving her hand back and forth at him. The woman had a warm smile, but looked like she was riding a float in a parade, the way she waved her hand. Shutting the door behind him he replied, "When are you gonna sell me some of that weed you keep in the back room, over at the pharmacy, Elen."

She smiled at this. She liked how the man would joke like a carefree high schooler sometimes. It made her feel young and unpredictable to joke like this. She fit herself into character, "Why would you need anymore marijuana with that greenhouse you have in your basement."

"Hey, that room is our little secret, remember?"

The man turned the key in the small lock of his office door and stepped in.

He knew in a few hours the floor he was on would be filled with secretaries punching menacingly on keyboards, and people walking back and forth carrying stacks of papers and drawings. Right now there was only him and one other master architect, who also liked to work early. The circular window cast steep rays of light across his still office. In the rays were little dust particles, dancing wildly. The beam of light ended on the wall, where it made a white, pie shaped outline. He walked through the pie to the radio and flipped on the classic rock station.

The DJ boomed, "Hey there all you early birds, we got two free tickets here I'm giving away, to see Red Hot Chili Peppers in concert at the stadium," the man always loved the sing song voice of radio DJ's, "... all you gotta do for me here is name this tune from a band that didn't catch any felons, but sure had some good hit songs."

A brief excerpt of an ancient tune came over the radio. The tune caught the man's attention, drawing him from his work. He knew this one. Without hesitating he reached across his pencils and blue prints to the phone and dialed the radio station.

A voice boomed in the telephone receiver, "This is KXCU Classic Rock, do you have a guess for that tune."

"Yeah, was it the Police."

"Yes it was, of course I think the band was a dead giveaway with my felons clue there, Ha, Ha! Can you tell me the name of that tune, there, sir?"

How stupid I must sound, the man thought. I sound just like those stupid people that always phone radio stations.

Name that tune, not name that band.

“Yeah, is it ‘Every Breath You Take.’”

“It sure is, what’s your name there, sir.”

“Tom”

“Well, Tommy, we got two free tickets here for you down at the station to go see the Red Hot Chili Peppers, thanks for listening to KXCU Classic Rock.”

The man put down the phone in victory. He felt like he had a big secret, that no one knew but him. Looking out his door he saw a janitor walk stiffly by. The man’s face was beaming with a smile, and he quickly looked to the ground when the janitor walked by. It felt out of place, and he was momentarily flustered. Then he heard his voice come over the radio. The radio station had been on a commercial break, and now returned with his embarrassing conversation. He had been talking to the DJ while the station was on a commercial break. He skipped over to the radio and turned the volume control down.

The man turned and walked slowly back to his chair. He continued his work on the new hospital he was designing. It was going to be built in the big city just north of town. He scratched in a pair of lines with his arcing tool, and examined the layout. His lamp cast shadows from his hands as they rested on the desk. He examined them for the second time that day. How perfect they seemed, how strong they looked to him.

The sun was tall in the sky now, and burned away all the shadows. The late spring sun heated up the black asphalt streets. Back

at the man’s home, the beach was littered with frisbee games, and people tanning on colorful beach towels. Many braved the cold ocean water to escape the heat. Some even tried body surfing on the little waves that plagued the surfers in early summer. The sky was light blue and much cleaner than the big city sky.

The phone on the desk rang. The man jerked his head from the angle grapher and picked up the phone, “Hello, Mr. Daily’s office.”

“Honey, I need you.”

A shudder of excitement shot through the man. His wife had been pregnant for nine-months and the baby was overdue as it was. He looked at the wall, “Yes, dear, what is it.”

“Honey, I think the baby’s getting close.” Her breathing was heavy.

The man told her to call the hospital while he would drive home, and to be ready to leave the instant he got there. The man laughed to himself when he remembered thinking how the radio game would be the only excitement of his day. He had no idea what to expect. He felt a tingling sensation as he got in his SUV and made for home. As he drove through town, all the worse case scenarios raced through his head. His foot reacted to this by dipping further down on the accelerator. He barely slowed for stop signs, and with one continuous motion, he drove from office, to home, to hospital.

Arriving at the hospital, he now parked in a handicapped spot, thinking they would understand. His poor wife, Nora, was dragged along by the man’s tight grip. Inside, hordes of flashing white coats and

nurses followed behind the couple. They pleaded with him to sign in, sign up, sign over this thing or that. He wondered if they knew who Flea, the bass player for the Red Hot Chili Peppers, was.

In the delivery room, his wife went through a short, but loud labor. The man felt like a helpless child while the wife he loved wailed in pain. In a short while, though, nurses began to leave the room, and as they walked away, the man could see a doctor holding a small pale form. He slapped its back firmly, and the baby let out a gargled cry. It was covered in blood from head to toe, yet it looked beautiful to the man. The man walked to where the doctor stood and held out his arms for the child. He held the wriggling body in his arms, and felt a love burn deep in his chest as he looked into its closed eyes. In that moment the man's whole life went into this child, and he loved it with all of his being.

The SUV climbed the steep driveway, it now carried precious cargo. The house seemed different, as the man walked down the pathway. He put his arm around Nora and looked at the baby wrapped in her arms. The house was dark inside. Nora went to the bedroom, while the man opened the sliding door and stepped out onto the porch.

A big purple eye was looking at him as he walked over to the railing. The sun was just touching its bottom on the horizon and looked so close to the man. He walked over to the pine tree, and pulled himself up the thick branches to a good resting place. Now he could see the eye's workmanship, as it painted the whole ocean with its purple and pink shades. It painted all the clouds in the sky, as if it wanted to share its beauty with

the world. The man stared directly into it, for no longer did it have its savage brightness of day. The eye, now half gone, seemed to wink at him.

The man wanted to ask it so many questions, like why can't time stand still? It whispered in his ear about the generations past, who also had many questions. As it continued to whisper, the sun slipped quietly into its bed of ocean, to sleep until morning.