

G.W. JEFFERIES



THE STRANGE
FALL OF
MARLON
APPLEWOOD



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by

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Chapter 1

Every morning I turn on to Cemetery Road to get to work and each and every morning I'm always a little depressed. Usually, I'm too tired or too late to really think about it but the thoughts of sadness pops into my head. When it comes to lunch time, I always ponder the name of the road and the little cemetery that rests next to it.

Each morning, a dumb driver or two passes me up at forty mph on the right hand side and on the shoulder. I have to wait for oncoming traffic to pass so I can turn on to that depressing road. They don't want to wait. These dumb asses don't care if it is dangerous. I always honk my horn and sometimes I flash my lights. Other mornings I flip them the bird. I think it just pisses them off if they are paying attention.

Dead possums and skunks are always squished and I swerve to try and avoid the remains. I used to see a bunch of dogs but now they are gone. I'm not sure what happened to them. They were ugly creatures.

It's a thirty mph zone on Cemetery road but most people go at least forty five or fifty. The road is narrow and dangerous for anything above thirty. Nobody seems to care. So what is my point? Why am I sharing this? I don't know. It's probably a sign to change jobs. In the grand scheme of things this is a life message that should not be ignored. The signs are there. They are shown to me every work day. Something is wrong with this picture.

What happened to common sense? I was driving home from work the other day and some teenager who was on his cell phone was crossing the street. Cars were very close to this moron. He did not look both ways. He did not seem to care. A car or two slowed down and the teen who should have known better lived another day.

Another incident happened with some teenage girl who was standing on the painted line getting ready to cross the street. She looked both ways but was standing in the middle of the road. I censored myself here. I meant to say...standing in the middle of the fucking road. Ah yes, that feels better.

Don't think I don't hold back while I'm in my car. The swear words start flying. The so-called "bad" words. Why are words bad? I don't get it. Why can't we say bad words when we are little but are perfectly fine when we are adults (or more or less fine)?

I think if you get As in English classes you can say what words you want in English.

Life was miserable.

Chapter 2

Marlon Applewood stood up and proclaimed his innocence. He raised a single finger to the crowd and began to speak.

“I am the victim here. It is likely that a murder didn’t even occur.” Applewood put on a great show. The crowd reacted with cheers which the news media got all of it. The media will probably add their own cheers to the group just to make the case for Applewood. After all, he did pay a handsome amount of money to Action 7 news to keep things hush-hush. Why would they get rid of someone who provides a little extra cash to their pockets?

“San Pinto, my friends, is a wonderful place and sometimes a few bad characters decide to ruin the good times. Corruption must stop. It is time to clean up these streets. And just like this street we are standing on, the hard earned money of the San Pinto citizens, will be used efficiently.” The crowd cheered. Most people ignored the fact that other streets were in dire need of repairs. This street was carefully picked out for the TV cameras.

“No matter what they say, I will continue on. The fight has only begun.” Applewood concluded his speech. Applewood waved to the crowd and head towards his car. There would be no questions for the city commissioner today.

I wondered what the San Pinto Times would have to say about this. Many of us knew about Applewood’s issues with the law. He was busted for drunk driving a few years back but the case was cleared by the district attorney. There was no trial for Applewood.

I had enough of this. The sun was getting to me and I had a job to do or at least get to my job.

Chapter 3

The fax sat on my desk. It read: “Take a trip to the Bahamas, Las Vegas, or Orlando for only \$199.” And as I read this information I paused for a moment to think. I wondered why I kept getting this spam. This same fax had been resent to the dumb company at least twenty times with words that clearly read – remove and it was in bold letters, too.

It’s not like I wouldn’t want to go to the Bahamas or Vegas or Hell even Orlando, it’s just that I’m trapped. My body and my spirit were trapped within these four white walls of doom that’s called a job. Okay, doom is a bit harsh to say but trapped is right on.

Conversations could be heard in the office next to me. This was another meeting without me and not only was I not in this room during the meeting, they were freely talking about me.

“Tim can’t give us the count. I’ve asked and asked but he just can’t give us the number.” One coworker said.

“He’s just lazy.” Someone else replied.

I just sat there and took the abuse. My job description had changed to seat warmer. I’m the company dog and not an ugly one either. I’m cute and cuddly and slightly adorable. Sometimes, I fetch things for the “humans” and I take the scolding that I did or did not deserve. They freely speak about me and insult me as I in front of them with my tongue hanging out. Oh please, I beg, please pet me. I’m a good dog.

It would make sense if I was a dog. I’ve become obsolete. I was the go-to guy for just about everything and it wasn’t usually in my job description.

“Tim my computer won’t turn on.” My boss would say.

“Did you push the power button?” I replied.

“Oh, no, alright back to work.”

And that would be the end of the conversation. No thank yous were ever included. I got used to this quickly. I still used my manners. I was just there to solve their problems.

They call my boss, the Brush, because of his mustache. He had a real name but I'm sticking to the Brush. The Brush wasn't my original boss because he killed my last boss but I don't think it was on purpose. The Brush and Mr. Marks, my previous boss, were having a heated argument about the amount of pens each employee should be allowed to have on their desks.

Mr. Marks argued that employees should have at least four pens while the Brush stated one pen is almost too many. I never really understood either side of the argument or the fact that they were arguing about pens.

The real issue was about control. This was a small battle to decide who would be the manager. The Brush wanted Mr. Marks' job right from the start and after only a year the Brush took over after the "incident."

A few pens rolled off the desk of an employee who shall remain nameless, and it's really not that important. It's the story that matters. Anyway, the pens rolled off the desk and the Brush stormed in to the office complaining about the coffee and how crappy it was because Mr. Marks had made it.

"Now hold on a second there." Mr. Marks raised his hand towards the Brush. Marks moved towards him and slipped on the pens, tripped and hit his head on a desk. Mr. Marks fell just in the right spot and broke his neck, killing him. We were in shock at the death of our boss and a new King took over the kingdom. I think a lesson could be learned from this, I'm just not sure what it is. Reality can be so cruel.

I shuffled some papers on my desk only to find a note from the Brush. The note read, "Go Get Hannon."

Chapter 4

The land was dry and brittle. A drought had taken over the ground for years. Dust covered the sky and it was difficult to breathe and difficult to survive. I questioned why I was outside. What did I do now to deserve this? I got out of the office only to go into the oven that is San Pinto. I heard music off in the distance but I couldn't see what was making the noise. After a few moments it became clear to me what the noise was. The sound of an ice cream truck shuffled by off in the distance and I could still see nothing.

My tongue was dry and sweat was soaking up my shirt. My body was in need of something cold. I could hear my body telling me to save it from this heat. It was not in words, but the messages were loud and clear.

This was not a time for ice cream. My body thought it was but I knew I had an assignment to complete. I was once a simple clerk and now, I'm an investigator for the company that I work for. My boss finally gave me something important for me to do besides just napping. The company I work for makes chairs. I got to crunch numbers and sit inside on the chairs that others make. And I was trapped within those four walls with no windows that could spare my torture. But now I was outside and sort of free.

The drought had caused many people to go mad. Hundreds of thousands of people died or simply disappeared. Well, they didn't really disappear, they just moved away. The drought has done something to these poor people. They hallucinate and claim that they were somewhere different, someplace better. The government has declared this madness an epidemic and even gave it a name, Carolyn's Disease.

The government has ordered each and every company and citizen to find and report these poor souls. It is our duty to help save our fellow man. And why not? We were doing something right. I don't mind saving people. I want to be a hero.

We can't trust those in charge, at least not the bosses of San Pinto. Marlon Applewood is a corrupt soul. I would never want to be like him. How can a man be so greedy and so over consumed with his own self growth and power that he just ignores all the suffering around him?

The funny thing is that the message is, "Don't be a hero, turn them in." Whatever that means. I finally made it to the door of Mr. Hannon's house. Good old Mitt, he was a good worker. But like all good workers, they get old and get in the way. I wouldn't call Mitt a friend but I always thought he was a decent guy. He at least showed up every day to work that is until last week. Mitt Hannon simply stopped coming to work. He didn't call or anything. He just stopped going to work.

I knocked on Mitt's door and then I waited. I had orders and the freedom to enter his home or anyone's home that was designated a residence of anyone with Carolyn's Disease. So, I just stared at the Mitt's ugly door. Most of the paint had been chipped away due to time and constant sand storms. The door opened and out appeared dear old Mitt.

"Hello." a soft voice was heard. Mitt appeared to be weak and a little disoriented.

"Mitt, it's me, Tim. Tim from work." I replied.

"Oh, yes, Tim." Mitt did not look me in the eyes. His concentration was on the barren land.

"We were wondering what happened. How are you feeling?" I continued on with the conversation while Mitt stared outside.

"Do you want to come in? I was making a pot of tea and I wouldn't mind the company. Though I -" Mitt stopped mid sentence and looked at the ground. He motioned me inside.

"No lights, Mitt?"

"No, don't need them. It was all so bright." Mitt mumbled. He kicked whatever filth was lying around. Most of it was covered in a fine dust. It looked as though nothing had been disturbed in years.

"I don't think I've ever been inside your home. A lovely place, mighty fine." I looked around and felt bad for this man. Times were tough but at least have the decency to clean especially when you have the time away from work.

"The water should be hot. I heard the steam. Mug is in the cupboard." Mitt pointed in the kitchen as he plopped himself on to a lounge chair. Dust blew into the air.

I did not see a kettle and the cupboards were bare. Broken pottery pieces were scattered along on the floor.

“I think I found your mug. You sure are losing it for a guy that is fifty. When I get to be your age, I hope to keep it all together.” I chuckled. I wanted to lighten the mood.

“I’m not fifty.” The voice from the chair spoke up.

“Yes you are. What happened? You were so full of energy.”

“Yes, I am. I’ve been gone. Gone for a long time. For twenty years, I was here or there.” Mitt stopped to cough. I interrupted him. I knew what the problem was.

“You’re not making much sense, Mitt. You know, there’s something going around. I’m not sure if you’ve heard of it but they call it Carolyn’s Disease. It’s this drought and it’s not your fault. We are going through water rations. Something like a lack of water and nutrients to the brain. I’m not sure. Anyway, they have these places where you can go and they will take care of you.”

“I lived another life and it was wonderful. No drought. Each day, I would walk barefoot in the cool grass. In the mornings, the dew collected between my feet.”

“That’s nice. We should really go. They kind of need me in the office and I’m kind of thirsty, too. You should keep water around here. Where are your rations?” I looked down at my watch.

“Go, I’m fine right here.” Mitt smiled.

“I can’t just leave. I need to take you down town to the Central Station.”

“Why?” Mitt asked.

“Because you have Carolyn’s Disease.” I said.

“What? I haven’t heard of that.”

“I just mentioned just a little while ago. Man, look. Just come with me and we can’t get you something to drink.” I moved towards Mitt.

“I just had some tea.” Mitt looked up towards me.

“There’s nothing in the kitchen. Everything is bone dry.” I motioned towards the kitchen in hopes of trying to get Mitt to understand.

“Tim, there is this place. It really is wonderful. But there were some people asking too many questions. But I messed it up. I messed it up. Everybody was happy and I ruined it. I’m not feeling so good. Maybe I should see someone.”

“That’s what I’ve been trying to say. I need to get back to office. Do you want to change clothes or anything? Mitt?” There was silence. I walked over to Mitt to notice that he had stopped moving. Mitt was dead.

I called the office to see what I should do and the Brush answered “Just go home I’ll call Central Station and everything will be taken care of.”

Chapter 5

Marlon Applewood is the new Mayor of San Pinto. This information was plastered all over The San Pinto Times. It was a long election cycle but Applewood managed to make it to the top.

“I just want to say, I love this city.” This quote was placed under a picture of Applewood shaking hands with people in the crowd. Everyone was cheering and thrilled to have a mayor that was less of a criminal than Applewood’s predecessor. Perhaps he didn’t murder that man after all.

I sipped on my coffee. The warm, dark coffee was my only boost that could get me through my day. People are blind and this is a fact. How can news articles keep being published about this man and yet people don’t care?

“The foundation of this great city is you.” Another quote from Applewood. Give me a break. This guy knows how to sell himself. Make the people feel powerful when in fact they are the ones being oppressed.

A book was released about Applewood and the author was never seen from again. Never seen or heard from again and yet, not a lot of people found this to be suspicious. There was an investigation or at least a talk of one. But it all went away, like things usually do here in San Pinto.

Applewood was a quarterback in high school. He was a jock and a star. The women drooled over him. But this was over twenty years ago. The legend of Applewood lives on in the hearts of the people. No amount of bad press is going to change that. Applewood is unstoppable.

Chapter 6

I decided to skim through the San Pinto Times to see what kind of dumb news I could find today. Not to my surprise, I found an article about my favorite city mayor. Man, does this guy ever stay out of trouble?

The arrest of Marlon Applewood took place when a police officer was directing traffic at the scene of a car wreck in the intersection. The police officer at the scene noticed a black Ford driven by Applewood coming towards him, records show.

The officer motioned for the vehicle to slow and move to the side of the road but the car did not stop. Applewood had to swerve to avoid hitting the officer and police vehicle which had the flashing lights on. Applewood swerved onto oncoming traffic in the opposite lane. Nobody was hurt.

The officer raced towards Applewood and proceeded to arrest him. Applewood refused to enter the police vehicle. After eight attempts by the officer for Applewood to enter the police vehicle, he finally complied. A small, jagged knife was found in the pants pocket of Applewood. The article also states that Applewood was later released on a \$200 bond.

I've had enough of Applewood for the moment. It was time for me to get to work. I had been consistently going to work fifteen minutes late, every single day. It's not like I don't work extra long hours. But still, it did not look good.

It was time to put the paper down and grab my keys. I got to work and got myself the usual cup of coffee and to no surprise, I was ignored by most people again. Conversations about Applewood could be heard throughout the office.

"That's San Pinto politics for you. The guy ran for Mayor and won. That man is a drunk and a murderer." One guy said.

"He's not that bad. Our current Mayor has had five DUIs. Applewood has a shot." Another guy responded.

"You don't mess with the Mayor. They don't like that sort of thing. Don't mess with the balance of power. Those guys don't like each other. It's going to be a long and brutal election. I tell you, it is going to be bad." Another guy joined the conversation.

I put one packet of creamer in my coffee. I usually put in two by due to rationing I've had to cut back to one. We weren't even allowed to have coffee but studies showed that job efficiency went down and employees were angry without their coffee, so it was brought back to work stations.

Chapter 7

For the first time in a year I was actually running early for work. Traffic is mild, but by far not busy. Such a typical morning, with a tad overcast with the music flowing like the wind.

I reached over to turn on my turn signal and slowed my car down. I'm ready to go to work, but to be honest, I'm not really sure why. Nothing good ever comes from it and work is a waste of time.

On this fateful morning, a woman who was not paying attention, going forty miles above the speed limit, ran her truck into the back of my car. There was no warning, no attempt to hit the breaks from the she devil. My seat breaks out of its hinges and the steering wheel shifts to the right. I think I'm still alive.

The car swerved into the ditch at the side of the road and in the back of my mind, I knew I had to get out of my vehicle. I remembered for television that there was a possibility the car would catch on fire. But, I really did not know that this was unlikely to happen.

I crawled out of my car and yelled, "What the Hell is wrong with you?" but I quickly fell to the ground. The clouds were moving at a fast pace. This was a surprising sight. My head began to hurt and I blanked out.

Darkness fell over me. My heart beat slower and slower till I heard no more. Death temporary conquered me. And then, I rose from a metal table in a darkish green room filled with various tools and supplies typically found in a morgue. Before my body was prepared for burial, I had reawakened. No telling how long I had been dead.

"Undead, I awake and live again." I proclaimed even though I knew I was alone. At least I thought I was alone.

Uncertainty and confusion was in the air. Why and how did I come back to life? What is the meaning, the purpose of all of this? This event did mean something. No, this is a miracle. It must be. I heard about this woman who had died and came back to life an hour later. Rigor mortis had even set in. They all thought she was dead. And why not, I thought? Your heart stops and you get buried. This is the norm.

I'm not sure how long I've been here. I'm no longer in a hospital. It is hard to remember past events. My body may be back, but my mind is not. Such a shame, for what is body without its mind?

There was a pair of used clothing on a chair in a corner of which I decided to put on, because I could not go out naked. With a few coughs here and there, I slid off the table. Surprisingly, for someone who had just come back from the dead, the body felt stronger and healthier than before. Maybe it was the long awaited rest that was needed. The joints were hard to move at first, but the usual flexibility came back, like the good old days.

The answers were out there and not in this odd place. That she Devil killed me. That must be it. How can such a random event take place? Of all days! I just wanted to get to work on time.

And then it hit me. Sort of like that car. My head ached and it was so powerful that the pain brought me to my knees. I reached up to touch my head, as if this would somehow miraculously stop the torment I was feeling. With disgust I noticed something, my hand felt a warm wet spot. A piece of my scalp was missing. How could I have not noticed this before? Everything else seemed to be okay with me, but I must move on and progress forward to find some answers.

Chapter 8

It was dark out, not surprising. There was a building to my right that seemed like an interesting place to go into. Maybe interesting isn't the right word. The place looked decent. It was unfamiliar, but a bit more attractive than the surrounding area. Maybe it was a hotel. It looked like one at some point.

The humidity was high and the heat made beads of sweat form above my brow. Rain clouds swarmed in and I knew I better get indoors soon. Lightning could be seen but there was no thunder. In fact, I heard no noise at all. The ground was wet but there was little vegetation. Dead trees and plants were scattered around. This was not a pleasant site.

I entered the twenty story building with a little hesitation. The lighting was dim and the smell was horrendous. There was a smell of death in the air and perhaps this was not the wisest of places to go into. But as I feared, rain began to pour. I was stuck here for the time being.

A scream could be heard inside one of the rooms. It was a startling sound and I jumped back when a young woman ran out yelling and crying. Hands in the air, she tripped on the steps and tumbled to her death. I ran over to the stairs to try and help but something peculiar occurred; the woman was not on the ground. She just vanished into a fine mist. I looked up to see a door opened slightly with a loud creak and then swiftly closed again.

Okay, what the Hell is going on here? These are not your typical events. My first instinct was to run but my feet would not move. My body and brain were not cooperating with each other. I felt compelled to move forward.

“Hey, someone's hurt!” I yelled, but to whom, I'm not really sure of. Being a bit naïve about these sorts of things, I realized that yelling to get a potential murderers attention may not be the wisest of things to do. A voice inside me told me to leave. It wasn't a soft voice. That usually quiet voice was yelling at me and telling me to get the Hell out of here. I did not listen and up the stairs I went to find some answers. Within a few feet from the door, the same woman ran out screaming and crying. Without thought

I moved as close to the wall as possible. The woman tripped and yet again suffered the same fate.

This is all very startling as you can imagine. Well, it is down right disturbing. It was dark and no one was in sight.

“Hello? A young woman needs some help down here.” I tried to raise my voice as loud as I could but only a whisper came out. The adrenaline was pumping and I was shaking. There was no answer.

A light flickered on. The young woman appeared out of thin air and an older man began to form.

“Let me go!” The woman screamed. But the older man grabbed her closer to him. This was not about to happen again I thought and I ran up to the old man but my hands did not touch living flesh. Instead the hands went right through the man’s body. The young woman kicked the older man and ran screaming and crying and once again tripped on the steps and fell to her death. Lights flickered once more.

Off in the corner a little black book was sitting on a desk. The book did not look too out of the ordinary. I grabbed it and ran out of the room.

As soon as I was downstairs I quickly skimmed through the pages, a single phone number was written in the book. I placed the book in my pants pocket and heard more noises. The same act of the young woman’s death occurred over and over. There was nothing that could be done. It was a loop, a never ending loop of a tragic event.

Chapter 9

There was a pay phone outside of the building, but I did not have any money on me. Material possessions aren't much good in the after-life, but a lot of good to the morticians. Money seemed to be an important asset to have at this moment. I will need to eat and possibly sleep at some point. Begging for money seemed like a plausible action and I could get at least some change to make a phone call. But, who is going to give money to a bleeding man with part of his head missing. I wouldn't. Would you? The rain poured down on to me and for an instance I thought that maybe something was wrong with me.

And out of the blue a dark shadowy man appeared and began to talk to me. His face was covered.

"You should cover that up." He spoke and in a low tone.

"What?" I'm not sure why I said "what" but he threw me off guard.

"Your head is bleeding. You should cover that up. I would go over there and get a rag or something at the very least. Then go and get a hat"

The man stepped back and disappeared before I could say anything. This was a bit usual, but under the circumstances not out of the ordinary. Strange and abnormal people were walking about with empty, blank expressions on their faces, just wandering about with no apparent destination.

I decided to walk in the direction the shadowy man suggested. Not really sure how far to walk down, he did not specify this information. It would have been a big help to tell me how far to go on this path. Maybe I would have to walk five hundred miles to my target? Hopefully this is not the case. Don't think silly thoughts.

The wind picked up some and the rain had slowed down to a calm drizzle. A wind gust knocked the hat off of the man in front of me. He attempted to grab the hat but it quickly blew into an alley. He seemed hesitant to walk into the pathway because he was probably concerned about his safety. Who knows what is lurking in the dark alleyways? The answer is me because I need the hat and here is the perfect opportunity to get one.

As I was picking up the hat, I noticed my posture was not as straight as it once was. There was a slight curve to my back. And what the Hell is that stench? Perhaps this is a side affect of the reanimation from the dead.

The next order of business was to get a hold of some money. Now that my wound was covered up and my appearance was still semi decent, borrowing some money shouldn't be too much of a problem. I've never begged for money before. At least, I don't think I have. Now, I don't want to be one of those pushy beggars and I definitely do not want to be a crazy beggar talking and spitting all about. No money will come my way by acting like a crazy. I'm just going to hold my hand out and hope someone will walk by drop some change in my hand.

It must have been at least an hour, with my tired arm still hanging out there in the air. Still empty handed and pathetic, I decided to just sit down. My head hung low, I was just not in a very happy mood. Who would be at a time like this? Now this may sound crazy, but I swore I heard some voices. I'm not crazy, I tell you! I heard the following two voices:

“Do you think they will find out?”

“Impossible, he is going to die anyway.”

The conversation continued on for several more minutes. It was all very much muffled and the only other two portions of the conversation I heard were “contribution”.

A fat and old woman walked by and dropped a quarter. She didn't give it to me but I figured it was fair game. I mean, if she really needed it should have taken better care of it.

I picked up the phone and dialed the single, lonely number. It was a recording of a male voice.

“Applewood is the light. Try the power of prayer today. Applewood saved me.” And other one-line religious messages were played.

“Applewood is the light? Marlon Applewood?” I began to mumble to myself.

“That bastard, I just wasted all of this time for a cheesy automated campaign slogan.”

And then it hit me. Maybe I should go to a church. It seemed like a logical step in this process. The answers are there, well hopefully some answers. Things were

coming back to me like location of certain places. This was San Pinto, but how? What happened here? Everything seemed so bland and gloomy. Still most thoughts were too vague to make any real sense out of. These surrounding buildings were familiar and yet different. I don't think I've been here before but I feel strangely comfortable.

On the way to the church, I found a newspaper lying on the ground under a box. The first section I went to were the obituaries. I didn't see my name. This was a relief and a disappointment. I flipped through the paper and folded the paper to the front page. There was a picture of me shaking hands of different people. The title read.

TIM COMBES IS THE NEW MAYOR OF SAN PINTO.

There must be some sort of mistake. I folded the newspaper and placed it in my back pocket. The night felt young.

I journeyed down the streets of San Pinto in hopes of finding the local church. Few people were out and about. I saw no cars either parked on the roads or people driving. The city was dead.

No recognizable faces could be found. This was becoming more and more distressing. My stomach was turning. If I am dead, how can I feel these pains and sensations? Nothing was right.

A flash of lights on a sidewalk sign grabbed my attention. The San Pinto Church's neon signs were working and I could see people sitting and mingling inside. The door was slightly cracked open but I was hesitant of going inside. The unfamiliar faces didn't look friendly but I had gone this far and I felt that I should at least go inside to find some sort of answers.

A man stepped out of the church. His comb over was obvious and his outfit was quite plain. He held up his hand and said to me, "You are not welcome here. Not yet."

"I'm sorry, I'm lost and tired and I was just trying to find some answers." I replied back.

"You are not welcome at this time. Only members are welcomed. You haven't paid your dues. We don't trust the outsiders."

I was not welcomed but I was still persistent, "Do you think I can make a phone call?"

With a sharp reply the man said "No."

“Do you know a Mr. Hannon, Mitt Hannon?” I finally asked.

The man’s demeanor changed, “Why, yes I do but I have not seen Mr. Hannon in a week. He went missing.”

“He passed away a couple of days ago.” I said.

“Mitt Hannon is crazy.” The man stepped back into the church and shut the door.

I stepped away from the door and started to head down the road again. I began to cough and I felt a bit winded. Perhaps I could just sit down for a while.

Chapter 10

I woke up in a puddle of drool; at least I think it was drool. My back ached from sleeping on the ground. It was still dark out so I must not have been asleep for very long. My stomach began to rumble telling me it was time to eat but sadly, I had no money for food.

I reached in to my pocket and counted the money that was stored away. The total came out to \$27.72. When and how did I get all of this money? My begging didn't go so well, or maybe it did. This doesn't matter now. I was hungry and it was time to eat. But what would I eat? I had no clue if it was around breakfast, lunch or dinner. It really didn't matter; I could eat anything at this point.

My hunt for a restaurant began. Perhaps some food will help clear my mind. My trek ended quickly as I walked up to The San Pinto Diner. I can't be in San Pinto, I thought. What's going on here? But before I could think anymore, the door swung open.

"You coming in?" a woman in white shirt opened the door. It looked like she worked there. Well, of course she worked there.

"Thank you." I entered the diner a bit hesitantly and found a place at the counter.

"What do you want to drink?" A waiter at the counter asked. He was a skinny man with a funny looking mustache. The ends of the mustache pointed straight up.

"Water" I replied.

"You ready to order?" the waiter asked as he placed the water in front of me.

"Do you have any specials?" I replied in hopes to find out what time of day it was.

"Nope, you can order something and it will be special to you." The waiter laughed thinking his joke was funny. But I did not laugh.

The waiter looked at me and saw that I was not amused. "The hamburgers are popular and cheap. Cheap in price, not quality, I tell you. We make the finest burgers. We even got some cows in the back." The waiter smiled.

“You have cows in the back?” A woman in the back of the diner jumped in on the conversation and the waiter shook his head and pointed to me.

I began to doubt the hamburgers, “Do you have a menu?”

“Nope, don’t need them.” The waiter said.

Puzzled, I asked another question “What else do you have?”

“What? You don’t like my hamburgers? You think you can waltz in here and insult my food. Get out of here.” The waiter turned his back on me. But I was still hungry and a crappy hamburger probably wouldn’t make much of a difference at this point.

“No, wait. I’m sorry. A hamburger sounds great. It will hit the spot, I just know it.” A noise came out of my stomach. I needed food.

“Okay, okay, I’m just kidding. I don’t want to kick out customers. I’ll get you a hamburger with a lot of fries. Fries sound good?”

“Yes” Fries did sound good. The waiter went to the kitchen and came right out with the hamburger with a large side of fries.

“Wow that was fast.” I said.

“I knew you were coming.” The waiter said with a straight face.

Suddenly, my stomach turned sour and my head began to spin, “You did?”

“Nope, just messing with you. You need to lighten up. The name is Huck.”

“Hi.” I replied back as Huck began to wipe down the counters.

“If you don’t stop to take a look around you might miss something. Something important.” Huck gave a nod and I could tell he was serious.

“Miss what?” I said.

“Life.” Huck moved back into the kitchen and I paid my bill.

Chapter 11

I exited the diner feeling refreshed. That burger hit the spot. But my hunger for answers was not quenched. What has happened to me and to San Pinto?

I heard foot steps behind me and the shadowy, mystifying man appeared before me. “Reveal yourself. I’m done with these games.”

“You are never done with these games. Life is a game and you are playing it.” The man stepped out of the shadows and removed his face coverings and hat. It was me. The man was me except with pure white hair.

The man stuck out his hand and said “Davidson.”

“Excuse me? What the Hell is going on? Why do you look like me?” I said.

“My name is Davidson. I’ve been tracking you ever since we were separated.”

“What do you mean separated?” I asked

“There are others but we are all the same. They don’t want us to be together anymore. They’ve separated us.”

“Who are you talking about? What are you talking about? Is this about Applewood? How can you do this? He’s changed everything.” I said.

“Applewood has gained so much power but he must be stopped. I’m on my way now to confront him. But I need you to come with me. Each of us must join together or we will die.” Davidson said.

“I am to get a key from him to get the light.”

“Applewood has been able to control much of the land. He’s started up an army to collect the others to unite under his wing. But we must not allow this. If he succeeds, there will only be darkness and it will be only a matter of time before this world will cave on all of us.” Davidson said.

“What does Applewood have to do with all of this?”

“Oh, I don’t have time for this. I’ll be back for you.” Davidson took off running down the road. I yelled but Davidson continued on his journey. Nothing was clear.

Chapter 12

I heard the chatter from across the street. It was the noise of loud whispers and the conversations were hard to make out. A felt tap on the shoulder.

“Excuse me, sir. I heard you talking in the diner about Applewood. I can take you to him. I’ve seen him. I really have.” An old man, hunched over was talking to me. He had a kind and familiar face.

“You know where he is?” I asked.

“Yes, I know. He’s down this way. I’m Ralph. My name is Ralph.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you. Is he far from here?” I said.

“Oh, I don’t know.” Ralph replied with a puzzled look on his face. He looked behind him and to the side.

“Okay, well, did you see that man that I was talking to?” I pointed down the street but Ralph looked confused.

“Alright, well I’m heading that way now.” I said.

“Let me go with you. I’m old, but useful. Applewood ignores me. He didn’t like my advice.”

This peaked my interest. “You worked for Applewood?”

“I’m his grandpa, Ralph Applewood.”

“Where does Marlon live? Can you take me there?” I asked.

“They say that he took all the light out of San Pinto. That’s why it’s so dark. Don’t you see the darkness? I told Marlon to bring back the light. The lights better us all because we are doomed without it but he doesn’t want to turn the switch.”

“I see.”

“No you don’t see. How can a man be dark, in here.” Ralph pointed to his head and then to his heart.

“Some people are like that. They are tough in their ways.” I responded.

“Some men are made tough. Some men are turned and changed, not because they want to. He can be saved. You can be saved. If we all work together, the light will be back.”

“Can you tell me where he lives?” I asked again.

“You are not meant to kill him.”

“I just want to see him. If he is the man in charge, then he can give me some answers.” I said.

“He’s not going to give you any answers. Not the answers that you seek. Find the key and you can turn the lights back on. Come on let’s go.” Ralph began his trek down the street and I began to follow.

He was an odd little man, hunched over. His face was full of wrinkles. Ralph was weathered down but you can see hope in his eyes. The potential was there to put it all back together.

And then Ralph stopped. “Oh dear, this isn’t good.”

In the distance I saw a large translucent rat cross the road. It was a hideous creature and I don’t think it spotted us.

“It’s time to order some cats in bulk.” Ralph said to me. This statement puzzled me.

“We need to go. We have to get out of here before that thing sees us.” I said.

“The rat can’t harm us, yet. We should stop him now. I’ve got to call Mr. Gato. He sends cats in bulk.” Ralph pulled out a cell phone from his pocket and began to call Mr. Gato.

“How’s the cat business? Oh really? Good. I need fifteen to twenty in one batch and maybe another set later on. Where? Oh, the diner is fine, but just put it to my attention or they are going to be supper. Thanks.” Ralph hung up the phone and smiled.

“Why are you getting cats?”

“Kittens.” Ralph said.

“Okay, kittens. Why the kittens?”

“To get the rat of course.”

“That rat thing is huge. I don’t understand how a bunch of little kittens are supposed to stop a large clear rat.”

“Oh, they’ll be hungry. They are specially bred in Canada and shipped by the post office to us. I hope they make it this time. They didn’t have enough holes in the box from the last shipment.” Ralph shook his head.

“This is madness. Let’s just go to Applewood and get the key so we can turn the light back on. I just want to get this all sorted out and find out what the Hell is going on.” I said to Ralph.

“That’s Applewood’s spirit animal. It’s been running around for over a month looking for something. Okay, let’s go then. We’ll worry about that creature later.” Ralph replied.

“Maybe we can go behind the buildings?” I said.

“No, stick to the road. I’m sure the rat will move along.”

Chapter 13

“We should stop here for the night and build a fire.” Ralph said to me. He looked winded.

“We’ve only been walking for about ten minutes. Are you sure you can handle this?” I said.

“It’s been longer than that. No we will build a fire and I’ll tell you a story about Davidson.”

“Oh, so you do know, Davidson. Why does he look like me?” I asked.

“We were close.” Ralph sat down on the ground while I began to pick up a few pieces of branches and sticks.

Davidson would always tell us the story of how he made it to the desert. The story stayed the same week after week. We all knew the story by heart because of how odd the tale was.

Davidson, known as plain David then, awoke from his bed, tired as usual. Getting ready for school was the daily routine that never seem to end. The bus ride was no different. Usually there would be people chatting on the bus, but not David. The bus ride gave him time to think and ponder about different things.

The question “why” always seem to show up. His question never had answers to them. Usually, the “why do I exist?” question would appear to David. “The little philosopher” was the name given to him by a teacher when David asked “Why does the Universe exist?” Most people would generally ask how the Universe was created. But David was different and he kept to himself.

By the time David’s day actually got started, he would put his questioning on hold and get to his school work, at least some of it. David never seemed to be motivated for school. He paid attention to his teachers but would rarely do his work. David understood what the teacher was saying and figured that that was enough. School was a waste of time for David. He already knew most of the information being taught. David read books on his own. He was a self-taught boy. Unfortunately, his grades were never high and sometimes failing a course or two. David would rather observe and think than anything

else.

David was never popular with people his own age. Constantly being ridiculed because he was smart, David learned to ignore the mean insults being thrown at him. But it was an art that he hadn't yet perfected. He felt different, almost special. David never took anything anybody said seriously. He knew if he did, he would be the butt of the joke for the rest of his life.

David walked into the classroom very tired. He sat in his seat and began to fall in a meditation state.

“David! David!” The teacher began to yell.

Everybody seemed to be yelling at David, but he did not move. He was motionless. David could see, but could not move. Soon this began to switch and everybody in the classroom stopped moving. Truly in a concrete mode, they were in a suspended state. David got up from his chair and found that he was the only person awake.

“What the hell is going on here?” Intense emotions began to rise inside of David. David pushed one of the classmates, but the student didn't awake. David yelled and screamed. He even kicked a student. Nothing worked. David collapsed to the floor and covered his eyes. Intense thoughts circled in David's mind. Then he heard a voice.

“David, what are you doing out of your seat?” Mr. Roberts asked.

David could not answer. A sharp pain was stabbing through his skull. Everything was spinning around him. The classroom began to turn into a bright red color. David closed his eyes.

The temperature began to change. David was feeling the heat firing down from the sun. He opened his eyes and found himself in the middle of the desert. Dazed and confused, David yelled for help. He walked around for a few minutes but found no one.

David sat back down and did not move until night fall. His concerns changed from how he got to the desert to finding food and water. Days went by and David never found water. Actually he wasn't thirsty. He wandered in the desert for ten days till he found a spot to stop. A couple of trees were in the area and so David decided to nap in the shade. A dream came to David and the following phrases were told to him:

You are of the desert and the desert is of you. The sand will fill your belly. The

Sun will charge you. The night will bring strange events. David Johnson is dead. Davidson is here. Davidson is everywhere. Unlike others you will see your purpose. Ralph closed his eyes and began to go into a trance. A bright light began to surround him but it quickly disappeared. A few moments later, Ralph returned from his trance feeling a little disoriented.

“Davidson is the key. He can turn us all back.” Ralph whispered to himself.

“Ralph, I don’t understand where I fit into all of this?” I asked but Ralph continued his story.

“Out of nowhere I was in the grocery store, the produce section to be more specific. I just couldn’t take it anymore. Angry, I was so angry. My mind snapped. Bits and pieces are still vague, but I remember running around and throwing vegetables in people’s faces. Carrots, tomatoes, lettuce, all were thrown. Strangers were being hit and I didn’t care. I remember running around and yelling, finally stopping and collapsing to the ground. Tears rolled down my face. I just waited for the police.”

“Okay, what happened next?” I asked

“I remember being arrested, but I don’t remember actually going to jail. Maybe it was a hospital? It was very strange, I know it is. Light surrounded me once again and the place changed. It was my backyard or at least it sort of looked like my backyard. The yard was much larger with a river to the south of the house. Feeling a little mixed-up, I sat down in the chair next to me. Then everything felt alright again.

This appeared to be a normal situation and nothing felt out of place. But, it wasn’t alright. Something was different. I jumped out of my seat and attempted to scream. People began to come from everywhere. A group of faceless people jumped from the trees. I could not see their eyes. They had no eyes. The strange thing was that I already knew who they were. They were unfinished. A group of men cupped their hands and blew into their newly made hand cups. Dust flew out of their hands. Someone standing next to me told me to do the same. I cupped my hands and blew. I did not see any dust, only water. And then I heard.

“What’s wrong with you?”

I didn’t answer. Actually, I didn’t have time to. The light surrounded me again

and I was back here.”

“Here?” I said.

“Yeah, back in San Pinto.” Ralph said as he looked me into my eyes.

“That story you just told me, it doesn’t make sense. It can’t happen. Nothing around here makes sense, nothing is real.”

“It’s real now.” Ralph laid himself on the ground.

“I’m tired. Oh, so tired.”

Chapter 14

I awoke to screams of anger and self doubt which echoed in the air. Ralph was gone and raced to my feet. I was running away from something or somebody. No, it was clear now. People were chasing me. Hungry creatures were after me and I couldn't stop them.

I ran down the streets in to an abandoned building.

"Come here." One of the creatures was crawling his way to me. It was a man with a shaved head but I could not see his face.

And then several more voices could be heard, "Tim. Tim. Come here." The men all looked the same. The faces were facing the ground so I could only see their heads. It was madness. I backed myself into a room. One creature managed to make his way in the room as well. I picked up a board that laying on the ground and swung.

I missed. I missed every time I attempted to hit them. No matter how strong the effort was everything seemed to go in slow motion. It was as though I was tapping them on the head. I threw some punches with the same effect. Everything was tried. Was this truly my end?

And then, I felt something move inside of me. This feeling was both familiar and yet it was very foreign. The faceless creatures were ready to pounce on me. My stomach was sour and the adrenaline was running wild. A confidence had surged inside of me. I could see what I was doing but I could not control my actions. I had taken out a curved knife and began slitting the throats of the creatures. One by one, each creature feel to their deaths.

My hand closed the knife. Blood could be seen all around the room, but not on the knife and no blood was on my body. One of the bodies turned over and I could see his face. For a moment, there was a haze of me. Or was it? Nothing could be certain. And then it was over. The face was gone. Everything was blank. The foreign being or power left me. My body caved to the ground and the surroundings turned black. Only a voice could be heard.

"Tim, you are such a fool. You must not kill them." It was Davidson.

“They were going to kill me.” I replied.

“If you kill the creatures you kill yourself.” Davidson continued.

“How can you be so sure?” as I asked this question I felt the foreign power take over my body. I reached for the knife in my pocket and swung out at Davidson slitting his throat. Davidson slid to the floor and his body began to shrivel up into a little ball until he was completely gone.

A rage exploded inside of me. I was confused and powerless. Everything I attempted to do failed. No good act could succeed. My thoughts were good but I could not act on them. These foreign powers had taken over me. I knew I must somehow finish Davidson’s quest and get to Applewood. I would rather die trying then just let this man take over my life.

Chapter 15

“There must be some sort of rational explanation for this.” I muttered to myself. I was fitting in here as I was talking to myself like the other crazies. But then I heard another voice that had a familiar sound to it.

“Tim, wise up and start thinking straight. You are making this increasingly difficult to gain control of the situation. Look, we don’t have much time. I need you to listen very carefully.” Davidson started to grab me.

“Tim, you and I are the same.” He began to breathe heavily.

“I know this may be hard to comprehend but you and I are the same person. And I think there is a third as well, but he could be dead. I hope not because we need to get together.”

“What do you mean? Three of us? Do you mean Ralph? What the Hell is going on? This is foolishness. I must be mad!”

“Tim, trust no one. Things are not what they seem. We are lab rats. I tell you! We are lab rats. Those bastards, this is not right. You see, I figured it all out and now they are after me, uh, us.”

“Who are...” but before I could finish my question. I heard a loud bang. Davidson clinched his chest. He was shot in the heart. There was much confusion, time seem to have slowed down.

“Davidson!” I yelled as I ran over to him, to me. But as I was running, I realized that I was holding something, something heavy. It was a revolver. I had shot and killed myself! I fell to the ground and blacked out.

Chapter 16

My sense came back to me. The fuzzy images began to take focus. I stood up and yelled “Applewood, I am here. I’m here to stop you.”

A loud voice echoed the room, it was Applewood. “You can not stop me. You’ve tried and tried before and have failed every time.

“No, we are Applewood.” Applewood flashed before me. He was a man with a scarred face and dark hair. His eyes were black and his face was bony.

“We’ve tried to stop. We can’t stop. It’s not possible.” Applewood spoke.

“Maybe there is a way this time. We must try to bring the light back to San Pinto. You are not my enemy.” I spoke.

Applewood stopped. “I slit their throats.”

“I know you did. That’s why we must stop and come together.” I replied.

“No, you don’t understand.” Applewood stepped back.

“What do you mean?” I said.

“I’ve been killing us, a piece at a time. They are a part of us. They are me. I had to stop them because they wanted to kill me. But I know I am the strongest. I am the most powerful and I can stop them.” Applewood was yelling and it echoed even louder across the room.

“We must work together. You can’t stop all of them.”

“I can stop them.” Applewood pointed to the sky. “Not the Davidsons or Tims, but them. I must be strong to over take them.”

“You are only killing us. You keep slitting the throats of yourself and you will eventually die. No one is after us.” I responded.

Applewood brought out the curved knife from his jacket. “Only one of us must proceed. Only one of us can move forward. Tim Combes does not exist. You are a part of me that they separated from.”

Chapter 17

I had blacked out and the next thing, I can remember was that I was in this metal room.

“Interesting, this is very interesting indeed.” A little man gave out a modest chuckle.

“That is one interesting story. Let me get the Dr in here, I know he can help.” The little bearded man continued.

Before the little man got up from his seat, the door began to open. Dr. Dan Band entered into the room.

“Ah, good, Dan, we were just talking about you.”

“We’ve been waiting for you, Marlon.” Dr. Band spoke.

“Yes, Marlon, waiting.” The little man quickly followed the doctor.

“We were not talking. What is going on? How did I get in here?”

“Please, let us explain.” Dr Band spoke.

“What the Hell is going? You’re a doctor?”

“What? You don’t recognize your own friends? I’m afraid we need to do some more tweaking.” The little man interrupted the doctor.

“Tweaking, yes tweaking.” Dr Band replied.

“Tweaking! I think not. I’ve never seen you guys before today.” I could feel an increasing sharp pain in my head. It was the strongest pain I have ever felt.

“Marlon, I’m Dr. Dan Band and this is my assistant “Santa” Nicholas Roberts. You know St, Nick?”

“Santa Claus?”

From behind Santa tugged on my arm and moved me inside towards the other end of the room. I’m not sure what the Hell is going on but I fear that I have little choice. I don’t remember Dr. Dan or “Santa”, maybe I am insane.

“See, you remember us already. You have seen us multiple times. Even in the real world, well, sort of. You were a little, how do you say it, brain dead at the time. I brought you back to life, in a sense, and we’ve been working on different experiments with your brain. Actually, it is a lot of fun tinkering with brains. You would be surprised

what you can do with them. The awesome power of the brain is fascinating.” The doctor spoke.

“You can’t do that. What gives you the right to mess with a man’s brain? You are doctors! You are supposed to help people, not destroy them! Do you know what kind of Hell I’ve been through? Damn you man, why didn’t you help me?”

“We are helping people! Millions of people can be saved with this research. Now granted, this science is still in its evolutionary stages. Lots of work needs to be done, and this is where you come into play. You see, Marlon, nobody cares about you. Just because you are a mayor of this little town, you think are king of the world? We have the power and you stepped on the wrong feet. You are a criminal and are nothing more than an animal, a beast. With people like you, we can advance the technology to save people that are, contributing citizens. You had your chance and you messed up. And now, you will pay for what you did.” Dr. Band spoke as started tinkering with some tools.

“You have no right! This is not justified! My crimes were all nonviolent. I was young.” Memories flashed before me.

“Your crimes against society led to pure chaos. Time and money was spent on you, tracking, hunting you down. Lives were lost because of your stupidity, your ignorance. Ah, Marlon, it doesn’t matter. Not in the grand scheme of things. We wanted you to feel what is like to lose everything that you have. All of your love ones, all of your precious materialistic items, are all gone. We want you to know what it is like for the rest of us. But, you won’t remember any of this anyway.” I heard a slight chuckle from Santa.

“That woman that died, I knew her, right?” More memories began to form but sudden emptiness was felt on my arms that surprised me. I wasn’t being pulled anymore.

“Where did he go?” I asked as I looked around the room.

“Don’t worry about it. It’s only temporary.”

“Temporary, what’s temporary?”

“This...”

From behind, I could feel two hands pressing down on my shoulders. Before I could turn around to find out who it was, Dr. Dan covered me with a cloth.

“No! Stop this!” For a moment I could not move. It was as if my muscles had turn into concrete. But, a moment later, something happened inside of me. I could feel a force, something primitive and wild. I began to run and the further I would run, the longer my hair would grow. I was turning into a beast. I was no longer human, just an animal. My instincts were to run and run far.

I heard the laughter and the feet of people chasing me.

Silence, it was dark all around me. I could feel or hear nothing. All senses have been cut off.

“Let me go! Help me! Help me! Where am I? What’s going on?”

Light rushed back to my eyes and I was tied down, unable to move. Struggling only made it worse. I’m in a bed in what looked like a hospital room. There was a woman by my side.

“Doctors! Doctors! He’s doing it again! Someone help him.” The woman screamed for the doctors. Two doctors entered, Dr. Dan and Santa.

“You! What have you done to me? Let me go! Dr. Dan, let me go!” I screamed but it was incoherent speech, and I was quickly silenced when Dr. Band injected me with some sort of drug. Moments later, an older man walked into the room.

“Ralph is here? Grandpa is here?” I tried to form a few more words, but was only able to mumble them out. One blink and then two, I could hear the conversation going on in the background, but could do little about it.

“He’s delirious. There isn’t much we can do now. It’s only a matter of time.”

“Does he know I am here, his own wife? Not even his best friend?”

“I’m afraid not. He called out and mumbled thinking my name was Dr. Dan and he was obviously very unaware of his surroundings. I was just talking with Dr. Sanchez, and the prognosis doesn’t look good. There is just too much brain trauma; his mental state is slipping beyond repair. It could be from the experimental medication. He may even die. Dr. Sanchez and I both attempted to calm your husband, but he just cannot relax. The science is there, but sometimes, God takes over and there is little we can do.”

Tears rolled down the face of the young woman, Diana.

“Oh, Marlon, what are we going to do?”

There was little she could do, but stay by the side of the man who left her years ago. Not physically, but sadly mentally.

About the Author

Author and Poet, G.W. Jefferies, is a native Texan and is a writer of contemporary and dystopian fiction. Jefferies' themes of counter-culture and dystopian views are usually included in some form in his works. Jefferies influences include Hunter S. Thompson, Chuck Palahniuk, William S. Burroughs, and Kurt Vonnegut.

Other Works by G.W. Jefferies

[Apolo Drakovich](#)

[The Wind Changed As I Lay Dying \(Poetry\)](#)

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