

NEWS

by Adam Sifre

Truman sits in his car on an early Tuesday morning. He rolls both front windows down. Despite the infusion of fresh air, the car still smells of stale meat and sickness. The ghosts of countless meals delivered from drive-thru windows has seeped into both his fingertips and the car's upholstery. He's cleaned the car just that morning. Truman has become fastidious lately for reasons he does not understand. But some scents, like certain memories, refuse to be banished or buried.

The rifle is propped up on the passenger seat and ignored for the moment.

There is something exceptionally peaceful about an empty parking lot on an early autumn day. To Truman, it feels like white space — a page without a story. Uncluttered. The soft whispering of wind in the trees flanking the parking lot lulls him in and out of a light doze every few minutes. There are days when even the most urgent of thoughts or actions are insufficient to keep one awake.

The first car is a silver Honda, not that it matters. It parks at the opposite end of the lot. No surprise, as Truman is parked far back from the building. Even before the Honda's door opens, he can make out the noise of children arguing, but the sounds are so small they don't interfere with the wind and the trees.

Never a man of words, he knows there is a, a *poetry* to this moment. A sublime pause wraps itself around Truman and his world as they wait for everything to change.

He closes his eyes again and thinks how odd the world is. A man can commit a horrible act and then later do something wonderful, and people will say, "Would you look at that? Look at all the good he's doing now." But if that same man commits the exact same acts in reverse order -- something wonderful followed by something terrible -- people say "The monster! All this time and we never knew!"

Only perception changes.

There is the thing that happens and then there is the story we make up to explain the thing that happens. One is real, but the other is important. Truman thinks about all the terrible things that have happened, and the terrible things that are going to happen. He has lived with these thoughts for a long time. At first they would keep him awake at night and shadow him through the day. Sometimes he would cry; sometimes shout. But now, at this moment, they hold no power over him. He drifts off again and when he opens his eyes, four more cars are in the lot.

Three children get out of one of the SUV's, backpacks slung over their shoulders, and walk/ run to the school. A steady stream of cars find their way into the lot, as well as the first in what will be a caravan of yellow buses.

He's so tired, always tired these days. Even his ex-wife, not the most observant of people, has remarked on this. She wants him to see a doctor. Truman promised he would.

The parking lot is almost full now. A line of buses forms a barrier between the cars and the school. Truman gets out of the car, stretches. He walks around to the passenger side and opens the door, stifling a yawn.

The world will want to know why. But this isn't that kind of story.

