

A Party, a Pig, a Ride
by Eric Cecil

I'm at a party. Neither the location nor the people are familiar to me, but I explore the apartment anyway, walking through myriad rooms with large couches. In something resembling a dim study, I stumble over a small animal. It's a pig.

The partygoers watch it with attentive bemusement. The pig is indifferent. It nuzzles the lower corners of a plush green sofa, then pushes its snout into the litter that its owners have carelessly strewn about the room: discarded tissue, fast food wrappers, rotting produce. Sustenance, someone explains. I nod in assent, looking on as most of the others clap and coo. When the pig finds a pair of soiled underwear, however, everyone jeers. Some cover their mouths in disgust. Many leave.

I leave, too, and wait for a cab at the curb of a dark cityscape. The cab is supposed to take me to an unknown destination: home, I suppose, or maybe work. Though I have no idea where I'm going, I'm still in a hurry to get there. Or maybe I'm just eager to leave the area. I'm the only person there, and the surroundings are foreboding, ominous. I wander aimlessly across a derelict plaza, the onramp of a highway looming nearby. Still more overpasses shadow broken sidewalks, and harsh winds blow refuse along deep gutters.

In the car, I can't see the driver, but I'm not worried about his identity or appearance. I'm more concerned about the commotion outside. Somehow, as if we're parked and stationary, I can clearly hear a man's raging voice issue a series of vague threats. I'M GONNA DO IT! he yells. I'M GONNA SNAP! Alarmed, I turn to look through the back window. A wide spray of blood cascades from the embankment of a passing interchange, just barely missing the rear bumper of the speeding cab.

I lean forward and ask the driver to step on it. There's no response. Other voices clamor to join my plea, but I'm not aware of any other passengers, and when I look to the side, I see, instead, the source of violence: a small group of armed men in military fatigues. They march in triangle formation alongside the highway, frowning behind the grid of a high chainlink fence. The leader of the group walks several paces ahead. He trains his handgun on an unseen target, shouting something unintelligible before unloading a series of rounds. Those who flank him follow suit.

When the deafening shots dwindle, I already know what's about to happen: the leader tips the barrel of his gun into his own mouth and pulls the trigger. This does little to deter his comrades, who step over his fallen body and continue ahead, still in pursuit of their unknown prey.