

The Plaza
by Eric Cecil

I'm on a hill. Gravel and low gulleys worry its surface. Tall grass needles the spaces between. Its fronds barb my palms as I grasp them for support, staring into the plot of a wide plaza below.

The plaza is vast. Several statues decorate its grounds. These figures are vague in form, but severe: each resembles a misshapen animal leaning on its haunches, its broad shoulders lowered as if preparing to charge.

Pedestrians stroll and laugh between these sculptures, oblivious to the nature of their appearance. Some revelers walk to the horizon, where several outbuildings darken the periphery. The largest of these is perhaps five or six storeys tall, and twice as wide. Dense brick forms the bulk of its facade. The side facing the plaza, however, avails itself to tall windows, which extend from the base of the building to its roof. Under the pall of obscure, wavering glass, still more statues loom. These are much larger than their outdoor counterparts, fiercer: heads like giant anvils slab from massive, corded necks, their jaws gristling into deep sneers.

I release the grass and slide down the embankment, hoping to get a closer look. The hill is damper than before, and steeper, more treacherous. Each rent in its surface is a new land onto itself. At the stretch of one ragged gulch, a swing dangles from the elbow of an old tree, the frame of an upturned slide curving through the anemic brush beside it. At another, a small puddle yields to the suppurations of full marshland. I stop to watch its waters burble and expand, then suddenly find myself at the edge of a cliff, where I pause again to look at the plaza below.

The crowds, once docile, are frantic, scurrying along the walls of each building. It looks as if they're running from something. I can see nothing pursuing them. Nothing left in the plaza. The pedestrians now clear of its expanse, I notice that the statues are gone, too. All that remain are the concrete plinths that once supported them. Thin rods, copper with rust, coil from the center of each. Behind the windows of the large building lies only the vacant and uncertain gloom of its interior. The crowd pulses against it, trying to gain entry. The glass thrums like a gong under their fists.