

Spring

"Let the music keep our spirits high"

"Hey Mr. Cuddy, remember me"

I was walking through our parking lot on my way to the pool. The sky, featuring various shades of gray only Cormac McCarthy could do justice to, was spitting moisture.

"It's me, Ricardo. Remember how you helped me?"

Hat pulled low to his ears, brown face, stocky, 40's or 50's. Coming into view as I alter course to head toward him to shake hands.

"You remember me from 126?" Now I'm working at Turning Point. When you bought it Mr. Mullaney (seller) told me I could trust you."

I focus on the present with Ricardo. He's looking good and doing well. I pat him on the back, commend him and then thank him for remembering me.

On the way to my car, the jukebox in my head switches from a Leonard Cohen dirge to Jimmy Cliff's version of "I Can See Clearly Now."

"Let the buildings keep our children dry"

When I return from my swim I spot Mary getting out of her car a few spaces over. Retired, she co-ordinates a relapse prevention group after lunch once a week. Joan is riding shot.

I hug them both and focus on Joan.

I tell her she looks great. Not an exaggeration considering last year she was on life support in an induced coma.

Joan was an important and revered member of the local recovery community before a series of personal tragedies led to a spectacular and heartbreaking fall.

We focus on her recovery and I let her know how much I admire her courage and integrity. Switching subjects, I tell Joan to be on the lookout for the time machine garden sculpture we're going to install outside of the sober house she's living at.

"Hey Joan, I want to get a picture of you with it, imagining the future that you're taking yourself to."

After 29 years I find myself living in Trumpsville MA. When I walk the dog around our small, rural neighborhood I see Trump 2020 banners floating right below the American flag on some of my neighbors' lawns.

How did this happen?

I find solace and an explanation in the scenarios painted in the sci-fi novels I became so familiar with during adolescence.

We've been invaded by alien spores.

I'm standing in my neighbor's driveway one recent weekend day when he blurts out "Isn't Trump great? He's really gonna' fix things." I remained silent. First I try to peek to see if there's a bulge in the back of his jacket, wondering if the jacket is concealing an other-worldly gelatinous mass.

Oops. Wrong novel.

Then I try peering over his shoulder into the garage, looking for the pots where those body replicas would be growing. Unfortunately, the darkness obscures my vision.

To be continued.

"Let creation reveal its secrets by and by"

Albert the artist returned energized from his trip to Paris. While we talked, he looked me in the eyes and I didn't need one of those NASA listening devices to hear his words. In Paris, he met a girl and visited museums. He wanted to move there and be an artist. Did I have another project? He needed a path.

We talked about him painting a great dove of peace on the two-story, corrugated metal back wall of the old power plant. We surfed the net looking at various images of doves with an olive branch in their beak.

"Albert, can you imagine how many people are gonna' see this every day.

The mural will be visible to folks traveling west on the commuter trains or on Route 135.

"When the light that's lost within us reaches the sky"

A few Fridays ago the Metrowest Advocacy Coalition held its annual Legislative Day. Our own Jerry Desilets was honored. As I approached the table in Nevins Hall, where many of our staff were seated, I spotted a familiar face.

"Hi Patrick. It's nice to see you."

"Hi Jim."

Patrick, probably the most challenging member of our unaccompanied adult continuum, has now been in from the cold for one year thanks to our staff. I never thought that was going to be possible. They did.

As helpers, we need to find the light within us in order to assist those we help in getting their light to reach the sky.

NOTES:

- The lyrics are all from Jackson Browne's "Before the Deluge".
- Most of the names have been changed, although they are consistent with the names I have used for those who have appeared in other essays.
- 126 refers to 126 Main Street, Spencer, a distressed lodging house that we were able to invest in and renovate.
- The time machine sculpture can be seen at 360 Union Avenue, Framingham.
- Invasion of the Body Snatchers