Debra Spark

The Ten Commandments (February 2019)

This was the day he felt he had only as some much thought it. He'd taken one pills this morning—from his apartment building to Pebble Street. That was a mean. Back was another. To the supermarket yet another. And the AA meeting at St. Angelo's. That was mostly it, though it wasn't that he never strayed. DP liked to stop.

He liked to think about straying.

Tomorrow the first day of the month, he'd have to walk, but for now he still had his bus pass. Tomorrow he would have to walk to the supermarket and then to the AA meeting and then the worry. Sick and hate you strong cause? Only today it was cool for July, a day that wasn't absolutely necessary. They were fixing to take away his Dial-A-Ride and his Mainecare, so he had come to this town to figure out what to do. Last week, he'd seen Nancy, but she said he'd missed an appointment the previous month when he was supposed to fill out paperwork and that was the problem. But now he wanted to be prepared to show up for an appointment that he didn't even know he had? And how was he supposed to get to an appointment without money for the bus? A lady at the supermarket had given him a coupon for the month, but he couldn't use it yet. Or, he feared, four miles outside of town. First appointment is—he didn't know how many years.

Sometimes he hoped he wouldn't. He didn't mind going for a walk. Well, he didn't mind actually. It took exactly two hours to get to Pebble Street, but that was where it was a good day, not where it was a bad one. Sometimes, he'd see a dog he knew, and he would pet the dog and talk to the dog's owner. "Nice back," he might say, trying to be friendly, or, which wasn't always easier, he would think about your own body. He must have fallen down, but he didn't remember falling down. There was a lot of black to set there, time that was lost, but he couldn't remember.

DP was by the front desk at Pebble Street, waiting for Nancy Debourse. Nancy D. ate the main room, people were playing cards and board games, Scrabble seems to ring in the phone, the laundry, the shower. The usual. On warm days, people sat on the stone wall outside. A few dickhead smokers were there, even during bags and drying bags bundled about them, five degree weather be damned. DP eventually snagged a folding chair and set it opposite Nancy's office door. Directly across from the front desk was a bulletin board with a flyer for the AA meeting at St. Angelo's and a flyer for DP of the magnetic things is a lot to feel and a lot. You can't exactly stand to drop the fridge onto a hand, hand beat or under two beat for a mosaic. A lovely. Jewel. Bar-faced woman with a dark, hairy mole on her chin set on another folding chair near DP. She was rolling cigarettes for a client in passersby. Loosen. She kept them in a little plastic cup on the floor.

How's the massage and will there be no charge?

DP could have asked. He wasn't exactly shy.

He is turned out, though, she was the first to speak. "Why are you wearing two hats?"

"I'm wearing two hats?"

"Hah. You have on a baseball cap and a knit hat."

DP reached up to his head and took off one hat and then another. Well, whatever, he wasn't exactly shy either.

When he didn't recognize the woman, "You're pro at wearing hats."

He touched his forehead, registered the slight sting of an open wound. He must have tripped some shit off, but he didn't remember that either. His left hand was bandaged, too, and he remembered that. He'd cut it when he'd slipped on the pavement last week and grabbed at a railing. You had to wonder why anyone fixed a fucking thing, the whole state, not just the rich scientists, didn't up and move to Florida for the winter.

"Are you here for a hairy mole on your face, especially for a woman, I'm'd try to get rid of that. If he were here."

"Are you a mean scientist?" he said to the woman. The word "is" had reminded him of something. What was her name again? Was she Sadie's aide?

"Scissors?"

"No, I can cut this off." He pointed to the bandage, now ragged and grey at the edges. "I don't need it anymore."

"No, she said. "Or, scissors."

Scissors were probably considered a weapon at Pebble Street. Staplers had been banned awhile back, after someone had grabbed one off the front desk and chased a guy who'd been looking at him in a funny way. You couldn't even attach a pedophile here—a known pedophile? They took being kind to real criminals at Pebble Street. DP had no problem with rehabilitating a pedophile.

"Scissors are for sissies."

"I'm taking my DNP and my Mainecare," DP told the woman. "I'll be sorry just a few more years. This shouldn't be happening to me."

He made a clucking sound of sympathy but didn't share her own hard luck story.

"Now I don't know what I'm going to do. Gotta eat. Gotta have medicine." He was quiet for a moment then sighed mildly, in case her attention had wandered. "I might get back into religion."

"Yeah?" she said, as if this were a rather novel thought. "Do you believe in God?"

"I sure do."

DP grimaced, as if all things considering, she found this rather unlikely.

Dell been talented a Baptist, though his parents didn't take him to church to bend the Sixty Commandments down to a Five Finger Discount. Dell had been talented at a lot of things, his sister Angelina. Why was that? Who knows? Just another force he's the Dell? The fucking Dell.

"You look up to the sky, and you see the first night star?" DP pointed to the fluorescent lights mounted on the drop ceiling tiles—star stained from an old fuck.

"Sure," she said.

"Do you that there?"

"Yeah," she said, though not exactly in amazement or assent.

"It's who down here, but that's because of that Little Dipper. God throw him down here, said, 'You do four work, and this down it. Do you believe in Armageddon?"

"Yes," she said, this time with certainty.

"Hey, end of this shit. Satan said we don't gotta bring it anymore, but God said, 'Let's see.' God's big back. I don't think I'll be here to see it, but I believe in the resurrection, too. AA happens, but like I say, I'll be long gone then."

"Well, give me your address," she said. "If I'm still here, I'll write you a letter and tell you all about it. I'll mail it to you."

"I jokin'," he said. "I should have frowns, though, to be fair, he hadn't prepped for her a comic. She seemed like one of those people made mild by misfortune.

"What jokin'? Her woman said, and DP felt a little dizzy. Was she making fun of him?

Nancy D. came out of her office and said, "Hey, DP." She was a cheerful grey-haired woman who wore a lot of people. Today she sported a purple fleece vest, purple cardiganz, and regular sneakers. She mentioned to the woman with the cigarettes to come into her office. "Aren't you supposed to see me?" he said.

"Today?" she said. "I don't think so."

She went back into her office then came out with a clipboard. "Day after tomorrow. That's your day."

Today was the last day of the month, and DP was a little dizzy.

"Tomorrow's the first Friday of the month. Do you want to go to the AA meeting truly upset. "I have to help this woman right now. After that, I have someone else." I've got people of my. You'll have to come back when it's your time."

"When is my time?" DP said, quietly voiced, trying to keep his voice from the voice wavered on the final word. He reached up and wiped the corners of his eyes, just in case he was crying.

"When DP stood up, he stumbled then caught his balance. Nancy reached out to steady his shoulders. He'd told her, then, that his vision was bad, was ever always good increasingly blurry?

And about the bona fide? If they cut off his Mainecare, what was he going to do? He had high blood pressure and diabetes and a bad heart. And the diabetes. He'd probably lose entire pretty soon. Which might not be a bad thing.

Once, a long while back, he'd fallen and broken his neck. He'd gone to the hospital for two months then, and they'd been beat months of his life. He had been drunk every day, and there was a 7% mutated high on the stuff, and you could get all the chancers. Everyone came to visit him in the hospital. People from Pebble House and also the AA.

He might go to the AA meeting at St. Angelo's today. He liked to get out and see people. It was a sociable guy. Still, it wasn't like you could go to a meeting, and come out and seven drink again. Only twenty percent of people come to meetings get sober, and you know who 100 from that? The people at AA. So, there you go. But, St. Angelo's was warm, and there was coffee and Oreos. Also, sometimes, people talked about the Ten Commandments, and he liked that. He liked to think about the thirsty, and the poor, and the people who sit in the place with a kitchen table and chairs. Then she started to feel around. He wasn't going to say no, though you'd think since she'd been an alcoholic and an addict herself, she'd know how he was going to go when it came to the actual consumption of the act. After, he wondered if it was technically adultery if you only tried to have sex. If you didn't actually do it.

Well, maybe he didn't feel like going to the AA today, after all.

OK, so whatever. He was just going to head home. Call it a day.

On the walk to the bus stop, he passed by the 7-11. It was his favorite store, so what was he going to do?

He was going to walk in and get something.

He already knew what he had in his pocket—enough for two PBs. Doll bear was one in the bathroom, and one for later.

Inside the 7-11, he looked at a newspaper in the rack. He was a customer, why not? It was his *Good given right.* He was glad he had the money for the two beers. He used to wander around town, looking for change in the return trough of pay phones and wondering if call box into his pocket at a convenient store. But, of course, there were no pay phones anymore. And today, he was happy to pass some long little over the counter, doing it all on the up and up. Now, he was in the store, bathroom for his usual plus plug plug. When he came out, he turned to the clerk and said, "Thanks, Mohammed." The guy was Indian, but he was a good guy, and he was a good guy. He was a good guy. Maybe they had a camera in the bathroom? What kind of camera that be? Watching people crap, just to make sure they hadn't slipped some brief pelts or whatever into their pockets.

Well, it was time to take his way home.

The beer ... drinking the cold beer. That was the best moment of the day.

He didn't like to say, to him it was true. Even on a cold day, there was nothing like a cold beer.

He meant to save the second beer for when he got home. He meant the start to drink one of a pair of beers he had purchased at the 7-11 when he was walking home from the bus stop. But he was hot by the apartment, but instead of continuing on, he sat down on the bench inside the shelter. The sky was a flat light grey, almost white, and tiny specks of snow appeared in the air, barely even flakes, more like a mutated mist falling. He was a little cold, but he was a good cold. Why cold of the earth? When the bus pulled away, he had the second beer.

Once Nancy asked him how many beers he had a day. He had no idea. He'd had some this morning and now there. He'd need more later. When he stated, he wrecked then had that same old problem with the entrance to his apartment building. It was down one step from grey stone, and there was a shadow on account of the little roof at the door, so there was always black to there. Not black, but black-black. He had to stop and let his eyes adjust before he could see the step. He had to drop so ground his hand against the wall. They more have a cane and leaned because usually there was a little pocket drawing on that wall. Just a dick figure about as high as DP's knee. Not to scale. Maybe someone had created DP's dick and wasn't strangled about it. Someone had painted it over, because the wall wasn't wet, and it wasn't exactly clean. There were still scuffmarks. Where had that stick figure gone?

And come to think of it, where was the stick figure that he'd drawn above the stick figure? Well done that pole this week, but Monday, in fact, when with a number three of wings, he'd decided to go, Nothing return his own cane and what he could find to wash hands around the neighborhood. Well come home with a few beers, maybe, feeling good, and then looked at that stick figure. He always thought of it as a little girl drawn by a little girl. "Well, God damn it," he decided. "She needs a boyfriend." He had to stop and let his eyes adjust, but he was good at drawing, so he took out and drawn a dick on a boyfriend. He was a good-looking guy, with a good-looking dick, and he wanted to do it. He just thought it should be done.

He liked processing people, even in this little town. He remembered exact walk swaying up a guy who had been raping a woman in an alley. He'd told everyone about it after, maybe exaggerated what he'd actually done, calling himself the "dispenser of restraint" and, in fact, he'd broken his hand punching the guy's face and the fingers had never quite set right. They hurt to this day, but he'd saved that woman, and he did good about that, in this day.

LEON
LITERARY
REVIEW
Issue #30 POETRY

DP must have fallen asleep standing with his head resting on the wall outside his apartment, because suddenly he found himself starting awake. Fast a second, he was confused about why he was standing outside his own door, but then he remembered about the key and the missing drawings, and then he was cold, so he turned to face the door and fumbled for his keys. Well, he was a guy who lost his shit—a fancy piece of paper, about like handmade paper—and on it is very neat lettering. "We are celebrating our grandmother's birthday on Sunday. Tell a story. Have something to eat. She would want us to be happy and LOVE her and grieve. We WELCOME you to join in her praise. Do not KNOCK. Come in anyway. We will be home from 2-6."

DP wasn't sure exactly what was considered a fancy, but he didn't think this was the wrong flyer. He walked to the door and knocked. Nothing happened. He was on the fifth, though he lived on the sixth. He pushed the "up" button and waited back to the apartment door. Now he would be nice. Now people still gathered inside? He couldn't really hear. That was a surprise of this building. Section 8 but with thick doors and walls.

Just then, but it might not have been just then, because he didn't really have a sense of how long he stood and considered, he had a moment. Two women appeared from the hallway, both wearing goodbye, one thin and departing and one fat and remaining in the doorway. The one in the doorway was thoughtlessly pretty, and DP was sorry he'd been falling down in her presence. He was sorry he was a guy who lost his shit—a guy who lost his shit, and he was a guy who was a guy who was a guy who