

Let's Hear It for Sam

by Andrew Oberg

Spring never came for Sam. The weather got warmer, of course, but his mood was not subject to the buoyancy that such seasonal changes typically brought. He told me, standing there with his brown eyes peeling and tall, rotund frame as unsteady as an ice sculpture forgotten in the sun, that he thought about killing himself but that it seemed like such a cliché. And what would be the point anyway? He was dead already and could see no difference between his life now and his nonlife then. She loved someone else and that was fine; it was her decision and her emotions and her inner journey on the ride that the events which she could not hope to really control were taking her on. In time she would regret it, naturally she would, and he might or not might not still be there then. If he weren't, well, that was her loss. And if he were, well, there was no telling how he might feel about her at that point. There was no telling about anything.

In some ways I could sympathize. Daily life was largely a matter of going through the motions. You woke up, you got dressed, you washed, shaved, brushed hair, brushed teeth, had a coffee, took a shit. You found yourself at a job that was boring, unfulfilling, beneath you, a waste of your talents. You got paid and spent the money on distracting yourself from the contours of your life. Dead, dead, dead. There used to be some significance to taking a nihilist stand, to rejecting it all, to somehow finding meaning within meaninglessness. Now that too had become simply banal. To proclaim that it was all empty and without purpose was to state the obvious; no one would even blink or turn to look at you. So thoroughly modern, these people that surrounded us. Sam had little use for them and they, he knew, even less for him. She had offered some hope, he once thought, something of another possibility or another way of being in the world, but like all else that had not worked out. The task of going forward was now his alone – it was his burden, his struggle – and there could be little benefit to the efforts that such would require. It was probably best for him to just stay neutral. Watch another movie, have another drink. Read something light? Goodness no, far too stressing. Put on some video clips instead, maybe lie down and listen to some music. Just don't *do* anything, for fuck's sake. What a nightmare that would be.

Wake. Work. Shit. Wank. That would probably be it for Sam. I didn't blame him; hell, I applauded him. At the end of a long life he could look back and catalogue all the serialized programs he'd watched, all the consumables he'd consumed, all the products he'd used and loved and thrown away, sometimes recycled. He would have

very carefully avoided creating anything, investing himself in anything, exerting himself at anything. He would have achieved success. And in that he could rest content as his breath slipped away and he prepared to face that great happy blank. The world had been his for the taking and he'd had the courage to turn his nose up at it. He'd triumphantly managed to do no more than to accept what was on offer.

Kudos to him.