Mr. Fuller’s Revolt

Roger Zelazny

“Good morning, Mr. Fuller,” said the attendant, smoothing his white smock and smiling.

“Good morning, George. What’s on the schedule for today?”

“Schedule, Mr. Fuller?” answered the attendant. “You know that there never...”

“Skip it,” sighed Mr. Fuller, an average-looking man in his middle thirties. “I just thought that maybe...Oh well.”

“Anything you want, sir?” the attendant inquired eagerly.

“Nothing. I think I’ll take a walk.” He turned and left the old attendant.

It was a beautiful day, he mused, but then they all were. He followed the winding road down into the valley and stopped at the orchard. Not bothering to examine it, he picked an apple from one of the trees and lay down in the shade munching it.

It was a perfect apple of course, they always were; in fact everything about this place was perfect. You could just lie back and relax, and everything would be taken care of for you. He sighed again and watched a dust devil spin idly across the road. You should be immensely happy when free to do anything you want to. There was only one catch, there was nothing to do here.

Mr. Fuller realized that he was unhappy.

He threw the apple remainder against a nearby tree trunk.

Splat!

Just like that, he thought. Just crossing the street when some crazy driver crashed the light.

There was a grill and bumper coming toward him and the tortured screaming of tires. They screamed louder and louder.

Splat!

And here he was. He stood up and yawned. He brushed some dust from his smock. Maybe there was something he could do. Where is that blasted attendant?

“Did you call?” questioned George, stepping from behind a large tree, smiling.

“Uh-huh,” he answered. “How’s chances of us finding some more guys and getting up a softball game?”

“I’m afraid not. Strenuous sports are prohibited here, you know.”

“Just trying,” he shrugged, and turned down the road again. There had to be something worth doing!

The attendant fell in step alongside him. “There’s an excellent view of the waterfall down the road a way, and there’s a pear orchard, too.”

Mr. Fuller was silent.

They saw the waterfall and he ate half a dozen perfect pears. He didn’t get a stomach ache though; he never got them anymore.

But there was something inside him, gnawing and craving to be let out. He longed to express himself in some way.

Finally he spoke. “George.”

The attendant looked at him, smiling. He always smiled.

“George, there are many beautiful things here,” he began. “And you’ve been very nice to me. But there’s nothing to do here. You’ve given me a Utopia and an empty life! This is a place of idleness!”

Indignation began to boil within Mr. Fuller as he went on. “There’s absolutely positively nothing here to hold my attention! Maybe I’m not cut out for this sort of thing, but if this is what Heaven is like, I’d sooner have Hell!”

There was a twinkle in the attendant’s eyes as he smiled more broadly than usual. “Is that so?” he asked. “Just where do you think you are, anyway, sir?”

A Word from Zelazny

Among the few surviving stories written during his teens, this one represents the first time that Zelazny ever received payment for a short story⁠—$25 (about $190 in 2008 dollars)⁠—and had it professionally published[[1]](#footnote-1). It was first published in the Euclid Junior High School literary magazine Eucuyo. He submitted it to a National Scholastic high school story contest⁠—the same contest that Harlan Ellison won in his time⁠—and earned the $25 plus the distinction of having it printed in the national magazine Literary Cavalcade Vol. 7 No. 1, October 1954. That milestone “inspired me to go out and write another hundred short stories. They were all rejected, but occasionally I’d get a little nice note. I had a sentence from Fletcher Pratt once, saying ‘try again.’ Ray Palmer dropped me a couple of notes saying ‘Comes close this time,’ ‘Didn’t quite make it.’ Then I went to college and stopped writing altogether; I had too many courses even to read science fiction.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Zelazny later had this story reprinted in the chapbook And the Darkness Is Harsh, where he remarked “I don’t know where [this] piece came from.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Critics later cited recurring themes in Zelazny’s work including death, immortality, suicide, automobile accidents⁠—and it is noteworthy that some of these themes date back to this early published work.

Notes

Sir Thomas More coined the phrase “utopia” (a perfect place) for his 1516 book of the same name.

1. Roger Zelazny: A Primary and Secondary Bibliography, 1980. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. If, January 1969. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. And the Darkness Is Harsh, 1994. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)