

EVE OF THE EVE OF DESTRUCTION—Version 2

By Howie Good

WHY WE LIKE IT: *This double posting came about when the author's original submission was snapped up by another zine seconds before we sent our acceptance. (That'll teach us). But we think Good is Best so we asked for something else. He sent 'Eve of the Eve of Destruction'. We loved it (go figure) and then he sent us a revised version of the story which we liked just as much. As Charles explained to The Good Man in his email we would like to take BOTH versions because...it shows the creative process in action and also draws attention to the reality that literary expression (all artistic expression, really) is flux not fixity or finality. It's a deconstruction--art is process--obsession we can't shake so with your permission we'd like to publish them both—as version 1 and version 2. Listen up, dude, Dada is alive in 2020 and the lights are on in the Cabaret Voltaire.'*

Eve of the Eve of Destruction

The big road map on the wall at the highway rest stop is just a frustrating tangle of lines to the man standing there studying it. I try to remember what state is south of Nebraska in case he asks. The only laws that are regularly enforced are the laws of chance. Self-driving Mercedes will sacrifice pedestrians to save the driver.

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I've written some thoughts on the bedroom wall. Sometimes I forget they're even there. My gas mask hangs on the back of the door. A city inspector declared the building's crumbling façade unsafe. The very next morning, a Park Avenue socialite was crushed to death by a falling piece of masonry. Once while I was visiting Los Angeles, I saw people digging up a grave with their bare hands. I'm not afraid of dying. I'm afraid of how many things can go wrong during a crime in progress.

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The day to come is just a rerun of the day before. So I board a train with the idea of appearing that night *in flagrante delicto*. The old rattling train sways alarmingly. When I arrive, the station is crowded with soldiers, though of whose army I can't say. The situation that awaits me across town doesn't allow any time to find out. I climb in a taxi, give the address. The taxi lurches into motion. By now it's red dusk, fire clinging to the clothes and hair of a laughing toddler splashing in a puddle of what looks suspiciously like blood.

