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Dust

From the sun's rays bouncing off the chest at the end of the bed, the blind dust was revealed as it swam aimlessly in the atmosphere that surrounded him. He knew the dust was there, but the only time he ever saw it was on mornings like this one, so he never bothered to remove it. He had been awake for hours, sitting upright in his bed, staring at the inanimate objects that lay motionless across the landscape of the apartment like abandoned military equipment upon the horizon; images that occupied his view while he was pondering life. He then shook himself from this suspension and slowly sauntered over to the window, which he opened to let in the fresh sea air.

To his amusement, he watched two fat pushcart operators on the street below bicker over the rights to the corner. But the smile soon disappeared from his young face as he remembered he had been laughing at these same characters the day before, and the day before that. Slowly, he eased away from the window, still viewing the spectacle, as he fumbled for the pack of Lucky Strikes on his night table. He didn't smoke, but death was upon him and he was still trying life. His hands shook nervously as he lit the cigarette that was dangling perfectly at the end of his lips, held on by the perspiration he had built up in his morning hell. In disgust or simply just to hear the sound, he threw the matches down on the cold, barren floor.

Placing his head between his knees, he opened his eyes to read the matchbook that was lying perplexed on the ground. It read, "Landetas" and he reminded himself that that was where he was last night, with what's-her-name. She said to call on her again tonight, but then again, he may not be around. "Stop kidding yourself," he laughed furtively into his shirt. A sigh escaped his mouth as he took a long, nervous drag from the dwindling column of ashes and blew the smoke towards the two men outside. Sure, he was young. But the emotions etched on his face showed signs of a mid-life crisis.

When he was a boy, he was just that, a boy. One who had no regard for the events around him, but now he cherished time. Oh, how he cherished time. There wasn't a day where he missed the tolling of the twelve bells in the local square or the faint six o'clock alarm on his watch that signaled dinner. He was counting down time and still is counting down time. But he will always be counting down, for there is no end. No end. "Ha!" he scoffed at himself and buried what was left of the cigarette in the porcelain ashtray his brother has won at a carnival when they were both eleven. The idea had gripped him when he finally opened his

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eyes to reality, beyond the elusive dreams and fancies he had spent years molding like a golden ball of clay. Either because he was left facing the world backwards or because he was just ignorant, he found himself sleeping with Sir Thomas Moore amidst a secret Elysian society. When he woke up, he was deeply startled, but then spent his "time" searching for a resolution around this dilemma.

It was late June, and the sea morning was very hot. Droplets of perspiration formed on his wrinkled forehead. A lone drop found its way ahead of the rest and it streaked down his face till it met the floor with force but utter silence; depicting his cause but a contradiction of his reality. Again, he removed himself from the bed, and then found himself in the bathroom staring in the mirror at a pale, desolate figure who wanted nothing in life but to be left alone. Slowly he disrobed. In the shower, he tried to write familiar Shakespearean passages upon the steam pressing against the shower doors. But he soon gave up in vain as the water erased nothing from the walls. The water began to get cold and he stepped out and got dressed. Yet, he still had no idea for what he was getting dressed. Nor had he ever.

As he re-entered the bedroom, he noticed that the din from the street below had disappeared and was now replaced by the solemn footsteps of passing fishermen. Pulling an abandoned chair up to the window, he took out another cigarette and placed it carelessly in his mouth, but then abruptly fell upon the floor where it lay unnoticed. The matchbook behind now read, "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR- Read the Book of GOD," and lighting the cigarette, he quietly remembered where these had come from. The light from the match produced a lone glow into the fading sunlight in his room, and from the street below, it must have seemed like a vigil was being carried on in the heavens above. He sat transfixed, thinking, but never quite sure what of. The world outside his window would be his subject matter for tonight, as it was every night. Crying alone, the cigarette carved in the corner of his mouth showed signs of deficiency, and before it extinguished itself, he put it out. But this time he missed the ashtray and the fiery-gray ashes bounced haphazardly upon a copy of *Oedipus the King* that was lying forsaken on his night table. The thin sunlight in the room had moved in an oblique measure from the chest at the foot of the bed, to the door of the apartment. Now the dust on the doorknob was highly visible and waiting patiently. He knew the dust was there, but the only time he ever felt it were days like—

Tomorrow he may change, but then the world may too.

Dave Cane