

## ***Tailings***

### **THE PESTILENCE.**

Who are one's friends in solidarity?  
The Temptation of Gold.

I had been on the water for some time. I had avoided the port cities, touching here and there where I might rest in peace or barter for supplies. While I needed to be watchful at all times when near land, the ordinary task of the mariner, I had also to be aware of those who sat upon the shore awaiting opportunities; the pirates and the salvors. On the whole I had escaped any serious difficulties, this fact not wholly attributable to the generosity and altruism of my fellow man. Being at the ready and purposely avoiding certain coasts was instrumental in making passage possible and this narrative is offered as testament to my survival.

I had felt a persistent primal element existed in man, causing him to act meanly toward other life, his own look-a-likes being singled out for the harshest treatment. Perhaps it was too much for me to expect a coastal dweller, who is opportunistic through habit, and without conscience, to understand the little he would gain from me in his maraudings; the cessation of my life would not leave a severely unbalanced equation whether he perceives or not an equation or any attendant morality associated with his actions. If I was to invite encounters with these free agents in order to teach them something about simple mathematics or about rights and wrongs, I would not have a moment for the enjoyment of my adventures into the wilderness. However, we are both selfish in our own way, he concerning his *modus operandi* founded upon survival, and I, in my persistent disregard for reality, wherein I would hope to cram down the coastal 'savage's' throat some form of white morality that remains consistently undistinguished in its power to engender any distinct social purpose or action in the 'higher animals', i.e., those who populate the civilized world. And who is to say whether or not the selfish should engage each other in a death struggle (mortal combat).

Initially I had taken to the water as an escape from the pestilential pressures of my fellow man, whom I regard politely as *homo amorphous*, very presumptively self-inflated to *homo sapiens*, who cannot refrain from his endless persuasion to a nebulous 'progress'. My contact with him affected and perhaps had broken my spirit, and my will to pursue the flatulent dreams of this tailored beast; dreams which he had attempted to engender and inculcate in me when I was most helpless and impressionable; dreams which had lacked any clear purpose unless it was to serve greed and to deny yesterday. What an unhappy proposition!

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Now, being on the water seems natural enough, even though I haven't anything to show for the time thus whiled away; lest one add tranquility to the ledger.

But there is the unavoidable, the inevitable, if you will; not that I must pass over the last horizon, but that I will encounter the rabid pestilence. While I am able to parry successfully the scant opportunist who, upon the sea, escapes my first caution, I am powerless against the pervasive disease, should it truly seek me out. However, it must be mentioned that to perish in the embrace of this amorphous creature would constitute an unseemly, undignified and ignoble exit.

The last occasion I had chosen to 'go amongst the people' happened in a small sleepy inland community that subsisted without much reliance on and contribution to the overwhelming presence of the industrialization of man's world. They farmed mostly, in tranquility, answering to the rhythms of the Great Mother. One could say that hardship lurked about, yet could not make successful inroads when the people came together in some commonalty and confraternity. And come together they did and would; it seemed a most natural joining and mingling, a reassuring solidarity founded in a mutuality; it was their bastion against natural calamity.

The people looked upon me as a stranger, hardly to be included in their figurings, but received me warmly enough once I had stood inspection, having escaped detection (I was dressed as Don Quixote; and everyone knows how well received he is the world over). I was given nods of recognition, if not the occasional doffing gesture towards my common humanity, a not untoward encumbrance or embarrassment in this remote region.

Whilst in their midst a controversy had arisen amongst the people. It happened when the advanced guard of the rabid pestilence had come amongst them. Beneath their farmland existed some abundant remains from ages long past that could be extracted and utilized to engorge the engines of progress. The corporate maw breathed heavily about these peaceful environs exhaling its vile stench, hardly concealed in its scented words.

Alas!, sadly; sadly, Alas!, there were some amongst these, who, though fully accomplished in their purity of existence, envisioned relief from their hardships; who, vulnerable and susceptible in their human weaknesses, in their animal issuance, in their desires for imagined ease and leisure, and pleasure, were considering the honeyed words of the harbingers of the pestilence.

There were others, perhaps no less susceptible, but wiser, some wiser in the knowledge of what had happened in other places, some wiser innately, knowing appearances are deceiving; others still wise enough to know what and who they were.

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The peaceful community had become somewhat agitated. Some would yield to the temptation; some would hold fast; each was allowed; it was their right, a democratic right, a right extended and guaranteed from some place over the horizon; an alien right. Even those who sought refuge in their rights found it difficult to abandon their lifetime friends; if only they could persuade their friends. Riches in exchange for your way of life. All the pleasures of the world will be yours. Think of the advantages your children will have. Good gawd, what is an advantage? (The Don asks; no one hears).

I was the stranger; I could not counsel them without having to pass inspection again; my purpose was to earn some wherewithal through my labors that I might continue on my way; soon enough the seasonal need for labor would be past. (Truly it was very unlike the Don not to interfere).

I could not tell them of the pestilence; that it was worse than any disease they had ever known; that it would leave them sitting by the roadside all hollowed out. Yes!, they would have Gold with which they would try to buy back a world they had lost. I wanted to tell them, but felt I didn't know enough; I hadn't any special vision, only that of a visionary. Who was I to counsel them against their opportunity to escape the seeming perpetual austerity and precarious indifference of the Great Mother. I abandoned them to their uneasiness.

They needed someone to rise amongst them, to evangelize, to revive or instill a spirit, their very own spirit which lie in a dormancy. Someone amongst them needed to declare theirs a temple, a sacred place which the accursed would not be allowed to defile.

But none came forth; these were not people accustomed to articulating themselves in a defense against the curse of avarice. Theirs was the act of bodies in unison amidst the wonders and perils of the Great Mother. Theirs was a world of weathered wood and staples, not of plastic and packaged goods.

I could foresee the end; I would leave, not returning. If the honeyed words did not seduce some of them, thus spelling doom for all, the democratic bastards over the horizon would threaten them with 'eminent domain'. "Ye!, by God and Country, had better come into the modern world of progress or we'll bring ye there!". The National Vested Interests of Progress and Greed will prevail!!!

What is a life? What is a way of life? Whither thou goest, Oh Life?

As I returned ever so sadly, impotently, to the water, I mourned them in their torment. Before the harbingers of the pestilence had appeared their eyes had glowed in a welcome hail during their encounters with each other. Greetings now seemed strained; they had probed with their looks: "Are you one of them?" to which would come a reassuring glance or downcast eyes. Some would conceal themselves behind doors and walls or walk the other side of the street in order to avoid the other who

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would peer searchingly, doubtfully, accusingly. Such pathos. What are we doing? We are a pestilence!

What do I know; a bleeding heart? I'm a hypocrite; I'll not refuse the product of progress; I'll not say NO!. But I do refuse some; I purposefully do not squander the irreplaceable. The more I would use, the more communities are thrown into the hopper, the more people become the fodder, the offal, the debris, the drudge; the more her breast becomes pocked, uglified, parched, laid barren; all to feed this unconscionable maw. Yes!, we are all part of the maw, the unsubtle pestilence that invades, engorges, drains the good, leaving scattered ruin behind, abandoned to its fate; communities rich in plastic and packaged goods, rich in artificiality; they too become tailings.

Yes, I too have been drained of my vitality while pursuing this phantom you have placed before me; this compound of progress and the annihilation of yesterday. Somehow it has been convenient; we have not felt the need to be held in check through the errors that have preceded us. Each sojourn upon the land has endangered my equanimity, has threatened to exact my remaining reserves, in eluding retribution, for displaying my lack of faith, and for badmouthing homo progresso, that amorphous pestilence.