

“Magic comes in a bottle and goes about as far as you can throw it. In your hand, it has a little heft to it - like the weight of an important book and comes with all the same consequences and life-altering drama. It’s meant to be thrown overhand, grenade-like, and when shattered it explodes into radiant plumes of color; blues, oranges, reds, and yellows all darting hot across the sky upon impact. Every meager bottle holds tremendous revolutionary potential - the literal ability to change - to create and destroy, make and unmake, to change whatever it touches into something wholly new. Nothing can withstand the power of magic. No structure, no army, no social order, no king, no usurer. From concrete to fertile soil, from oppression to liberation, from sickness to health, from empty stomachs to contented peoples, it changes everything under the sun.

Magic comes from small people, like us. Our lives generate magic. In sickness and health, in times of need and times of comfort, when we succeed and when we fail. We generate a little magic every day. We exude it naturally. It emanates from our labor, our love, our joy, and our sorrow. We are the source of magic and we use it to soothe all of our ills - to heal each other, to feed each other, to laugh together - to build a beautiful world for all of us small people, collectively, together. We honor our forebears who wielded it prior and the great worldly changes our small ancestors wrought for us. It blossoms in our hope for a better world, and it dies quietly while we sleep. It is ours and ours alone.

The problem, you see, is that it has been taken from us.

Captured, commodified, bottled, and sold back to us piecemeal, dissected, and disconnected from us and our work to make it. In this era, there are horrid, bloated, covetous gargantuan insectoid men who pile carrion mounds ever higher so that they may sit upon them and chitter downwards. They crave what they do not have - our magic. Their multi-armed segmented bodies writhe with hunger, each segment a stomach unto itself, hunched atop their mounds consuming all that they can reach. These thorax-laden giants possess many things, a dragon’s hoard worth of wealth and resources are collected in each burrow, but they cannot be satiated and do not have magic. Instead, they have plotted and schemed and conspired to con us out of our most ancient and valuable asset. And from their greed, they have birthed the most awful bargain -

‘We will heal your sick,’ they said with their multi-tongued mouths, ‘for a little bit of your magic.’

‘We will give you bread,’ they said with acrid breath and rotted maw, ‘for a little bit of your magic.’

‘We will give you a home,’ they said, sneering, gaunt, and twisted, ‘for a little bit of your magic.’

‘We will give you work,’ our ears penetrated by the proboscis, ‘for a little bit of your magic.’

And we did. Anything to send the wretched hosts away. We let them slither down our throats, one parasitic centipede leg at a time. We surrendered little bits of our magic every day, every hour, until all of our time was spent surrendering, offering up magic, instead of tending our

sick, building our homes, feeding our friends, or working together. It was easier to surrender than to resist. We gave them our magic, and they feasted until they were fat. They cannot not know contentment.

Worse still, they employed us to build a machine - a capital machine - a great, extractive, everlasting spider-like colossus of a machine, weaponized with ten thousand chitinous arms to grow their gluttonous mandibles across the entire planet and fueled by never-ceasing combustion engines that discharge blight and filth from deep with within their burrows and high atop their mounds. A machine designed and constantly redesigned to imbibe our increasingly meager offerings of magic in the most brutal, most efficient, most honest fashion. To collect and ferret away every drop - first for themselves so that they may grow fat and then to sell it back to us so that their mounds may grow ever larger. A fetid ouroboros of a machine that subjects us.

Their bargain was naught. Our homes were turned to shacks and shanties. Our fields made toxic and lifeless. Our bread made rotten and infested. Our sick, dead. Our magic, stolen. For centuries, our magic has been stolen. Once their fiendish hooks and rancid ideology had pierced our skin, we were powerless. Powerless and desperate. So desperate that we began to cannibalize our own - such as in Paris 1871, or in Logan County 1921, or in Yorkshire 1984 - small people, like us, were killed by other small people hired by the gargantuan insect men. There were mighty struggles. Sometimes we won. Most times we lost.

Today, instead of making magic for ourselves, we buy it by the bottle.

It is ours and ours alone.

That is their ideology.

Where once there was community, brother and sisterhood, there is only the ten thousand armed colossal extractive machine and our subservience to it. Where once we were the engines that made and shaped the world, fed and cared for all of us small people together, there are towering carrion mounds that house parasitic men far above us - their rotted maws and bloated, covetous thoraxes pregnant with our labors. Their multi-tongued mouths dripping with with deceit and gaping with hunger. Their stomachs yearn for ever more. More of us. More for them. More of us. More for them...

...So tonight," I said, inserting the rag into the gasoline filled bottle, "remember; Magic comes in a bottle and goes about as far as you can throw it."