

There's No Surf in Cleveland (Section 1)

a futuristic work-in-progress
by Michael Ceraolo

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Tonight's sunset was slightly different,
with
scattered clouds camouflaging the colors
as the sun shone through those clouds in streaks of light

At least,
everyone thought
it was sunlight shining through the clouds,
until
the light remained bright well after sundown
and the true cause could no longer be denied
(there had been many alleged UFO sightings
in this particular area through the years,
none believed until now)

The spaceship slowly lowered itself to lake level,
and
then skipped itself to shore like a skimming stone
Some of those on the shore stood rapt,
while
others scattered and screamed maniacally
like the villagers in a 1950s monster movie
And
still others bombarded the nearby cell-phone towers
with calls that proclaimed Henny Penny a prophet
After centuries of being Columbus
they now felt themselves to be the Arawaks,
and
they didn't like that feeling one bit

But
there was,
and indeed had been,
a different model for contact,
perceived
by some on the shore and all in the spaceship
(those in the spaceship having had such contact
on many occasions),
and
they would act accordingly when the time came

The inter-something immigrants had chosen their location well
(they had considered the matter for a couple decades of Earth time):

in early-twenty-first-century America
the twin tracks of the country's history
were nearly at their most divergent,
and
threatened to lose sight of one another entirely
And
nowhere was that more on display than here
in the poorest city
in the richest nation
in the whole history of the planet
(at least
that was what its boosters said of it;
it was close enough not to quibble
Among
the old failed nicknames of this place
was "Best Location in the Nation",
a failure
not because it was demonstrably false,
but
because the slick sloganeers spouting it
didn't really believe it,
or act on it
(Most
of the other slogans aren't worth repeating)

A city
that educated young people were allegedly fleeing from
in staggering numbers to pursue
perceived opportunities elsewhere
(many of the places they were fleeing to
would soon be uninhabitable
if they weren't already so,
but
that's a story for a different poem)

A city
whose remaining residents were being
evicted from their homes in increasing numbers
due to the collapse of the financial house of cards,
prophesying the depression that would soon spread

that had recently made the endangered places list, A city
at that time there was no though
Endangered Places Protection Act

The immigrants
had chosen this location ironically as well:

here,
as all across the country
and
in many other countries as well,
were the stirring of yet another period
of anti-immigrant hysteria,
as though
everyone wasn't originally from someplace else (though
from just how far away varied considerably)

Here,
as all across the country,
were (possibly) secret immigrant prisons,
ones that would have made Mengele proud

So
the Seven,
knowing full well
just how 'illegal their 'immigration' was,
and
knowing full well their possible penalties,
took great pains to remain undetected

Over eons of Earth time
the Seven had intelligently observed
the many contradictions in all Earth societies,
ones that usually flowed from faulty starting points
they ascribed to a stunted view
of what constituted human nature,
and
they knew they would have to be prepared
to deal with any problems that would result
from their unexpected arrival

And
such problems arose right away
as the local civilian authorities
were convinced the beach was being stormed
by a hostile force

First
came the SWAT teams, guns brandished

Next
came the bureaucrats charged with keeping
the Homeland secure from foreign invasion

And
lastly came the troops,
volunteers
blending with the recent draftees,
all
having completely absorbed
the unmixed messages from all manner of media:

the notion of the noble sacrifice,
the notion of dying to protect freedom,
the notion of dying to protect a way of life,
all
noble notions that sometimes mutated,
depending
on the degree of darkness of the civilian direction
(something never mentioned in any manner of media),
into the notion of killing to keep what one had
no matter how it had been obtained,
the notion of killing for revenge or 'honor',
or
for some new notion not yet noted,
all notions that failed to realize
LIFE
is the prerequisite for all ideals

Having anticipated such a display,
the Seven had de-materialized the spaceship
and assumed human form;
they had the ability to assume
any gender,
any ethnicity,
any age,
and
to do so complete with necessary identification
and background stories,
so
they easily blended into the crowd at the beach

They had come on an important mission
they would start on very soon

-Michael Ceraolo
Thank you for your consideration.

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