



leaving your mark

JOSEPH FARLEY

ON A CERTAIN STREET IN A CERTAIN neighborhood in a certain city there was a wall that demarcated the property line for a junk yard. On the side of the wall facing outside, away from rusting piles of metal and plastic, there was a small section of grass, no more than two feet wide. It ran the length of the wall. At some point a tree had grown on that strip of grass. The tree was nearly twelve feet tall and thick at the trunk as two hands joined in a circle.

At night neighborhood cats took turns rubbing against the tree and spraying at times to leave their scent, mark territory, and communicate their comings and goings to all cats who might come by later. By day dogs sniffed the tree and wall, and peed on both to let the dog world know they existed and were in the neighborhood.

image info

Glory in the mark you make while you are making it, while the scent is still fresh, the piss wet, the paint yet to dry. Be glad with what you have done, no matter how small and temporary, for as long as it lasts. Or for as long as you last.

Over the years the wall had gotten covered top to bottom along its entire length with graffiti. Some nights a teenager would come by and spray his name or call sign, leaving his tag for all to see, usually plastered over older, fading names and symbols, in accordance with accepted urban custom.

One day there was an accident. A delivery truck swerved to avoid hitting a child who had darted out into the street from between parked cars. The truck hit the tree but kept going. The collision uprooted the tree and also took down a good portion of the wall. An ambulance arrived for the truck driver. A tow truck came for his vehicle. Both were taken away and presumably recovered after receiving appropriate care.

The fallen tree and wall laid there for months before a contractor cleaned up the

debris and hauled it away in a dump truck. More months passed before the wall was replaced with a new wall. It was years before a tree grew on the grass again to the height and size of the one that was lost.

Old and new cats and dogs came along when the new wall was in place and sniffed for old scents but could not find them. New scents were deposited where and when possible until a proper tree grew on the grass. Teenagers regretted the loss of the old wall of names but welcomed the fresh canvas. They filled the blank space of the new wall with calligraphy in just a matter of weeks following its construction.

There and gone. There and gone again. Some things wear away. Some are destroyed by local upheavals. The vacuum is filled. The new becomes

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old and is replaced by the newer or newest. What came first, or even just before, disappears or is otherwise forgotten.

It has always been that way and always will be. That's just how it is. Anyone who plays the game should know this.

Glory in the mark you make while you are making it, while the scent is still fresh, the piss wet, the paint yet to dry. Be glad with what you have done, no matter how small and temporary, for as long as it lasts. Or for as long as you last. Your odor and your name will not last long, certainly not forever. It does not need to. Today is enough, and maybe tomorrow, and possibly the day after that if you are truly lucky. It has to be. It would be foolish to expect anything more.

Do not dwell on it. Just let it go. The difference is unimportant in the long run. Neither are you, or me, or anyone else for that matter, in the long run. Think geologic time. Leave your scent now. If you must. But you don't have to make a big stink about it.

The world is full of fools, some of whom are called artists and writers. Some say such people are blessed. By whom or what depends on what you believe. Others say fools should not be tolerated. That way of thinking seems too harsh, and also foolish.

One person's wisdom is another person's foolishness. I read that in a book or on a wall somewhere. I treasure foolishness of all kinds. Life would be too boring without it. Even in the short term. 🐦

