

*“Thus God Knows the world, because He conceived it in His mind, as if from the outside, before it was created, and we do not know its rule, because we live inside it, having found it already made.” Umberto Eco*

## **Get a Life**

It was very hot outside on account of the season, the latitude, and the small spot of anger that broods in the heart.

I noticed something measured in the way I cycled down the road, the bike wheels turning. A small turtle, recently hatched, crossing the street perpendicular to the road side. A tree bent to the prevailing wind and shadows balancing the light. There is some kind of system at work — I am riding the curve of someone else’s formula. What is this mysterious equation? It’s no secret I’m struggling to find my place in the world.

I cycled out on to the main road and across Forest Lake, where locals tickle the surface with hooks and lines from shallow boats. The water ripples like giggly flesh, such is the character of the lake — a fat girl who likes her pleasures — the boats to stroke her and the little fish to nibble her below.

My bike was from Sears and it wasn’t very cool. Somewhere along South Cashua Drive a beer bottle is lobbed in my direction from a passing truck, accompanied by shouts of, “Why don’t you get a fuckin’ car?”, a brutal message in a bottle if ever there was.

And “Yes,” I think to myself “While I’m at it, why don’t I get a life?” I’m working on it. Really I am.

Still, youthful folly is my invisible force field so I pedal on. Undeterred, even by the ripe summer smell of decaying possums squashed on the road, not just one, but two. Then, right on cue, as I approach Florence County Club, the German shepherds come galloping towards me bearing their teeth. Fortunately I out-bike them and emerge through arcing rainbows generated by neighborhood lawn sprinklers. Not much further now. I continue past the asbestos-sided cottages of old Florence, sun-bleached grey and green, they haven’t seen a lick of paint since the 1950s.

I arrive in Timrod Park, freewheeling down the low grade and able to catch my breath. Past the neatly trimmed topiaries and the giant magnolias, their blooms like white porcelain tea cups on a spreading canopy of glossy green foliage, leave me

momentarily feeling like Alice through the Looking Glass. And with one final push, it's on the to the public library where I re-shelve the books for \$5.00 an hour.

Here, behind the red brick walls and Palladian windows, I am quietly organizing the world of knowledge, thanks to Dewey, from 000 to 999. And on the way, hopefully, I will find my place in it.

Between the shelves I immerse myself in mysteries of the unknown, psychology, witchcraft, mythology, religion, economics and language — I'm quite sure something here will define me and everything will fall into place — cooking, farming, architecture, art, literature, history, and then to the last shelf which ends abruptly with extra-terrestrial worlds. There's an empty shelf or two, vacant for my future. At least that's how it is today.

I will be back tomorrow looking for inspiration in the biographies, and failing that, there's a room full of fiction to shelve.

And so this continues for several months, at which point I emerge from the labyrinth of book stacks. Like Theseus I have conquered the Minotaur, the Minotaur of my indecision, and enroll in the Master of Library and Information Science degree at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. It sounds very grandiose. Well, it's a plan of sorts. I didn't say a sound one.

Leaving the library I pedal one last time through the streets of old Florence. After I graduate and get a job I could be happy in one of these shabby cottages, I think to myself. Mine would be the one with a fresh coat of paint, banana plants and a dog behind the chain link fence. But for now I'm heading westward with Columbia and its promise on the horizon.

Promise of what? Understanding? Belonging? Finding my orbit, I think. A place where my friction with the world is replaced by my vibration in it.

It was very hot outside on account of the season and latitude and the small spot of anger that broods in the heart. It seems like today that one bad thought of mine launches a thousand angry jets across the sky.

There was something measured in the way I cycled down the road as the wheels turned like clocks. At regular intervals small turtles recently hatched crossed the street perpendicular to the road side. There was some kind of system at work - and I was riding the curve of someone else's formula.

I cycled out on to the main road and across the lake where people tickled the waters with hooks and lines from shallow boats. The water rippled like giggley flesh such was the character of the lake - a fat girl who liked her pleasures - the boats to stroke her and little fish to nibble her below.