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# Impressions in Rose

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# Impressions in Rose . . .

. . . Robert Chatterson

Everywhere there is that sense of emptiness. Of watchful waiting. Row upon row of blank, staring, impassive faces. Waiting to be touched by the flame. A flame that can never touch them.

Who gives a damn. Drink up.

Fear lurks behind those faces. A pervasive, nameless fear. It does not clutch at the heart, or probe deep into the soft, slimy viscera, or dehydrate the throat. It is a faint, ubiquitous shadow that falls relentlessly across the lives of us all.

Drink up, pal. Worse days are coming.

You see the faces everywhere. On the streets, in the lecture rooms, in the homes, in the factories, on the battlefields, in the churches, in the honeymoon cottages. And always they are the same. Blank. Utterly devoid of humanity. The faces of robots who wander blindly about in their own little paths until the clock of eternity ticks off their last flickering second, and they are gone leaving nothing behind. Not even a memory.

Drink up, drink up, before it gets flat.

Sometimes the blank faces smile or laugh or cry. But these are mechanical reactions. Humor, joy, sadness, love, hate . . . these things do not touch them deeply. The smile, the laugh, the tears come and go, as though operated by push-buttons. And always the blankness returns to the faces. The watchful, staring eyes. Uncomprehending. Afraid.

Drink up, friend, I'm buying this round.

I am a free man because it says so in the Constitution of the United States of America, so don't come around here giving me that line about my responsibility to my fellow man. To hell with my fellow man. I am tired of it all. So have a drink, but don't be telling me your goddamn troubles, pal. I've got enough of my own.

The blank faces speak but they do not say anything. Their hearts thud heavily, and the pulse beats out the message of the heart . . . I am tired, I am exhausted, I am confused, I cannot laugh, I cannot cry. I simply do not give a damn.

And that's the way it is.

Expectant. Hushed. Waiting. Time Marches On . . . there is no turning back. Nothing is important except a new Cadillac and a new

modernistic home and a wife with sex appeal and a husband with money and the easy way to have children and the weekly paycheck. All else is irrelevant.

But there is also faith.

An uneasy faith in the hydrogen bomb.

Who gives a damn about life? Drink up.

The blank faces do not stir . . . not a twitch betrays the inner emotions. Nothing. A deep, endless, black void. Suspended in a vacuum tube. Brief flashes of light glimmer. But the blank faces retreat from the light and the sightless eyes close from the glare. The beam is bent, or the flashes of light are of the wrong color, or something else is wrong. There is always something wrong.

So what? What the hell difference does it make? Drink up.

Sometimes the blank faces respond dramatically and unforgettably. A sudden fire lights up the eyes, the face grimaces in sheer horror, shattering the last highball glass with which reality is desperately clung to, and the blank faces becomes the faces of madmen.

Who gives a goddamn. Drink up. The night is young, and I know a cute little doll who will. She's smart, because she doesn't give a damn for anything. What you don't know sure as hell can't hurt you. Let somebody else do the worrying.

There is nobody else.

Drink up.

Somewhere in the night a kid is starving to death.

Drink up. Drink up.

Somewhere in the night a white hot piece of shrapnel sizzled into somebody's guts.

Drink up, damn you.

Somewhere in the night three teenagers smashed a new, glittering, 130 horsepower Cadillac into a pile of twisted, blood-spattered junk.

Drink up, drink up, drink up.

The blank faces cry out in the blackness and their voices are afraid and terrified. Drowning. Strangling in their own inhumanity.

Drink up.