Reflections of a Strangler

Seth Cable

Standing in the commons one evening, appreciating the night sky, I was approached from behind by an unknown person. As he sidled up next to me, I could see he was an elderly gentleman, wearing the uniform of a Stranger. Though, by his age, I assumed he must have been retired, probably for many years already.

I smiled and nodded to him, but he made no immediate reply. Instead, he surveyed the grounds a moment, breathed deeply, and spoke in a thin whine. "I guess you've probably heard about all the so-called 'atrocities' that happened here a while back, right? In this park here?"

"Uhmm, yeah. Sure. Of course."

"Of course, you have. Of course. There's a lot of stories about it; a lot of books written. At one point, there was a movie too. I saw it. But I also saw the real thing. Right from about where you're standing."

"Wait... what? How old...""People have tried painting it in lots of different colors, vibrant and heroic. But all I saw were sad piles standing in a circle. Folks talk all the time about the terror, what terror there must have been, especially in the youngest. But, I didn't see that terror. Hand to God, they all just looked... well... they all just sort of looked bored to me."

We had so many pleasant summer evenings like this, that whole year when the world broke open. From April to July, every day was cool and crisp, like late September. We knew that the aquifers were drying up, but as long as some water was trickling, it was downright idyllic.