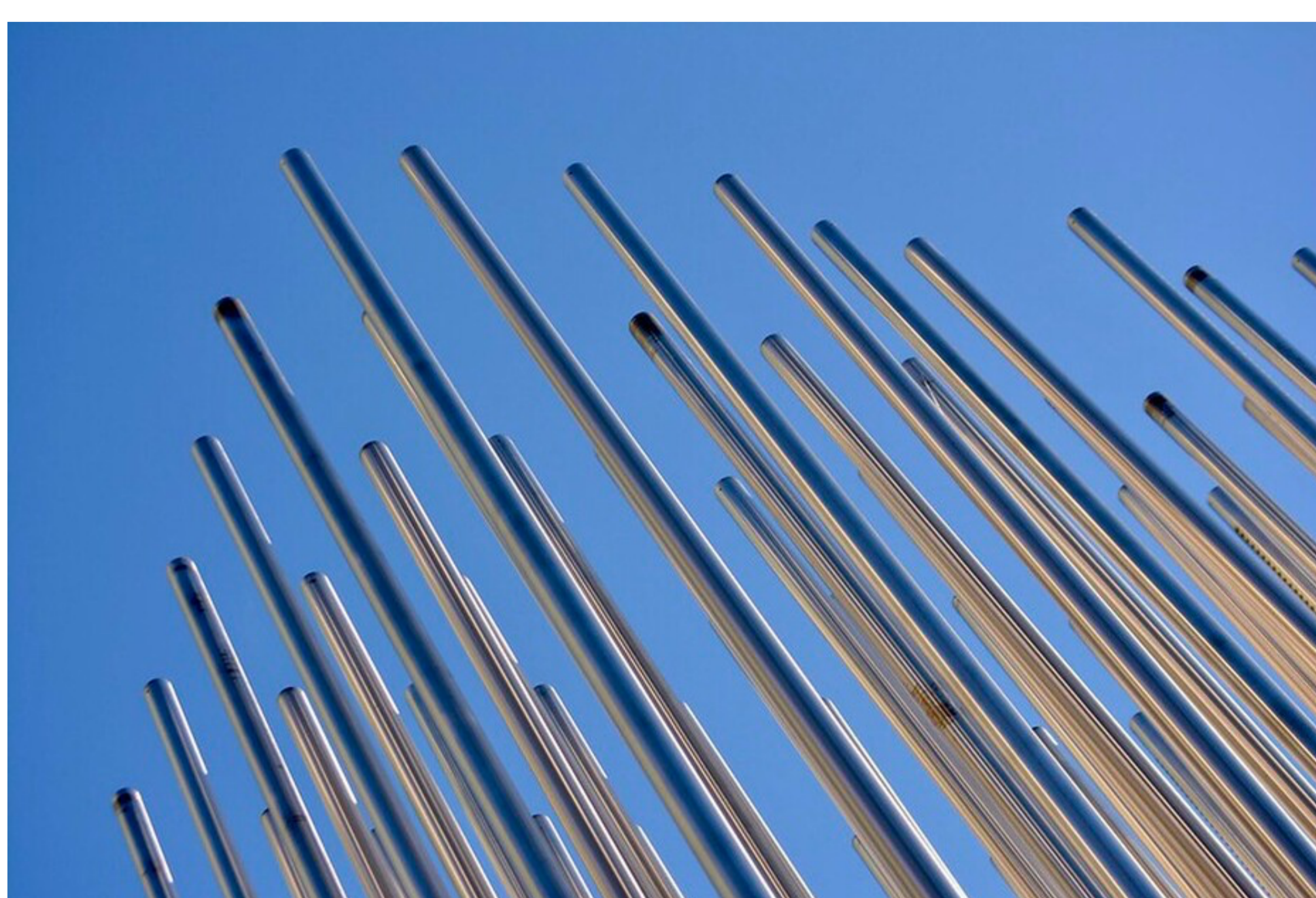


# SHORT FICTION

1/9/2021 0 COMMENTS

## SEEK WISDOM TOMBLOCK



J.T. lays on his back Marlon Brando in *Apocalypse Now*.

He is up the long African river into Burundi.

His tail turns into a series of jungle vines. Macaque monkeys call and chatter. Huge sweat beads roll down his bald head, onto his massive, bronzed stomach, then drop to the ground, turn to roaches and skitter away in all directions.

When I was young he says. He sighs.

I sit cross legged next to him on a reed mat made by a local villager from Mmuock Leteh in Cameroon. The reeds scratch at my naked leg. I wear only paint-spattered, cut off Levi jeans I have had since youth. They do not fit and are unbuttoned at the waist to allow me to breathe. I sweat in large drops which roll down me and drop onto the mat, where they collect into a small rivulet and stream toward the ocean which laps at the beach next to us.

Yes I say.

J.T. appears to be asleep. His chest rises and falls in a quiet cadence. My eyes droop. The sound of a single propeller plane slices through the silence. I want to leap up and wave my arms and scream for help. I waited on Eric Sevareid says J.T.

The reptilian forked tongue flicks out of J.T.'s mouth. It laps at the moisture rolling down his chest. The forked tongue grows longer. It dips into the small rivulets rolling off of me and across the reed mat and toward the sea. It sucks greedily. It clears my mat of all moisture. It walks across the sand toward the nearby sea. It dips itself into the ocean. The ocean begins to lower, moving further away from shore.

It was in a French *brasserie* in Marblatown. Broken glass scattered on the floor instead of rugs. Service arrived only for those who entered in bare feet. We kept an ambulance onsite for broken dreams. This was also before the descent into the labyrinthine when L'enfant Terrible still ruled the city. We all believed in our hearts that everything would be OK. Eric Sevareid walked with a cane.

J.T. heaves a huge sigh rumbling the hills and sending the roaches like lemmings into the sea to drown. They file in a straight line with their heads down and their little legs tied behind their backs except the two most forward and two most rear which manage to move them toward the water.

It was midnight on halloween. Eric Sevareid came in dressed as an old man. He had a beak where his cane used to be. He ordered an omelette with *fines herbs* and no french fries and a side salad with the house dressing. Mustard Vinaigrette.

J.T. heaves another shuddering sigh. I lift off the mat and float back down onto it.

The air is dry as a desert. J.T. has sweated himself out. His skin is sandpaper. His eyes are rivulets of red blood vessels. His arms crack and his chest heaves slower and slower.

\*

The President hears that J.T. is near Mmuock Leteh in Cameroon. He rushes to his side.

J.T. lays on his back next to the reed mat. I vacate the mat when His Excellency arrives. I stand next to the thatch pilings rotting beside the door. I assume an attitude of prayer.

J.T. says the President.

J.T. sweats louder. More drops roll down his corpulent corpus, turn into roaches and scurry away. J.T. sighs. Eat twenty six of them he says they have protein but not as much as crickets still I think we can monetize this if it is packaged correctly.

The President eats 26 roaches. He smacks his lips loudly. He says nummm nummmm. Now he says J.T. that was delicious. I thank you. The President has a southern accent wrapped in a falsetto he learned once at the opera in Birmingham. But that's not why I came. I know says J.T.

I came to pay homage says the President humbly while twirling his Toyo straw hat in his hands. I know says J.T. May I says the President repositioning himself onto his knees and preparing to prostrate himself in an attitude of Muslim prayer.

My frambulator in the genuflexicon is broken J.T. lies. It is going to have to wait.

But J.T. the President says sweat popping out on his face like acne. J.T. I can't wait. I have to get back to giving the people the business. J.T. laughs so hard that tears roll off his eyes and turn into scorpions. They begin to bite the President. The President grimaces but dares not indicate displeasure or pain.

J.T. wipes his eyes. His tissue turns to gold. He holds it out toward the President. Oh thank you says the President making to take the golden tissue. J.T. takes the tissue back and wipes his behind-side with it. It emerges vile, brown and wet. He holds it out toward the President again. No thank you says the President.

Exactly responds J.T.

\*

Even the void and nihilism felt by modern man is a symbol, a symbol of the transcendent aspect of God who, after bestowing all qualities, also takes all qualities back into Himself.\*

\* Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man* (Chicago, IL, ABC International Group, 1997), p. 131

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