

Manager

The pinwheel spun. The folds of coloured paper were tattered. It had been left in James' garden for the past week. The festival had been going for three days. He had watched many processions, all with different interests. One procession consisted of people dressed to look like animated animals. He couldn't tell what they wanted. As a grey squirrel walked past playing the trombone, he heard a woman whisper to her friend: 'They want to have sex with animals'. When the festival was first suggested there were protests. People on the street wearing t-shirts, holding signs. James saw them walking around in circles below his apartment window. He saw them on television, shouting and marching in different cities around the country. Police rode in, scattered amongst crowds and rode out.

James watched as a Grande Armée revival group walked past. They all wore large black hats. Sheathed sabres bounced against their thighs. He thought his pinwheel suited the group. They could all be in 19th Century France, him standing in mud in the rain while a strong wind spun his pinwheel – the army marching past, one of the soldiers doffing his hat to James. Was that his manager? James recognised Matthew's pink face and flushed cheeks. Matthew was wearing pantaloons and marching briskly in time with a sabre at his side. Usually Matthew would walk into James' office to correct him. He would read James' notes then give them back covered with annotations as to how each note could be improved. Matthew was very serious. He often spoke with a serious expression. When he smiled it looked like he had read about it in a book, or practised in the mirror for the first few weeks of January. James remembered how once, he had seen Matthew playing pinball at a bowling alley in the outer suburbs. James had been on a

date with his ex-girlfriend Susan. He avoided Matthew and watched him from where he and Susan were bowling. Matthew was wearing navy tracksuit pants and a grey hoodie. He was engrossed in the pinball game and James was startled and repulsed by the rough way in which he bumped the machine. With each thrust the machine seemed to jump into the air. After about an hour of aggressive thrusting Matthew left. Susan had become bored with bowling and on their way out James walked over to the pinball machine. It was called Napoleonic Wars and had a large blinking graphic of Napoleon reaching toward the player holding a silver pinball in his outstretched hand. The high scores flashed over the screen: M, M, M, M, M.

The Grande Armée passed. Sabres rattling, backs straight. The next group were re-enacting or marching in remembrance of holy wars. They held large cardboard crucifixes and were yelling. The tattered pinwheel's spinning felt out of place. James walked away from the barrier and the crowds. There were more to come. Long trails of protestors and enthusiasts waiting for their turn to pass everyone. James wondered if Matthew wore his uniform at home. Did he ever play Napoleonic Wars in full uniform, saluting the machine? Thrusting the shining silver pinball through Waterloo, through Paris. Through flashing armies of people. High score after high score. A tilt and another start. James threw the pinwheel onto the ground as a dancer with bright green dreadlocks yelled, 'Have faith'.

