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Attention All Students

The bugle trumpeting war is not the lunch bell.

The beast sharpening his hooves in the science wing is the new mascot.

Anxiety is not an excuse for truancy.

The test about democracy has been postponed.

If you witness the enemy in the swimming pool, inform your assistant principal at once.

This week field trips to the fallout shelters have been canceled.

Do not disturb the history teachers dying on the football field; their fear is contagious.

All wills without a name will be marked incomplete.

The Armageddon drill will begin shortly.



The Chamber

After he turns off the stars, the dictator curls up in bed like a comma and dreams in prehistoric paintings.

They are the best he can do.

By day, in his palace, he sketches work camps in charcoal, captures the stick figures perfectly, his advisors say.

It's all in the steady hand, he replies.

But now, in bed, the crude image of his own fist follows him along cave walls. Under his soft sheets, the dictator kicks like a sleeping bloodhound on the chase.



Classified

A secret list of enemies exists, journalists report.

No one can obtain the list of enemies, journalists report.

The phones are being tapped, journalists report.

Some journalists disappear, no one reports.

The diet secrets of the new beautiful heiress are revealed,
journalists report.

The telephone poles tell secrets to one another.



The Blasphemer

Tied to a wooden pole in the town square, he wears a blindfold made of transparent silk.

He sees but he doesn't understand.

He remembers unwrapping as a child the heavy, black telescope his parents bought him. Had he looked through it and witnessed the firing squad, he knows he would have put it down.

The soldiers lift their guns.

He has decided to do this eyes-open. He screws his feet tightly into the ground. He focuses on the church with its stone back turned toward him.

The soldiers call Ready.

His shadow hides behind him, or maybe the sun moved it.

The spire interrupts the air.



The Dictator Takes to His Telescope

The stars once looked like small explosions. Maybe they were explosions. How do stars work? He was told once but has forgotten.

He seems to remember explosions.

After he declared war, the stars in his nation disappeared.

A scroll of small homes unwinds along a distant hill. He pretends their lit windows are stars.

His most beloved citizens sleep with light.