

1965

Forsaken

R. Nicholson
St. John Fisher College

[How has open access to Fisher Digital Publications benefited you?](#)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle>

 Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Nicholson, R. (1965) "Forsaken," *The Angle*: Vol. 1965: Iss. 2, Article 15.
Available at: <http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1965/iss2/15>

This document is posted at <http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1965/iss2/15> and is brought to you for free and open access by Fisher Digital Publications at St. John Fisher College. For more information, please contact fisherpub@sjfc.edu.

Forsaken

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"The torrent of the rain had fallen in wind-whipped sheets, each swollen droplet crashing on the street like so many shattering crystals; and now, in the late afternoon, the flushed city streets began to steam as a cooling breeze followed in the wake of the summer squall. Above the indistinct bustle characteristic of the town could be heard the dull rumble of a gasoline-laden truck approaching a busy and congested intersection. No one, however, seemed to notice."

Cover Page Footnote

Appeared in the issue: Volume 10, Number 2, Spring 1965.

Forsaken

By R. NICHOLSON

The torrent of the rain had fallen in wind-whipped sheets, each swollen droplet crashing on the street like so many shattering crystals; and now, in the late afternoon, the flushed city streets began to steam as a cooling breeze followed in the wake of the summer squall. Above the indistinct bustle characteristic of the town could be heard the dull rumble of a gasoline-laden truck approaching a busy and congested intersection. No one, however, seemed to notice.

Crouched low in the reeking cab sat a small, owlish man, his wisp of light brown hair dishevelled and his drawn face frowning behind horn-rimmed glasses. He stared gloomily at the deep black asphalt ahead, mesmerized by the insistent sizzle of heavy high-pressure tires on the wet pavement. The heat had lifted in hidden waves, and now the slight, spring-scented breeze, sweeping through the streets, chased away lingering clouds.

The intersection light suddenly flicked amber, and while he jammed the accelerator to the floor he wrenched the wheel to the right, screeching around the corner just in time, tires smoking. He gazed dully at the road ahead and, seeing it clear, began to relax.

Yet slowly, as if guided by a giant invisible hand, irresistibly, the dead-weight tanker behind him, which had been so obedient on the earlier part of the run, began to skid beyond the curve, beyond its accepted bounds, into the next lane of cars. It swung as the tide goes out—ponderously, heedlessly, but always overwhelmingly—drawn by a hidden magnetic force.

Recovering from his shock, the driver instinctively knew what would happen, and as a sudden flood of perspiration came to his forehead, he threw himself on the cab floor.

With a dull crunch metal clashed with metal, chrome co-existed with chrome, windshields dispersed, and an outcry of gasoline was seen over an oppressed black coupe. It flooded over and into the cab in a drowning wave, seeped into the upholstery, and overwhelmed the shaken young man inside.

A curious wide-eyed crowd quickly gathered. Dazed and bewildered, the young man could but gaze speechlessly at the crowd. His brain, fogged with shock, could neither comprehend what had happened nor sense

any pain. His left leg was crushed-splintered from the knee down; the impact of the clash had ripped the muscles in his shoulders, rendering his arms limp and helpless, and the seeping acrid fumes burned his nostrils and seared his eyes.

The muttering faceless crowd had already grown to a murmuring mob, encircling the devastated coupe with a human ring of passive spectators. Slowly, but so very surely, the white heat of pain from his pulverized left leg increased, and consciousness began its slow march to the young man's mind, bringing agony and torture as its companions.

He could see now the ever-thickening mob, and he wondered why they stood there, talking, motioning. They could plainly see him and observe his plight, but yet they remained apathetic to his silent plea for deliverance. A shot of pain from his arms stunned him momentarily. Here I am! he thought. I guess they're waiting for an ambulance. What ambulance? Of course they sent for an ambulance! Who? Who sent for an ambulance? He raised his stricken limb to gesture to them, to catch their attention, but the sickening pain brought cascades of salt-water to his eyes, and he was engulfed in a torrent of agony. Very slowly, as he sensed the nature of his predicament a wave of awareness rolled in on him. The image of the crowd faded from his mind; it seemed to be miles distant. He realized in the same instant that he was alone, that he was approaching his sole inevitable fate, that he was helpless. Despair rode astride the wave of awareness.

The gasoline was still pouring forth from the mountainous gray tanker, and as the surging tide flooded the hood of the coupe, small sinister streams stealthily crept closer to the twisted hole above the red-hot engine head.

With a flash the smaller vehicle was devoured in an envelope of flame.

By now his head was reeling with pain, his mind thickened and drugged with shock and his vision distorted. The car was a stifling oppressive furnace, the flares of heat rising and stabbing throughout, burning away his hair and eyebrows. Instinctively the crowd turned and protected itself from this pyre, but he could not turn, could not protect his face, could but sit and nourish the starving holocaust.

His eyes wandered through the pall of flame to the crowd beyond, but he could not, through the smoke, discern distinct figures, and the misty wall again encased the car. He thought of nothing, of everything; he saw amid the dancing vapors of heat a cool, brisk, soothing pond, shimmering with glints from the golden sun, and he was staring at his wavering blurred reflection when he felt the pressure, the ponderous, pulsating pounding in the ears. He felt for the first time the overwhelming suffocation, the roaring boil of this blazing cauldron, the scalding pant of these

all-encompassing fires. He was nauseated by the musty stench of . . . He shuddered—his foot was afire.

The savage blast was relentless, and he felt he was enclosed in a fiery brazier, a reeking morbid tomb, darkened by the oil-black clouds of smoke which suggested to him horrible menacing arms grasping for him, soon to clutch him and drag him down to the depths of the baleful amber hue. Ghosts of memories shot through his aching brain like pale wisps of drifting smoke. He crashed down, sinking into the inferno, torrid, seething.

The flame crawled up his leg like a cancer, throwing unsparing torment to his brain, eating away, always the throbbing torture of pain! He writhed like a gaffed captured shark, turning, twisting, adding with his convulsions more racking pain.

As he threw back his head in a wild, uncontrolled seizure, the thirsty tongues licked at his chest, pouring heavy billows of black to his blistered countenance. An enraged demon—some crazed ogre—clung to his shoulders, dug its powerful talons into his soft body, and ripped him apart, thrashing and flogging him with a red-hot lash. He twisted about the furnace like a wounded snake, alternately moaning and screaming, gesticulating with a nodding torchlike head.

He succumbed with a shrill piercing shriek, anguish personified, conflagration consummate.

Like an infant tiring of a new toy, the disenchanted crowd turned, grasped and stumbled, split into individuals, and trngded to its haven. Soon, like a flock of vultures, the fervent band of photographers would descend on the scene to record for all time the grotesquely crumpled and half-cremated human at final rest in the middle of Main Street.

. . .like the rat in dark horde
with its ugly grin
lifts its green eyes glaring in their hollows
bares its pale fangs
to some light
flashed by its hole

D. CALLAHAN