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#35

by stanley lieber

The boy on the skateboard had attracted attention not because skateboarding was inherently interesting, but because he had wandered into a restricted area. The operator decreed that his progress should be monitored indefinitely, even after he left the restricted area. Daisuke worked out the details and the surveillance was commenced.

This kind of thing was becoming more common. The operator would fixate on some random civilian whose activities obviously contained no intelligence value. But the record would be created. After all, orders were orders. From time to time Daisuke would catch a glimpse of the bigger picture, and, wouldn't you know it, it was all there. He guessed that the operator really did know what he was doing. Summaries were the purview of a totally different department, so each time he caught a glimpse Daisuke would shrug and shortly forget all about it.

He thought back over the last few years and tried to remember how long he had been working in the office. It was no use. He gave up.

The collapse of his conception of history had been gradual, and he hadn't noticed it happening at the time. The shape of his thoughts now flattened into a schematic view of a singularly focused event: present time, present day. He checked all his connections and everything seemed to be in order, but there was no orderly progression from A to B, no sequential coherence he could discern in the arrangement of constituent parts, only a continuous, everlasting moment that always seemed to be happening at the precise instant he attempted to observe it. He felt dumb. Was this heaven?

Moments later he was distracted by a comment from the operator. He was obliged to laugh.