

MAUDE MOLD

#17

by Stanley Lieber

TIME AND TITLE

tags: 1964, jerrymander_mold, mars2, tab1

31 October.

Uprange.

"This job is haunted. Resonating in its time-studied particulars with the ghosts of a hundred thousand early retirees, voluntary and otherwise."

Jerrymander crouched with his elbows digging into his knees, chin propped up on the heels of his hands, as TAB1 scooped shovel loads of action figures into the open burn pit. He inhaled the black smoke, savoring the highly collectible outgassing of all their useless, previous efforts.

"Every time a wave of them get fired, we turn around and hire a brand new batch. It would make more sense to hold onto the ones we've already prised from the sands."

Jerrymander inhaled deeply, internalizing the irony.

"Some of them are moving to the new facility," TAB1 said, heaving another shovel full onto the fire. "But most of these are peg warmers, anyway."

A gregarious black column of smoke twisting in the Martian wind was a regular feature of the scenery for employees long jaded by reportable environmental offenses, but this one seemed to be attracting local children.

Wearing... costumes?

"Halloween," TAB1 said, leapfrogging Jerrymander's stillborn query.

TAB1 shoveled a single figure into each outstretched Halloween bag as the children filed by. Silent, in compliance with his filecard description, but not altogether unfriendly.

Jerrymander reached into his back pocket for the contract book.