

The Dissident

It started when he was mysteriously not invited to the school reunion when invites were dropping into people's inboxes like verbal diarrhoea and nothing came into his.

The trickle of invites to social gatherings slowly dried up with his political observations no longer seeming to have any punch or favour.

His arm of the splinter group seemed to wither away, and the funding for his course dried up overnight. Government cuts you understand, nothing personal.

His tenure wasn't extended and suddenly his wife announced she was leaving him for another man. She'd always been loyal but had told him not to rock the boat just lecture and be happy to take home a good salary.

They were childless. She didn't want much but when a Professor of IVF in Germany met her at a party and doggedly pursued her with the possibility of opening the sluice gates to motherhood she couldn't resist. That was her Achilles Heel.

The social networking sites that had been his boon now became the quintessential albatross around his neck, dragging him down like a weighed down convict. Many followers unsubscribed to this Twitter account, guilty by association, so in the end it was an embarrassment being on there - he had to dismantle it.

There he was suspended in the universe like something out of Arthur C Clarke's 2001's Space Odyssey exerting a silent scream reminiscent of Edward Munch. There was he a University Professor without a university, a free thinker with the overhead power-lines cut.

Then the descent into paranoia in the book-lined study with all the ideologies taunting him from the book shelves.

The final indignity was being carted off in an ambulance after a dispute with his next door neighbour.

No-one believed his claim that the neighbour was part of a conspiracy to discredit him further by searching through the rubbish for incriminating evidence and then circulating it to his enemies.

The police took him ranting and raving to the hospital and then he was administered the chemical cosh that skewered his mind and calmed the agitations.

The years went by and then he was a lonely old man wittering to himself in the park with all the other down and outs disenfranchised through poverty-stricken backgrounds, abuse, the being round pegs in square holes and being worked on by the rest of society.

He was the dissident in the day surrounded with rusty tyres, old tin cans. Subversive graffiti under the flyover was his only means of communication with the outside world.

Nobody wants to know you when you're down and out.

Myra Litton