



“Where do they all come from?” Reordon asked.

“Everywhere,” said Carmack.

They were standing on the coast highway. As far as they could see there was nothing but cars. Thousands of cars were jammed bumper to bumper and pressed side to side. The highway was solid with them.

“There come some more,” said Carmack.

The two policemen looked at the crowd of people walking toward the beach. Many of them talked and laughed. Some of them were very quiet and serious. But they all walked toward the beach.

Reordon shook his head. “I don’t get it,” he said for the hundredth time that week. “I just don’t get it.”

Carmack shrugged.

“Don’t think about it,” he said. “It’s happening. What else is there?”

“But it’s crazy.”

“Well, there they go.” said Carmack.

As the two policemen watched, the crowd of people moved across the gray sands of the beach and walked into the water. Some of them started swimming. Most of them couldn’t because of their clothes. Carmack saw a young woman flailing at the water and dragged down by the fur coat she was wearing.

In several minutes they were all gone. The two policemen stared at the place where the people had walked into the water.

“How long does it go on?” Reordon asked.

"Until they're gone, I guess," said Carmack.

"But why?"

"You ever read about the Lemmings?" Carmack asked.

"No."

"They're rodents who live in the Scandinavian countries. They keep breeding until all their food supply is gone. Then they move across the country, ravaging everything in their way. When they reach the sea they keep going. They swim until their strength is gone. Millions of them."

"You think that's what this is?" asked Reordon.

"Maybe," said Carmack.

"People aren't rodents!" Reordon said angrily.

Carmack didn't answer.

They stood on the edge of the highway waiting but nobody appeared.

"Where are they?" asked Reordon.

"Maybe they've all gone in," Carmack said.

"All of them?"

"It's been going on for more than a week," Carmack said. "People could have gotten here from all over. Then there are the lakes."

Reordon shuddered. "All of them," he said.

"I don't know," said Carmack, "but they've been coming right along until now."

"Oh, God," said Reordon.

Carmack took out a cigarette and lit it. "Well," he said, "what now?"

Reordon sighed. "Us?" he said.

"You go," Carmack said. "I'll wait a while and see if there's anyone else."

"All right." Reordon put his hand out. "Good-by, Carmack," he said.

They shook hands. "Good-by, Reordon," Carmack said.

He stood smoking his cigarette and watching his friend walk across the gray sand of the beach and into the water until it was over his head. He saw Reordon swim a few dozen yards before he disappeared.

After a while he put out his cigarette and looked around. Then we walked into the water too.

A million cars stood empty along the beach.

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“Ma di dulà vegnino?” al domandà Reordon.

“Di ogni bande” i disè Carmack.

A jerin su la autostrade a ôr dal mâr, e, par ogni bande dulà che a cjalassin, si viodevin dome machinis. Milante machinis tacadis parefang cuintri parefang, puarte cuintri puarte. Ogni centimetri de autostrade a ‘nd jere cuviert.

“Ve là altris” al disè Carmack.

I doi pulizais a cjalavin la sdrume di int che e traversave la splaze. Reordon al scjassà il cjâf.

“No capis” al fasè pe centesime volte in chê setemane. “Propit no rivi a capî.”

Carmack al alçà lis spalìs.

“No sta filâi parsore. Al capite e vonde. Ce impuartial?”

“Ma a son robis di mats.”

“Cjale, veju che a van.”

I doi agjents a viodevin la int che e bandonave la splaze grise e e scomençave a cjaminâ in aghe. Cualchidun al cirive di nadâ, ma la plui part no rivà a cause dai vistîts. Carmack al viodè une zovine femine colâ tra lis ondis e sparî a plomp, strissinade dal pês de pelice.

In pôcs minûts a jerin lâts ducj. I puliziots a cjalarin il pont de splaze dulà che la int e jere lade dentri.

“Ma trop aial di durâ?” al domandà Reordon.

“Fin cuant che no son lâts dentri ducj, o crôt” al rispuidè Carmack.

“Ma parcè?”

“No âstu mai sintût fevelâ di lemming?” i disè Carmack.

“No.”

“A son des sortis di pantianutis che a vivin in Scandinavie. A continuin a multiplicâsi fin cuant che a cjatin di ce mangjâ e alore a emigrin tal teritori fiscant dut ce che a cjatin. No si fermin nancje devant dal mâr ma a continuin a lâ. A nadin fin cuant che a àn la fuerce e dopo si innein. A son milions.”

“E crodistu che al stedi capitant cussì?” i fasè Reordon.

“Al po jessi.”

“Ma i oms no son lemming!” inte vòs di Reordon e jere une ponte di rabie. Carmack nol replicà.

A restarin a spietâ sul cei de autostrade ma nol rivà plui nissun.

“Dulà ise la int?” al domandà Reordon.

“Mah... forse chei a jerin i ultins” al constatà Carmack.

“I... ultins?”

“Cheste storie e va indevant di plui di une setemane” al disè Carmack. “La int e je rivade di ogni lûc e no sta dismenteâti che a son ancje i lâts.”

A Reordon i vignirin i sgrisui. “Ducj inneâts” al disè.

“No soi sigûr” i fasè Carmack “però fin cumò a rivavin di continuo.”

“Oh Diu” al disè Reordon.

Carmack si impià un spagnolet. “Bon” al disè. “Ce fasìno cumò?”

Reordon al sospirà. “Tocjal a nô?”

“Va prime tu” lu conseà Carmack. “Jo o spieti un pôc par viodi se al rive cualchidun altri.”

“Va ben.” Reordon i tindè la man. “Adiu, Carmack.”

“Adiu, Reordon.”

Carmack al continuà a fumâ e al viodè l'amì traversâ la splaze grise, po jentrâ tal mâr e lâ indevant fin cuant che la aghe i rivà parsore dal cjâf. Reordon al nadà par une desine di metris prime di sparî.

Dopo un pôc Carmack al distudà la cjiche e si cjalà ator, cuindi ancje lui si indreçà bande dal mâr.

Un milion di machinis vueidis a stavin fermis su la splaze.

***Conte dal 1957
dal scritôr merican Richard Matheson
voltade par furlan di Checo Tam***