

## **Revenant**

In the dream, fitful sunlight dapples the overgrown forest path with intricate designs, the lush verdure of the Pennsylvania summer engendering fanciful arabesques of nature's art. Normally attuned with and delighted by God's natural wonders, on this day Professor Roderick Blake perceives the cosmic shadow play as a weave of despair. He knows his circumstances and mood color his perception and subconscious dream mind, and that sunshine and butterflies, for him, bespeak of little more than the transient condition of life.

Now the sun flees behind a sullen cloud wrack, and the trail assumes a dark and looming aspect more appropriately suited to Blake's mien. "What will I do now," he thinks--the eternal question, one that is invariably answered, but in such a way humankind's illusion of control is utterly dispelled.

Blake does not see the path at his feet, and his thoughts coalesce around nothing tangible--there is only a cognitive gloom no less copious than the lowering clouds of what must be an approaching thunderstorm. The first rumble mutters at him, a message from above he interprets in his bitterness as a malign threat--not at all typical of this normally devout man.

Now Blake's dream mind conjures an image of the little placard on the wall next to the water cooler in the faculty

lounge: "Life is Beautiful" it proclaims, the trite homily placed there by the affable but hopelessly naïve psychology department secretary.

Life is beautiful. Blake has his doubts--knows better. Oh yes, he's glimpsed the beauty--held it in his arms, seen it in the blissfully ignorant and wondering eyes of his infant child. But if he were forced to make a generalization, it would be far less sanguine. Some people spray bullets in crowded theaters; societal elites sell their souls for power and fleeting wealth; beautiful young wives die in the mangled wreckage of automobiles; fathers are left behind to raise babes not long out of diapers. No, not beautiful, and Blake knows that unadulterated truth, the destroyer of souls--mercifully veiled for most--has jolted him from what had been a comparative stupor.