

CIRCA

A NOVEL

ADAM GREENFIELD



Circa by Adam Greenfield

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An excerpt from

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pages 74-76: “Uprising”

Truman pushed the door open to an empty apartment, and together, he and Alberto unveiled their grand scheme. Their plan was simple: priced out of home ownership in Los Angeles, Alberto and Truman had rented apartments adjacent to one another. They let no one know that they were friends and were both planning on moving in over the next couple of weeks. As time wore on, they would begin to publically not get along, and the basis of their disagreements would all be centered around the fact that Alberto was Hispanic and Truman was white. They would keep up the racial turmoil, increasing it ever so slightly as time wore on until they had established that there was a clear and undeniable racial problem in their building and hopefully, if the plan worked, in their immediate neighborhood. The neighborhood's resulting bad reputation would drive down property value to the point where Alberto and Truman could scoop up the places at a steal and, after mending fences, sell at an enormous profit.

"The opposite of gentrification. We're going to facilitate decay for the betterment of others," Truman said.

"What others?" Henry asked incredulously.

Truman pointed at Alberto as Alberto pointed back at Truman.

"You guys are insane. This is really," Henry searched for the word to express his disbelief, "wrong."

"Wrong?" Alberto snapped back. "What's wrong is that we haven't done this until now. This is the thing that we deserve.

It's about time that me and Truman were rewarded for our interracial friendship. It's not every day you see a Latino and a Gringo get along so well. Society owes us something for that, doesn't it?"

"Gringo," Truman nodded. "I like that. Let's make sure we use it in one of the opening salvos. It'll be a great precursor to me lighting a piñata on fire on your doorstep."

Alberto nodded his head. "The escalation needs to be gradual. You're absolutely right."

"You guys are nuts. I mean, this is seriously deranged. Someone's going to get hurt." Henry was trying to assimilate all of this information.

"Post-postmodernism, dude. Welcome to the real world," Truman said matter-of-factly. "If you can't beat 'em, give 'em what they want. Besides," he went on, "crazy ideas are completely overrated in my opinion. Surviving a lifetime of overrated experiences is what makes us American in the first place. I'm a fucking patriot."

The idea, as shocking as it first was to Henry, seemed to make more and more sense as Truman and Alberto confidently defended it. Perhaps they were right, perhaps this was the way to get ahead. Maybe their version of what war meant to Henry was right here, doing this crazy scheme together, faking out everyone else with their apocalyptic inside joke. And besides, as Henry had begun to understand only recently, their friendship was based on need more than anything else, a dismal condition that depended on their mutual abhorrence of one another's success above all other things. One could not fail without the other. Their friendship was a life raft made for three with two people occupying it pushing out other potential survivors.

"Okay. Fine," Henry didn't want to argue with them. It was

exhausting. He was feeling fried and he wanted to go home. “What was it you wanted to ask me?”

“We just wanted to know what you thought,” Alberto said, “but I guess we know now.” He thought for a moment and then went on. “Do you know what friendship is, Henry? I’m talking about real friendship?”

Henry just wanted to go home. He could feel his heart pounding in his chest, every inch of skin his sore spot, his blood like a voice, reminding him about things he didn’t want to think about. He didn’t feel anything like malice toward Truman and Alberto. He was just tired and didn’t want to have to think anymore about why nothing was easy, why nothing could be straightforward. Any way you sliced it, there were meanings and motives inside everything. Nuance was the nucleus of all action and if war for Henry was the orientation point for life, then who was he to judge a little social upheaval for the sake of profit. After all, it felt American enough.

Truman stepped up and slapped an arm over Alberto’s shoulder as Alberto replied, “I’ll tell you what it is.” Henry braced himself for the onslaught. “It’s having a person you can go to when you’ve done something terrible. Something really terrible.”

Truman nodded and then interrupted.

“Like fucking an animal terrible,” he said gravely.

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About the Author

Adam Greenfield's short fiction has appeared in many literary magazines including *MungBeing*, *Outsider Ink*, and *Prole*. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife and two children. *Circa* is his first novel.

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