The Quiet Way

Short stories of non-violent revolution

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Contents

I tried to flesh out the story and I can't see how to make a nonviolent community make sense without a God of justice. There are wrongs that can be committed that rupture relationships in ways that can't be repaired without the cross. Detachment from this world only makes sense if there's a life after. Generosity only makes sense if God provides in abundance. I was trying to build a story about Jedi (or whatever) that don't use and glorify violence, who submit and serve rather than rebel, without discussing religion. But I don't see how that's sensible. We glorify vigilantes and rebels against evil empires because we don't believe God. Mangione is a hero because Jesus was naive.

Story Title: The Quiet Way

Genre: Eco-Science Fiction / Steampunk Dystopia **Style/Tone**: Literary, philosophical, morally complex (inspired by Margaret Atwood & Ursula K. Le Guin). Almost a collection of connected short stories rather than explicitly a novel. Avoid gender roles and gendered language – not to make a point but to sidestep the controversy – not an interesting question.

Setting: One of several nations on a fictional planet. Steampunk tech. All of the nations are authoritarian oligarchies even though some nominally present themselves as egalitarian or meritocratic or democratic. Materialist, consumerist economies driven by assumed scarcity.

Plot lines: There is a growing rebellion against the ruling regime. The rebellion is currently underground though there have been some protests and violence. The rebels are divided into 2 factions. The first is

a conservative / traditionalist / religious faction seeking a return to "traditional values" (which are not critically examined by members of that faction) under the belief that doing so will restore an imagined golden age from an earlier historical period, even though such a golden age was not as traditional or as golden as imagined. The other rebel faction is progressive / secular / technocratic / humanist seeking to build an egalitarian techno utopia. The factions share an uneasy alliance in the fight against the ruling regime. Some of the rebels see violence as a necessary evil, but many glorify violence in pursuit of a revolution – to die fighting for a good cause, to take as many of the enemy with you to death as you can, to fight now so that your children may have peace. The theme word for the rebels is "resist". Both rebel factions are reflected in other nations on the planet which reveal the future trajectories of both factions – both ultimately lead to authoritarian regimes built on violence. Because how you play is what you win. The rebel factions are central to the beginning plotline because they function as literary foils – arguments to argue against.

The aim of the story is to construct an argument against violent rebellion (and its glorification of violence, heros who win by conquering). So at the same time there is a community within the nation that has local organization and structure, but no central leadership. The community defines itself in part by its rejection of the underlying assumptions of materialism and consumerism – it accepts that technology can be helpful but does not solve our problems because our problems are always in ourselves. Because it rejects the underlying assumptions of the regime, the community is violently oppressed by the ruling authorities and according to the regime's propaganda is part of or maybe even the source of the rebels. However, the community is non-violent at its core, though sometimes younger initiates in the community lash out in violent anger against the oppression of the regime. The community only invites, never forces membership. The community teaches personal disciplines that feed individual growth, psychological health, maturity, wisdom. The community encourages living a quiet life, minding your own business, working with your hands to provide for your family, living at peace with all people, unity in the essential things and permissible diversity in the non-essential things. The community's theme is "submit and serve". The community serves the poor and oppressed. The mature in the community respond to violent attacks by accepting their own death – "serve by dying" – "a person is more than their body". The community honors most those who most serve.

Themes: How you play is what you win – if you use violence to fight your oppressors, when you win you yourself become a violent oppressor. Authoritarianism is self-defeating – a house divided against itself cannot stand – authoritarianism is always built on violence, fear, competition for resources, and those diseases breed division.

Core Themes:

- *"How you play is what you win"*: Violent rebellion begets violent regimes.
- *Authoritarianism's self-destructive tendencies*: Systems built on fear inevitably fracture.
- *The radical alternative*: A community that rejects materialism and violence, embodying "submit and serve."

Setting:

A resource-scarce planet dominated by competing authoritarian oligarchies, masked as democracies or meritocracies. Steampunk technology (clunky, inefficient, exploitative) powers industries while draining the environment.

Key Factions:

1. **The Regime**: A decaying oligarchy clinging to power through propaganda and brute force.
2. **The Rebels**: Theme word for both is "Resist"
   - *Traditionalists*: Nostalgic for a mythic "golden age," using religion/nationalism to justify violence.
   - *Technocrats*: Ruthlessly pragmatic, believing a "perfect" society requires purging dissent.
3. **The Community**: A persecuted, non-violent group that models an alternative way of living—serving others, rejecting consumerism, and embracing disciplined inner growth.
4. Lay people
   1. slave – wage slave class
   2. poor and foreigner
   3. merchant class – think themselves free but enslaved by market and consumption
   4. uber wealthy – enslaved by passions and fear of losing wealth / power

Protagonists & Their Arcs:

1. **Kael (Main POV)**: A traumatized ex-regime clerk joining the community. Struggles with the tension between action and passivity. *Arc*: From desperate anger to tempered wisdom.
2. **Sister Helin**: A serene community elder. *Arc*: Demonstrates unwavering commitment to non-violence, even in death.
3. **Commander Dain**: A regime enforcer. *Arc*: Discovers his loyalty destroys his own family.
4. **Reverend Vey**: Traditionalist rebel leader. *Arc*: His dogma blinds him to his faction's hypocrisy.
5. **Dr. Orienne**: Technocrat rebel scientist. *Arc*: Logic without ethics leads to atrocity.
6. **Talis**: Citizen of a traditionalist-ruled nation. *Arc*: Learns the past was never pure—too late.

7. **Nix**: Citizen of a technocrat-ruled nation. *Arc*: Yearns for beauty in a sterile world.

8. Need to add a subplot or two showing people who are not affiliated with a faction – the merchant just making a living, valuing consumption, sees it threatened and then reacts with fear and seeks a false safety in security tech and isolation. – The poor or sick or foreigner who is dependent upon others, plot ultimately highlights how even the wealthy are dependent upon others but the wealthy get to command while the poor beg, contrast the detachment from materialism that is easier for the poor than the rich. After a series of on the job injuries and children dying of preventable diseases with expensive treatments, an unskilled profession attempts to strike for improved pay and healthcare, but other wage slaves complain about the incovenience and the unfairness and so the govt shuts down the strike by threatening to fire / blacklist anyone who doesn't show up for work the next day.

Plot Framework:

- **Act 1**: Kael flees the regime, encounters rebels and the community. The rebels' factions unite uneasily against the regime.
- **Act 2**: The community is scapegoated; Kael wavers between rebellion and submission. The "nation" POVs reveal the rebels' doomed futures.
- **Act 3**: The regime falls; rebels turn on each other and the community. Kael chooses service over vengeance.

Subplot Prompts:

- **Kael & Sister Helin**: How does Helin's death reshape Kael's understanding of resistance?
- **Dain & His Son**: Can love survive indoctrination? (Hint: No.)
- **Vey vs. Orienne**: Their ideological clash destroys their alliance—how?
- **Talis's Discovery**: What does the hidden memoir reveal about the "golden age"?
- **Nix's Poetry**: How does art become a silent rebellion?

Key Questions to Explore:

- How does the community's *"submit and serve"* philosophy undermine the regime's logic?
- Every faction sees itself as the good guy, and has rational elements and redeemable qualities. No faction should be repulsive. The members of a faction see each other's individuality and internal division, but see other factions as faceless "other". Since the community spans factions it needs to see faces.
- How do the "nation" POVs foreshadow the rebels' futures?

- people can use tech to help people, or use tech to hurt people, or be used by tech and made less than people

- Changing the world is not your job, not a healthy / wise goal

- what lasts after death? Must have a spiritual realm or fall into nihilism

- What rationally frees from fear, provides hope, frees from slavery to consumption

Haunting lines:

- Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food but both will end in death. What will last?
- *"They promised us a revolution. They gave us a new cycle of tyrants."*
- *"When you dig a grave for your enemy, you are digging one for yourself."*
- *"Patience is rebellion. Hope is rebellion. Service is rebellion."*
- "If you what are is only what you have, you must grab hold of everything you can."
- what does it mean to win or lose. are you growing?

Closing Tone:

End with ambiguity—not hope, but a *question.* The community's way is fragile, but the alternatives are monstrous.