The Ideal Person

STEPHEN DUNN

When we returned to the shop after lunch, we were surprised to discover the ideal person totally assembled, looking similar to some of our earlier designs. Hands, a bowtie, paper clips, tear ducts – things with, things without – all put to use. Who did this? we collectively asked.

No one answered, except the ideal person himself: “I’m guaranteed,” he said, “I’ve been given…” His language trailed off, and other qualities he must have believed to be everlasting began to collapse around him.

“Let’s dismantle it, start over, locate what made it work in the first place,” I said. We all agreed it must be a parts problem -- maybe this time a real heart instead of a spigot, lips instead of a spit valve.

And so we proceeded to again look at everything we’d collected, try to select the best possible parts to build the best possible person.

Yet the mystery remained. How did the ideal person get built without us? The famous Screw Instead of Nail Theory, and Wilson’s Part B, Second Cause of all Things Theory, were offered as possibilities.

When Paulsen raised The God Theory everyone laughed. We were makers, after all, had studied at the best schools with the very best makers of our time. Besides, if there were such a thing as a God, all of us would be trembling, wouldn’t we? I felt a little something in my hand. The others already had resumed the vast undertaking.