

## My Escape

The sirens went off as the church bells rang. Clang, Clang, Clang; eleven times the bell rang, obstructed from sight by the low clouds that penetrated the night sky.

The siren, a low sound that made windows rattle and floors shake signified curfew, though a tad unnecessary as no one would brave the streets at this time of night. The patrol would come around soon, crawling through the empty streets like shadows of a beast looking for prey.

Throughout the city, door locks clicked shut and window shutters were pulled down. Lights would be doused and the people would embrace sleep like a long lost brother. Sleep was a commodity that was too precious to be wasted. People would hold onto their sleep like a child clutching its mother's hand, until the morning siren would sound, ripping their minds from dreamland.

The world ran like clockwork. The morning siren raised the world. At the same time, everyone would walk to their kitchen cabinet. At the same time, everyone would pull out the only contents of the cabinet, a black case. At the same time, everyone would set it on the kitchen table. Open the case. Pull out a small syringe, filled with a pale, purple liquid. Roll up the left sleeve. And everyone, at the same time, would plunge the needle filled with liquid energy into their arm.

Like ants in a line, everyone would leave their grey homes and enter the grey world. They would get in line and march to the grey station. There, they would board a grey train, which

would trudge them past a grey landscape. Everyone would stand, eyes forward, looking without seeing, making no noise.

The train had three stops. Most people would exit at the first. For twelve hours, everyone who got off at the first stop would carve soulless cubes from the stone skin of mother earth. They could carve whatever size they wanted, tiny cubes or massive behemoths, so long as they carved for 12 hours. Failure to do so would mean the end of their monthly supply of liquid energy. Failure to do so was a death sentence.

The train would continue, past the quarries and into the city. Giant stone structures loomed over everything, like celestial beings looking down upon men. Giant stone spires dwarfed all, including metal skyscrapers, remnants of an age long past.

A smaller group got off the train, refusing to make eye contact with the final passengers on the train. For those who remained on the train were the ones who would not be coming home that night. The third stop was into never-ending darkness.

Those who got off at the second stop would unload the train of all the cubes carved the previous day, and start to build. They would stack the cubes with no direction but up. For twelve hours, they would climb to the heavens, taking one step closer to a fabled lord. There was no safety. Everyone would take the third stop, in one way or another.

After twelve hours, the train would return, empty, to conclude the workday for all. All would board. All would return home. All would wait for the curfew siren. All would go to sleep. All but the patrol.

The patrol, exempt from work during the day, would rise in the evening, and run through the motions. Take the syringe, roll up the sleeves, and introduce a new round of energy into their bloodstream.

The patrol had one job. Shoot on sight.

Half the patrol would break off the main group and board the train. There were three stops. No one took the third.

And every night, I would get off at the second stop. I would exit the train and enter a black world once grey. I would pass the stone pillars, some hundreds of years old, some as new as the day, walking past the disapproving gods made by man. I would walk for hours, or minutes, until I enter a small clearing. Surrounded by a low wall, was a relic, a piece of forgotten history.

I would enter the skyscraper, climb the decrepit stairs, carry myself to the top. I would place my hand on the doorknob, give it a twist, feel the gears shift and unlatch the door from its frame. I'd push on the door and enter the room.

The room held a vast difference from the outside. Inside, there were colorful posters of men and women, posing in strange clothing. There were posters of shining vehicles, and dreams of a future that never was. Inside were bright neon lights, powered by an unknown source, lighting the room with a soft glow. I would sit in the middle of the room, crossed-legged, surrounded by the furniture, and think to myself "Tonight, I am not going back." I would think it over and over, and over again, convincing myself it would be better to sit there until the end of days.

But at the end of every night, I'd rise. I would exit my shrine, closing the door behind me, shutting it like a prison door. And every night, I'd think to myself

"Maybe tomorrow."