

Star of David

Kyle Rupert was in the cubicle next to David's, arguing with his wife. He would start off talking in a sharp whisper through gritted teeth, with agitated sighs in between apparently interrupted sentences, and then move into an uncaring loud yell. Their argument would always begin with something worthless, like what was for dinner that night, and then escalate to scratch the surface of the psychological problems in their relationship.

David saw his Hawaiian bobble-head shake a bit as Kyle slammed his fists down on the desk. Most of the people on the fifth story, David's floor, didn't hear Kyle because of the drone of beeping, ringing, and typing. David heard him though, and David decided in this moment that he simply could not go on typing up the report due Friday for another second. Kyle leaned away from his phone for a moment and made eye-contact with David as he got up to leave. "Hey, you wanna go out for a drink tonight with Frank and me?" David told him he couldn't, that he was busy. When David drank he saw through kaleidoscopes, and he was a man who liked control over the small things in life.

The balcony greeted David with the nighttime breeze. His eyes had to adjust to nature from being around those buzzing fluorescent lights all day. The smells of dust from the hiking trails below and the wind from the mountains greeted his nostrils and eyes like grandparents at the airport. There was a plastic fold out chair which was covered in dust, and then there was David's part of the railing. The shining part where he would take his place leaning over the night. The rest of it was caked in dust from years gone by. David's thumb practiced the familiar snapping routine with his lighter. He didn't want to light his cigarette yet, then all that suspense from the day would be over. He would eventually finish the cigarette and have to go back inside

to all of the artificial plants, cubicles with computers sporting reminders and family slideshows, and “that smell”. There was always that smell that wafted around the room, slowly taking hold of its victims. A smell familiar to nursing homes and hospitals. Everyone was slowly wearing away; they were all antique clothes in a dryer instead of being dry-cleaned.

Hadn't he fought for this though? Hadn't they gone into the interviews for these offices with nerves and excitement and crossed-fingers? Now all David had were veiny eyes and blackened nail-tips. He lit his cigarette finally and felt as though he was a star, telling people from the field down below to go the other way. He must have been a small orange glow for any late-night person walking their dog or taking a stroll. A small orange glow against the bright lights of his building.

David saw Matt and Steff on the ground floor. Matt smoked and breathed out practically right in her face, and she drank a coffee. Venti soy mocha frappuccino. David could practically smell it in her breath and hear her autumn-like laugh from up there.

Out there in the vast field behind their building was nothing. Houses nobody here would ever want to live in, and people nobody here would ever want to talk to, and yet, he stood on the edge of this fear. Was that why whoever built this, built this here? So that the employees could see where they didn't want to be and have ambition. It wasn't fair. Steff wasn't fair, his kaleidoscope eyes weren't fair, and the uneven soles on his shoes weren't fair.

What if David jumped off this balcony? He could dive down from the darkness and it would be over within a few seconds. Steff would be screaming, Matt wouldn't be coughing that stuff all over her face, and David wouldn't have to finish his Friday report. Or maybe he could go to the bar two blocks over, the one where everyone hangs out. He would be the cool, mysterious guy at the table and some other cool mysterious girl would find him and they would have a

passionate night and then only ever cross paths in the streets, and smile slightly with a wink. If David did these things, however, who would signal away the ships in the night?

So David went back inside and was greeted by the ever familiar sounds, sights, and smells. The person on the other side of his cubicle, Ruth, had microwaved a chicken burrito with rice and beans, as David had expected since they were all staying late tonight. His computer greeted him with many of the letters worn out on the keys, and no family slideshows. Kyle's wife would call back in half an hour to apologize and they would end up getting in another argument. The Rubik's cube sat in David's desk drawer, ready.