**The Afterword**

The wind whistled between the buildings. Snow swirled as it was blown down the street. Ice had long ago formed crystals over the frozen windows in their frames. The sound of a violin echoed through the alleys and buildings, the slow notes distorted by damaged speakers and so much time.

He strained to look between the buildings as he trudged across the desolate world. He went nowhere. He came from bad memories.

Cars were stopped in the streets, their frosted casings looked like the carapaces of giant beetles that he had seen in an old book. Each step he took was accompanied by a crunch as the frost under foot was compacted. The sound of each foot step echoed through the streets, reflecting off of the frozen hulks of the buildings that clawed their way into the sky. The relics of what had been standing, like old webs that remained long after the spiders were gone.

The breeze blew snow from the fronds of a frosted tree. Dim light filtered through the clouds in the purple of the sky.

He turned around a corner, each step was met by the reply that bounced back from the walls. The light at the intersection flickered red to green. He touched the cold metal of a light pole as he passed. A tear slid down his face, steaming in the cold. The ghost of hope still hovered low, but it was merely that, a ghost. It was over. It was all over.

The tear fell from his chin to land in the featureless sheet of frost stretching across the world.