

A man walked through the misty, dirt-covered streets of Suliar, a confident demeanor surrounding him. He wore gauntlets on either hand, and what little of his face could be seen from under his thick brown hood was obscured by the mist around him. Despite his enshrouding, however, it was clear to anyone watching that he was walking with a purpose. Even without speaking, his actions seemed to say that he had an important matter to attend to at the Tower, and the few people he encountered on his path shrank away from him, fearful of this mysterious man wielding seemingly unprecedented power.

Eventually, the man reached the Tower, where the guards quickly moved to stand in front of him, unyielding. After a moment, however, they nodded to the man and let him pass, seemingly approving of his presence in the building. The man passed them, nodding to them slightly and crossing the bridge that led to the main doors of the Tower. All around him, soldiers and workers froze in their paths and shrank away, much like the people he had encountered on his path to the Tower. Some tried to escape the building, but did not get very far before being stopped by the guards. Some fought back, and they were quickly cut down. The man, however, did not flinch at any of this. He simply continued his journey to his destination, climbing up the spiral staircase at a pace that was almost leisurely. At last, he reached a large, lone oak door and pushed it open. It gave way with no resistance, despite the fact that it had been locked and bolted—the only indication of these two facts was the *snap* of broken metal as he opened the door.

Inside, a man stood in the center of the room, facing the door. He had a calm expression on his face, but the mysterious man could tell he was dreading this encounter. They faced each other for a moment, the mysterious man with an expression of stone, and the other man with eyes narrowed almost to slits as he glared at his intruder. He opened his mouth to speak, while raising his arm to attack the intruder—

It was barely a fight. The moment the man started moving, the mist around his intruder surrounded him, sucking the air out of his lungs. It ate away at him, corroding his skin slowly, painfully. The entire time, his intruder had barely moved.

In the last few moments of the man's life, he knew only one thing: he had met a power that was unrivaled by anything else to ever exist. And he had perished at its hands.

Ris stumbled through the rocky streets of Mystalis, a box in her arms weighing her down and making the scrapes on her arms worse. The shopkeeper had been relentless, making her do the heavy lifting in the store until she could barely stand, but it had been worth it—he had been generous with his pay, and Ris could go home with enough supplies to last her a week. Slowly making her way to her small apartment, she made sure to avoid the Mist, trying to make it seem natural. When she was younger, her mother had drilled the teachings of the citizens of Mystalis into her: *Whatever you do, don't use the Mist. It's just the government's way of spying on us. The second you use the Mist, or even make it look like you're using the Mist, they'll be watching your every move, and soon, they will surely take you away.*

As a child, the teachings had scared her into avoiding the Mist, but as she grew older, the fear dissipated, replaced by a loathing for those who had implemented it in the first place. For those who took away anyone who tried to escape from the government's condescending eye. For those who had, unjustly, taken away her mother. Still, the fears from her childhood had rooted themselves into a corner of her brain, and now, out of habit, she still avoided the Mist, since *it's better to be safe than sorry, anyways*, as she often told herself.

Soon enough, Ris reached her apartment building and climbed up the stairs to her apartment. The building was crumbling, and more than once, Ris had wondered why the government had not torn it down and replaced it yet. Usually, when a building showed signs of old age, they replaced it with a new one—it

helped them implement the newest forms of technology to spy on their citizens. They never admitted it, of course, but it was a fact that almost everyone in the city knew.

Still pondering as to why her building had been left alone, Ris opened the door to her apartment and finally set the box down, before locking the door behind her. It didn't do much, given that the door was almost falling off of its hinges, but it gave Ris a sense of comfort anyways—at least she could tell when she had an intruder. Kicking her shoes to the side, by the door, she began putting the contents of the box into their respective places in her apartment: groceries in the cupboard, bandages in her makeshift medicine cabinet...

Ris soon lost herself in the soothing comfort of habit, and she moved almost entirely through muscle memory, her body going through the motions to put everything away. Once she was done, it was already dark, so she flopped into her bed and stared at the ceiling, mindlessly throwing around a small stone she had pocketed earlier in the day. Despite her exhaustion from the long day, however, or perhaps even because of it, she found she couldn't sleep. Instead, all she could think about was the Mist, and what it meant for the city. There had been quite a lot of it that day—there were likely a high number of disruptions the day before—and she took out her notebook to write down this observation.

The notebook, and her habit of analyzing the Mist, were both gifts from her mother, who used to track patterns in the Mist, trying to predict how much of it there would be the next day, or even the next week. Before she started doing so herself, Ris never understood why her mother took such great care to write down all of her observations on the matter—it was obvious to her that disruptions would lead to more Mist the next day. Once she started writing down everything about the Mist herself, however, she quickly became intrigued by it, seeing it as a small victory to be able to read the government like they were surely able to read her. This day was no different, but her mind lingered on the fact that the act was a small victory—perhaps it was the exhaustion, but she found herself loathing the government more than ever. Her grip on her pen tightened with every second spent thinking about the matter, and her hand started shaking slightly from anger.

It happened before she could even register it. Her grip on her pen became so tight that it snapped, the plastic leaving jagged cuts on her palm. She gasped, and, before she could get up to clean the wound and get a new pen, it happened. The Mist started encircling her hand, swirling around it, and as she watched, the cuts slowly faded. The pen followed a similar fate, its parts coming together to form a whole again. Ris simply stared at the scene.

- “The Mist” – people can learn to manipulate it, but soon after, they start going missing
- It is discovered that it is actually a technology deployed by the government to get rid of those who are deemed to be dangerous once they have their hands on power – the Mist allows the government to spy on whoever is using it
- There is a rule amongst citizens not to use the Mist
- Someone uses it somewhat unintentionally in a secluded area, but they aren't caught by the government → it is discovered that the Mist is actually a lot more complex than what the government says it is, and that they spread rumours about it being a way to spy on people as a way to detract from the fact that they didn't really know what it was
- Run by the Safety Committee, specifically

- There's a character who is constantly trying to write everything down, including every little detail in each place they visit
 - Turns out that this character knew that they were going to have their memory wiped by the government, and so they were trying to write everything down so they could read what they wrote and remember everything
 - The government is not only wiping memories, but putting them into a database for analysis on the effects of the Mist