

Chapter 1

Darkness knocks

I was 7 when my fear of sleep first developed. A child should sleep on their bed. Not under it. This is my story, of a different time and different world. When, the world was ghost-quiet except for the crack of dawn and deathly alarm. Now , I'm a lot older I feel as though it's of vital importance to record all these little details in my life. Perhaps, I'll want to remember them when I'm older.

The alarm bell rang.

Rring Rring! Rring Rring!

Two giant arms and two steel fists were cocked back like a revolver. Ready to fire its empty rounds - into empty space.

Rring Rring! Rring Rring!

The rounds ricocheted of walls and bounced into my ear. Rattling the ins - and outs of my skull. The ringing grew and a streak of post-it notes, tacked to the wall, fluttered towards the floor. Then so did a row of glass beer bottles, creating an awful clanking as they roll past each other. And a glass picture frame, another victim of the alarms tirade, that too was hurled to the ground.

Rring Rring! Rring Rring!

It ceased to stop and I felt each and every vibration creep its way up my spine as I lay frozen. My eyes oozing in fear and glued to the side faced the empty wall. Wide-eyed and waiting. Waiting. Waiting for the ringing to subdue.

Rring Rring! Rring Rring!

It never did and my bed which had been sitting in the far corners of my room soon began to give into the alarms demands.

Stretching.

Sinking.

And slumping to the alarms metronome.

I was soon to follow

The city's surrounded itself. Mute-grey sky-rises, clad with concrete armour and windowless stares. They litter the streets at regular intervals - but never seem to end. Busy bodies and airbrushed faces brushing past you - disappearing past the bend. A whistles been blown, slicing at the thick blanket of day and a taxi promptly arrives. The honk of a horn. Red light. Red light. And a cop car quickly drives. Follow this maze of streets and you'll quickly discover the web of veins pumping vitality to its heart.

I flick through the map on my phone, taking the occasional glance up to confirm my whereabouts. When, my eyes accidentally lock with a thin bespectacled man in a striped suit walking down the boulevard. Hoping, he could direct me to my designation I match my pacing with his. He walks faster. I walk faster. He walks faster. I walk faster. A thin bead of sweat trickles down his forehead and he stops abruptly.

"Hi, I was just wondering if you knew whe-

"And what business do you have tailing me? Do you get a

kick out of it? Oh God, you better not be one of those perfume people” he snaps at me, digging his pointed finger into my breast.

“Oh no, I just wanted to ask if you knew where Silver Solicitors was?”.

A look of annoyance furrowed his brows and he let out a lengthy sigh. “Why, I happen to be on my way there would you like me to escort you there? Hand-in-hand?” he replied sarcastically.

“No, I work there!” I reply cheerfully.

He stops and makes eye contact with me for the first time. Staring deep into my eye-sockets, I see his lips quiver as if he’s seen a ghost.

“What... no... you can’t be here! I watched them b-b-b-b you!” he fumbles, dropping his jaw.

Maybe he’s playing a practical joke on me I think, as I reach out for his hand that was stapled to his side and grasp it firmly, swinging it up and down. A look of horror consumes his face and white threatens to swallow him whole. Before I have the chance to slip in a word, I see his thin angular frame become a dot in the horizon as he runs of frantically.

The fuck is wrong with him, probably a loony, I mumble. No wait, I forget that thought. What did he want to say? Letting curiosity get the better of me, I chase after him.

Tightness begins to build up in my suit and I can hear the click-clacking of my shoes against city tiles. “Wait, what was you gonna say” I yell out, my voice fading in the distance. As the dot becomes smaller and smaller, my breathing becomes heavier and heavier. I think I see him and the-

Smack-Bang like a brick wall. I catch whiff of a rancid smell. Sealing my mouth shut, my eyes are met with a horrid bright blue neon sign.

WELCOME TO SMOKERS LOUNGE! Smoking prohibited outside of lounge.

“Smokers lounge” I tut to myself, “anything but a lounge”. It was one of those dingy locations I had seen highlighted on my phone, so I knew I had to be close. “Filthy, filthy, filthy” I mutter as I walk towards the sign. Mist forms above my cold breath and I backtrack a few steps.

All around me are different walks of life, huddled together in one large group. Blue-collar, white-collar, red-collar yep they’re all here. To each their own, I say but if it wasn’t for their wide-eyed smiles and gigantic grins I wouldn’t have made anything of it. Large groups of men and women are sprawled across a single small patch of grass. Each of them huffing and puffing large bellows of smoke out their mouth’s. Office worker, construction worker, office worker, sanitation worker. The ties on their suits and tool-belts on their waists all flap fitfully in the wind as their owners continue to smoke. They’re huddled as if they were a colony of penguins clinging to the last remains of winter warmth.

Yet....

This crowd...

They’re so happy!

I can make out their middle aged banter and chuffed expression through the waft of smoke and there doesn’t seem to be a care in their eyes. They all seem so happy, so young, so yout-

Honk!

No I say to myself. They’ve got yellowish stained teeth, black lungs and a burning hole in their wallet.

Honk!

Another car speeds slips through a closing green light and the

final waft of smoke disappears before my eyes.

"Filthy, filthy" I mutter.

A ballad of branches sat lurking amidst the shadows. Crawling and floating up into the air they clatter their skeleton bones and gently tap away at the windowsill.

Tip-tap. Tip-tap.

It was a signal and the wind's on cue. Weaving, its way through the crowd the wind wisped past needle-like branches and slipped an eerie-lullaby through the window gaps.

Look at me now, I'm crying for ya. I miss you so bad and I hate that I'm the blame for it.

Rain pounds at the grass and an animal with a cloven hoof walks across it. The ground gurgles and burbles as the hoof sinks and the creature lets out a deathly scream as it realises its fate. A crow caw The alarm bell rang for the final time that night.

Rring Rring! Rring Rring!

"Thank you oh so much" I gleefully reply, waving of a kind stranger who had walked me to my workplace. I didn't know as to why I had forgotten my office's location but I thought it had something to do with last nights drinks. As I feel a drop of rain on my lapel, I quicken my pace and slip through closing company doors.

I lie still for a while. Breathing in slowly. Breathing out slowly. "How long was I out for?". The shutters are drawn. Morning's been. I can hear a faint clatter of dishes and a faint jingle of keys. Yonder and a ritual silence. I let out a deep moan I can already feel the stiffness building up in my neck.

Rain, rain go away come again another day. It was pouring heavily last night, worse than other nights I presumed by

the splish-splashing I could hear outside. It trains to make my entire life a misery but now it only remains as street sludge and it seems to have been an eternity since I've heard the birds chirp. I think to myself as my mind wanders. "How long was I out for? And why am I on the floor?". Last night at the bar... How much had I fucking drunk? I presumed the others would still be hungover from last night's rounds but I guess I was wrong. I know my rooms less shielded from the elements. It was built that way. Still, it felt like this weather's got a particular vendetta against me. Maybe that sums up why I've been struggling to get a full night's rest. Well that coupled with my: drinking habit, manga addiction and my need for long hours of scant internet pornography.

Gently leaning to my side, I felt the smooth-cold touch of the hardwood floor against my bare skin. My eyes began to drift around vaguely as I recollected the events that transpired last night. I let out a sombre yawn and ponder as to what the time is. As I raise my arms triumphantly to mark the start of what was sure to be a busy day I feel a frail and long hand gently lower them. He turns my chin. I meet a pair of blackbird eyes

"Did you lose your sense of sight to, when you fell?" a familiar voice coldly inquires.

"No I can see just fine!" I reassure the voice, beaming back but squinting ever so slightly so I didn't give away I had no idea who I was speaking to.

"Good, good".

A minute passes. Then another. He sits and gently shifts thorough my wreckage of a bed. The floor, still cold beneath his feet. He's taller and his clothing much darker than mine. 30 seconds pass and he pivots to the side. Light seeps through shutter gaps alligning itself in perfect panels on my hardwood floor. He slips a smirk and gravitates towards me. Another 30 seconds go by and he taps at the floor. A smile crawls up the sides of his face and he quickly purses his lips.

“ Ermm sur-.

Before I can finish, I feel my phone screen being squished between my face. As I wrestle with the voice, I feel the shutters of my eyes go mad, as the glaring screen comes closer, burning the edges of my eyes

“Aaah fuck off” I yell.

“Read it!” he snaps back.

“Not until, you get of me”

Thump!

A fuzzy neon hue melts into my eye.

Seven. Fourty five. AM “HOLY SHIT”.

Chapter 2

School

It was a woeful early winter morning. The busy town of Solstice was mute-grey and void of all life; except for the scurry of morning delivery. As I trudged through heavy wades of snow I chuckled to myself.

Why did Akbar have to be such an early bird? And why did it fuckign matter if I was late or not - its not like we go 2 class together

Then again if he hadn't been my personal alarm I would have definetely missed my first class of semester and I didn't want to get in my teacher's bad books on the very first day either. Shame, he couldn't chauffer me to class though. I'll make it up to him. I'll buy him something from the convenience store, probably a cola or iced beer. But that thought would have to be put on hold.

A stalker. It'd been tailing me for long enough. It circled around my small frame in a figure of eight. desperate to break into my balloon lungs, it blew a huge gust of gritty gale into my mouth. I gagged involuntarily as I felt each and every corner of my lungs filling with shards of winter air.

Less than a month. The cute weather girl said winter would be over in less than a month. I'm gonna write about it. Want something to remember it by

As I was induced into a coughing fit, spluttering like a weak engine, I picked up enough conviction to want to leave this horrid weather. It wasn't the first forced kiss with the wind, but it was enough for me to want freedom. Burrowing my chin deep into mybrest, I made one last push to escape this gory wind. "Its just the usual forecast" I reassured myself, as I lunged for the closing door handle. As my skinny frame, slipped through the closing glass doors, my marble eyes took one last peak.

An army of one patrols the street. Smothering the unlit skies, it marches towards us. A carpet of thick black smog is soon to follow. Inch-by-inch. Inch-by-inch, thats what I told myself. The smog and the wind they seem to twirl heavenwards, like they're stealing souls of people caught out in this hellhole

"Just the usual forecast" I repeated, more firmly this time. The heated corridor air was far more palatable than the grit left in mouth and the hallways were illuminated by a streak of shining lights. My first day of college, yet I still felt like a highschooler who'd wondered onto campus. Its not that I hadn't been here before. I came on induction day, so the layout of the school was still vaguely familiar to me. Without wasting time, I headed to the library. As I navigated my way down the corridor I was halted by a large blockade.

"Huh, what's the hold up?" I inquired, conscious of time.

"Didn't you hear what happened at the printers?" replies an anonymous voice.

"Yeah, I couldn't believe someone like her could pull something like that off".

"You think she was set up".

"Could be, but I wouldn't shrug the idea she was behind it".

"Last time I heard someone did something that scale, they got a whole years worth of detention!"

“Shit dude, she’s totally gonna get expelled then”