

**The eyes** surround me, gazing into and through the deepest crevice of my being.

The nights have become restless and agonizing.

My waking hours are spent dreading the inevitable nature of sleep.

The eyes...

I see them, clear as day, even outside of the confines of the bleak reality that is sleep.

Caffeine **gave** up on me long ago.

And so will I.

The amphetamines I found in the lab are waning.

And so am I.

Olsen is nothing but a faded memory, obscured by a thick fog of lab notes and documents.

Frederick feels like an acquaintance met in a past **life**.

Ruwet still belongs to this reality, her presence being my only tether between the wakefulness of my mind and the fleeting objective reality.

**Man** may not reason with Gods, lest he is prepared to become one himself.

I tried saving Olsen but was met with devastating failure.

*"For I **will** not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me"*

*Romans 15:17*

Only in our little Topeka laboratory, Christ is more common folk than son of god - not unlike a local shopkeep or a butcher. A human with an impact so insignificant, so miniscule, that he will **be forgotten** long before he is dead and gone.

Then again, so will we.

We already have been.

The Agency has not responded to any of our writings for months now.

The town feels less and less populated by the hour.

The day before yesterday I went to the shop to purchase some cigarettes for myself and Dr. Ruwet.

Marge, the shopkeep, was behind the counter, staring into the ragged and torn photograph of president Eisenhower that's been hanging there probably for as long as she remembers.

She must have been a child when the photo was hung on the wall, most likely by her patriotic father.

*"Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring."*

*Proverbs 27:1*

A pack of Marlboro Reds and a bag of sunflower seeds.

Marge took the bill from my hand, only breaking eye contact with the president to count the change.

I walked across the street to the Veterans Center, into the complex and **froze** in front of the WRI building. I forgot to buy cigarettes for Ruwet.

I walk back out of the complex, back across the street and into the shop.

It must have been no more than three minutes since I first left the store.

Inside, Marge was no longer to be seen. The store's shelves were empty.

Maybe I passed out on the way back to the lab? I felt my heart pounding and my chest growing shallower with each pound.

It's never happened this suddenly before, I'm usually aware well before it begins.

No, I thought. This isn't it. Not this **time**.

There's no conceivable way to explain it, but I just know when I enter ROT.

This is real.

Panicked, I looked around for any signs that might help solve this mystery but I'm only met with president Eisenhower's stern gaze.

I went back to the lab and received a scolding from Ruwet for failing to return with her camels.

I never mentioned this event to her, hoping she was experiencing something similar, hoping she would come forward first with her story.

*"Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?"*

*Romans 8:24*