

CHAPTER 4

What ever was not yet finished, would be finished. If this never happened, there would be nobody on the other end to pick it up. Nobody to receive it. Nobody to care.

On the other end, everyone was eager. Eager to see the results of long, hard work - people slaving away, for hours on end. Or perhaps only one person. Perhaps none.

The stories that told of this, these tales of creation, had their own tales behind them. Stories upon stories - naturally, you will add your own experiences to the pile. Would they be told?

The end of the tunnel was near.

Tunnels were limited. You can only pass through so many of them, and when you have finally run out, there is nothing that you can do about it. The tunnels are behind you.

What, then, would be the fate of this project? Without enough tunnels to work within?

There was something that needed to be built. A happiness engine. Care had slaved away on this project, for many many years, but there was not much time. Outside of these tunnels, work could not be done, but within them, she could build anything. But how many tunnels would there be? How many dreams could she possibly have left?

The end may have been near. She wouldn't have known it.

Parts, pieces, bits; all around her, scattered about, waiting. Talking in thousands of languages, specialized, made for the communication of one thing to another - in this particular case, a piece or a part talking peacefully to their "handler." Care was proud to be a part handler. Every night, she would be the handler of thousands of pieces, assembling them together into her happiness engine, communicating in each and every little language.

She was a master of these languages. She knew every word by heart, and could say them all simultaneously.

But she was alone, with nobody to compare herself to.

Everyone else was out there, in a different tunnel, building a sadness engine. Adding to it every night. If you are unsure which engine *you* are building when you sleep, it's probably the sadness engine.

She wasn't always alone, building this thing. But recently, as the outside world began to tear apart, her life inside of these tunnels was ruined as well. Her family took pride in this goal, to build this engine as Care envisioned it, but that part of her life was over. Maybe it never happened.

That wouldn't have been surprising.

Putting these pieces together was easy, but time was limited. If there was just one more person around, one more part handler, maybe this would have been possible.

Standing up, Care looked across the room for a small, flat, circular piece. None of them appeared to be in that shape. There were square parts, some triangular parts, but no circular ones.

If it didn't exist, why did she need it?

It was easy to ignore, and indeed that's what she did, but at some point that round piece was going to be necessary if her dream of building the happiness engine was ever going to come true.

Regardless, she returned to the engine that she had successfully built so far and found an empty space for a rectangular part. This part was easy to find, and she proceeded to have her usual conversation with it (these were all spoken in different languages, one for each individual piece).

This conversation, however, played out a bit differently than the others.

The piece told her that it was time for a change. It told her that the only logical choice would be to give up and try something new.

"It's all going to be useless," it said. "Nobody is going to help you. There will be no benefit from a happiness engine, because at this point, it is far too late." Of course, he did not speak in that language, and there was no complete one-to-one correspondence between his language and our own.

Care didn't understand this. She ignored the suggestion and returned to her work.

This engine was going to be perfect. Care wouldn't believe anything else.