

CHAPTER 8

Nervous wrecks, scrambling about. Hands in pockets. Looking down at the ground. No enthusiasm for anything. Hopeless people, ignoring the world.

Sometimes it felt like they were everywhere. Maybe they were; it certainly wouldn't have been surprising. They thrived on the sidewalks, all marching forward at the same lifeless pace, spreading the gloom. For all to enjoy. It was like the world, as well as everything else, had given up on this town.

And I, with my trusty taper, had the pleasure of filming all of them. They weren't happy about it, but then again, they weren't anything.

I must admit, when given this task, my first thought was not a positive one. It may of been something along the lines of "Oh god why am I doing this" or "Please they must be joking" or even "Why does everybody else seem so confident right now whereas I sit here and talk about how horrible this place is? I mean, we all live in the same little town. Perhaps this is all some sort of illusion and I am the only depressed person here."

Tapers was never depressing. It was perhaps the only place where that feeling did not exist in any way, shape, or form. And sometimes they even had music playing. Those were usually good days.

CAMLANDAR never had music playing. Walking into that store was like crawling into a corner and dying.

Maybe that's why people liked it so much.

The most that I could have done was tape nothing. Maybe that was the best choice, because other than that, the only reasonable action would have been to give up and forget about it. And that didn't sound like a very good idea, looking back at how much time I wasted (hint: it's a lot of time).

I lifted the camera up and began recording.

The beings on the sidewalks took no interest. A few of them looked over and pretended to ignore me, like they were ashamed to have cared about something. I guess that's what I would have done as well, if my reputation of being a loser was in jeopardy. That wouldn't have happened to me, though. I don't lose reputations.

Still taping nothing, I decided to walk forward, with no real destination in mind. More people began to take notice of me and my taper. When that happened, I made sure to zoom in on them and wave. Naturally they did not bother to wave back, and I returned to my business of doing nothing.

It continued to bother me, though. None of this was interesting. Nobody was going to care.

As that last word bounced around my head, I was reminded of my daughter. And all of my other concerns were temporarily destroyed.

I hadn't seen her in the last couple of days. I even waited for a solid twenty minutes (and admittedly I brought the camera every time). It was really beginning to worry me at this point, much more than anything else had recently. She clearly was not going to school, but why was this? Why was she not leaving her home?

This was not an entirely selfish thing. While she would have been very useful and satisfied my own desires, I truly did worry about what could have happened. It felt like I was losing something that I never had. It also kind of felt like a combination of loss and guilt, and it never ceased to drive me insane every minute of the day.

I tried shaking the feeling off. It wouldn't go away easily.

Everyone began to look at me funny, as the number of people I bumped into every second increased at a very uncomfortably fast rate.

I wasn't expecting one of those people to be my worst enemy. Really, I wasn't.

In general, this isn't something you would think is likely to happen. And at the time, I didn't even know this man. I hadn't seen him once before, or seen anybody like him. But it felt like his life's mission was to be unlike other people, and for this reason it shocked me that I had never seen him before. Like I'd been missing something for my entire life.

I will call this man Hil.

His clothes were made of metal and his tie was made of rock. His face was larger than his head, and his eyes were larger than his eyelids could cover. Nobody saw him, nobody talked to him. Hil didn't like people very much. It was his assumption that, if he could be seen, people would not like him so much either. He lived his entire life under this assumption.

Unaware of this man, and his presence in front of me, I continued forward with a distracted look on my face, searching for the answer to my problems. Thinking of Care, the pure innocence, the opportunities, was taking over my mind, and the thought that she was gone had taken it over as well and crushed every one of my hopes. He appeared in a flash, staring directly at my face, his eyes almost coming out of his head.

I bumped into that face. Needless to say, he was angered, and I was shocked beyond belief. The pure awe of the situation sent me down to the ground, as did his powerful stare.

My taper rested in his hands.

Getting up was impossible. I was stuck to the sidewalk, and nobody else seemed to notice. They simply passed by, like

absolutely nothing was happening, and life was still just as boring and hopeless as usual. I felt like pretending that same thing, but it wouldn't have worked out on my end, with a large man forcing me to the ground.

"You," said Hil, holding my taper tight, like he was intending to cause damage. It worried me that he would have really done that on purpose.

I didn't want to respond to him. Every part of me wanted out of this situation. He continued:

"Is there something wrong with you? Get up off of the ground."

My ability to move suddenly came back. I stood up and looked at him, feeling like a complete fool, and ready to leave.

"Oh, I'm sorry," I said, trying to ignore the impossibility of what was happening. "I'll be more careful next time."

"No you will not," Hil said in response.

I waited for his next action. Surely there was a purpose of what he was doing, I thought to myself. But nothing happened, and I needed to speak up.

"Could you give me my taper back?"

"Taper?" he asked. He looked around, then at his hands.

"Oh," he continued, holding up my camera. "This thing?"

"Yes," I said, nodding. "Give it back, please. It's mine."

I reached out my hands to take it, faking a smile to pretend I wasn't completely freaked out.

"No," he said. He pulled it back, and a smirk showed up on his unbearably ugly face. At the same time, my smile began to disappear.

"No?" I said, attempting to grab for it anyway. "That can't be right. You're going to deny me my own camera? My pride and joy!"

Hil didn't look happy about my response.

"Pathetic. You don't deserve it."

He proceeded to throw the taper to the ground, breaking it into possibly hundreds of pieces and making a loud sound that naturally nobody noticed. I looked back and forth between Hil and the camera, trying my best not to go mad and attack him.

"Yes, okay," I said, kneeling down to pick up the pieces. "If that's how it is!"

As I moved my head downwards, he took advantage of my current position and stepped on my head, laughing. I struggled to get free,

but he only continued to laugh.

"You're a fool. Hopeless. Useless." he said, still very amused. I continued to struggle, and that made him laugh even harder.

Not a single person was aware. Or maybe all of them were aware. Maybe they were all on his side. It seemed like a good guess at the time.

"Yes. That's right," he said, his voice fading away. "This is where you belong. Trust me. And mark my words, you will never get up again!"

Nothing seemed to happen after that.