He still remembered the rockets leaving. He must have been in his teens when the rapidly ascending lights vanished into the sky. He remembered the hate. Injustice, uncaring, ceaseless violence, whose cause was so complicated no one could successfully unravel it.

The world had been fractured. He remembered reading a story about a place called babble in church back when there were still things like that. In the story God had grown mad at the tower man had made and cursed them with different languages so they could never understand one another. It seemed like his plan worked too well. Perhaps God would be happy with the results He had wrought.

The man looked down from the skylight he had been staring at. He was perched on a pile of expensive TVs and other electronics, seated on a fine mahogany and red felt chair which he had stuck on the top. He was clad in an exquisite suit, its pockets stuffed with hundreds. When he looked over his hoard he saw the occasional sparkle of gold and jewelery. The rest of the mall was mostly empty.

He picked at a loose thread in the chair's armrest and sighed. Resigned to boredom, he slid off his throne and tromped down the broken screens.

Passing by a similar pile several bodies tall of canned food, he selected one at random and rummaged around in the pile until his hand found an opener. He drained the contents as he stepped down the now defunct escalator.

Finishing both the can and the decline, he tossed the remains carelessly before him, where they joined their brethren on the tile.

His steps from his several hundred dollar shoes echoed as he walked down the main hall. Above him, the skylight betrayed the late hour. A shockingly beautiful pollution filled sunset hung above him. Just like yesterday and the day before.

The empty stores leered at him as he walked. Jewelery, electronics, fine clothes, restaurants, he had gutted them all long ago, humorously spraying 100% off messages across the widows and store fronts. He had put all the mannequins in lewd poses and written obscene messages on the stores he disliked.

After they had left, everything was chaos he remembered as he reached the exit. Fires and death, riots as those left behind railed against the unfairness of it all. Why should they be left here on desecrated pollution scarred earth with the rest of the degenerates and criminals and terrorists while the wealthy and privileged fled? At some point he had lost his family. He missed them now that everyone else was gone.

The murderous sun glared at him through violent reds and oranges, casting the world in burnt shades. A line of Lamborghinis, Maseratis and other expensive cars lay in front of him, one of every color he could find. They were in stark contrast with the rest of the road past the mall which only hosed the remains of burnt out cars and the debris left behind.

Perhaps he should have done with them. But he had only been a teenagers, full of righteous fury and fueled by a considerable amount of greed. He had even laughed at the rest of his gang when they told him that the shuttles had been sent back for the rest of people still on earth. Why would he leave when there was all the riches one could image just sitting here waiting for someone to take them?

His foot connected with a can he had littered earlier and it shot into the air startling him.

He glanced around. The pharmacy, a hotel, car dealership further away, then residential, a strip mall and then the rivers, too familiar.

He made his way towards the river, down main street. Off to the side there was a bank which had been Prince Henry's area for a year or two until things had quieted down more. He hadn't seen Henry in a long time but had no desire to do so. What would be the point? We both had everything we needed for ever, and more. There was nothing to talk about. Plus Henry was probably dead. The old man was at least twenty years older than him and the smog had a nasty way of going after the lungs when you got older, or so he had heard.

Main street was mostly empty. Even years of gang wars and the fighting between other Remains eventually fell away before the onslaught of years.

He became more melancholy as he approached the river. The oppressive emptiness of the world rung in his ears. He picked up a rock near the side of the road and malevolently approached an unsuspecting 2011 Toyota Camry.

“What's the fucking point?!” he yelled, smashing the window to tiny pieces.

“What's the don damn fucking point?” he screamed again, planting his foot forcibly on the side of the door.

His breath was heavy. How long had it been since he had said something? His shout echoed on the empty streets suddenly making him feel ashamed.

He slunk to the end of the road and sat on his bench and looked at the river. The turbulent flow churned gold, reflecting the sky above it.

He had once found a body in the river, back when the dam was still up. Excited at first, he had been hit with conflicting emotions when he realized that the Remain had been dead for some time. He had admittedly thought for a moment about keeping it to have something to talk at, but perhaps some things were too weird, even with no one around to see.

The turbulence of the waters soothed him, like they always did, something about the ever changing currents and swirling eddies.

“So its definitely not about things” he said aloud.

He wished he had even a dog to talk to, but he hadn't ever been able to convince one not to bolt when he approached. The best he had was his river.

“Life I mean. It just stands to reason. If things were the goal, I should feel happy.”

“But I don't” he admitted, shocking himself that those words had even come from his mouth.

“I suppose I've known that for quite a long time. Ever since the gang left. I should have left with them. Or maybe picked up something to kill the time better.”

But it wasn't making things either. Henry has thought it was and until things got quiet, Henry always had generators and power saws running. When they finally stopped and he knew the old man was probably gone, he had tried to grow tomatoes, perhaps out of homage to the Prince.

They took him a whole season to get right. The fighting hadn't killed off all the insects and even after he got the tomatoes, they were rancid. The pollution permeated everything. Canned tomatoes were it then.

“So its not about making things and its not about getting things.”

He tried to think back to a time he had been truly happy and not just distracted. A face responded: Angela. She had left with the gang. Had she made him truly happy? Perhaps the nights and days he had fleetingly spent with her were just the lust filled hopes of a long gone teenager.

Or perhaps he had been happy. When the fighting started to slow and he had time between raids to think about things other than survival. To think about her and him. About children. He blinked back a tear. Some habits died hard.

“It must be people. I suppose I need to find other people.”

Unfortunately, he had attempted this before for different, more nefarious reasons back when green still moved his hands and legs. He knew there weren't many Remains left, and those that were left would probably kill him on sight. He had not been a good neighbor.

He looked up again at the sky. The sun was setting for good. It was time to get indoors.

He awoke on the double king bed he had fashioned in the Ikea. The Egyptian cotton sheets lay in a pile on the ground beside him. He passed through the kitchen section and out towards the exit he had taken the night before.

He grabbed a bag and filled it with some canned food randomly and topped it off with bottled water.

Dragging the whole thing to the front, he threw it into the passenger seat of a yellow Lamborghini. Turning the keys, he found that despite his best effort the car refused to turn over. He switched to the red one instead.

He hit the gas and was soon down main street, weaving between the skeletons of cars and half wincing when he ran over something large. He quickly made it to the bridge.

He was halfway across when he felt compelled to stop the car. Doing so, he exited and leaned over the railing. The flow below him sped past, rippling in its ever changing waves, surfacing and submerging before his eyes. But he didn't need that anymore. He was going home.

The city was a dark place, the looming husks of towers past still rose into the sky. He had gotten stuck there in the past, so this time he kept to the highway.

Buildings turned into overgrown fields and soon he found himself at a dusty chain fenced entrance to the closed shuttle station. He drove the car straight though the fence.

He grabbed his bag and briefly caught a look at what he had gotten from the pile: tomatoes. Of course.

He held his breath as he approached the central building. Fortunately there was no one there, and the door had been left open. Surprisingly the lights still worked and flicked on when he opened the metal door and peered inside.

Nicely pained hallway met his eyes. Only a thin covering of dust covered the white walls. He followed the clearly marked passage down to the launch platform.

There it was. He emerged into the underground silo and looked up. Amid the years old covering of dust, a thin amount of light trickled through into the silo and illuminated half a dozen rockets, which loomed above him. Picking the closest one, he entered it.

Everything seemed like a dream. After years of denying himself even coming close to the shuttle bay, here he was, inside a shuttle. It was almost an out of body like experience. He frowned at the controls in front of him. There was one button. It was obviously designed to be easy to use, approaching childish.

“Launch” it said. It was bright and blue. Shrugging, he strapped himself in, pulled his bag of food close and hit the button.

For a moment nothing happened, but then the automated systems kicked in, having fought several years of neglect and won. The lights in the shuttle dimmed. He heard a low hum as sunlight started pouring in from outside.

A dull rumble, which felt far beneath him started and got louder.

As the rocket lifted from the ground, slowly at first, but then accelerating, and he saw earth, his domain fall away beneath him, he was reminded of the first time he had seen a shuttle.

He had been escorting a venerable scientist along with the rest of the gang. After fighting off some low lives, they had successfully gotten the scientist to the shuttle launch bay, the same one he was slowly lifting out of now. For some reason, before he left, the scientist had addressed the gang, perhaps out of thanks.

He still remembered the words, or at least the gist of what the professor had said.

Look around the world. The pollution, violence and terror we have caused. It is easy to say these things were inevitable as we struggled to deal with twelve billion people. However, ask yourselves, he had said pointing to them, if you suddenly had the choice, as you do now, would you accept mankind's collective flaws? Think of the hate and the ignorance, the fear that you have seen. And ask yourself, if given the choice, would you make for yourself something new beyond the clutches of ignorance and far from the stupidity of society? That choice is now yours, the scientist had said.

At the time, he had known his answer clearly but the years had taught him otherwise. He was now no longer the king of earth, he reflected as the shuttle lighted him higher and higher out into the atmosphere, but perhaps with others, he could find out what it meant to be truly human.