

The Cabin

Grim skies and dark green grass, grey clouds, and tainted water. Lonely shadows and flickering lights, empty cities, and broken nature.

A cabin, the wood old and withered, lonely like the forest that surrounded it. The wood was grey and mossy, like the bark of the nearby trees. It stood alone, in an open field, sole, uniquely. A broken window, the shards glistening in the pale light, with a stick launched through it, to the other side. A branch, thrown by a lightning storm from so long ago. Even the violence of catastrophe could have been better than this.

I felt my jacket brush against the doorframe as I went inside, the door to fit the frame remaining unlocked, the previous owners having left in a rush. In a struggle. There were scratch marks on the floor, perhaps furniture was dragged, or heavy luggage. Maybe a weapon, a tool of defence, or offence, for that matter. No need to worry about the carrier of such tools anymore.

The planks shifted and crunched under my step, as I passed over the dead wood. A fireplace filled with ash, the remains of a flame that long since died out, was what stared at me from the corner of my eye. The metal that was once supposed to shield little ones from falling in, now rusted and decaying, so long ago. Like a husk of the protection that never came, for the burning metal would burn the skin from your hands twice over. First, at the touch, second, at the loosening of your grip. The hope of

salvation that never arrived. No god to pray to. No prayers to answer. No screams to drown out. No skin to touch as the world died.

This world was not alive. The only one alive was the one deciding to walk it. To my knowledge, only me.

A couch dressed in a strange mould, as the cloth returned to its maker, to the ground. I rested my shoulders, placing my backpack on the ground, followed by a heavy thud, as it made the foundation quiver under the newfound, ancient weight, of a generation that was supposed to be lost. To the stars, or to the Earth. Convinced that the legs would turn to dust, I avoided the wooden table and chairs, moving to the kitchen instead, where sturdier material was formed into shelves and cupboard, The remnants of a disease that would have cost our planet her head. It would have. At least it still stood, ready for use, while the rest returned to the depths.

Anything vacuum packed in that same disease, anything at all. Candy bars, anything was healthier than the sick air. Bottled water, unsafe to drink, but a bottle that could be repurposed, no matter how ill those particles could render me. A bottle of pills, stale chemicals, designed to kill the biological, but not me. At least, not when they were still safe to take. But as much as I did not want to take the pills, desperation had me take a different approach. I packed those too. Three candy bars, a bottle of filthy water, and antibiotics. I would live, for now. Footsteps outside, I did not even turn my head. Those echoes, I had grown numb to them. The giggling of a child, the muttering of a worried adult, followed by the

creaking of a door. A door that had already been open and remained open. Like a banshee, the memory wailed. It wailed for something to witness it. Something to allow it to persist. For now, I would carry it with me, to grant it one last view through the dimming sockets of a withering man, before my amnesia took that one too. At least I remembered how to eat. How to sleep. How to drink. Like radio static, it entered my mind, reminding me of a silent that I thought could not grow quieter. Yet it did. Lifeless, boneless, soulless, eyeless, deathless. It echoed and died out again. And again. Once when it hit me, and once when it hit the floor. My touch killed, in a world of the deathless.

I leave the withered cabin. Like a poltergeist, it continued to knock things over in my head. Until, eventually, that too, died out.