

INSIDE THE ASHES

There is a looming presence she can't erase from her mind. Behind her stands a tall slender building, casting a shadow on her path, reflecting the light around her, full of bodies, and half-humans, try-hards, somebodies, and a lonely pop-star crouching on the ground whom she walks towards.

<Argaret stops at <Annah and takes a seat next to her after brushing her sleeve on the floor to rid the surface of any dust or dirt which may stain her beige overcoat.

Hi.

Hi <Annah. I would have come sooner but I was stuck in traffic, the 966 was backed up by the skytrain. The new underpass connecting it to the highway-hovers is causing a shitstorm of problems, and I couldn't get out from daycare sooner since >Eter is still breastfeeding.

It's ok <Ary. I'm happy you made it. Did anyone follow you here?

<Argaret takes a deep breath and wipes her hands over her face in a tiresome manner which struck <Annah with distress. She quivers her fingers around her arms, and chews her lips while mumbling to herself: she is worried they are coming again.

Last time they saw each other, <Argaret was backstage at <Annah's last show. It was the night of the big blackout, when the greymen took over the city for good. This meant more construction, less colour, texture, smells, more concrete embossed by wind stamps and heat bubbled lettering: *LONG BOY BABY TOYS* towering over the downtown core, next to a row of other buildings labelled by an unforgiving, unavoidable presence: casting shadows which guide people on their journey through a sea of non-places to a *PLACE CALLED HOME*.

No one followed me, I'm alone. And I don't want to get into all that. I am happy to see you and I want to be here with you...I know the past few months haven't been easy for you. After they solidified your voca-

I don't want to talk about that. You're right, let's just enjoy sitting here together. I don't want to talk.

<Annah looks down at her body watch and sees the warning flashing: 112 WORDS LEFT BEFORE POWER OFF. She wipes her face and holds her watch out for <Argaret to see. <Argaret folds her arm back and places it delicately back in <Annah's lap. She extends her hand out and waves it in front of the building they are facing, she reaches over and delicately brushes the dampness of her oldest friend's cheeks. She sees childhood memories flash in front of her eyes, her past embellished in something as simple as a pair of eyes.

<Annah and <Aragaret sit together, shoulder to shoulder in silence and watch as bodies and objects move in all directions around the building they face.

INSIDE THE BUILDING UPSTAIRS AT THE END OF A LONG NARROW HALLWAY STANDS A GREEN DOOR WITH GOLDEN DETAILING AND A STAINED SILVER KNOB GREASY WITH FINGERPRINTS AND LOOSEENED FROM BEING TURNED TOO MANY TIMES IN ONE DAY.

INSIDE THE ROOM WHICH THE DOOR LEADS TO IS A HEAVY FEELING OF ABYSS, EMPTINESS, FOG IN AN INTERIOR SPACE COMPOSED OF DUST DANCING IN THE AIR AND FALLING LIGHTLY. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM IS A LARGE CABINET WHICH GRAZES THE CEILING.

INSIDE THE CABINET ARE ASHES OF THOSE WHO FELL THE NIGHT OF THE BIG BLACKOUT. SOME OF THEM WERE DANCING TO <ANNAH'S MUSIC WHEN A GREY MAN SLID A NEEDLE INTO THEIR SPINES, WHISKING THEM AWAY INTO AN ENDLESS SLEEP. SOME OF THEM WERE HALF-HUMANS WHO WERE IN LINE FOR THEIR FULL HEART WHEN A GREY MAN UNPLUGGED THEIR RENAL CHORD AND DISCHARGED THEIR LIFE LINE.

INSIDE ONE DRAWER ARE THE ASHES OF >SCAR: THE FATHER OF <ANNAH AND A LEADER OF THE NOW FAILED REVOLUTION OF POP. HE WAS BACKSTAGE THAT NIGHT. CHEERING ON AS HIS DAUGHTER SERENADED THE CITY WITH SONGS WHICH ECHOED ON FOR MILES ONLY TO BE BLENDED HARSHLY WITH THE REVERBERATING CRIES FROM THOSE WHO RAN FROM THE MASSACRE AND TOWARDS THE COUNTRY, WHERE THEY FELT A SAFE HAVEN WOULD BE WAITING.



*INSIDE THERE IS A BIG LIE
WE KNOW AND WANT TO SHOW
THE TRUE LIFE IS WHAT YOU DREAM OF
SO COME NOW LET'S FALL IN MAD LOVE
MAD LOVE
M-M-M-MAD LOVE
MAD LOVE
M-M-M-MAD LOVE*

and outside, where the two girls sit and watch the day pass by in front of them, wondering when they will be home again, the home where they felt free, warmed by security fostered by their own ability to share their art, their talents, they remember.