

MONUMENTALITY.

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Morning's routine was so ingrained in her mind that she didn't know anything else. The time she wasn't working was scarce, and strictly for sleeping. It's been two years since her first day on the farm. She was 6, her knees were wobbly, and she looked about as stable as a newborn lamb. Now 8, Morning's legs have grown stronger, her calves more prominent, and her stance more confident.

She wasn't the first to be subjected to work at such a young age. That system had been present since her great grandparents were alive. Starting out kids as young as 4 to work in fields, factories, any place where employees were needed. Morning wasn't sad, or happy for that matter. She didn't think about those kinds of things. She woke up, did what she was told to do, and that was that. There was no time for thinking. Once, Morning had a thought, it lasted for about a minute, she was beginning to stall when—

“Morning, focus!” Lilia whispered, just barely containing her anger.

One thing Morning could never cleanse her mind of, though, was the City. The City, where most of it's inhabitants were upper class, the peak of luxury and success. Morning dreamed that if she worked hard enough, put in enough elbow grease, and did her part better than anyone else, she would make it there too. She had such a vivid image of it, what her future could be like there. How colossal the buildings must be, how the streets must've been paved with gold.

She twisted the stem of the tomato,

“Lilia, what if I told you something silly?”

“Not now, Morning,” Lilia said back in a cautioning tone.

“How ‘bout when we get older we can visit the City together, y’know where those big things are!” Lilia scowled at the very mention.

“Morning...” Lilia drifted off. It was hot. Morning felt herself sigh, almost involuntarily. She felt like passing out, her lips were starting to crack, and she felt tempted to drink out one of the rain puddles. And for the first time, Morning thought. She barely had enough energy to imagine her better life, but it was *glorious*.

It was 12: 54 A.M when Morning got home, she was exhausted. Her bones ached, and she wished she could just screw her legs off to stop them from hurting so much. She was more than exhausted, and yet she couldn’t sleep. Morning sprang up when she heard her mother come through the door.

“Morning, you’re still awake?” Her mother inquired.

“Yes...” Morning said regretfully, “I-I wasn’t really able to fall asleep, and when I heard you come from the door I-”

“It’s fine. But it’s best for you to get some sleep now, you have to get up in a few hours.”

“I know, I’m sorry.”

With those final words said, Morning rushed back to her mattress, and flopped onto it. She felt a presence near closer to her,

“Goodnight, Morning.” Her mom kissed her on the forehead, and left to the couch.

“...Goodnight,” Morning said, in a weak, almost whispering voice.

That’s when the dreams started. Dreams so vivid, Morning almost believed they were real. Skyscrapers, less like buildings, and more like monuments. She felt herself jolt awake, and then she was reminded of where she really was. The spring in the mattress giving her a painful budge, a cruel reminder of her current life. It was 4:28 A.M when she got back to the fields.

Back to the tomatoes and peppers. Sometimes, Morning felt like they were watching her, mocking her, even. The crops grew a wide, toothy smile and laughed at her, both with pity and contempt. She just twisted the stem off and the smiles were gone.

Morning watched the 6 A.M train ride off in the distance, it was headed to the City. She sometimes wished she could just get on that train and never go back, far away from the farm, and everyone on it.

“Morning, for the last time,” Lilia let out a long sigh, “*please* stop letting yourself get distracted.”

“Oh, sorry. I was just... thinking.”

Lilia was a few years older than Morning. She knew enough that her spot was secured on the farm, for the rest of her life, just like everyone before them. She gave Morning one last stern look, one last warning, to give up.

Morning knew what she had to do.

It was early, 1:17 A.M. Morning was eager, she made sure to stay up early enough that she could hop on one of the passing cargo trains. The ones headed for the City. She put on her purple raincoat, one of the few garments she had, took an apple, and was on her way. She carefully tip-toed out of the shack, making sure not to wake her mother. If she could just get past that point without any problems, she would be golden.

It was time. Morning felt her heart drop to her stomach, but she gripped on part of the train and made it inside. She felt a pit grow in her stomach, was it nervousness? Excitement? She stared into the seemingly starless sky, noticing one bright spot that seemed so dazzling compared to the ink pit surrounding it.

It was almost 4:30 A.M, the time she was meant to be working by now. Then she saw it, the City she'd imagined so many times in her dreams. She hopped off, and stumbled over the rocks. The vision was unreal. It was so full of life and opportunity. So many things she could never even conceive of seeing.

No gold paved roads, though.

“M-meegah... leeth?” She read off the sign. The sign looked miniscule compared to the giants beside it. Morning stared up in awe. Not sure whether to feel fascination, or fear. She frolicked around, like a weed in a garden of roses. The people walking by stared at her, she was something out of place, something ‘other’. Her purple raincoat made her form look something akin to a flower as she skipped down the infinite streets.

The City felt almost immeasurable, no definite beginning or end. It then struck Morning that she had no idea where she was. She knelt down to catch her breath, and out of the corner of her eye, she spotted a purple blob almost identical to her raincoat. It was Morning Glory, the same flower from which she got her namesake. It was just starting to open up, showing it's magnificent petals. Morning decided to pick the flower from which the spot it stood. She couldn't let it wilt again. Once she got home she would crush it under a few heavy items to preserve it.

Then she saw *them*. The men which Lilia had warned her about to discourage her from running. They were here for... her? She ran as fast as she could in the opposite direction, and ended up a train stop a few miles away. She hopped on and prayed that this would all be resolved in the morning.

She tried to stealthily run back to the shack, which she ultimately failed when two men spotted her.

“Please... she’s just a child!” Her mother was on her knees, grovelling.

“Mo-” Morning was ushered back by one of the men. She felt her eyes well up, and her cheeks started feeling wet. Were they going to... take her? She felt so *stupid!* Her mind was spinning, and her vision was blurring, everything around her turned into a blobby mess.

“*Please!* I’ll discipline her well, please, just please, let her go this once.” Her mother pleaded one last time with the men, practically begging them to leave her go, to just have some compassion.

The man’s grip loosened on her arm.

“...C’mon, she’s a kid. Just make sure a stunt like this doesn’t happen again, or there will be no mercy.” The men walked off, their boots leaving indents in the muddy dirt.

“Morning what were you thinking!” Her mother screamed at her, she’d never heard her so upset before. Her eyes red and puffy from crying so much, her voice so weak from begging she could barely let out a sound.

“I’m sorry mom, I really am!” Morning launched her arms around her mother’s waist and tried to stop crying, to no avail.

“Do you even *know* what could’ve happened? Why don’t you ever think about these kinds of things before you do them? Do you even know what could’ve happened to you, do you? How could you do this to me. You have no idea how worried I was when I got a visit from them!” Morning looked towards her feet, she’d made a horrible mistake this time. But, she couldn’t help but wonder why her life was like this in the first place. Why were they even in this position in the first place? What’s the point of rotting on a farm for their entire lifetime. Instead of saying any kind of rebuttal, Morning hugged her mother tighter. Tears streaming down her face, her eyes shut.

“I-I’m sorry mom, I really— really am. It won’t happen again. I promise, I swear!”

Her mother didn’t give any reply, she just returned to the shack. Morning shrunk. Now looking something more like a wilted flower, the Morning Glory in her hands that was once held so tightly, let go, and swept away by the rain.