



The Birds Aren't Real

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Part 1

The walk to the surveillance room was dreaded, his footsteps echoed throughout the corridor, each door that he passed contained a person watching after a flock. Accompanying the sound of his footsteps was the soft hum of the fluorescent lights. Arnold turns some corners to continue walking through the corridor that seems to never end. As he inhales the sterile smell of the floor cleaner fills his nose, it's a lemon freshness that slightly burns. Looking down at the tile floor it's glossy and you can see the overhead lights in the shine of the floor. Finally, he is almost at his door, Arnold knows after turning the handle of his surveillance office door he would sit there for hours.

Arnold held the position of command center watch for project espionage pigeon-tillery. That was the US Government's clever way of naming the fact that these pigeons were artillery weapons. For the record, these pigeons have the ability to shoot silent red lasers out of their eyes. The government always had some sort of secret surveillance system in place to monitor its citizens and when the crime rate in the country went up, the government justified the addition of lasers. The laser were allowed to be used to protect the citizens, for example in the case of a robbery happening the pigeon would shoot the robber, then release a memory loss gas via fart. This information of lasers and gas wasn't released to the public, nor did the public know that they were being monitored.

In years prior it had been other animals like raccoons, bears, and mongooses, and then the government was running into the problem of citizens shooting the animatronics while hunting. As a result, people started to get suspicious when the animals they shot didn't contain any flesh. Of course, to make sure the people didn't raise any questions they were disposed of properly.

Over the years the government has improved preventing its citizens from discovering the animatronics. The government has implemented laws that prohibit hunting of whichever animal is the current monitor and then claims that it's because the species is endangered, the animal rights activists not knowing the full

story love hearing this. The citizens never question it because the laws were always proposed as though the government has nature in its best interest, and who would argue with that?

These pigeons were huge for a bird that lives in the city, because although we've figured out how to put a laser system in these animatronics the government hasn't figured out a way to make them smaller to look more like the actual birds. The pigeons had big lifeless round beady eyes, with a red hue to them. Pigeons were the most recently selected monitoring animal, this was because they could fly which meant they could easily get around. Also pigeons were very common in cities which is where the government wanted to monitor the most.

The job itself was nothing crazy complicated, it was like any other security job. Everyone wore a uniform that consisted of khaki pants and a navy blue collar shirt, which complimented the blue in Arnolds eyes beautifully. Task wise Arnold just had to sit there and make sure nothing goes wrong with his flock, and not forget to call the flock back into the command center before his shift ends so he could put them on the charger. But his work never followed him home, well actually it wasn't allowed to. The government had strict rules that prohibit the discussion of classified government jobs with anyone who didn't work in the same department as you. There is an oath you swear by when you accept the job, and if you break the oath there is the threat of disposal.

The only time the job was ever too stressful was when enemy countries posed a threat, which was very rare. And has only been mentioned before by Russia and North Korea, both their motives were because they "wanted to expose the truth about your nation". Both countries were furious when they were exposed for rigging their elections. Which the U.S. informed the Russian and Chinese citizen about. There was talk of war but things have settled down.

Arnold step into his office and press the button that would clock him in and send out his flock. He walks up and pulls out his office chair from the desk, looked down to see the valley his butt left from sitting in this chair all the time. Once he is seated he presses another button that makes the screens in front of him go from black to static and then quickly whirl to life, with the outside world now on display from 9 points

of view. In front of him mounted on the wall were nine different screens arranged three by three, each screen was a different bird. The controls were arranged in front of him with a toggle to switch between what screen he could control, a touchpad to make the camera zoom in and out, a lever to control the movement of the pigeon itself, and the pièce de résistance the big round red laser button, which Arlond almost never used.

With the birds in the back of his mind Arnold thought about the interaction he had with Martha yesterday. Martha worked in the office next to him and every once in a while they would have an interaction, that interaction would leave him giggling and twirling his long curly hair like a school girl. Arnold thinks of Martha as a ray of sunshine in this dark windowless office. She always had a soft smile on her face with a natural rosy hue on her cheeks, brown eyes, with long dark hair. Yesterday during lunch Martha joined Arnold in his office for the first time. Something took a turn from the usual bubbly and smiley Martha. She brought up the point that if she was an average citizen she would hate to find out that she's been watched her whole life.

“Imagine it Arnold, any sense of privacy you've ever had would be thrown out the window. The government has always been watching you, keeping tabs on you and everybody you know. I wouldn't feel safe, not to mention the lasers that these things can shoot laser out of their eyes. I know the point of these animatronics is to keep the people safe but all the lies that the government makes up surrounding these pigeons would make me not trust them.”

As she says this she hunches so she is close to Arnold's ear. Her eyes fleet around the office to make sure nobody is listening, and her voice gets quieter and quieter until she is at a hushed whisper. Arnold sat there pondering what Martha said,

“Maybe you raise a point Martha, I never thought of it like that”.

That conversation left him still thinking about it today.

Arnold is sitting in his office with dreamy and distant eyes and his mind still on Martha. None of his attention is on the screens even though they are right in front of his face. Until one of the screens go dark and then Arnold snaps out of his daydream, anything out of the ordinary like that almost never happens.

After a couple seconds the screen whirls back to life again, that was odd Arnold thought. Suddenly another screen goes dark, Arnolds palms begin to sweat and his collar suddenly feels tight around his neck, he gets the sense that something is definitely wrong. He takes a deep breath, orders the pigeons to stay in place. Arnold is going to try turning the system off and on again, in hopes that it'll fix the problem. While the screen in off he goes under his desk to check teh wires and make sure everything is plugged in, huh everything looks normal here arnold thought to himself. When arnold turns on the screens again the pigeons are in a different place then where Arnold had left them.

Arnold goes into full focus mode, and orders the pigeons to stay put once again. Arnold watches the screen for a minute and the pigeons dont move. Phew thank god, Arnold lets out a breath of relife. But he assumes the problem is over too quickly. Now one pigeon is diving beak first kamikaze style at full force into a puddle on the sidewalk. When that pigeon meets the ground with that much force its bound to break, meaning all the hardware inside of it is going to start sparking.

“Oh shit”

Arnold says out loud.

Carla Luna-Flores

Annotation #1 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

One techniche i chose to use was third person point of view. I chose this because i wanted the narrator to be omniscient. By knowing what everybody is thinking i can introduce two different prespetives about the pigeons. Which will make the readers hopefully side with the citizens about the invasion of their privacy. Ken liv also wrote in 3rd person!

“ Arnold sat there pondering what Martha said,

“Maybe you raise a point Martha, I never thought of it like that”.

That conversation left him still thinking about it today.”

Annotation #2 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

Another technique i chose was longer sentences with usually a comma or two. This is because there is so much information the reader needs to know about that i want to give it to them in one sentence with small breaks inbetween. I want it to feel like an information overload because there is so much the government is hiding from its citizens

"Imagine if Arnold, any sense of privacy you've ever had would be thrown out the window. The government has always been watching you, keeping tabs on you and everybody you know."

Annotation #3 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

Another technique i used was vocabulary. I chose to not use any new vocabulary because the world this story is set in is very similar to ours. That's why i really don't describe the world that much but instead describe things like the pigeon or the office because those things aren't similar to what's in our world so they need more describing so the reader gets a good image what it's like.

"The pigeons had big lifeless round beady eyes, with a red hue to them"

Part 2

After Arnold managed to fix the problem with the pigeon another pigeon began to behave erratically, before he could react yet another began to malfunction, and another, and another until soon the entire flock he was in charge of was malfunctioning. For a few moments he was in shock, nothing like this had ever happened before. Then he launched himself into action, at first he tried to order the entire flock to return to the nearest base, but as the order went out they refused. It was then the panic he was trying to stave off hit him.

What am I going to do? He thought as he began to pace around, Do I go to my supervisor? Wait no I could be demoted or worse if I do that, think, Arnold, think. Wait a minute. He then sat back down and began to search through the coding for the birds. He thought that maybe he could solve the problem on his own. It was then he found it, that morning there had been an update to the central computers for every flock. He went through the coding until then he noticed a word that was composed of foreign letters.

Πραβδα. A Virus was in the coding of the update and the worst thing was, even though Arnold didn't know it yet, one of the orders was particularly insidious. He began to attempt to run a purge of the virus so he could regain control of his flock at least. The Virus was designed specifically to take over systems like the pigeon's central computers and when someone attempted to regain control it would only accelerate the takeover process.

A blinding red flash appeared on the screens and Arnold looked up from his work. He had only seen a flash like that a few times but knew immediately what it meant. In one of the cameras a kid who had been playing with a paper airplane only a few moments before now lied slumped against a brick wall. His young blood smeared across in a dark crimson. Then more flashes appeared across all the screens. Each flash was another life gone, another splatter of dark crimson. A horrid tapestry was being weaved before him and he was powerless to stop it. Arnold had always told himself that what he was doing was right, that it was all for a greater good of sorts. But the thing about lies is that one day the truth will always be revealed and on that day catastrophe will always follow. That catastrophe was happening now and Arnold knew the truth. Arnold had always felt a disconnect between his actions and the pigeons. After all he

wasn't behind the gun, he couldn't feel the recoil of it, he couldn't smell that distinct metallic smell that was the trademark of blood spilt. Arnold had gotten rid of his empathy a long time ago; he saw it as a weakness, an obstacle that got in the way of his work. It was why he didn't really have a relationship with anyone inside or outside of work. He never had time for anyone, even himself. When he got rid of it he had no remorse but now he felt that long gone feeling return. It was then he remembered why he had gotten rid of it, guilt. Guilt is the one thing that can stop anyone dead in their tracks and now he felt it. It was like trying to carry a boulder of pure lead on his back. He slumped down to the floor and tore at his hair, the red lights still flashing bright as the pigeons continued their work in the uncaring manner that only a machine could do.

Arnold then heard a sound, metallic clicking sound similar to a lighter or the faint click of a clock. He looked up from his stupor for the source of the sound. For a second he thought it was the door knob but no one entered the room. He then heard it again this time louder and more clearly than before. It almost sounded like it was above him, something in the vents maybe? As he slowly raised his head up to the vents he began to move his right arm over to his holster where he kept his service pistol and waited for the clicking sound again. Instead he heard the sound of tearing steel and an all too familiar whirring sound. The pigeon dropped down from the vent with a loud thump.

They were only meant to look like a pigeon from afar, up close they were much more intimidating. Wings like bayonets, a metal chest with a faint red glow emanating from within, and a pair of abyssal cameras for eyes. It was the size of an eagle, maybe even a condor but far less elegant after all machines can only mimic life they can never truly live.

Arnold drew his pistol and began to send bullet after bullet into the thing but the small rounds from his gun just ricocheted or embedded themselves in the metal plating that acted as it hide. The whirring noise continued its pitch getting louder as it approached. A few feet away from him the thing stopped and braced itself as its head and chest split open revealing the barrel of its dreaded weapon. Arnold moved attempting to dodge. He raised his left hand in front of him as if he were trying to ask the thing to stop or maybe in some fool's attempt to catch the laser. Arnold was blinded this time not only by a flash of red

lightning but also by an excruciating pain which shot up his arm. When he regained his vision he saw his hand had become scorched and his cracked skin began to bleed. Arnold took his chance and ran up and kicked the bird across the room. He then pinned it to the floor and fired at point blank into its chest killing the metallic monstrosity. As the adrenaline began to leave his system the pain from his hand got exponentially worse and he began to look around for something to stop the bleeding. Finding nothing he tore away a strip of fabric from his button down shirt and wrapped it around his hand and used his tie to hold it in place.

The intercom which sat just above the door then blared to life and began to play an announcement.

“This is a black day for our nation. Today at 11:22 AM President Eian McArthur was killed by a swarm of unidentified UAVs. Soon after the said UAVs then began to rampage killing all civilians that were within line of sight. Similar attacks have followed suit across the nation. All citizens are advised to stay indoors, Army garrisons and National guard units are being deployed to deal with this threat.”

The voice giving the address was the Vice President who had somehow managed to survive although Arnold wasn't confident he would live for very long. For that matter he wasn't even sure that he would live for much longer. His Coworkers were likely dead or dying as far as he knew he was the only thing that didn't have oil for blood and a battery for a heart left in the facility. Arnold sat for a few moments and went through his options. He could of course run but in all likelihood that would just have him die exhausted. He could hide but the chances of him surviving till help arrived were slim to none. So that left fighting which would certainly result in his death. The pigeons had always outnumbered the staff of the facility and now with almost all staff dead the numbers were not in his favor. The one advantage that fighting had over the other two was that he might be able to take down a few of the metal beasts before his inevitable death. It was then he remembered something about the pigeons and the facility. Each one of these centers had a main control room which was the only room in the building that could actually force a shutdown on all the flocks. If Arnold managed to get to that room he could potentially save thousands of lives in the process and hopefully his own. He saw it as a redemption of sorts, a way to atone for those long dead people which he had indirectly killed.

In the end he never got that far. His body was found leaning against a heavy metal blast door with a small plaque that read “main control room”. His body was burnt to nothing but an ashen skeletal body that once could have been called human. The floor was stained a dark reddish brown color by dried blood. The hallway was choked with metal scrap and the black blood of the pigeons streamed out onto the tiled floor. A sickly aroma filled the hall, blood, burning flesh, and the smell of sulfur all combined into a horrid smell. In the end they never managed to identify him.

Annotation #1 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

We chose to use third person omniscient in our story for multiple reasons. We all had experience with third person writing. We also wanted the reader to have a more complete perspective on the events of the story.

Annotation #2 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

While reading you may have noticed the word Правда (Romanized: Pravda) this word translates to Truth in English. I added it as a way to show the reader who was behind the virus but also as a way of foreshadowing Arnold's later Epiphany.

Annotation #3 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

I often used sensory descriptions in the story focusing mainly on sight, smell and sound. I did this so the reader could have a better understanding of what's going on and imagine the scene in their mind. Often the descriptions have a focus on describing things so they sound more mechanical. This is because I wanted the reader to have a clear disconnect between Arnold and the Pigeons. As Arnold acts like a machine because he actively suppressed his humanity where as the machines never had it in the first place.

Part 3

Derrick woke up abruptly to a loud thud on his window. Unusual, because he lived on the 8th floor of his apartment complex. He got up rubbing his eyes and walked over to the window. He saw a few scratch marks and heard the commotion in the streets and opened his blinds all the way. He looked down trying to see through his window. When he saw people running with what little they could hold of their belongings, he knew what hit his window. Derrick never believed the conspiracy theories about the government controlled pigeons but all the news that had been coming out was undeniable. That's why he wasn't surprised when he saw the sparking robot pigeon that was laying on the ground 7 floors down. Derrick had never been one to panic, however in that moment he didn't know what to do. He had so many questions. He turned on the news trying to get some information on why everyone was running around like the world was ending. He clicked the power button on his TV and it didn't go to the normal channels. Instead it went to an all blue screen like he was getting an amber alert. Suddenly a familiar voice, the president's voice... It sounded like a pre-recorded message. He listened curiously as it said the following: "My fellow Americans, time and time again the government has succeeded in protecting this nation from outside threats. Unfortunately we did not consider the possibility that we are the threat to ourselves. As you may have heard we have deployed pigeons to watch suspicious activity in the nation. The pigeons were initially equipped with lasers to fight against the threats they may encounter. However in the last few hours they have malfunctioned. The pigeons were initially equipped with lasers to fight against the threats

they may encounter. With this malfunction they are firing at random. As far as we know they will fire at anything and anyone. At this moment the government is being attacked by a flock of pigeons. We wish everyone luck, and God bless America.” Derrick didn't know what to do. “Did the president just quit his job?” he thought to himself. He was in disbelief. Suddenly he realized he wasn't the only one who heard this message. There was a commotion outside he started to hear. The sound of glass smashing rang through the streets. Derrick ran to the window and looked out. He saw a large group of people breaking into a store to loot it. “What the hell?” he said, there must have been tvs broadcasting the news in everyone's house because suddenly everyone was flooding into the streets. He had to think fast because It seemed like everyone was already one step ahead of him. Derrick didn't have a lot of valuables so he just packed the necessities and left the safety of his apartment. He didn't even know where he was going but he thought he should look around and see what was going on outside.

When he got outside there was more going on then he thought. Most of the noise was coming from people breaking the glass of store windows or pigeons firing lasers at cars. No one in their right mind would've thought this would be reality. Derrick walked for a little while. Just going around corners seeing people fall apart while these pigeons swooped up and down and shooting at mostly cars. However he did see one shoot at a human. In Fact he was seeing it happen more and more. All the sudden the pigeons were shooting at people left and right. Derrick ran for cover. All the sudden he saw 5 military cars plow through the street.

“The last hope the government had must've been this.” He said

About 5 years ago Derrick was doing work when all the sudden he got a call that changed his life. His brother had died in battle and his body was never retrieved. After that Derrick couldnt believe in the military. He didn't understand how they could just lose someone like that. They don't find a body or anything. So how could he trust them now? How could they keep him safe if they couldn't keep his brother safe. Seeing all these military trucks pull up just triggered all these uneasy feelings. He couldn't hold back with all this chaos ensuing around him; he couldn't think straight. He looked up and suddenly there was more than just smashing windows. The pigeons were firing at people as they looted and ran

around the streets. The military forces were doing their best to fight back but it wasn't working. As they fired at the pigeons they were being outnumbered. However in the heat of the moment he just couldn't hold back. Ten feet away from him was a soldier. The soldier was kneeling behind a car and there was enough room for Derrick to go next to him. He decided to make the move. He got there and decided to air it all out.

“Excuse me” Derrick yelled.

“Now's not the time buddy” The soldier responded.

“I'm not your buddy...and what makes you think you are going to be able to save us? Last time I checked you couldn't even save your own fellow soldier!”

“Look man, I have no idea what you're talking about and we have bigger issues to deal with.” The soldier said.

“I think you have bigger issues to deal with!” Derrick said, winding his fist up for a punch. Suddenly all this confusion and uncertainty came to the forefront of his brain and he swung.

“Woah!” The soldier quickly blocked the punch.

“What do you think you're doing? The whole world is ending and you are worried about some history that has nothing to do with the situation at hand.”

Derrick heard what the soldier was saying, but he was overwhelmed by everything happening around him. He stared at the madness going on around him.

“Listen man, I don't know what happened or what you're talking about. All I know is that we are fighting pigeons right now... And they are winning. So, are you gonna help? Or are you going to just die by being hit by a pigeon's laser.” The soldier said.

Derrick continued to think, but now it was different. He was no longer thinking about the past. Now he was thinking about his future. He didn't want to go out like this, he didn't want to die from a pigeon. He figured that if the civilians and the soldiers worked together they could have a better chance of beating the pigeons.

“You're right. If we work together we could have a better chance of beating these things.” Said Derrick.

The soldier nodded. Derrick ran to a crashed police car. The windshield was smashed but he could see the microphone. He figured since it was connected to the speaker on the car he could get people's attention. He didn't even know what to say so he just started talking.

“Uh... Hello people. There's not much to say because there is so much happening right now. If we all work together we can have a better chance at beating these things. It's time we stop fighting for just ourselves. We need to save our civilization because we are all we have left. No government. Just us. So let's go! Pick up what you have around you and attack.”

To Derrick's surprise people actually listen. Suddenly people started throwing rocks and bricks and anything they could at the pigeons. The air was dusty and thick from all the rubble. As the pigeons swooped through the rocks and bullets it became clear to many of the people fighting that they were still unmatched. Hours went by, Derrick was starting to wonder if he should just give up, but the people around him were standing tall. There were bodies on the ground. Things he never thought he would see. This fight was something he never thought he would be a part of. As he fought tooth and nail he turned his head to see where his soldier friend had gone. He couldn't see him anywhere and a pigeon had just attacked where he was looking. He looked down as he realized what happened. On the ground lay the soldier. “Just like my brother,” Derrick thought. Lost in battle. There was no time to mourn though. The pigeons' attacks were nonstop. Just when he thought the wave was finished another one came. It was endless. This new wave was different though. They were more aggressive than before. They were being tactical. One of them went to a building. Its laser struck through the whole thing. The top half started to crumble and everyone started to run. Like a tsunami, the rubble started to flood the streets. Derrick started to run. He ran as fast as he could. As he ran he thought about his soldier friend. He was covered and out of sight now. Everything was out of sight. He felt the breeze and saw the dust coming. It was time he knew he would be eaten up by it anytime now. One more step and he would be dead. All the sudden he

tripped on the arm of the lady who lived downstairs. The last thing he saw was the dark cloud of dust.

They lost. He lost.

Annotation #1 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

One technique I chose was to use the third person point of view. I chose this because I feel like it is my strongest style. Third person also lets the reader picture what the character is doing along with describing the surroundings. With the subject of our story, detail and description is really important.

Annotation #2 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

Another technique I used was punctuation. I used punctuation to describe tone but also timing. I think this helps make the dialogue and story more realistic. One example of this from my section is "Suddenly a familiar voice, the president's voice..." In this sentence I used the periods to make the feeling of this more intense.

Annotation #3 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

Another technique I used was description. I used it to show what was going on around him and in the world. I think this is really important because it will let the reader visualize the story. With how strange our story was. A quote from my text that is an example of this is "Everything was out of sight. He felt the breeze and saw the dust coming. It was time he knew he would be eaten up by it anytime now. One more step and he would be dead."

The fight against the bots was harsh. Each one equaled five men in power, but sneak attacks were effective in exploiting their lack of durability. They won the fight! The humans won against the artificially intelligent pigeons!

The battlefield was destroyed, the sky full of smog, thickening the air. Standing on the barren wasteland was a man with isolation as his winning prize. His eyes widened upon witnessing his burnt up comrades that piled on top of each other then slowly turned to an amalgamation of human flesh. He doesn't say a word, just stands there in silence thinking of how it came to this.

In the fight against AI, the humans had no way to protect themselves against the lasers. Dead bodies were often used as a shield against them. They cut right through their armor like a hot knife cutting through butter.

“Did we really even win?” he yells to himself. “Is this what winning is?” His voice gets quieter with each word. There was a loud sigh that soon turned into cries. He tries his best to be strong and hold back the tear but as he fights each tear off he just hurts even more.

He recalls memories from how this all started, he was just one day sleeping then woke to a commotion from outside. Looters and pigeons shooting the civilians it was. The president's message to everyone. After that he ran with all his necessities.

A helicopter flying over, the helicopter spotted Derrick and flew down to pick him up but first there was a person he remembers seeing at the settlement.

“How are you still walking with your injuries?” Derrick passes out and the person catches him before he falls.

Derrick woke up in a run down hospital. The rest of the world used this as their base, Derrick said to himself. In a bed, Derrick tries to move his leg but only one of them moves. A couple months ago he

would be horrified but now all he can think about is his comrades that he fought side by side with in battle that had been turned to mush by the ai.

He looked around, there was nothing but a broken light hanging from the roof, broken medical equipment on the floor, and some shattered glass. The walls had ashes on them as if and everything smelt like burnt popcorn. But that exact smell brought a smile to his face.

After lying in bed for another hour to collect his thoughts he finally mustered the strength to get up. And leave the room he was in. Getting up and moving was one of the most physically demanding things he had to do since the war. His entire upper body was in pain. But he pushed past it and finally sat up.

Next was walking, he could only move 1 leg. He was getting used to moving in his body again the pain and soreness was still there but he was getting used to it. He started to walk. Barely. The walk was more like a lurch through the halls of the hospital.

Luckily after looking through the barren hospital he found some crutches he used to help him walk faster.

After scouring the building for a way out he sees the entrance. A way out he thought. The glass on the entrance was all shattered but yet Derrick still struggled his way through.

A mini society of people he saw. There were a ton of merchant shops everywhere he turned. As well as many people walking around browsing for items to buy or just going somewhere else. The shops are made of wood and old crates from what used to be grocery stores. One of the crates even had a 7-Eleven logo on it which made Derrick smile just a bit, he used to go there with his friends.

The person he last saw before he passed out on the battlefield, was handing out plastic bags to a group of the elderly. His mind was blank.

“Hey” the man said. “You're finally awake.”

“Yea” Derrick said, “how long was I out.”

“About a week.” Derrick just took the information in. For some reason he had already expected that he was out for a while. By the way his body felt after he woke up.

“My name is Roy by the way.” The sun started setting. Derrick looked at him for a moment then looked away.

“Society is good now if you were wondering, because of the effort you and the soldiers put in, we can enjoy being outside on a beautiful day like this.

Roy handed out the last of his bags but left one for Derrick. “Here take this.” It was a bunch of vitamins. “You probably want to take them because you know, you've been out for a while.”

“Alright.” Derrick said.

“I can show you around if you want after all my shift is over.” Roy said. Derrick shook his head, yes. They started walking through the shopping area, this is what used to be downtown, but now it's just a run down building with shattered or melted glass everywhere.

They walked all the way to the housing district. Well you can somewhat call it that.

“This is the housing district,” Said Roy. There were some tarps and tents on each side of the road but there still was a path in the middle of it to have a clear way of travel through this messy area. There were mostly women, children, and old or disabled people occupying the area.

“It isn't much but it's all we could afford to do in the time frame we had. We are working on getting more medical resources because most of our people have fallen sick. Even so I suspect within a few more months we will have electricity.” Roy said.

Derrick has been mostly quiet. Just observing what his new reality was. Just barely processing it. To him the war only just ended 2 hours ago. All he can think of is the war, he dozed off while Roy was talking more times than he can count. Until something finally comes to his mind.

“Where can I sleep?” Derrick says.

“You can either sleep in the hospital or we will find a mat or a tent for you to sleep on. Oh actually I just remembered we have been working on restoring the houses and apartments as well. I think we'll have one ready in just a couple minutes now. It won't be perfect but it'll be something. But you will share it with 3 other soldiers though, Would that be fine with you?” Roy said.

“Yea it will be perfect.” Derrick said.

Roy showed Derrick exactly where his new home would be. As they walked through what was left of society to the apartment they finally reached the steps. Oh the steps. This would be a breeze for Roy to get up but Darrick would be a different story. One of his legs didn't work.

They both looked at each other, "Do you need a little bit of help with that?" Roy asked and then proceeded to carry him up the 5 steps. Roy then went back down to get his crutches as well.

There was an upstairs to another floor of the apartment but it seemed that the stairs were burnt off. "For now we only have the first room that is livable. But in the near future we will hopefully be able to open up more houses to more of our people. Oh and the others should be coming here soon. Hope you rest well and have a speedy recovery." And with that Roy left the apartment building.

Derrick was now alone, he looked around for the least destroyed door on the first floor. And there was the 2nd door left. A bright red door. The walls of his new place, a off-white color on every other corner matches with a light brown. They even repainted the walls he said to himself.

The living room had nothing but a couch and a coffee table in it, the couch had enough space for 3 people but maybe 4 if everyone would be squished together, 3-5 holes on the side of it with white fuzz coming out. But it was surprisingly clean with 0 stains. The coffee table was brown and it stood on the left sound of the couch, it had nothing on it but an empty picture frame.

He struggled his way to the bedroom as he was extremely tired. Just to find a mattress with nothing but a thin sheet. There are other rooms but he had yet to check inside of them. Derrick then front forward slammed onto his new bed and shed a tear. I wonder what the other soldier would be like Derrick thought to himself.

"This is what we sacrificed our lives for, a struggling society of people." A loud sigh came after. "This is better than I thought." He laughed to himself as his voice was fading away, getting softer and softer until he was asleep.