

Erased
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The inside cheek of my mouth was fleshy and raw from biting it for the past hours. Long and drawn-out breaths exited my mouth as I reminded myself to stand up straight. My pen finally made contact with the official looking contract and dragged hesitantly across the page to form a finalizing signature with a trembling hand. A tear fell and blemished the navy-blue ink and subtle off-white colouring and made the once official looking document give the impression that it belonged in a pre-K art classroom. I would say it wasn't the end of the world, but that's very much what it felt like to me. My life as I knew it was about to change forever with the lift of my pen.

My gaze averted from the newly completed piles of legal paperwork to a dark figure looming over the uncomfortable desk I had been at for hours on end. His large frame towered over me even when I stood up. The guard's bald head shone in the bright flickering lights as his shrewd stare met my gaze. He had been watching me for the whole time and hadn't spoken a word or moved. I wondered how much he was getting paid for this.

"Finished?"

The only word I heard him speak was filled with a sense of gravitas that bellowed throughout the desolate blank walls of the room. I faced him and nodded subtly.

"Follow me," he uttered again in that authoritative tone.

My legs were noodle-like when I took a step towards the door. I almost collapsed to the floor after approaching the exit. Needles pricked my legs with every burdensome step as the circulation rushed back to my limbs. The pristine steel door opened seamlessly and clicked shut behind us as we walked into the corridor that looked endless from where we were standing.

What felt like hours passed as I marched closer to whatever was waiting for me on the other side. The hulking guard stayed close behind as I realized with every stride I took, the idea of ever living a normal life again was fading. My clammy hands ran through my hair and slicked back thinning strands soaked with sweat. I was making an effort to regulate my breathing by matching my exhales with the clicking of my shoes. I fixed my gaze on the floor tiles and began grinding my teeth to an invisible rhythm.

Finally, in the distance I was able to make out the door on the other end of the vast hallway. My neck muscles tensed, and I clenched my jaw tightly. I stopped walking to catch my breath and keeled over as sweat dripped on to the spotless tiles. A voice spoke sternly from behind.

"Keep going."

I took a second to pivot my heels and turn to see the guard. His eyebrows rose and I could see all the cavernous wrinkles on his forehead. His beady eyes constricted even more before he erupted in fury like a rabid animal.

“I SAID KEEP GOING! YOU MADE YOUR CHOICE ALREADY!”

“Sorry sir, I was just nauseous,” I muttered trying not to trip over my own words.

He passed me, knocking my shoulder as he did, and approached the second steel door to turn the handle. This time the door let out an eerie squeak that echoed throughout the hallway like a desperate shriek for help. I wanted to turn back, but he was right. I had made this choice.

The guard held the door open and stayed outside as once again there was a loud click behind me. The room became a void of darkness, swallowing any hope left in my exhausted spirit. Dimmed lights flickered and I settled into an old leather chair. Out of nowhere a loud static crackling bursted from the room. The lights flashed and a loud voice surrounded me over an intercom.

“You have come here to be forgotten.”

This voice contrasted with the guard’s gruff and stern voice. It was velvet-smooth and pierced my ears with a cold tenor.

“You will no longer recognize your face after this procedure, nor your own name.”

My laboured breathing became hyperventilation. I knew what was coming.

“Every photo, memory, and recollection of your existence will be gone within the next forty-eight hours. You will become a new person with new memories just as you wished.” The voice changed its demeanor and sounded almost amused now.

Suddenly I felt a sharp jab in my arm and a figure with a black mask appeared in my peripheral vision. I tried yelling and getting up, but it was as if my mouth was glued shut and my whole body was paralyzed.

“Do not worry. You will soon be erased.”

Everything faded quickly.