

## Fear

Thunder echoed beyond the mountains that swallow the landscape. The sun steadily climbed above the lonely horizon, casting stray beams of light upon the decrepit ruins. Snow concealed the forgotten past that lay beneath my feet, as the lashing wind torn at my face. Trees stared ominously at my every movement, while the chilled ground grasped me with an unforgiving grip. I began to ascend.

The stone path weaved and swerved intermittently amongst the frosted grass; the path was steep but manageable. I climbed, the throbbing in my legs intensified but it is unparallel to the pain I am burdened with which is seared into every thought, branded within my mind. Images of their faces still cloud my vision. Cracks rippled through the cement, winding streams of imperfection. Society was monotonous, plagued by daily repetition. Now there are few survivors that live. When it happened, we knew it would spread fast, but what we didn't account for was the contagious nature of fear.

I sat over-looking the city. Vines spiralled and constricted the once towering structures. I sat and waited. The falling snow lightened, as the screeching and howling of an engine erupted through the silence. The truck stopped; its metal lined with rust. Two men exited the vehicle, they continued to slowly and methodically patrol the road below me. Are they too looking for him? I laid in the overgrown, cushioned grass and rested my head against the twisting roots of an oak tree. The tree's bark was smouldered and contorted with burns, much like those who are left.

The man finally emerged. He staggered from a ruined house, cloak draping over his shoulders. A leather texture wrapped his face and dark hair covered his mouth. His worn and bloodshot eyes drifted up the hill to meet mine. I slowly climbed back down the hill, until I faced the man. His withered hands reached inside a makeshift bag. A small wooden box appeared in his palm. Rough and weathered, the box was placed in my shaking hands. The man's face was discoloured and blackened, with blood curdling under a hot breath he spoke. "Go."