

one last thing

It's happening. We've been practicing for this day for so long it feels as meaningless as the drills, as dull and repetitive as the daily work commute. Of course no one goes to work anymore. The streets have been closed for years...well, covered, really. The streets have been covered for years and all we do is practice leaving.

I haven't addressed this letter to anyone in particular, so I guess I'm writing to you. *Finder, Future, Friend?* More than likely this will just be covered along with everything else, buried in the uninhabitable heaps of stuff that keep arriving, crushed under the excess of the things we once desired that Agents still deliver. Nonetheless, I hold onto hope that this letter, stashed amongst the clutter, will once again feel the steady pulse of a human's touch and connect us—you, reader, and me—transcending time and the messy layers of ruins that span between us.

Though, perhaps you don't think so kindly of me. I can see you now; rolling your eyes at my ignorance, wondering how we didn't see this coming. "*There were so many signs!*" you proclaim to the sky. But you are far away. My moment has long been explained to you, lines neatly drawn between events and time broken down into a series of isolated actions, unveiling decisions to you that were made behind doors closed to me, organizing this ever-changing chaos into logical steps. History has given you a manual.

In any case, this monumental act of exodus has compelled me to write to you, perhaps because even on this last day I am still unsure of what side I'm on--*am I one of the going or the staying?* Perhaps I write to absolve my own regrets...this letter, a picture of conflicted thoughts and my best attempt at an explanation, my last contribution to the mess.

We dreamed of a world devoid of errors and mistakes, a world where we could work less and get more. *With liberty and convenience for all.*

Agents were introduced to streamline our material lives. They eliminated all sources of hassle and unpredictability by removing us and our lagging, archaic thinking from their system. We fed them with our *want*, maps of our wanderings and searches, so that once they got to know us they could anticipate the things we coveted and deliver them without us having to ask. We no longer had to rely on other humans, or be relied upon. Fueled by algorithms of desire, the Agents lifted the burdens of accountability and guilt and functioned as personal proxies, establishing a seemingly indestructible delivery system that could run itself.

At first, our new unapologetic outlook was liberating, but the more the Agents intervened, the less useful we became. Feeling out of practice, we avoided interaction. When we began to feel lonely, Agents responded by providing us with distractions, material *things* to keep us company in our separate lives. Our longing was insatiable, and so the Agents carried on.

Public spaces, already deserted, were the first to be filled when our houses could no longer hold the things the Agents delivered.

It soon became clear that the delivering had to be stopped, but no one could agree on how it should be done. We had become so accustomed to living without responsibility that no one could admit--or even realize--that they had contributed to the mess. Everyone pointed fingers, accusing their greedy neighbors, industries, and politics. Governments compiled exhaustive studies that implicated other countries. The incessant blaming made everything worse, slowed all action...and so the Agents carried on.

When the ground was submerged by our belongings, we started to build above the mess. Lakes brimmed with debris and trees drowned below us as clutter continued to pile and the buildings stretched upward to outrun it. Our towers grew taller to hide us from our belongings as they piled up outside our doors. These hastily stacked structures became towering shrines to ourselves, an attempt at escape from our material lives that left us isolated and imprisoned as we grasped for the sun.

So here we are.

I find myself hiding in this room, with a choice to make as the Agents still deliver below me, shaking the desk I write on and the floor it sits on, in this stick of a tower snaking down to a pinpoint plot of land. Land that cradled the foundation of this home, once upon a time, now buried somewhere far beneath the tons of stuff crunching and inching higher by the minute.

Some say that inevitably the mess will fully consume our buildings, break past our boundaries and fracture these floors of safety and avoidance. They've planned to leave before that happens so that we can start over. They believe we can unite long enough to fly away together to recreate our separate worlds somewhere else.

Others say it's not too late. They feel compelled to stay, to declutter and begin again. *Here*. They want to shine a spotlight on our instincts for selfishness and call out urges to feign blindness. They think that once accountability is restored, the mess will stop coming. They say we should clean and rebuild.

I don't know which *they* I am.

I didn't create the systems, *I* wasn't in the meetings, *I* didn't build. Yet here I am, guilty, and faced with a choice to stay or go – confronted by you, who will justifiably consider me as part of the problem because of the time in which I lived. You, all of you, will credit us with having made a critical decision, one way or the other, that changed the world. I feel this weight.

I know you're still thinking: *You should have seen it coming*. History repeats itself, but she only reveals herself once she has already passed, like fleeting pages that turn themselves before we have finished reading. Time in my now is merely a blur to me, as it is in yours to you.

I can remember the last time I saw the ocean. I stared out at the horizon, squinting into focus the edge where the sky met the sea. Two infinite blue landscapes split by a single line. Just like you and me, dear Friend...

Forever,
Jute