

125 years ago

In accordance with the recent destruction of our many beloved buildings, we have issued a new law. It shall not be voted on, and it shall go into effect immediately. In our day and age, too many people are feral; running amuck in the streets and terrorizing every place they go. With Law-G, perpetrators will be sentenced to death. In memory of the only few years the United Southeastern Front was at peace with the United Northwestern Front, we shall be using the same form of punishment: the guillotine. We hope this will help to straighten out our streets and that it will save more lives than are extinguished. Thank you.

10 years ago

"Daddy, Daddy! Can I come with you to work?" I asked excitedly. My dad smiled at me and ruffled my hair.

"I don't know Leon; I don't know if you can handle it," he replied back.

"I'm five years old," I said puffing my chest out triumphantly. "I can handle anything." My dad laughed and threw me into the air.

"Alright, sport, you got it," I cheered and followed him out to his car. I squirmed in my seat for the entire trip, and I was out of the car before it had fully stopped. My father ran after me and grabbed me mid-step.

"Slow down there pal," he said between gasps. "We have to wait for another half hour until the prisoner is ready." I nodded glumly and kicked at the dirt around me.

"Hey now, cheer up," my dad said as he led me towards the large stadium looming before us. "How about we have a look around."

"Yay!" I said as I jumped into the air. We entered through the large open doorway and I gasped. The stadium was huge, with seats covering the entire outside wall. My dad noticed my amazement and chuckled.

"Later, every single one of those seats will be filled up,"

“No way!” I said in astonishment. I wandered away and studied the large wooden structure standing before me. At the top was a big flat piece of shining metal, and the sun glinting off of it blinded me.

“Admiring the guillotine, huh?” I jumped and turned to see my dad standing over me. I nodded and returned my gaze to the amazing contraption.

“Come on, it’s time to go get ready,” my father said as he lead me out of the stadium and into a small carpeted room. We each put on a crisp tuxedo and greased our hair back. My dad stuck his long black hair into a slick ponytail. I tried to do the same, but my hair was still slightly too short. We looked at our reflections and I giggled. I looked absolutely nothing like his son, with his black tuxedo to complement his black hair and my white tuxedo to go with my white-blonde hair.

“Ready?” he asked me. I nodded, suddenly nervous. We reentered the stadium and sure enough, each seat was occupied by an excited villager. All of the exits were given at least six guards suited in clean, black armor that gleamed brightly in the sunlight. I smiled at them, and they ignored me. I continued on, sweat forming on my palms. My dad gave a big speech, and once he was finished, he escorted a bald middle aged man up to the giant contraption. My eyes widened and I jumped and clapped; this was the moment I had been waiting for. The man was strapped to a platform and lowered down; his head dangling over a wooden ledge directly below the sheet of metal. The villagers cheered, and I covered my ears in a failed attempt to block out the deafening roar. My dad pulled a lever and the piece of metal crashed down onto the old man’s neck. His head landed with a soft thud in a waiting basket. He was dead; just like that, he was gone, and everyone was *cheering*. I was suddenly sickened by everything going on around me. I threw my hands to my stomach and threw up. My dad dragged me out of the stadium and into an awaiting limo. I cried for the entire trip, and once we were home, I retreated into my room. A while later, my dad walked in with my mom. They were both acting suspicious, and my dad seemed to be hiding something behind his back. I wiped my eyes, and they both came over to me.

"I'm sorry you had to see that," my dad said softly. "I guess you weren't ready after all." I nodded grimly and gave him a hug. Suddenly I felt a sharp stab in my neck. I yelped in pain and pulled out of the hug. My dad was holding an emptied syringe in his hand. I dropped down onto my bed, my body feeling as though it were filled with lead. My mind began to swim and my eyes drooped.

"I'm sorry, Leon, but this is for your own good," my mom said right before she left me alone with my dad.

"All right sport, listen up," he said in a harsh tone. "You will fall asleep after I leave your room. Tomorrow morning you will wake up, and you will have forgotten everything that happened today. Understand?"

"Yes," I mumbled quietly. My dad smiled and gave me a pat on the head. My eyes closed, and the next morning I awoke in a wonderful mood.

"Morning, Daddy!" I said happily. "Today feels like a good day!"

Present Day

"Are you ready for tomorrow?"

"I guess,"

I lie in my bed and stare at the stars, lost in my thoughts. Tomorrow is the day I gain my dad's job, and he is sent away to "the probe." When a child reaches the age of fifteen, he takes over the parent of the same sex's job, and the parent is either sent away to be dissected for future inventions that are "necessary" and will "help" mankind or left to continue caring for younger siblings. My mom is staying home only because of my younger sister. When she is of age, she will inherit the house and my mom will join my dad at "the probe." Tomorrow I am forced to become what my dad is, and I don't even know what he does; he would never tell me. Whenever I ask my dad if he really wanted to do whatever he does, and he always says the same thing: I can't even remember a life before my job. I close my eyes and try to push all of my

apprehensive thoughts away; I try to be excited, but I can't. I don't remember falling asleep, but I must have, because suddenly I'm being shaken awake.

"It's time to get ready," my dad says as he pulls me out of bed, and I groan. I shower and my dad shows me how to grease my hair and pull it back into a tight ponytail. I put on a tuxedo so clean and white that it seems to shine in the sun. I stare at my formal look in the mirror, and my heart speeds up; something seems familiar about the image. I can just barely see a young me, standing in front of a mirror wearing a similar white tuxedo, but my hair still too short to pull back. I snap out of my daze when I realize that my dad is staring at me. I give him one of my winning smiles and put on the crisp white gloves waiting for me on my desk. I take a deep breath and walk out of my room.

"Let's do this," I say, trying to sound brave. We walk outside and my mom and sister hug me goodbye. Now that I'm about to become the man of the household, I will be assigned my own house and my own wife. I will probably never see either of them ever again. I pull away from the hug and step into the limo and sigh. The interior is white; the color white is beginning to hurt my eyes. We make the trip in an uncomfortable silence; neither of us knowing what to say. When we make it, I stare at the vaguely familiar stadium, and the same feeling from earlier in the mirror returns. I'm about to say something, when I'm pulled into a small room. My dad fills out sheet after sheet of paperwork, and I wring my hands nervously. A half hour later, the papers are turned in, and I'm telling my dad goodbye.

"You're on your own after this, sport," he says pulling me in. I smirk and give him a soft punch; my dad hasn't called me sport since I was five.

"Good luck," I tell him, and he wipes his eyes.

"See you on the other side," my dad says seriously. "And remember." I wait for him to finish his sentence. I cock my head slightly and he gives a slight laugh. "That's it. Just 'remember.'" he says giving me one last hug. I am "escorted" away from him. Once we are out of view of everyone, my "escorts" lift me up in the air and throw me hard into the ground.

While I'm still disoriented, they place me against a cold table and strap me to it. The tight restraints restrict my chest slightly too much, and I moan from the pain.

"What's going on?" I say after a few seconds. The two "escorts" exchange a look.

"He's going to forget anyway," One says to the other. He shrugs and turns to me.

"In order to have you fully take over your father's job without objection, we have to do a full memory wipe combined with a brainwashing video," he says as if it's nothing. I panic and try to pull away, but the restraints are too tight.

"Hold still kid," one says as he shoves my head to one side. I cringe as he inserts a large needle into my neck. All at once, my memories from my childhood return. From the excitement before I went to see my dad's work to the terror of after. It flashes for a brief moment and then it fades away just as quickly as it came. Slowly every single one of my memories fades in and out in a similar fashion, and soon I'm merely an empty shell tied up to a table. The two men standing in front of me nod at each other, and they insert another needle into my neck. The pain adds to my confusion of where and who I am, and I begin to cry. The two men laugh, and more tears stream down my face. Whatever was in the needle takes effect after a few minutes, and my thoughts dissipate. A video screen is placed in front of me, and it shows an informational video on how wonderful and necessary executioners are. At the very end, the video goes dark but the sound continues with a chant.

"You want to be an executioner." It says over and over again. My blank mind finds solace in it, and I begin to chant along with the video. Louder and louder, I repeat the phrase until my throat hurts. Finally the video ends, and my restraints are removed.

"Are you ready to accept your job?" the men say in unison. I nod, and they each smile approvingly. We walk out into the awaiting stadium, and the crowd erupts into cheers. One of the men hands me a microphone, and I know exactly what to do.

"Welcome, everyone from all around," I say in a charismatic voice. "Today we are gathered for the execution of..." I glance down at a sheet that I don't remember taking. "...of

Bernard Gustafson. He has committed many terrible crimes, including murder and larceny. He will be executed after we have all said the pledge of allegiance.

I pledge my loyalty, and my heart, to our beloved southeastern front. To our leader, for which we stand. The better nation, with liberty and justice for all

I walk over to the awaiting lever and take a deep breath; something about this feels very wrong, and my hand remains glued to my side. The man notices my hesitation and walks over to me angrily.

“Do it,” he hisses in my ear. My hand shoots out and yanks the lever down. With a swift and satisfying thunk, the criminal’s head lands in the basket. I stare at it, and laugh. My laugh grows stronger and stronger until I’m completely hysterical. I can’t stop, and even once I’m out of the stadium I continue laughing. Tears stream down my face, and the image of the head falling into the basket repeats itself over and over again in my mind. Through my blurry tear-filled vision, I see that the two men are still there. One pulls out a gun and I feel something hit my chest. There is no pain; I am numbed by my hysterics. The world fades away, and right before I completely lose consciousness, I hear the two men whisper to each other.

“It’s a shame really, considering how good his father was,”

“Yeah, well, it didn’t work out. We’ll get someone new, and this atrocity will be sent away to “the probe,”