

Short Story

Josh woke to the sound of his alarm clock, groggily he turned to switch it off before it woke the rest of the house. A large 4 greeted him, blinking in his face. He didn't enjoy getting up at this time, in fact he despised it. In his mind it was the worst reminder everything that had gone wrong, but he got up anyway. Making his way downstairs to the kitchen he paused to look out the window. It was still earlier than most people were awake, even those working, and the world seemed a little more peaceful. The air itself seemed fresher, not yet disturbed by the smog of the city. Continuing on to the kitchen Josh prepared himself a cup of instant coffee. Wincing, he choked it down. Josh always bought the sort with added caffeine, the taste was absolutely wretched, but no one bought coffee for the taste anyways, and Josh needed the caffeine to work in the morning. Most mornings he would add a drop of gin as well, but bootleg liquor was becoming harder and harder to come by, and in the process it was becoming more expensive. Bundling himself in his warmest coat Josh made his way out the door. His coat did pitifully poorly in protecting him from the cold. Josh scowled as the icy wind nipped at him through the deteriorating pieces of plaid shirt and denim that ran across his jacket in colorful patterns.

Josh made his way to the train tracks, this was his preferred route to anywhere in the city. It was out of the way enough that he never got hassled by bums, no one paid to much attention the tracks anymore. Josh only hoped that they wouldn't get torn up and developed in the near future. Before too long Josh started to warm up from the walking and he started to feel a bit more optimistic about the day.

Arriving at work was always a trying part of Josh's day. It wouldn't have been so bad if he had a better relationship with his boss, but unfortunately this was not the case. His boss seemed to hate everything about him, giving him the most difficult jobs possible and was always giving him a hard time. Josh worked at a convenience store downtown. He frequently had to deal with shoplifters, a task made harder by the fact that the storeowner refused to purchase any means of protection against this. Josh's job was to open the store and then work the register and any other tasks his boss assigned him until 5pm. When Josh arrived at the store he noticed a note attached to the door, it was a notice from the boss, telling Josh that the lot had been purchased, and that Josh no longer had a job.

Josh was stunned, he had known for a long time that the shop would most likely close before long, but he had expected to be warned, he had expected time to look for a new job. He had no idea what to do next, no idea who would be looking for work. No one, he suspected, would have an opening on such short notice, it felt as if it was an almost futile search.

As Josh stepped out onto the street to begin his search the rain started. There hadn't been any rain for almost two days and Josh had been getting an idea, ridiculous as it seemed to

him when he thought about it to himself, that the rain had been taking a break. This theory seemed to be broken. Josh put his head down and continued to wade through the large raindrops. It was a sickeningly familiar feeling, the way they struck his head, trickling down his face, stinging his eyes and leaving their bitter taste residing in his mouth.

Josh often wondered about the rain. He remembered as a boy playing outside during the sunny days, and it seemed as if there used to be many more of those sunny days. Josh had heard many people speak of the rain, of its possible reasons. He'd heard them talking about jet streams, and the timing of runoff. None of it made any sense to Josh, as far as he was concerned the past was history.

Josh trudged on in the direction of the metro station, hoping that it was still early enough that it would not be a long wait. Arriving at the stop, he began to make his way down the long sets of stairs. The air had an unwelcoming smell, stinking of the men and woman who had made these stairs their home for the night, and left before they could get hassled. Old campaign posters littered the walls all the way down, giving messages of new promises, new deals for the American people, and one announcing the progress in the development of the hydrogen car. When Josh came to the bottom of the stair he stepped into line at the toll booth and began to fish around in his pockets for change, hoping that he had enough to make it through. It had been a rough day, and the last thing he wanted to do was try and sneak his way in, it was a good job running the booths, and the people running were not usually eager to risk their job after letting someone get in without paying.

Fortunately, Josh would not have to deal with this problem today, he paid his fare to the booth attendant and dropped his copper coin down its slot. Quickly he made his way to the platform, he didn't really feel like jostling his way through the crowd to secure a spot on the first train, so he settled down on one of the benches, carefully picking a spot that seemed less dirty than the others. Eventually the train came and left, and Josh got up and made his way over to the edge of the platform. After a minute or so the crowd filled in behind him and he had to concentrate so as to not get pushed over the edge of the platform, when the train arrived Josh was disappointed to see that it was already quite full, this would be an uncomfortable ride. Josh was pushed roughly onto the train, quickly he grabbed a rail so he wouldn't be pushed across the car to the other door, an undesirable place to stand, mostly because if you came to stop where the door opened, you would be forced out on the platform and have to wait for the next train.

After about 20 minutes the train got to the stop Josh was looking for, he pushed his way off the train and started walking towards the exit of the station.

It was only a short walk to the docks at the edge of town, but it was raining harder than ever, and Josh was in a bad mood. Usually Josh would try to use alternative routes when he walked anywhere, even though his clothes weren't anything special, it was still obvious to most that he wasn't homeless, and this was as good as an invitation for trouble.

Arriving at the docks Josh took a moment to look out over the water, he was told by some that this city never used to be a coastal one, and that the seas had come to it. Josh looked at the old oilrigs out lining the horizon. He could have gotten a job there, had they not closed down. Josh made his way over to the dock manager, and asked him if he had any work. The manager shook his head sadly, and told Josh that if he checked back in every now and then he might find an opening, but as of now there was nothing. Josh thanked the man for his time and left to go on his way. He realized he didn't have enough money for a return trip on the subway so he would have to walk. The rain didn't have any signs of letting up, but Josh didn't mind. Right now the rain was the least of his worries.

Afterward

The premise of my story is in a future United States, where the coast has changed due to the polar ice caps and global warming, the economy has collapsed, due to too little and effort in change from dependence on oil and the resulting industrial depression. The weather has gone to extremes of continuous acid rain in some parts of the country. This is because of the change in ocean temperature which in turn has changed the jet stream. There is a severe lack of transportation, resulting in everyone riding the subway. All of the small businesses have been bought out by larger companies as a result of the depression, and the country has no good alternative energy source.