

"A Sound Like Breaking Glass,"
1-81-1¹

My mind was scratching itself. It evaded its comforting regular thoughts. It wanted answers.

Who are you, Delilah?

It echoed through the abyss of my now racing mind.

Who are you, Delilah?

I sought to answer it the way I knew Hilt would.

I am Delilah. Citizen 0270. Analyst at the wing of Health and Humanities at the School of Life. Currently working on research regarding the creation of super-human cells.

What defines you, Delilah?

Hilt's words again found their way out of my mouth.

I am a top research analyst in the wing of Health and Humanities at the School of Life. Currently working on...

My words trailed off. I knew they would be useless against this Thing interrogating me.

I stood up, and looked around.

“All I need is here, in this room.” My monotone voice sounded dull. But the Research that I analyzed showed that all a human needs for happiness is food, sleep, comfort, and entertainment. Why did I feel empty? Nothing was missing. Something was missing.

I raised my voice this time.

“It’s all here. Everything I need. Right here!” I yelled.

Still my voice sounded dead. That thought surprised me. Death. The last unspoken in our society. Here anything is permissible. The foulest language or the most repulsive acts are accepted, but Death was different. It’s the one thing nobody can stop. We take pills to elongate our lives, and we have the best medical systems possible, but when Death is hungry, who can stop it? My thoughts ran in off-centered circles, and I looked like a monster in the mirrored walls. It wasn’t supposed to be like that. I was supposed to be equal.

Equality was highly important, second only to the Self. We are all trained to put ourselves first in everything, unless doing so will make us unequal to others. Now there are a few exceptions. People have different jobs, different rankings in jobs, and different

tastes. But we are all strive to be as uniform as possible, while continuing to look out for the Self above all else.

Meanwhile I stepped outside. I sat down on the ground, surrounded by tall buildings. No one else was awake, so I fixed my bloodshot eyes on the sky. I was aware that was not really the sky, just a projection. It was grey. Like everything else here. All shades of grey. Without a sound, someone sat down beside me.

“Grenwick,” a voice said. The person extended a hand in my direction. There was an “R” branded into the palm.

“I’d rather choke than talk to you,” I said. At first embarrassment crept up into me, but I forced it down. Someone like this didn’t deserve niceties.

“Understood,” the person laughed, “so I’ll do the talking.”

“How about, ‘No!’,” I muttered, nervously, rubbing my hand across my hairless scalp.

“I’ll ignore that. As I said, my name’s Grenwick. Yes, I’m a regressionist. But I think that you could gain a lot by actually listening to me.”

“Like what? Do you even know who I am, regressionist worm?” My insult was obviously tacked on and useless.

“My name is *Grenwick*. And I haven’t the slightest idea who you are. But I also know that it doesn’t matter, since you probably don’t know who you are either.”

“How dare you!” I sputtered. I began to tell him about my research. but he stopped me.

“I know who you think you are. I was asking was who you really are. Do you know?”

“No,” I whimpered, “I’m so lost. Can you help me?”

My eyes fluttered open. Everything was normal. Everything was right. Everything was so wrong.

“You have to be at work early. You have to finish that report. You have to get that promotion. Head analyst! But why?” I asked myself.

“What did I just hear, Delilah? Did you just question progress? Should I call the ARF?” It was Hilt. My landlord. My boss. My best friend.

“Hello, Hilt. I’m just tired. Feel free to exercise rights as landlord and let yourself in, by the way.”

“Morning, Delilah. I was just kidding. Hey, get me a piece of cheese.”

I tried to ignore the question stomping around in my head, but I couldn't.

"Hilt?"

"Mmm?"

"If I was in the way of progress, what would you do?"

"Remove you."

"Kill me?"

"If necessary."

Panic caught in my throat. "Hilt, are you serious?"

"Nothing is more important to me than me. So work around that." His face was hard.

There was no laughter anywhere.

"Here's your cheese," I said.

On my way to work I thought about what Grenwick said before he left.

“Tomorrow at seven. 778 Eleventh Street. Walk so we know we can let you in. Let your hair grow, and take out the eyeSees.”

I stopped walking and gently removed the disks from my eyes. My eyes immediately burned and itched, so I replaced them. I forgot to shave my head that day, and little hairs were growing. I put on a hat. I couldn't concentrate at work. All I could think about was meeting Grenwick.

At six thirty I walked to Eleventh Street and knocked on the door.

“Take off your hat,” the opener, a person with disgustingly long hair, said.

“Welcome!” she smiled after seeing my fuzzy head.

I was taken to a room filled with people. I walked over to Grenwick.

“Hello, Delilah,” Grenwick said, leading me through the crowd to the front of the room.

“This is Delilah,” he proclaimed, “What, Delilah, is the most important thing in life?”

“The Self.”

“What if I were to tell you it is not the Self, nor never was?”

“You would be wrong,” I said.

“So the pursuit of pleasure for the Self has brought you peace?”

“No.” I am fighting back tears. “It brings only pleasure. And once the pleasure is gone, there is only emptiness. I’m so empty.”

“We all are,” Grenwick says, “but we don’t have to be, Delilah. We can be filled. What do you know about God?”

“I was taught that He is a myth.”

“Well, Delilah, God is not a myth. He is real.”

“I don’t need God, Grenwick.”

“I see. Why not?”

“I just don’t. Now tell me how to fill the emptiness and soothe the ache.”

“That’s how.”

“No.” My world was spinning. I was angry at Grenwick. I ran away, tugging my hat down as I go.

When I get back to my Cube, a note is lying on the floor. It is from Grenwick. I want to burn it. I want to read it. I read it.

“Delilah-

You told us that the reason you live is to serve the Self. I want to present something drastically different.

Stop serving the Self. Serve others. The Self is never satisfied anyways. You can try to sate it with this world, but it won't work, Delilah. The only thing that can bring you peace is God.

Please listen. If there is no God, then there is not point to life, right? You already know that. But, Delilah, if there is a God, then how much more wonderful could our dull, dead lives be? I mean, isn't it better to believe something that isn't real than to deny the truth? A guy named Pascal was the one that thought of that. I found a book he wrote one day. It's outlawed of course. I think that you would like it, though. If you want to borrow it, you can.

Grenwick.”

I sat on the floor for a long time. Then I stood up, ripped out my eyeSees, ignored the pain and walked out the front door. I looked up at the sky. It was an odd color, and it was shedding light of its own.

“Can’t you see the light from the sky?” I asked a passerby. He just looked at me and laughed. I kept walking, but suddenly was struck by an intense desire to take off my hat. My head felt deliciously light and cool. As I walked down the street, feeling the bristle-like top of my head, and staring at the bright sky, I heard a sound like breaking glass.