

Waste

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by [dotpng](#)

Summary

Sleep is a waste of time, and Cloudbank is a waste of him.

“Your hands are shaking,” Grant points out, when Royce fumbles and drops his cigarette for the third time.

“You do need to sleep sometime, you know that.” He’s right, Royce knows, and yet he can’t prevent a flash of irritation. He’s an adult, now, but Grant, he still has this habit, this habit of concern, like they’re both back in the office where they first met, him seventeen and precocious, requesting early read/write access to city planning, Grant thirty-five and just greying at the temples and answering *put out that cigarette, Mr. Bracket, if you want to get anywhere at all*.

“That’s what this is for,” Royce mutters, gestures vaguely at the coffee mug sitting on the table beside him, next to Grant’s cup of tea. “Doesn’t do much for the tremor, though, to be honest.”

“Really though, Royce.”

“Either way I can’t sleep right now, not with this nonsense going on. Later, maybe... But even then.”

Royce sighs, slumps in his seat. The headache from that afternoon is back in full force, suddenly, like a memory of frustration, and all at once the low lighting of Grant’s kitchen seems too bright, the coffee too bitter.

“I’ve never liked sleeping, much, did you know that? Ever since childhood. Used to get in trouble for reading under the blankets past lights out. It always struck me as ridiculous, I think. Squandering half my day on unconsciousness? What a waste... So much to do instead, so much to discover.” He snorts. “And then they wondered why I was so far ahead of my class.”

Grant raises his brows. “You’re only human,” he remarks, only half-joking. “Act like it, for once.”

“And what? Sleep away the hours, never think too hard, vote on another bridge... A park, maybe? Vote it down within a month, back up in two... It never changes, Grant. It never does. I’m stuck with them... stuck with the voters, endlessly recycling last season’s trends. Ever-shifting but dismissing every novelty, every innovation I come up with. What a waste! I’m so tired of it.”

His hands shake, still, and he hates it, how it gives away his weakness, his three hours of sleep in the past five days and his tenth cup of coffee. How he can’t control it. Can’t seem to control anything, these days.

“I know *I’m* human. It’s *them* I have my doubts about.”

Grant nods, serious now, stirs a spoonful of sugar into his tea and for a moment the only sound in the empty kitchen is the clinking of his spoon. Royce doesn’t need to elaborate. It’s always the same *them*.

“I mean that bridge I designed. You saw it, right? The arches, the greenery, the benches. Beautiful. Functional! Everything you could possibly want. Marvelous thing.” He buries his head in his hands. “It lost the vote, today. They put a pond there instead. A pond, Grant!”

Grant grunts as he sips his tea, gone cold by now. “It’s really a shame,” he replies, after a pause. “All these decades in Administration; so much change I’ve seen but not a hint of evolution. When I met you I thought you showed promise, but it doesn’t matter, does it? The city repeats its cycles, endlessly, and all these people... they don’t realize it just loops back around. They don’t know what they really want, there lies the dilemma.”

Royce sighs. “And what do you suggest we do about that?”

“Well, the two of us know better. Instead of letting them make bad decisions... we could just *tell* them, somehow, couldn’t we?”

Tell them? He considers it a while, sorts through his options. Smiles, finally. “Yes, Grant,” he says. “I do believe we could.”

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