

## Impending Doom

He was coming back home along the main street. The working day went terrible, which, of course, had a negative effect on his mood. But there was nothing to do, the day was not over yet, and he had an important meeting planned for the evening, which could radically change his immediate future.

He was completely immersed in thoughts, so he was walking very quickly, not noticing what was happening around him. He just wanted to come back to the apartment, sit on the sofa, spread his toes, so to relax. The wind lifted the hair above the forehead, the houses were above the moving bodies of people, the trees rustled in a mature autumn, and the sun was buried in the gray shadows of everyday routine life.

In all this movement, he did not even notice how people began to disappear. With every step he made there were less and less people. When there were no people left in the street, he unexpectedly looked around and froze; he was completely alone. The cars parked on the road were empty, the shops were empty, the dogs with leashes around their necks were running without their owners, barking at the ruffled cats hiding in the canopy of the city's trees. He took another step and another, he walked with his mouth open until the barking of the dogs ceased. The cats climbed down from the trees and began to run along the sidewalk.

He was puzzled by what was happening, but that didn't stop him from continuing to walk. With the next step he took, cats began to disappear, then birds, insects...; then he could no longer stand it and yelled but all he got in response was unshakable silence. The only thing he wanted to do was to return home. He pulled out his cell phone and started calling but no one answered him, as if he was the only one in the whole white world. Then, being in complete horror at the realization of what was happening, he began to move towards his house.

First, cars disappeared, then poles, trees, mailboxes, garbage cans, things disappeared from shop windows, newspapers from kiosks, then kiosks themselves, windows and doors in buildings, the buildings began to disappear; even the wind disappeared.

He stopped when there was nothing left but the road on the ground and the sky above his head. Emptiness, unbearable, all-devouring emptiness. He lifted the hem of his trousers, and found that a sock was missing on one leg. Following the next step, the second sock disappeared. Then shoes, trousers, jacket, shirt, T-shirt, and his underwear.

Everything was gone, he was completely naked. But he didn't stop walking. First, toenails began to disappear, then the nails on his hands, then his ears, nose, fingers, hands as if they never existed, then his mouth, genitals, neck; when the toes disappeared, he stopped. He looked like a worm covered in skin, whose eyes stared into nowhere. He looked ahead, barely keeping his balance, and stepped forward, hoping that everything would return but instead he plunged into darkness. "There is no road

ahead”, – he thought.

He decided not to go in that direction any further.

He began to walk back; and step by step everything began to return to its place. His eyesight returned, limbs returned, buildings returned, windows and doors, cars...; everything returned except for people and animals. If there is no road home, then where should he go?

But with every step that separated him further away from home, all sorts of things appeared around him, blocking his way. There were refrigerators, washing machines, televisions, trees, cars, all kinds of experimental structures among those objects... They appeared on top of each other, forming an impenetrable wall in front of him, behind which people began to scream. He started yelling at them but the people behind the wall did not respond. Everything around him was filled with rubbish. And suddenly he realized that there was no way out of this road: on the one hand, there was emptiness, on the other hand, clutter.

In his not so sober thoughts, he turned his gaze to the left: there was a dark door behind the white refrigerators. He climbed over them, climbed the steps and knocked. The door opened and I appeared in front of him:

– Yes.

– Could you let me in? – the doomed man asked with an apologetic look.

– Sorry? – I did not get it at first.

– I have nowhere else to go.

– Nowhere? But...

– I don't know, I just...

– Come in, – I didn't want to wait for his explanation.

He entered, and I looked around before closing the door. People were walking along the street, cars were passing by on the road, everything was ordinary for me, without any strange things. I offered him tea. He told me everything that happened to him. Of course, he tried to justify himself, referring to his psyche, and he tried to reassure me that he understood everything that was happening to him was only a figment of his imagination, which I could only laugh at.

I didn't laugh though because I thought it was nonsense, no. I took him to the second floor, where people like him were sitting. Their number was growing every day. So I laughed, realizing that my turn would soon come, and I, like them, would be stuck between emptiness and clutter, without understanding the reason for my disappearance.