

“They said that he had a bomb.”

“I heard that he was poisoning the produce.”

“Whatever it was I’m sure he deserved it.”

The bus terminal was teeming with passengers waiting for buses that might never leave. Across the street Mike, Moses, and Gabe sat with illicit cigs perched on their lips and the wrappings of lunch scattered around them. They alone knew when the buses would leave.

The State was all about efficiency. The buses would run on time. People would work a every second of their shift. Overtime was not permitted. Curfew occurred exactly at sunset. Everything worked like clockwork. In theory. The three bus drivers were not afraid of the efficiency of The State. They were friends with the local peace officer. Or if not friends, then they paid him enough to keep him happy. This was the truth about The State: if you kept your head down and paid your bribes no one would bother you.

“What’d ya mean he deserved it?” Mike asked in a bored voice as he lit up another cig. The crowds in the terminal sighed as the other two did the same.

“Well he was obviously guilty of something,” Moses said playing with one of his lukewarm fries. “Everyone is nowadays.”

“But does that mean they should get dragged off a bus? He was probably just trying to get home.”

“Eh what’s one green grocer more or less.”

Gabe let out a low rumble at this. He was a big man, in another world he would have been a linebacker. In this one he was a bus driver. Though the other two always suspected that he had connections within The Party. They did not mind his company. “It was my bus.”

This only confirmed their suspicions.

“So what did he do?” Asked Moses as he tossed his fry toward a nearby rat. The creature jumped on the grease stick as if it was about to runaway. The rat shook it until the potato’s neck snapped and ketchup flew everywhere.

Gabe eyed it in distaste, “Nothing.”

Moses and Mike exchanged looks. “When you say nothing...you mean he

didn't pay his bribes?"

"He tried."

"Did he comply with the officer?"

Gabe grunted in consent.

"But he had a bomb. Or poison."

Gabe just stared at them.

"So you're saying that he did nothing wrong. At all."

"Yup."

Mike and Moses just stared at each other. "You can't just say that big guy."

Gabe grunted and moved to stub out his cig. "I've got a bus to drive."

"He can't say that can he?" Mike asked in awe as they watched the big man walk toward the terminal.

"No he can't," sighed Moses. "Damn him." Moses reached into his pocket and withdrew a handgun. With another sigh he squeezed the trigger. Gabe dropped to the ground. There were no screams or shouts only a murmur of surprise.

"Damn him," Moses said again. He stood and scattered the rest of his fries for the rats and made his way passed the body and to the terminal. Mike watched for a second and then stubbed out his own cig and followed.

Only two of the buses were on time that day. In the street behind the terminal the rats swarmed. Food was aplenty for them these days but they still enjoyed fresh meat whenever they could get it.