

His hands are grubby, grubby, grubby. It's genetic, they used to tell him. That want was there since he was a child.

Or maybe it wasn't. Sometimes you catch it. They call it trauma: turns out your brain is like a computer, and trauma is the thing that changes the wires around and makes you do all sorts of things. Some people drink, some people obsess. Some are addicts. Some hurt themselves, some hurt others. Most aren't that obvious at all; they react weirdly sometimes, and maybe don't do things they used to do anymore. The mind can get weird in many different ways.

As for him, he grabs things. He makes them his. And then, he changes. It's what he's done his whole life.

Right now he's a clerk. Clerks do busywork. They go around and do all the menial tasks the agents are too important to do; write the papers, deliver information, work maintenance, keep the wheel of bureaucracy turning. Clerks have no need for fancy weapons. All of them are issued a handgun and then they go out as normal. None of them last long. Turns out a bullet will deter any normal human who wanders in, but does nothing to a monster or what-not charging in like they own the place.

And oh, they own the place. Agents spend all their time catering to their needs and desires. Apparently it produces energy, and that's what the company sells. But like any prime material, if they don't keep the monsters happy, then they start killing.

The agents get similar treatment. They're resources, you see. No agents, no one to please the monsters. So they're trained for their jobs. Sometimes the monsters give them gifts. And the cameras... they stare at them. It is endless, loving attention. Dangerous, yes. But nothing good exists without a little danger.

He's not an agent, so no one sees him. He's just a clerk like everybody else. Just some guy with a suit and a gun and an armband that says he belongs to Information.

This bothers him. He could be so much more.

Sometimes he daydreams about it. Huge thing is coming his way. Agents are panicking, ripping their eyes out left and right. Not him, though. He's calm and collected, nothing but nerves as he aims the little shooter straight for its eye and he fires. The bullet connects and they're knocked back, brains blasted into the walls like primordial stew. The Captains don't praise him. Of course they don't, who praises a clerk? But for just the slightest moment they exchange glances, and he can see the respect they are so afraid to give.

Hours pass. Then days. He repeats the fantasy in his head again and again, as if it'll somehow make it more true. But that day never comes. He's still just a clerk.

One day, he finds a wrench on some other employee's toolbox. It's heavy. The handle feels right in his hands, his fingertips caressing the cold steel over and over like prayer beads. Over and over he practices his swing, the weight of it forcing a wide arch, its landing bending the old metal pipes with a maddening CLANG.

Yes. He thinks he'll borrow it from now on. Its owner is paste on his feet anyway, her back raked to pieces by the beast of the day. Not like she'll be using it.

He has a **wrench** now. *His wrench*. It turns heads at the cafeteria, other clerks murmuring amongst each other: *did they see that guy? Where's his gun?? Is that what they issued him??* They all call him '**that guy with the wrench**'. He jams a few agents in the face with it, whenever they start screaming about how nothing matters and we're all going to die or whatever, and the other clerks feel a little bit safer for it. It's red and it's shiny and it's heavy and *it's his wrench*, and now the others don't just call him a clerk. He's not *just* a clerk. He's the **Wrench Guy**. And it's not what he wanted, but it makes him happy.

The fun doesn't last long. The novelty of a different weapon wears off quickly, and several dozen dead bodies later, no other clerks remember a time before he was the Wrench Guy.

So they start picking up their own weapons. Oh, that guy has a kitchen knife. That girl brought her pa's revolver. That one uses their fists. At some point they stopped issuing handguns-- to cut costs, probably. But everyone wields what they like because it doesn't matter, and now he's just another weird clerk again. He just happens to have a wrench.

But he has a plan. Any day now, it will happen. The opportunity will come if he simply just waits.

He's listening to his co-workers talk about nothing in particular when that huge bird with the thousand unblinking eyes escapes and the power goes out. As they all sit in the darkness, waiting for the agents to deal with the rampaging beast, a light engulfs the girl right beside him; some A-name like Anna or Avery or whatever. He sees as her eyes fill with unnatural wonder, mesmerized by some force beyond this world, and she shambles out into the hallway towards nothing in particular. The rest of them rush out, they call out to her and jump on her and do all they can to stop her from inching ever closer, and he's standing there, watching it all play out, alarms blaring in his ears, the stench of fresh blood hitting his nostrils.

It is at that moment that he knows that the day has finally come. This is the day they'll see him again.

The other clerks don't notice when he slinks out of the hallway and into the emergency stairs, leaving them to their own affairs. He catches some of the carnage on the way by-- bodies fall off the railings missing all above the legs, employees wailing all the while.

The manager doesn't notice when one of the agents-- some gruff-looking guy with an eye in his suit-- decides that he is done being in this death trap of a job. He finds him hunched over, banging his head against the wall, that same wonder in his eyes as that girl from before. He's bewitched like the rest of them, and yet his mind cracked under the pressure. All he wants now is the stillness of death: the paradoxical desire to desire nothing. So he gives him a hand, of course. He bashes the wrench into his skull over and over, cracking the back of his head until he finally hits something soft. He brings it down one last time and it bashes with a sickening squelch. The light leaves the agent's eyes, and all is quiet.

They don't notice when he takes his suit, its fabric pristine even as his skull lays wide open on the orange body bag he's stuffed him in. It's tragic, really, but he has to deliver this to a different department. He gives some platitudes, but not too many. No death is mourned in this place, after all. Once the bag is zipped shut, no one remembers that agent again.

They sure as hell don't notice when he spends his night in the maintenance room, taking turns shivering and sweating for the whole night. Not until another clerk opens the door and he falls forward, breaking out into a million apologies, saying he's just been moved around, he got lost, that he'd like to go see the Information captain. The new guy has never seen him or his wrench, knows him not, cares for him not; he shrugs and points off to his right. *Just don't be late*, the clerk mumbles.

The captain notices he wasn't there before-- no agent gets assigned an EGO suit before they come to work. But he meets their stare, unyielding in his resolve, and when he doesn't flinch they call that good enough. *Welcome to the team*, they say. *Don't use your head like the clerks do, and we'll get along fine.*

For the first time since he got here, he smiles.

Oh, no. They don't notice at all.