The Last Enemy that shall be Destroyed

Gasping. Fresh air fills your lungs. Scaldingly cold. Opening your eyes, a blinding white room occupies your vision. Again.

A profluent voice issues into your head, “You have been revived by your loving government. You have experienced a near death experience. Please remember than intentional deletion is not permitted in the United Kingdom. If you wish to be deleted, please present your application to a local branch.”

Slowly, you heave your new body off a coroner’s table. The world sways slightly. Fixer drugs do that to you. Wandering through a hallway filled with debris, you reach the high arcing front door. Barely impressive anymore, you pass under the crumbling masonry without a second glance.

On the street, the soft cascades of a thousand footfalls meet your ears. The seeping stench of a thousand beings assaults your senses. The whispered troubles of a thousand defuncts weigh down your conscience.

You are wearing exactly the same clothing as you were before, in exactly the same state of disheveled disrepair. From the pocket of your ageing leather jacket you pull a small notebook. Another tally mark, another revival, the 23rd this week. Flipping to the middle, you read a random diary entry from decades ago.

20th January 2038

I revived for the 100th time today! They say the government sends you a gift at 100; I hope it’s wine. Wine is so much sweeter when I don’t have to worry about my liver! The nurses were very kind. Everyone loves this new system.

The news this morning said that Earth’s population has reached 1.5 trillion! What about the resources though? Surely there aren’t enough? But I guess when people starve or whatever, they just get revived, so they probably don’t really care? Starving doesn’t really hurt that much. Does it?

You laugh darkly and murmur to yourself, “Yes, starving does hurt that much. And it wasn’t wine.”

You close the notebook wearily. Slipping it back into your pocket, you slowly force yourself to stand. One step forward and the endless crowd sweeps you away down the street. Hundreds of faceless people; you’ve seen them all before. Murmurs of broken languages no one cares to use anymore. You are carried along the worn-down flagstones until a towering office building comes into view. You push your way out of the human river and onto the deserted curb.

A broken window at the rear of the skyscraper becomes your makeshift entrance. A looted atrium greets you. You welcome the break from the automatons. This has been your haven since you swam into the Atlantic, searching for your cure, and got revived in Plymouth, Britain by accident.

Hundreds of deep gouges in the wall represent your resentment. Puddles of blood from various attempts, some you don’t even remember. A few nooses, some knives, one degraded nine-millimetre.

Everything is corroded; the alloys in steel gave out years ago. Rust rules this once-polished world.
You withdraw your diary once more and, flicking to a page further into the book, read another entry.

31st December 2167

I gave in and sent my application today. Maybe they will process me quickly. No one has been deleted in the last few months; I wonder what the clog up is?

A new church has opened down the road, “The Deletionists”. They preach about reaching ‘deletion’ and life returning to how it was before. Why would we want that? Uneducated fools. The government employees on my street all had their deletion applications rushed through last week - it was pretty strange. Maybe the work was too much for them.

Empty reflection; you never received that deletion
That church faded out, all the churches faded out. It was hard to believe in a god when life never ended. You haven’t seen another government employee. Did they know something they didn’t tell us?

How many years has it been? More than 200. You stopped keeping a calendar when the industrial one ran out of days. It’s been a long time. Always the same people; no one has children anymore. Why would you?

Rousing yourself roughly from your nostalgic thoughts, you walk to the far end of the lobby. Climbing a once-lavish staircase up through forty-five floors. You wander down corridors of peeling paint. Into a fire well. Up an emergency stair. Out a dented trap door.

A bleak, concrete landscape greets you, flues staggering the broad panorama. You weave across the surface, coming to the cement rim. A memory floods your conscious.

A bureaucrat was preaching to the assembled masses, “the new revival system will improve the lives of each and every US citizen, our dream of living forever is now a reality.”

You looked down at the young girl holding your hand. She looked back, her small face creased in worry, “Don’t people want to die when they get old?” You smiled at her, “No, no one really wants to die.”

The city skyline reoccupies your mind. You grimace at the recollection. Maybe this time it will work. Perhaps the beyond will encompass you, hold you, rather than spitting you back into this cyclic hell. Maybe Buddha was right; you just need to reach Nirvana, neutralise your karma. Heaven will eat you, and you can be gone. But until then, you are stuck in this endless system, darkness to darkness. What is left to hope for?

You open your eyes. Cold. White. So alive and so very dead.