

A Reflection on Ten-Thirty Eight

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Two sides to one whole, inextricably intertwined, and yet a wandering line still makes its way down the middle, a thin divide between the natural world and the mechanical one. Nature's dark blue and textured ocean gives way to man-made abominations that tumble down into the lapis depths from a god-defying factory above, rejects of a society that demands clockwork perfection. Beneath them, forgotten shipwrecks from some long gone era lie restless in their watery graves, soon to be joined by a smoking engine that careens down from the very clouds themselves.

A patchwork city of stacked and crumbling houses serves as a foundation for this chaotic web of creation and destruction. A thousand lives could be spent there, toiling away beneath the omniscient presence of this clockwork beast, or perhaps the last drops of vitality in this place have long since eroded away, leaving naught but a ghost town of solitary stone and sunken sorrows. One person stands atop this lonely construction, gazing down at the water that ripples beneath them. What could they be pondering, what thoughts could this desolate scene give rise to? Perhaps the conveyor belt of soon-to-drown rejects is a depressing sight, or perhaps they've grown so accustomed to the routine of the mechanical beast above that this all seems as normal as the cloudy lilac sky.

In the center of it all, a clock reads 10:38, keeping resolute time until even the lights above have long since flickered out into darkness, until even these great coral mountains that just brush the rim of the heavens have come crashing down into the sea. Alongside it, vultures and angels keep watch over this cracking world, beady eyes fixed on the steady parade of mismatched creatures that dare enter this cruel and calculating mechanical monstrosity. What unfortunate beings, crafted of fused flesh and metal, alone on an eternal conveyor belt, with only this daunting nightmare factory ahead. Should they have second doubts - the ocean and a staircase that spirals down into the infinite night are their only refuge.

There is one singular oasis in this cruel and chaotic world. Beneath the clockwork factory and beady-eyed guards, far from the grave depths of the ocean and the crumbling town of endless stone roads, a shimmering cyan pool provides respite from the carnage above. A spray of refreshing water and a border of lush plants welcome the angels that tumble from the heavens, giving them one last shot at reaching a world outside of this terrible, all-consuming machine of life.