

# Whole

By Annabelle Smith

I walk through the streets of my town, surrounded by people I have always known, and will always know. The dark sky heightens the electric mood, like a lid put on a bottle that will be shaken. I look from the menacing sky back to the road ahead of me. My eyes dart away from faces masked with distaste and despair as I quicken my pace. I pity them. But it can't be avoided. If I could have, I would have gathered their limbs that lay severed on the ground in an attempt to help. But I couldn't, so I didn't. Now they live with fingers, ears, eyes, or legs missing, jigsaw puzzles with pieces lost forever. A harsh draught sweeps through the street. I walk quicker. Miniscule arrows of water strike my face. Eyes turn upon me, a familiar spark within them. One of condemnation. I wade through their stares, pushing against their silent assaults as I focus my eyes on a marble building. It reaches high into the sky, the pillar of light against the ominous sky. My skin crawls with the accusing eyes I know follow me like they always do. I try to ground myself, I feel my feet, my legs, my torso, my arms, my head. I am whole. I am true.

I step foot on the marble steps, and a serene wave of familiarity washes over me. I turn to see all those who are fixated on me, dispersing like roaches. Brushing fine dust off my suit, I step into the glass elevator that takes me to my office. As it speeds up, I turn to see a line of people waiting anxiously, shrinking until I cannot identify them as people. I turn to step out of the elevator and look down the stairs next to them. They extend down further than I can see, they are stunning. Each stone laid perfectly next to the other forming a perfect whole, not a crack to be seen. No one has ever stepped foot on them, those who have tried to ascend them cannot, this area is only for the whole of heart. Others could only dream to reach the top.

I see my desk, beautiful in its simplicity, but where so many peoples' fates lie. But what power did I have? They had already determined their fates the moment that they lied. I take no account of whatever consequences they face, it is justice. An eye for an eye. My responsibility is to maintain integrity amongst all of us. Honesty is all we have that elevates us from what came before. I was tasked to advance our population, that means what is corrupt must be cut.

I wander over to my desk and open the file that contains today's judgements. I reminisce on the first day I sat here, proud yet intimidated, gazing up, my eyes focussing on the hardened features of the man who taught me. He taught me all that I knew, nurtured me to become the person who sat above all. The person who never falls, who is whole. I was taught of what came before, a world filled with ambiguity, a world filled with danger. He taught me the one rule that protected all of us. 'Do not lie'. I read of all the lies that were told in the past, parasitic, undermining that society. Honesty is what I must adhere to, the legacy I must uphold. I turn and see the neat column of names printed on the wall, simple and true. My predecessors, their lives commemorated by the black text.

I look to the file, and surprisingly there is only one case. I open it and read 'ARIA FRANCIS' across the page with photos printed underneath. I look to her face, and an unnerving emotion sweeps over me. Her face is different from everyone's I have ever seen. It is as though the familiar veil of dismissal that seems to settle on all others has been swept away. It moves me, but I continue to read. It seems as though her house had been routinely searched and she had been found with art. Not many make art anymore. They had learnt not to and now those who do are mocked. Of course, they will get caught and they know that the consequences are severe. There is no need to make art anymore, its foundations lie in lies. It was used in the past to modify the truth and to appeal to something within us something very dangerous. I read about it and its power of persuasion. Creating anything of such nature must be punished. I read the suggested punishment, 'SEPARATION OF DOMINANT HAND'. I agree, but out of pure curiosity I turn the page and gaze upon the deceitful work. Colours jump out at me lulling me into their sinful world. I turn pages and pages, the vivid story hidden within her eyes revealing itself to me. Waves of passion roll over me as I follow the fantasy unfurling like a rose on a spring morning only for it to end.

I turn the last page of the book and a sense of emptiness consumes me, followed by one of resentment. One last sheet of paper lies before me, the sheet that will determine her fate. I stare at it. Her portrait covers the majority of it and below it lies the words, 'Aria Francis is guilty of dishonesty therefore, her dominant hand shall be separated. Signed .....'. I look into her eyes that hold her enigmatic world within. Something feels wrong, I pick up my pen and lower it to the page. A fine yet definite line being produced, the river ink meandering its way over the paper. I gaze at the paper I have made right, feeling content. It reads 'Aria Francis is guilty of dishonesty therefore, her dominant ~~hand~~ arm shall be separated. Signed X.'

