

Psychomancy of Elysian Suite 137 for Departures

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A car swerves on the far side of the road, horn blaring.

*Oh gosh.*

Lights flash.

*Not the kid.*

That's all that runs through their mind.

*Not the kid.*

A second car swerves, leaving tire track marks on the asphalt and concrete road. Pale flecks decorate the dark grey tires that spin around and around, visibly dizzying the figure.

*Not the kid.*

The figure runs out onto the road, hesitating for a moment to avoid a black car and cursing the heat of northern summers. They run out again, dodge around another car – blue this time. A red car slams to a stop to allow them to pass.

*Not the kid.*

A storm of white floods their vision as hundreds of cars seem to pass by at once, cutting them off from their goal.

*Not the kid.*

They hear another horn sound out, droning on from the other side of the highway.

*Not the kid.*

An alarm blares, making drivers hit the brakes and finally giving the figure a chance to run out between the cars.

*Not the kid.*

Finally, they reach the middle island. It's covered in plants, and the grass is a balm to their red-raw feet, blisters already forming. A tree provides enough shade to cover most of the island, and the sight before them makes them speed up.

*Not the kid.*

The asphalt has waves of heat emanating from it, creating mirages close to the ground that trick drivers into closing their eyes. The figure's foot sizzles as it makes contact with the road, but they pay the pain no mind as they take off once again.

*Not the kid.*

They dodge a green car and pause so a truck doesn't run them over.

*Not the kid.*

The truck and both its trailers pass, and the figure takes off again; a bus makes them stop, hopping from foot to foot to prevent further damage as much as they could.

*Not the kid.*

Another bus cuts them off, but they manage to pass through a slim gap between vehicles, reaching the other side of the lane as a motorbike flies past.

*Not the kid.*

Another three lanes are filled with quickly moving traffic, keeping them separated from the kid for another – minute? Two? However long it takes for a break to appear.

*Not the kid.*

One lane. Two lanes left.

*Not the kid.*

Another lane. One lane left.

*Not the kid.*

A final lane.

*Not the kid.*

The figure sees a couple that looks similar enough to the kid to be their family – perhaps their parents? Either way, they're definitely family to the kid.

*Not the kid.*

They finally reach the child and manage to wrap their arms around them enough to scoop them up and run to stand between two lanes. The white paint of the dotted lines providing a thin layer of protection between their feet and the road.

*Not the kid.*

They take off, but a horn blares before they take more than a step. They barely have enough time to set the kid on their feet and push on their back before pain overwhelms their senses.

*Not the kid.*

The figure sees the kid stumble, falling to their knees on the grass.

*Not the kid.*

Their vision blurs out for a moment, and they open them again to find their cheek resting in a pool of a sticky red liquid. A paramedic crouches by their side, speaking urgently to someone behind them. The paint of the car that hit them, once a clean, pristine white, is now splattered with – oh. Blood. Their blood?

They feel their heartbeat slow, and glance over at the kid once more.

*At least it wasn't the kid.*

You watch, transfixed by the scene before you.

An androgynous person, verbally ripping into the well-built woman before them with arms waving, tearing apart her every argument. After a particularly sharp movement, their teal hair flops into their eyes, some strands a darker colour reminiscent of the ocean. With a click of their fingers, the person's cloak disappears and reappears, moving from their shoulders to the coat stand behind their desk.

A silver badge pinned to a lapel nearly blinds you, making you avert your eyes from the, quite frankly, mesmerizing sight. Matching silver bands around biceps are carved with symbols that you can't make out from the other side of the room, even as they glow with power. The runes on the floor begin to light up as well, rippling out from where the person stands and illuminating the room from a new angle.

They look like an angel.

You suppose that's fitting.

The light cast by the runes is a sharp white, cutting through the yellow warmth previously filling the room. The badges on the lapels of the staff's shirts turn black, the lining of their cloaks darkening from the pure white of fresh snow to the grey of storm clouds.

All trace of the low buzz of idle chatter present moments ago is gone, a sudden silence filling the room. A sense of foreboding fills the air, a chilling contrast to the contentedness that had filled the room.

You tense as a cold breeze that reminds you of Antarctica blows past you, chilling you more thoroughly than winter back home in Victoria, much the same as the continent did while he was studying there. Others around you shiver, but you don't – you're far too used to the sensation of a sudden bone-deep chill to react beyond goosebumps. Even still, the sudden change almost gives you whiplash – something else that you'd gotten used to since you'd been a scientist.

Something *old-unnatural-wrong* is present.

You see a cloud of dark energy coalesce until it forms a vaguely human shape, and a gravelly voice speaks. 'Zrea, what is the meaning of this?'

'Well, sir,' the teal-haired person begins, back ramrod-straight – this must be Zrea. 'This peach here's just a bit confused about her placement. A bit concerned, see. I knew you weren't available, all of us did, but she demanded to speak with you.'

'What?!'

You easily pin the woman with the high-pitched shrieking voice as one of the worst sort. The kind your siblings have laughed at the claims of. The ones you have encountered a dozen times, each of them negatively, the interactions significantly worse each time. The worst of the worst to walk the Earth.

She's a Karen.

'That is not what we were discussing at all,' she cries, feet stomping against the tiles as she stalks up towards Zrea, jabbing a finger into their chest. 'We were discussing the fact that you were entirely unwilling to allow me to speak with your boss, and that you were blatantly ignoring protocol.'

You get the sudden feeling that the being knows what happened and wants to watch both the woman and Zrea squirm.

'Zrea.' The being speaks, voice hiding laughter in an attempt at sternness. 'Were you skiving off your job again? You know what happened last time.'

Zrea blanches, clearly remembering a negative experience – or perhaps the outcome of the event mentioned. 'No, sir, I wasn't. I learnt the ramifications it causes for everyone.'

'Hm. I'm sure.'

Sweat beads on Zrea's brow. They don't wipe it away, hands trembling at their sides too much to do so. They flinch slightly when the being speaks again.

'Well. I'm certain the Wisp would be delighted to sort out the problem with you, Miss...'

The woman flicks her hair back off her shoulder imperiously. 'Adelisa. Captain Adelisa Fairjones of the Australian army.'

Ah, that's why the blonde hair had been familiar. Her incident, only the day before your own, had made national news.

'Of course. The Wisp's guides have only your comfort in mind – the punishments for breaking protocol are most severe.'

'Thank goodness,' Ms. Fairjones simpers, looking quite stupid, really.

'Now, Captain Fairjones, if you'll just take this door, the Wisp is free and can sort your problem out for you quickly.'

A door and frame appears in the middle of the room, a red wood that is increasingly out of place as it brightens. The door itself swings open as Ms. Fairjones approaches it, and she falters slightly before visibly squaring her shoulders and walking through. The door slams shut behind her.

*Good riddance*, you think, as the lights go back to normal.

‘You did well, Zrea, by holding your ground against her.’ The being’s voice is softer now, more welcoming.

‘You think?’ They perk up at the being’s nod, smiling slightly.

‘Of course. Everyone has had to deal with someone like them, at some point in their careers. You handled her admirably.’

‘Thank you, sir.’

The being seems to smile, the facial expression obvious even without any defining features. ‘Of course. Now, I must go deal with her. Will you be fine to continue working?’

‘Yes, Mr. Wisp, I will be. Thank you.’

The being nods and the energy changes shape until it is the cloud that it entered the room as, a significantly warmer gust of wind blowing it out of the room.

‘Alright, everyone,’ Zrea begins, looking out over the crowd, ‘sorry for the interruption, but we’re behind schedule, so if you could please line up and follow the directions given to you by a staff member? Business as usual. Thank you.’

A low drone of idle chatter rises once more, warmth spreading throughout the room as people retake their places in the lines. Zrea herself fades into the background of the room, taking their rightful place behind a counter and opening their station up to the people spread around the room. Business as usual.

You join the line, smiling slightly as a child runs across the floor, laughing wildly.  
*Yeah, business as usual.*

Everything is normal once more, in Elysian Suite 137 for Departures