

Cleaning Man

by stephen hastings-king

The Zone is a garden of skyscrapers. Every building is a model. They say that copies are exported to the North and that the garden is a model of the North that has been put here for us so we can live model lives in a model place too.

Every night I ride a glass elevator up the outside of the tallest building. I feel like I am in a spaceship. Before I got this job I had never been so high. Where I come from, the land is flat. They say we used to move to different places with the seasons. But the government put a stop to that. They say that the idea was to make each region unique.

People in the Zone come from all over. There are so many different types here. Living among them I feel free.

For the first few minutes of every elevator ride I sing to the rhythm of the floors as they fly past.

Then I stop singing to look at the galaxy spreading out below me.

When I get up so high that the fainter stars start to disappear, I remove all my clothes and press myself against the glass. I spread my legs and hold my arms out. I imagine myself the center of a universal geometry like a drawing I remember from school. I stay like that until the cold of the glass penetrates my body. Then I get dressed and wipe away my outline with Windex and paper towels.

The cameras have to see me. But no-one has ever said a thing. Maybe I am invisible.

When I arrive on my floor, I wander the identical cubes in which no-one works to see the ways in which dust has fallen from the ceiling and plan the route I will take to erase the passing of time.

