

I see another world.

Full of hardness and strife. All cold metal engineered for production. Surfaces built with precision, each cut, every cubicle intended for a purpose. No openings. No windows. No doors that I can see. Only cold, hard metal. A canyon of steel.

I see no people, no living beings. No flesh.

A loud thud echoes through the chasm, then a door cracks open. Light pours into the darkness causing streams of illumination, pointing the way, stirring my heart to strain to follow the beam.

Back to the door.

It sounds like a garbage truck lifting a dumpster high above, releasing the contents, then slamming it down on the concrete. Only here I don't smell sewage.

I smell gas.

Something like automobile gas.

Fumes.

Oh-oh.

Get me outta here.

Now!

A match flies out, into the darkness.

There is a pause, a loud hesitation.

Maybe it's me holding my breath, right before ...

Ignition!

Oh my God!

I feel it searing my flesh, burning deep, incinerating my being.

Pain.

Anguish.

Waves of terror.

I glimpse flakes of ash falling around me, twisting in the current of flames.

I hear sobs.

My own?

I know only pain and terror.

Done.

Quiet submission.

I smell sweetness.

Fresh, new morning smell. Earth refreshed smell. Rain smell. Fragrance of heaven.

I chance a look at myself and gasp.

I am covered with burnished gold. Every part of me, tested and pure.

Approved.