

Fungalis Decomposis

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Ivy's eyelids slowly lifted. The gleaming rays of sun weaved through the venetians. A soft groan escaped her lips. After leaving the blissful heaven of her bed, the idea of the restless day ahead filled her mind. She slipped a loose white tee over her head, the large shirt consuming her petite body. A pair of black leggings were pulled up around her legs, along with her discoloured socks and dilapidated shoes. Her decaying canvas backpack was slung over her shoulders. Ivy blatantly sighed. Little did she know, this was the day she would regret one of the riskiest decisions of her life.

It had been seven months since Fungalis Decomposis spread internationally, killing billions. The infectious disease enters the human bloodstream, withering away at the heart and other organs, decaying flesh and eventually decomposing the skin. This infection spreads via contact, and unknowing people would be within close proximity of each other. Therefore, the plague would contaminate others at a rapid pace, obliterating the majority of the human race.

The 19-year-old girl left her makeshift home, her observant, glassy eyes glancing around, examining the surroundings. She strode swiftly down the street, gathering her lengthy chestnut hair into a thick ponytail at the top of her head. The once-lively community that she was raised in, now a neglected shell of what it once was. The chronic fog and dust hung in the cool air. She had one intention and one only; to find the cause of this epidemic.

The main street of Wellbridge spanned from one border to the other. It began at the small boutique on the corner, all the way along, then up the hill to the mysterious laboratory overlooking the town. That laboratory was one of the few buildings that still appeared structurally safe, and seemed as if nothing had ever changed. This was exactly where Ivy was headed. This was the key to her quest.

With all of her attention and energy dedicated to reaching this laboratory, she marched up the tall, steep hill. There was a look of determination in her cold, turquoise eyes. With her arms swinging avidly, she made her way to the top of the hill. The large wooden sign read 'Wellbridge Science and Medicine Research Centre'. The prison-like building stood, the main door right in front of her. Slight waves of anxiety remained in the back of her mind. Determination took over. There was no turning back now.

Her hand wrapped and turned the grand, steel handle. There were decaying bodies scattered around the area. Ivy ignored them as much as she could. Cautiously, she entered the building. The clinical feeling of the area sent shivers down her spine. Every step she took, the closer she was to the door. The door that could lead her to finding the cause.

Ivy had been in this facility before, earlier this year. After moving out of her parent's house, the adult world was intimidating. She was extremely low on funds. Feeling too ashamed to face her parents in this financial strife, she resorted to theft. Desperately in need of some money, the 18-year-old Ivy quickly entered the building, took several pieces of equipment and left as fast as she could, assuming she'd escaped unnoticed. Her assumption was wrong.

She stared at the door, focused. The lock had a slot for a card. Her head instantly swung to the right, as she saw three male bodies on the floor. These men were wearing lab coats, they must have been planning to enter this room. She needed that security card, she had no choice. If she came into contact with this body, she would contract the deadly disease. If she couldn't

enter the room, her quest would be over. Somewhat nervous, she looked around, seeing several hazmat suits hanging along the wall. Being careful of where she placed her feet, Ivy silently walked across the room. She warily unhooked one of the suits, and gently placed her backpack on the floor. Then, she slipped it over her body, putting on the gloves and helmet also. She returned to the rotting body. Her hand reached for the pocket of his lab coat. Ivy's hands were shaking. She quietly praised herself as she pulled out the card. The card was placed into the slot.

Beep, beep, beep, bing.

A green light appeared above the card. She removed it as the sound of what seemed like one hundred locks unlatching echoed through the dull room. She lifted her helmet and used all of her might to push open the door. Her jaw dropped. A gloomy room was what was past this door. A room that was almost pitch black and empty, except for the glow in the centre.

One foot after the other, Ivy moved closer and the shadows became clearer. There was a man sitting at his desk with his back to her, babbling. He scrunched up the page he was writing on, then threw it on the floor. He continued writing, then the process repeated. It felt as if Ivy was standing there for at least five minutes, silently watching him add to the growing pile of paper scraps beside the desk. "Ivy." He said, looking up from his page. Her eyes immediately widened, she was speechless. "I know you're there." The scraping sound of his chair moving backwards was barely audible over the sound of her thumping heart. The man stood up. His tall, slender figure caused goose bumps to form along Ivy's arms and legs. The silhouette became a defined person as he turned around. "At last." The unknown person said.

"What do you mean?!"

"I need to show you what you have been looking for."

The man was approaching her, his arm slowly raising. Ivy's body was completely still, yet shaking. She had no idea what to do. He placed his hand on her back, silently escorting her out of the room. They walked through the labyrinth of hallways, not a word was spoken. Eventually, the pair reached a dimly lit storeroom. The déjà vu kicked in. Ivy had been in this room before.

"You know this room, don't you?" The man said, an evil smirk spread across his lips.

"What do you want from me?!" Ivy exclaimed desperately, tears welling in her eyes. She analysed the features on his face. She had no idea who this man was.

"You know this room, don't you?" He repeated, with emphasis.

"Yes! I do, okay?! I came in here and stole supplies a while ago. Are you happy now?!" She shouted, mixed emotions of anger and fear present in her tone.

"Not yet." The stranger whispered. He laughed maliciously. Once again, he escorted her to a small table in one of the halls. "See this?"

There was shattered glass both on and around the table. In the centre of this, was a small wooden podium, and an empty test tube lying next to it. There was also a substantial hole near the opening of this test tube, as if whatever was in it, had broken down the wood.

"Oh my." Ivy mumbled. The pieces of the puzzle were attaching together in her mind.

"It was you, Ivy. It was you."

Ivy's legs gave way and she collapsed to her knees with her hands over her open mouth.

"You did this! You were the reason billions of people have lost their lives!" He proclaimed.

"I bet you thought you would find a way to make everything return to the way it was and live happily ever after, didn't you?"

No words were spoken, only gentle sobbing.

The man abruptly grabbed Ivy's hand and quickly pulled her through the halls, back to that same, gloomy room. She was shoved into the desk chair the man was sitting in earlier. Ivy screamed for help at the top of her lungs. There was no hope. Through her tears, she could see the man reach for something, she didn't know what it was. Her vision was too distorted. Her body tensed as she felt the sharp pinch of a needle piercing her right arm. Seconds later, Ivy's eyelids slowly dropped.

"Well, you thought wrong."