

THE TRAIN

Andrew stood patiently in the midst of the crowd at the expressway station, casually glancing at the commotion. He enjoyed watching people; standing sentinel against the restless activity swarming around him, swallowing his very being.

Andrew sensed the swelling emotion rather than heard or saw it: a woman's scream and gasps from bystanders. His thought process halted, and, instinctively, he began running. Long, steady strides devoured the distance separating him from the fallen child. Without pause, Andrew vaulted over the railing; descending upon the child, an angel without wings.

The lack of feathers did not stop him from landing lightly, gentle puffs of dust announcing his contact with the ground. Alarms blared as the train approached, thundering down upon the man and child. Andrew did not hear them, he thought only of lifting the child to safety. Gently cradling the boy, he stretched upwards, depositing his nearly weightless burden beyond the safety of the guardrail. The train was slowing, but not nearly fast enough. Calmly, Andrew's brown eyes met the vibrant green of the boy's.

The impact brought with it more screaming, though none issued from Andrew's mouth. The pressure was jarring, but expected. Andrew's right auditory receptor was the first of many victims. A cacophony of sound assaulted the delicate instrument; then a horrid grinding, the silence. The expressway's alloy hull continued its siege, colliding with the broad side of Andrew's face. He felt nothing, but was aware of the destruction all the same. Even worse, not blinded by pain, Andrew was fully aware of every nanosecond. Minuscule gears governing the movement of his chin were ground together into fine powder, an odd slackness covering Andrew's lower jaw as the pathways of his artificial nervous system were severed.

The alloy bone structure that defined Andrew's cheek bent, until the pressure was too

great, and the material was sheared apart. His right shoulder and hip were compacted instantaneously, rending his metal frame and tearing artificial tendons apart. His foot became caught, and in an instant he was pulled underneath the crushing weight of the train.

Andrew's world became overwhelmingly dark, occasionally penetrated by stabs of light as the wheels of the expressway passed next to him. His bent and broken body was repeatedly caught by the belly of the train and was thrashed about before being released once again.

Andrew's limbs were severed, his torso cloven in two.

The right half of his face was loose and numb, paralyzed by the train's onslaught. Unable to move, his head was slowly demolished by the expressway train. Photoreceptors, long since blinded, flickered on and off as Andrew's optic circuits shorted out.

His brain, once an engineering masterpiece, now most nearly resembled an ingot of raw iron. Slowly, stuttering, Andrew's systems shut down. Just before the very last vestige of consciousness evaded him, Andrew at once felt an incomprehensible state of calm engulf him. His greatest purpose now fulfilled, Andrew slowly slipped away, as the last of his capacitors released their charges for the final time.