

LUNGS



My lungs were on fire.

Running. Faster, faster, faster. Smoke and ash burned my eyes. I couldn't see what I was running from.

My lungs burned as I kept running forward, forward, forward. I felt my legs, as though pulled by an invisible string, slip out from under me. I fell hard, feeling the darkness creep over me.

I tried to scream.

No sound came out.

I shot up in my bed, gasping and coughing. I shook my head, trying to snap my head back into reality. I didn't want to waste my daily oxygen. I pulled back the shade and looked out my window.

Desolate environment. Smoke and ash polluting the now red sky. Everything so, so burning hot.

The year 3056. The world died on May 1st, 2078. It was before I was born, but I still felt like I knew what life was like before... everything. Before we lived in giant, over-glorified oxygen tubes.

Before the amount of oxygen intake per day was measured.

And restricted.

I knew our days were numbered. Everyone did. It was an unfortunate fact of nature.

A scary fact of nature.

Every day passed faster than the last, due to the slow purification and production of oxygen.

The outside world became uninhabitable after pollution and global warming reached a point of no return. The tubes and oxygen purification factories were built. Life as we knew it was permanently changed... for the worst.

But still... we survived. Miraculously. And we continue to survive.

Somehow.

I fell backwards, back onto my pillow, exhaling heavily. *Just go back to sleep*, I told myself, closing my eyes. *It's safe there. There's oxygen there.*

...

It's silent there.

...

It's there.

...

*And every passing day, **It's** getting closer.*

...

I rolled over, clenching my eyes shut. *No, no, no.*

I knew what I was so scared of.

Even though I would never admit it.

I'm not supposed to be scared. I'm supposed to place my faith into the hands of the government who supposedly know what they're doing.

I'm supposed to place my *life* into their cold, grimy hands.

Without question. Or restraint.

It's not fair.

But.. it's the way things are. Any other way would have the population decimated by now.

The results of what we did.

I relaxed into my pillow, trying to plunge back into the familiar darkness of sleep.

Fading, fading, fading...

A blue sky.

A cool breeze.

Soft, dancing grass.

All victims of the past.

I inhaled the sweet, clean air.

This was nice. Peaceful.

...

This was a lost reality.

I felt the darkness approach me.

I didn't run. I couldn't move.

I felt the blazing heat creep over me.

I wanted to scream.

But what good is screaming with a voice that makes no noise?

Like living in an oxygenless world?

It looked me dead in my eyes.

I know you.

Why you run from the truth.

Your truth.

I felt terror crawl up my throat.

And I screamed.