

A FALL IN AUTUMN

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To my husband Michael, for encouraging me at every turn.

To Josh, Kat, Corwin, Joe, Mike, Brian, and the many other creative friends who played in that game of Microscope or listened to me blather about this world since then.

When Buttercup saw me, I had a glass of air-reactive sake in one hand and, in the other, a bean pastry so tough it tried to take my lunch money. I tracked the big lug for an hour before he finally made me, right there in the middle of Lower Market Market. Yes, that's its name; it isn't *my* fault the Empire breeds creativity out of the bureaucratic class. Buttercup—the big lug—gave me a look from under the brim of his hat, one that said in no uncertain terms he would very much be looking forward to my funeral. I thought—mistakenly—I would be undetectable in the middle of all the glow splash and the condensation mist and the hundreds of meters of low market stalls heaped against one another like drifts of filthy snow.

I don't know why I named the guy "Buttercup," but I did, and it stuck. I bestowed that moniker on him a couple of days before when the client showed me a likeness of him and told me where to find him on Saturday afternoons. The client wanted him tailed to see how he was passing his time. I figured she was a jilted girlfriend or maybe a wannabe with a little cash to burn, throwing detectives down the wishing well. Find out where he hangs out, what he does, and *just happen* to be there herself next time. You know, the usual.

I don't have time to go into greater detail as I write this, or to start earlier in my career—earlier than these, the case I *thought* would be my last, and the case that really was—but if I did, you would see what I mean.

A detective's job is not glamorous. We spend a lot of time finding married ladies' lost kittens and washing them off in enough coffee to make them stand up straight before we bring them home. Buttercup was yet another of these: a woman wanted me to find a man, so I found him. It's never a happy task, but at least the dogged pursuit of unhappiness could mostly pay the bills.

Buttercup rang in at three hundred kilograms of uncooked beef, maybe more, and not all of it the lean stuff, but as they say, it takes all kinds. The client was a Mannie, raptor leanings, with the iridescent eyes and the peaked, glinting, halfway-to-talons fingernails to prove it: made for detailed work in the dark. I didn't ask her how she earned her birdseed, but I figured something in the middle: good enough to hire me but not good enough to hire someone better. Buttercup, on the other hand, shouted fisticuffs and heavy lifting. Opposites attract, right? You never know in my business, which is simply the business of trying to find things out. The funny thing is, half the time, when it all comes together—when we answer the client's question, when we reach wrist-deep into the muck and pull out the truth with a stream of something that smells bad running off the corners—they wish we hadn't.

Knowing—knowing a thing, knowing a person, knowing a secret—can hurt worse than any patch of briars you have to wade through on the way there.

Not a lot of detectives will take a Mannie as a client, but not a lot of Mannies were interested in hiring an Artie, so I figured we were even on that score. I'm not picky about my clients, personally, and not merely because I'm, by nature, such a big-hearted egalitarian guy either. I like to think I take people as I meet them rather than trying to shove them into the nearest box, sure, but that isn't the point. Mainly, I'm not picky about clients because I can't afford to be. Here I am, born the old-fashioned way from people too nice and too dumb and too infuriating to know better, but I live in the City of Autumn anyway. By that fact alone, I am already kind of a freak. I will always look different, sound different, and think different from the rest of the people who've been built for a place like this. No one in either end of the social spectrum ever quite knows what to do with me.

Sometimes, when I stare into the reflecting pool that is every single glass of hooch ever poured, across the whole history of people deciding to bottle up ways to get stinko, I know in my heart I like it that way. Autumn, last of the great flying cities of the ancients, is a freak show

through and through: antiquated, idolized, hated, mocked, resented for its wealth and for the disparities of wealth and power evident at even a cursory glance. It's beautiful, careworn, crowded, lonely, cosmopolitan, and suffused with a certain kind of *knowing* the City itself will surely never last forever. The whole place is waiting for some other shoe to drop, a shoe it can't describe, can't name, can't explain. But it knows that shoe is out there all the same, and the City hopes to the gods that shoe is not the City itself. We find solace in the groupthink of living in a place so many others live, and we find ourselves annoyed at the traffic. We find fear for its future when we read the histories of its dead sisters from the past, and we find ourselves wishing something would come along to clean it out a little but maybe not a lot.

So, here we all are, every last one of us feeling like the rat with the nicest cage and every last one of us wishing he had it to himself. I figured out a long time ago the biggest freak in the whole show gets two things: spat on and space. I could handle one if it got me the other, no problem, and thank you kindly.

Buttercup's demeanor went from grim to worse as he looked at me, and he turned away from the market stall where he was eyeing bales of hay like he might take one home for supper. He started making his way—slowly, at first, but he was picking up steam as he went—toward the Pearl Street gate. When he got there, Buttercup looked to his left so he could turn right out onto the sidewalk, which would put him going in the direction of the downtown steerless. It was a smart move: the carriages are too small for a tail to jump on without being in fairly close proximity. If I jumped on with him, he'd know for sure I was a tail. If he wanted to question me in a public place, he'd have his chance. If I didn't jump on, he could shake me at any stop from here to Autumn Center.

On my way to the gate, I downed the sake and tossed the bun to a clutch of street kids. I wasn't hungry—I hardly ever was anymore—but that didn't mean it had to go to waste. Those kids could have the luxury of fighting over who got to chip a tooth.

I decided to let Buttercup think he'd gotten the best of me for now. When I reached Pearl Street, I turned left and crossed instead of following him, but I let him see me looking back over my shoulder. Might as well feed the myth of being a shaken tail, right? Let him think I was grumbling to myself over his clever escape, let him get a little room to loosen the belt on his confidence so his guard could sag. Once I was across the street, I fell in behind a troupe of Sisters of Sincerity and let my

own crumpled cap give me a little cover. I walked thirty meters right behind them, then forty, shrinking behind their ridiculous wimples, then turned at a lamp post and made my way back across. A short row of dingy yellow mag cabs always lined up near the Lower Market Market, and I hopped into one near the back with a Rat for a driver.

“Hey, buddy,” the guy chattered at me. “Front of the line, right? We got rules!” I ignored him and pointed at the bus up ahead, the one Buttercup was about to board.

“You can make it up to the rest of the guild next time,” I cooed, trying to help this go fast and easy. “I need you to tail that bus, and I need it discreet.”

Ratface looked at me in the rearview mirror, twisted his whiskered cheeks this way and that in consternation before saying, “Forty on top.”

I shook my head, but I didn’t laugh. “Twenty. That’s more than the going rate, and it’s plenty to split with the other guys. Five will stuff plenty of orange rind in those handsome cheeks.”

The guy didn’t even bother to negotiate further. I was right, and he knew it, and anyway, the other drivers ahead of him had started to notice he was picking up a fare out of turn and raising a ruckus. Ratface checked his side mirror, twisted the steerer, and the mag shot away from the sidewalk and around the rest of the queue. The cabbie in front actually stepped into the way, bringing my driver to a sudden stop. I bounced off the smoked glass partition covered with stick-on advertisements of interest to libertines and last year’s chewing gum. I cried out in pain, but the Rat ignored me. He had his window down to yell at his guild brother.

“What, you trying to get run over?” He sounded like annoyed family: concern and anger in equal measure and well accustomed to one another through long affiliation.

“What’s this, grabbin’ a fare out of sequence? You know the rules, Fay. You know I get first crack, then Scram, then Langley, *then* you.” The other Rat hitched his pants up in the back like he was getting ready to do some sort of manual labor.

The driver hitched a thumb at me. “I’ll split the fare later,” he barked. “This guy’s a religious devotion. Take a walk, bro. You need to cool off.” I could hear the wheel in his head squeaking as he thought while talking nonsense. “Says he always takes the fourth of anything.”

The “bro” looked in the window at me, squinted his big round eyes and then leaned back. “Hey, you didn’t say you had an Artie,” he said, then to me, through the walls of the car, “No offense meant, you know, just, it’s

what they call the vernacular on the street, you know?” He doffed his big straw hat. “Fourth of everything? Learn something new every day. What’s the word? Numeralolology?” He slaughtered the pronunciation, running the syllables together languidly across the top of his palate like they were pushing to get out of his mouth.

I looked at the Rat in the front. “Unless I’m mistaken,” I pressed the tips of three fingers to the pad to link him to my account, tapped a rhythm, and with my fingers still held to it subvocalized *tip twenty*, “I’ve paid you to drive the car?”

“Easy!” they both said at the same time, but the driver shot forward again, joining the flow of traffic at the tail end of a light and maybe running it a little bit. Buttercup’s steerless had pulled away from the raised platform, but the driver told me it wouldn’t be a problem to catch up.

“That’s the 9,” he said. “I know its route like the back of my own paw.”

He probably did, too. After all, learning his way around the City of Autumn was what he was designed to do.

The Route 9 steerless autobus went downtown, but Buttercup stepped off it before it got there. He jumped the line for the 27, earning a few shaken fists, and rode it away on a tangent, headed sidewise for the Down Preserves and a bit of fresh air. He was good at getting away from people, I could tell that: he knew to get in a crowd and then to get out of the crowd. If you want to stay clear on who’s been around for a little while, you have to shuffle the deck of faces and see if any come up twice. Unlucky for him, I was better at my part in the game than he was at his. Ratface wanted to cut a corner here and there, take a shortcut, leap the walls of the maze Buttercup was trying to run, but I wouldn’t let him. I needed eyes on that steerless at every stop in case Buttercup did another jump and dash.

He didn’t. Twenty-five minutes after he stampeded the platform at Pearl Street, I saw him duck out the back of the steerless right before it pulled away from the next stop past the entrance to Down Preserves. That put him walking back this way, able to watch to see if anything was still following him—such as the bright yellow mag cab in which I was sitting. I dropped flat across the back seat and told the Rat to keep driving. “Turn down a side street,” I barked, my voice muffled by the coat

I threw over my own head. I crumpled against the slightly sticky upholstery and tried not to think about what might have made it sticky in the first place. I didn't want to consider my Artie immune system going up against whatever was now on my face and the palms of my hands.

I felt the mag cab twist a neat little turn, and the shadows of a narrow street fell over us. I counted to five, then to ten, then lifted up in the seat to peek out the back screen. Buttercup was walking in the entrance to Down Preserves, ducking so his horns barely missed the arched sign over the entrance: wrought iron, painted black, and draped in antioxidant smart moss. Some people believe that kind of moss—common as dirt—was one of the first of the protean plants. Seemed like a stretch to me, but then, everything's a stretch in a place like Autumn.

I pressed my fingers to the pad again to finish paying for the cab even as Ratface started up the sputtering hostage negotiation patter of cabbies the world over. He'd gone out of his way, he'd lost a lot of fares at the Lower Market Market, he might not be able to find his way back—

At that, I gave him an unimpressed look. "Argue all you like. I made you an offer and you took it and the deal is done."

"I bet you got some paper to slide me, too, right? You don't look so clean you don't have any." Ratface licked his chops, and the cab's doors remained resolutely locked.

Paper money was illegal, of course. The only hard Imperial currency left was all in museums, but people with no money tend to work out their own medium of exchange. Usually, that was what you might call "goods and services," but sometimes, it's something more tangible and transferrable: local scrip a gang or entrepreneur prints up to circulate without the Empire logging every transaction. The Empire tells us making up our own money is a kind of rebellion, a form of disloyalty we ought to avoid. I think all that does is give some people the idea in the first place.

I didn't have any on me—at least, not any I was going to give this guy—so I shook a finger at him. "Do your job like you were made to do, sure, but don't insult my intelligence, Mannie." He didn't like me using that word, and neither did I, but it got his attention and it made him ready to cut me loose. The doors unlocked. I slid out and took off down the sidewalk toward that same moss-covered, wrought-iron entryway.

My hat cleared the sign with a good meter to spare. Like I said,

Buttercup was big. I rounded the corner to see a group of people loitering in the small gravel parking area, either about to go in or coming out. They looked at me and then looked away, some of them a little sheepish—not literally, mind you; that’s another word I should have felt bad about—though their kids stared at me in earnest and with simple curiosity. I winked at one of them. I didn’t blame them for being curious. Arties like me are easy to spot, what with the old scar down the right side of my face, the nose I broke years ago, the ear half-chewed off from that time in Sunrise, the widow’s peak. I’m not subtly imperfect the way some Artisanal Humans are: I’m beaten up, dented and scratched, with holes in the toes, and showing it. Everything about my face screams non-designed. Even if I’d been a cheap Man Plus knockoff from a back-alley retrogeneticist, I, at minimum, wouldn’t have the scars or the bags under my eyes. That stuff is foundational for designed humanoids. I stood out like a moldy orange in a bin of apples.

Mom and Dad got me the old-fashioned way, and I’ve been fending off insults and adulation ever since.

Walking into Down Preserves felt good, the way I imagine it feels to walk into church with a clean conscience. It also felt like—well, not like coming home, because this felt good—but I felt less out of place. For once, I wasn’t the only natural thing around. Oh, there are always plenty of proteans around in Down Preserves, sure, but it’s one of the few places in Autumn where wild things are allowed to grow. At the entrance, there are grasses—actual grasses, trimmed once they reach a certain height by real Sincerity monks with glinting silver scythes and the black cowls and the whole shebang. The land there slopes upward ever so slightly, enough to let you know you’re going to work if you keep walking. There’s real earth, rich and brown, tended into perfection by those same ascetic brothers, mute in their devotion to the perfect world they say came before the Rise. I love walking there when they’ve been working. The powerful scent of tilled soil, the bright green smell of that hand-mown grass, the thick perfume of heavy blossoms letting it all hang out, all come together to make a lurid cocktail of aromas reaching deep into the experience of our ancestors and reminding us we once always walked in such places. It’s enough to get a city boy high for a week—or to remind a former country boy like me of the best features of a place I came to Autumn to forget.

I’ve always thought it weird to have the Sinceres in Autumn at all, given their position on modern society. But if my history teacher back in school taught me anything, it’s that we—humanity, in all its manifold

forms and branches—have spent forever telling ourselves life was better yesterday while looking forward to tomorrow. We're addicted to a past shrouded in the mist of fiction, one where we didn't have so many mouths to feed or decisions to make. The Sinceres—I've never thought about it until now while writing things down, but when you say it aloud, it sounds like "sin seers," which they probably think is pretty fucking clever of themselves—make hella bank on that. They sit around spinning tales of the wonders of humankind, of the time when we all looked more or less the same, before the Mannies, before the Plusses, before the whole human buffet.

Don't believe them. Their stories are self-evidently lies. My profession has taught me nothing is ever as simple as it seems, and nobody's pure, no matter how pretty they are. Usually quite the opposite, in fact.

Right after the ground rises a little, it levels out, and a gravel and sand trail emerges from the manually tended grass. The gravel is a mix of shades of beige and white and gray and red, all different kinds of rocks jumbling together, but slowly, like pixels in a painting shifting together to present a larger image. The rocks resolve into stones and then into small boulders, stepping stones, and bigger outcroppings as the crust itself rises out of the sand and soil. Down Preserves is way in the back end of Autumn, near the Inner Edge. The angle of elevation is partly to give us more natural space to run around in—useful when the City drives us too fucking nuts to stand each other another second longer—and partly to hide the massive exhaust and thrust portals. Instead of the sight of yet more machinery, no matter how vital it is to things like navigation or braking or whatever, Down Preserves gives us something like Terra Firma to look at out the windows of our homely hovels. It's a little bit below to remind ourselves what life is like in normal places, a corner of open green we can scurry to when we need it.

Walking into the woods on that slowly forming path, surrounded first by large ferns and the tropical flora of North America and the desert scrub of the Mediterranean, it's easy to feel like you're everywhere and nowhere: for all the Sincerity monks say they're keeping things "natural," it's as unnatural a mix as you can imagine. No geography in the world contains that botanical mix on its own. That's religion for you. Heading up the hiking trail, though, into the simulated higher elevations, you start to find deciduous forest and deer and Scratch Ivy, and the mosquitoes fall away: all the stuff you're used to if you were lucky enough to be born north of forty-five degrees. I like it in that part of Down Preserves.

It would have been easy to get lost in letting my mind wander, except I wasn't dressed for a hike—ratty slacks and the dress shoes I needed to replace a year ago, the ones with a hole in the sole right under the pad of my foot—and I was busy tracking a third of a ton of likely very angry meat. This whole case was starting to smell bad, too. I was supposed to be seeing whether Buttercup was visiting a milkmaid on weekends. If he was, she picked a hell of a place to ply her trade. If he wasn't, I was supposed to tell the client what he *was* doing. The rational part of my mind told me to turn around, go back and call off the case, give the client back her retainer and invite her to take a long walk to a different detective. Something about this didn't add up. The client didn't want pictures, and they always want pictures if they think there's actually a case. The cobwebs in my cupboard and the late rent notice in my mailbox urged me forward, though. If I was going to eat this week, I had to know what Buttercup was doing on Saturday afternoons in Down Preserves. I could only hope it didn't involve giving one of his mittens a quick sniff.

Down Preserves is the largest open space in Autumn, but that doesn't mean it's actually very big. Designers modeled it on a place from ancient times. The Americans had a place called Golden Gate where they preserved a section of carefully tended nature in a large and largely artificial urban landscape. There's a whole thing in the visitor center about how they borrowed this and that from Golden Gate for the design of Down Preserves. This version is more extreme, though, and if you go high enough up the back, you make it into the Alpine zone. When Autumn travels to the right places for it, we'll get snow down in the City, but here, it's winter all the time with white-furred rabbits and the like to give it that touch of Mother Nature.

I climbed, breathing hard but not breathless, pulling my jacket around myself against the constant wind. It probably wasn't all that cold out, but the slightest breezes cut right through me these days. In the higher elevations of the park where you're above the Fore Barrier, you start to get a taste of real weather. For once, I was glad I quit smoking a few years ago: I could breathe, and I could smell the wet chill of some distant winter in the colder air blowing down the hill at me. It felt glorious, if only because I wanted to savor every sensation I could and this one was so starkly different from the uniform pleasantness of everywhere else in Autumn.

Back when I quit smoking, I pretended I did it for health reasons, but the truth was, I was tired of the stares it got me. Arties aren't supposed to do a lot of the fun stuff other people get to do. That's true for all kinds of

things, of course, and normally the judgment of strangers doesn't bother me. Smoking was different, though. I gave it up after a Sister of Sincerity walked up to me on the bus, slapped the reef out of my mouth, and dragged me off the bus at the next stop. I decided maybe it would behoove me, if not entirely to *respect* some people's views on my status as a living historical artifact, at least not to *aggravate* them.

The trail through the middle elevations in Down Preserves is, of course, impossible to use for tracking: all gray rocks and brown mud. All that is covered in a uniform blanket of gold and brown and red leaves dropped from trees perpetually bursting with the colors of fall foliage. It would make a hell of a place to have to run away from someone: even at a walking pace, I had to step carefully and look where my feet were going rather than up ahead. I was hoping Buttercup would go as high as the snowline so I could find his prints there. The standard attire of a working detective wasn't exactly hiking boots, but having a trail to follow would be worth picking twigs out of my loafers for a week.

As I rounded a curve, a frigid gust came shooting down the path to greet me. Maybe this could happen according to plan! Maybe I would actually get to sneak up on him. Maybe I was *not* being led directly into a trap. Maybe I would get to close a case and get paid in full. *Maybe today would be okay after all.*

The snowline was right there, maybe thirty meters from me, then twenty-five, then twenty, then fifteen—and then Buttercup stepped out from behind a tree. He balled up one fist and rubbed his knuckles against the palm of the opposite hand like something out of bad theater.

"Okay, Buttercup." I held my hands out at my sides, clearly unarmed, clearly no match for his massive bovine strength. "So you made me. But please tell me you didn't lead me all the way here so you could teach me not to follow you around. You could have done that with a kind word—even an unkind word, maybe even a cruel one—way back in town, saved me a cab fare, saved you a bus ride or two. I mean, really, seriously, please do not beat me up and leave me to sleep it off."

"I'm not going to." Buttercup's voice scraped and banged, something heavy being dragged on stones. It suggested the shaking of ancient flanks in the golden light of a primitive morning from a simpler time. His eyebrows slowly inched closer, like each had an uncertain crush on the other at an old school dance. "Did you call me 'Buttercup'?"

I shrugged at him. "It seemed to fit somehow. No offense intended, of

course. I'm glad to hear we can talk this out. You're my last job. I'd like to conclude this as tidily as possible."

His eyebrows finally got together, and he shook his massive head. "Not gonna talk, neither."

"Okay, but that doesn't leave us a lot of options and, to be honest, I'm a pretty lousy dancer." I was simply producing words, trying to keep him occupied. Something was about to happen, and I was pretty sure it wouldn't be good.

I was right.

Fingers—talons—tapped me on the shoulder from behind, and when I looked back, it was the client. She hissed at me. "He's not going to beat you up. I am."

That was the last thing I remembered for a while.

It didn't matter. Nobody in particular needed me awake.

While I took a long nap on the side of an artificial mountain at the back of a sculpted landscape, Autumn flew on through the daylight toward a zone of night. As I write this, it's sometimes hard to recall the fine details, but if I remember correctly, we were moving from South American highlands toward Africa. I always enjoyed it when we went to Africa: lots of fresh food and a few new faces around town. Things would be looking pretty good on the dinner front for the next few weeks.

The next thing I knew, the golem shook me gently awake. He had a little snow in his hair, having blown in from above the snowline a few meters away, but my vision still blurred a little when I tried to open my eyes, so the rest of the details were hazy. My head ached and my face felt like Buttercup danced on it, which was not necessarily outside the realm of the possible. More than anything, though, I was surprised to see a golem: one of the *actual* Living Metal themselves, with dark hair and artificial skin and all the complex mechanisms of the face that let golems toe the rim of the forbidden Uncanny Valley of Lore.

"Are you alright?" The golem asked it in that gentle voice they all have—the tones I once read were selected to make them seem trustworthy.

"I don't know," I mumbled. "I don't suppose you've seen a bird and a bull pass that way, laughing up each other's sleeves, have you?" It had started to get dark, which meant it had been a couple of hours at least. I was probably concussed, but I needed the rest, whatever the source.

"I'm afraid not." His eyes narrowed in mimicry of relaxation. "I'm glad I found you, though. You need medical attention."

"No," I groaned, trying to sit up. "I'm fine. I'm really fine." I got up on

one hand, then the other, then managed to stand with his help. I dusted myself off and shook my head back and forth. “I guess I’m not getting paid for that one.” I sighed it to myself, but the golem smiled a little. He started to say something pitying or placating, but I waved it off. “Never mind. Thanks for stopping when you saw me. It’s more than most people would do.”

The golem ducked his head and shrugged a little at me. “Sadly true.”

I sighed a second time and looked around. “Worse places to get beaten up, I guess.” I patted my pockets: my wallet was still there, which was something.

Of course, they hadn’t robbed me. They wanted me to know it was something personal.

“True,” the golem said. “It’s going to be a beautiful day tomorrow, but I wanted to catch the forest today before the colors change.”

“Oh?” I looked up. “Are they going to change?”

“Haven’t you heard? We’re going to have spring tomorrow.” The golem smiled. “I appreciate it, but I’m not quite ready for everything to be green again for a while.”

I nodded at him. That’s life in Autumn for you: envy of the world, object of hate, and we complain about the weather being too predictable. I tipped my hat at him. He was beautiful, if a little too sincere, which is what you always hear about a golem after somebody gets a look at one up close: more human than you’d expect, maybe too human. I’d seen them before, from a distance, but I’d never met one in person like this. “Sorry to hear that.” I rubbed my temples. “Thanks again.”

He stopped me, holding out a hand to shake. “I’m Alejandro.”

I took his hand and met his eyes. They clearly weren’t human: the irises spun, concentric rings of flexible materials rotating in opposition to one another around pupils obviously Other in origin. They weren’t from the right color palette, either, and in my memory of that moment—that pivotal moment, when a simple introduction eventually changed everything I understood about myself, about the grand flying City of Autumn, about the Empire, and about the world—his pupils glowed a faint electric blue from within, striking both in their obvious artificiality and their very human softness. Alejandro had eyes that said more to me of compassion, of understanding of the human condition, of hope and loss and regret and persistence, than any other set of eyes I’d seen in a long time.

So, of course, I walked away and forgot to give him my card or tell him my name or anything useful and didn’t turn around when he called

to me to ask if I needed help. Instead, I staggered back down the trail and out onto the street, back across town, out of the green and brown aromas of night flowers opening and tilled earth, and into the miasma of bodies and sweat and damp fur and old food the City offered the nose instead. I couldn't afford another cab. If Talons was stiffing me on the job, then she would shut me off from her accounts as part of whatever this had been as soon as they laid me out and beat it. Eventually, I dragged myself up in front of my office door an hour before midnight. Stenciled letters declared VALERIUS BAKHOUM, QUESTIONS ANSWERED, and behind that door was a desk, a couple of filing cabinets, a few purpose-driven proteans to keep the air from going stale, and a couch I could unfold into a bed.

I did exactly that, stripped to my imperfect Artisanal skin, and fell dead asleep before I was even flat.