

sameness. We were all so numb. But this was your only chance. You leaned to the right and started to spread your message through whispers. "After last shift, follow me to cabin 42. We will take a leap. Spread this message to as many as possible." The man nodded; he was familiar with your ideas and promptly started to share it.

Afternoon and evening shifts went by quickly. You saw folks passing on the message. One at a time, leaning over, and quietly nodding. Most knew you and your previous, but not successful, escape. But this time it was different and you felt it, you knew it. The bell rang and the shift was over. Everyone was led back to the cabins.

This was it. Master opened the cabin door and you rushed to your bed. Everyone stared. You quickly pulled the

hope in her still. It was only her fourth week in this stretched place. The hope vanishes once you realize that you fell for a scam. We all went through that. Swipe, swipe, tap, tap. It was so easy to fall into the rhythm and forget about your surroundings. Even if you didn't finish it all and met your quota, you didn't care.

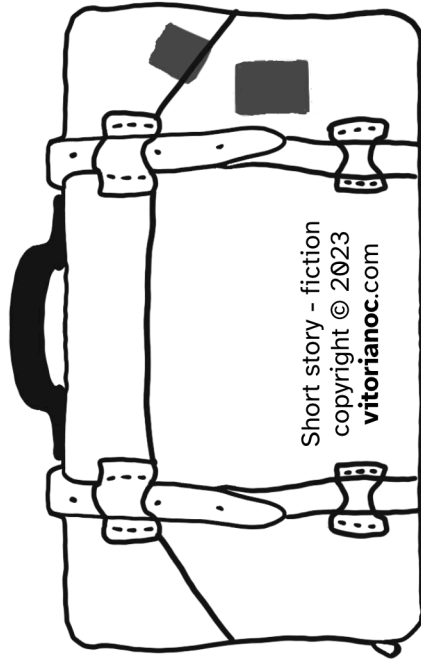
You needed out. We needed out. The midday meal arrived. Even if your memories of last night had faded you refused to dine here another day. Now, how could you convince anyone to come with me? Who would believe on your plan? Everyone sat on long tables and ate the grub, whatever it was. I lifted my gaze from my unappetizing plate to the folks around. They ate, or pushed the grub around. What appetite would be left? Tap, tap, tap, scroll, scroll. The horrors and the

suitcase and while running towards the door you started to open it. Once at the door you flung it at the road. The suitcase flopped open, shining a light as bright as a lighthouse. Brighter than you recalled. You were restrained by the master and alarms were sounding.

You mustered "I'm sorry" and the last of your strength and lunged forward to break free.

You gave one last look at the crowd and jumped into the suitcase ∞

had to. But you couldn't do it alone, it wasn't fair to the others. They deserved the same hope. But how could you even begin to convince them to step into this bright light? Was that how you reach this new reality? Was it all a fever dream? Memories of dreams and plans of freedom fade into darkness through the grueling daily toil. Some cleaned, others cooked, some filmed and edited, but most just clicked and swiped. Are you a robot? Might as well be one. Time is but a spell that you need to break free from. Your train of thought is broken by a question. "What's gotten into you? How many screens have you finished today?" Her observations of your lack of productivity furthered fuel your need to leave and to take them all. The woman who asked you had some



door. The bag was worn and strangely lightweight. The zipper was large and rusty, it fought you as you cracked it open. From the opening, a faint light started to spill out, in the dark room, it looked like another gap in the wooden wall. You lift the case to your face and stared into the light.

You could see everything! There is peace, green, space, smiles. It is a dream inside, making you lose track of time. The gray dawn arrives and you felt the urge to reach into the mirage, but master had arrived for the morning shift.

"It is time!" Said the brooding old man with a disheveled beard, stained shirt, and ripped pants.

You had no sleep but felt recharged somehow. The fire in you, to escape into this magical reality, was ablaze. You did not know how, just that you



It was the middle of the night. You knew that if it wasn't now, it was never going to happen. This was your last chance to break free. The room was drafty and the night chilly. Through the cracked windows, the light of lamp posts illuminated the faces of the children sleeping between their parents. The room had no heat; with more people than beds. Not the worst arrangement in nights like these, but it would get much worse in the winter.

All were denied dignity; only two meals a day and always supervised. You couldn't do this anymore. Sitting on the corner of the bed, closest to the back window, you reached under it for the suitcase. You found it while on break yesterday. It was leaning against the bathroom