Moving On

"You died," The voice stated. It was neutral, almost calming, or would have been if it weren't for the words it spoke. Or the fact that I couldn't see the owner. Or that I hadn't a clue where I was. "You now have a choice."

"What's the choice?" My voice asked, surprisingly steady given the information I had received. It echoed throughout the walls of the torch-lit cave which seemingly went on forever.

"Wake up." It paused, perhaps gauging my reaction. "Or move on."

"Wake up? I'm not awake?" I touched the naturally smooth wall of the cave next to me. It felt real.

"No. You died. Think of this as purgatory. Either find it in you to wake up and go back to your life or move on to the next one.

"Can I ask, how did I die?" I remembered everything. Apart from that.

"In a car crash. You were drunk." The voice bore no judgement. The memory came flooding back. I decided not to think about it.

I thought of my life before now. Mid-30s. Low paying job. Would anyone really miss me? The thought of "moving on" seemed quite pleasant, even if uncertain.

I thought for a moment, processing everything. "What does moving on entail?"

"You simply move forward. Walk through the cave and think about every detail of your life before now."

I looked at my surroundings. The ground I was standing on was rough and uneven; small rocks of varying shades of amber illuminated by the glow from the torch which tirelessly dancing on the cave wall next to me. The cave itself was massive, stretching on endlessly, the smooth walls rounding far away as they turned a corner. Stalactites and stalagmites scattered the ground and the ceiling; their freakish, spear-like points carrying a strange beauty.

The voice continued, "At the end of your journey you decide where you belong."

"How long is the journey?"

"However long you make it. Some may spend eternity reflecting on themselves and some will spend an hour."

A strange urge overtook me and I took a step forward. I started to wander across the rough terrain slowly, drinking in the alluring rocks and the flickering fire from the torches. The oddness of my situation then hit me. I was *dead*. What about my friends, my family? Would

they even miss me? In retrospect, I wasn't a good person. Sure, I didn't kill anybody, but I didn't care much for those around me. I was angry and bitter and spiteful and pushed away anybody who tried to help.

I abandoned my thoughts and realised I had entered an entirely new section of the cave. Time moved strangely here.

"I was quite obnoxious, you know." I spoke more to myself than the voice. "Didn't have many friends."

"I know." I was almost surprised it was still with me.

"I wish I could turn back time and just… I don't know, be more kind. So many people offered to help me so many times, but I would just shrug them off."

"I often find that, within reason, it doesn't matter who you've been and what you've done. It's who you will be tomorrow."

I stopped mid step. I could go back. I could be *better.*

"I can still wake up, can't I?" I asked the voice.

"It's your choice."

I thought for a moment. I could either change my current life or start a new one. I supposed they weren't too different. There was so much left to do, to make amends, to love. I wasn't finished with life.

"How do I wake up?"

"Continue walking and your conscience will find you."

I almost rolled my eyes. The voice was quite pretentious. Purgatory had too much walking for my liking.

I walked for what could have been years, the cave's landscape changing as I went. I pondered if I really was here, if this was all real. I concluded that it wasn't for me to decide.

Just as I was starting to tire of my existential thoughts, I noticed a white light ahead in the distance. It was getting closer. A strange, giddy feeling overcame me as it neared and engulfed me. "*Your conscience will find you."* said the voice in my head. It didn't seem so pretentious now. The light started to fade around me. My surroundings became clearer. I heard voices and sirens in the distance.

"Hey, we have a pulse!"...