

## The Hunger

He sat alone in a secluded booth at the edge of the food court savouring dark coffee and even darker thoughts. It'd been three months since the sickness had returned and he was hungry.

From his vantage point he watched a young girl in uniform wiping down tables. As she worked her way closer she leaned over the benches and he felt his eyes drawn to the half-lowered zipper at the front of her blouse. Fragile arms vigorously worked the cloth across the Formica and he wondered whether she stroked her boyfriend with the same rigor. A quick strike and she could be outside in the old van he'd inherited before anyone realized what was happening.

"Have you finished?" She pointed to the empty cup in front of him. He pushed it toward her. She was pretty. But she wouldn't do.

It was three months since he'd last satisfied the hunger. He moved on, trawling the mall, fishing, searching the shadowy still waters near the exits, where he could disappear quickly again with his catch.

A show finished at the cinema. He stopped beneath the green LED signs, pretending to study the sessions. Several teenagers floated past in a wave of stale smelling popcorn. His eyes settled on an outlier. A kid on his own, wearing a designer sweatshirt and eating ice cream. The hunger surged.

The boy brushed past without noticing him, pulling out a pair of the latest headphones and placing them over his ears. Expensive. Noise-cancelling. Perfect.