I AM THE ELEVATOR

Open with a hollow, cavernous open bass, emulating the depth of an open shaft. Hits of dissonant-distance craws here and there.

This elevator will not kill me.

No matter what they would have you believe...*low and murmury*: No matter what I might tell myself...and no matter what the elevator itself wishes were true. Of course, I've had to ask...ask if it has already. If it killed me to begin with, when it first violently plummeted from floor 6 to B1...and everything that has followed has been but a delusion. Or better yet, an afterlife. That's what they would all like to believe, isn't it...isn't it...

And who am I to blame them, really. When a building as old as this--as *derelict* as this, abandoned and forgotten for god knows how many years has an elevator crash, you don't really check for survivors. Hell, just to do so would be to risk your own life; there's enough rubble and wreckage down here to occupy two entire underground floors, and the elevator didn't even make it past the first of them before crashing into the ground, and spitting me out. Out into this minimal space between slanted slabs of fallen concrete, formed in a merciful V-shaped gap for me to exist, to breathe. At least the former. Which, of course, means that the only place I can go for space to breathe is the elevator itself...the only source of dim, impossible fluorescent

light in this whole place...and wouldn't it like me to seek it...

I came here to perform a structural analysis. My employer wanted to purchase this building to open a branch office despite every reason not to; despite the fact that this place hasn't been touched for over a decade, despite the massive budget required just to make it usable, and despite the...*sigh* ever-popular rumors of paranormal influence here that tend to follow any such abandoned structure. *scoff* I could put those rumors to rest quite easily. For as long as I've been down here I can say with unstinting certainty that there are no spirits or ghosts in this place. No, the only thing here that will kill you is...an elevator. And it will do everything it can to do so.

And I've been down here fffor...*murmuring beneath breath*: well...how does one even know at this point. Days, weeks. Months maybe. One begs the question of how I'm still alive. I ask it myself quite frequently. And I've only come up with one answer, really: I'm alive because the elevator didn't kill me. For that to happen, it needs me alive. So...here I am.

Lower bassy MIDI subtly worms its way in, Funeral-esque.

It stares at me from across the slabs of concrete. It looks at me with doors still crashed open in an uneven mouth. Like the unhinged jaw of a serpent. So it can fit its mouth around me...and I know what needs to be done.

Small, higher-pitched shriek-ish MIDI, very quiet and filtered with Sandman Pro.

There's only one way out of here. Up. And it's true, after all, that there's only one way to go up. Only one person between

the two of us who has ever gone up in this place. And it's staring at me with an unhinged jaw.

I know what it wants. I know it would do anything to have me naively slip into its mouth a second time, with intentions utterly irrelevant to its metal mind, and let it finish the job. I know it will never let me out of here. That's why I'm not going to let it. I'm going to *make* it.

Ominous *detuned* piano low-notes, underwater-like.

I grip the concrete, maneuver myself down. Struggle and slide down, into the elevator. My feet meet its tiled floor. I wrench my balance up and forward, come to a dizzying, uneasy stand--one I haven't taken in days or weeks or months. But I manage it easily, more easily than I expected. More easily, even, than I walked when I first entered this thing, clipboard in hand, tentatively testing its stability like an insect into a flytrap. Not anymore. Now we are...acquainted.

But not as acquainted as we are about to be.

Who ever said survival was easy...who ever said you could make it through life without a little...*sacrifice.* I need this thing to go up. I need to make this thing go *up*. And if it won't do it for me...I guess I'll have to do it myself. Show it how.

Waterphone begins to scrape, crinkle.

I grip the rail. I run my hands up and down it, going side to side. Fathoming the metal. Familiarizing myself with it...and I do it until my hands feel a little numb, feel used to the touch. Then I press--! my back into the wall. Strenuously and relentlessly squeeze my body into the cold, steel wall of the elevator, covered in filth and rough to the touch. But still I press...press like sandpaper against wood, and I wonder idly which of us if which...which is which...

Then--up--! with my feet...I bend my knees and clamp the bottoms of my feet into the wall as well, gripping all the tighter onto the rail to support my weight firm, holding me aloft. My forearms strain and struggle to keep me in the position, no part of my body on the floor of the elevator now, my entire self just a mass of person pulsating against the wall. And everywhere I feel more familiarized...everywhere I feel further numb, like those parts of me aren't even there...aren't even there anymore...just the elevator.

Shriek-ish MIDI comes up louder, but not piercing, just closer to the front in a quiet, hideous voice.

I open my eyes. Look straight into broken numerical screen. Look straight into the eyes of the one who broke me. The one with its steel teeth at my neck, rapt unceasingly on ending me here in this pile of rubble...the one whose life is ending mine. The one whose name is my death. And all I see in the reflection of that shattered glass is my own face...my own pained, struggling face...

But not for long...not for-r long...n-not for long, long-g long-g-g...

All sounds slowly fade away. Fade out of his breath straining, struggling, fighting...wait a while...then fade back in of his breath hoarse, wheezy, inhuman, QUITE different from what it was when he faded out.

I open my eyes.

BOOM: Low, gritty, rumbling distorted bass, and the waterphone is actually bowing now, just a bit here and there with scraping in between, metallic.

And I am...changed. I am...*small laughter*: looking prett-y good...

My hands...they have made friends with the rail. Fingers shining with a dull, iron color that spreads fast across my knuckles, and my fingertips...*scoff* well...my fingertips are no longer there. Melded together with the rail. Melded together with the elevator.

As is the majority of me. My body...it has at last begun to fuse with the wall, feet bonded inseparably to the metal with toes completely erased, keeping themselves held in place without much strain anymore. My upper arms continue to writhe, but my forearms...they are practically rails themselves, the skin turned steel and immovable, fortified by their adhesion to the wall. The same goes for my back, felt only in that I feel much less of it than I did before, glued and amalgamated to the wall it's been pressing against for incalculable sums of time.

And my face...warped and dim in the reflection of the broken screen. But I can see enough of it to know that it is...*chuckle* changed. Less...recognizable. From my cheeks extend strings of metal, pulling back my face in a rictus, like thick lines of spider web. What is left of my hair resembles steel wool, frayed and tangled like wires, but the bulk of it has already made its entrance into the elevator, like little hooks of me pierced into this great leviathan, this dealer of death forced now to reckon with another such beast. With another such primal force strong enough to not kill the first...but to become it. To consume it. To possess it. (Pause) And from this angle, the grimace on my face looks almost **Metallic voice-filtering effect beginning to fade in:** like a smile.

I feel it already. I feel the extension of my body, rectangular and huge, so much bigger than I was. And yet the more of it I become, the more it feels like less like a prosthetic and more like myself, a phantom limb I was always meant to have, meant to possess, meant to take for myself...and after I have, who knows how much stronger I will be. Stronger than ever. Stronger than I was when I first walked into this thing. Strong enough to survive the simple crash of an elevator--because how could it crash...when I am the elevator...I am the elevator...

Waterphone ceases, and the bass fades away to leave in its absence the same Funeral-esque bass that started us, perhaps a bit more poignant, or at least *just* foreboding. The voice becomes less metallic within first few sentences:

small, under-voice gruntwhine But it...b-but it...hurts...m-my knees...hurt...the metallic color spreads up from my ankles, pulling my shins closer to the wall the more it spreads, and my knees bend to keep up with them but I, Igh, I h-have too much leg and I, I can't extend them any further now that they've embedded into the elevator. And my neck, it...it tries to fuse into the wall that my back has already assimilated with, but it p-p-pulls my head down in the process, my head which cannot move, bound to the wall by hair of steel. It's like I...like I can't fit into this thing without...without breaking me...without undoing the individual parts of me...and eventually my whole self...

Won't my whole self have to...have to go, too...isn't that what it means to...to survive this? To refuse the elevator what it wants...to force it to go up...this is what it takes...to erase my features, reverse engineer my body, make me into

something else...something cold...something metal...that's how I survived this...*that's* how I survive...this--!

Crunch of bone, and right on the note the rumbling bass comes back in, more side-by-side with Funeral bass.

I...force my legs...into place. Force my knees into the wall. I push--!

Slosh of meat. Voice begins to turn metallic once more:

My neck...to the wall without moving...my head. It forms a near semicircle between my head and collarbones. My forearms rest casually against the wall, and...and I-I...

Voice begins to lower, detune:

I have every part of me...flattened against this wall. Every piece of me assimilated, or assimilating. I watch my features slip into the wall as into still water. And n-now, well...*__deep__ chuckle* Now making myself the elevator feels less like straining...more like resting. **Voice beginning to reverb:** I rest, into the elevator...I rest into the metal...I rest...into...

All MIDI cuts out, and his voice is plain once more:

whispering: My new self.

Sound of elevator powering on, then rumbling its way up the floors.

And I...am moving...up. *delirious relieved laugh* I'm moving up. I'm making the elevator...move up. Making myself...move up. Because I'm not inside the elevator...*similar laugh, a little darker* I'm *inside* the elevator. I slow its brakes. **Sound of it coming to a stop.** I open its doors. **Sound of doors opening.** And I close them, just for fun. **Doors close.** Because I decide...*I* decide what goes up, and what goes down. I control it all--I control *everything* that controlled me. And

that's why when the question goes through my mind, the question of how I'm even supposed to get out of this elevator, out of this building, out of all of this--I have an immediate answer. (Pause, then) *whispered*: I don't want to. Why would I ever...want to? After all...this elevator will not kill me. This elevator will *never* kill me.

Not me.

Doors open.

I open my doors...to see somebody. A kid. Some punk teenager with a smartphone, and a grin quickly vanishing from his lips. He aims his phone at me, filming. I'm willing to bet he came to see the famous haunted building on the outskirts of town, trying to catch himself a ghost on camera. But there is no paranormal threat here. (Pause) **All at once, MAX voice manipulation:** Other than myself. But he'll never have the strength to force me out of here...he'll never be able to take what I have taken, to possess what I have possessed. (Pause) But hey...never hurts to let him try.

I let him into my doors. I let him look around, record my walls. Then I close the doors, **(Sound of doors closing)** with him inside me, and I let myself go.

Sound of elevator dropping, falling down through the shaft, and crashing at the distant bottom.