



DRAWINGS © Bryan Kent Ward

# Hank Kirton

## *Work*

“I’m a craftsman,” I kept telling myself. “An artist.”

I confronted my job at dawn, my dread rising with the light. I worked outdoors and every morning I prayed for rain. We couldn’t work in the rain.

The day was bright and clear.

I parked my dying Dodge Shadow under a catalpa tree, took a deep breath. Karen’s upcoming abortion was still on my mind and I’d thought about calling in sick just so I could THINK.

I left the car with the tree and headed toward the fields.

It was early summer and the smell of the flowers was overpowering. Twelve acres of flowers and flowering trees; each little stab of color puffing perfume into the air. I’d been working at Addax’s Art Nest for two months and already the smell had become cloying, noxious, headache inducing.

I walked across a worn wooden footbridge that forded a narrow stream they kept stocked with shy, timid goldfish. I glanced at my wrist and saw I still had a few minutes before I had to punch in, so I stopped mid-stream and looked down. The water was kept clean with a filter, the little river-bottom paved with perfect white pebbles. I didn’t see any goldfish.

I stood like that for awhile, looking at the calm, speckled current and the cattails and blooming milkweed beyond. I thought about Karen.

And then I noticed the buzzing - that hateful droning - and it wrecked things; the quiet, my daydream. I finished crossing the bridge and headed into the office.

Mr. Philips was sitting behind his sprawling, Polyester acrylic desk, smoking his breakfast-cigar and spreading fresh honey on a piece of burnt toast. He looked at me, then back at the toast. “You’re almost late,” he said.

I shrugged and apologized. Gertie and Dave were already there, drinking coffee, chatting. They were never almost late. They gave me synchronized nods of greeting. I nodded back and then filled out my time-card: Hank Kirton, Employee #24, and punched in. I was five minutes early. I slid my card into the rack and then approached Mr. Philip’s desk to suffer my assignment.