

Elevator Operator

Courtney Barnett

Oliver Paul, twenty years old
Thick head of hair worries he's going bald
Wakes up at a quarter past nine
Fare evades his way down the 96 tram line
Breakfast on the run again
He's well aware he's dropping soy
Linseed Vegemite crumbs everywhere
Feeling sick at the sight of his computer
He dodges his way through the Swanston commuters
Rips off his tie, hands it to a homeless man
Sleeping in the corner of a Metro bus stand
He screams "I'm not going to work today!"
Gonna count the minutes that the trains run late
Sit on the grass building pyramids out of Coke cans
Headphone wielding to the Nicholas Building
He trips on a pothole that's not been filled in
He waits for an elevator, 1 to 9
A lady walks in and waits by his side
Her heels are high and her bag is snakeskin
Hair pulled so tight you can see her skeleton
Vickers perfume on her breath
A tortoise-shell necklace between her breasts
She looks him up and down with a Botox frown
He's well used to that look by now
The elevator dings, and they awkwardly step in
Their fingers touch on the rooftop button...
"Don't jump little boy, don't jump off that roof
You've got your whole life ahead of you
You're still in your youth
I'd give anything to have skin like you!"
He said, "I think you're projecting
The way that you're feeling
I'm not suicidal just idling insignificantly
I come up here, for perception and clarity
I like to imagine I'm playing Sim City
All the people look like ants from up here
And the wind's the only traffic you can hear"
He said, "All I ever wanted to be was an
Elevator Operator can you help me please?!"
"Don't jump little boy, don't jump off that roof
You've got your whole life ahead of you
You're still in your youth
I'd give anything to have skin like you!"

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