

The skyline kept getting taller and taller. The buildings became more numerous every day. It was now to the point where you could see a skyscraper from any point in the continental United States. And now, they were building them so they could be expanded to greater heights once the initial construction was completed.

Down in the depths of this mega-conglomerate of monster buildings, down on the streets, it was dusk at mid-day. The street lights were lit continually.

People were becoming polarized. Those who wanted it, and those who didn't. Litigations were filed over the right to sunlight. As it was, you practically had to ride an elevator to catch more than a glimpse of sun!

And the by-word of the day was, "More Stories!" Greater heights! The trademark of progress. The bastion of civilization. The great continental monument to man and his achievement.

The financiers wanted it. The profiteers wanted it. The businessmen wanted it. The construction companies wanted it. The politicians, ah . . . well, they were torn, of course. Saying one thing to one group, and another thing to the other. Always remaining rather non-committal and vague.

Needless to say, the Audubon Society didn't want it. The Naturalists didn't want it. Greenpeace didn't want it. The Humane Societies didn't want it. There were scarcely any country folk around any more, but those who were didn't want it. The Environmental Protection Agency was all but disbanded. But they were having difficulty getting their voices heard. Yes, litigation was filed, but the "Justice System" was for it, so the dockets just piled up in some old dusty room.

Somewhere, hidden away in the vast array of structures and humanity, a solitary, small, but commanding subliminal voice kept repeating the phrase, "More Stories! More Stories!"

The idea was being effectively seeded in the minds of those in power. It was practically against their will. The message pervaded their magazines, their newspapers, and even their computer databases so extensively, they were persuaded and convinced this was the right direction and were willing to pursue it beyond all reason.

The economy was booming! More jobs for blue collar, more jobs for white collar, a heyday for everyone -- that is, everyone who was for it. For the others, it was a nightmare! A full circle of evolution, they called it: from the caves of stone to the caves of concrete; from the forests of rain to the forests of glass and steel; a total disregard for natural processes. Surely, it was the twilight of humanity.

But the message kept appearing everywhere, "More Stories! More Stories!"

Taller and taller the buildings became. More massive at the base, to support such high structures. Stronger materials had been developed to stand the strain. New construction techniques had been devised to distribute the stress. And they called it progress!

And yet, they didn't understand that the message was misunderstood. For, deep in the lower level of the building which housed the nerve center of communication, there was a children's nursery. A forgotten nursery that in years past had been run by robots. One child had never been picked up by his parents. Whether the parents had died, it was never determined. Due to an unfortunate oversight, the nursery was closed down, the basement area of the building sealed. That one child who remained was still being cared for by the robots. He had been there fifty years. It was all the life he had known. The robots saw it as performing their job well. They were instructed to take the most

extreme care of the children. This was their last charge, and they saw nothing unusual in the child being nearly fifty five years of age.

This child was a highly intelligent member of the human species, but being deprived of all other human contact since the age of five, he had no desire to reach other humans. Instead, he loved to read.

The robots had developed a method of access to a particular data bank of literature using one of the terminals that remained in the forgotten basement. They didn't know the terminal was connected to an illegal, but since forgotten subliminal transmission network.

Whenever this unusual elderly child wanted additional reading material, he simply typed, "More Stories! More Stories!"

And the misunderstanding prevailed. More Stories.

How many times has the human race taken the wrong direction as a result of misunderstandings? How many times will the human race do so in the future?