

The Leap

In the war of 2040, the powerful nations of the earth engaged in the first conflict involving weather warfare that the world had ever seen. Giant landmasses were shifted; new land was brought forth from the depths of the oceans and old land descended into them. Tsunamis devastated islands and coastal countries, tornadoes ravaged small towns and great cities, and earthquakes convulsed the land, leaving new scars upon it. Volcanoes erupted with such grandiosity that they shook the very foundation of the earth and from their fiery chasms came the most lasting consequence: ash and smoke that would envelop the sky and enshroud the light from the sun for years to come.

Freeman's eyes sprung open and a sharp, deep breath filled his lungs. Covered by only a thin bed sheet, he was sweaty and cold.

"Jesus Christ," he moaned.

His clock read 5:30 and as the first semblance of light entered through his window, he sat up and looked into the mirror. His skin wrapped tightly around his jaw and cheekbones and with his dim, blue eyes, he examined his tired frame in the dusty glass. His once robust torso had become angular and striated and veins coiled like snakes up his wiry arms. Freeman smiled softly and pulled on his work clothes. He opened the refrigerator and took out a piece of bread and a glass of cloudy water. A dull honk came from outside the flat and he skipped out the door to get a ride to work with his friend Carlos.

After the war ended in 2044, the elite families of the North American continent funded the building of several ghettos for survivors. Not wanting to let a good crisis go to waste, they established regimes in these cities and permeated them with willing apostates to ensure that their investments would remain lucrative by way of cheap plebeian labor. People were given government jobs and were paid with a one room flat, food rations, and a small allowance.

The morning air was thick outside of the supply shed as the two friends gathered their tools.

“I love you amigo, but you are always talking that crazy shit.” Carlos bantered.

“Please, that was a total inside job man, they just wanted an excuse to start the war,” countered Freeman as they loaded their wheelbarrows into the back of the truck. “What are we doing today anyway?”

“We’re going to work at the house of the guy who pretty much owns this city. I guess he is having an addition put on and some other landscaping done,” Carlos said.

Freeman and Carlos were given work with the construction division of the city. They were both strong and experienced and spent most of their days constructing new flats, sidewalks, and other buildings. They got into the back of the truck and the supervisor put it into gear. The drive lasted for an hour before they arrived at an expansive estate that hid behind a lifeless and decaying forest and was surrounded by a vast, dead lot of dirt.

“Wow, I haven't seen anything like this since before the war,” Freeman said, taken aback.

“I’ve never seen anything like this,” Carlos replied as they both paused to admire the mansion.

Freeman was born with health problems that plagued him as he grew up and because of this, he spent much of his life daydreaming as a way to escape the pain. His ideas made him skeptical of what society offered him and he began to realize that he was missing something. His problems culminated one day when he was eighteen and nearly dead in the hospital from his lifetime of being feeble and sick. From that point on, Freeman spent hours every day searching the global network, trying to figure out the truth about health and what was wrong with him. While finding the answers to these questions, he discovered something that he never expected. Freeman discovered that the shape and nature of the earth was not what the people had been told.

Freeman and Carlos stood in the circle of the eight workers that made up the crew. After he assigned five to get started on the addition in the front of the house, the supervisor told the two of them that they would be digging out an area for the foundation of a back patio. This monotonous task gave them some time to talk.

“Listen, Carlos, you know I am planning on leaving soon.”

“I’ll believe it when I see it, Freeman. Besides, you can’t be serious. I know there are a lot of conspiracies, but the earth being flat, I don’t know.”

“If I’m not right, where do you think the bread is coming from? They have to be growing it somewhere,” Freeman said.

“I don’t know, they probably just did that genetic modification shit you told me about to make it so it can grow without sunlight.”

“I don’t think so, man.”

Freeman pulled a piece from his pocket.

“I’m so tired of eating this shit man. It’s not even human food.”

“How are you going to get there anyway...”

The friendly argument cut short. The two heard a voice coming from the back door and their eyes opened wide as the girl in the doorway motioned for Freeman to come towards her. She was the most beautiful woman that he had ever seen and his heart raced ahead of him as he walked in her direction.

“Come inside,” she said.

“I don’t know if that’s a good idea...”

She took his hand, softly pulled him into the house, and closed the door.

“What is your name?” She asked, beginning to caress his hand.

“Freeman.”

“What do you think of me?”

“I think you are beautiful, but what happens if your dad sees me in here?”

“He’s not here,” she said.

“Where is he?”

“He is... somewhere else. He won’t be here for a long time.”

“Well, what can I do for you?” Freeman asked, in a somewhat fabricated presentation of confidence.

She looked at Freeman, stood on her toes, pushed her body against his, and kissed him. The two stumbled their way into the next room, immersed in their mutual affinity. But moments later, when Freeman looked up from the embrace, he saw something that astonished him. Now inside

the kitchen, he saw a basket of oranges on the counter. He grabbed the girls shoulders, gently pushed her away and walked towards them.

“Where the hell... How... What...”

Freeman looked back at her with wide eyes.

“You can have one,” she said.

Freeman tore off the peel, ate it and felt an energetic sensation throughout his entire body.

“Do you know what we eat in the city?”

“Yes.” She said.

“They come from the other earth, don’t they?” Freeman demanded, having been provoked into a state of exasperation and excitement.

“Yes... but you can’t go there... unless I take you. Stay with me and I’ll take you there whenever you want.”

“What is your name?” Freeman asked her.

“Delilah.”

“Why are you saying all of this to me?”

“Because Freeman, you’re different. You are like the people on the other earth: wise, peaceful and enlightened. We don’t have to control them like we do the people here. Don’t you see, this earth was destroyed by your people and their wars.”

“Our wars? Your kind are the ones that start the wars!” Freeman exclaimed as the look on his face darkened.

“Your kind are the ones that follow orders and kill each other. It was decided that the population was too high and that the earth had to be cleansed. It wasn’t my choice,” she said calmly.

Freeman eyes blazed and without saying a word, he walked to the bowl of oranges, picked up two, and began walking towards the door.

“Freeman stop.”

He continued walking.

“Wait,” she said. “Freeman if you walk out that door, I will tell my dad that you came in here and assaulted me!”

He stopped for a second, then slowly turned to face her.

“Oh, is that right?” he asked with a villainous grin and a slight tilt of the head that made her chest tighten and lungs quicken.

Freeman moved towards Delilah and carried her down the stairs into the basement. He laid her onto the floor and with one hand above her sternum, kissed her and pressed himself up. He went back upstairs, closed the door, and pulled the dinner table in front of it.

“You’re not doing shit.” He murmured to himself.

Freeman hurdled through the backdoor to see Carlos who was winking and making suggestive gestures with his shovel.

“Yo man, I’m leaving. I stole a bag and some clothes and food and shit. In an hour or something go let the girl out of her basement.”

“Freeman, you’re fuckin’ loco hombre!” The two laughed out loud and Freeman walked back into the doorway. He reached into his pocket, pulled out an orange, and with a quick nod of respect, tossed it to Carlos.

Freeman passed through the house, grabbed the keys to the 2040 black sports car in the garage, and left tire marks down the cement driveway and into the street. He shifted through the gears

and merged onto a small highway. The hours passed and the day faded as he observed the dreary landscape and watched gray semi-trucks occasionally roll by.

“Wherever those are coming from is where I need to go,” Freeman thought.

The water’s edge marked the end of the road as Freeman arrived at a loading dock to see a rusty container ship with its ramp sprawled out onto the shore. Forklifts rolled back and forth and transferred palletized boxes to the tune of the occasional laugh or shout that could be heard over the reverberating hum of the idling engine. Dusk had not yet arrived, but without the rays of the setting sun reflecting off the ocean, it was nearly dark. Freeman parked the car a short distance away, crept through the dirt, onto the pavement, and moved through the shadows until he was only footsteps from the ramp. He walked briskly onto the ship and sidestepping the eyes of unsuspecting workers, he slipped inside an empty container. He tied the doors shut with a long sleeve shirt, laid down, and prayed that no one would come and close the steel latches on the outside. Freeman closed his eyes, thought of all that had happened and all that could happen next, and slept.

Freeman awoke to bitter cold. He put on his stolen clothes, opened the container doors, and with squinted eyes saw his breath mix into the morning air. Freeman stepped out of his first floor shack and peered out onto the ship. He walked to the base of a steel structure and found a ladder. The ladder, bolted onto a vertical column that bisected the ship’s horizontal cranes, led up more than twice the height of the triple stacked containers that filled the deck. Freeman climbed fifteen feet and gazed out over the water. In the distance, he could see what he had only heard about in legend. The great ice wall was approaching and the ship was headed straight for the gap made

many years ago by explosives that perforated it and created a connection between the two worlds.

As Freeman marveled at the sight, he heard a shout come from below. A group of men had gathered and one started to climb towards him. The ship was only moments from the wall now. Freeman climbed higher. The front of the ship entered the channel as Freeman reached the crane. He walked out onto the suspended steel that hung over the swirling arctic water as the man, now at the top of the ladder, watched, frozen with disbelief. Now most of the way across, Freeman took three running steps and jumped.

An inch of soft snow padded the ice where Freeman landed. He looked toward his home and the dark sky filled him with heartache. He looked to the blue sky of the new earth and as the sun emerged from behind a feathery cloud, it illuminated his face and refracted through a single tear, creating a glimmer that quickly faded when Freeman realized what he had done. The ring of ice stretched until it vanished into the horizon and the billowing oceans that surged against it left him no escape. Freeman shrugged off his bag, sunk to his knees, and laid on his back. He tilted his head to the blue sky and thought about being rescued. He turned back to the gray and saw himself in prison. He gazed above where the two met and imagined divine intervention. He closed his eyes and envisioned that no one would come: he envisioned his death. His consciousness ascended from his body and as he looked down upon the figure lying there, he felt no fear- for that part of him had already died.

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