

The World We Lost

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CHAPTER ONE: THE LAUNCH

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"Commander, we are all set for the launch" The first engineer, Mr. Schneider looks at me with eloquence.

I nod back at him.

All five members of our crew sits inside the cabin of GSAT-90. This rocket was meant to launch about a month ago, but it kept on getting delayed until today.

I prayed the entire day for my safety and of the crew and well being of my family's. But nothing can totally diminish the anxiety before a launch.

As the main engine ignites, the entire orbiter clatters and shakes like skyscrapers swaying in an earthquake. Peril starts to build up, 'But there is no turning back now'.

The countdown begins and as it reaches 'T-minus-zero', the rocket booster ignites with a massive thrust and we get blasted off the launchpad.

One after the other, the empty boosters starts to flay away and the launch seems like a success.

"Yes! We have made it" comes the enthusiastic voice of Mr. Derek (the second engineer of our crew).

Slow claps and relieved voices starts to fill the air of the cabin.

Mr. Schneider looks at me and starts nodding, "Well done comma...." when he stops midway. "Did you hear that sound?" He asks with distress eminent in his voice, his eyes dilates, brows raise and wrinkles his forehead.

"Uh-huh, yes! I hear something" I reply, eyes still gazed at his; both afraid of the uncertain.

Then comes a sudden rattle, not something usually heard after the launch. A moment of silence. All of us look at each other. Then comes the shake, which sends me crashing into the

walls. I have my space suit on; but still the thrust was heavy and I can feel my muscles colliding my bones.

Before I can get up, the orbiter starts shaking again. The cabin which was filled with cheers a moment ago is now engulfed with fear and shouts of everyone inside.

I look at Mr. Derek; he is trying to get up. As I stretch my hand forward for him to catch, the sound of a huge explosion tears through all my senses.

I look back at Mr. Derek, I can't hear him but he is saying something. His lips are moving with fear in his eyes. I try to read his lips, 'Put it on' is what he has been saying; and throws a helmet towards me. My hand barely reaches it. But I somehow manage to put it on.

Now flames have started to cover the cabin.

I look towards the right, where the door to the emergency exit is.

I look back at Mr. Derek and signal with my hands, "I am going to come back for you" and dash towards the door on the right. But before I could catch the handle, I hear another explosion and the entire orbit rotates upside down.

I turn around and see a huge mass of flame running towards me, cutting away the smoke billowing inside the orbiter.

I push the door with all my weight, but it won't budge. I push again; and again and again until I see flames all around me. I cry out with the last bit of hope leaving my body.

The door is getting away; my eyes can see only red and orange in-front. The red is getting redder. The flames have engulfed me. But I don't feel any pain, only a sense of nothing. I feel dizzy; the red in-front has started to get darker.

I don't hear the shouts anymore, only a breeze of silence. My eyes are getting heavy and the darkness has won over the red. Everything has gone black, I am going to die !

CHAPTER TWO: THE WORLD BEYOND

Time: Unknown

Place: Unknown

"Hi-hu-hu-huh" One of the three men opens his mouth with a spear pointed towards me.

I don't know where I am. But after the explosion, everything went dark until I saw a shimmer of light lingering in the distance. As I open my eyes, I find myself between these

three men. Two of them are wearing some boiled leather outfit with spears on one hand and shields on the other. The third man looks older and he is wearing a leopard skin around his torso and lower half, speaking authority. He is not carrying any weapon; only a necklace made of bones clutching onto his neck.

"Hi-Tu-Su-Hu" The older one looks at me with his bright red eyes and points one hand ahead.

'Is he telling me to walk?' I think. I have tried to communicate but all in vain.

Without any idea of what to do, I take a step forward; with the other two still behind me with their spears pointed right at me.

As I take the step, all of them take a step with me. We all walk ahead; the older one keeps his red eyes still locked at me.

I look around, we are going through a jungle. Big brown trees rise to reach the sky with bright green coloured leaves blooming on them, like the onset of spring. There are birds, red and yellow perched on the branches; their eyes on me.

The sky above is turquoise with white clouds billowing in between. I have never seen a scene this beautiful. The Sun ahead is a bright red with orange hue around which mingles as it goes further away from the Sun with the turquoise blue trying to mingle in between.

I can see my helmet locked inside the belt of the younger men. He must have taken it while I was asleep, or comatose. I am still not sure what happened. How I reached this place.

The air is sweet; I have never inhaled air so sweet and pure.

It has started to get darker and we have walked a few miles. I can see where they are taking me.

There are few huts at the distance near the horizon.

The Orange-Red Sun has started to set behind these huts and the colour of the sky has started to change. It has started to take the hue of violet like that of a late bruise.

There are thousands of birds flying towards the Sun to the north. I have never seen flocks of birds of this size ever in my life. This place is different; there are green-yellow hillocks sprayed all over my right with dark green and blue plains on my left.

Over the plains, there are herds of white goats with antlers bigger than their entire size. The young ones are hopping behind their mother. Her big, branched antler raises to reach the sky with their intriguing eyes on me.

We soon reach the huts. A commotion has started to surround me. Everyone has come out of their houses to look who this new stranger from a distant land is as the word about it spreads like fire.

In between all this commotion, the older men left my sight with the other two still behind me with a few more joining them by now, holding their spears firm as ever.

A few moments pass with the people chattering and shouting; some of them mumbling in a dialect I can't understand.

Just as the situation starts getting a little tense for me, the old men comes out piercing the crowd. There is an even older women following him. She is wearing a red gown and a crown made of yellow, blue and green feathers. Her eyes are deep and steady.

"Come with me" This women opens her mouth to my astonishment. I didn't expect her to speak English.

She sees the bewilderment in my eyes and takes me inside one of the small huts.

The walls of the hut are lined with many crystals. There are tree trunks placed uniformly on which more crystals of different colours are placed.

She asks me to sit on a mat placed neatly at the centre of the hut. The mat is made of fur, probably from a dead animal.

"Who are you? Why am I here ? How do you know my dialect?" I throw at her one question after the other quite impatiently.

"You have many questions I know. But for now, you have to only know that there is very less time for you" she looks at me with a rueful smile.

"Less time? For what?" I ask with a sudden strong feeling of fear building up inside me.

"I am a Mystic. I have served this village for many years. Since my birth, I was raised by another Mystic who always told me that this day would come."

I listen as she moves her hand while she speaks and her bracelet of bones makes a rattling sound.

*"You are from a different time." She has finally started to talk about me.
"Where you are now is your earth fifty-thousand years behind your time."*

I don't reply. Words won't come out. All this has come so suddenly and somehow I can't not-believe her.

But she continues. "You have only ten minutes to leave this place. Otherwise you won't be able to go back. I can send you back, but before that you have to promise me one thing."

"W-what?" I ask meekly.

"You have to promise me that once you are back to your time, you will spread knowledge about this place to your people. Tell them how beautiful the earth is; was for you. Tell them everything you have seen. And you have to make them stop; tell them to stop."

I can see the sternness in her voice. She looks very Serious and she is also right. This place is wonderful. Even in the most beautiful of imaginations, I could have never imagined our earth to be this beautiful.

"Yes, I promise. I will make sure that everyone knows." I reply with confidence and content in my voice.

"Very well then, let's now prepare for your return." She says as her eyes turn bright Indigo with a smile at the corner of her lips.

CHAPTER THREE

Time: 20th March; 2017

This is seven months after everyone was shocked at my return. The rest of my crew got killed. Only I survived.

Since then, I have tried to fulfil the promise I have made. I have travelled all around the world to spread words about what I saw. There were seminars and many events which I have organised and attended.

Today, I am going to attend the tenth rally against deforestation. After my initiative, deforestation has declined to a great extent. We are also taking edge in replacing fossil energy with electrical energy. The first success was replacing fossil fueled vehicles with electrical ones.

"I know for sure we can't get back the Earth we destroyed. But still one day, looking at the dedication and love for the mother Earth in your eyes; I can say that the future looks brighter and better than yesterday."

And the entire crowd of ten thousand college and school students burst into applause.