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Short Story
The Beginning of the End

I had a dream last night. A dream about living a new life, a happy one. I had a family in that dream. I can't remember their faces, but I knew I was happy. I got out my tent and looked up. It's been months since both the sun and the moon appeared in the sky. It concerned everyone. The governments issued that everyone continue their lives as normal, but we couldn't. Disasters struck everywhere, from earthquakes to floods, you name it. The world cried out. There were riots, there was destruction, and then there was nothing. It was quiet, for a while though, like the eye of a hurricane, there was more suffering yet to come.

The government couldn't do anything about it any longer, they issued a paper, a paper about evacuation to space. Ridiculous, I know, but the more you think about it, the better it is than here. I was not fortunate enough to evacuate. I didn't want to evacuate, I had her then. Oh Michelle, my sweet Michelle. If only I could've saved you, if only I took the chance to evacuate. Now hope seems so far away. Enough of that, I've rambled long enough now. I looked around my surroundings, I had to make sure it was safe for me to leave. I can't stay here any longer, it's not safe anymore. I lost her here. I looked into the distance, there was a faint cloud of dust approaching. Dust storm, it may not sound threatening, but with the shelter I have, it was dangerous. I grabbed my backpack and went off in the opposite direction. I can't bring my tent with me, no, it's too heavy for me to be bringing around. I didn't know where I was going, but it most definitely would be better than here. The plains aren't the ideal place to be in the apocalypse. There were too many dangers, I learnt them the hard way.

I walked until I found a dirt path that led me to a fork in the road, so I took my chances and went down the middle. In the distance I could see a farmhouse, not the best place, but it will work. I ran up to the door, locked. I ran to the back of the house and checked the back door, locked. There had to be some way to get in, then I noticed a window near the door. I grabbed a rock from the ground and threw it at the window. I took off my jacket and knocked out the remaining glass shards that were on the window frame, then I climbed through the window. It was somewhat dark in the room, but it was nice. Beggars can't be choosers. There was barely any damage done to this house surprisingly. I walked through the room I was in, which turned out to be a kitchen. I walked into the next room. There wasn't anything notable but an electric fan, a fireplace, and a storage chest in the corner of the room. My curiosity was piqued so I opened the chest. It was full of tools, these will be useful. I closed the chest and went to the fan. I pressed a button and it turned on, which was extremely lucky for me because most appliances didn't work that much anymore due to the lack of electricity nowadays. I turned off the fan and went to the fireplace. It wasn't eventful, it was just dusty. I was about to walk up the staircase near the living room door when I heard a stair creak.

I suddenly got chills down my spine. I hesitantly walked up the stairs. Step by step, dread filled me. I didn't know what to expect, I feared the worst, but I continued. As I reached the top of the stairs, I saw a figure cowering in the corner.

"Who's there?" I called out. The figure flinched. "Come on out, I'm not going to hurt you." I stepped a bit closer.

“Stay back! I- I know karate!” The voice squeaked. I looked closer at the figure. It was a little boy, no older than nine, cowering in the corner with his hands covering his head.

“Hey, it’s okay. I won’t hurt you.” I reassured him. He looked up slowly at me, still shaking, still visibly frightened. “What’s your name?”

“Declan...” He responded.

“That’s a nice name.” I smiled. “My name is Kevin.”

“H-hello...” He waved. I chuckled.

“Where are you parents, little buddy?”

“Mama went to find food and water and Papa went looking for a way out.”

“Oh, it must be hard work for them.”

“Y-yeah...” He looked down. “It gets lonely without them. I don’t have anyone to play with...” He frowned. Then he suddenly looked up at me. “Unless! Do you want to play with me??” He had this hopeful look on his face that I couldn’t say no to. It was nice seeing him happy, but then I looked out the window and saw the dust storm approaching closer. I realized that if we didn’t do something, we would die in this house.

“Declan, little buddy, I know a game we can play.” I said, facing him.

“What kind of game?” He asked, visibly excited.

“A game about, uh, about finding things that will help us cover the windows and the door. Oh, and also finding things that will help us get through tonight.”

“That doesn’t seem very fun..” He looked at me with a bored face.

“Uh, tell you what. If you help me fortify this house, I’ll play with you all night.” I proposed to him. His face instantly lit up with a smile.

“Deal!” He jumped up with excitement and ran off. I followed after him and we spent the next few minutes searching for anything useful. I looked out in their garage and found a few planks of wood. I brought them inside where Declan was waiting with some cans of soup.

“Hey bud, what’d you find?” I asked him

“I found these cans in the kitchen!” He smiled.

“Great job!” I patted him on his head. He smiled and ran off to I assume to find more things. I went downstairs to the chest of tools. I grabbed a hammer and the nails, and brought them with me to the kitchen. I boarded up the window I broke the best I could and continued with the other windows throughout the house. Declan stood near me from time to time with more objects he found and told me that he was winning. By the time I finished boarding up the windows, it was late in the evening. I hope Declan’s parents return home soon, I’d hate to tell him what could’ve happened to them. Declan tugged on my sleeve.

“I’m hungry.” Declan complained.

“I’m getting hungry too, say, let’s cook that canned soup you got.”

Declan nodded and we walked to the kitchen where I took the cans and opened them with a kitchen knife that was laying around. I placed it in a pot and on the stove, which surprisingly worked.

“Your stove actually works?” I asked him, very surprised.

“Yeah! Papa fixed our gen..a.. rator! Papa fixes everything!” He responded with pride. I laughed and waited for the canned soup to finish heating. Once it did, I poured it back into the cans and placed the cans on the table.

“Thank you!” He grabbed the can and started downing the soup, slurping loudly. I laughed and started eating the soup as well. Once we finished, I went to the door and took one last look outside. It was dark, but I could tell the dust storm was about to hit. I told Declan to get to the living room where it was somewhat safer. If anything happens, I can hide him in the tool chest. He’d be safe at least. Declan ran into the living room and I followed, I really hope the barricades hold up. Last thing I want is this boy’s parents rushing home to... no, they will hold. I know it. The wind picked up outside. The lights flickered on and off multiple times, but then completely turned off. Declan clung to me, I could see the fear painted on his face. I held him close while the winds roared. I heard Declan’s faint breathing, he must’ve fallen asleep. A yawn followed, I’m so tired. The barricades are holding up well, I’m sure it’s fine if I just take a short nap. I took a pillow from the couch and laid it under Declan’s head, I took another for me as well. I laid down next to Declan and stared up at the ceiling. I could barely see it. The roaring winds were oddly comforting. I closed my eyes and drifted off to sleep.

I had another dream. A dream where I had to make a decision that I couldn’t quite remember what. All I knew was that it wasn’t a good one. Then I woke up, blinking rapidly, trying to recall where I was. Everything came back to me when I looked at the familiar look of the living room. I looked down next to me, Declan was sleeping calmly. I was so relieved we were safe. I heard a car stop outside and keys jingling. The door burst open and a woman ran in.

“Declan?!” She looked around, then she looked at me. She had a look of shock on her face and she yelled. “Who are you?!? What are you doing in my-”

“Mm..” Declan shifted in his sleep right next to me, then he opened his eyes. All the yelling woke him up. “Good morning...” He said while rubbing his eyes

“Declan!” The woman yelled, tearing up. Declan sat up and looked at the woman.

“Mama!” He yelled, running to her with his arms open wide.

The woman took him into a hug and cried.

“Mama! This man was really nice! Can we keep him??” Declan asked his mother. I chuckled and looked at her, smiling nervously.

“You were the one who boarded the windows...” She looked at me. I nodded. “Thank you... Thank you so much for taking care of my son.” She smiled.

“It was the right thing to do.” I responded.

“Please, come with us.” She said.

I was confused. “Pardon, Ma’am?”

“My husband, he found a way out of this place. Please, come with us.” She requested. “You saved my son, this is the only way I could think to repay you.”

“I.. I’m not sure what to say, Ma’am..” I was awestruck. Could this be? A new start?

“Please Kevin! Come with us!” Declan pleaded. “You’re really fun! Please??”

I smiled. “I will, thank you so much.”

Declan clapped and gave me a hug. His mother smiled and wiped her face.

“Come now, my husband is waiting for us outside.” She held her hand out. Declan grabbed it and tugged my hand to follow him. I picked up my things, then I held his hand and walked outside. I can’t believe it. I did it, Michelle I did it. I got another chance at having a happy life. Michelle, I found a new family. The next moments of my new life are going to be incredible, and I wouldn’t trade them for the world.