

Hope in a Barren Wasteland

By Maxsilver18

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After WW3, Humans take refuge inside a hole in the ground called a vault

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It is the year 3065. The world as our ancestors knew it will never be the same because of the last three World Wars, spanning from 2993 to 3025. The greed of resources was the catalyst of these malicious acts that resulted in an all out nuclear war, stripping the planet from its abundant life and replacing it with a toxic, barren, wasteland. Very few life forms were left, and if they survived, it's because they lived in the ocean or underground. The surface was scarce and overwhelmed by dust storms and toxic rain. Most of the human race resided in a network of underground vaults, resistant to radiation, bombings, and the intense weather conditions of the surface. These vaults had artificial lighting to grow fruits and vegetables and source water from underground springs. Life in a hole in the ground was weird but it was all I knew. Everyone at a young age was assigned to learn a specific duty to the vault whether it be a service technician or a garden specialist. Our vault, Genesis95, had a structured determined community that had strong rules to follow. Everyone was too worried about these laws that no-one seems to have "fun" and, if you like to joke around and have a laugh, you were looked at as the town's clown. People called me a wise guy or a jokester but I know I'm a rebel and I don't belong in this "cave". Most of the community timidly wondered about what was beyond those 30 inch steel vault doors and what the surface may look like. I had always tried to give the head council the notion of a surface exploration mission. We would get 10 men and suit up in our anti-radiation gear and collect samples of the soil to test earth's condition, but this idea was turned down more times than I can count. Because of fear and arrogance, the council couldn't possibly consider an idea coming from 18-year-old class clown. The only time guards ever opened the vault door was to send "criminals" to the surface.

Due to my mom's rebellious nature, she broke the most vital law of the vault. She had a second child, my brother Milo, which is forbidden. Families were only allowed one child maximum for population reasons because the vault can only hold so many people. Because of this one of us was to be released to the surface and it was going to be me! I couldn't let my mom or dad be punished, so I took the penalty.

At the enormous vault door I suited up for the uncharted world outside. All I was equipped with was a

backpack full of freeze-dried food and distilled water, an anti-radiation suit, a survival knife, and a compass.

The door opened with a loud shrieking noise, exposing the bright amber light from the sun as it shone through clouds of dust. As I took my first couple of steps out of the vault onto the grim desolate soil, the huge steel doors slammed shut behind me without even a farewell from the guard. The harsh reality set in, I needed to make a plan and find shelter. I began my journey heading south in the hope I would reach Mexico and, from there, reach some islands off the Caribbean, maybe Cuba. My theory was that the islands would be unscathed from the bombings and that I might just find an oasis, but my destination is a very far one to walk to.

As the night crept in and the day was on its last breath, I began to set up shelter. I found a big crevass in a boulder and started to make a door out of dead wood. Then, out of the depths of darkness I heard the most bone-chilling noise. It growled and snarled but it was pitch black and I couldn't tell which direction it was coming from. I hid inside my half-made shelter, trembling in fear, grasping my survival knife, awaiting this unknown beast. It's fight or flight, and I knew I couldn't out run this thing. To my relief the beast didn't find me, or didn't want to but I didn't want to wait to find out.

After not sleeping all night, shivering from the cold and the terror, I began my venture again. I found a huge footprint about 4 times the size of my foot with deadly claws right outside of my shelter, this thing was way too close for comfort. I headed for the nearest abandoned city following a deteriorating road. After about five miles I was struggling for breath and in need of a water break. I heard a motor humming in the distance and it headed my way. I didn't know who or what to expect. My gut was telling me to hide but my mind wanted to believe it could be help on its way. I decided to stay in sight of the vehicle, when the driver spotted me and started to speed up. This scared me into running but the truck was right on my trail and it was full of desert refugees. One of them was swinging a noose and managed to trap my leg. I fell, quick and hard, leaving a cloud of dust from my impact. They captured me, tied me up, and threw me in the bed of the truck. Without even saying a word, they communicated with sign language. ~ To Be Continued~