

Post-apocalyptic visions

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i was divinely (or should i say, abyssmally) inspired to write this, as a game, picture, song, vidoe clip and people i know all merged to create this story, just started it so may take a while to finish, any comments welcome

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1 - Part 1 - Rebirth

I woke from the darkness and its nameless terrors, to the oddly-comforting feeling of soft feathers brushing against my face. I simply lay there, eyes closed, enjoying this small pleasure that seemed a miracle after the devastation of yesterday. At least, I am assuming it was yesterday. It is very dark now, probably well into the night. It had all happened earlier that morning, or early on some morning, time was skewed in my head. The destruction. The pain. Then the silence. The day had start just like any other. Got up. Had a shower. Got dressed. Had breakfast. Picked up the book I had been reading the night before, to continue. Everything was normal. Routine. There had been no warning. No possible way to have known. Even the animals were acting normal, despite the common belief they can sense natural disasters. If you could have considered what ever it was natural. I was lounging on the couch, in the sun, when I first heard the rumble. I thought it must have just been a plane going by, so I ignored it. But as it continued to grow louder and more violent, I went to investigate. I went out the front door, looking towards the north, the direction the noise was coming from. My first thought was that I was dreaming. A wall of tumbling red and orange fire, as tall as the sky it seemed, was rapidly approaching, roaring its challenge to all who dared oppose it, destroying all that stood in its path. I never reached the second thought. There was a brief moment, which stretched throughout eternity, of blazing pain, within every fibre of my body and soul, as if each was dipped in molten lava. Or at least, that is the most painful thing I can think of to compare it to. And then, nothing. I was not sure I wasn't dead. My awareness began to return in the form of torturing dreams, watching all that I loved, destroyed time and time again before me. This torture was broken by bouts of darkness and silence. But never long enough for me to forget the screams before they began again. Within these tortures, there was one moment of clarity, which remained concrete and real. A voice, completely androgenous and monotonous, spoke from the darkness. "You must shape the destiny of this new world." Then I returned to my tortured dreaming. I retched myself from the painful memories and tried to focus on the present. Feathers. Why was I laying on feathers? More importantly, was I alive? I resolved that before anything else, I must open an eye. I then had to consciously decide to open my eyes. It turned out that it was not night. But then again, it was not day. I was not even sure if either existed anymore. The sky was a glowing blood-red colour, without any signs of a sun, black clouds wisping and whirling through it. They were driven by a heated, sulphurous wind, the same wind that was ruffling the feathers. Feathers. Still not sure if I was alive, I decided to explore why I was lying on feathers. I turned my attention to them and noticed for the first time, they were jet-black. I had expected them to be white, why, I don't know. But they were black as jet, and just as shiny, while still being soft. Observing them did not explain very much, so my next thought was that I should move. All around me was indistinguishable rubble, blocking any view of anything in front of my. Once more, I had to consciously choose to move. I decided to start small, not knowing what would happen. I started by wriggling my toes. So far, so good. I then moved my fingers, ever so slowly clenching them into fists, then releasing them. There was tension around my shoulder blades and my skin seemed to feel like it had been stretched extra tight but other then that, I felt unscathed. Encouraged by this, I decided I would be best served standing up. This was my first mistake. As I rose to my feet, the feathers underneath me moved as well, sending me sprawling into the rubble. My hands immediately came out in front of me to break my fall. It was then I first noticed how much my arms had changed. The tightness of my skin now was the obvious result of what looked like tattoos that seemed to whorl up and down my arms. They too were a silky-black colour, much like the feathers, and seemed to flow in asymmetric patterns along my arms, in no visible pattern or

recognisable shapes. It did, under closer examination, seem that there was in actual fact only one tattoo on each arm, which doubled and tripled back over itself. However, breaking my fall demanded more attention at that current moment. As I tumbled into the rubble, the feathers followed me and laid themselves over my back as I tried to stand again. They seemed to cling to my skin, and even when I was upright, they remained. I was known to be fairly intelligent, back when there were still others to judge, but it still took me another few minutes of trying to remove the feathers for it to hit me. I tentatively slid both hands up my back, slowly making my way towards my shoulders. As I did, I felt what seemed to be liquid on my back, till I realized it was simply more tattoos. My hands finally found the source of irritation and tension. Protruding from my back, at level with my shoulder blades, were what seemed to be wings. Hence that black feathers tripping me when I moved. It became obvious that it was these I had been sleeping on. I marvelled over this discovery for quite a while, also taking time to examine the tattoos that seemed to cover my body. I came to believe that in actual fact, it was all one giant tattoo. After this period of self-examination, I turned my attention to what remained of the world around me. As far as the eye could see, was a vast, blasted wasteland of charred buildings and the corpses of both once-animate and inanimate objects. Mounds where a tall building or hill used to be occasionally reared their heads, as the lay of the land became clearer to my view. I now saw the valley that the area I used to live in was named after. The air was heavy with the smell of smoke, and my face and chest were occasionally blasted with sulphurous winds. There was no reason for me to remain where I was, and because all sense of direction was distorted by the sunless sky, I simply picked a direction, and headed off. A correct choice to rectify my previous mistake. onwards.

2 - Hope

Post-apocalyptic Visions Part 2

I aimlessly wandered for what I thought was hours, searching for something, anything to suggest something else had survived. The dry wind began to howl as it whipped around the valley.

Several times, I could have sworn I saw dark shapes move in my peripheral vision. Whatever was there did not actually do anything, so I decided to continue, while remaining on guard. There was no chance of hearing them, as blasts of wind often roared by, carrying any debris it could snatch up. After more aimless wandering, I decided I should head for one of the mounds and try to see if I could see anything of interest from a higher viewpoint.

As I trudged through the rubble on my way to a nearby mound, I began to notice that not everything had been destroyed. Here and there, I saw more solid looking remains of structures, as well as miscellaneous objects that had somehow survived. A small toy car that had surprisingly lost only one wheel, a hunting knife that was protected by the rest of the contents of the toolbox it was in, and, to my great surprise, a small bottle of anesthetic, which had somehow remarkably remained unbroken. I put these things I had found in the pockets of my jeans, not knowing if I would need them or if I just wanted some connection to my old reality.

I still had not decided whether this was some kind of hell I was sentenced to or whether some cataclysmic event had occurred and I somehow survived. I was however leaning more towards the theory that I was still living, unless my personal hell was to wander for eternity.

My ponderings were brutally ended by an ear-splitting scream. It seemed unearthly and yet uniquely human. It split the air as the scream seems to invoice all the anger and sorrow that I had previously been numb to. Before I could think what I was doing, I threw back my head and howled in unison with the voice, releasing all the anger and sorrow I had kept at bay. I screamed for many minutes before finally coming to terms with the idea that everyone I knew and loved were dead.

With tears still running down my face, and hope in my heart, I went in search of the voice. To my surprise, it had come from very close, although it had not sounded like it. I rounded the mound I had intended to climb, throwing all caution to the wind in the hope of finding another human. And then I saw her.

She looked to be a young woman, although she was facing away from me. She was kneeling in the dirt, holding her head in her hands and sobbing quietly. Her mane of golden hair hung limply against her back and was covering her hands, as it fell around her face. I called out to her, although I don't remember what exactly. She did not seem to hear me, lost in her own sorrows. As I approached her, a sense of familiarity began to grow, until I swore that I knew her name, but just couldn't remember it. I tried to make as much noise as I could approaching her, as it was obvious that she did not need anymore shocks. I called to her again as I stood beside her. She did not seem to hear me but simply stood and continued face away from me and stare at the ground in front of her. I put my hand on her shoulder, trying to get her attention.

Another mistake.

She let out a scream that was tinged with hysteria and insanity as she spun around and swung her hand towards my throat in an attempt to scratch me. Moving with a speed that I did not know I possessed, I stepped back from her and grabbed her by the wrist. It was then I saw that this move had potentially saved my life. Her hand was lightly furred and heavily armed. At the end of each of her fingers were inch-long claws, which each looked wickedly sharp and quite capable of causing serious damage to my throat.

I looked up from her hand to her lightly furred but otherwise human face. Other than her eyes, that was. Her eyes were like that of a cat, only bright red. At that time there was a look of annoyance flashing across them. There were also signs of tears that had caused dark streaks down her face. Slowly, a look of realization stole its way into them as we simply stood there staring at each other. I am sure the same look must have been in my eyes.

It seemed that both of us had been mourning a little prematurely.

3 - Part 3 - Banishment

Part 3 Banishment

We sat, among the rubble of what looked like a playground, and that was all we did for a long time; sat. Only once we had both dealt with our own personal despair, were we able to connect. It began by the two of us simply holding each other in our arms. I had desperately needed the human contact, if you could call it that. And she seemed to share the sentiment. As we sat there, a small blossom of hope began to grow, deep within me. I did not dare let it grow any larger, as at that time, I did not think my soul could deal with any more suffering, should the hope turn out false. Perhaps there were others left, others who had survived. I spoke for the first time in this new world, my voice strangely loud in the whirling air. I voiced my hopes to her, as we sat in each others arms, and thankfully, she shared my thoughts.

I stopped talking, letting the small blossom of hope grow ever so slightly. To my surprise and hers too, before us, a small, white rose began to grow. It grew as if viewed in fast forward, fully flowering in a matter of about a minute. Time froze for the rose there, staying in full bloom. The stem was very gnarled and thorny, looking very much like a wild rose. I stared at it for a long while, wondering how it came into existence in such a bleak and desolate wasteland. Returning from my reflection, I saw her clawed hand reach forward and pluck the single rose from the ground, twirling it slowly in her fingers. She then began to shred the petals with her claws, making sure that every one was torn and ruined. She then snapped the brittle stem into many little pieces and threw them to the wind, which scattered them some twenty metres away.

I sat and stared at her in shock, only to receive the full anger of her glare. The vehemence of those eyes made me release her and shuffle a few feet away. I demanded to know why she ruined such a beautiful thing when it had only just grown. She hissed at me and then informed me of the injustice and indignity of the rose growing before them. According to her, that flower had no right to grow here, be beautiful and perfect, as if to mock our current state and the world around us. I was not sure I understood where all her anger and cynicism was coming from but I did not argue with her. Partially because I almost understood what she said, but also, I was slightly ashamed to admit, I was terrified of her anger and the twinges of insanity that danced in her eyes.

Deciding to put the incident behind me, I suggested we find higher ground so as to see if we could find shelter, or at least look for other forms of life. She did not lecture me again, but her eyes still blazed. We walked, for a long time, or at least I think it was long, time remained skewed. We reached the top of what would have been a shopping centre, if my sense of direction remained true. We stood at the top of one end of it, looking outwards over the wasteland around us. There were still the remains of some of the sturdier buildings to be seen, although none had more than half a house. As we stared out over the vast expanse, I noticed that not all of this shopping centre (my sense of direction was with me yet) had collapsed in. Here and there, there were small pockets or holes, which rubble had not filled. I pointed some of these out to her, and we agreed that these would be as good a starting place as any, if we were to find anyone or anything else.

As we began our descent down one of the collapsed sides of the centre, holding hands to help avoid

accidents, a cone of piercing white light began to break through the murky red-black clouds behind us. She noticed it first and pointed it out to me, causing me to stop to look. As we stood and stared at the light, a figure began to materialize within it. The figure at first looked like an opposite of my present appearance. He, if it was a he, too had wings, except his were the pure white I had expected mine to be. He also wore a shining suit of gold-washed chain mail, which covered every ounce of his skin and may have covered his face, but it was impossible to tell with the blinding light around him. He slowly floated downwards towards the roof of the shopping center, coming to a halt a few inches away from the ground. He simply stood, or floated, there, apparently watching us as we stared back. Even then, for some obscure reason, his face remained a blur of white light. We all stood there, watching each other.

Again the anger and insanity surfaced.

She flung herself at the shining figure, her claws aiming, presumably for his throat. Realizing the futility of her actions, and curious about this outsider, I threw my arms around her waist, cutting her attack short so that she clawed empty air. Those claws almost swung back in my direction before she regained some sanity and realized it was me holding her back. Once I was sure she had calmed down, I released her and once more spoke, my voice again sounding louder than intended in the open air. I politely asked the figure for his (or her) name, for something about him seemed to demand respect. He oddly tilted his head to the side, as if he did not understand the question. I repeated it more slowly, but he showed no reaction at all the second time. We just stood there, watching each other, and it was during this time I realized that the howling wind had stopped, and the world around us became still.

The figure then straightened his neck and I was hit by a wave of emotion, of disgust, with just a hint of sorrow, radiating from him. I was also filled with the greatest sense that I should be ashamed of whom I was and everything I had ever thought, said or done. I came to believe this figure communicated through emotions, as it simply shook its head then distinctly turned his back on us before slowly floating upwards towards the clouds, quickly disappearing from sight, as did all remnants of the white light. This was not the last time we saw the figure, and every time we met in the future, no words were ever exchanged.

It was then a single white feather fell to the earth before us.

The world seemed to unfreeze around us, the howling wind quickly returning. Not for the last time I questioned the effects of the cataclysm on her sanity, for then she bent over and slowly picked up the feather. Expecting another outburst of rage, I took several steps back. But to my surprise, and relief, she simply stood and put the feather within what remained of her jacket, presumably for safe keeping. I stepped back closer to her and embraced her, as she was looking like, well, a lost kitten. We both stood there for a long time, both contemplating all that had happened.

It would seem we had both been judged, and were now suffering the consequences.