

As He Prayed

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As He Prayed for salvation

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Ron Koppelberger[br]
App 1900 Words[br]

Stone Rare stood on the precipice. The moon base was deserted and the only signs of life were the silent rush of air that filled the dome overhead and the screams of the undead population. The edge of the open vista standing before him was long and pointed to the distant sun, a twilight in moon phase. The raised Dias glowed a bright fiery red and the tendrils of light that spread out from around the platform stretched into the dust and open plaza below.[br]

He looked down into the valley and prayed, there were tattered remnants of what had once been human shambling and shuffling across the dusty plaza walk. They moaned and moved closer, he was safe for now yet alone in his human mortality, except for the virus. [br]

Stone continued to pray as the plaza filled with the damaged remains of what had been the moon bases population, destroyed, leaking blood and viscera, eyes sunken and purposeful to the allegiance of need, wont, wild fury and desire. They craved the human experience, the flesh of what was not dead, what stayed close to the bosom of god. Perhaps it was because they were cursed by the virus or maybe they were in the silent grasp of a more powerful force, something dark and evil. [br]

Stone turned from the platform and made his way back into the complex, he had his Rambler, a laser gun, powerful and ready for the undead meandering the depths of the station. His face wore days of stubble and he rubbed his cheek, chapped and sore from the dry air in the station, the humidifiers werent working right. He prayed again, a miracle was what he needed.[br]

Pushing open the door to lavatory A he went to the wash basin and splashed some warm water onto his face, something moved in the last bathroom stall. He looked close to the floor and saw a pair of ankles, pants around them next to the porcelain base of the toilet. Two hands, flesh mottled and reddish crept down and pulled the waistband of the pants up. He looked into the mirror again, his eyes were lined weary and old, he felt old. The stall door banged open and a man shuffled out with some effort. He was bluish and his lips were bulled taunt in a snarl. He could tell the man had been one of the bases technicians, he had died recently. [br]

Stone moved backward and away from the man, he was slow and unable to manipulate his shamble into a run. As the lavatory door shut tightly behind him he looked into the dim light of the hallway toward the rows of security lockers. [br]

The goal was to find the main lab, locked and behind a security veil, then with an antidote, what he hoped was, the antidote in hand, he would make his way to the launch station where the small craft waited for flights to earth. He knew there was a chance they had gone home infected, the virus active and waiting for the unsuspecting population of the planet. The cure he thought with a touch of hope, a brief moment of approaching sunshine. He knew they had a vaccine, the problem was the lab techs had all died and behind locked vaults. [br]

He went to the lockers in the long hall and tried a few. Locked and several hanging open with the remnants of what had been a normal existence. A sound from the darkness of the shadowy hallway, the sound of approaching bodies, and screams, there were a crowd of them, bloodied torn and decaying in the confines of the moon base. Stone paused for a moment, turning toward them, he fired a few shots

from the Rambler toward the ceiling panels overhead. The tiles collapsed to the floor in a heap of tangled framework and plastic tile. It would slow them down. [br]

He moved back down the hall and turned left toward the science labs, lockers lined this part of the base as well. For a moment he considered the virus and how it had come to be, what had they been aiming for. Fields popped into his mind. Fields had been the last living person he had talked to. One minute he had been sleeping and the next he was yelling and thrashing with angry need. Stone had placed a single shot to Fields head and finally he had ceased to move. He had cried and mourned the loss because he knew he was alone with the undead.[br]

The shadows stretched in fuzzy rows confined mostly by the steel doors to the labs. Stone thought for a moment, the coming winter, cold lonely and dead yet shambling, aching for the warmth of new blood...food, all they wanted was a taste, a taste left for the undead and here he was pulsing with life and, he considered, the will to survive, the will to get home and away from the nightmare. Stone pulled out the key card and moved closer to the locked doors of the science lab. There was a narrow metal gash in the left hand side of the door, carefully he pushed the card into the slot. He prayed, would it work; near the end of the hall plopping wet and methodical, a leaky faucet, the sound of a water balloon making contact with a hard surface. The figure was standing then falling face forward, up and down inches at a time with each fall. Its legs were broken and the shambling gate was more like a lunge as the dead man fell over and over again.[br]

The door hummed and opened for stone, his prayers had been answered. Slipping inside he pressed a green button on the wall and the door slid shut.[br]

The lab was empty except for the rows of metal cages and test tubes lining the counter; there was an observation room lined with red smeared glass and behind a half dozen peering faces, licking at the glass, tapping for weak spots, he turned away from the taboo to the far side of the room, Salvation. The refrigeration unit was working, he could see the yellow flashing light above the door. Stone moved to the refrigeration unit and pulled open the heavy double doors. Inside were an array of plastic bottles and syringes filled with the vaccine. What a tragedy, they had never had the time to use it. [br]

Stone grabbed one of the syringes, the liquid inside was clear and pure looking. Rolling up his sleeve he inserted the needle into his arm and injected the clear substance labeled X-243 into his arm. His arm tingled from the injection as he sighed with relief. There were several portable freezer packs on the shelf and he loaded them up with the syringes. Strapping them across his shoulders he made his way back to the entrance.[br]

Stone grabbed the Rambler from his waistband and prepared to shoot his way back down the long dark corridor. He pressed the green button again and the door slid open with a whoosh. The hall smelled terrible, all decay and coppery as he let the shadows close in around him again. The crowd at the end of the hall was bigger now and they were screaming as they bumped into one another, otherwise they hadn't made it as far as the science labs.[br]

He had to make it to the docking bay, one floor down from him. Maybe he could avoid the crowd. He turned left into the darkness as he headed for the stairwell at the end of the hall. [br]

He was burning the breach between what was real, what was nightmare and what had become real as he stepped across the torn and broken remains of several lab workers, for a moment he had spotted movement, there wasn't much left of them the others had eaten them nearly to the bone yet tiny groans came from one of them, in that moment he cursed the scientists and what they had done, he had to make it back to earth. He knew there was a chance the others had been infected, they needed the vaccine and he needed to be away from this god forsaken hell.[br]

Yanking at the green metal door near the end of the hall he peered into the darkness of the stairwell, Silence and the distant echo of the stations air control units. He stepped in and felt his way to the rail near the stairs. Cautiously he made his way down the two flights of stairs to the launch deck.[br]

Light crept in from the corners of the door and he tugged at the handle. The door moved a couple of inches outward as it bumped up against something. Looking through the crack in the door he spotted the problem, there was a body directly in front of the door. He pushed harder and the body sat up and screamed wildly. Stone pulled out the Rambler and poked it through the door at the thrashing figure. He fired a few quick bursts and the dead man lay still.[br]

A nascent moment of breath stole over him and he felt energized, he would make it, to earth, with the cure. He hoped for the morrow with a passionate intensity, the struggle would be worth it, he had to make it. Another pulse of energy overwhelmed him and he pushed the door open wide to the space port and the loading dock. [br]

He paused for a moment to pick something up out of the floor, a brooch, silver and ancient etchings, it opened and a picture of a young eager couple stared out at him. He closed the brooch clasp and placed the jewel in his pocket.[br]

There were three ships at dock and another three that had managed to escape. Stone walked up the boarding ramp into one of the ships. He closed the ramp behind him and made his way to the control area. Purveyors of revolution and space travel had never foreseen this situation. He rolled open the port doors and looked through the bay window into the cool dark confines of space. There were a few dozen bodies spinning lazy circles around the entrance, weightless and unseeing. He fired the main engine and the rocket roared to life. The coordinates would be preset for earth all he had to do was launch.[br]

The child in him was thrilled with the legend in myth, space travel and home away from the awful horror of the moon base, Do you own what belongs to the heart of desire and eternal rest, scarlet tears and the love of another day for tomorrow will be with the help of our breath. he said aloud as the rocket launched into space for earth. [br]

The starlit sky called the heavens and the hope that Stone felt was overwhelming, but what if. They had gone on infected, what if the vaccine had never made it to earth, what if' He looked forward to the approaching earth and a shiver of fear ran down the length of his body. A new frontier, he had to hope and he did have two freezer packs filled with the vaccine. What lay before the temple in seasons of chance and change, an alm and a prayer for mankind, a prayer for mankind.[br]

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