

You do not belong here!

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The wanderer awoke with a start! His heart was racing and a thin layer of sweat glistened in the pale moonlight along his skin. Where was he? It was the only thought his mind could form in his rattled brain. His eyes darted from one direction to another, nothing look familiar.

With a bit of fear he held his breath and watched the stars in the night sky, far above him. The constellations looked almost alien to him. So familiar, but wrong, were they closer? His head throbbed, like a vice was tightening on his temples, and with each movement of his eyes it felt like the vice was clamping down harder, it felt like his soul was being held and squeezed by two powerful hands.

Closing his eyes against the pain he forced his other senses to explore his situation. There were no sounds. No bird or beast. No creature or even a breeze. The silence was deafening. He could feel blades of grass against his skin. His hands, his face, and his neck all seemed to be free to the elements surrounding him. Carefully with intense focus he slowly exhaled, allowing his fear to follow his breath, out of his body and away from him. He was trained for this. He must calm his nerves and focus his thoughts.

With effort that sent his head spinning, he rolled over onto his chest. His fingers dug into the dirt amongst the grass. It was thick and moist. It was cool to the touch. There was water close by. The air about him was damp and he could smell a subtle hint of salt. Was he close to the sea? He was not on sand or typical terrain that signaled to his memory ocean shorelines.

Among the stars above, the moon hung low in the sky, casting a pale blue hue over everything and everywhere. There were no clouds in the sky. No technology or signs of native settlements as far as he could see. The detail in the moon washed over him like a title wave. The moon filled the horizon, like a living creature resting on a shelf, so crisp, so huge. The small hairs on the back of his neck stood at attention.

Gathering his strength, and bracing his hands beneath his shoulders, he pushed himself to sit up upon his knees. His body felt stiff and his joints were on fire. They warned him about the possibility of this, but the intensity was more than he expected. It felt more real, more alive, more fantastic than they ever imagined.

He was in a field of grass that stretched to the horizon on all sides. Placing his hands on his knees, he felt the fabric of his uniform; it was warm to the touch. His feet were covered in leather heavy duty military boots. He quickly searched his pockets, no gear. No tools. No weapons. He was defenseless.

The hint of salt lingered in the air as he forced his body to stand. Was he successful? Was this where he was supposed to be? His mouth was parched. He needed to find water, before the sun rose. With deliberation of thought (food, water, shelter) and determination of will built up from years of training he turned north according to the stars above, and began walking. After three hundred paces he sensed the smell of salt fading away to his left, to the east.

The wanderer continued toward the north, hoping to reach anything, person, settlement, or animal. But the grass field went on as far as he could see, with nothing, no one in sight. With effort he felt the strain of his lungs and muscles as the terrain climbed to a small null. At the peak of just a few dozen feet, he hung his head to catch his breath. The air was so rich. It felt like he was drinking the oxygen instead of breathing it. It was too much for his system to process.

He lifted his eyes to see what new sights could be seen from his vantage point, and a dark outline of a figure loomed ahead, vaguely haloed by the vast sky and the starlight, bathed in the blue hue of the massive full moon.

The figure sat upon a large stone. The first object in the acres of endless grass, he had seen since he opened his eyes, in this strange place. He carefully and cautiously stepped closer. As he drew nearer to the figure details emerged from the darkness. It was a massive being. He sat with his back to the man. The span of his shoulders would make four normal adult men. He was dressed in a cloak that covered his form, and his head. Above the hood of the cloak spikes of gold gave the wanderer the sense of royalty, maybe a crown? Two enormous arms rested across the hilt of an incredible sword. The sword stood tip pierced into the grass, taller than his own, six feet, two inches.

The figure remained silent and motionless as the man crept closer. Some mystical force compelled him to get closer. The hand that held the sword was as large as a small child's entire body. The figure did not stir, nor move, but a voice spoke from the darkness, that caused every fiber of his body to freeze in terror. The ground the wanderer stood upon shook with every syllable spoken. The voice held no hatred, no malice, just truth that made the wandering man drop to his knees, his legs no longer able to hold his own weight. "You do not belong here."

The being slowly stood his mass blocking the light of the stars and the moon. "You do not belong here!" His voice roared once more. The being lifted his sword and pointed it at the man as the wanderer tried to crawl backwards to gain distance from this terrible sight.

"Where am I?" He tried to ask from his dried throat and fear parched lips. But no sound came from his mouth. Was his life to end now? He tried to speak, as the

sword ignited into a bright white flame as bright as the sun. The being threw back his cloak and a light shined from his form that blinded the wanderer like he had just seen the center of an exploding star.

A great weight pressed against his chest as the tip of the sword burned through his uniform and into the flesh of his chest. The pain enveloped him as he found his voice and screamed in agony and fear.

“You do not belong here! Return now, to the pit of thy wickedness and blasphemy!” The voice commanded and then the wanderer passed into unconsciousness. Everything went silent. With a crack of thunder and the quake of the earth below him, he knew no more.

The man gasped as he sat up from the immersion chamber. Red lights flashed and swirled, as sirens resounded. An assistant rushed to his side and helped him sit up from the iced blackened liquid and with hurried hands, began removing the attached medical monitoring equipment and wired leads.

The doctor approached him with his clipboard and a pen, “Did it work? What did you see?” He asked with a faint Eastern Europe accent, his eyes wide with eager excitement. The doctor quickly pushed his bifocals up his nose, back into place so he could see more clearly.

“How far did you send me back?” The wanderer asked as he allowed a robe to be draped over his naked frame. “So cold...” he muttered to himself as the assistant, adjusted the robe over his lean body.

“I set the chronometer for 10,000 BC. I figured that would be a safe date to use as our maiden voyage.” The doctor said as he stepped over to his wall of equipment and checked his monitor for the hundredth time. “But the date actuator only advanced just over half that span. It stopped on March 4th, at a negative 6275 years. The date actuator, rolled backwards quickly at first and then the system just...stopped.”

The wanderer reached for scientist with a firm hand. He rested his hand of the doctor’s forearm as he trembled with a mixture of fear, and a reaction to the sudden coldness of the room. “Doc, we need to talk...”