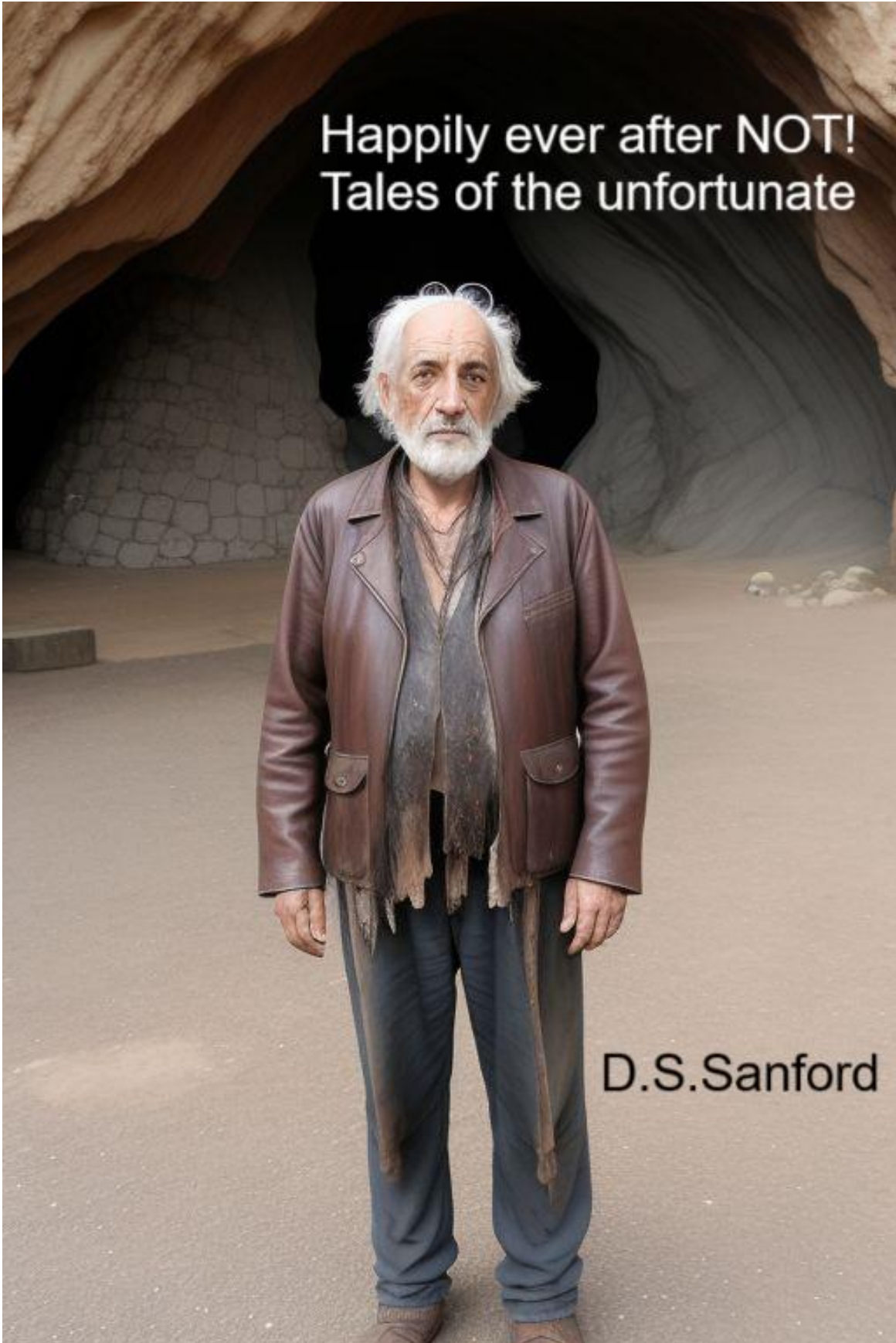


Happily ever after NOT!
Tales of the unfortunate



D.S. Sanford

Happily ever after Not! Tales of the unfortunate by D.A.Sanford

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Warning: Contains adult content due to graphic descriptions of any or all of the following:

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Author's note:

I have stories that sit in my pile that are short but not with that expected ending. Everyone sometimes gets into that mood. I can see an AI generated picture and just see that the person will not have a happy ending.

This is just a few of those twisted tales

Shunkman

I'm sitting here in one of my many caves. I can't tell you how many years I have been doing my circuit but it has to be around twenty years, a little more or less. My circuit takes me three months to make. I have become a legend.

I have been seen, from a distance. There are wonderful homes that know when I will be there and leave me parcels of food. I will eat a little of it and save the rest for later. They can tell that I have been there by the parcel being gone and my smell.

I am a recluse that wants no one to ask questions. I really don't want to talk to anyone, not even to myself. To that end and for my protection, I use skunk smell. I trap them and take out the gland. I bottle it. Some around the cave entrance and my rock cover and no one bothers me because I now smell like a skunkman.

That is my name. I like it that way.

My past is the thing that haunts me almost every night I sleep. You see, I once had three wives and a large number of nonwives. I ran away from all of them. The day I ran I left one son, only months old and at least fifty other women that were pregnant. I feel guilt everyday but you see, they threw themselves at me.

Okay, I know what you think. That is the typical male response but I am the one that caused a whole village to be scorned. Their name went from Safe Home to Lost Trust. I was at one time a very important person. I am the reason that people are living a safe and free life.

Safe from mutants and free of the plague that caused that mutation to occur.

The dream, or should I say nightmare, repeats a scene of me coming back to my house after a long campaign to eradicate the last of those mutants. I open the door to my house and there, in my house I find all those women standing there naked and yelling welcome home. Most men would call that a wet dream but circumstances must be taken into consideration.

You see, I am a mutant of sorts. That is the basis for me being in my cave, smelling like a skunk. I look the same as any normal human but looks are deceiving. I was bitten by a mutant and survived but what I did not know was that I had been changed down to my DNA.

Humans cannot interbreed with the other non human races so I had fun after I recovered. My wives readily approved. As a matter of fact they encouraged it. Had my favorites and casuals.

There were a lot of communities that surround Safe Home. I was thrust into the role as leader. I had to make sure that all were doing well. It was a month since I had recovered and I needed to make my rounds. That would take almost three weeks.

On my last stop, there was one woman, that I was close to, that was sick so I convinced her to go with me to Safe Home. We reached the clinic and I found it full of the women I loved. They were of different species and were all pregnant by me. I was told that, because of the bite, I mutated on the genetic level. Now, regardless of species, I would get them pregnant if I even started to enter them.

The women started a joke that, even if I touched them with my finger, they would get pregnant. The village women started to shy away from me like I was contagious. Others would whisper, point and giggle. I became the village joke to all of them. They would not let up. It got to the point that even the men were joining in.

The women started to realize that I was getting mad. They pulled me into a meeting to tell me they were sorry but the room was full of snickering.

Having had enough, I let my feelings be known. If I had known of the change, I would have left them alone. Making me the laughing stock of, not only in Safe Home, but the whole community, cut me to the bone and poured salt into the wound.

I told them that I was moving my things to a vacant building and to leave me alone. I left.

They had never seen me get that hurt. They did leave me alone for a while but they did start to show signs of back sliding. Yes I enjoyed the sex but looking back, it was the women in my life that initiated most of the encounters. Now they were starting going back to touchy feely which I rejected each time.

I needed to take care of a matter that should take a few weeks. At a camp hide, I took the time to put it in writing my conditions for normalizing relations. I wanted them to leave me alone personally. Professionally and casual conversations are acceptable. The biggest thing was that I was going to be the one to initiate sex, not them. It was simple.

I sent a runner with the instructions, "Deliver this to my wives then come back." He did just that. He said that they read it and then read it to the community. "They were smiling."

I figured that it was because I laid out some simple rules for trying to come to trust them again. They will now be able to understand that I am not just a walking dildo. I could not have been more wrong.

The campaign took a little longer. Mopping up caused us to be three weeks more. We made it back to Safe Home. They must have had people out watching for us. I was walking

through town and saw women smiling and waving. It was the smile that bothered me. It was happy but sly, like they knew something.

I opened my door and there were most of the women I slept with in my house yelling "Welcome home." The thing is, and it is burnt into my mind to this day, all were naked and almost flaunting their pregnant bellies.

Betrayed, I turned and ran out of town. I went not to my usual retreat spot, I went in the opposite direction into the deep woods. I cried until I could not cry anymore. I did hear people calling out my name, including my wives.

After midnight, I went to one of my hides where I knew I had paint. I went to the sign that had the town's name on it. Painting over that name, I then painted "Lost Trust" Beware of the women.

With that, I ran as far as I could that night.

For months, I put as much distance from that village as I could. All the time fighting myself. I constantly was telling myself that I needed to go back and confront them but I really knew that it would not change. If having it in writing did not stop them, no return to talk one more time would not.

If you give a threat and don't carry it out, they will never listen to any warning you make after that. I had given them my conditions and they might as well have torn them up to be used as toilet paper. No I will always keep going away from them.

On a few occasions, before I became the recluse that I am now, I would be invited to sit by the camp fire of friendly folk. We would talk. Over and over, I would ask about Safe Home. They always would correct me.

"Don't you mean Lost Trust?" then they would go into the same report. The women have now been the subject of ridicule and scorn. No one has been physical but they are the laughing stock of the area. They would go into the fact that the man they drove out was the binding force of that area. Once he left, the other villages would have nothing to do with those women. It was to the point that the group of women have dispersed with the exception of his wives and ten others.

"They stand at both entrances to Lost Trust waiting for him to return. All have knives and vow to kill themselves in front of him while saying that they were sorry."

After a few of the same tale, I stopped talking to people.

It was around the sixth month of my travel that I no longer heard anything about that village. I found a cave and set myself up. The clothes I had with me when I left were not in the best shape. I had no money to buy new ones.

I have been able to hunt and I already knew about turning hides into leather. I now have all leather clothes. With mountain lion hides, I have warm winter ware. It was because of the lions that I started using skunk.

As the days wore on, I became bored and wandered. I found caves along the way and set them up. Always, when I left, I would rock up the entrance. After a long time, I have established a circuit of caves and now I stay at one for two days then move to the next.

This is because, I do not want to over use one location and run myself out of game and wild vegetables.

While making my route, I spotted someone. He was a farmer that was trying to move a large rock by himself to a skid. Without saying anything, I helped him.

At first he recoiled at the smell but accepted the help. We were able to get it on the skid and he had his horse drag it to the edge of the field where we dumped it. All this time he was trying to get me to talk. I would only nod or give one word answers.

His wife saw me helping, came over to watch but was put off by the skunk smell. She went back into the house and brought out a big piece of bread, some raw vegetables and a few other items in a cloth. She handed it to me and thanked me for helping.

Despite the odor, she thanked me. That is the first woman I have had even the slightest interaction with. It was comforting but it hurt very deeply. I took the bundle, looking down, I softly said thank you and left.

Helping people without getting into even friendships, I found that people started leaving food in scrap cloths for me. They always knew the day I would show and leave me something to eat. A lot of them will leave used scraps of soap. I take them but I am now nose blind to the smell. I always nod to them as I take it.

There is always something to help with. I know that they do that so I don't feel that their food is charity. I don't want to betray their feelings. I always thank them but, really, I would still take the food. Feelings no longer count for me.

If they knew that I had left untold numbers of children and their mothers behind me, I think that the only thing I would get is chased out of this area.

My circuit is my life now. Change locations every other day, help people that now know that I will help but I don't want to be welcomed into their town as a resident. They know that I don't really want to talk so now I get a welcome and a thank you after.

The only thing that stops me is when there is a blizzard. No one has entered my caves, even though they know where they are. In my caves, I have food stores and bedding made from all those scrap food cloths sown together. When a blizzard happens, I will hunker down until it is over.

Mile after mile, day after day, year after year, I walk and help. Untold miles on this route always berating myself for my past. Always thinking that it would have been better to have let them find my dead body near Safe Home.

One day, while holed up in my cave, I hear someone outside say that he was George, my son from my first wife. He and his brothers from my second and third wife were out here to talk with me. I don't answer but they say that they will stay right here no matter how long it takes for me to come out.

They did not sound hostile but I took a little time to write a last note to the people that will come to find me when I don't show up. I tell them that I finally was going home. The only thing was that I expected to be killed by them.

After the third time he called me out, I told him that I was coming out. I put the note on my bedding with a rock to hold it. Then I went out to my fate.

There were three men in their late teens, maybe twenties. Handsome but with features that were my wives.

"What do you want with me?" I say in a gruff manner.

"We wanted to find you, father."

"You have the wrong person. I'm no one's father."

"We came to take you home. Our mothers have never forgiven themselves for what they have done to you."

He pulls out a well worn paper. I take a deep ragged breath. I know that paper. I wrote it. I push it away. He says that this proves that I am their father since I know what it is. I finally snap.

"Of course, I know what that miserable piece of scrap paper is. That was that person's death sentence. All I am now is the Skunkman. If you will excuse me, I am almost late for my next stop."

They stop me.

“If you are going to kill me do it. Don’t you think that every waking and sleeping moment for these years, those days, those women and you children have not been on my mind! Kill me and put me out of your misery or go away.”

“We, your children do not blame you. Otherwise do you think we would have spent these past six months tracking you down? Going on sightings and rumors of a skunk man? We want you to come home, if only to confront those women. Give all of them and yourself closure. If then you want to leave, we will stop anyone that tries to keep you there. Our mothers, your wives, have had nothing but sorrow since you left. Know this, they blame themselves. They carry knives so that you can kill them if that is what it takes.”

I can’t here this. I won’t listen. I run. Again, it all comes flooding me like an avalanche that I cannot escape. A cascade of memories that are cutting into my soul.

I hear their voices behind me asking me to stop. I just stop.

“Please no more.” I take out my knife and put it to my throat.

They wrestle it away from me. I am broken.

“I’ll go with you. Give me back my knife.”

“Only after you talk with them.”

We walk and they don’t speak of the village or their mothers. It was only casual talk for the six months it took to get back.

I know that we were close because, after all this time, I know exactly where we are. Safe Home was around the corner. I still want to run but we walk the last mile. I now see the town.

Where are the wives. The three looked confused. People are in shock when they see the three but almost in horror as they recognize me.

One brave soul comes up to us.

My son asks, “Where is my mother? Is she at the other end?”

“You were gone for so long. I’m sorry” He looks at me and I am hit in the gut by his words.

“Three months ago, evidently they had an agreement, they all hung themselves in what was your home. Side by side, naked, they stepped off the chairs. We found them later in the day.”

He handed the note to my son. He read it and then handed it to me.

“We do this because we are guilty. Our husband is dead and now our sons are also. We go to the next life to apologize to them.”

I scream so loud it hurt my throat. “YOU FUCKING DRAGGED ME BACK HERE JUST FOR THIS? YOU SHOULD HAVE KILLED ME!”

After leaving them standing there, I again ran. I did not return to my circuit ever again.

Years later

A few young fledgling adventurers stumbled across a cave. They wanted to explore so they go in only to find a man’s skeleton dressed in leather. When the parents came, they looked and could tell, by the knife in its hand and the cut marks in the neck bone that this was a suicide. In one pocket was a paper the simply said

“I am known as the Skunkman. I now take my own life.”

They had heard of him, who hasn’t. He was a legend. They carefully gathered his remains and buried him in their cemetery. Then put a marker there that just read The Skunkman.

Because he was a legend, the word went out and people went there to pay their respects. The strange thing is that there is a large group of adults that show up every year.

This story is very loosely based on an actual person.

Only known as the Leatherman. He walked a 365 mile circuit in New York and Connecticut from 1839 until his death in 1889. He rarely spoke. When he did, it was in French or broken English. He slept in caves along the circuit.

He was completely dressed in leather clothes he made.



Actual photo of the Leatherman

He was so precise in that circuit through more than forty towns, people knew the day he would be there and they would feed him. The town that I live in was one of his stops. He had a cave in Tory's Den

When he did not show on his expected day, they searched for him. They found his body on March 24, 1889 in his cave in Mount Pleasant, New York's Saw Mill Woods. It was determined that he had died of cancer of the mouth. He was buried in Ossining, New York. In his pocket was a French prayer book

He, even though he accepted food, was a private man. People have speculated as to his identity and reason for what they have called a penitence journey. Most common is that he was rejected by the woman he dearly loved in Canada. None of the rumors will ever be proven.

Recently, despite public opinion against it, they tried to exhume him to get DNA. After what was called a circus, careful digging resulted in a few metal nails. The body, along with the wood coffin, had completely disintegrated.

Even in death, he eluded those who wanted to disturb him.

God's make mistakes

It's a waking nightmare. I am at that point that in waking, the dreamland portal is still open and lingers for that instant. That instant is what causes confusion and makes you elated, worried, or angry, depending on the dream.

Mine was the one where all my loved ones were celebrating a holiday. Laughing and swapping tales of events that were the same but different prospective. One by one, they excused themselves with them saying that they would be right back. One by one, they never come back.

I am left behind at a table that once was full of plates and now only an empty pizza box with only a lone bit of grease.. I actually woke in terror that went instantly into anger. The wall that my bed is against now has another hole that I need to patch. I don't bother to paint them anymore.

Not wanting to go back to sleep, I try but my mind is now in full 2 a.m. mode. That is the time that most people that have real issues wake but the mind generates all the odd scenarios. What did I forget, I need to do this, I'll be in trouble if they find this out. None of which actually happen.

The only solution is to get up. I used to turn on the TV for the music. That is no longer an option because of some "good intentioned" meddling god. I am on another world. I have a house in what I would call the country.

Unlike those fantasy stories, there is no magic, no real adventures. Today I need to tend my garden. It is this worlds start of summer. I need to work hard to grow the vegetables to tide me over the winter. There is hunting and fishing. Some to eat but most gets smoked, canned or dried, for the winter.

This is my magical life of adventure.

It seems like that god made a mistake. This world had a plague and as far as I can tell, all humans died. When I woke here, I found only bones encased in clothes. Power had gone out. This house had a drilled well. I was able to hook up a hand pump inside. I haul water to the toilet so that works. No need for an outhouse.

During my first winter here, I closed up most of the house and lived in the room that had the fireplace for the four months until it got warm.

That dream I have, you see they did not leave me, that god made a mistake. He meant to take my neighbor but misjudged the location, misjudged this world. That god is senile and needs to retire. I had screamed to him to correct his error but he is a might deaf. I'm quite sure that he has totally forgotten.

My only thought is that his superiors will catch this but I hold out as much hope as meeting someone else. I have thought of killing myself but that is quickly dismissed. I would draw that god again. Nope, I am stuck here in this dead world.

The only things here that are interested in me are the cats and some dogs. They were left when their owners died. Most of the special breeds that were totally dependent on these people died off locked up. Almost all of them stay away from me. They, for the most part have gone feral. There is an odd pair that have attached themselves to me. A black and white cat and a black and tan dog. It seems that they want my company. It is not the food because they both hunt and bring back their catch. I sometimes feel that they know when I get too deep in self pity.

They will either insist that I pet or will romp all over as to distract me by aggravation. When I go out scavenging for anything I need, they are always near me. At times they will race to get ahead of me so that they can lead me back from where ever I have been.

“I don’t know how I would ever find my way home without you.” I tell them. They will look back at me with a look that said, “You are damned right! You would be lost without us. You may need a collar and leash.” They are the closest thing to company that I have but I do tell them that I wished that they could talk back.

This is my life.

The one thing is that I was able to get a SUV going. I found a hand crank pump and set it up with a long hose so I can pump the gas. All I need is to open the door and ask if they want to take a ride and they will jump in with no hesitation. I drive looking for things that will make life easier.

I now have a gas generator. Would like one of those propane ones but until I can get something going to help lift it and a propane truck, I’ll stay with the gas ones. My companions seem to like the music. I like the ability to be able to use a plugin griddle to cook food. I missed my coffee maker but now I have it.

Not to spoil my two, but I could not help it. The supermarket’s fresh meats and raw vegetables had long since gone the way of people and no longer stank, but the canned goods last almost forever. As long as they show no signs of puffing or eating through the metal, they are good. I cleaned out the canned dog and cat food.

They seem to like it but they do act strange. I can only figure that it is because of their hunting.

We now have gone through several winters together but now we are entering spring again. Time to take those seeds I dried and the potatoes that are sprouting eyes. I have

learned that, if I let some of the vegetables go to seed, I can get the original version of that one. I now have hardy plants.

There is something odd about this spring. I haven't heard the song birds yet. By this time, the males should have returned and be staking their territory. They are not here, The game is getting scarce. I have found more and more dead animals. Something is up.

My two go out hunting and bring back some of their catch but of late, they have not brought back any. They went out this morning. I see the dog bringing back something. He really is not looking well. He collapsed at the edge of the property.

The object he brought back was his cat buddy. It appears that it died and the dog was bringing it back to me. I am broken. My only companions are dead. I look at them and neither have injuries. No obvious reasons that they should both be dead.

I feel that I am not right. I feel very tired.

Maintenance and reclamation unit is now surveying the world.

"I'm glad that they retired that old god. He told us to eliminate any sentient life here so it could be used to relocate another world's life here. This new replacement god found that we were not told that all but the plant life had to be eliminated. The transfer will involve the wildlife also."

They look around and see bones. They will set off a spell that will fast decay the bones, "Good fertilizer" one of them comment.

Waking up, I know this place. This is the same place where that the old god was. "WTF"

A young man appears. "I have replaced that old god. He was retired. That planet he put you on, it's sentient life was so evil, it could not be saved according to his report. Rather than letting them destroy themselves, he had them exterminated. He thought a peaceful world was going to be destroyed because it's sun was going to explode. All life was going to be moved.

He only had the people killed but even that planets animal life is as delicate as the people so all life needed to be exterminated. Unfortunately, he forgot that and put you on that world."

I have had enough. "Aren't you supposed to be all knowing? How could your group let him continue for so long? He aimed wrong and took me instead of the real target. He

put me in a world that had no one. I had two companions and I saw them die. I don't care anymore. I don't want to hear anymore."

He tells me that they are going to correct these mistakes.

"What are you going to do? Putting me back into my own world is the only thing that would rectify what has happened to me."

"That can't be done. The world he placed you on was your old world."

I am stunned. My family, my friends, gone. I cannot process that. "What are you telling me? My world did have its trouble makers but the vast majority were kind and loving. You're telling me the whole world was condemned on the word of a senile old man? Fuck you all!"

He seems offended that I question the gods.

"That's enough of your insolence! I have decided that you will not go to the final life. You are not yet worthy. I have just the thing."

I once again wake up and I am in a different world. I am on a mat on the floor. I am naked. I am human. I feel my neck and there is a collar. Two humanoids come over to me with a leash.

They are my companions from the other world. The cat hooked up the leash and told me "Walkies"

Old habits

A meteor air burst will cause a 32K degree fireball. The material thrown up could cause an atomic winter for years. The burst will generate a shock wave that exceeds anything that the strongest nuclear bomb can generate. That was the biggest problem.

The astronomer's spotted this meteor almost a month before it was going to impact the earth. They made sure that it was made known to the public. After being briefed, the major superpowers prepared. The first thing they did, hours before the impact time, was to turn the automatic response systems to standby. This was circulated through all the countries that were nuclear capable. Or so they thought

The impact was going to be in a middle east desert area, so no one should be really affected. The only problem was that there was a weapons laboratory in the area. When the meteor exploded in the air, that country knew it was under attack and launched. All they had was short range missiles. . Their targets responded.

Secret labs were destroyed, mostly.

At first, the world thought that the entire region from the Mediterranean to western China was totally uninhabitable. What they did not expect was the asinine research being carried out at a lab that was partially destroyed by the shock wave.

People started to get sick. There was the initial large group of people that died. They were, it turns out, the weak ones.

A strange thing started to occur, people started to disappear from the hospitals. Not that anyone cares now but it turned out the governments of the world were taking those who looked like they were surviving, They were never seen again.

That only lasted for a few weeks until the people that made up the government got sick.

Just before the world broke down, the last of the televised news went out that civilization was tanking. There were mutations breaking out. I was one of the ones that did not get sick.

In this world, there was only around twenty five percent of the population that did not get sick. The survivors of the sick were now escaping out of the hospitals, but there were the vast majority that avoided the hospitals and stayed at home.

The mutated now were coming out. At first, they were very cautious, scared but all getting used to their new form. The thing is that they are not acting strange. Contrary to all the fiction stories I have read, they are actually having fun in their new lives.

Felids, canids, harpies, dwarves, elves and such. They all got along with each other. The one thing that was troubling was their view of us humans. We were the cause of their change, so we really needed to be watched, guided, so we did not get into any mischief and cause further trouble.

They seemed to have forgotten that they were human. They have forgotten that the humans that are left, are not the ones that released the mutation, those ones died in the war but they seemed to forget that fact.

The new races have formed the new world governing body. That is the reason that I have run into the wilderness.

In their infinite wisdom, we humans must be guided, protected from our destructive selves. To that end we need to be gathered into segregated communities, for our own protection. We can be observed to curtail our aggressive nature.

This started the first human habitat exhibit. We are now an exhibit akin to the wild animal parks of old. Money to be made, a world order was made that all humans must report to the government for relocation. This is the reason I have been on the run.

Feral humans have been listed as a threat to the new peace of the world. If they cannot be captured, lethal measures can be used. That is how I have been subject to open hunting season.

Several of the new species have exceptional olfactory abilities, I keep a supply of strong vinegar with me. I also have my stashes of ammunition along with rifles and sidearms. If I am to be hunted, I'll defend myself.

I have become legendary. The epitome of evil humans, but I have become so proficient that I have been subject to so called predator races coming after me. I constantly move to different terrains. Most of the times, rocky but heavily wooded areas. I find that the pine regions mask me the best.

Becoming famous has its drawbacks. I did not know this, but there were whole human exhibits that had to be culled due to uprisings. I continued to fight and flight. Ambush whenever possible.

This went on for a few years. Longer than I would ever expect. I have fled deeper and deeper into the uninhabited areas. The only thing that gives my direction away is the trail of bodies.

The ruling races were starting to have their people decry their relentless pursuit of me and others like me but it seems that some of the old humans, now humanoids, of the government crept into the new government.

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