

Year 2178

Planet Earth.

Crush!

A look at the horizon allows us to see everything that we had not seen before.

Certain beliefs began to crumble about that civilization based in rituals and liturgies that only served to entrench its ills.

In the distance, a storm; nearby, fiery winds that take away rare birds from our view.

“What is all this?”

“Where are we?”

“Watch out! It's perhaps only part of a bad dream.”

Our protagonists just realized that in this instant they are stepping on a place that many had not been in a long time.

Certain suspicions haunt the minds of everyone as no one can understand why they are surrounded by giant plants with sharp leaves and flowers with petals edged with some orange color.

Just a few moments ago, we heard the voices of Anair, Odan and Rad. They are members of the advance party sent by the inhabitants of Carbal. And, I'm Maz, an adventurer with few resources who self invites to any mysterious journey that reaches his ears.

So, yeah, yeah, that's why my feet are sunk six inches into the sand, that's why a week before I was enjoying the pleasant company of

Inga, the beautiful daughter of the Speaker of the People of Carbal, mir Felkac.

A few days ago, the inhabitants of this small satellite, Intervida, began to have problems with supplies coming from Planeta Primario, which will not be really a problem for their survival. They had developed food technologies available that are outstanding and well known throughout the system.

That fact worried the founders of the colony, partly because their families were still living on Earth.

We are twenty, we arrived in my ship about twenty minutes ago.

In the stories my grandfather Conra told me, Earth was a planet full of life, with a beautiful blue sky with white and gray clouds, and where our civilization had created its Planeta Primario.

We expected to find buildings and people, but after hours of wondering around we saw no signs of human life, and yes, yes, we saw hundreds of strange life forms, but nothing like the creatures that all of us had studied and expected to find on Earth. Everything was so different from what we were told that it was certainly disconcerting.

Meters from Anair, a unique and cute insect flies by showing its impeccable art in the use of its wings.

Sshhhuuuuuffffff!

“Damn! What was that?”

“Be careful, Anair!” screamed Rad to her partner, while unable to react as he saw this giant bird ripping her head off.

“Noooooo!Nooooo! Where have we come to? This cannot be happening!”

“ Biber,Biber! Biberrrrr!Answer, fuck!”

My colleagues' faces expressed our shock at one of our team members being slaughtered by who knows what! No birds of this kind were included as part of the database we received on this planet.

“Biberrrrr! Damn, are you there?”

“Yes, Yes, tell me! Is everything okay down there?”

While the four of us were on the planet's surface, the other sixteen selected for this journey were waiting for orders in my ship, a former spatial module that I converted a decade ago.

“Biber! Fuck! Check the coordinates of the planet we're at. Down here everything is weird. Very, very weird!”

One of several theories that haunted my mind tried to make me think that perhaps, only perhaps, some technical failure had brought us to the wrong place, and that our inability to think that it couldn't be possible, our full confidence in the procedures we followed didn't allow us to accept that possibility. On top of that, from the distance that place we reached seemed like Earth. Without any doubt, it was Earth, it had to be Earth.

“Odan, be prepared to go ahead”, Maz said.

“What? Because we have come in your ship, you're not in charge!”
Odan responded.

That was true, but Rad had collapsed. The sight of his wife's head rolling down the sand had exceeded the threshold of his strength; he was far from the right person to be in charge at that time.

Our mission was to place a number of devices installed correctly, so that we could broadcast a series of electric signals of light that will

give us all sorts of data about the current condition of the planet when we return to my ship. In it, I have the latest technology to be able to study organic and electro thermal life forms.

“Do what I say! We'll move around the ship about one hundred meters, and we will leave the detectors that you carry in your backpack”.

“I can do it!” shouted Rad.

“Come on! I do not think this place will give us too much time”, Odan said concerned about their timeframe.

“Rad, you take these two to the west!”

“Odan, you must place the antenna right where we are now”.

The antenna is a key part of this simple procedure, Rad and I will post the multidetector in six different locations, creating distance between them between eighty and two hundred feet.

“Do not go so far away, Rad. Leave one where you are now”, Maz indicated to have everything prepared as soon as possible.

“OK”, it was told.

“Let's do it quick! Quick!” Maz ordered getting concerned that they were running out of time.

I had placed three of them when I turned my head and saw another of these birds fly with sudden aggression toward my position. I jumped to the ground without thinking; a small hole under a rock let me escape that attack.

While Rad had placed his two transmitters and was coming towards me to help me with the last placement, I realized by looking at his

face, Odan had seconds before his life would be over. That same bird had cut short his flight and directed its anger at Odan, who had just put the antenna up, but life had come to an end for him.

“Nooo!” Rad yelled.

“Come, Rad! Let's go!” I, Maz, told him.

We boarded the module and got out of this place.

“Rad, how are you doing?” I asked him.

“Phew, aacckkk! But, what is this damn place?” he just didn't know what to do after what just had happened.

“Hopefully we'll discover it upon arrival at our ship. Biber is investigating the navigation data. Odan and Anair could not prevent their death”, I tried to assure him.

“Anairrr! Anair!” Rad kept on repeating over and over.

With plaintive gesture and tears running down his cheeks, now my colleague calmed his tone and looked proud.

I kept on saying: “I do not know where we are, something has happened on Earth during these years that we know nothing about, but I assure you that we'll find out, Maz, and I do not know how, but I assure you, Maz, I shall end with those knives with wings”.

The state of anxiety and anger of Rad was only the primary basic response of any human being; all began to crumble, he had never seen death so close, in its satellite it had never been any record of violence, and the latest events had managed to break his strong personality.

“Open the gate”, Maz ordered.

“Welcome! We were worried”, Biber received us.

My ship is a modification of the SMFB (Space Module Fly Bird) which started the commercial interexchanged between Earth and Sistema Creacion over one hundred and fifty years ago.

My grandfather, after the Great War, had been assigned by his company as a pilot of the first non-military mission crew for shipments of supplies to the inhabitants of the project who had begun years ago. The purpose of those missions was to perpetuate the human race all throughout the universe.

When my grandfather had a few years left, and, after seventy-three years of service and a large fortune made, my grandfather decided to spend it all purchasing this ship that represented more than half of his life.

It's important to make a note that the average age of man after the war had dropped to sixty-four. We do not know why but it had arisen from the presence on Earth of a multibillionaire, Bash, which devoted one hundred years of his life to create formulas to rejuvenate.

In our Planeta Primario, the average age in 2025 was around one hundred and twenty years, the economies of rich countries had collapsed and emerging countries were booming. Many of the latter countries had managed to break free from the oppressive hand of the powers exercised by the great nations and began to assume great power.

Year 2087

THE GREAT WAR.

Twenty crazy rich people changed the world order. After annihilating ninety-nine percent of the population with systematic attacks on every

major city in the world, we were just around one hundred million inhabitants, but the state of nature was stable and clean.

Man took advantage of it, under a dictatorship, and the colonies had only economic and trade exchanges.

No one in the new worlds was allowed to visit Earth for years, but so far we did not have an answer to this situation, why this was happening.

“Hi, Biber! Have you done what I asked?” Maz inquired.

“Yes, Maz, but I have some doubts. We may have strayed, but nothing in the stellar coordinates tells us we have done so”.

I had not told you, but Biber is my second. I trust him completely. Besides being my ship's pilot, he is also my friend. I've known him since childhood. The two of us grew up in New Galicia, the colony founded in 2110 in the satellite Pequeno Io.

“It is very strange! What we have seen and lived down there has nothing to do with the beautiful world that our parents have told us stories about. And, on top of that, until just a few months ago, everything was normal in terms of shipments to the colonies”, Maz tried to explain.

“I think something serious has happened to the people and the planet”, I continued saying.

“We can orbit it again, but looking for human life signs more closely”, Biber responded.

“I completely agree. Tell the others. Let's get everyone down to work!” I firmly agreed getting ready to get things accomplished.

Throughout the ship, a siren is heard indicating the need to stabilize.

We will have to navigate Earth's sky and we'll go through turbulences and jumps by the presence of air despite the power of my machine.

Such a long range study would not be possible with the shuttles we have available. They are only good for a few hundred miles and they also do not have the right equipment to detect life forms.

Two hours and a half later, we detected a small town with large tracts of uncultivated land known as Europa.

Initially, we do not see anybody, but we could see something similar to what it looks like farms. We doubted that all that was human, though.

Without knowing from where, a pair of laser rays tried to break our defenses.

We sent signals of peace and whoever was shooting at us stopped.

After initiating talks by radio with them, they let us go down in one of our shuttles. They were really nervous and did not trust anything that came through the air. Biber, as always, was left behind in command of the ship.

Rad, Sali and I went down to the surface using shuttle number three.

The entrance to the village was a gigantic rock which opened at the will of those men. Others came to meet us before letting us see their world.

They wore clothes that really looked archaic, not airtight, and made of organic materials. That was strange as it was assumed that our skin rejects all organic materials, and yet these "original" humans used them normally. Some concerns would remain in my mind by the use of these garments.

They had pretty basic weapons available, just a few laser submachine

guns and one or two canons that look like turrets.

But, certainly what most catches my attention, was their gestures and feelings that were full of anxiety and nervousness.

A few seconds later we were already walking through a tunnel made up with dry organic cylinders that created a frame that supported meters of ground and stones.

Sali, who was very intelligent and knowledgeable of the history of the system, began to tell us about the use of those facilities. Both, Rad and I, could not understand how men made those huge structures to remove material from inside the earth.

In New Galicia and Carbal, as in the rest of our system, mining was left to machines. The men and women of the colony only managed the movement of materials extracted from the subsoil of its satellites or planets.

After a few minutes walking almost in the dark, a bright light opened in our eyes, and a whisper began to shake our ears.

Natives who had escorted us to the place began to give us more space.

Sali, somewhat distrustful of the attitude of those men and women, began to slow down the pace, leaving us, Rad and I, at the entry of that place. Nothing could be distinguished beyond that intense brightness at the end.

Each time the sound was more and more intense and I could finally distinguish two words: "Human Aliens." Rad and Sali also heard those words. All of us felt more relaxed as the tone in which those words were expressed was warm and comfortable.

We were facing a door, a symbolic door because it was a laser arc.

None of us took the first step to cross it until Anxo ordered to deactivate the shield.

On the other side we found a big surprise.

Anxo had been sent to pick us up. He was accompanied by a red hair girl, Carla. From the first moment she began to talk to us, we noticed she had a very pleasant nature. She was very young, no more than fifteen or sixteen. Her language was similar to ours, but full of strange words.

“No doubt you are going to be caught in the mine!” I managed to understand.

“What? Pay attention!” I told to my scared colleagues. This place could easily be the last thing I saw in my life.

“Relax! Hahaha! You haven’t understood me”, Carla repeated without stop laughing, “What I said is that you will like a lot our mine”.

She walked a little faster and left us behind when Anxo began to make conversation.

“Where do you come from?” Carla asked, “We have needed help for days now”.

“Have you received our warning signs?” Anxo inquired.

We finally began to understand that we were not wrong in our calculations. That place was definitely Earth and those people were the genetic origin of our species.

We begin to lose our radio signal. Biber was concerned and was calling us.

“Relax, our friend! All is good down here. How's everything up there?”

I asked.

“Well, how can I tell you?? We are being watched by hundreds of birds of metallic appearance”, Biber responded nervously.

“Eeeehh! Maz”, Biber called for me as I was still thinking on what I heard.

“I’m listening”, I responded to Biber.

“They look like birds but they are really machines. We have created an ultrasound shield around the ship and the mine entrance”, Biber explained shortly.

“Great! As always I am relaxed with your decisions!” I answered.

“But, there is a ‘but’. You have twenty minutes to get out. Then, we have to get out of this atmosphere to clean the equipment of the ship and recharge in outer space. If not, we will be without enough energy to overcome gravity”, Biber explained shortly.

Just as I finished the conversation with Biber, we went into what it looked like a taxi lane.

“Let’s hope this will go very fast, Anxo! We have only fifteen minutes to return to my ship”, I was already thinking on our return to protect the ship.

A mischievous smile showed on her face at this time.

ShuuYuuuuuu!

“Hell, uufff, this is speed! Hahahahaha!” I was enjoying the ride.

Within seconds this artifact had brought to this huge hall, gorgeous, filled with stone figures that were over ten meters high.

“Welcome to Earth, friends!” We heard throughout the PA system.

Ten or twelve illuminated signs welcomed us to the place, and after giving about twenty steps we found what it looked like a terrace, under which thousands of people gave us a big hello.

This was overwhelming. We didn’t know what to expect or what these people were expecting of us. But, I realized quickly that with the time I was given by my second Biber, we would not have enough time to absorb what was happening in that place, so I ordered Rad to go back to the ship and give the necessary instructions to Biber. It was vital to keep the safety of the ship and he waited for our team to finalize all the issues and concerns we were working out in that place.

Sali stayed with me there. I was enjoying every step and second spent there. Everything I had learned throughout my life about our origins; I was living it there in person. I was beginning to find the link that made all of the cultures of the system so similar, the origin.

Sali said this reminded her of those giant figures at Stonhein Moon, a satellite of Z12, the world's largest service center throughout the known universe.

As we got closer to the rail of the lifting platform, two heads were appearing, that of a woman and of a man. She certainly was very beautiful.

“Greetings, friends!” Dario said.

Dario was the speaker of these people.

“You are in Mondariz! This is the fallout shelter built by the Galician before the Great War. At the end of the war, some twenty thousand Galicians hid here for thirty months, and for years we have become an underground city”, he explained more in detail.

As we descended in the platform, we realized the true situation of these people; though we still had in our minds the origin of our mission: Why the lack of trade with the Earth in the last few months.

The beautiful woman who came with Dario was Fani, who, with feline eyes, told us of the reason for the presence of those metal birds outside. But, I was unable to pay attention to anything beyond the delicacy of her curves as it had been months since I was with a woman. Suddenly, in this old planet, I had found the woman of my life.

“Hey, you!! Are you listening? I did not expect the aliens to be as horny as the guys from here! I see that not even the outer space help you guys to improve! hahahaha!” she just plainly laugh.

Despite her scolding, something morbid was left floating in the air, and I, embarrassed like a little child, I started paying attention to what she was telling us:

“It is now about three weeks that these birds arrived to the planet. It started in South America, a continent across the ocean that connected these shores of the part of the Earth with South America. Bright lights started to appear all over in that part of the planet. A week later, almost all surviving population of the planet had been attacked by these creatures”.

“At any time of day or night anyone could be attacked”, she kept on explaining what it had happened. “From that point forward, the people in the planet had to stop trading with the exterior for safety”.

As we continued down to the underground city, I found myself even more surprised as there was like a giant greenhouse with camouflaged homes with the environment. Everything down here was spectacular.

But, I kept on thinking on those events that Fani had just told us about

and I found myself disturbed by it. I also didn't understand why they had not reported this to the rest of the universe. None of us knew more about those original people than beyond the long time exchange of goods.

It was sort of taboo in the system the History of the Great War, and was forbidden to have conversations beyond business with these people. But now the situation was different, we were face to face.

Some birds lacking in tone colors flew ahead. Those people had reproduced the same structures and systems of conservation for different species that had throughout our system over the last century. These were called Noah's Arks. They tried to preserve as many species as possible to recreate a new world in other galaxies, or even in the planet itself by what we were seeing now.

At last, we reached the level where they were taken us. A small vehicle with seats picked us up and took us to a huge room where lots of these people were awaiting for us. Everyone was looking at us with nervousness and happiness. These were similar feeling to ours as they were our originals, and we were their evolution. We haven't seen them in centuries. These people were certainly a little different than what we thought and studied. They were wrapped with "rags" and unrefined whiff permeate them all throughout.

That contrasted with the glamour and elegance that my eyes appreciated in Fani. And, it was then when I started to wonder what type of government existed there. You never know what kind of leaders you have to deal with, hence my pursuit of Fani was restrained to avoid confusion or bad reactions, but it really brought some of my aggressiveness.

Once I observed in detail the room we were at, I noticed that this was like a gigantic root that embraced this space. It looked like an amphitheater and at the top we saw Xurxo, the Prime Minister of this town. We were greeted by him with a big hug and a huge smile.

Sali began chatting with Fani and one of the watchers. A relaxed atmosphere began to flow, and suddenly a diver, a fire breather, and various clowns came out of nowhere and started doing tricks for all those present.

Xurxo introduced me to his wife and children. Just as his family left, Xurxo and I sat on a bench covered with skin dramatically long. It was very, very, I mean very comfortable. And with plenty of food in front of me, I felt like I was in a dream, and I was unable to comprehend that what happened on the surface was a problem for these people as everyone was happy, occupied, ready for more work.

That same concept was explained to me by Xurxo. The invasion of these birds was not a problem for them; it only prevented them from going normally to the surface and using their ships to finalize the trade. Their very survival was based on the use of the subterranean areas and the ark created there.

Both Sali and I watched the beginning of our way of life, the first facilities that served as the study rooms to develop architectural technologies, agricultural, aquacultural, etc. She lived this experience with great intensity as it was much more significant to her than to me. All that information, rooms, technologies, all that came into her eyes meant something to Sali, gave practical content to a lot of theoretical knowledge. This trip had become the adventure of her lifetime, the best experience ever.

At the same type, my thoughts went to Rad and my team. Has Rad done what I sent him to do?

I have not heard from him and the ship since I've been down here. No radio contact at all. I just hope everything went well and my ship was refilled.

I honestly did not feel the need to intervene at all in the invasion of the

planet. That community did not seem disturbed by the presence of these birds.

Xurxo explained to me they knew that these birds were a migratory race and that in no more than two years they would be going to another planet. Hence, the need of protection and defense was not needed. These people had become a highly peaceful civilization, with very little appetite for confrontation. Unmistakable a sign of the violence experienced a century and a half ago.

I asked if they had contact with other colonies in the planet.

Xurxo led me to an open space called Karma Lounge so that I could see with my own eyes and hear with own ears their communications with other colonies, so that I didn't have any doubts about it. He told me that this lounge was used to pray in the first years of the war, although now this lounge was used as a communication room and it just had radio stations of all types and a couple of old computers that served as internal communication network.

“How do you use these radios?” I asked.

This town was able to communicate with twenty villages scattered around the planet. Xurxo could not assure me that those twenty colonies were all the existing communities in the planet. So, I thought that perhaps our new task would be to track the status of all of the communities on the planet and try to find new ones if any new ones needed finding.

As Xurxo was told by the other colonies, everyone was in the same situation than this town.

I finally was able to be relaxed and calm as I saw that everything was in order, more or less, and I finally began to enjoy that place.

Shortly after that brief reception, we were invited to eat something. We

had all that food sitting in front of us. Sali, delighted, went two steps forward toward the sitting area, smiling and happy. It seemed like she was hopping. But, now, I was thinking back about how my old ship was doing, whether the recharge was completed. Crossing the atmosphere was not the best thing for the ship given its state of conservation. My thoughts were going back and forth between the peacefulness and greatness of this place and the latest events in the last few hours.

The death of two members of Carbal's crew, who is with me and pays for this mission (and, of course, my expenses), really worried me. I did not know how to explain it. We took perhaps too many risks without considering the situation. We knew that something was going on in the planet and we just went down with no security or defense of any kind. And, as we could see, this resulted in disastrous events.

While I was deep in those thoughts, my eyes came across Fani who was looking at me with intense depth. Everything about her made me leave those thoughts behind. The sweetness in her eyes was calming and peaceful. As if she were a mermaid, I followed her to sit down next to her at the table to which all of us were invited. All my concerns were gone.

A lot of trays full of delicious food were before me. It had been many years since I had the chance to choose what I would eat that day. It's hard to believe, but life in space is very, very complicated.

While I enjoyed that peaceful moment, Sali was taking notes and asking about the meal's preparations, but neither, notes or questions, stopped her from continuing eating. It seemed like this was heaven.

Fani, after lunch, invited me to her home. I accepted and we went to her very small but very cozy cabin. And, although it may sound bad to say, she left my body totally relaxed for a while. She turned out to be a great lover.

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