

**TROUBLE
VALLEY**

**BY CODY
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TROUBLE VALLEY

Chapter 01: In the Beginning.

Matt's tired eyes opened to the sound of terrified screaming. He stood upright, barely taking in his surroundings. The shrieks grew louder as the walls shook. The light above him swung violently.

He realized he was in a brightly-lit train carriage.

Tearing his burgundy blanket off him, he stood up in the room unsteadily, his knees shaking wildly. He looked out the window; it was too dark to see out, so there was no chance jumping out that way.

Also, he was on a moving train. Jumping off a moving train is typically not a very smart thing to do, even if one is surrounded by terrified shrieks.

He spotted the door and ran out into the train's hallway. The screams grew behind him, as babies cried and ladies yelled, mirrors broke, plates smashed, and he could hear the sound of little girls crying in the distance.

The doors glowed and pounded as if behind each and every door there was some kind of ferocious monster.

Matt's heart began racing and his whole body dribbled in sweat. He covered his ears and ran down the hallway, scared out of his wits.

A discordant piano began to play a horrific melody as Matt ran down this endless hallway.

The wallpaper began peeling off the wall and the hallway shook so violently Matt had to hold onto a light handle just so he wouldn't fly out the train.

A window broke; torrents of rain poured in as thunder and lightning boomed away in the distance, and light specks of water flickered over Matt's face as he tripped and scraped his knee.

He stood up again, panting loudly. Suddenly the door next to him began pounding fiercely, as a loud voice screeched "OPEN THIS DOOR!! OPEN IT!!!!"

Then, shadow-wolves ran down the hall and tore his clothes to shreds, and then as he rose up again, he narrowly avoided being struck by the flaming arrows that flew past.

And that's when things got really bad.

The hallway convulsed violently, and the train shook like a snake, the room twisting and turning in impossible ways like some mad M. C. Escher landscape.

And then...

And then, Matthias Cyrus Harris woke up.

He raised his young body off the cold metal floor and looked around, as the early sunshine poured in through the train windows.

His burgundy blanket lay about three feet away from him.

It had all been a terrifying nightmare, thank goodness. Matt stood up and collected himself, wiping off his sweaty forehead. Matt walked over to his carriage's small bathroom, slamming the door behind him. He looked into the cracked mirror and took a good, long hard look at himself.

He was a young blonde boy with a long nose, in his early teens. He wore a ragged-looking green sweatshirt and black pants.

He already knew all of this, of course, but it never hurt to check his appearance in the mirror, particularly on an important day like today.

Today, Matt was moving to the village of Trouble Valley. To Matt's knowledge, it was a village of only about 25 people.

He'd been told that all the villagers were going to turn up to celebrate his becoming an official Trouble Valley Villager. Matt did not think much of this celebration, chalking it up to redneck fanfare and the fact that they probably didn't get many new people in the village very often.

He certainly didn't think of himself as special enough to warrant an entire village to celebrate his arrival.

In his opinion, he was a pathetic loser merely hanging onto this miserable and cruel mud-ball of a planet by the skin of his teeth until his inevitable lonely demise, undoubtedly at the hands of some selfish, greedy jerk with an immensely huge bank account.

To call Matt cynical would be the understatement of the century.

To be fair, he had quite a good reason to be cynical; he had lost his parents several years ago, and he had since then gone from orphanage to orphanage, one miserable experience after another. He never made friends and never found much of anything to be happy about.

He was not looking forward to moving into Trouble Valley at all. If anything, he was sure that the Valley of Trouble would more than live up to its name. He was about to find out if this were true, as the train was drawn nearer and nearer to the little village of Trouble Valley.

He looked out the window and across the horizon. He saw a small scattering of buildings in the distance, in between a most scenic valley, rivers streaming from both ends of the mountains.

If he weren't such a dark and depressing person, Matt would call it the most beautiful sight he had ever laid eyes upon.

Matt squinted his eyes. It was hard to tell from this distance, but he was pretty sure he could make out a Church, an Inn, and a Schoolhouse.

He could also make out a few houses; most of them seemed to be made of grey stone with thatched brown roofing.

There was also a scattering of farms here and there. Some of them had Sheep in them, some of them had cows in them, and some of them had no animals in them but instead had many delicious-looking fruit trees in them.

He also passed by the remains of a burnt-down barn; all that remained of it was a cobblestone wall. Some graffiti artist had written the bible verse '**Revelation 7.14**' across it, which seemed to feel vaguely ominous to Matt, but he quickly forgot this as the train steamed on valiantly.

The train huffed and puffed across several small villages, and Matt saw the Pitiful Peak Prison, the dreary gorges of Pancake Ridge, and the swampy, deserted remains of what was once the small village of Happyville.

None of these sights interested Matt though; in fact he did not so much as say a word until finally the train pulled up into Trouble Valley Station. From his seat, he looked around and could see that he was in the dead centre of town.

Looking out the left side of the train, he could get a closer look at the village Church, which had a sign printed nearby reading "**DELACROIX CHURCH**", and the small park nearby.

Looking out the right side, he could see the Inn, a General Store, and the schoolhouse, which was painted a shining bright red. The Inn had a medieval sign out the front reading **“THE WOLF DOWN INN”**

Looking out both sides, he could see quite clearly that all 25 villagers had gathered to this very spot to give Matt a traditional Trouble Valley welcome.

Matt did not very much care for welcomes of any sort; he just wanted to get this over with as quickly as possible.

So, he stood up out of his seat, packed his bags and headed for the front door of the Train.

The Train Conductor gave Matt a cheesy smile as he held his hand on the door.

“Wowee, you must be the luckiest kid in the world to be receiving a welcome like this!!” The Train Conductor said.

Matt glared daggers at the Train Conductor and replied, “Yeah right!”

“Oh, don’t sound so glum! I’m sure things will only be looking up from here on out!” The Train Conductor said.

Matt replied, “As if! I can say with absolute certainty that nothing exciting is going to happen to me in Trouble Valley,” and then he stepped out of the train.

He had not made it one step, however, where there was a loud banging noise in the distance, and the sky lit up. There was a clashing sound of trumpets as a large rock-like object in the sky flew toward Trouble Valley.

The villagers huddled together. Matt fell on his rear, as his hands rubbed against the cobblestone road, watching in horror as this strange object flew by.

He was sure this was simply another nightmare, but it wasn't. This was all too real.

Parents held up their children to see what the object was.

It was large and rugged and rocky, like an asteroid. It flew down and down, closer to the valley, growing larger and larger.

The strange object flew 32,000 feet above the villagers' heads, and then it went crashing off into the nearby forest.

Naturally, the villagers were quite panicked.

"It's the aliens!" One young Indian boy screamed.

"The little green men are invading! They'll rule over us all and use our innards as light ornaments!!" the boy held up a comic book as if to illustrate proof of this blind assertion.

Then, a tall man in a suit, with dark brown skin and dark blonde hair approached the centre of the crowd and began to speak.

“My fellow citizens of Trouble Valley, there is no reason to panic! As your Mayor I can assure you there is nothing to worry about. It was simply a rogue asteroid that flew through the sky. It did not strike any of us, our buildings, our livestock or farms, so there is nothing to fear,” the mayor said.

This seemed to calm the villagers down somewhat.

“Now, let us all give Matt a great Trouble Valley welcome!” The Mayor ejaculated, and the crowd hurrahed.

And with that, the villagers all got into an orderly file, and began to greet Matt, some presenting him with gifts.

Morley and Rachel Lawrence, the Innkeepers of The Wolf Down Inn, gave Matt a card entitling him to half-priced lemonades at the Inn, not that Matt had any intention of taking them up on this kindly offer.

A man named Milton gave Matt a long rope, and a woman named Sheila gave Matt a small mirror, which Matt stuffed away in his pocket.

Even Matt’s new guardian, Sebastian Oberto, had a gift for Matt; it was a single paper-clip. Matt put this in his pocket and promptly forgot about it.

And there were other folks that, though they had no gifts, were still colorful characters in their own right.

There was Goldie, the sports-loving girl, and there was Tipene Tirikatene, the nice, hard-working farmer boy and son of Tane.

There was the elderly Lucy Lawrence, there was the cheeky little boy Timmy, and many more besides.

All these villagers were pleased as punch to accept Matt to Trouble Valley, making him become Villager Number Twenty-Six.

Then, he was approached by the Indian boy who had begun screaming before. He introduced himself as Sunil and told Matt that his present was a movie, and Sunil dragged Matt into a dark room and started the projector.

“This is the history ‘the man’ doesn’t want us to know about,” Sunil explained.

And with that, the film started and distorted music began to play.

Random numbers and words in white text began to appear.

27! 1355! 1863! Turin! 1874! Fnord! 23! 26! Crop Circles! 32!
6526! Nostradamus! Mark 1.14! Dogwit! Revelation 7.14!
Four! 4444! 27! 5-55-555!

Then random images appeared on the screen; an American city, a flower blooming, images of Buddha, diagrams of flowers and their detailed insides, diagrams of bacteria and viruses.

Strange geometric shapes flashed as the words “**WE CREATE MEANING**” flashed over the top.

There were also diagrams of buildings, and drawing of snowflake patterns.

There was an apple hanging in the middle of an outer-space scene, and hands with eyes coming out of them. The number 9 appeared in a white circle, surrounded by a black background.

After this, there was a shaky monochrome picture of New Zealand, and the scene seemed to be zooming in on one specific location.

Then the film abruptly ended.

“And there you go; an entirely accurate history of Trouble Valley,” Said Sunil, “pretty mind-blowing, isn’t it?”

“That’s one word for it,” Matt muttered as he stood out of the chair and proceeded to get the heck away from the strange movie he had just seen.

“The movie has a message; **The Move-Takers create History, the Movie-Makers create Mystery,**” Sunil said, putting his hand on Matt’s shoulder.

“What the heck does that mean??” Matt asked.

“There are those that take and those that make.

It is harder to make than it is to take, so the greedy amongst us prefer to take rather than to make, and the takers are the ones who are honored in the history books, because the makers are held back in fear,” Sunil explained.

“I have no idea what you’re on about,” Matt said, leaving the room.

“One day, you will!” Sunil said in what he expected was a sagely voice, but made it sound more like Sunil had a cold.

Matt wanted a break from all this attention, so he wandered off to a picnic bench seat at the nearby park.

However, Matt did not get any rest or respite, for there was another soul on that picnic bench seat who had now turned to Matt.

“Pretty tiring, ain’t it?” Said the blue-skinned boy.

“Who the heck are you?” Matt asked.

“My name is Blake. Don’t worry; they gave me a similar ‘welcoming ceremony’ when I came here too. I know exactly what you’re going through,” Blake said.

“That’s cobblers. You don’t know anything about me,” Matt replied.

“I can tell that you’re blue,” said Blake the blue-skinned boy, “And I can also tell you that you don’t have to be. The one thing that not many people realise is that we are entirely responsible for everything that happens to us. Troubles don’t just happen; we make them happen by having low self-esteem; for example, maybe you have a date on tonight and you’re feeling a bit anxious.

Then, a Lion jumps out and eats your girlfriend. You see, that never would have happened if you’d just had more confidence in yourself!

The secret to being happy is to remember that everything wrong in the world is entirely your fault,” Blake said.

Matt knew full well that his self-esteem did not change the way the world turned, and to illustrate this, he picked up an apple from the crate he’d been lugging about, and tossed it at a nearby wall.

“Oh look,” Matt said, “I think the apple had low self-esteem,” “Listen, you just need to come to my friend’s self-esteem workshop, we’re holding it over at the Impenetrable Cavern,” Blake began, but Matt had already walked off.

Blake chuckled to himself, thinking back to several hours ago, when he had been given his marching orders by the brilliantly fiendish Queen Oizys.

There he was, in the Impenetrable Cavern.

“Has the space-ship been shot down?” A dark voice in the darkness asked most darkly.

“Yes. The Hesean is surely as good as dead, your vileness,” Said Blake.

Queen Oizys stepped out of the shadows, her true form revealed. She was 8 feet tall with glittering, gel-like blue skin, dark black eyes, and two long, winding tentacles shooting out of her head.

“Good. We can’t have her interfering at this stage, not when I am so close to winning back my Kingdom and can return to ruling over the Dagonites with an iron fist! All we have to do is trick those foolish villagers to come here to the Impenetrable Cavern,” Said Queen Oizys ominously.

“Maybe we could tell them it’s a self-esteem workshop. Humans are awfully insecure, and will believe they have low self-esteem if somebody tells them they do,” Said Blake.

“Yes, an excellent idea. You go into the village and talk each and every villager into coming. Then they can become our slaves,” Queen Oizys said with a most diabolical chuckle.

“I’m not sure if it will be quite that easy, your vileness. The natives believe this Cavern to be home to some kind of monster or Devil,” Blake said.

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