

## Shadow of the Past, Glimmer of the Future

“Ma’am, the latest reports are in,” Sergeant Bobby Langford reported from the elaborate doorway that portrayed a wild forest with tigers and peccaries living in harmony. Dr. Elizabeth Blake looked up from her datapad and focused on what the news could be.

“Continue Sergeant,” she said with a wave of her hand.

“There are reports of the rebel group at work again.” He then proceeded to read off the attacks on Clean Air facilities and other buildings, such as ones that have been helping patch up the ozone layer. After the damage that had started over a hundred years ago, these repairs could take a while.

After listing the new intelligence, Sergeant Langford relayed the data to President Blake’s datapad. He was then dismissed to continue his work. Elizabeth sighed as she mulled over this information. The reports of attacks had increased over the last few months. They had been taking preventative measures, but the Human Superiority organization was very crafty; she had her best people on the task of rooting out and preventing attacks by this group.

Rising from her chair, Elizabeth went to stand by the window, at least at what looked like a window. Nowadays, there was nothing to look at in the center of civilization, which was where government officials of many countries insisted on stationing their offices. What was portrayed before her was a live transmission from one of the places on Earth that had progressed to the point that it was no longer an eyesore. When faced with problems such as these, the field of waving grasses was soothing and often helped Elizabeth think.

It had been over ten years since Elizabeth had become president of the United States in 2040. The task of returning Earth to her former glory weighed heavily on her shoulders. The former party in the White House had been a preliminary grouping of individuals that would leave to form the Human Superiority Group after they had been beaten out of office.

She still could not understand that group. What in the world would possess them to begin the destruction of Earth’s natural resources? She knew the answer- power- but didn’t understand why people would go to such extreme measures to gain this power.

Before Elizabeth came into office, she had come upon reports that detailed a plan to eliminate most, if not all, of the animals on Earth. The plan was to create more space for their factories and houses. Thankfully the Human Superiority party was out of office before it was put into effect, but this didn’t stop them from trying. Most of the animals had to be put into high security areas that had been created for their safety. Due to the advance in technology, the Pro-Earth group was able to create habitats that were so lifelike; the animals hardly knew the difference. These areas are classified and only people directly related to running their operation knew of their existence.

Even with the secrecy, the rebel group had still found out about them. It wasn't that Elizabeth and her comrades weren't trying; it was just that this group was very persistent. Elizabeth sighed again. Turning from her window, she picked up her datapad and looked at what was next on her schedule.

*10.00 Meeting with Dr. Matthew Fraser (science dept.); improvements to air cleaning process*

A smile lit up Elizabeth's face. Matthew and she had been friends since childhood, growing up with families that worked behind the scenes while the Human Superiority Group was in power. Matthew had followed in his mother's footsteps and took up the scientific battlefield, while Elizabeth followed her own mother. Lauren Blake had been a very strong woman and had worked in the political front. Sadly, she had died seven years ago when there was a widespread assassination plot by the Human Superiority Group and she was one of many government officials who had been killed. She was only sixty years old. From then on, Elizabeth became closer to Matthew's family.

Turning to leave to room, she glanced at the doorframe again. It had been a gift to her mother from the dignitaries of India. The dark magnolia wood shone with a faint glow from the ceiling light. The story it told was the way Earth should be, fatal enemies living in harmony. If only the peccaries and the tigers could live in peace in this real world. Why did the tigers have to control and destroy? She supposed it was up to the peccaries to heal the wounds, and in time, perhaps, the Human Superiority Group would see that their carnivorous goals were pointless.

Continuing out the door, Elizabeth took the MagTram to the science department. These magnetic transportation devices were an ingenious invention. In response to the destructiveness of continuously polluting the Earth by CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, Dr. Colleen Fraser, Matthew's mother, had perfected the device shortly after finishing college. That was in 2016. Now this new technology was extremely important all over the world. The Pro-Earth cause had financed a committee that would install these MagTrams around the world, so that poorer countries would not resort to old fashioned cars; even the Human Superiority Group had to admit that the technology was easy to use. With the press of a few buttons, one could input the coordinates for the destination and the onboard computer would find the fastest route. The magnetic track the cars ran on was placed high enough above the ground that it would not hit any passing animal, when the time came to rehabilitate them.

The use of gasoline to power anything was obsolete, considering the fact that there wasn't any left. After deciding to drill in the Alaskan Wildlife Preserve, the Human Superiority Group went crazy with the idea. Any place that harboring oil, was quickly depleted of its resources. These MagTrams worked by using the Earth's magnetic pull and the minute curvature of the surface to produce a slight slingshot motion. This allowed the Tram

to move by only shifting its super-magnets to give the greatest push. One magnet always pointed downward, and it was used to harness the repelling force and power the computers.

Without harmful toxins filling up the atmosphere, the Pro-Earth group was able to make progress. By sending probes into a low orbit, they are now able to extract the toxins from the air and convert them into useful substances. Elizabeth didn't know how they did it; that was Dr. Fraser's area of expertise.

When it came to a halt outside of the science department, Elizabeth stepped out of the MagTram into a clean hallway, typical of a scientific area. Passing her identification card over the scanner, a doorway opened and she continued down the hall. Upon reaching the end of the passage, she entered a briefing room lined with posters of the latest inventions and projects. She smiled as she remembered how excited everyone became when they would come up with a new way of saving the Earth.

Turning to the left, she watched Dr. Matthew Fraser, busy with his own datapad enter the room. His dark brown hair stuck out in every direction and seemed to have a life of its own. He clutched a cup of coffee in his hands and made his way to his seat, not noticing Elizabeth. She chuckled as he almost tripped over his seat. He jerked his head up and saw who it was. His blue eyes sparked and he smiled at her.

"I see you've been busy," Elizabeth motioned to his datapad.

"Ya think?" Matthew said with a smirk. Taking a sip of his hot drink, he placed it on the table. "It's good to see you haven't lost your sense of humor, Liz."

"I know," she said softly as her face turned serious. "With the attacks these days it's hard to stay optimistic."

Matthew gave her a wry smile. He understood. The attacks were taking a toll on his science department as well. Their task of finding solutions to the Earth's problems was becoming more pressing every day.

"Okay Matt, what do you have for me today?" Elizabeth took her seat and listened as Matthew began to detail the improvements that could be made to the space probes and land facilities that would better clean the air.

At the conclusion of his report, Elizabeth said she would immediately put the protocols into effect in the United States, and forward the data to the other countries so they could do the same.

By the year 2050, all of the countries were in a similar state. They were recovering from the Human Superiority rule, with the cooperative help of all countries. They formed the Pro-Earth Coalition, and they worked together for the betterment of Earth. Even with the

resistance Human Superiority Group, most humans had come to a consensus that they should work together. That was probably one of the few positive things that came out of the confusion.

The reason for the start of the confusion was still a little muddled. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, there had been hints of a plan to usurp of power from many world governments; nothing came of it until the 2020's. Around 2023, there was a simultaneous political switch, and the Human Superiority Group took hold of the reins. It seemed as if their years of waiting had paid off. Care planning and scheming allowed them to embed agents of their organization into the workings of the political system. They then had an official in every government worth taking, and there was nothing anyone could do about it. So for seventeen years, the rest of the world sat and bided its time, as the Human Superiority Group wrecked havoc upon the land.

At the start of their rule, the United Nations Council had been dissolved. It was deemed "harmful to humanity." It was in fact the people from that organization that went on to form the Pro-Earth Coalition, and save humanity.

Turning back to Matthew, Elizabeth stretched her arms and asked, "Are you busy now?"

"No, actually I was thinking of heading down to the cafeteria for some lunch. Care to join me?"

"I was hoping you'd ask." She smiled again and took his proffered arm. As they were walking down the hall in companionable silence, Elizabeth got a call on her earpiece, "Dr. Blake you're needed in the Foreign Dignitaries Conference Room, Level A5."

"Thanks. Is it safe to bring someone?"

"Yes ma'am. Everything seems safe"

"We'll be there soon." Turning to Matthew she asked, "Would you like to join me in a meeting with a foreign ambassador? Maybe you can explain this addition to them."

"Love to." They took the MagTram to Level A5 and entered the conference room. To their delight, the Indian Ambassador Archana Vamanrao stood before them.

"Auntie Arch!" They both greeted her in jubilation. Ambassador Vamanrao was one of the original leaders of the Pro-Earth Group. She used to work with Dr. Colleen Fraser in the scientific field. Now she was partially retired and worked as a liaison between the United States and India, her native country.

“Good to see you are well Elizabeth. With all of the attacks around here, I was afraid you might have been harmed.” The ambassador spoke with all of the wisdom of her age. “It is also pleasing to see that you are well, Matthew.”

“The security here is excellent and we are lucky they have not struck too close to home,” Elizabeth said to Archana. “What brings you all the way to Washington, D.C.?” Despite all of the attacks, D.C. was still a well-protected place and was fairly undamaged.

“I heard you have new information on the Human Superiority Group and the Clean Air project.” Elizabeth was not surprised. Information traveled very fast in this day and age.

“I was just going to send the information to the entire Coalition, but since you are here, Matt can explain it to you.” Elizabeth turned to Matthew, “I have to file some reports, so I’ll leave you two.” Turning to Ambassador Vamanrao, she gave her a hug, “It is good to see you.” Elizabeth then turned and left the two scientists to discuss the additions.

Dr. Blake returned to her office once more and tapped her earpiece to order some lunch. Food was actually pretty good these days. There were many areas that were making a comeback in produce, and the Pro-Earth Coalition was able to distribute the food throughout the world with little cost.

All in all, Elizabeth had to admit that the conditions were improving. If the Pro-Earth group had failed to attain a grip on the situation, it would have been likely that the Earth would have been uninhabitable in the next hundred years, if not sooner. The emissions would have completely destroyed the atmosphere, and the Earth would have warmed until all of the ice had melted. This path of destruction would have continued until the Earth was either flooded or poisoned, both a horrible and unacceptable endgame.

Sitting down, Elizabeth flicked on her datapad. Yes, things were looking up. Instead of thinking about the shadow of the past, Elizabeth chose to think about the glimmer of the future. Yes, they would be okay. If not, there would be no point in continuing. As long as there was that beam of hope, the future could turn out as pleasant as her mother had envisioned it many years ago. She lifted her own cup to the photo that portrayed her mother smiling with other delegates of the former United Nations.

“To you mom, may I live up to all that you wanted me to be.” She smiled and took a sip. Yes, the future looked good indeed.

*Afterward...*

There are many questions we must ask ourselves today. How will our actions affect the future? Are we thinking with the future in mind? I believe that we must think of the future every day. If we don't, what will become of us? Will the ice caps entirely melt and flood us? Or will it get so hot that all of the water evaporates into space? Look at Mars- it used to have water, but where did it go? We must take the reactions of the Earth seriously as well. Perhaps our actions of drilling for oil, destroying forests, and releasing CO<sub>2</sub> caused the tremendous tsunami in the Indian Ocean and the hurricanes in the Gulf Coast of the United States. We need to work together to solve these issues.

Eventually, the Earth's resources of oil and coal will run out. Even though it is tempting to say we will find a ZPM in Antarctica, it is extremely unlikely in this universe. Therefore, we must find a solution for ourselves. What technology can we use to prevent emissions? Water-powered cars are promising, but how far in the future is that? As Thomas Jefferson once said, "Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today." I believe we should listen to him and start in our own homes. Even if you believe you cannot change the world (which you can), you can turn off the lights in you own home, recycle, and ride your bike instead of driving to school.

We can make a difference, and it is time to start today.