

Rare Haven in the Ashes

Walking, no tramping, thru what looks like hair from lice's view,
or a fortunate few.

Ascended away from spotted death via fire. The beckon of one in place,
requesting small labor midst a beautiful space.

The water is a haven.

Time passes, mourned instead of wished.

Exertion is bliss,

ending as it begun, for rest is fun.

Destruction of unmeasurable power and renown is halted and put to sleep by the willing
summoned. The preserved, newly discovered is perfectly serene in this seemingly chaotic
scene. Refreshment never-ending,

all in awe at the splendor of the peaceful green.

Ills hushed, thoughts and breath flow as the stream, savoring every trickle, visually, heard, or
felt. The peace is profound, hallowed by silent respect. Hearts overflow with gratitude and
wonder at the reason for this secluded rendezvous. One can't help but feel so,

for it exists for us.

Leave it and just as quick as the scape enfolds, it closes. Back to black dust,
cob webs in the hair,

unstable desolation offers no hospitality. Retreat again for the last time to quietly enjoy,
fading into recollection.

Seek Pleasure

Two stars to the right and half past 8pm and there she sits. Tossed brown hair, a homely face splashed with freckles. The only thing unusual about her is her eyes. Large, almond-shaped and arched upward. Parked in an indigo cruiser Molly kept waiting still and silent, at least for the moment.

Without the heater running she pulled the thick black coat closer around her figure. Lace curved down, plunging the neckline of her little red dress revealing the effect of the black push-up bra. Sleek black boots hugged her calves, begging the view to seek her skin.

"Waiting at a dark park on a Friday night, how typical," she said aloud, frustrated with herself.

"What the hell am I doing here?" throwing her hands in the air and hanging her head. A red-headed figure broke the steady beam of her headlights. Molly barely caught a glimpse of him as he walked to the car parked next to her that she hadn't even noticed.

The lights flashed twice, illuminating the black Mazda Miata. She leaned forward to glance at the figure, completely forgetting about the reason she had come. As Molly moved she hit the lights, pushing the joystick downward and with a slight lick they flashed on and off and on.

Shooting backwards, pressed against her seat, she turned off all the lights. Molly's face turning a flush of pink unforeseen in the darkness surrounding her. The Miata sputtered, then shut off, leaving the headlights lit.

"Ah, Stupid, just leave," Molly muttered under her breath. She tried not to stare but the figure was now getting out of his car, approaching at a persistent rate, his shadow elongating as he came closer. Molly was preparing to mutter the usual response – I'm fine. Rolling her eyes, just another macho man trying to help a seemingly distressed "damsel".

He pressed his face to the window.

"Molly?" the deep muffled voice said as it fogged up the window.

"I'm fine, I mean, I am, yes" she stuttered through her response.

"Tyler Blake, do you remember me?" he answered.

"Ty, wow it's been a long time since high school" Molly said, her outfit suddenly felt like a disguise. Molly got out of the car slamming the door shut, stumbling to the other side, stepping into Ty's headlights.

"Wow Moll," his jaw dropped as he let out of the words, "it has been a long time, What are you doing here?" He asked.

"Umm...waiting....for someone." She looked down at her pleather boots. She dare not explain her reason for being here. Ty reached into his pocket, pulled out a black business card, printed with just four white letters on the front, SEEK.

Sliding it into Molly's view he leaned forward pressing Molly against the hood of his car. Molly felt the warmth of the engine. Let me do this, let me do this, her mind kept repeating, she needed the money, she had do this. The card slipped out of Ty's hands as he let them guide her face to his. Turning over and over in the air, the card landing backside up with Molly's information and the word PLEASURE printed in the same bold font as the front.

I don't know if I can push myself that hard. All of these other guys eat, live, and breathe this stuff. Me, I just like to bang. I don't mind getting hit, bloodied a bit, because I can usually dish it back out. Do I mind lifting? No. Do I mind the leg gellifying cardio? No. But I just refuse to workout to the point of hurling into a bucket, and getting back on the treadmill. That's just ridiculous. These guys see it as a lifestyle. For me its just a hobby they pay me for.

Ive got a big fight in a couple of weeks. This is the first time Ive been afraid to get in the ring. I'm wondering how I got here. My name is Bo, and this is my story.

I was born in Nebraska, but I don't remember it. I suppose Ive always just taken my moms word for it, theres no way for me to really know. The only home Ive ever known is Dallas- The Big D. My mom and I shared an apartment with my grandparents. Its crackling, crumbling, grey interior matched the dirty downtown streets. Its yellowing wallpaper echoed the streetlights and the skyline at night.

I didn't have any siblings, not for a while at least. My mom was young, but she loved me. She always tried to do right by me. I was a very quiet kid. I don't know if it's the way God made me, or if its because there weren't many kids in my neighborhood, at least not that Mom let me out with. I never said much. Still that way.

WE were not well off by any means, but Mom always made sure I looked nice. She didn't mean me any harm by it, but in my neighborhood you were better off wearing torn up, stained, hand-me-downs. She wouldn't have any of that, not for her boy. I didn't have the heart to tell her I wouldn't wear such nice things. She hadn't bought herself as much as a t-shirt in as long as I could remember.

Defending the Union (continued)

"We are approaching the Akeedoo homeworld, Captain," stated Lt. Cmdr. James in her earpiece as Malcolm walked the short distance from her personal quarters to Ops. "We will be in orbit within the next ten minutes."

"Acknowledged," she replied, hoping the Akeedon ambassador to Earth hadn't sent her on a wild goose chase. The blue-gray planet was light years out of their way, but if their contact on this odd planet could help make the virus unstoppable, it would surely be worth the trip. Still, the invitation seemed sketchy at best and, if she was to be so backward as to still judge by appearances, this local techie appeared in the vid to be more addict than reputable source.

She knew that the best hackers were often the pleasure seekers out to break virtual reality code to suit their disturbed whims and that VR was just a stepping stone to committing those crimes in real life...but this is war, she reminded herself. If it saved lives, what did it really matter what some alien did in VR to some holographic alien child?

She felt another layer of coldness creep into her soul as she gathered her shuttle team for departure to the planet.

Mr. Akma met them in what appeared to be the darkest part of the alien capital city. The carbons monoxide and dioxide filled the air at a rate which lowered the lifespan of the Akeedons considerably until they developed the technology to implant all of their citizens with lung enhancers. The shuttle team were all wearing breathing masks outside due to the low oxygen content of the atmosphere but, thankfully, the indoor air in Akma's laboratory approached that of a "clean room" due to the computer chips he was creating.

"I'm Captain Malcolm and this is my crew. We are here to discuss your virus-enhancement program, as we discussed."

"Yes, yes," Akma snarled at them. "I could care less who you are. Just tell me if you have my payment."

"It was unclear whether you wanted Space Union credits or something in trade. Which is it?" asked Malcolm.