

Rashaad surveyed over the rocky hilltop. Ahead he looked out onto a charred landscape. The dirt was pounded in and rock hard and dull gray. If you looked onward, you would see pale sticks coming up from the ground. These were the fossils of dead trees unearthed by time. If you looked farther you could see large metal and concrete objects jutting out of the ground. These were remnants of human skyscrapers from a bygone era. There was hardly anything to connect the space to Earth. It belonged to the robots.

“Alright” Rashaad said “I don’t see any robots, I think we can go.”

Rashaad continued over the hill and was followed by another man who was older than Rashaad who was in his early twenties. They were equipped with backpacks carrying sharp wooden and bronze tools, tools perfect for picking technology of things. They were armed with bows and arrows and the older man had an iron spear. They slid down the hill and into a large crevice. It was dark inside, but they could feel the texture of the walls.

“Why is there carpet on the walls?” The older man said.

“Uhh, well, ahh! The building is on its side, Jack” Rashaad said to the man. “Don’t fall down a door.”

The hallway opened up into a chamber with windows facing the ground.

“Try to find anything of use to us. Medicine, food, raw metal” Jack said.

“Maybe a computer, eh, ehh” Rashaad said jokingly.

Jack was looking through a files drawer and crooked his head up “We can’t use a computer, we have no electricity Rash. And the second we started that computer up we would be detected.” Jack coldly explained.

He didn't get the joke.

The two of them rummaged through desks and drawers. They found hand mirrors and some plastic soda bottles.

“You know how the doc has that little project ‘bout making a floaty thing with plastic bottles. He would love these things, Jack” Rashaad said.

Jack went back into the hallway and peeked back into the outside while Rash kept looking for more supplies. Something sticking out of the drawer caught his eye. He grabbed a gleaming black rectangle out of it. It was a *phone*. Rash had been told stories passed down for generations about this device. It was like a book, it folded open and closed and open again. One half of the flap was dedicated to buttons, which Rash learned were used to talk to people far away. The second flap was a screen, like a television screen but small. It led to a whole other world, a world that let people see other people. With it in his hand he gripped it tighter, digging his nails into it. He had learned that this in his hand was what allowed the machines to take over. The people of the mid-21st century were so farsighted they couldn’t see what was right in front of them. Rash was planning on how to break this device when he heard a shout from halfway.

“They’re here!” Jack burst in saying. “They’ve found us.”

Rashaad said, dazed. “Who found us?”

“The robots! There is one outside right now! We gotta go!” Jack impatiently said.

Rash shoved the phone into his backpack and scurried out of the room.

“Over there is where I saw it, I don’t see it now though” Jack said.

Yeah, I don’t see it” Rash said.

“We’re gonna have to sneak under the trash back to the safe zone. You got that?” Jack said.

“We gotta stay quiet...but yeah” Rash said.

The two crawled out of a window on the ground and crawled under some stray wood. The air was musty from the damp wood and they had to avoid getting their clothes caught on the wood. They crawled over gravel and only had enough space to go forward. They entered a part where there was no wood above them in clear sight of the sky. Rash sat up to look at a pattern on a building. A couple of rocks of increasing size fell from that area followed by the patterned wall. While it was falling the pair could now understand that this was no pattern, but a metal hunk with three dimensions. It was a large, riveted metal box, the size of a minivan brimming with electrical cords. While in freefall six stubby metal legs sprung out of it. On the top of it was a laptop sized webcam on it, glowing red. When it finally reached the ground it cracked the Earth and turned its camera eye straight towards Rashaad.

“It's a Scurrier! Run!” Rash said.

The two of them darted away from the wood area at full speed towards the building. The robot followed at not a particularly fast, but consistent pace. The engine of the scurrier roared followed by a trail of steam. Rash kept running, without noticing where he was going or noticing that the pebbles and piece of metal were tearing at his legs, or even that he had left Jack going in a totally different direction. Rash skidded to a halt, and went in the other direction towards Jack. He ran towards Jack with such ferocity he almost ran into him.

“Go towards, [pant] the hills,” Jack exhaustedly said. “They no can go over hill.”

Both of them ran up the hill with the scurrier following closely behind. The robot then jerked suddenly to a stop. It tilted itself up at the top of the hill and began to attempt to climb it. It sloppily put one foot in front of the other, but after a while it stopped. From the top of the scurrier two spires appeared and turned towards the two. Rash looked back and saw this

happening. A large volley of green traces of heat erupted from the scurrier, each piercing the hill. A large plumb of smoke came to the area.

“Just get over the hill. Just get over the hill!” Jack said.

Rash clambered onto the top of the hill and then rolled over the other side to the bottom. Jack got near the top and stood up on his legs but the scurrier cocked its eye towards him and targeted him. Rash looked up towards Jack but saw a large flash of green light. Jack tensed up but then fell down the hill towards Rash.

“Wake up. C'mon we have to go!” Rash exclaimed. “Are you okay? Wake up!”

Jack woke up and grabbed an exposed rebar. They then both began to run away from the gray landscape where the scurrier resided. The scurrier attempted to reach the top of the mound, but its hind legs with more weight placed on them slipped back causing the whole machine to fall. I tried to hold on with its front legs but still, it vanished behind the mound.

Jack and Rashaad began to walk away from the wreck on an ancient road. As they walked the landscape changed. In the midst of the metal ground, sunflowers appeared, guiding them to where they were going. Soon some shrubs appeared, then grass, then bushes. Soon they were swallowed by a green and blue forest. They were soon greeted by red, blue and yellow rectangles. They were rusted shipping crates with holes in them for doors and windows, strewn about around a dirt road. To cap them off were straw roofs. There were some young kids playing around them in some craters embedded in the earth long ago. There were some older men and women toiling in soil to grow crops while others were still cutting down logs.

“Ahh we made it home Jack,” Rash said. “Jack, you okay?”

Jack was breathing heavily and was shaking uncontrollably.

“Is he okay?” A farmer came over and asked.

Suddenly Jack collapsed onto the ground, his limbs still twitching. He was swarmed by other onlookers. A woman wearing a fur pelt burst out of a large blue building consisting of two crates stacked on top of each other with a spray paint of caduceus.

“You're the guy who went on that scouting mission, weren't you,” She said.

“Uhh yes.”

“Did he get injured in any way?” The woman said.

“There was... there was a scurrer, uh, I think it shot at him,” Rashaad said confused.

“We'll take it from here,” The woman exclaimed.

“Rashaad, your back,” A man from the other side of the road said and motioned for him.

Mr. Hayes' room was large but dark. It had few windows and the windows it did have were obscured by shelves of things. The shelves had a set of headphones, a plastic water bottle, a power strip with nothing plugged into it and much more. On the floor there were things too. A wardrobe, a 21st century oven, a late 20th century computer, and a picture of an ugly monkey. Rashaad had never seen any of these things in action and looked back to the phone he collected.

“I hear Jack was injured in the scouting mission,” Hayes said in a low voice, “I am truly sorry to send you guys out then.”

“He's fine,” Rashaad quickly said.

“Okay, what do you have for us?” Hayes asked.

“I got some of these small mirrors,” Rashaad said.

“Hmm, I think we could use these to make morse signalers” Hayes said “you know, with the reflecting light to...”

“Yeah I know how it works. I also have some plastic bottles for the doc's project.”
Rashaad said.

“Yeah we could use those to make some rafts. Did you get any of their technology?” Mr. Hayes said.

Rashaad almost mentioned the phone, but stopped himself. He wanted to see if it still worked. Another man walked into the building bearing the same pelt as the other woman.

“Please see Ms. Makhinaogy in the office.” The man said.

The two moved from the messy dark building to the steril light hospital.

“So, your friend has been shot with a machine electricity bolt,” The doctor said. “It's a slow weapon as it electrifies and shuts down the nervous system. It's not the initial blast itself, but it causes the body to require more stimulation and electricity, a withdrawal event.”

“One touch of technology and you're addicted to it.” Rashaad said. “what can you do for him?”

“The injuries are on a neurological level, healing that takes tiny lasers, x-rays...” She chuckled sarcastically. “A robot could do it.”

“Jesus, you're kidding me,” Rashaad said.

“I mean it might work, hehe, they could do it.”

“We can't do that. They wouldn't do anything for us.”

“He's not gonna make it, then, I'm sorry.” The doctor barely managed to get her words out.”

Rashaad stepped out of the hospital that couldn't save his friend. He allowed himself to be surrounded by sunflowers. They directed him silently towards the setting sun and to reflect on the last day. Jack was dying and for what, some plastic bottles? In search of some reason he turned to the object he found just this morning, his phone.