

Your Life Will Pass Before Your Eyes

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Chad stood looking over the beautiful landscape of his second home. He was atop a cliff overlooking the serene landscape of the planet Quarnton. The plant life of the planet was entirely adopted from Earth, they constantly traveled to Chad's home world to transfer the foliage to their own. The view of the Joshua trees twining around the branches of the Weeping Willows let Chad appreciate the talent of the Quarnonese as well as the versatility of their home planet.

The perfection of the landscaping would normally overtake all of Chad's thoughts, but the case was different on this day. His emotions were torn between what should be the most glorious day on this planet in years and his love for Sophia. Even gazing among the exquisiteness of the Weeping Joshua Valley, he envisioned Sophia prancing through the trees, hugging the trunks of each one as she spun around it. Her fine brown hair flowing through the awkward branches of the Joshua trees, her innocent youth seemed to shine through even in Chad's daydreams.

He took a deep breath and dropped his head. The stress of the day was beginning to get to him. He felt a slight shaking within his body, but there were no visible signs of convulsion. Suddenly his mind was flooded with memories of his life.

He could see all of the times when he was truly happy on Earth: his birthdays, his first kiss, graduation, and random memories of his parents. These thoughts were fleeting, he felt the emotions just like when they originally occurred, but only heard a few words from each specific event. The recollections continued to fly through his mind at a great speed until he came to the day he was abducted.

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Chad's emotions twisted at this thought as it brought him to a horrible time in his life. His parents had both been recently killed by a drunk driver and he felt that he had no direction for his life. He was a fresh college graduate with no job prospects. He recalled lying in his bed looking for a reason to go on when he saw them. Within his darkened room decorated with posters of his high school heroes were standing twenty small creatures. The vision of these walking, breathing plantlike animals nearly put a young Chad into shock. Before he could scream at these toddler sized beings his mind was filled with warm thoughts and soothing sounds.

The strange organisms slithered over to Chad's bed like snakes fleeing to the shade when a torch is lit near them. Their appendages reached out to pet him; they were trying to calm him through the most common pleasure to an Earth mammal. Their touch felt more like tree roots to Chad than that of anything else he ever touched.

In Chad's mind, there was no question as to why they were there. Through what he could only describe as telepathy he learned that they wanted to give him another chance. He knew that he was not alone in thinking that society on Earth had destroyed any chance he had at happiness on the planet.

Chad shook his head and refocused on the valley that lied before him. He knew he had to come up with something to tell Sophia before he made his sacrifice. He could not think of anything to explain why he had to die. There were no words, not which could keep his true love from being destroyed. The activities of his brain once again shifted to the past. This time of the things that had gone on during his stay on Quarnton.

There was no sensation other than gratitude in Chad's heart for his captors. Everything he ever wanted was given to him without delay or question. When he asked for entertainment he was given the greatest tales ever devised in a performance for just him. When he asked for food he was given the best cuisine, which was designed for his specific tastes. When he asked to visit home he was granted unlimited trips to Earth. These trips are what kept Chad from insanity. No matter how much care and consideration the Quarnonese gave him he was still missing companionship of humans. It was the only thing his hosts could not personally give him.

Once again shaking his daze Chad tried to refocus on his farewell to Sophia. His determination of writing his speech dwindled even quicker this time as he looked to the sky and imagined the love of his life floating through it. Her perfect body soared through the air like that of the most gracious of all winged animals. He could see her soft skinned face lighting up with joy as she twisted and turned through the air.

Chad's image of Sophia soaring through the heavens slowly was replaced by the first time he saw her. It had been eight years since he was taken away from Earth to live on his new planet. He found himself outside of an elementary school where he saw the most beautiful girl he had ever come across. Following his intrigue he tracked her all the way home. He stayed on her trail for a little over two miles as she walked home. The intensity of his interest nearly made him lose his concentration and get too close, he did not want her to know he was following out of fear that she would run away.

After a long and tiresome hour of walking they came to a small decaying mobile home. When Chad saw the horrid situation that the girl lived

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in he felt the worst pain in his life. He did not know if it was the sight of the rat infested shack she called home or if it was the stench of feces he had smelled from the sewers, but his stomach reacted either way. He felt a sharp pain in both of his sides it was as if his intestines were being crushed. He almost could not stand.

After a few minutes Chad looked into a window and recognized Sophia's mother. It was the girl he had seen just months before his parents passed away. Her name was Suzie. She was the only person he had ever slept with. She broke his heart when she left him for her drug dealer. Now looking at her with her daughter, he realized that it might be his as well. The sight began to bring back the emotions of his past, it was as if his body disappeared and he was just a soul wandering in limbo, refusing to move on because of the attachment he had to this woman.

Chad stood in the front yard of Sophia and Suzie's house watching them through the window. Eventually Suzie left her seven-year-old daughter as she went out wearing not much more than measuring tape.

Still standing on the cliff on Quarnton Chad clenched his fists remembering why he took Sophia away from her mother. He still knew that she had to come to live with him; she had no future on Earth, just like him.

Chad's visualization dissipated into the sky. He looked back down at the valley and noticed that thousands of Quarnonese had gathered among the trees. In the center of the assembly was Sophia. A rush of panic swept through Chad's veins as he realized that it was too late, his daughter would see him die without an explanation.

Without hesitation Chad jumped off the cliff into the valley. He fell through the air with his arms out to his side, his body rotating as he plummeted towards the ground. He crushed down into the soil killing him instantly.

The mass of Quarnonese slithered over to Chad's lifeless body and dragged it to the center of the valley. They danced around in celebration as Chad had given them the greatest gift in the universe.

Sophia joined in the celebration. The image of her dad was replaying constantly in her mind. The vision of his body giving no resistance to the ground, bones shattering, and his blood flowing from fresh wounds the impact caused. The image somehow caressed her psyche. It was a scene that she did not mind seeing; it did not haunt her, but brought her joy because she knew why her father had given his life to the Quarnonese. It was the gift of life, the same gift her father gave her twice. Without this unselfish act the next generation of the Quarnonese would never be born.

After the blood of a mammal soaked into the Quarnton soil the plant life slowly took on an animal form. Sophia did not know if it was a chemical bond or an act of God, but she did know the survival of their species depended on the death of a mammal, her father.

Sophia looked at the carcass of her father and realized that one day she would repay the Quarnonese for their hospitality as well. She knew that there was no gift she could give the beings that gave her a home other than the gift of death.

The Quarnonese began to pray. Sophia joined the prayer, but spoke to God for different reasons. She thanked the lord for her chance to know

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her father, for all the gifts she had been given, and for her exposure to the Quarnonese culture without which she would have been devastated by her father's mortality.