

The Big Blue Hue

by

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I woke to the sound of the avocado tree tapping on the window. I turned and our doona rustled. She was still asleep. I'd forgotten how beautiful she was. My sweet Lilly with eyes bluer than anyone else's. Well in my eyes they were.

I slipped out of bed as she stirred. I kissed her silky blonde hair. She smiled and went back to sleep.

Every night I'd wake up, dream of what could be, grab my brown slippers, my robe and my headset, then I'd trundle off to the backyard to gaze at the stars.

There's nothing like looking at the stars with the headset on. They still look weird like one of those old baseball caps from the stories of the past, and those clear plastic safety goggles. Incredible invention though. At night, the bio-luminescent screens under the brim are brighter than normal and you can see their reflection in the visor so clearly. While I looked at the stars, the headset highlighted constellations like a fairy godmother sprinkling pixie dust.

My backyard was small but I liked the soft green grass and the avocado tree. Even when the morning drones came in to pick any ripe fruit and mow the grass, it was still peaceful.

I liked living on the edge. No one else got to see the stars like the edge dwellers. But no one admired the stars like me. And this night was no different.

As I walked toward the edge, I went to put my headset on but I dropped it over the picket fence and they slid down the steel structure to boundary glass window. No one was looking so I jumped over and went down to grab my headset. The view was amazing this close to the glass. As I reached down to grab my headset, my cheek pushed against the glass and then I saw it. Through the boundary glass, there was a blue hue outside, ever so slightly creeping past the edge of the window frame. I was stunned.

I grabbed my headset and put it on. The massive round window never looked so big. And the stars were bright, almost as bright as the city lights above. That's one of the things that sucked about living on the inside of a giant tube. It blocked my view of the universe.

As the window started to turn the opaque blue, I looked over all the other buildings above. And I tried to forget what I saw.

Breakfast time. Lilly wore her brown skintight suit and looked amazing as usual. I never liked my suit. It showed too much. Lilly made French toast. She always did it so well. I couldn't even order a Vitashot without messing up. But when those slices of French toast were printed, the smell just filled the room. She smiled as she put down the plate. "Bon appétit."

I hoed in. Lilly watched. "Trouble sleeping again?"

I swallowed. "Just the usual."

"Should I call a medic?"

I scoffed. "No... There's nothing wrong."

"Well why don't you just sleep like the rest of us?"

"I... I like to think... and to look at the stars."

“That doesn't make sense. There's nothing out there.”

“Well... actually... I saw a strange blue hue -”

She looked at me stern. “There's... nothing... out there.”

I went back to eating. She drank her Vitashot. “It's Danny's 435th birthday tonight. So no weird stuff, okay?”

I nodded.

Danny lived on the other edge of the tube. It was a great night, watching them all with their blonde hair and blue eyes, all dressed in their brown suits, sharing their kitten links on their headsets. Lilly fit in perfectly. I stared at the stars and I couldn't help but think of that blue hue.

No one noticed me scale the picket fence. I got to the boundary glass and pushed hard. There it was. But how could that be? It must've been huge. Could it have been... another world?

My mind raced. I hurried back up to the party and found Lilly. “Hey you have to see this.”

Her eyes glazed over with disdain. “See what?”

I paused for a second. “It's okay... Don't worry about it.”

She smiled, kissed me, and went back to talking with her friends.

That night, I couldn't help myself. I had this idea about this world, where people could live. In the living room, I wrote it into my visor notes like the stories I see in the top ten lists. Then I brought up SearchIt on my headset. “Search, upload your story.”

It showed no results.

“Assistance please.”

A hologram of a girl appeared in a red dress. She had brown hair and brown eyes. It was weird. She looked... hypnotic.

“Hi, I'm Magie.”

I snapped out of my trance and pointed at the results. “Is that right?”

“Correct. No results.”

“Search, submit your story.”

“No results.”

“Search, share documents?”

A page came up but I had no idea how to use it. “How am I supposed to share my document?”

“Document Sharing access requires ninety nine trusts.”

“Ninety nine?”

“Correct.”

“Fine... Authority granted.” Lilly wouldn't be happy but I just had to share my ideas. “Upload file, the big blue hue.”

“Document uploaded.”

It was done. “Search, the big blue hue.”

“One trillion, two hundred and -”

“Wait... Where is my document listed?”

“One trillion, two hundred and -”

“Alright alright. How do I get my document in the top ten list?”

“Algorithms provide suggestions based on a user's history.”

“So how -”

“You can't.”

“What?”

“I'm sorry but without credibility level seven or above, you are unable to get your document considered.”

“How do I get credibility level seven?”

“Uploading eleven million documents will access credibility level seven.”

“What?”

“Uploading eleven million -”

“Just forget it... Thank you so much for your tremendous help.”

Her gaze softened. “There's no need for sarcasm, Sir.”

I paused. “Joe... Call me Joe.”

“I'm sorry, Joe. I want to help but this system is all we have. If you need me for anything else, just ask for... assistance, Magie.”

“Ok. Thanks.”

I closed the window, revealing in front of me, Lilly. “What was that?”

“Look I -”

“Magie?”

“Please -”

“So you're spending trusts on this big blue hue?”

“Lilly I -”

“Don't... just...”

She stormed to the bedroom, grabbed my drawer case and thrust it at me. “Don't come back until you sort yourself out.”

She pushed me outside and the door slid shut.

In the centre of the city, I found accommodation at the top of the centre tower. Way too much space up there. Gravity was weaker too and I found myself hitting my head when I jumped too hard. I looked out at the strange view of the tube as the boundary glass turned to day. I could see everything so small down there in the street. I had an idea.

In the street, I stood up on a solid wall and shouted aloud, “Hey everyone, gather round. Have I got a story for you!”

People gathered as I shared my story. Some asked questions. I told them of the big blue hue and the world that was beyond the stars, where different people did the things mentioned in our history stories, like work. As the crowd grew, I saw Lilly astonished by the sight of people listening to me. She... she smiled at me.

That night, I knocked on the door. Lilly answered. We paused, silent. She shook her head in disbelief. “So you got that off your chest?”

“Yeah.”

“No more weird stuff?”

I paused, but then I nodded. I noticed something in my visor to the side. I swear I saw Magie, but I wasn't sure. Lilly noticed. “What is it?”

“Just a glitch.”

I put down my headset next to the bed. Me and Lilly stripped off and caressed each other with succulent passion.

That night I woke up. I grabbed my headset and went outside. My suggested top ten list came up and in position six, there it was, the big blue hue. Suddenly, Magie appeared. “Hey... I pulled some strings. Is that better?”

I smiled. “Thank you.”

“Don't give up.”

She nodded and signed out.

The next day, I got up and headed outside with a big smile. Lilly raced to the door. “Where you going?”

“Just out to say hello to people.”

It's as if I ripped her heart out. I didn't understand it. She shut the door and I sauntered away.

In the street, I saw some of the people who listened the day before. One was a tall man. “Hey Sir, did you see my story on the top ten list?”

He shrugged. “What story?”

I saw another lady who listened. “Ma'am, you wanna hear more about the big blue hue?”

“The what?... Has it got anything to do with that black kitten behind the man of the minute?”

“What man?”

“Um.. I don't remember. But these kittens...”

I got up on the solid wall from the day before. “Hey everyone, gather round and hear more stories about the big blue hue!”

A short man stopped as I talked. Others paused but then kept walking. The short man grew anxious. I asked, “What's wrong?”

“I'm sorry but have you got the link to the black kitten? I missed it.”

I couldn't believe it. I dropped down and stooped away.

“Sir? The kitten link? Sir?...”

Lilly was there with my drawer case. I walked up to her and I just knew. She touched my cheek. “I'm sorry Joe, but you're just weird. And you don't fit me anymore. You understand, right?”

I nodded. The short man caught up and pushed me aside. He looked at Lilly. “Hey do you happen to have the black kitten link that was in the top ten a few minutes ago?”

“The one behind the man of the minute?”

He grinned. “Yeah and have you got that other link?”

She smiled.

I slunk away and Lilly didn't even look at me. She just walked and talked with the short man.

Up in the tower, I threw the drawer case on the bed which bounced off and smashed a mirror. I sighed and sat on the edge of the bed. I looked out the window at the big blue boundary glass up the end of the tube.

A maintenance drone holding a bar hovered in from the balcony and over to the mirror to clean up the glass. Just then, Magie appeared in my visor. “What's wrong, Joe?”

I scoffed. "It's all just a waste of time."

"What do you mean?"

I looked at her. "Even if my ideas were the best ever, within minutes they would be lost in the flood of garbage. And nobody cares. They just keep watching whatever is stuffed in front of their eyes."

I dropped my gaze, trying not to look pathetic. "I... I just can't live like that."

"Then don't."

I looked at her. She smiled and walked out onto the balcony. "Come see."

I followed. She stood at the end. "You want to be appreciated right?"

I nodded.

"Free?"

I nodded again.

"Living in a whole new world."

I smiled.

"Take my hand."

I paused confused. "Come on, let me show you."

I walked with her. She smiled. "You'll see."

Suddenly, my foot gave way. My arm swung up to grab something, hitting my headset. The visor half came off revealing the safety bar missing and the replacement glass up against the other rail. I was falling and I couldn't do anything about it. I watched the balcony get smaller and smaller outside of the visor and Magie inside the visor. She had a sorrowful gaze. "It'll be okay. Trust me."

I turned to look at the ground coming up fast.

THUD!

Next thing I know I woke up here. The Magie synth helped me out of the pod. The ground was strange. She lead me past some guys who were fishing in the stream. Then past the guys building the log cabin. She introduced me to you and you said to me, "Congratulations on becoming one of the elite, and welcome to Earth."