

First hand account of the event.

There was no warning, no indication that something terrible was about to happen. In the movies, there's always a tell, some type of dark omen. But not in reality. At least not this time. No, it was just...there. How could something so gigantic just appear out of nowhere?

Suddenly people were running through the town center in a panic. Patrons emerged from the cafe, restaurants and shops to see what was happening. And they all ran. No one spoke. No one screamed in terror. They just ran. It was like watching a shark feeding frenzy on tv with its frantic movements accompanied by near silence.

The ground shook harder and harder with each step as it lumbered closer. Its giant frame appeared to move in slow motion as it approached. Yet, with each otherworldly step it covered so much ground. I was mesmerized. The way it moved was fascinating; so graceful yet plodding. Trees bent and snapped. The giant boulders I played on as a child were launched into the air, slamming to the ground and rolling a hundred feet with the flick of a toe. Everything that I always saw as large and immovable was suddenly cast aside providing no more of an obstacle to this creature than freshly hewn blades of grass to you or I.

A plume of dust hovered in the air marking the trail of the beast. As the wind shifted, the dust blew into the town square briefly blinding me. I began to choke as the dense dust kicked up by the thunderous steps of the behemoth found its way to my throat. It was with this sudden blast of reality that I realized, while so enamored with watching this beast, I had ignored my most basic survival instinct. Frozen in place I looked up as the gusting wind carried the dust past me leaving a clear view of the most terrifying thing I could never have possibly imagined.

Somehow I hadn't noticed that the thunderous booms of its footsteps had stopped. I had, perhaps in my fear and amazement, lost my perception of spatial dimension. This gigantic creature whose every step caused the very earth itself to tremble was now standing ominously at the edge of the town. However, for all of the terror its mere presence induced, another observation struck me like a thousand icy needles piercing my skin. Was it really looking at me?

It felt like an eternity. Our eyes locked. Its face had an undeniable fierceness. Yet, in its eyes, there was an unexpected calm. In retrospect, it makes sense. After all, what could possibly cause this beast any form of distress. But, the peace was suddenly broken. For a reason I couldn't perceive, the calm essence of its gaze shifted to what I can only describe as rage. It was like the look a person gets when they reach their breaking point. You can see all of the negative emotions. The hate, frustration and rage all manifest in the darkest pools of their eyes.

The creature slowly reared its head back, opened its massive mouth and released a sound unlike anything I had heard before. Undertones of anguish resonated against overtones of rage and hatred creating a cacophony of dissonant harmonies. The various tones danced asymmetrically with world around them like little demons around a fire. The defining volume of the beast's guttural roar was like nothing I had ever experienced. I can only guess that it was akin to standing near a jet as it powers up for takeoff. Though still hundreds of yards away, I could feel the heat of its breath swirling through the crisp air of the early spring. The sheer

power of this beast's roar created a wind of purely unnatural character sending chill down my spine.

As it's giant jaws clenched, my blood ran cold. My sense of wonder was finally overridden by a simple imperative. RUN. I stumbled backward as I tried to turn. Afraid to take my eyes off it, I tripped, the fall leaving me briefly dazed. The quakes resumed. It was once again on the move. As I gathered my thoughts, I realized I had to just run. No looking back. I couldn't afford to fall. I had to run for my life.

My heart thumped in my chest and my lungs burned. Yet I ran. I could hear the crumbling of the office buildings which had stood empty at the edge of our town. "Good" I thought, "that might slow it down." I ran until I couldn't run any more. The volume and intensity of the giant footsteps seemed less than before. Perhaps it was distracted. I slouched up against a brick wall. The cool bricks felt good on my forehead. But, though winded and afraid, I had to gather my focus and courage. With fear resonating through every fiber of my being, I looked. I could see its massive outline through the dust and smoke. Fires flickered like candles in a draft as the creature went about its destruction, seemingly tasked with the utter annihilation of our town. The larger buildings quickly submitted to the force of its blows, shredded to bits by its prehistoric claws. Smaller homes quickly turned to sticks with the swing of its colossal tail. Cars exploded into fragments of metal and glass beneath its giant reptilian feet. The only thing which seemed to slow the onslaught was the beast's unexplainable obsession with the complete decimation of every identifiable structure it encountered.

"Snap out of it" I ordered myself. Though I had put some distance between the creature and I, it was clear that I had to get to safety. Could I hide and wait for the creature to leave? I looked about hoping to find a suitable building where I could wait out the attack. I was quickly struck by the futility of that act. Any of these buildings could be a target. No, simply hiding was not an option.

I turned my attention back to the beast. Maybe it's going somewhere specific. Maybe it will pass through. All I'd need to do is find shelter outside its path. Almost on cue, the creature shifted course. No, there was no predetermined route that I could see. It was already where it was going. As far as I could tell, this creature was here solely for the wanton destruction of this city. I needed to keep moving.

As I ran, I couldn't get the experience of locking eyes with the creature out of my head. Was that what really happened or was it just merely looking in my direction. It would be like a person making prolonged eye contact with a flea. The idea seemed far fetched. Yet, the experience nagged at me.

My legs burned and my feet felt like lead weights. My breathing was relegated to painful gasps. I had to stop and rest. Exhausted and running purely on adrenaline, I stumbled into a nearby house. The door was unlocked as I imagine most would have been, given the sudden appearance of the creature. I slowly entered the home, hopeful that I might encounter a resident but expecting to find nobody.

I could still hear the crumbling and explosions in the distance. The ground shook in almost rhythmic intervals with giant footsteps, the toppling of buildings and frequent explosions becoming almost indistinguishable from one another. The plaster on the ceiling cracked and fell in fist sized chunks with each tremor. The walls were all bare. Pictures and other adornments lay in shattered heaps on the floor along with the majority of dishes and canned goods that once sat in the now crooked cabinets. It became clear that there was no one there. I was alone.

The idea that I could hold out in the house for a bit was quickly quashed as a sudden darkness overtook the space. I slowly walked to the window to look but was already certain of what I would see. As I looked out the window, my fear was confirmed. The beast was moving toward me. Sheets of sunlight surrounded the creature. Beams slashed through the dust and smoke from the setting sun like lasers at a concert. The backlit form, a megalithic cross of humanoid and dinosaur seemed even more ominous than before as it literally blocked the sun. Then, I was struck by yet another terrifying thought. "No" I thought to myself. "There's no way its following me!"

It seemed absurd yet disturbingly plausible. How could it possibly pinpoint my location? Then it hit me. I've been assuming that it sees the same way I do. How could I be so foolish as to make that assumption? This impossible creature is clearly not governed by conventional rules as I know them. I began considering options. "Heat signatures." I muttered under my breath. Maybe this creature can pinpoint my body temperature among the buildings.

Though the creature was clearly headed my way, it still seemed oddly preoccupied with the complete destruction of every structure it encountered. I had to move again. The beast was entering a densely built area. I had to take advantage of its obsession with crushing all of those buildings. But where would I run to? "The river" I thought. Taking one more look at the creature's silhouette decimating a building with the setting sun as a backdrop, I had never been so struck by the polar blend of horror and aesthetic beauty.

I ran as fast as I could, often stumbling as the muscles of my legs approached a state of uselessness. I took stock of the landmarks, each one providing much needed morale. The school, the library and the old mills each told me I was getting closer to the river. I could hear it. It was spring so it was running hard. The water would be cold. Maybe the cold water would cool me down enough that the creature would no longer recognize me.

At the embankment adjacent to the river's edge, I lost my footing and slid. Luckily, I caught myself on a nearby tree before I fell. Gathering myself after the near fall, I carefully navigated my way to the edge of the rushing water. "This is crazy" I thought as I crouched down on the gravelly riverbank. Placing a hand in the water, the idiocy of my plan became obvious. What was I thinking? This water is freezing cold. Did I really think I could submerge myself and lay there for however long the creature took to finish pulverizing the town? Besides, how could I be sure that it wouldn't recognize my shape? Fully submerged I'd still be warmer than the water even if I wasn't a normal 98.6. "No, this is stupid." I thought, chiding myself for being so foolish.

I splashed some cold water on my face. The sudden shock gave me a bit of clarity that had been lost in my panicked state. Then it hit me. "The trees", I thought, "they can give me cover". The forest along the river was thick with pines and newly bloomed deciduous trees. Maybe it

would be enough to mask me from the beast. "I can follow the river out." I thought to myself as my derision turned to enthusiasm.

If, in fact, this creature was somehow drawn to me, it seemed secondary to its desire to destroy the city. I had to take advantage of that as it was likely the closest thing I had to an advantage. With a renewed sense of vigor and a clear goal, I set out along the river bank. I made it a point to stay close to the steep embankment whenever possible. The extra cover gave me a much needed sense of hope. I'm not sure how far I had traveled at this point, but, I noticed that the sounds of devastation had begun to grow distant. My plan was working!

As I pressed on, my mind began to drift to the many questions I had ignored until then. Did everyone get out? Are they safe? The faces of friends, neighbors and family who had been fixtures for as long as I could recall danced in my head. As I trekked on, I could only hope that they were safe.

I could see through the trees that there was a building ahead. I realized that I had reached the neighboring town. It was a quiet place. The large homes painted a picture of a wealthier community than the small city in which I grew up. Slowly, the embankment gave way to a slight incline leading to a park. With the sounds of the Beast in the distance, I decided it was a good time to rest. Then, perhaps I could try to find some people.

As I stood at edge of the tree line, I could feel a grumble in my stomach. I needed to find food. From the distance, the town appeared deserted. With my city being attacked first, it made sense that surrounding towns would have adequate warning to evacuate. Though I could no longer make out the details of the beast, the massive cloud of dust, smoke and debris loomed over what remained of my home.

Afforded a brief reprieve from the terror that had owned me until that moment, I was overcome by the bevy of emotions I had suppressed throughout the ordeal. My legs, exhausted from the constant running, gave way and I dropped to my knees. My arms dangled at my sides while my eyes leered at the ground in front of me. And I wept. In just a few short hours, all I knew had been turned to dust. Everyone was gone and I had no idea where they were or if they were even alive, never mind safe. "Safe" I mumbled to myself, choking on the word. "How could anyone be safe from this?"

I looked up once again at the giant cloud where my city once stood. The crashes and quakes of the continued onslaught echoed in the distance. Fires danced in flickering pairs of yellow and orange, their eerie glow spreading through the dark dust like the sun setting behind lingering storm clouds.

As I slowly stood, I wiped the tears from my eyes. I had allowed my humanity all the time I could spare. I had to find some food to give me the strength I needed to continue my escape.

I watched the continued destruction as I hustled across the field that separated the river from the town. As I approached, I could see the downtown area. "There will be food." I thought. Soon, I reached the Main Street. There were a couple of small restaurants that I knew of.

Exhausted, I paused for a moment before pulling the door. No luck. My heart sank for a moment. "Idiot!" I muttered as I pushed the door open. For the briefest of moments, I managed a slight smile, amused by my own foolishness.

It was no surprise that the venue was empty. I had come to expect nothing else. I quickly shuffled to the baked goods counter where many pastries and breads remained untouched since being freshly made that morning. Careful not to gorge myself, I ate a few bites of pastry to get a boost of much needed sugar. The cooler was filled with juice and bottled water. I grabbed a bag from behind the counter and tossed in some bottles. As I reached for a second bag, there was a loud thud.

I ran to the door to see what caused the sound. The next thing I noticed was a rhythmic series of thuds. Was the creature running? The thuds grew louder and the ground began to shake with each step. It was getting closer.

The terror that had consumed me came flooding back. Had the beast completed its destruction of my city? Was it now bent on finding me? The earth once again quaked as the creature approached. Its giant tail seemed to float through the air behind it as its quickened pace reminded me of watching a dinosaur run in movies. But something seemed off.

At first I thought it was the combination of hunger, fatigue and fear disrupting my senses. But, as the beast approached it became clear that the thunderous tones were not all lining up with the landing of its feet.

A now familiar sensation overtook me as my blood, once again, ran cold. There was no question in my mind. It was looking directly at me. I froze with fear as the full realization set in. There would be no more running. This was the end of my story. Though my instincts tried in desperation to get me to flee. I had closed myself to the simple fact that I was about to die.

The creature sneered as it sprinted toward me. The graceful, systematic movements which mesmerized me were no more. The beast had its next target and would waste no more time.

Our locked stare was abruptly broken as the beast unexpectedly turned its head to its left. At that moment, the most amazing thing happened. My experience could not have possibly become any stranger. Yet, fate found a way to add an unexpected twist.

It leaped through the air, its colossal fist reared back. In the blink of an eye, the gigantic punch met the beast's face with an earth shattering explosiveness. It made sense now. The sounds and the footsteps didn't all correspond because there was a second giant running towards the town. But how could the beast have not noticed? Was it so focused on me that it was completely unaware of the pending attack?

The beast met the ground with the force of an earthquake, its enormous bulk rippling from the impact. I could see a pained expression on its pseudo-reptilian face as it slid across the field. The giant stood there, glowering at the beast, fists clenched. The giant seemed to match the beast in height but not overall size as its human-like proportions would not match the bulk of the

creature's dinosaur like form. Yet, the giant seemed a worthy match for the beast as he had leveled it with a single punch.

As the giant stood there, surveying the situation, the beast sprang to its feet with unexpected agility. It lunged forward and swung a giant arm catching the giant off guard. He reared back and stumbled a bit as the beast swung with the other arm, its claws catching the giant's arm as he attempted to block the attack. The giant let loose a guttural roar as the beast's giant jaws clamped down on his shoulder. The crunching and tearing were disturbingly audible as blood squirted from the wound.

The beast stood ominously, emanating a clear sense of superiority as the giant staggered backward, clenching its wounded shoulder. The beast lunged again, attempting another devastating bite. But this time the giant grabbed it by its gigantic head and tossed it over his hip. The beast let out a shrill mixture of pain and surprise as it landed squarely on its scaly back, completely crushing two houses that sat at the edge of town.

This time, the giant would not repeat his mistake. Without hesitation, he mounted the beast and began throwing fierce right hand punches. The beast roared with each punch as it writhed in attempts to free itself from the attack.

With a quick shift of its massive bulk, the beast freed an arm and dug its claws into the wounded shoulder of the giant. He shrieked in agony as blood spurted from the freshly reopened wound. With another quick shift, the beast freed its other arm and swatted the giant off of its chest.

The giant fell, wounded shoulder first into a collection of small homes and with jaw clenched, grimaced as his deep wounds ground into the rubble.

The beast slowly climbed to its feet, dazed from the flurry of punches to its head. Thick blood oozed from its nostril, mouth and a gaping wound on the right side of its head. I clenched my fists with a sense of enthusiasm as the giant had clearly injured the beast. But, he was also hurt. Would he be able to win the battle?

Another thought struck me. Perhaps the assumption was due to his humanoid form. Perhaps that bit of relatability led me to the conclusion that the giant was on my side. But, how could I know for certain? How could I be sure that, should the giant vanquish the beast, he wouldn't merely take over the attack?

"Not now" I thought. I had to focus on one problem at a time. These enormous creatures had already brought about massive destruction in the brief opening moments of their fight. I couldn't stay where I was. I needed to put some distance between us. I turned to observe the eastern side of the town. There was an old abandoned mill building at the eastern border. It stood apart from the rest of the town and was overgrown making it less of an obvious target. That's where I would go.

As I turned back to take stock of the battle, I was met by that terrifyingly familiar gaze. The beast had once again set its sights on me. I scanned left and right to choose the best escape route as the beast began plodding toward me, its focus never waning. With a loud slam, a giant

piece of rubble struck the side of the beast's head. Stunned, it paused for a moment and shook off the hit. The giant stood poised with another slab of concrete in its hand. As the beast turned to face him, he hurled the projectile which struck with the force of a cannon blast.

The giant, without taking his eyes off the beast, reached down and ripped a massive slab of concrete from the side of an office building and pitched it at the beast. Again and again, he pelted the beast with concrete, rooftops, cars, trucks and anything else he could get a grip on. The beast recoiled with each hit gradually becoming staggered by the rapid fire attack. Finally, a school bus struck the side of the beast's head. It released a horrible, piercing shriek as it stumbled for a moment and dropped, belly first to the ground. I lost my balance as shock waves emanated outward from the reptilian epicenter. "Was it dead?" I wondered.

The giant cautiously approached, grasping his damaged shoulder with his good hand. I could see the fatigue in his movements. His focused stare masked the obvious pain that he felt. His chest heaved with each breath as he made his way toward the beast's prone body.

The giant was just a couple of steps away from the beast when he paused. He let go of his battered and bloody shoulder and clenched his giant fist. Slowly and without taking his eyes off the motionless beast, he reached down and picked up the smashed husk of a car and tossed it at the creature's face. The metal mass bounced off the side of the beast's head and crashed to the ground. The beast didn't flinch.

The giant took a deep breath as he straightened his back and stood tall. Without prompt, the beast's eye sprang open. Suddenly, the giant's feet were pulled out from under him as the creature's tail swept his legs from behind. His feet shot into the air as his body inverted. With a devastating slam, the giant fell with all of his weight on his damaged shoulder.

The roar of pure agony was deafening and the earth shuddered with the impact. A nauseating crunch pierced through the thunderous slam as bones shattered. The giant slowly rolled over on his back. However, his left arm, now limp, remained trapped beneath him. A horrific scream accompanied the sound of ripping flesh and popping ligaments as what remained of his damaged shoulder strained to keep his arm with his body. Blood poured from the gaping wound forming a pool the size of a small pond.

As the giant attempted to push himself up with his good arm, the other dangled at his side. The beast, as it returned to its feet, could sense that victory was near. The giant, now upright but on his knees gasped at his demolished shoulder as his lifeblood spewed from the gaping hole. The giant looked up, heaving with every breath seemingly accepting of his fate. The two behemoths engaged in one last stare down. The earth quaked as it had so many times before with each step as the beast arrogantly sauntered into striking distance. There was no sound, no battle roar or shriek of pain as the beast raised its arm and slashed it downward on the giant. The giant's bony claws tore through skin, muscle and bone as blood sprayed from his chest. Slowly, the giant keeled over and crashed to the earth.

The beast took no time to bask in the glory of its victory. Looking about, it soon turned its gaze toward the building where I was hiding. The creature no longer seemed interested in crushing structures as it began to slowly lumber in a straight line toward my hiding place. I could see that

it was exhausted and wounded from the fight. Blood still ran from the giant gash on the side of its head.

“Maybe I can get away.” I thought. I snuck out the door at the back of the building, ran through a cluster of trees and slid down the embankment to the river. I looked through the trees and could see the beast was still a good distance away. Though it was slowed significantly, I knew there was no way I could outrun it.

Just a few feet away, something caught my eye. It was an old drain pipe. Staying low and close to the embankment, I made my way to the pipe. The grate was loose, most likely due to all of the quaking. I was able to easily move it aside and slip in through the opening.

It was dark inside the pipe. But, as my eyes adjusted, there was just enough dusk light for me to be able to tell that it went on for a significant distance. I speculated that it led to an old processing plant near the Southeast edge of town. That plant had been shut down many years earlier due to pollution in the river. It made perfect sense. The only real question was whether or not the pipe would be intact. I decided it was worth a shot.

I could hear the giant footsteps moving closer. I had to get moving. As I began to scuttle my way through the pipe, I noticed that the steps had stopped. I heard a massive crunch as the building where I had been hiding fell prey to the beast. I froze with fear. There was a muddled snort followed by another crunch. A third crunch followed another grunt. Was the creature looking for me in the building where it last saw me? I quickly speculated that it couldn't find me underground.

I began to hustle a bit more being careful not to make noise as I had no idea what capacity of hearing the beast possessed. Though I had encountered bits of debris, I was amazed at how well the pipe had held up. Suddenly, the earth shook once again as the beast let loose a roar even more ferocious than it had in battle. Was it frustrated? Nothing seemed outside the realm of reason by that point.

As I continued along my hidden escape route, I began to formulate a plan. Perhaps I could draw the beast into the town using myself as bait. Then, while it tears apart the buildings looking for me, I can make my way back through the tunnel to the river. I could then use the trees as cover as I did before and follow the river to safety. It had been hours since the beast first appeared. There had to be some sort of military plan in the works. All I had to do was get far enough away to survive until the military showed up.

I could hear the beast utterly pulverizing my former hiding place in the distance. Up ahead, there was a soft glow of light. I figured that I must be close to the basement of the old plant. As I moved closer to the light, I could see that it came from above through a drain cover. I was under the building. As I arrived at the end of the pipe, I reached up to test the grated drain cover. It was heavy but had some give. I positioned myself beneath it, grabbed firmly with both hands and pushed. With a bit of jostling, the old grate shifted, its edge lifting out of the inset of the concrete floor. With a few more heaves, I was able to slide the cover enough to slip through.

As I climbed out of the drain. I could hear the quakes begin again. "How?" I thought as I assumed the creature had somehow discovered my new location. However, unlike before, there would be a few steps, a pause then more steps with more pauses. The patternless sequence of sounds told me that, though the search radius had grown, it was still looking around the remains of the old mill. With the sparse remnants of the waning daylight, I found a staircase leading out of the basement. The staircase led me to a hallway which opened up through a set of doors to the of the vast work area.

It was particularly dark as the windows were all boarded up, likely smashed by vandals long ago. I could just make out an old exit sign. Being careful to make mental notes of the route back to the drain pipe, I worked my way to the door.

I opened the door carefully and placed a block of wood in the jamb to avoid locking myself out. The street was surprisingly bright as a full moon shone in the evening sky. I emerged cautiously from the building. I could see the beast in the not so far distance, it's megalithic form outlined by silver highlights. The moonlight shimmered and danced as the creature frantically stomped about, searching the area where it had last seen me. My next task was to get its attention.

Based on my prior experience, I figured that I would only need to get it to look in my direction and it would immediately home in on me. With the wide street and sidewalks allowing a clear line of sight, I just needed to make a loud enough noise to draw its attention.

Looking around, there was very little debris since the area was as yet untouched by the beast. Yet, I knew that the quakes would have likely loosened something that I could use. Seeing the boarded up windows gave me an idea. As my eyes scanned the ground around me I found it. I reached over to pick up a brick that had jarred loose from an old, degraded chimney stack atop an adjacent building.

While looking over my shoulder to check the status of the beast, I jogged to one of the street level boarded windows of the processing plant. I took a deep breath and swung. The brick slammed against the large plywood sheet with a large thud. The tone resonated within the building, amplified by the large open space and hard, flat surfaces within.

I looked hopefully toward the beast. There was no reaction. It couldn't hear my giant drum over the sound of its own actions. In frustration, I began striking the plywood over and over. All of the fear and anger that had built up within me released in the form of the loudest scream I could manage.

Then I noticed the quaking had stopped. I looked back to see the beast, eyes trained on me. It's rage and hatred seemed to build with every millisecond. With a gigantic roar, it lowered its head, raised its massive tail and began to run.

With no time to spare, I turned and sprinted back to the door. The quakes began to increase in intensity, the accompanied thuds growing in volume. The creature was approaching quickly. I ran as fast as I could to the staircase. Stumbling briefly I managed to maintaining my balance as I sprinted toward the black hole of the stairway.

As I slowed to take the stairs back to the basement, an explosive sound rang through the building. As I glanced over my shoulder, a gigantic claw slashed through the roof of the building sending debris crashing to the floor. Acting on pure instinct, I raised my arms to shield myself and slouched in the corner of the stairwell. I knew the creature was enormous. Yet, to witness the sheer size and power up close renewed the terror which had owned me for the majority of the day.

I quickly gathered myself as well as I could. Being careful to shield my eyes from the debris, I turned and hustled down the stairs. The shrill sounds of metal beams bending, the crumbling of concrete and the moans of wooden planks ready to snap sequenced in a dissonant array. Chunks of floor board dropped into the basement with every thrust of the beast's claws. I bobbed and weaved, dodging the falling debris as I made my way across the basement floor.

Patches of moonlight began to illuminate dinner table sized spots on the floor as more and more of the structure above turned to rubble. I slid like a baseball player sneaking past the glove as I dodged one last slab of debris and slinked into the drain pipe. I took only the briefest of breaks as I prepared to hustle down the pipe to the river.

Gathering myself for one more press, I began to scuttle through the pipe. "NO!" I thought as I was met with a wall of compressed soil and crushed concrete pipe. My knees gave out and I fell to the ground as this new reality struck home. The beast, while sprinting toward the plant, must have stepped on the ground over the pipe. The humble structure was no match for the massive force of the creature's stomp. The chances of this happening seemed staggeringly improbable. All of that area between the mill and the plant and this specific piece of earth, a mere 4 feet wide, was struck.

Dismay turned to hope as I remembered, though I was trapped, the beast could not find me underground. Confident that I was far enough from the plant and that lightning would not strike twice, I sat, leaning against the rubble where the pipe once ran.

For the first time since the beginning of the ordeal, I felt like I could rest. I gradually became aware of my physical state. My stomach grumbled, my legs burned and my head pounded. Somewhere along the way I had acquired several cuts which had all become caked with dirt and dried blood. My eyelids grew heavy. I resisted the temptation to sleep although physical, mental and emotional exhaustion dragged me ever closer to slumber. As my mind drifted, the massive thuds of the destruction above morphed into the sound of waves crashing on a beach. The rubble around me turned to fine beach sand. The stale air in the pipe was replaced by a warm and soothing ocean breeze.

The volume of the crash coupled with the sudden blast of moonlight jarred me awake. I froze as the shock of the abrupt awakening surrendered to the horror of what was before me. I have no idea how long I slept. Perhaps it was only moments. Perhaps it was longer. If really didn't matter. The perception of time was no more than a brief distraction from the fact that the beast had clawed down through the earth below the plant and exposed my hiding place. Did it know I was there? Did it just happen to swipe its claw through the right spot while thrashing the building? Regardless, it was clear that, between the collapsed pipe and this new development, my luck had run out.

“How could it be?” I wondered. After all that I had survived, how could this finally be the end? Perhaps the good fortune which allowed circumstances to align in my favor left me complacent. Did I get sloppy? Was I expecting too much from the universe?

As the creature withdrew its giant claw from the hole, what remained of the pipe became flooded with moon light. For a moment, the creature was still, no doubt examining the section of pipe it had exposed just a few short feet from where I sat. I remained still, afraid to breathe. Suddenly, the beast let out a giant roar which gave way to the shrill shriek of agony. Then, silence.

Apprehensive, I slowly slinked my way to the opening to see what had occurred. I cowered at the edge of my hovel, the silence only broken by the sound of wind whistling through the rubble. My heart began to beat faster and harder, pounding from my chest to my inner ears. With dread filling every nook of my thoughts, I slowly looked up. I fully expected to see it standing there, ominous and terrifying with its gaze fixed upon me. But, what I saw stole my breath. The beast did in fact stand in front of me, an ominous visage for certain. However, behind the behemoth, it was him.

His damaged arm dangled at his side. His good arm, thrust elbow deep, rested inside the beast. The creature stood motionless, its claws tensed to the point of deformity and its jaws agape. Its eyes stared forward affixed on oblivion.

The creature shuddered as the giant tore his massive arm from its back. A huge glob of the beast's thick blood struck the earth with a sickening slap as the giant liberated his fist from the creature's torso. As if in cinematic slow motion, the beast keeled to its left. In what seemed like an eternity, the beast fell, its arms and legs locked in a rigid pose.

With an impact that seemed earth shattering to me, the beast struck the earth, falling for the last time. The giant stood over his fallen foe as the beast's disembodied heart took its last beat within his grasp. His eyes still affixed on the corpse of his enemy, he tossed the ventricular mass aside.

In perhaps the most peculiar moment of the saga, the beast turned to face me. With a mixture of fear and curiosity blanketed by an inexplicable sense of trust, I emerged from the drain pipe. As I made eye contact with the giant, he opened his mouth as though to speak.

No words would follow, though. The sudden sound of jets grabbed us both and, in an almost synchronized fashion, we turned to see the fighter jets on the horizon.

He staggered as the first rocket struck him in the chest. Another rocket and then a third quickly followed striking him in rapid succession as the jets flew by. “NO!” I shouted as I tried to climb out of the hole. The giant, hearing my exclamation turned his head and, upon seeing me, held up his hand in the universal posture to stop. A look of genuine concern crossed his face. He was protecting me once again.

He roared in agony as the next flurry of rockets struck what remained of his wounded shoulder. I was overcome by horror as his arm struck the ground, landing flaccid and lifeless at his feet. Blood flowed freely from the gaping hole where his left shoulder once was. I fully expected him to pick up the arm and use it to swat the jets out of the air as they regrouped for another run. But he didn't. In fact, he didn't fight back at all, instead choosing to allow himself to be pelted with wave after wave of rockets.

There was blood running from so many wounds. So much blood. Too much blood. Growing weaker by the second, he dropped to one knee. Three more rockets struck him in the neck. His blood spurted from the wound as he pressed his hand in an instinctive effort to stop the bleeding. The blood ran quickly between his fingers. His chest heaved in gradually longer intervals. As he turned his head to look eyes once more, he mouthed something. His chest heaved one last time. As with the beast, the fall seemed to last forever. The impact, though significant, was less devastating as he gracefully slinked to the ground.

"NO!" I shouted again as I clawed my way from the hole. I ran as hard as I could. I stopped and stood just a few yards from his face. As I looked into his eyes, the fire that burned so powerfully throughout the battle simmered to a mere flicker and then...nothing. No light remained, only two giant pools of darkness. My heart sank, my legs went numb and I fell to my knees as the giant lifeless orbs peered off into nothingness.

"Are you okay?" A voice shouted out. Nearly blinded by tears, I could make out the shape of a soldier rushing toward me, radio in hand. I felt dizzy and cold. The world around me sounded like it was under water. I could hear the soldier calling for medical support as I drifted off.

"That basically takes us to this moment." I wasn't sure what his rank was, but he was certainly high up in the hierarchy. The man across from me had a stern look. There was a touch of fascination in his expression. Yet he barely reacted to the events of my story. I struggled to believe the events myself and I had lived them. Yet, here was a complete stranger absorbing every word while appearing not to doubt me for a second.

I had so many questions. Where did the beast and giant come from? Why did this begin in my city? Why was the beast seemingly targeting me? Why did the giant protect me and then refuse to save himself? However, one question burned deeper than all the others. What was the giant trying to tell me? The vision of his attempt to parlay a message was seared into my mind playing over and over like a video clip on an endless loop. Yet I couldn't quite make it out.

The man stood and began to gather his notes. For a moment, I watched him arrange his papers neatly into a file folder. He reached down, picked up his briefcase and placed it on the table. "Can I ask you a question?" I inquired? The man paused for a moment, looked at me with a steely stare and replied "No."

Taken aback by the cold brevity of his reply, I watched him pack, close and lift his briefcase. Without as much as an utterance, he turned toward the door and marched out. Through the window I watched him walk past several other officers without a hint of acknowledgement. "What is going on here?"