

Sunset

by Bradley Hook

Behind the bellicose façade lay a soft, compassionate soul.

He sat within a swirl of rosy twilight hues, buoyed by the gently creeping tide. A dark wall approached and he mechanically spun and began stroking into the glassy canvas of light and ocean that lay between him and the golden, tree-fringed dunes. The wave matched his speed and lifted him up, releasing him down onto a steep ramp, turgid and ready to unfurl its power as the sand bank steepened below them. Instinctively he crouched into the wave's heart space, hand outstretched, brushing her smooth cheek with his fingertips. The lip spilled over, engulfing him, and he became lost in the strangely familiar, blissful eternity of Nature's most intimate and fleeting place. Adrenalin and desperation to emerge unpunished forced his reflexive escape towards the light. Yet somewhere he longed to remain forever inside this wave.

The lone surfer felt a thunder of spray collapse behind him as he raced out onto the wall. But instead of carving his way to the beach he looked down, just watching the golden water as it passed beneath him, knowing moments like these were what kept him alive.

He paddled back out to catch one last set wave before darkness shrouded the ocean and brought on the discomfort of night. A full moon illuminated clouds which now contrasted brightly with the darkened sky. He cupped his hands and captured a handful of the moon's reflection, staring into light and energy born of the sun. Filled with a melancholy longing for something he couldn't quite comprehend he turned, paddled strongly, and carved long arcs into a new wall, smaller and steeper than the last, all the way to the shore break. The current tugged at him, drawing him back from the security of the standing shallows but his persistence and brute force prevailed and the ocean relinquished him, begrudgingly, to the soft, dark sand.

"Another day, another dollar" grunted Jeff as he collapsed into his chair, a ring of coffee trickling from his mug onto the plastic wooden

desk. The chair made a soft wheeze as it adjusted to his ample dimensions. "Yes" replied the man beside him who was classified by the organisation as a Business Analyst, but who was actually something much greater.

"Have you run the reports yet?" asked Jeff, coughing, before slurping his coffee and releasing a satisfied sigh. How the man beside him hated that slurping sound. Clicking into a spreadsheet and activating a shortcut icon the man beside Jeff simply muttered, "Yes".

Today Rich was a man of few words. Perhaps even fewer than usual, especially when it came to being in this place.

It had been four years since Rich had been embraced by the ocean. Four years since the rebellious young man started a journey that would leave him tired, pallid and sterile. He looked out of a steel-framed window at the end of the office, the tinted glass making the grey world even darker. As his monitor flashed up an application error, which signalled certain data loss, he stood up. He lifted the large monitor and began walking. Leashed to power sockets and a base unit, an electric hiss and crunch of steel against plastic wood alerted Jeff and a few others to this odd spectacle. Rich walked steadily towards the far window, paused, and then hurled the monitor at it, hoping for some kind of majestic destruction. Instead, the monitor rebounded toward him and landed at his feet, not even looking all that broken. He stared down at his reflection in the large grey screen and knew that everyone was now standing up and searching for some kind of reason for the image they saw. A small shriek meant that Anne the secretary felt the need to alert even more people, just as her ancestors had once done.

Rich never looked back as he made his way down the stairs to the ground floor and emerged into the dank cold of outside. Thankfully his phone and wallet were in his pocket when he experienced this, his first moment of madness. It would have been hell going back to his desk.

He looked up at the daytime full moon, grateful that he could see it through the smog. The north wind was blowing him in a new direction.

