

The Great Rush

By Keith J. Bowers

This was written in 1989 when the threat of nuclear war was still vividly real.

The news hit me like a slap in the face. Old Tom Brokaw, now seventy five and still broadcasting on NBC, came on the air at five in the afternoon. He had the cruel duty of telling the nation that the Soviets had launched a sneak ICBM strike against the United States. Our own ICBM's sat useless in their silos, effectively destroyed by sapper units. The new Soviet openness was simply a façade.

Stunned, I rose from my chair to tell my wife, Amara. She was making dinner in the kitchen. At first she laughed and thought I was looney. Then, as she overheard Brokaw's continuing report emanating from the living room, she became wide eyed and silent. Panicking, she then went berserk, screaming and running out the door of our home. I never saw her again.

"Daddy?" I felt a tug on my leg. My three year old daughter, Rebecca, awoke me from my stupor. "Daddy? What's wrong? Where's Mommy?" I picked her up off the floor and also walked outside. "Daddy?"

"Nothing's wrong, honey," I lied. It pained me to lie so, but it was for the best. No sense tormenting her last few moments of life. "Mommy went for a little walk. She needed to be alone for a little while." I tried to look cheerful in the face of eminent death.

I knew what was going to happen. Anarchy would reign soon as the end of our society and civilization came near. I carried Rebecca back to the cliff that overlooked the freeway. From our vantage point a hundred feet above, it looked like a traffic jam to end all traffic jams. And it was.

“Oh! Look at all the cars! Why are there so many cars, Daddy?” I couldn’t bear to answer her much less lie again.

People were beginning to abandon their cars and run aimlessly from the danger and death that they could not escape from. Others were driving up the embankment to try and get around the pile up, uncaringly crushing those on foot.

Anarchy had come faster than I had anticipated. The end was near. I could see the contrails slowly falling from the sky on either side of the horizon. The great rush had come. A flash in the distance grabbed my attention. Philadelphia. Another flash, closer this time. Harrisburg.

Everyone and everything stopped, all staring at the ballooning balls of light and destruction on the horizon.

Pulling Rebecca closer to me, I sat down on the edge of the embankment, watching another dot fall from the sky. This one was ours. Rebecca pointed up at it, her mouth open with wonder. I could not bear to look at her innocence any longer. I looked down at the masses below. The great rush was over as quickly as it had begun. I had sat down to watch them all die. I held my daughter tight as the white light enveloped us all, wiping our existences out like a blown out match.

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