

Frankie K woke up to the sound of aerosol being released from a can. It was a subtle hiss that pulled him from dreamland and into reality. When his eyes fluttered open he was face to nose with a hammerhead shark. Its weirdly detached eyes glared at him and its maw opened wide. Shark attack!

Frankie ran and stubbled and picked himself up and ran some more. He found himself face to forehead with sea turtles and octopuses, electric eels reached out their wolfish faces to get a better look at him, and all the while the hammerhead swam circles around him. As the shark lunged Frankie dived through a door and out of the aquarium, the shark catching the heel of his shoe.

Frankie stood on his one shoed foot, the other hanging limply nearby. There were no signs of sea creatures here but the chaos and fear did not lessen. It was rise against the machines. It was skynet. It was bloodshed raining from the heavens. Everywhere he looked robots were slaughtering people. Giant gatling guns ripped through the air cutting buildings, people, and everything else in two. Bullets smashed the door behind him but Frankie didn't take a moment to see if the shark would burst through. Ducking and rolling, Frankie tried to think of a way out. There were too many of them to fight and his fellow humans were no better than cannon fire. It did not look like there was a John Connor to save the day. No Arnold Schwarzenegger was going to appear, naked or otherwise, to save the day. He was on his own.

Explosions rocked the city streets and Frankie knew that humans had no chance of survival. He could see giant AT-AT walker mow down the fleeing crowd while miniature drones made the slaughter more personal by flying straight through people's faces. Frankie ran. There was no thought in his mind except escape. He was not made for war or violence. He was not one of the heroes who would save the world from this massacre. He was one of those who would die with a drone through the face. And as he thought it he heard the buzzing. A killer drone was behind him, his brain its next juicy meal. There was no outrunning it. He could feel it getting closer. Its propellers where blowing on the back of his neck. At the last possible second Frankie leapt for an abandoned building. The door swung open and Frankie stumbled through, throwing it

closed behind him. "Please let it not follow, please let it not follow." He silently prayed in front of the door, hoping that death didn't chase him. Also hoping that it wasn't waiting for him when he turned around. As that thought crossed his mind goosebumps exploded across his skin. He shivered and his teeth began to chatter. Resigned to his impending doom, Frankie turned around.

The land was a snowscape. Icecaps and igloos stood all around while polar bears and penguins frolicked together. The more Frankie looked the more amazed he became: little elves with big ears threw snowballs at a pair of anthropomorphic snowmen, a reindeer with a blinking red nose gave a lecture on "the myth of the adult human" to a plate of brownies, and in the middle of it all a jolly old man dressed in red sat eating a bowl full of jelly. Frankie made his way passed all the other wonderful creatures, he only had eyes for Santa. The snow burned his feet with every step, somewhere along the way he had lost his other shoe. He was dressed only in boxers, not exactly how one wants to meet the god of childhood. Still, this was a moment that he would remember forever.

"Ho, ho, ho," Santa laughed when he caught sight of the man standing in front of him. "You look a little cold son." From the big bag at his side Santa withdrew a big blue blanket, one extremely similar to the one Frankie had on his couch. Frankie clutched it about him, thankful for its warmth.

He perched on the old man's knee right next to the jelly bowl. "What next?" He asked the god, not really expecting an answer.

The old elf's eyes twinkled as he gestured to a nearby igloo. It did not look any different than any of the others to Frankie. It was just a normal igloo. Then Santa Claus winked at him. That small act of magic got Frankie to his feet. He ducked into the igloo and started down the stairs. Instead of retreating, the cold only became more intense. Frankie clutch the blanket closer and opened the door at the bottom of the stairs.

The vacuum of space spun endlessly around him. He was floating amongst the stars. From every corner twinkled a new galaxy. It was the most beautiful sight Frankie had ever seen. Tears poured down his face as he felt his own insignificance. The universe was so vast, how could he ever matter? Shooting

stars raced around him. Frankie turned, trying to follow their beautiful dace across the heavens. That's when he saw it. One brief glimpse of a blue and green marble. Earth.

But standing in front of the earth was someone else. Frankie's mind raced and clicked. "Cathy?" She had been visiting from out of town. They had been partying...

The woman turned around and in her hand was a can of spray paint. "You're awake," the woman said with a smile. "Did you like it?"

"Like..? What are you talking about Cathy?"

"Your house. It's art now!" The woman said clapping her hands. "It might be the best thing I've ever done."

Frankie just looked at her in astonishment, "I haven't been home in a long time. There was sharks and machines...and I met Santa!"

Cathy just stared at him. "We're home now Frankie."

And Frankie looked. And looked closer. The stars shimmered away to reveal his moldy basement. "But it's so real... Santa spoke to me..."

"Oh Frankie," Cathy sighed. "Did someone take too many tabs last night?"

Frankie started to cry. It had been so beautiful. Except for the violence and the running and stuff. He had met Santa. He had seen the life of the universe. He collapse on the cold floor of his basement, sobbing into the cement. Cathy walked over to him and gently embraced him. "It's okay dear. Let's go get you a calm cup of tea."

Frankie sniffed, "Okay." As they stood, Frankie looked around the room. He could still see the stars shimmering. "Is it okay if I stay here for a while?"