

Good Help is Hard to Find

By Bill Wolfe

The Kid looked norm but didn't talk. Like the rest, he was born to one of The Tribes out in The Green and banished to the city 'cause he was Skyburnt. There weren't no more city tribes. Too much burn still in the old buildings and almost no food. Far as I know, I'm the last of the Deesee Tribe. Born in the city, not exiled. But boy-oh-boy could The Kid Tinker. We found him 'cause we heard music.

Music!

None of us had heard real music till The Kid showed us he could fix the old Pods. He liked nothin' more than to sit and Tinker with machines 'til he made 'em work. Most times he'd take the thing apart and put it back together a dozen times before he'd figure it out. You give him a gizmo he hadn't seen and you'd have to slap it out of his hand to make him eat. Don't know how he survived 'till we found him.

The Deesee Tribe been tryin' for generations to open The Door. Took The Kid six months but he kept pushin' buttons, night and day. We kept him fed 'cause we wanted inside the bunker real bad.

Why?

'Cause everybody knew here is where Potus and The Joincheefs all escaped to.

How do I know?

My Gramps told me that his Great-Gramps told him, that his Uncle was one of the secservs for Potus and he seen it with his own eyes. They went in through The Door and it hadn't opened since. We was told they was livin' high in here since the sky burned. They had everything we didn't. They ate safe food and drank clean water, had 'lectrics to do their work, and women.

Women, oh yeah! We wanted in bad, all right. Hadn't even seen a live woman in close to four years. And The Monster ate most of her, though he did say he was sorry about it, later.

The Monster was scabby and ugly and Skyburnt bad, but he could see at night and smell things before any of the rest of us could. He probably helped us find more food than anyone. 'Till The Kid let us in here, anyway.

'Cause when we got in we found the water and food, crates of it stacked higher than Jolly Green's head. Eveen, Mrees and SPAM? They ain't myths, buddy. And more working 'lectrics than even The Kid could fiddle with. Didn't find no women, didn't find nobody. Did'ja know it hurts to eat too much?

Cuckoo's the one that found the magic room. In some ways his Skyburn's worse than anyone's, though he looks almost norm. He don't say nothin' in real words but he can screech like a hundred kinds of bird and he's real expressive. Once you get used to it, it's almost like talkin' regular. When he found the room where Potus and Joincheefs went, he did his crow noise, real loud. You know, where the one crow calls the others to food? Like I said, expressive.

Kong 'n Gimpy got the door open and soon as they did, there was Potus Himself talkin' to us from one of the gray windows. I'd never believed the stories about the moving pictures in the gray windows but here He was, plain as day and lookin' more alive than His dirty, scorched pictures inside most of the gutted buildings in Deese.

". . . pray to God you are an American. In any case, my scientists tell me that the H-Bomb explosions have released so much energy into the atmosphere that we cannot accurately target the Temporal-Spatial Portal, the TSP. It defaults to the first moment in history with similar conditions. . ."

We didn't understand most of this, but we sure understood it when the fat guy with skin so bad he looked Skyburnt himself, started telling us how we could escape the same way as Potus. We could go anywhere, any time at least fifty years in the past.

It was Gimpy who started yellin'. His legs hadn't grown any longer since he was a baby but his arms were stronger than anyone's, even Kong's. No sooner had The Screamer mentioned snow-covered mountains, and Gimpy was waving his canes around screaming. "No mountains. I can't climb no mountains! I gotta have flat land."

". . . conditions for at least a decade. For this reason, we will enter the TSP while it is in standby mode. You must push the Delete button first to cancel our destination and then push the Reset button to reacquire our pre-set target. But do NOT press Finalize. . ."

Bighead Jake took Gimpy's side, like always, and soon Cuckoo was doing his rooster call and The Screamer was louder than usual that he wanted to see snow you could touch and not die. Kong and The Monster were just yelling about finding healthy women, though they both knew they didn't mean the same thing by it.

Jolly Green jumped on that bandwagon and wanted to meet something called Watusi. He weighed no more than The Kid but was three times as tall, and he made one hell of a lookout. Who knew he'd always dreamed of a woman who was taller than his waist?

". . . for us no time will have passed, no matter how long it has been since the war. The TSP will be safe for you to use as long as the Power light is not flashing. . ."

I was trying to calm them all down, they listen to me 'cause with this third eye on my forehead, they think I've got special vision. I've tried to tell 'em it's blind.

That's when The Kid pushed the button. He sure liked to push them buttons.

The lights dimmed and up on the screen there were words.

Destination Finalized:

Date: 1 November, 1952

Time: 07:15 local

Location: Eniwetok Atoll N11^o20'4.53" E162^o21'26.94"

'Course, none of us can read.

The End