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### A Flooded World

“Hey mom? We were learning about Old Florida in class today, and I was wondering if you could tell me more? I mean, you and grandma probably remember some of it, right?”

“Well, Andromeda, why don’t you and Orion sit down in the living room, and I’ll get some tea while we talk” she offered with a smile, moving into the kitchen.

A moment later she sat, placing three cups of tea before her as she gathered her thoughts.

“Well, in truth, I am not quite old enough to remember what Old Florida looked like myself, though I have seen what’s become of it since. What I *can* tell you, is what I remember my mom and grandmother telling me.”

“Your great grandmother often spoke of what Miami had been like when she was growing up... There was a certain... air of sorrow about those stories, even though she always tried to speak of the good times. I suppose she must’ve missed those days.”

“Really? You must know a fair bit about that period then. Could you—“

“Never mind that, start during Abuela’s time! Its faster.”

“Well, Orion, South Florida, and Miami by extension, were left much the same as they’d always been for the grand majority of my mother’s childhood — it was simply wetter than before. Most of the low-lying coastal areas of Florida were swamped by an additional twenty feet of water that came gradually, with a few rapid rises as massive chunks of the polar ice caps began falling to the sea, in fact.”

“Really? So the roads were intact?”

“Hahaha, yes Orion, the roads did in fact remain intact. As my mother tells it, there were vast stretches of road still close enough to the surface that in the clearer areas you could actually follow the road by boat and find other parts of the city. She was young then, and most of the taller buildings were still standing — there were even some fringe communities built around downtown Miami using the taller buildings that remained.”

“Must’ve been fascinating, to see the cultures that rose from the tattered remnants of the city...”

“Eh, it was alright. By 2044 most of those living there were the stubborn children of those too stubborn to leave when the sea started coming in. The communities therein survived by becoming a

black-market hub while the federal government was too busy with other things to devote any resources to the area.”

“As I understand it, some rich businessmen continued to try and salvage the coast, though none ever managed the funds necessary to completely rebuild the city’s infrastructure.”

“How long did it take for ‘em to give up and be replaced by the shady touristy types?”

“Not very, although many of those businessmen went out of business over the years as their assets in the area were destroyed and the geography was altered by repeated hurricanes. Really, it was the Red Year that did in the Miami my grandmother grew up with...”

“The Red Year? Mr. Jungfrulig mentioned that near the end of class today, but what is it?”

“Also! Since clearly Andi ain’t gonna ask—“

“Don’t call me that!”

“— why is it called “the red year”? I mean, cool name and all, but why would it be called that?”

“Well, the Red Year is actually a misnomer, since it refers to a period stretching from 2045-2047, during which the whole world was buffeted by all manner of natural disasters. The reason we call it the *Red* year and not something to do with storms is rather simple — the Red Year saw a staggering 3 million casualties.”

“Jesus Christ! 3 Million?! How’d that even happen?”

“Yeah, didn’t we have infrastructure set up for that kind of thing? I mean, I know Florida saw a lot of hurricanes, and by 2019 people actually started listening to hurricane warnings, right?”

“While that is true, Andromeda, the scope of the disasters at the time was too much for the federal government to really handle, leaving very few resources available to spare after the third hurricane of the first year. Look, the bottom line is, a lot happened during the Red Year, but that is, frankly, a story for another time. What *you* need to know is that the end result was a vastly different Miami than my grandmother grew up in. When my mother took a trip there again in august of 2048, she said she felt like Indiana Jones, exploring the ancient ruins of a long-dead civilization. Apparently, most of the structures that had been fashioned into a society in her youth had been reduced to rubble under the sea by then.”

“Okay, sure, but that doesn’t really explain the Little Bahamas, mom. Could you tell us more about that?”

“Sure, sure. The crescent-shaped island chain you know as the New Bahamas is the result of a project my grandmother and her classmates undertook to plant mangroves. You see, the largest

concentration of mangroves in Florida was along the Miami area and the Everglades, so when the hurricanes picked up and moved sand and debris, the new landmass formed along there.”

“That... that is really impressive. You’re saying that a bunch of school kids basically terraformed a region by planting trees — hell, you’re implying that we live on the land their actions created! Do you know how awesome that sounds?!”

“Jungfrulig mentioned that actually. Apparently it was organized by some teachers and a group of hippies.”

“Wait, SERIOUSLY?!”

“Andromeda is absolutely right, Orion, though I agree with you too. Through sheer force of creative happiness, a group of kids and artists changed the future, arguably for the better.”

“I gotta admit, I never expected to hear that sentence or anything like it in my *life*.”

“And yet, here we are. I’d be focusing a bit more on the information she’s giving if I were you. We have a test next Thursday.”

“Meh. It’ll work out fine. This is story time. Now let me enjoy myself, will you?”

For a moment, their mother seemed to try to stop a smile from forming, face contorting strangely as she did, before giving up and taking a sip of tea to hide some of it.

“Right, well, I visited Las Noches quite often growing up, and got to see a lot of its remains. I think my last visit would’ve been around twenty odd years ago, in 2085.”

“Twenty years? Its been quite a while... think we could go this summer?”

“What he said. Oh, and could you tell us a bit of what exactly you saw there?”

“I don’t see why not. There should still be some rather interesting sites to show you.”

“You know, even not having grown up in Miami myself, and having no first, or even second-hand knowledge of what living there may have been like, it was beautiful to behold. The ancient sunken ruins of an Old American city... The remains of these spires of concrete and glass, rising high above the surrounding black and grey sand, rectangular buildings, rusting cars, and a set of statues all covered in barnacles and algae, having become an artificial reef bustling with marine life... in the areas nearest to the surface the whole world seemed tinged a magical aquamarine with light shining through, broken only by the choppy waves of the surface to create patterns of light along the seafloor.”

The twins (of which Andromeda was clearly the oldest) stared at their mother with rapt attention, eyes gleaming as the cogs in their heads turned to reproduce the world their mother's words were spinning for them.

"I remember having swum past this really cool-looking building — it said "Lincoln Center" in front, and some of the colored glass was intact. The foundations of the building seemed to have been damaged, so I guess it was kinda dragged into the sea at some point. I wonder how far it is from where it was before... anyway, it was really cool, and there were some frankly *adorable* sea turtles making their homes inside it, alongside a whole host of other fish!"

"Ah, and there were these limestone crags nearby, going a fair bit deeper — you could see all of these baby lemon sharks darting around there, and this really small one swam out of the ravines to bump into me! It was absolutely *precious!*"

"YOU SAW SHARKS?! MOM! WHY DO YOU NEVER TELL US ABOUT THE *COOL* STUFF YOU'VE DONE?!"

"I sure did, kiddo. Although I didn't dive into the ravine, since something nearby caught my attention — an area I vaguely recognized from a prior trip as Bayside, covered in budding sea-sponges, mollusks, and some rather colorful fish. It was magnificent! A blend of man-made ruin and naturally occurring marine habitat! Hopefully you'll get to see it all yourself this summer."