

Will It Arrive?

by Stephen Mark Golden

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The tribe awaited anxiously, nervously, as the time of dawn approached. "Will it arrive?" , one grunted to another in what could scarcely be called language. A ghastly look of fear was on each of their faces.

It had always arrived before. It had been the standard around which everything revolved. No proper morning could occur without it. But now, its arrival was in question.

There had been a terrible dispute with the deliverers the previous evening. Those bringers of warning threatened to extract an undeserved portion of tribe's sustenance. It wasn't fair! The tribe had given their alms! Now they were being requested to give again! How many more times would it happen? How much of their sustenance could they spare?

Curses promulgated from the mouths of these harbingers of doom. At one point it seemed violence was inevitable, but the deliverers departed with one final curse: "The Great Provider will no longer provide his warmth and light upon your tribe! You will live the remainder of your lives in darkness, unless you pay your alms!"

It was a terrible thing to say. What made the matter worse, was the fact that the deliverers were able to accomplish such an event! Without the presence of the daily light, there would be no day! Life could be sustained without food for a time; water could be obtained from numerous sources; but without this essential source, no work could be performed.

Throughout the night, they kept vigil. Watching for any sign that might indicate unusual activity. The women and children trembled with fear. The men hid their tremendous anxiety as best they could. But they all wondered; they all worried. Their sources of heat and light were kept burning brightly all night. The question of life itself wearied upon their minds.

Would it arrive?

Several times during the watch, there were false alarms. Unexplained noises, movements in the distance, and sometimes just heightened imaginations resulted in the arousal of the others for nothing.

It was such a horrible ordeal, and yet, they were willing to endure it on the principle of not paying alms for the same service twice. The agreement had been made with the providers. The bargain had been kept by the tribe, but the deliverers who were sent to receive the alms had not kept close records of collection -- or they were skimming off the excess they could receive by collecting from the various tribes multiple times.

The darkness seemed to hang on longer than usual. As dawn approached, a heavy fog settled in, obscuring the view of those on watch to no more than twenty or thirty feet.

Then, there was the sound of approaching footsteps. An occasional "thump" was heard at various intervals. The sound became louder with each moment that passed. The tribe leaders instructed everyone to hide. Only a

selected few were granted the privilege of gazing out from their places to see whether "it would arrive."

And then, in a moment of fury, the fog parted long enough to reveal a cylindrical object being hurled at the dwelling of the tribe. Those who were watching hid their faces. It landed with the loud "thump" they had heard intermittently in the minutes before.

After a few moments, the leaders looked out from their places . . .

It had arrived!

There was much joy! The deliverers had either recanted on their threats, or recounted their collection tickets. The providers of The Daily Light had come through! The morning paper had arrived!