

The Church of the Golden Arches

Mona walked through the abandoned street. The road was grey and faded – huge chunks broke off from the large asphalt islands. Husks surrounded her – places called “Gas Stations” and “Convenient Stores” were sprinkled throughout the street. The buildings were not alone on this road: large trees bellowed without a single leaf upon them. There was not a patch of grass anywhere to be found in the World Leftover. Instead of grass, there was ash.

Mona gripped her backpack tighter. The quiet unnerved her; though she was used to coming to the surface, the World Leftover still frightened her in its loneliness.

Her mother told her about the disasters that caused the surface to be left for dead. Too ambitious people superheated the world, bringing the Great Flood that began at the tip of Earth and took the old civilizations with it. Those who survived had found high ground – only to find the heat was only getting worse.

Mona’s father told her that the world soon became caught in the Great Fire. Cities were destroyed, animals and humans were killed, and the land was turned red. The humans who were able to escape the Great Fire dove below ground. They laid down their roots as soon as the initial fear loosened its hold over them. They created cities united under The Order of the Underground. Each city was run by a presiding Ambassador of the Order. There were 77 Ambassadors, and they all met at the largest city – Heartland – to discuss business for the good of the Underground. Mona lived in one of the outer cities close to the surface tunnels, Ashwood.

After ten centuries under the Earth’s Crust, people began surfacing again. Instead of seeing the greenery and the ocean blue sky, they were only met with a surface looking like

leftover firewood. Most stay away from the surface, but others walk the ash-filled streets to find something out in the dead zones.

Mona did not know why the World Leftover intrigued her so much. Her father told her it was her ancestors calling her to discover where she came from, but her mother thought that was a bunch of horse feces (whatever horses were).

The girl had searched many different places using the stars and Cardinal Directions as her guide. Today she decided to follow the Day Devil as it raced across the sky. Many of her people feared the Day Devil because it had caused the destruction of the World Leftover. Mona, unlike the others, saw it as the true guide of the surface. Though she mostly did not follow it, today she decided to go off her normal path. The Day Devil guided Mona down the street. “Where are you taking me?” she asked curiously. Even though she was alone, Mona kept her voice low. Did she not want the Day Devil to hear her, she had no idea.

Mona held her hand over her eyes as the Day Devil descended lower towards the underground. *It's getting late*, she thought. *I think I should turn back*. She sighed as she stopped. She gazed at where she had just come from, asking herself whether she should return home. Mona looked towards the Day Devil once more. Her eyes followed its path to the... *What did Mum call it?* ...the horizon.

The girl jumped in surprise. A structure was blocking her view of the Day Devil. She could not make out what it was in the light, so she turned to its shadow. The cast on the road was of two great arches connected with the center stem. “This is what you were guiding me too!” she exclaimed with a smile. The Day Devil seemed to ignore the girl and continued on its journey.

As the light disappeared, Mona could make out the color of the arches. They were golden; they rested upon tall polls rising into the sky. Next to them was a building, just as broken

as the rest of those along the road. Mona looked back for a moment, debating on turning back towards the Underground. It only took a second before Mona was heading to the building.

Whatever material was in the frames of the door, it was far from gone now. Carefully, Mona squeezed through the bottom frame. Once she was inside, she took out her light wand. She clicked the button, shining the ray into the room. She found seats, both broken and damaged, all around. She stopped at the counter at the head of the room. What looked like televisions hung above the countertop. Behind the counter was rows and rows to hold things Mona did not know. She saw an area in the back blocked off by debris.

Her mind began racing with ideas of what this place could be. “There are so many seats here, so many people could be in this place at once.” She held her chin while she thought. As she thought, she continued searching with her light. She spotted a faded picture on the wall behind the counter. Quickly, she raced towards it. The picture had been scratched where the person’s head was, so Mona could not make out his face. She could just make out a glimpse of red hair upon his head; on his body rested a mainly yellow jumpsuit with red and white sleeves.

She gasped, “I know what this is.” Mona leaped onto the countertop. She clenched her fists in victory. “This must be the Church of the Golden Arches!” She descended onto the ground. With one of her hands, she patted the countertop below the televisions. “This must be where the head priest gave their sermons,” she explained. She motioned to the open floor with the seats. “They would speak while those listening would be out here.” Mona turned to look at the picture. “They worshipped the speaker of the Day Devil, the Red Ambassador!”

Satisfied, Mona exited the building. She walked to where she could see the Day Devil’s rays. “I understand what you wanted to show me.” Mona nodded and said, “Thank you.” Turning away from the rays, she pumped her arms in an excited manner, jumping back and forth on her

tiptoes. "I must tell the Underground at once. Maybe a church can be developed for worship in the Underground now that I have found it!" She smiled and began running back to her home.