

ALTERED REALITY

Written by

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INT. HOME LIVING ROOM- DAY

In the living room sits EDWARD, late 50's, bags under his eyes. Random boxes are stacked around the room. Old magazines on every available surface.

He clicks through channels on the TV; it's ad after ad. He sits back and tosses the remote onto the coffee table.

It tumbles off the table; he sighs and rubs his face. He stares at the poorly patched ceiling and then to the window.

The window is foggy, and you can hardly see past the pollution clouds. BAILEY, 16, in baggy clothing, passes the couch to the open kitchen.

Edward sighs again. Bailey comes back in with empty milk in her hand. Edward forces a smile.

EDWARD

I'll get more.

INT. GROCERY STORE DAIRY SECTION - DAY

With a heavy-duty mask on, Edward is in the drinks and dairy section of the grocery store. He looks at the brand of milk and the prices. The most expensive carton says: "Old Times: Made from Real Cows."

The cheapest carton says: "Best Artificial Flavors."

He opens the fridge door to grab the milk, and as he pulls, the door falls off. He sets it on the ground, and he sees the last pack of beer.

He pulls a sticky note out of his pocket; it reads: "Bread. Peanut butter. Milk." In a circle on the note is: "\$30."

He looks back to the beer and the price tag: "\$30.00."

INT. GROCERY CHECKOUT - DAY

Edward sets the pack of beer in front of the CASHIER, 30's, heavy-duty mask on, and coughing. The Cashier scans the beer.

CASHIER

This it?

Edward grunts and nods yes. He pulls out the wallet, and the note falls to the ground, crumbled. He pulls out the cash, emptying what's left in his wallet.

Edward hands over the cash. The Cashier struggles to open the machine and BANGS on the side of it.

Edward rolls his eyes. He looks by the machine and sees a stack of pamphlets. The top half reads: "Reality Airport. 50% discount. Only \$30 to find your family a new world."

He grabs the pamphlet and flips it to the back. There is a small list of "World Options." Edward looks to the beer again, then to the Cashier.

INT. HOME LIVING ROOM- DAY

Edward shows up empty-handed. Bailey's in the corner of the room reading a torn book.

MEGAN, 17, dressed in the nicest clothes, enters and stubs her toe on a stack of boxes. The top box falls over. She groans. Old newspapers and useless knickknacks fall out and cover the floor.

MEGAN

Why do you even have all this junk?

EDWARD

It'll be valuable one day.

Edward kneels in front of the box and starts to put the items back in it. Bailey looks up from her book.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I found a pamphlet at the store for the Reality Airport. I think we should go.

MEGAN

We can't afford that.

EDWARD

It's thirty dollars for a family.
We have just the right amount.

Megan looks to Bailey and squeals. She picks the small girl off the floor and jumps up and down. Bailey doesn't meet her excitement.

INT. REALITY AIRPORT - DAY

The walls are white, and holograms pop up in different areas of it. The ads talk about the different worlds you can live in.

Edward, Bailey, and Megan walk up to the front desk. WORKER, 30'S, wears a white uniform with a smile painted onto her heavy-duty mask.

WORKER

Welcome to Reality Airport. How can I help you today?

EDWARD

I was looking into the family move pass. Is that available?

WORKER

Of course! What world are you interested in? We have a list if-

EDWARD

Child's eye. Child's eye reality is good.

The Worker's eyes fall a little, and she looks to Bailey and Megan. She clears her throat.

WORKER

Okay, that's thirty.

INT. CHILD'S VIEW TERMINAL - DAY

The family follows the Worker to the terminal. The area is built much like an airport, with chairs in rows in front of virtual doors.

WORKER

Any world you decide to go in will have a timer. You are welcome to explore as much as you want, but if you do not like where you are, leave before the timer finishes.

The Worker stops in front of a door, and above is a sign that says: "Child's Eye." Counting down beside it is: "24:17:30"

WORKER (CONT'D)

The watches on your wrists are your passes. They will buzz when you have 10 minutes left until the door closes forever.

The Worker looks at the girls.

WORKER (CONT'D)

Pay attention to those timers. Have a good time and enjoy the new world.

They walk through the pixelated door.

EXT. CHILD'S VIEW STREET - CONTINUOUS

They enter the world, and the air and sky are clear. They walk into the street, and there are happy and laughing families without masks on. Parents are letting kids run off on their own.

They hesitate to take off the masks. As they take off their masks, they take deep breaths. The realization of clear air hits, and they start laughing.

They start to explore the street shops. They vary from toy stores and candy shops. There are food stalls of unhealthy fried foods that waft in their direction.

The family gets hefty portions of free samples. They eat and walk. Bailey starts to point at animals and toys she's never seen, and Megan smiles down at her.

Edward walks a little behind the two girls and looks around with awe. He focuses on the kids running off on their own.

KIDS run past a colorful sign with fair rides on it; it reads: "Have some fun at Fairs Underhill! We have food, games, and rides for everyone. Just take the stairs to the left, and you'll be there."

An arrow on the poster points to the stairs. Edward looks to his daughters, who are now trying cotton candy. He walks to the girls and touches their shoulders.

EDWARD

Let's find a place to stay for the night.

INT. HOTEL ROOM- DAY

The hotel room had two queen beds. Megan and Bailey sat on one with small boxes of candy surrounding them. Edward walks to the open window and looks out to the street.

EDWARD

There's a Fair close to here if you guys are interested?

MEGAN

I want to go!

Megan jumps up from the bed, and Edwards still stares out the window.

EDWARD

I think you guys will like it.

BAILEY

Are you coming with us?

Edward pauses and takes a deep breath.

EDWARD

I'm going to find us some dinner.
The sign for the fair is a block
from here. Follow it and have fun.

Edward walks past the girls without looking at them and leaves. Bailey looks to Megan.

MEGAN

Nothing new, come on.

INT. FAIRS UNDERHILL - DAY

The fair is underground, and the walls are like caverns. String lights and lanterns send a glow across the carnival and fair rides spread around.

There are even more food stalls in this area, some in little coves and others on a two-wheeled stand. Workers are dressed in bright colors, and kids SCREAM and LAUGH.

Metal CLINKS on the rides and wind from a roller coaster whorls past Bailey and Megan.

Bailey holds onto Megan's sleeve as Megan leads there way through the crowd to a ride.

They walk up stone stairs and to a metal gate. On the other side, WORKER TWO opens it for them.

The girls settle into the seats of the ride and put down the bar. Bailey grips the handle tightly, and Megan smiles wide.

WORKER TWO

Enjoy the ride!

Megan pulls Bailey's hands off the bar and holds them in the air. Bailey tries to pull them back down, but the ride starts and lurches forward.

INT. FAIRS UNDERHILL - CONTINUOUS

Bailey and Megan exit the ride. Bailey wobbles and holds on to the railing as she walks.

MEGAN

Oh, come on, it wasn't that bad.

Bailey shakes her head and holds up a hand to her mouth. Mean laughs.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Go to the bathroom. I'll get you some water.

Megan walks away, and Bailey starts to head to a bathroom. Bailey walks with her hand along the cavern walls, and when she turns to enter the restroom, she bumps into someone.

AN ABANDONED GIRL, 12, is covered in dirt and looks weak and sick. She holds onto Bailey, and there surrounds the glitch.

Bailey catches the girl before she fell and notices how dim the room got. Bailey's nose scrunches. When she looks up, she doesn't see stairs for the bathroom she walked into.

Instead, she sees another girl lying on a thin blanket and coughing. There are holes in the cove's ground where the toilets should be. Bodily fluids and solids are scattered and pooling around the holes.

ABANDONED GIRL

Don't trust what you see.

Bailey's shoulders tighten as she stares at the girl.

BAILEY

What-

A hand lands on Bailey's shoulder. The room brightens and looks like an average bathroom. The abandoned girl is also gone.

Bailey turns and sees Megan with a bottle of water in her hand. Bailey covers her nose.

MEGAN

Bailey, you alright?

BAILEY

I think something's wrong.

TO BE CONTINUED.