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Ayush Kumar
Concordia University - Portland

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The Outcast of Planet No-Where

Ayush Kumar

Discarded into the overwhelming shadow of poverty, he sat homeless, hopeless, helpless. The soiled clothes hung limply on his withered body, barely shielding him from the elements. The vitality of life drained from his deeply weathered face, his cheekbones poking hazardously through his thin skin. Years of hardship made themselves known by the scars disfiguring his body and the wrinkles carved into his cheeks. Plump bags stood out beneath his diluted eyes, accentuating the heavily-lidded gaze that slowly flickered from vacant face to face. His knees folded loosely underneath his resting elbows as an unfettered finality hung crushingly on his emaciated shoulders. His knuckles were swollen with age, red from the bitter chill, his palms slick with grime, his fingers gnarled and stiff. The bones of his cupped hand seemed frozen in the position of desperation, need, yet extended in hope.

The jingle of change echoed in the frigid air as he waited with the Styrofoam cup for the next passerby to take notice.

However, not one passerby even glanced his way.

Not the fashionable soccer mom, with immaculately manicured, shell-pink nails, as she ushered her bundled children to their highly acclaimed private school. Not the recently promoted chief executive in his Armani pinstripe suit and tie, frantically rubbing at the fresh coffee stain blemishing his lapel. Not the model-like blonde bombshell in her Versace trench coat and Christian Louboutin heels, who happened to walk right past the mangled figure. Her perfume lingered in the air as the *click click click* of her stilettos on the cold hard pavement faded down the street.

All the while he remained, waiting, his hand outstretched and his heartbeat growing fainter. The only treasure, his purpose, lay next to him. The ukulele, an instrument that once was played vivaciously by him, lay beside his gnarled fingers. The years of weathering masked the youthfulness that once existed. Before the war, he'd belonged to a band that traveled around the states, and he was known for his laughter and charm. The light *thrummmm* of his ukulele echoed in his ears during his brief flashes of nostalgia.

Bluegrass. Bluegrass. Bluegrass...

He remembered with all his strength, reached back and managed to create the light *thrummm* that took him back into a mirage that was his reality in the past.

The change lay dead silent in the frigid air, glowing in the sunlight as he waited with the Styrofoam cup for the next passerby to take notice. Now he was part of the ostracized on a desolate planet, a planet of no-where, and no hope.

Suddenly, the mangled mass stopped staring. He closed his eyes and for the moment, seemed at peace. No one took notice.

Cast away under the shadow of poverty and society's selfishness, his wasted carcass lay. His gaunt legs no longer folded neatly beneath his body, but splayed chaotically across the sidewalk, impeding the flow of traffic.