

# Skeletons of a World

*There used to be trees here.*

It was one of the few thoughts passing through my mind as I began to sit up. Oddly, it was the only one that truly stuck in my head.

There were so many different trees, too, all unique and just *gorgeous*. Some only a few feet tall, some stood towering in the hundreds, nearly as tall as I. That was, of course, before they were removed. Some fell naturally, fire, age, weather. But all those years ago, those small creatures tore them down. Those humans, so long ago, stole the trees from me.

I remember humans too, those scurrying little fellows. Always busy; busy busy busy. I'm sure someone else will surface at some time to replace them, they always do.

It wasn't even that I necessarily enjoyed the worship, the gifts, especially not the sacrifices. They had such unpredictable tendencies, you never knew quite what they would end up doing. Before them, everything was so consistent and natural.

I could sit down and rest for eons, and I would wake up to the same places. I fell asleep for a couple hundred years in a quaint forest a continent away, and I woke up buried beneath miles of sand. No real respect for the Earth and those others who wander it. I build a small mountain to rest my back on, and they need to go and harvest it. Even try to disturb me while they're at it.

Trying to wake up, even now, is still a difficult task. I open my eyes, and try to achingly stand up. My teeth make a dull *crunch* as I squeeze my jaw, feeling tons of sand grind against the internals of my mouth. Bones straining to let me rise, unaccustomed to being used in centuries.

Pushing thousands of acres of rough, coarse grains off of my body is painfully arduous, and one that takes me many moons of time. Fully coming to a stand, I gaze out towards a forest I once planted. Handfuls of trees still remain, but they're poisoned from digging, massive ravines sprawling throughout the once-solid dirt.

I watched them carve those boreholes through the ground, as wide as my entire arm, dug deep into the earth, evidence of their ancient harvests. They stole what they came for, and then they vanished, leaving nothing behind but scars in the soil, cuts in the rock. The whole place has a sickness about it, like their process blighted even the absence of life.

I would say the rest is history, but considering the circumstances, I suppose that's no longer the case. History was always an interesting piece of their growth. They couldn't remember things like I could, always feeling the need to scrawl out ideas with their tiny little fingers.

Their lives were so short, like minutes to me. Up until they all finally left, it seemed to extend for much longer than it had. Mere decades became centuries, some even living long enough to see me twice. It was nice, recalling the ones who cared to visit. It's a shame they could not stay, though they orchestrated their own undoing.

Moving past the mottled forest, I see the remains of a city. They were particularly fond of it, their largest, most powerful vista of concrete and glass. Once upon a time it glittered like a beacon, a symbolic haven of their advancements and power. Now, it rests in silent elegance. A battered metal sign stands guard at the entrance to the once-great city. The broken towers that still stand, like the bones of some ancient creature. All of these things, mementos to a fallen people. Even I too, one day, will return to dust.

Massive empty cities, silent roads stretching for miles. The world from above, entirely desolate. Not a single glittering mark to lead anyone home. But if someone truly came from another world, what would the earth look like to them? An empty basin, maybe lifeless fields of rock? No. Even after millenia they would see this world, shaped by human hands in every aspect of its being. They would explore the crumbling cities and the unending roads. The bridges, the docks, the sprawling beaches. And they would say: Here lived a race of giants. An empire of world-shaping titans.

The world as it had been would die with me. I saw it all: empty barren rocks, frozen landscapes sprawling across continents, great floods, and the beautiful, green rolling hills dotted with trees. Now, all they would see is this current iteration; the deteriorated remains of beings so determined to make a change, they would spend lifetimes working, knowing full-well they would never live to see its completion.

No matter how hard they tried, they could not undo the damage from their exploitations. Like making soup. Add broth, meat, sliced-up carrots and spices. But try as you might, you'll never manage to un-make that soup. They pushed too far, caused injury they could never heal, as much as they wished to. Even I was asked to help, though I had nothing to solve the problems they devised.

Desperation grew, and their options faded away. Eventually, they chose to abandon me, abandon the domain we had shared. Like the meteors that once attacked the earth, they shot up in a blaze of glory to search for a new home. Even if they had bothered to ask, I would have chosen to stay here.

The ones who stayed, succumbed to the blight on this world. They returned to feed this dying place, and so too shall I. If ever those travelers are to return, maybe they too will join me. I have always been patient. I will wait for them nonetheless.