



# **THE MAN WHO STOLE THE WORLD**

**PART 2 BY TINYPTEROSAUR  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRAMESTORE**

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Part 2 by TinyPterosaur  
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## ii. **TinyPterosaur**

Still intact, the Leeb thought as it examined the partially submerged truck. This Leeb did not have time to extract the vehicle, but it had been the nearest unit available for inspection. It put the call out to the collective. Another Leeb would arrive later to finish the job.

::Do we really have time for this?:: Koche transmitted.

::I do not like inefficiency::  
Leeb responded, walking back towards their functioning truck  
::If we can reclaim this vehicle that is one less thing to replace::

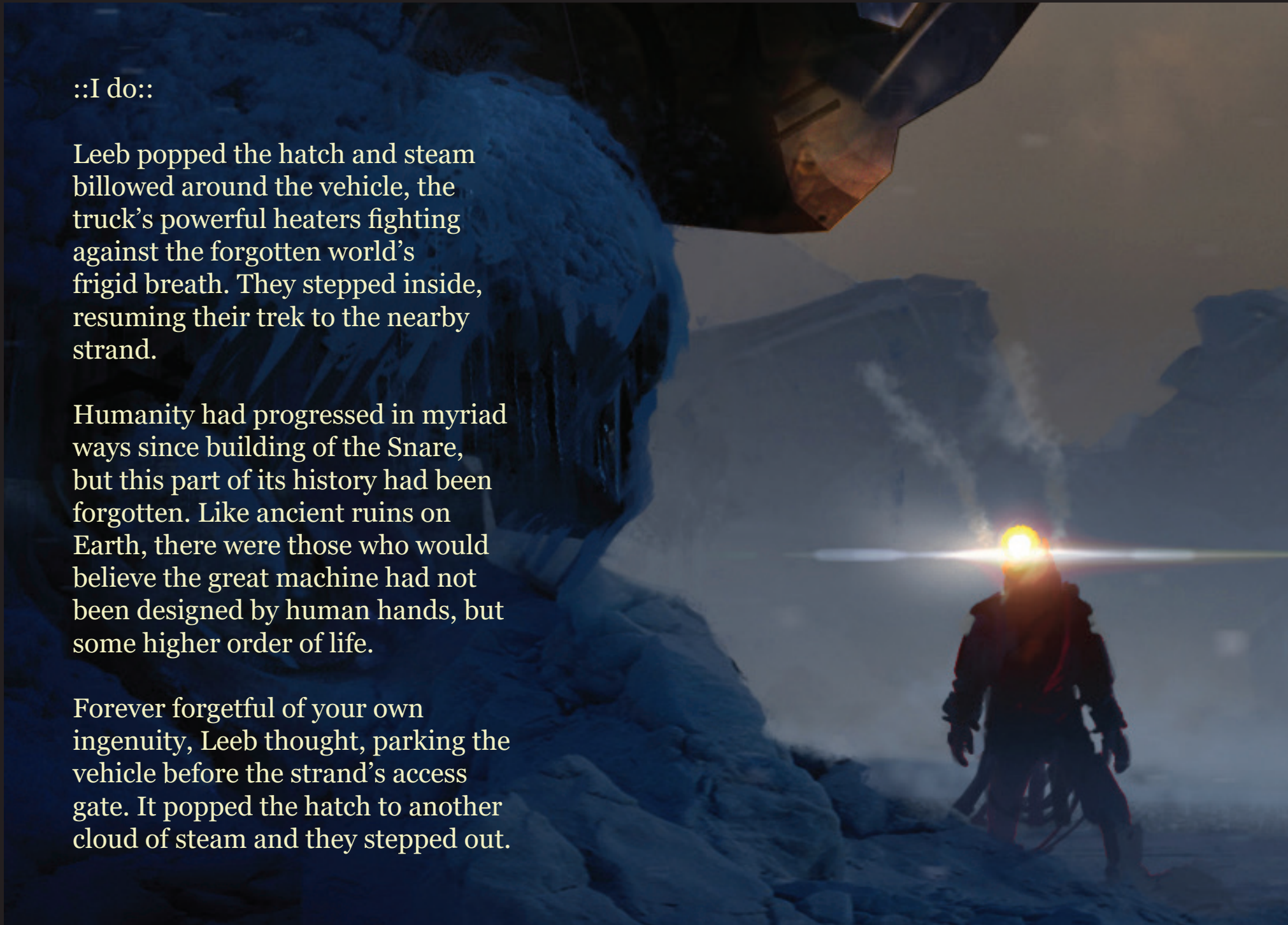
::We're not going to be here much longer; who cares about one truck?::

::I do::

Leeb popped the hatch and steam billowed around the vehicle, the truck's powerful heaters fighting against the forgotten world's frigid breath. They stepped inside, resuming their trek to the nearby strand.

Humanity had progressed in myriad ways since building of the Snare, but this part of its history had been forgotten. Like ancient ruins on Earth, there were those who would believe the great machine had not been designed by human hands, but some higher order of life.

Forever forgetful of your own ingenuity, Leeb thought, parking the vehicle before the strand's access gate. It popped the hatch to another cloud of steam and they stepped out.















::This is your first time inside one of the strands, correct?: Leeb already knew the answer to its question, but it wanted Koche to be relaxed.

::Yeah:: Koche responded.  
::Virtually, I know them up and down, but this is my first time actually going inside::

::This one has not yet been cleaned. I suggest you prepare yourself::

::For what?:







The frozen gate to the ancient strand slid open at Leeb's command, revealing an ice rimed hallway. Inside, a half dozen frozen lumps, all shorter than knee-height, and darkly colored, red and black, spreading down into frozen pools. Leeb stepped over one and proceeded to the elevator at the end of the hall. It heard Koche follow for a few steps, then paused.

::Are these... people?::

This Leeb, one of thousands, all watching the moment through its eye, turned.

::I am afraid we have been less than honest in our history of this device::



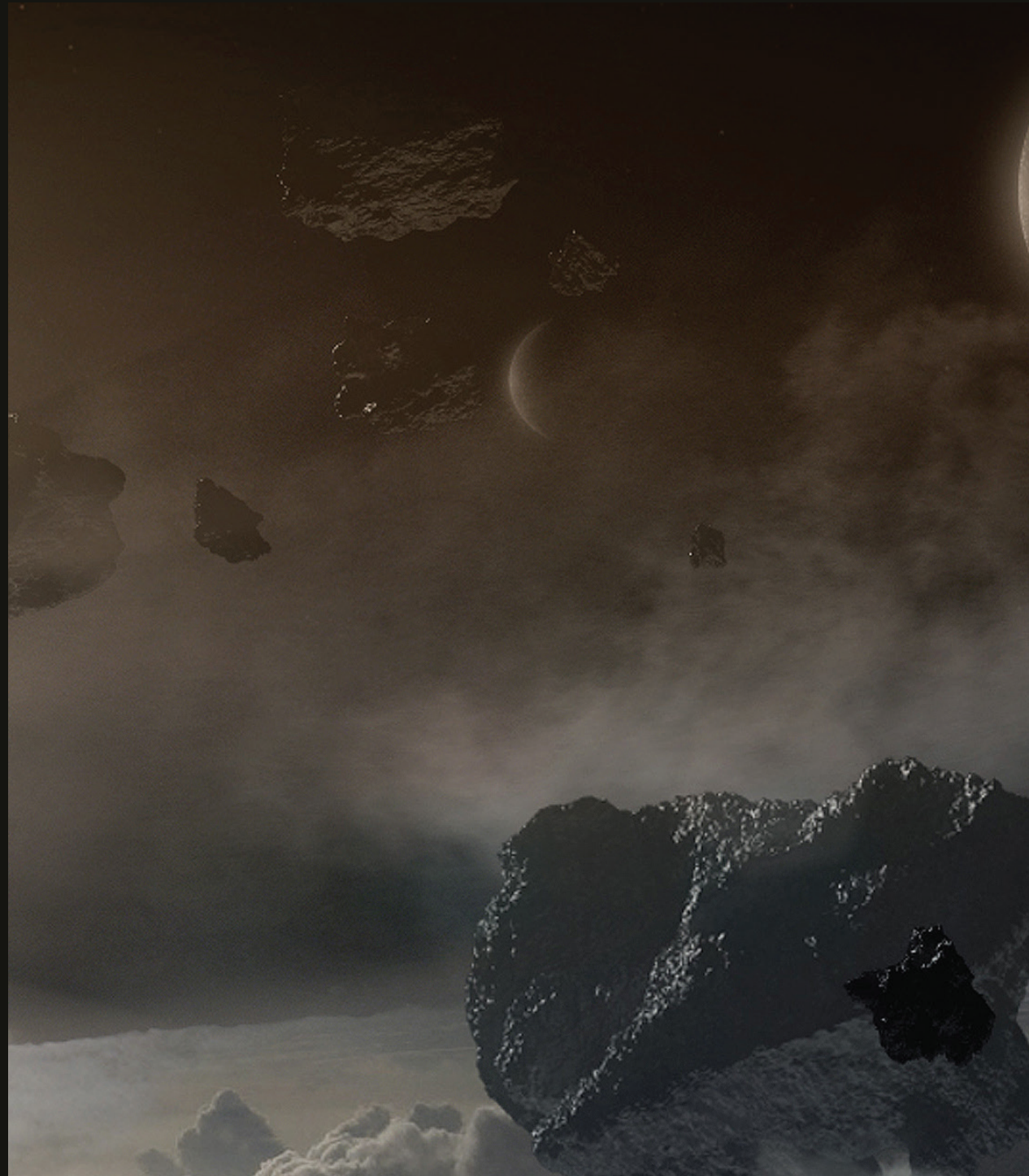




A low, unearthly groan resounded through the station, peppered by metallic clangs. The space around them was filling with planetary ejecta; increased volcanism was just one of the more spectacular side effects of a planet being torn apart. Halifax wondered morbidly if he'd be able to spot any landmarks passing by.

“Amazing view, isn't it?”

A woman walked up beside him, leaning against the railing and giving him a once-over with too-bright eyes before turning back to the view outside.







“It’ll get better,” he grumbled. The debris would eventually form a ring that would look quite stunning, at least for a while before it too succumbed to the nanoforges’ infinite appetite. Even that demise would look quite cinematic, but it was just another part of the horrible process he wish he’d never set in motion.

“You’re the one who designed all this, aren’t you?”

Hal wished she’d go away. “I was just another cog in the machine.”

She seemed unconvinced, her bright eyes twinkling, her Rider helping to see if he was lying. “But you’re the one who actually drew the plans, aren’t you? You’re the architect.”

The key to lying to a Rider was to tell the truth, just not the right truth. “I was involved in the final design.”

For a little while, there was silence, as the woman turned away from him to regard the cancerous lump protruding from the shrinking world.

When she spoke again, her tone startled him.








There was a deep, resounding bitterness, an overwhelming sense of powerlessness and regret. For a moment, he heard himself in this woman's voice. "Did you know they were going to use Genevieve's World?"

Ah, Halifax thought. Suddenly he saw her in a new light, one that left deep shadows. "No," he said. "No, I did not."

The woman nodded, trembling almost imperceptibly. "Is this ship going to be a weapon, or a home?"

The background image is a dark, atmospheric scene of a rugged, rocky coastline. Two small figures are standing on a rocky outcrop on the right side, looking out over a vast, dark body of water. The lighting is low, creating a somber and mysterious mood. The text is overlaid on the lower-left portion of the image.

The manifold weapons integrated  
directly into the Worldship  
flooded through Halifax's mind.  
It would be a home, but for the  
rich and powerful, a weapon of  
oppression and a pedestal all in  
one. He was creating Laputa, and  
it was not for those of the earth.





Halifax thought of Leeb, and the ruinous genocide that had left him so few in number. But Leeb did not seek vengeance; the synthetic hive was beyond that.

No, it was Halifax who wanted revenge.

He looked back at the bulging ship, ringed by fire, surrounded by stone.

“A home.”







Something shimmered  
in the woman's eyes,  
and it was not a Rider.  
She blinked and nodded.  
"Thank you."

The easiest lies to tell,  
Halifax thought, are the  
ones we tell ourselves.

End of Part 2











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## About this story:

This story was born as an experiment by io9.com as a variation on the “exquisite corpse” method of story creation. An exquisite corpse is a storytelling method where the narrative is collectively assembled by a group of individuals. Each writer adds to the body of work by advancing the story where the last writer left off. In this version of the exquisite corpse, artists from the incredible visual effects firm Framestore participated in advancing the story, too.

Parts 1 and 2 were written by Rixomatic and TinyPterosaur, respectively. The top-voted conclusion to the story was written by Graeme Bennett.



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## About Framestore:

The Framestore art department has done VFX and concept design for countless companies and studios, and has worked on movies like Captain America, Sherlock Holmes: Game of Shadows and several Harry Potter movies. The company produced visual effects for Alfonso Cuarón's Gravity and the Keanu Reeves samurai epic 47 Ronin. They also developed the zombie concept designs for World War Z.

The rights to publish the completed story and images were awarded to Graeme Bennett, with thanks to Framestore, Rixomatic, TinyPterosaur and io9.com for their contributions.