

A TASTE OF HELL

Written by

Dante on the beach

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FADE IN:

EXT. COASTAL BEACH - DAY

A blissful, sunny day. The tide is out.

Lay on the earthshine gold beach is Jeff, a guy who's discovered life does begin at forty. He's athletic, tanned and there's not a bad bone in his body.

He beams in delight at his ROSE, his eight-year-old daughter. She giggles as she buries him in the sand.

He closes his eyes and experiences a feng shui moment. In the distance, the music of the fairground, the seagulls squawk, families frolic in the sun.

Her laughter ceases. Jeff opens his eyes to find his daughter staring up at the sky.

A GUY wearing shades catches a frisbee. He notices Rose, follows her gaze and points towards the sun.

Jeff shades his eyes from the glare as he looks up.

Is that a crimson dark edge to the sun?

It creeps across the fiery globe.

A shadow spreads across the beach.

EXT. ECLIPTIC VIEW OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM - DAY

All the planets align with the sun as it turns blood red.

EXT. COASTAL BEACH - DAY

Total silence. Not even the wind makes a sound.

Jeff blinks in surprise. He is up to his neck in tight-packed sand. He glances round. The beach is deserted.

There's daylight but with a slight red tinge which permeates the air like mist.

He attempts in vain to wiggle free.

Jeff shouts for his daughter but discovers he's mute. No matter how hard he screams, not a sound escapes his lips.

Shadows circle the sand around him. He looks up to see a flock of seagulls circling overhead, buzzard fashion.

He squints, are they seagulls or buzzards?

Further down the beach, Jeff spots his daughter's head in the sand. She too is trapped and gazes at the sea-buzzards.

Jeff hollers, shakes his head from side-to-side in an effort to attract her attention.

A SAND CRAB scuttles towards him, its pincers raised.

Jeff attempts to shoo it away. He hollers at it. The crab is not impressed by his silent rants.

He blows, the crab scuttles back, pauses then creeps ever closer to his face.

With his lips pursed, Jeff takes in a deep breath, then lets loose with a gust of air that would impress the big, bad wolf.

The crab holds its ground until Jeff goes white with exertion and the mini-hurricane subsides.

It darts forward. Jeff pull his head back. The crab snaps towards his exposed Adam's apple, Jeff brings his chin down sharply and squashes the crustacean flat.

Bits of shell and goo dangle from his chin. He scrapes it off as best he can against the sand.

Then he notices, three more ghost crabs surround him.

There's a Mexican standoff moment.

All three scurry in for the attack.

Jeff's roars in defiance, flails his head this way and that. He turns away from the pincers as they snap towards any vulnerable spot.

One scrambles on top of his head, he shakes it loose. It falls on its back, its little legs flail in the air. It flips over like a crab ninja and rejoins its comrades.

Jeff thrashes like a madman having a fit for a few moments before he notices the crabs have disappeared.

He squints, turns his head as far as he can left to right. There's no sign of the little critters.

A trickle of water laps up against his neck.

He snaps to attention, gazes down the beach. The tide is on its inevitable return journey.

The waves swell, then cascade onto the shore.

The seawater seeps inwards. A gentle splash, then it slides back.

Jeff spots Rose. She thrashes around as the water gushes and froths around her.

Her head is submerged. Jeff waits for what seems like an eternity for the sea to subside.

When it does, she is still alive, if not exactly kicking.

The veins bulge out on his neck as he struggles to shake free. The water logged sand does not budge.

The waves swell. Jeff screams at the oncoming waves.

Rose is submerged again. The water that splashes against Jeff is less than gentle.

He coughs and splutters as the tide retreats.

When it does, it reveals a clear beach. Rose has gone.

He redoubles his efforts. His face turns red with the strain.

The tide returns. He tilts his head back as far as he can. The sea cascades around him, his nose barely above the water.

The tide retreats.

It returns. He tilts his head back again but his head is completely submerged.

Surrounded by his salty coffin, he stares defiantly at the copper-bottomed depths.

The water subsides, the tide retreats. Jeff blinks, trying to clear the salt from his eyes.

He takes in deep breaths as the waves uncoil before him for the final time.

The tide hits him full force. He goes under.

Jeff holds his breath, his eyes shut tight. An age passes.

He starts to gag, his involuntary reflexes kick in.

His eyes flicker open. Before him floats Rose. Her face is inches away from his.

Her eyes dart open.

Their combined underwater screams create a torrent of bubbles.

EXT. ECLIPTIC VIEW OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM - DAY

The planets shift out of alignment. The sun's color reverts to its natural fiery orange.

EXT. COASTAL BEACH - DAY

An ashen faced Jeff finds himself partially buried on the beach. The tide is out, the sun back to its former glory.

Jeff notices that he can hear sounds again when Rose pukes up a gush of seawater.

She cries as she frantically digs her father out of the sand. At first with the toy spade, then with her bare hands.

Jeff blinks in shock. He coughs up a mouthful of seawater.

The music from the fairground is out of key, there's screams and cries for help up and down the beach.

The sand around his body becomes loose, he scrambles free. His daughter dives into his arms.

A seagull falls dead out of the sky. It makes him jump.

Jeff notices the body of the shades guy up on a nearby sand dune, the frisbee lodged deep into his head.

Jeff strokes Rose as the chaos reigns around them. He whispers soothing words, rocks her back and forth. Yet his wide-eyes and bleak look betrays him.

He's not OK.

And we are left with a sense that, nothing will ever be the same again.

FADE OUT.

