

Preservation by Obstruction

by Daniel Kanizar



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Chapter 1: Breaching the Wall

Growing up as a child, I always had a clear view of the great border wall. Across the channel with the sunken bridge stands a menacing four hundred foot wall. Black and grey, it holds its ground, keeping any wandering souls out and anyone seeking freedom in. Now, as an adult, that barrier still stands. Day to day I stare across the channel to the looming barricade. An electrified, spiked-plated obstruction, that stretches as far as the eye can see. I've always wanted to see the other side, but beyond the behemoth wall is a thick fog that steals all hope of a glimpse. Any aircraft that dares cross over never returns.

Father always tells me stories about the forgotten country. The way others speak of it makes it seem more like a legend than an actual nation. It was a place known as the United States of America. He says it's been nearly a hundred and fifty years since anyone has had contact with the U.S. Apparently, it sheltered itself from the world and is the reason for the great collapse the world suffered soon after the wall went up. Father says the same rhyme every time when referring to the wall. The rhyme has been passed down since the wall's construction. Nowadays, I often find myself repeating it in my head...

Beware the overshadow of the great black gate. For from its confines lurks the power to seal man's fate.

Here, in Fort Erie, the wall is a part of everyone's life. We all see it, and we all must be wary of it. That is what past generations have taught us. No one ever has a clear explanation to validate the fear we have. I really don't have time to keep dwelling on this though. Father gets mad when I'm not one hundred percent

focused on the boat. Fish aren't in great supply across the channel, so we must work hard and be focused to make the day's catch. Still this wall steals my attention every day, even now.

"Hey Baron!" Dustin's voice dissipates my thoughts and brings me back to reality. "Your dad is going to kill us if today's haul is like yesterday's."

Dustin, my best friend and my only other crew mate, is right. He's tall and skinny, but somehow twice as strong as me and twice the fisherman. Whereas fishing is a hobby and a lifestyle for Dustin, it's more like a chore for me. Nonetheless, Dustin is right. Father is down with the flu currently, but he's still keeping track of everything we take from the water. "I know man. For a sick old man, he sure let me have it the other day."

"I bet. Well, let's move closer to the gate cause we ain't catching anything over here. Last week, I made a pretty good haul near that vegetation against the wall," Dustin explains.

That was odd since the wall is supposedly electric. Fish would fry if they got that close. Still, I know I can trust Dustin's word.

"Okay let's head over there."

I steer the boat towards the wall, and it begins to putt to our new destination. This old rickety excuse for a boat has seen too many years, but Father refuses to get a new boat. He's so attached to it that he gave the boat a name, *The Verona*. The years have painted this boat with rust. The constant sputtering of the engine fills the area with the smell of leaky oil. From the sound of it, you'd think the engine would quit at any moment, but it's been this way since I can remember.

Dustin is preparing for the recasting. Tying and securing knots, he jerks with the next testing of its strength. With sweat dripping from his brow, he wipes his forehead and gives me a thumbs up. He always recasts faster than I do. The wall is becoming more menacing as I draw us nearer. This is the closest I've ever been. Father always stays clear of the wall and would probably kill us if he found out we were this close. But it is a sight to behold. It condescendingly stands high above me, with its inverted spikes to keep any man from scaling it.

"Isn't the wall emitting electricity?" I ask, still looking up.

"I don't think so," Dustin replies without hesitation. "I think it's just an urban legend. I mean I've never seen anything electrified in the channel. Have you?" I shake my head. "Yeah, I mean no electrified birds or fish or anything. I've been this close to it before, and nothing has happened."

It's reassuring to hear Dustin say that. Now I can focus on fishing. We cast our gear and continue to fish. A cool breeze is picking up and time is passing idly by. Idle conversation keeps things moving. Small jokes here and there really help fight off boredom, but soon enough, we reach a moment of silence. A silence that will be broken soon enough.

"Hey Baron," Dustin calls out. "Help me pull up the net and see what we got."

With a simple nod, I walk over to help him lift the net. The net is heavy. I can't remember the last time the net was a struggle to lift. "It seems heavier than normal."

With a smile on his face, Dustin happily says, "I know right? Told ya' the fish were over here." Quickly, we get the net on the boat and bind it properly. "Looks like we got a nice mix of trout and salmon. Let's head back to shore."

"Father will be happy with this catch!"

With everything ready to go, I position the boat to head home. The current has pushed us dangerously close to the wall. A sudden gust of wind gives the boat a final push. The motor hits the wall, causing sparks to fly and the oil to ignite. I can see a blue current shoot across the wall like a rigid shockwave.

Dustin shouts, "Damn it Baron! What did you do? The back of the boat is on fire!" Dustin looks over the edge of the boat and prepares himself. "We need to get off now."

No later than a second, Dustin is already in the water. It looks cold, but I don't really have a choice. There isn't anything to use to put the fire out, and it's spreading fast. I jump out. Nothing could have prepared me for how cold this water is. Diving into the bitter water, it feels like all my nerves are being stabbed. Upon

opening my eyes, I see something unbelievable through the vegetation. I swim to the surface and do my best to ignore the frigid temperature. My black hair is blocking my vision. I move it out of the way as I prepare to tell Dustin what I've seen.

"Dustin! There's a hole in the wall. I'm going back down to check it out!"

Before Dustin can tell me what a bad idea it is, I dive back down to inspect this hole. It looks like it leads to somewhere dry. It would be easier than swimming across the entire channel. I swim back up and take in a huge gasp of air. I look to Dustin and say, "There's a hole down there. It looks like it will be a short swim."

"You're nuts man! What if we touch the wall? You saw what it did to Verona," Dustin reasons.

"I think that's only the surface of the wall. I'm going in. This water is too cold. You can swim all the way back if you want." I look behind me and see that *The Verona* has sunk. I turn back around and see a frustrated Dustin glaring at me.

"Fine!" He says. "Show me the way."

Without a second thought, I dive back down. The hole is gaping, making the wall's surface easily avoidable. After a few meters, the underwater path turns vertical and goes dark. I quickly breach the surface. It is pitch black. Dustin quickly follows up after me.

"Can you see anything? I could barely see you under there. Black clothes in black water don't mix!" He says.

"Sorry about that, we should feel around for something to grab onto." After a few seconds of silently swishing through icy water, Dustin breaks the silence.

"I found something. It feels like a metal bar. I think it's a ladder." Swimming blindly, I find Dustin and the ladder. "I'll climb up first," he says. There is a hint of contagious excitement in his voice. I grab the cold steel and begin to make my way up.

When we reach the top, we find ourselves in what is apparently a hallway, but it's still very dark. We walk with our arms outstretched in the darkness. Minutes in pitch black seem like an eternity. Dustin stops suddenly, causing me to run into him.

"Why'd you stop?" I ask, annoyed.

Ignoring my question, Dustin says, "There's a wheel here. It feels like part of a door. I'm gonna see if I can open it." With caution, Dustin turns the wheel to the left. The wheel is very creaky and must be hard to turn, since Dustin is grunting and breathing heavily. After a few turns, a loud pop echoes through the fortified chamber and the door creeps open. In silence we enter into a thick, misty fog. With limited visibility, we walk through the cloud of mist. The farther we go, the thinner it gets. As our eyes adjust to the dim light, they widen at the shocking sight before us.

**FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENS TO DUSTIN AND BARON IN
CHAPTER TWO: THE BARREN CITY
ON SEPTEMBER 10, 2012....**