

FAREWELL NEW YORK:

A Post-Human Premonition

Sam stopped mid-step, his boots ringing hollow against the grating. He forced brightness into his voice, clinging to optimism like a life raft. "Come on— isn't New York still unstoppable? Still vibrant? Why all the doom and gloom? You make it sound like Gotham City in a dark fiction."

Kris didn't look at him. Her eyes remained fixed on the oily sheen of floodwater lapping at crumbling foundations below, where yesterday's skyscrapers became tomorrow's reefs. When she finally spoke, exhaustion weighted every syllable.

"For the wealthy few up in their sky-towers? Sure. Unstoppable." She gestured at the submerged streets, where delivery drones buzzed like mechanical mosquitoes through the humid air.

"But look closer, Sam. For everyone else, New York is a tiered, rusting Third World slum— a vertical favela built on the backs of exhausted gig-workers and forgotten drone-servants. The city didn't actually die. It just... stratified and sank."

Tim had wandered to the gantry's edge, his silhouette dark against the apocalyptic sunset. When he spoke, his voice seemed to come from somewhere distant, dreamlike, barely rising above the wind's mournful whisper.

"Give it time." He pointed at the water creeping higher with each season, each storm. "Parts of the city will slip under soon enough. Back into the saline brine where all things return... Then eventually, the skies themselves will turn dusty gold instead of blue. Carbon sunsets. Particulate dawns." His hand swept across the drowning skyline like a conductor guiding an orchestra toward its final note. "The landscape we see today—this moment right now—will someday seem like a fictional dream. A mere myth told by survivors to children who won't believe cities could ever stand so tall."

Sam's jaw tightened. The words unsettled something deep in his chest, some primal fear he'd been pushing down for years. "Jesus, Tim. You sound like some doomsday prophet standing on a street corner." His skepticism came out sharper than intended, defensive. "How the hell would you know what the future holds? You got a crystal ball in your backpack?"

Tim turned, and in the dying light, his smile carried equal parts sadness and knowing. He tilted his head back and laughed—not mockery, but something gentler, more melancholic.

"Oh, Sam. You're such a man of the present tense, always standing with both feet planted in now." The laughter faded into something quieter, more serious. "If I told you how I learned all this... you'd send me straight to a shrink, probably have me committed." He paused, watching a piece of debris drift past in the dark water. "Suffice to say, the Tao teaches that all things are in flux—perpetual transformation. Matter, memory, whole civilizations... just waves rising and falling in an endless tide. We're standing on a wave right now, Sam. And every wave, eventually, must break."

The four of them stood in silence then, listening to the city creak and groan beneath them, a dying leviathan singing its requiem in rust and brine.