

THE GLOW

20° 54'00"N 156°36'00"W Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam

Time (15:00) Saturday, June 21, 2042

My name is Lieutenant Noah Peterson. This is the first of many deck log entries from USS Hawaii I will compile to document what is happening. We are one of fifteen submarines from six countries on a covert mission to investigate a strange glow from the floor of the Pacific Ocean. The glowing started three days ago and is becoming more intense. The year is 2042. The Earth is slowly falling apart from the pollution caused by overpopulation. In ten years, our scientists predict the Earth will be uninhabitable for all humans. The only solution for our survival is to reduce our population by half.

Time (17:34) Saturday, June 21, 2042

As I am writing this, I was just informed that the glowing has stopped. I have found an old WWII recorder in my states room, so now you can listen firsthand as our mission unfolds.

While I walk to the bridge, I see three half-dressed officers distressed running past me. Seconds later, the emergency red lights start flashing on the walls. Water is pouring in through the emergency pods as though something had ripped them out. Over the intercom our Captain's voice crackles and commands to the crew. "Attention, all sailors report to the bridge, we have a level 3 leak near the emergency pods."

I am running as fast as I can toward the bridge, but I am going nowhere through the rushing water, eventually giving up, and swimming. The freezing cold water chills me to the bone. Only my head and shoulders remain above water. I'm barely breathing from the lack of oxygen in the room.

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From the corner of my eye, I see the emergency valve still open. I swim to the other side and turn the heavy lever to shut the valve's 10-inch thick door. Now the water is contained from spreading to the bridge. While running to the bridge, four people pass me, and I realize that I'm going incredibly slow. I try to go faster, but I begin to pass out going into a deep sleep. The last words I hear are the Captain's over the intercom, "Emergency, Emergency." For the next three hours I am unconscious. I dreamt of the first day I joined the navy, starting as a seaman on the USS Montana.

Time (21:13) Saturday, June 21, 2042

As I awake in the ship's makeshift hospital, medical staff surrounds my hospital bed. I feel my heart beating rapidly, almost exploding out of my chest. My face burning, my head aching as the doctor talks. I catch every third word she says, hearing only hypoxemia...lack of oxygen... and brain. I rush out of the room, ripping out my IV, and stumble to the bridge to help my crew.

The Captain is barking orders at the sailors, running around the room, and their faces are serious and nervous. The air is thick with a metallic scent. The hum of machinery makes my head burn.

"What happened?" I scream looking around with lights flashing everywhere.

"The sonar is out! We are steering blind into the abyss!"

A thundering blast shocked the ground of the sub, as though a bomb had gone off. Steel cabinets fly everywhere trapping crewmates under them. The vibration must have been strong enough for the anchors to fail. Files floating in the slowly rising water.

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“SOS,” the Captain screams into the emergency radio. Nothing but static comes through.

Medics come from the infirmary,

“...Captain, I think you should see this,” calls one of the medics. Captain Johnson and I run toward the medic who points out the window. There in the water, three hundred feet away; the JS Maya JS Haguro is floating in the murky water with the back of the sub torn to a million pieces. Its crew floating in suspended motion alongside their sub’s debris. We stare in ominous silence to give our respects.

Time (21:27) Saturday, June 21, 2042

“Sir, we have repaired the sonar, and it appears that there are thirty-four creatures circling us,” states an officer. “The creatures are massive, and like nothing I have ever seen.”

“Emergency surface,” exclaims the Captain, as compressed air shoots out of the sub, jolting the crew and the sub up towards the surface.

“Surface in three, two,” says surface technician. Boom! The sub jolts to a stop, everyone’s legs buckle, and heads jerk from the sudden impact.

“What the hell was that?” I scream.

“Sir, it seems that we’ve hit ice,” says the surface technician.

“Just break through.”

“Sir, it is showing to be five feet thick.”

“Captain, submerge the sub, and surface quickly to shatter the ice.”

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“Great idea,” concurs Captain Johnson, “do as the Lieutenant says.”

The sub dives down, and then thrusts up shattering the ice. As long as we have been under the ice, we haven’t known where we are. With the sonar above the water we will know where we are in no time.

“Prepare to open hatch.” As the hatch opens, cold gusts of air rush into the submarine. Outside the sub, the wind is howling with gusts over fifty miles per hour. We couldn’t see anything, with snow blowing everywhere. Darkness.

"Brrr, my gosh it’s freezing out here,” I murmur. The Captain asks the temperature.

“Sir, it is negative 26 degrees.”

Time (21:49) Saturday, June 21, 2042

“Where are we, what are the coordinates?” yells the Captain to the bridge.

“Sir, according to the coordinates, we’re four miles off the coast of Florida,” states the sonar technician.

“What? At the rate we’ve been going, we should be near Indonesia. And why is it so cold in Florida,” I proclaim.

Time 48 Hours Later

Our sub’s supplies are dwindling, only having enough food to last one month, we make the daring decision to trek to the coastline via the ice. The crew prepares for the four-mile ice walk to

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shore. The submarine is less damaged than we originally thought, so we prepare to move anything valuable and salvageable out onto makeshift sleds made from the cabinets that fell in the bridge.

“I’m turning off the recorder to save the little battery left. The current time is 08:54 hours on Monday June 23, 2042.”

Time (14:56) Monday, June 23, 2042

“Mayday! SOS! If anyone hears this recording, we have just reached the coast of Florida in what seems to be a world still in the Ice Age. Half our crew succumbed to the cold. When we arrived on land, we were met with what we thought to be extinct, saber tooth tigers. My ill prepared crew didn’t stand a chance. Only I survived by escaping across the ice back to the protection of the sub. I’m frost bitten and my nerves are shot. Maybe a moment to close my eyes will help.” I dream of home again.

Time (11:34) Tuesday, June 24, 2042

I awake in the warmth of my cabin. I do a walk through the sub to check if any Ice Age creatures entered during the night. All hatches are secure, and I return to my cabin.

I pull out the recorder to see if any battery remains. “From what I know now, the glow in the sea was a portal to another world where the Ice Age never stopped. I think that if I can get back to where we were, when we disappeared, I might be able to get home again. From where we are in Florida it should take 11 days to get to Hawaii. With the engine not working to full capacity, from the attack on the side of the sub, it will take longer than it usually does.”

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Time (7 days later) Tuesday, July 1, 2042

The engine is slowly breaking; I think I have just enough fuel to get to the portal. Finding the portal is my only hope to go home. I close my eyes. Images of home, my friends, my family rush over me.

Time (6 days later) Monday, July 7, 2042

I look out my cabin's porthole and the water's surface is blinding. There's a strange glow encasing the ship. It seems I am getting closer to the portal, with the glowing getting more and more intense. Then all of a sudden, the glowing suddenly stopped.

It looked as though I have not moved, but I know that this is my world. I am no longer in the parallel universe. I hear sea birds screeching, the sun beating down on the water. With the engine out of fuel, my only hope is to be found. I am exhausted.

There is a sound, like a helicopter, with the thump of the blades ripping through the air. I make my way up to the sail of the submarine to see if I am right. I see the whirlybird in the distance. I cannot believe my good luck.

I can barely stand with the blades whipping water and wind in every direction. As it lands on the sub, three people exit the helicopter. Two men in military uniforms and a woman in plain clothes.

“Greetings, Lieutenant Peterson.”

“Wait, how did you know my name? It is classified.”

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“That’s none of your business Lieutenant Peterson,” she says in a cold firm tone, “come with us now.”

“First, why should I come with you, and second who are you?”

Just then, I notice one of the military men is missing. “Wait, where did he go?”

“Don’t worry, all will be explained,” she whispers into my ear.

I feel the sting of a needle go into my neck. I stumble around; it feels as though the earth is spinning faster than usual. Their faces go to a blur of colors. Then, darkness.

Time (Unknown)

As I wake up, I see they did not take away my recorder; maybe they are friendly, or just unobservant. The woman, now in a lab coat, walks in with two guards, armed to the teeth.

“Lieutenant Noah Peterson, I am Doctor Geni Walber. I was sent to see if any of the fifteen submarines returned from their mission to investigate the glow from the ocean floor. It seems that you were the only survivor. All the subs disappeared at the same time; then your sub reappeared two hours later.”

“Wait, I was in there for well over three weeks.”

“Time must work differently in the parallel universe.”

“Wait doctor, I didn’t tell you about the parallel universe, how did you know?”

“We have known about the parallel universe for decades, but we needed to assess if it was habitable.”

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I get out of my chair, pacing around the room. I can feel my heart racing. Now learning the US government could have saved millions of people from the Earth's overpopulation. Even my own father fell victim, dying in an overpopulated prison. All those years of senseless suffering. All those lives lost.

“With the Earth falling apart, we needed time to see if it was safe. We could not give false hope to people with little to no hope. With the intel you provided, the parallel universe is habitable, but we can't have the world find out that we knew about it before the submarines disappeared.”

“Wait, no one else knows about it? You kept our mission a secret?”

“Correction, only you know that the government knew about it. Don't worry Lieutenant, your family will be told you perished in honor saving your crew.”

Her voice was the last sound I heard, then everything went black.

I awake with the worst headache, my eyes clouded and unfocused. I can barely close my hands, “why are my hands so cold?” Sitting up on a cot, I can see my breath in the frigid air. Looking around, I see canvas walls of a military tent, my recorder, its tapes, and four crates of supplies.

Opening the tent zipper, I find myself back in the Ice Age. **Alone.**