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The Glass Plane

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Introduction

Most stories about physics begin in the hallowed halls of academia or laboratories filled with the hum of discovery; mine began at the end of one life and the uncertain threshold of the next. My name is Dr. Aiden Maxwell. Once, I was heralded as a “visionary”—a physicist whose passion for unraveling the universe’s mysteries burned brighter than the neon lights outside my office window. But visions fade, especially when every experiment ends in a dead end, every hypothesis dissolves into disappointment, and the world’s respect becomes a hollow echo in the chambers of your own disillusionment.

I had reached a point where even the beauty of theoretical constructs no longer stirred my curiosity. Research grants dried up, colleagues moved on, and I found myself staring at the walls of my empty lab, numb to the cracking of my heart beneath the relentless weight of routine. It was during this liminal stage—a half-life between what was and what might be—that I stumbled upon the forgotten government facility, hidden in the rotting industrial district on the city’s edge. I wasn’t seeking revelation that day; in truth, I wasn’t seeking anything at all.

Yet fate, or perhaps something stranger, guided my footsteps down corridors choked with dust and memory. There, in the center of a room that still thrummed faintly with an energy I couldn’t name, stood a device like nothing I had ever seen. Glass and steel intertwined in impossible harmony, yet it radiated fragility—thus, the name that would come to define all my days: The Glass Plane. In that moment, the boundary between the present and the past blurred, and with trembling hands I reached out, unable to resist the gravitational pull of its mystery.

The Glass Plane was more than a machine. It was a doorway—or, perhaps, a fracture—in the fabric of time itself. My first encounter with its controls was reckless, driven by a despairing curiosity and a desperate longing to undo a single moment in my past. I didn’t know then that every action reverberates not just within ourselves, but across the infinite tapestry of what-could-have-been. The timelines began to unravel, threads tangling around me, revealing echoes of choices both made and unmade.

That day, I set into motion forces that drew me into parallel worlds, where the people I loved wore different faces and the consequences of my decisions grew monstrous. And as I navigated these shifting realities, I learned that the power to rewrite one’s past carries a cost far dearer than I ever imagined. In the shadows, a silent audience watched—an organization whose purpose transcended anything so noble as discovery or progress.

My journey through the Glass Plane became not just a struggle for understanding, but a battle for redemption. This is the story of how I lost myself amid fractured timelines, and the odyssey that taught me the priceless weight of each moment, each loss, and perhaps—against all odds—each hope.

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CHAPTER ONE: Shadows at the Doorstep

The rain had been relentless for days, a monotonous drumming against my office window that perfectly mirrored the dull ache in my chest. My laboratory, once a beacon of intellectual ferment, had become a mausoleum of half-finished equations and forgotten breakthroughs. Dust motes danced in the anemic light filtering through the grime-streaked glass, a silent ballet that only I seemed to notice. My grant applications were consistently rejected, my papers published in increasingly obscure journals, and my last truly groundbreaking theory had been... well, let's just say it had been a while.

The official eviction notice arrived on a Tuesday, tucked neatly into a manila envelope, crisp and unforgiving. It wasn't a surprise. My university stipend had dwindled to almost nothing, and the building, a charmingly decrepit structure on the fringes of campus, was slated for demolition. "Advanced Research Wing D," the sign still read, though "Dilapidated Research Wing D" would have been more accurate. It was the final nail in the coffin of my academic career, or so I believed.

With the university effectively kicking me to the curb, I had nowhere to go, no new projects to pursue, and frankly, no desire to pursue any. The vibrant spark of curiosity that had fueled my youth had sputtered and died, leaving behind only the cold ash of disillusionment. I spent my days aimlessly packing boxes, each item a relic of a dream that had once burned so brightly. Old textbooks, dog-eared notebooks filled with elegant, yet ultimately futile, equations, and a particularly gaudy mug from a long-forgotten conference on quantum entanglement.

It was during one such melancholy packing session that I stumbled upon a box labelled, in faded marker, "Project Chimera - Classified." I didn't remember packing it, or even acquiring it. My memory, like much else, seemed to be losing its edge. Inside, beneath layers of outdated government reports on energy consumption and obscure geological surveys, lay a single, unmarked file. Its contents were sparse: a grainy aerial photograph of an overgrown industrial complex on the city's forgotten eastern edge, and a hand-drawn schematic.

The schematic was what truly caught my attention. It depicted a highly complex electromagnetic field generator, but with unusual design parameters that hinted at a purpose far beyond conventional energy production. There were no labels, no official stamps, just a series of interwoven lines and symbols that pulsed with a quiet, undeniable logic. It was a puzzle, a whisper of a challenge, and for the first time in months, I felt a faint stir of something akin to intrigue.

The industrial complex, according to the cryptic notes in the file, had been abandoned for decades, a casualty of a forgotten economic downturn and a shroud of secrecy. Rumors had always circulated about "government experiments" in the area, dismissed by most as local folklore. But the schematic, coupled with the photograph, lent a new weight to the old whispers. My rational mind screamed that it was a wild goose chase, a pointless detour. My scientist's heart, however, felt a tug it hadn't felt in years.

I wrestled with the decision for a day, the rain continuing its relentless rhythm. The practical part of my brain, the part that dealt with bills and job prospects, urged me to simply finish packing and move on. But the other part, the part that had always sought the impossible, the unknown, refused to be silenced. What did I have to lose? My career was over, my reputation in tatters. A desperate, almost suicidal, curiosity gnawed at me.

The next morning, armed with a rusty toolbox and a sense of resigned adventure, I set out. The eastern edge of the city was a bleak landscape of derelict factories and crumbling warehouses, choked by weeds and forgotten promises. The coordinates from the file led me down a winding, unpaved road that grew increasingly impassable, eventually forcing me to abandon my sputtering sedan and continue on foot.

The air grew heavy with the scent of damp earth and decay. Twisted metal skeletons of old machinery jutted out from the tangled undergrowth, like skeletal fingers reaching for a sky that ignored them. The facility itself was barely visible through the thick canopy of trees, a sprawling concrete leviathan consumed by time and nature. Its barbed-wire fence, rusted and torn, offered little resistance.

Pushing through a thicket of thorny bushes, I found myself in a vast, overgrown courtyard. Broken windows stared out like vacant eyes from the multi-story buildings that loomed around me. The silence was profound, broken only by the chirping of unseen insects and the occasional drip of rainwater from a leaky gutter. It was a place of ghosts, of forgotten ambitions, and a shiver ran down my spine, a mix of apprehension and exhilaration.

Following the faint outline of an old service road, now barely a path, I navigated through the ruins. The schematic from the file was a crude guide, but it hinted at a central research block, larger and more robust than the surrounding structures. After what felt like an eternity of climbing over rubble and dodging fallen debris, I found it. A massive, reinforced concrete building, its main entrance sealed with a heavy, corroded steel door.

The door was a formidable barrier, secured with multiple locks and heavy-duty bolts. Most were rusted solid, but one particularly robust padlock looked relatively new, a testament to some attempt at maintaining secrecy. My toolbox, however, was woefully

inadequate for the task. I kicked at the door in frustration, a dull clang echoing through the silent courtyard. It was then that I noticed a small, almost invisible, service hatch at ground level, partially obscured by a fallen beam.

It was barely large enough to crawl through, but the latch was less formidable than the main door's. With a grunt and a bit of leverage from a rusty crowbar I'd found earlier, I managed to pry it open. A gush of stale, cold air assaulted my senses, carrying the distinct metallic tang of ozone and something else, something I couldn't quite place, but which sent another shiver down my spine.

Taking a deep breath, I squeezed through the narrow opening, my shoulders scraping against the rough concrete. I landed with a soft thud on a dusty floor, my eyes adjusting to the almost complete darkness. The air was thick with the dust of ages, and a faint, almost imperceptible hum vibrated beneath my feet. It was a sound that shouldn't have been there, a sign of dormant power in a place long abandoned.

I pulled out my phone, its flashlight beam cutting a path through the gloom. The room I was in was a cramped service corridor, littered with broken equipment and overturned crates. Ahead, a long, dark hallway stretched into the unknown, its end swallowed by shadows. The hum grew slightly louder, a faint, almost musical resonance that beckoned me forward. My heart, dormant for so long, began to beat with a renewed, albeit nervous, rhythm. This wasn't just an abandoned building; it was a prelude.

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