

A GLIMMER OF HOPE

“In three, two, one, and... Action!”

A spark of neon light glowed against the miserable backdrop of what could have been a forest some decades prior, as a peculiar figure entered the camera frame. He wore a metallic blue suit, with purple stars and waxing crescents embroidered on his shoulder blades, complimented by his equally vivid indigo eyeshadow and lips. The presenter captured the essence of a sci-fi character, as he broke into an ingratiating smile and began reading off a holographic teleprompter.

“Good evening 2024 audiences across the globe! Welcome to a once-in-a-lifetime phenomenon, a futuristic spectacular if you dare. I’m Artemis Mintz, challenging the laws of ethics and time dilation as a chronic from the year 2094.” His act softened to a theatrical whisper “Chronic’s a fancy little word for time traveller!” His volume zealously bounced back up. “CRAZY, I know! But stay with me! You see, the future has advanced past fragments of your imagination into reality. I mean, here I am broadcasting our first ever live era-to-era interaction while within your space of time! Transmitted straight to every single phone simultaneously, and it is imperative that I do. I’m on a mission to show you the detrimental effects your ways have had on the dear giant panda, who doesn’t crawl my time’s Earth anymore. So, pull out a chair, and spare a few minutes of your life in this guide on how to save the pandas. But first, allow me to expose you to the already tragic reality of your society.”

The lights expanded past Artemis to display more of the morose excuse for a forest. He started leisurely pacing through the area, as his team, also dressed ultramodern in metallics, followed with a camera. “Ah, what better place to start than here.” Artemis embraced his surroundings. “Let me ask you, do you see any pandas? Or bamboo for that matter?” He chuckled, then abruptly switched to a sombre expression. “No, of course not. Because here, in the Chinese province of Gansu, deforestation has wiped out thousands of acres of forest and habitat, pushing the beloved panda up the mountains of Min Shan.” He extended his arm up, pointing in the direction of a distant nature reserve. “All in the name of innovation and change, that this perfectly adequate land is nothing more now than a construction site,” Artemis took a dramatic pause “suffocating in the urban sprawl of yet another railway that you ‘just so desperately need to have’”. The presenter mocked. “Well let’s just see if the profits are worth the expense of your cuddly friends. Let us continue.”

The broadcast cut to a new backdrop, yet instead of sorrowful and depressing, it captured a world of beauty. With trees of bright and vibrant greens, yellows, and oranges filling up the canvas, as a glimmering river twinkled through the land, sparks of bamboo just slightly covered three furry white and black faces. Stepping into the dream-like frame once again was Artemis. “Well, isn’t this just lovely?” He gleefully beamed “Despite the state of the world, there’s still some remains of this hint of magic, just look how cute these pandas are?!” He playfully queried, but it wasn’t long before that bleak dismal look crawled its way to his face. “But how come I can only see three of these guys? Perhaps some others are hiding, sure. Or perhaps your use of this world has fragmented pandas’ environments so very much that their population suffers immense isolation. Don’t get me wrong, this place is beautiful, but how much of it is really left?” He turned once again to the pandas, somehow seeming more anguished than before like a sense of fury ignited him to stop reading from the teleprompter, and just start blurting out his rage. “I mean, if you keep on constructing, and isolating

these species, how are they supposed to mate and reproduce? How are they even supposed to keep themselves alive?!” He looked down from the magnificent mountain range he was reporting from, to see nothing but yellow and brown frail pieces of bamboo, drooping on the outskirts of a nearby city, smothered by a toxic bubble of fumes. He turned back at the camera furiously. “You’re burning our world! And in the process ruining these poor animals’ vegetation, food sources, genetic diversity, and overall chance of survival! It’s no wonder they’re going extinct! -” Artemis’ voice quivered. “You’re practically setting them up for failure.”

Suddenly, the broadcast frame shifted one last time, revealing a murky backdrop, soulless in nature and dull in colour. The ground was dry and cracked, with no trees, no lakes, and no pandas in sight. Emerging from the gloomy scenery was a desolate Artemis Mintz. “This, 2024, is your future, my present.” He glared at the camera, sickened with distraught and unease. “This right here, is your delightful Min Mountain that we just encountered moments ago, seventy years in the difference.” Artemis’ eyes widened with hysteria as he edged the camera so very closely, you could sense his perturbation. “My dear audience of 2024. I implore you, to CONSERVE every natural element you have remaining. Stop cutting down trees and bamboo, stop tarnishing habitats, and stop burning chemicals. You are our last glimmer of hope. It’s you who can salvage what your forefathers have destroyed. And it’s YOU, who can maybe even bring back the precious giant pandas into my lifetime. This is your guide; I’m begging you to take it.”

And just like that, the peculiar figure sighed one last smile, this one appearing more authentic and vulnerable than ever, as he vanished from our screens, transported back to his reality; a world which he could only dream has been restored by the time he returns home, by the heroic efforts of his audience, who have the power to determine the lives of generations to come.

APPENDIX

Deforestation

Deforestation is the excessive clearing of forests and natural reserves for the intention of man-made purposes, such as construction (typically urbanisation), agriculture (especially animal grazing), and wood use (such as industrial and building products). Deforestation significantly damages our environment, responsible for 10% of global warming due a lack of trees absorbing carbon dioxide, resulting in the release of the greenhouse gas. Deforestation impacts pandas through the severe loss of habitat, as humans clearing their environment in the interest of firewood, bamboo harvest and herbal medicine.

Habitat Fragmentation

Habitat fragmentation is when the suited environment for a species is divided into smaller areas (fragments) due to human intervention such as land clearing, posing detrimental harm. This can include a reduction in biodiversity ranging from 13% to 75% (low genetic diversity- see below). Pandas are impacted by fragmentation most notably by the isolation of populations, creating breeding issues.

Mating Challenges

Mating challenges is when an organism is struggling to find another organisation to have sexual intercourse with, impacting reproduction rates, and the population of that species overall. Pandas already struggle with conception as the female panda is only fertile within a one-to-three-day time span a year, as well the pandas’ poor diet of solely bamboo posing energy issues to find a mate. Additionally, the fragmentation of pandas’ habitats is further preventing reproduction.

Low Genetic Diversity

Low genetic diversity is when a species lacks alleles (different versions of a gene), therefore members of the species are very similar. This can be damaging as it infers less time for a species to adjust to a shift of environment, posing a higher probability of extinction. The giant pandas have quite low genetic diversity, ultimately caused by their large loss of habitat. This makes pandas even more vulnerable and at risk of dying out.

Climate Change

Climate change is the increase in temperature of our planet and change in weather patterns. This has primarily been caused by human activities, such as the burning of fossil fuels which consequently emits heat and energy, as well as the clearing of forests (deforestation), along with numerous other practices hazardous to the environment. Climate change also causes a decrease in food production (through the drought of fields and change in temperature). As a result, the food security of pandas has further decreased, as the climate is becoming too hot in certain areas to grow the species primary food source.

WORD COUNT

My story consists of 984 words

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