

VACATION IN THE SHADE

By James Moore

WHY I LIKE IT: *Guest Editor Tina V. Cabrera writes:*

James Moore's "Vacation in the Shade" effectively blends the sci-fi/speculative fiction framework with social and political commentary. Influenced as he says by Tolkien, Shakespeare, and Hemingway, Moore's prose resembles that of the latter in the directness and crispness of the prose and dialogue. Moore's subtle prose beautifully lends credibility to this narrative of a future that mimics our chaotic and troubled current times.

Sol, the "alien" who joins his partner Aster on a journey to Earth describes the planet as "socially, culturally and morally fractured." Sol hesitates to go through with their plan to visit Earth to acquire an element called Fission Sand that earthlings use for fuel. He foresees the danger inherent in such a scheme because the "natives disrespect, abuse and enslave each other." Sound familiar? It turns out that while darker skinned humans are the majority of the population, they are also persecuted for their skin color by a nefarious group called ICE. When Sol and Aster take on human form, they choose darker skin, and when they are discovered to be "illegals" by ICE and arrested, they are shocked to discover that all foreigners are labeled aliens and thereby mistreated.

What would aliens from another world or planet say about us Earthlings if they could see the state of our world now, particularly that of the United States, where children are separated from their parents, placed in camps, and where racial prejudice is a norm, and the president and his administration lead this country into totalitarianism. This short story allows us to place ourselves outside of the framework to peer at the tragedy that plays out day after.

Editor's Note: *We give this story 5 stars. Spacing is author's own.*

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By James Moore

ALL I EVER WANTED

All six eyes twinkling with anticipation, Aster hits the send key on his touch-pad sending the weekly Interplanetary Observation Report to the Scientific Alliance. He spins his chair to face his work partner Sol.

"That's it!" Aster crows, "I.O.R. 260 has been officially sent to our superiors. Doesn't that make your fluids rush?"

"Frankly no." Sol doesn't bother to look up from his micro-scanner. "I don't see why we're being forced to take this time off when there's work to do."

Aster leaps up from his seat and rushes to Sol's side at the analysis platform. A tap of Aster's tendril on a control panel shuts down the scanner.

"I was in the middle of an analysis." Sol complains.

"Exactly," Aster says, "Work-time over, vacation-time start."

"Okay, okay. It's vacation time. So, tell me about this fantastic once-in-a-lifetime travel spot you've been hinting about for a dozen rotations now."

"Sure," Aster says with a smirk. "have a seat. This place is gonna blow your mind."

Aster's smile grows as his tendrils dance upon the control panel. The holographic projection system produces a basketball sized display of Aster's dream vacation spot. Sol stares at the image of a planet pirouetting in mid-air.

Sol gasps. "You can not be serious."

"Of course I'm serious." Aster counters. "What better place to visit than the planet we've been studying for the past five cycles?"

Aster reaches out and stops the rotation of the image. He then grabs the image and pulls with two tentacles to enlarge it.

"Sol," he says with a flourish, "I give you planet 3R235, or what the inhabitants call: Earth."

Sol steps around the holographic image so that it hovers between him and Aster. "Insane. I always suspected you were mentally imbalanced, now I have proof."

"Just hear me out and--"

"No." Sol interrupts, "First, you hear me out. Setting aside the fact that if we're caught we'll be placed in prison. Based on everything you and I have heard from the Science Council, you're talking about visiting a planet that's socially, culturally and morally fractured. One hundred ninety six governments, each with their own agenda and all fighting each other."

"Not all." Aster says.

"Enough to be dangerous." Sol retorts. "The natives disrespect, abuse and enslave each other. Can you imagine what they'll do if we're discovered? You want to take that kind of a risk for a thrill? A good time?"

"There's that," Aster says, "but also..." He walks around the Earth image and gets close enough to Sol to whisper in his ear. "There's Fission Sand down there."

Sol stares at Aster in disbelief. "How can-- are you sure?"

Aster puts a tentacle around Sol's shoulders and guides him to a lab stool as he continues to whisper. "Not only is it down there, they manufacture it, millions of pounds every year. They use it for fuel."

Sol closes his eyes and shakes his head. "Help me out, I'm still learning their units. Define 'millions of pounds'."

Aster allows Sol to sit on the stool before answering. "In one year they could fill this observation station five thousand times."

Aster spins Sol around on the stool to face the holographic model. Sol looks at the vision trying to take in the fantastic new information. Again, Aster is in Sol's ear. "I have a plan. If... when it works, we'll be set for the next 300 years. Permanent vacation."

Sol pulls his gaze away from the hollow-graphic planet. "Okay, what's the plan?"

THE PLAN

"It'll never work." Sol shakes his head, "Too many things can go wrong."

Sol and Aster stand upon the autowalk that leads to the other side of the space station. Their debate echos off the corridor walls. Usually dozens of scientists and technicians like themselves mill about but the vacation break means only a skeleton crew maintains the station. There's no worry about being overheard.

"There's nothing to it," Aster argues, "We go down, mix with the natives, find out where to buy what we want, and then come back here. Nothing could be easier."

"We can't just go down there," Sol says, "I've seen pictures, we don't look anything like-- what do they call themselves?"

"Homo Sapiens I think."

"Okay, we don't look like Homos," Sol says, "How are we going to do business with them?"

"I told you, I have a plan. There's an observation team scheduled to go and set up shop down there. We're going to do it first that's all. The scientist in charge of essence transfers is going to help us blend in."

"Essence transfer. New bodies then?" Sol asks.

"Yep, we'll have total say on the design. Color, size, age..."

"I've never done anything like that before," Sol muses, "I don't know."

Aster places a tentacle on Sol's shoulder. "It'll be no problem. We just have to get back in the three day window that's all."

"Do we at least have a sociological survey?" Sol asks.

"Well..."

"No survey?" Sol shouts.

"Calm down," Aster musters his most soothing voice, "We have the preliminary survey. That'll be good enough for what we want to do."

"This plan of yours is sketchy. We've been studying the planet itself, not the people. You're just guessing at how to go about this."

"I know the people," Aster counters, "I know there's a vast variety of body types so it'll be easy to blend in. The darker skinned Homos outnumber the lighter ones so we know what skin tone to use. I know the sub-society we'll encounter honors males above the females and most importantly, I know the population clusters that are near vast quantities of Fission Sand."

"But--" Sol says .

"Listen my friend," Aster says, "we'll never have another chance like this, to gain a fortune. But I can't do it without you. If you say no, we'll forget about it. Are you in?"

Aster's question comes as the autowalk comes to a halt near the Enhanced Bio-Lab. Aster looks at his friend expectantly.

"Alright," Sol says "I'm in"

"Great," Aster says with a smile, "let's get ourselves a couple of bodies."

NEW MEN

Aster and Sol enter the Enhanced Bio-Lab the way one enters a church. The natural daylight bulbs used inside are a welcome change from the harsh lighting in the corridor.

"I always wondered about this place." Sol says in a normal tone.

Aster whispers, "Shhh! we don't want to disturb him," he cautions.

Sol lowers his voice, "I thought we were expected. Disturb who?"

Aster whispers back. "We are expected, but that doesn't mean Leo isn't busy with some experiment right now."

"Leo? That's an unusual name."

"Yes." Aster takes a seat in one of the stools, "He decided to change his name after a study of the planet's history. The name comes from a historic figure he admires greatly. Leo Vinci or something like that. I just call him Leo."

"Leo," Sol muses as he sits on a stool, "So he's the one who's gonna get us set up with bodies for our trip?"

A voice booms out from a back room, "Indeed he is!"

Leo steps out into the warm light that mimics the sun of this system they've been observing. He looks over the two techs with piercing eyes. The bodysuit he wears has the emblem of a senior officer in the Science Council. Leo leans against the lab table closest to Aster.

"So," Leo says to Aster, "You mean to go through with this?"

"Indeed we do!" Aster replies, "Let me introduce you--"

"You must be Sol," Leo leans forward and extends a tendril, "Aster has told me alot about you. And when he spoke, it was with reverence."

Sol briefly entwines his tendril with Leo's as is customary. "That's good to hear sir."

"C'mon, just call me Leo. Were business partners after all."

Sol gives Aster a sidelong glance. "Partners?"

"Of a sort," Aster says, "Leo's doing a lot for us, new bodies, technical support, transportation... A twenty percent share in profits is not too much to ask."

"I'm glad you feel that way," Leo says, "because we can start right now. Ready?"

Aster and Sol exchange determined looks. "Ready." They say in chorus.

"Very well," Leo opens a lab table drawer and pulls out a remote control. A couple of buttons are pressed and a holographic form drops down from the ceiling as the lights dim. "Make wise choices, you'll be stuck with these bodies for a couple of days."

Aster and Sol have spent a few minutes working on the long list of aesthetic choices needed to get their bodies ready, when an issue comes up.

"That's the skin color you're going to use?" Sol asks.

"Ah," Aster says, "this is where the report comes in handy. I just happen to know that this skin color is one of the most popular on the planet."

"Really?" Sol asks, "that color?"

"Well, shades of it." Aster says, "You can go darker or lighter but this is optimal. Where we're going, the vast majority of the people have that shade."

"We can't look exactly the same though," Sol says, "I'll go a few shades darker. What else do you suggest?"

"Based on what we know," Aster says, "we should look like we're a little past the mid-point of their life-cycle in age. Most natives' bodies have twenty-five to thirty percent extra fat..."

"What?" Sol asks, "Are they trying to kill themselves?"

"It would appear so." Leo chimes in.

"Let's go with fifteen percent." Aster decides.

"Okay." Sol says. "Male or female?"

"Most definitely male," Aster says, "we need to be taken seriously, and the society we'll encounter sometimes treat their females badly. They talk a good game but the truth is different. We don't need extra complications"

"Alright then," Leo says, "add some contemporary clothes and you're set." Leo uses the remote to punch in the last of the settings and calculations. "Done. The transfer chambers are right through here."

They enter the back room that Leo came out of before. He turns on the overhead light as they enter revealing some of the most coveted hi-tech equipment in this space sector. Sub-micron bio-scanners, tissue re-generators and cloning kits were just a few of the items recognized by Aster and Sol. Leo opens the door at the other side of the room and they enter an area with eight human sized chambers. There are four open red painted chambers on the left and four closed blue chambers on the right. They are separated by a monitoring console and a bank of computing modules.

"Step into two of the chambers on the left" Leo says, "and we can get started."

"Hold it," Sol says, "I want to know how this thing works first. I know it's been done before but not to me."

"Will you relax?" Aster says, "Nothing bad is going to happen."

"No, it's okay," Leo says, "I'll be happy to explain the process."

Leo steps to the spot just in front of the console and turns to face his audience. "The pods on your left are a combination stasis chamber, bio-scanner and neuro-electric siphon. The pods on your right are a combination of bio-generation chamber and neuro-electric charge device."

Leo takes a side step and pats one of the closed chambers. "Two of these babies are already working on the bodies you selected. In a couple of hours I'll be ready to put you in them."

"Two hours?" Aster asks, "why do we have to get into the chambers now?"

Leo steps back toward the open pods. "It'll take at least that long to safely remove your neuro energy for transfer. The entire process typically takes about four and a half hours."

Aster turns to Sol, "Satisfied?"

"I just want to know what's going on that's all." Sol says.

"Your pods await gentlemen." Leo says.

Aster jumps into the nearest pod while Sol's entry is more deliberate. There's a hiss and a soft whine as the pod canopies close. Just before they snap shut Leo says. "See you in a few hours."

DISCOVERED

Five hours later, Leo punches in the final verification codes to make sure the neuro-electric transfer is complete. A bank of lights on two pods go green as their canopies release with a loud click. A brown-skinned, dark-haired man in his late thirties steps out of one pod looking at his hands.

"Sol?" Leo asks.

The man continues to inspect his new body. Arms, chest, legs, all covered in a rich brown skin.

"Sol!"

The man snaps his head around and focuses two dark eyes on Leo. "Yeah, it's me. Wow, I feel... kind of numb."

Leo walks over to Sol. "That's to be expected. Your nervous system is getting used to the influx of energy. Other than that how do you like the new body?"

Sol takes another look at himself. "Ok I guess, of all the bodies I've ever used this is definitely in the top two. Where's Aster?"

On cue, soft snoring comes from the pod next to Sol.

"Your clothes are in the other room," Leo chuckles, "I'll wake him up and send him in."

A short time later Leo Sol and Aster gather in the transport room.

"I can't get over this body," Aster says, "but I think you could have given us more ideal specimens."

"You don't want that," Leo remains focused on the transport panel as he cautions Aster, "ideal specimens get attention. You want to avoid that right?"

"Right," Sol confirms, "we just want to look like two average Homo tourists."

Leo stops his work and shoots an inquisitive look in Sol's direction. "What did you just say? Homo tourists?"

"Yes," Aster says, "that's what the natives call themselves, Homo Sapiens."

"Ha, ha... not normally," Leo says, "do you have a local customs report on the area you're landing in?"

"No," Sol looks at Aster, "somebody... didn't think it was necessary."

"Let me tell you, the vast majority of the natives do not refer to themselves with scientific nomenclature. Plus the word Homo is an archaic derogatory term for males who are attracted to their own sex."

"Oh." Aster says.

"Is there a problem with that?" Sol asks.

"There could be," Leo says, "if you refer to someone that way who isn't. I've been studying their culture for a while now, let me put some info together for you."

"How long will that take?" Aster asks.

"I can have something comprehensive for your area in two or three hours."

"We don't have that kind of time," Aster says. "Just transport us and we can get started."

"I have to tell you about a couple of features of your bodies first." Leo steps away from the transport panel and holds up a small bead between his fingers. "This, is a signal enhancer. The transport unit here will be on auto-standby while you're planetside. Tap this twice and the unit will lock on and bring you back immediately. Use it when you find the yellowcake."

"Yellowcake?" Sol asks.

"That's what the Humans, that's the correct term by the way Human Beings, that's what they call the Fission Sand on their world." Leo looks them over. "Are you sure you don't want me to put together an info capsule for you?"

"No time," Aster says, "just give us the enhancer and send us down."

"You already have the enhancer," Leo says with a smile, "each of you have one implanted under your skin. It's behind your right ear."

Sol and Aster each check for the small bump under their skin that ensures a return trip.

"Anything else we should know?" Sol asks.

"Yes, I've added a linguistic circuit to the enhancer. I know you've been studying the language Aster but for Sol's benefit I made this little addition. What you hear will be in our language but when you speak, the locals will hear their language."

"That'll come in handy." Sol says.

"If that's all," Aster says, "we're off to find our fortune."

"What's your plan?" Leo asks, "you gonna walk up to the first stranger you see and ask where the yellowcake store is?"

"Maybe not that direct but yes," Aster says, "they produce so much of that stuff they might even give free samples."

"Sure." Leo says. He walks back to the transport panel. "Ready?"

"Ready." Aster and Sol say in chorus.

"I'll be sending you to the population cluster we discussed Aster," Leo says, "but it's an out of the way spot. No one should observe your arrival. See you in two rotations."

The sensory experience of transport is something Aster and Sol have experienced many times. It is the safest way to travel after all. The view of the transport room fades and appears to dissolve into the background. That image is replaced with a view of their destination; a small back alley

in a large city located in a region called "The United States of America". Aster and Sol take in their new surroundings.

"What a filthy dump!" Sol says, "I hope the whole planet isn't like this."

"I'm sure it's not," Aster reassures, "Let's find someone to talk to."

His sentence is barely completed when a heavy metal door of the building behind them bursts open. Several men and two women frantically pour out of the open door and through the alley. They run past Sol and Aster without a second look.

"They look like us." Sol says.

"I told you our shade is popular." Aster says.

"STOP Federal officers!"

The voice from inside the building is followed by five uniformed men with heavy vests. Each one has a single word printer on the front and back; ICE. The lead man points to Aster and Sol.

"Wilson, Thomson! Grab those two, we'll go after the others."

One of the uniforms takes Aster's arm and pins it behind him.

"Hey!" Aster protests.

Sol takes a step to help Aster when the second uniform pulls out a weapon and points it at Sol.

"Stop! Don't make me shoot you!"

Pointing a gun at someone is a universally understood act. Sol backs off. Aster is being placed in handcuffs.

"Why are you doing this?" Sol asks.

"It's not personal," one of the uniforms says, "there's a push to round up illegals."

"Illegals?" Aster manages to say while pressed against a wall, "We're human beings just like you."

The second uniform grabs Sol and pats him down before putting on the handcuffs. "That's true, but you're also aliens."

Aster and Sol exchange astonished looks. "How did they find out?" Aster asks.

JUSTICE

The immigrant detention center overflows with Human Beings of all ages. A few seem to be alone but most are huddled together as family units or groups of friends. Many of the children and some adults weep because their empty bellies are twisted with fear. Other than being branded with the title "Illegal Alien", they all have one thing in common with Aster and Sol; dark skin color. Aster is one of the few solitary figures sitting alone at a cold aluminum table when Sol approaches.

"Where have you been?" Aster asks.

"Scouting." Sol says. He takes a seat opposite Aster and looks around. He speaks just above whispering to make sure their conversation is private. "I wanted to find out why we were captured."

"Well?"

"To start," Sol begins, "we should have taken Leo up on his offer. If I knew from the beginning what I know now, I would have never set foot on this planet."

"Did you learn how we were discovered? I can't believe so many aliens know about this planet."

"That's just it." Sol says, "you and I are the only real aliens here. Everyone else was captured because they come from a different country."

Aster tilts his head. "What? Foreigners are called aliens?"

"Not all of them," Sol says, "just the ones who bypass the long and arduous process of entering this country lawfully."

"Why would they bypass the process?"

Sol is silent for moment. His voice cracks a little when he answers. "Some don't want to wait in a line that's years long. Some come from deadly, dangerous places and want to survive. Most simply want a chance for a better life for themselves and their families. I had conversations with a number of Humans here and the stories are similar. They're running from despair and towards hope."

Sol's words hang in the air. The table between them is an island in a sea of desperation.

"Their situation is bleak," Aster says, "but we can't do anything for them. We need to think about us. How are we going to get out of here and find some yellowcake?"

Sol's shoulders are slumped and his head hangs over the table. "I don't think my heart is in this venture anymore. It all seems trivial considering what's going on around us." Sol raises his head to make eye contact with Aster. "There's something else I've found out."

"What's that?"

"Have you noticed?" Sol asks, "Every person in this detention center looks like us. Dark hair, brown eyes, brown skin."

Aster shrugs. "Yeah, so?"

Sol leans in closer to Aster. "So think about all the other humans we've seen since we arrived. The officers who captured us, people posted at every door, the guards who surround us now. Almost all of them are a much lighter color, shades of pink. I think these people are being singled out because their brown."

"Ridiculous! You can't make that assumption," Aster says, "we're in one small area of a large planet. It might not be like this everywhere."

"It appears to be like that here, for these Humans around us. We can leave whenever we want but what about them?"

Now it's Aster's turn to lean in. "I know you, I know what you're thinking. We are not supposed to interfere."

"Unless it makes us wealthy right?"

Aster opens his mouth to debate the issue but Sol's steady gaze makes him think better of it.

"Fine," Aster leans back, "what do you want to do?"

Sol shrugs. "I don't know."

"Hey, you two!"

A uniformed man is shouting to get Aster and Sol's attention. The broad-shouldered officer approaches the table motioning for them to stand. "You guys are up next."

Aster and Sol rise to stand next to the table. "Next for what?" Sol asks.

"You want to see your lawyer or not?" the guard replies gruffly.

"Lawyer?" Aster asks

"Follow me." says the guard.

Aster and Sol are lead through the detention area to a heavy steel door. The guard signals to his co-worker through a small window of bullet-proof glass and the door swings open. A march down a narrow corridor and a short elevator ride bring them all to a small meeting room. The guard turns the knob and pushes the door open. "Wait in here."

Aster and Sol are left in the room for several minutes. In whispered communication they debate whether they should activate their implants for a trip back home. Neither one has convinced the other when without knock or warning, the door swings open.

"Good afternoon gentlemen." A man in his mid-twenties enters and places a tattered leather briefcase on the table. "My name is Rick Hunter and I'll be representing you at your hearing tomorrow."

Rick looks as worn as his suit which is saying a lot. The blue shade of the fabric varies on the surface of his jacket as he takes it off and places it on the back of a chair.

"You two are an interesting case," Rick says rolling up his sleeves, "I understand no ID, but nobody knows you guys. None of the restaurant workers detained in the raid, no one in ICE, nobody in that neighborhood."

"Well," Aster says, "we just got here. We don't know anybody."

"Ok," Rick says, "I'm guessing this is your first time through the process so, I'm going to explain what happens to you next."

"Please." Aster says.

Rick sits in a chair opposite Aster and Sol and points to them both. "You two were apprehended during an ICE raid on a restaurant known to employ illegal aliens. As far as we know you have no ID, no employer and you've yet to tell anyone your country of origin. With me so far?"

"So far." Sol says.

"Tomorrow morning," Rick continues, "I have to convince a judge that there's a good reason to allow you to stay in this country. There will be another lawyer in the room trying to convince the same judge that you need to be put on the next plane out of here."

"Sounds like you have a tough job." Aster says.

Rick throws a bewildered look at Aster. "Yeah, especially since I don't know anything about my clients. Is there anything you guys can tell me to make my job, and as a result your lives, easier?"

Aster and Sol trade thoughtful looks. "Can we have a moment?" Sol asks.

Rick looks at his watch and then at his clients. "Alright, but I have six more clients so five minutes, no more." He packs up and leaves the real aliens to talk.

"We should leave right now." Aster says.

"We can't just disappear. Besides, there's something I need to do first."

"There's nothing for us here," Aster retorts, "our plan is a bust and the situation here is not going to change no matter what we do."

"I have to try," Sol says, "what if some things work the same here as in our society. We get to speak to a JUDGE Aster. Someone who can make a difference."

"What if that's not the case," Aster says, "what if the judge can't change the laws or what if the judge doesn't see things your way?"

"In that case," Sol says, "we make the return trip, but at least I will have tried."

FINAL WORDS

The next day, fortune favors Aster and Sol because their case is the first to be heard by The Honorable Harriet Barker. Her first cases of the day have the best chance of being heard with empathy. As the day goes on however, a heavy docket and stress of affecting dozens of lives a day can deplete the mercy well. The judge takes her seat and look doubtfully at two men sitting behind the defendant's table.

"Neither one of you looks like a lawyer to me," she says, "Where is your council?"

"Excuse me your honor," Sol says, "we'll be representing ourselves."

"Oh, you will?" the judge retorts. "Let's see on the docket... Aster and Sol Lopez?"

"That's right your honor." Sol answers, "from what we understand, this is our opportunity to tell our story. Is that true?"

No lawyer, no ID and the defendants want to tell a bedtime story to win their case. The judge knows these guys are destined for a plane ride out of the country. Sometimes though, a hopeless argument needs to be heard.

"Mister Sol Lopez," the judge says, "tell your story."

Sol stands and places his hands behind his back to take his presentation stance. "Your honor, my story is the same as many of the people you'll see today. A story rarely told to anyone who cares and has the power to help.

I'm a Human Being. No different than anyone in this room, or anyone on this planet. We have much in common, I want my life to have meaning, I want to contribute to society. I don't want to take advantage, I want to honor the opportunities available here by creating more opportunities.

It took Aster and I five years to get here. The road has been paved by dedication, life-threatening risk and hard work. My story is not uncommon. There are thousands and thousands of people like me. If you give us the chance to stay and prove ourselves, you'll see we're not a burden but a blessing. I ask not just for myself but all the Human Beings who want to bless this place, let us stay and prove ourselves."

Sol sits down and silence envelops the room.

"Mister Lopez," Judge Barker says, "I have heard your story before, and I believe the truth in it. But laws must be enforced. Petition denied."

Aster and Sol sit in the transport room. Back in their natural bodies and using time for reflection upon their vacation. For most the goal is to make memories. They succeeded.

"Think you made a difference?" Aster asks.

"With things like that," Sol says, "you can't tell right away. Time will tell."

"Well, we didn't get wealthy," Aster says, "but we did get arrested. That will be a story worth telling someday."

Leo comes into the room. "I've disposed of the bodies," he says, "was the trip worth it?"

"Probably not," Aster says, "no yellowcake and no justice. Let me tell you what happened."

"I can guess a lot of it," Leo says, "your antics are what they call 'trending' on the planet's information network."

"Antics?" Sol asks, "only a small number of humans even know what happened."

"More know than you think," Leo says, "apparently in the United States of America when detained illegal aliens disappear from holding, it makes the news. Their even replaying your speech."

"That was documented?" Sol asks.

Leo nods. "It's being played over and over planet-wide."

"Wow," Aster says to Sol, "the whole planet knows you."

"If I know humans," Leo says, "the excitement will die out eventually, but in the meantime who knows? You can always hope."

"That's right," Sol says, "you can always hope."

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *At the time that I came up with the idea for "Vacation" the government of my country (The United States of America) was forcefully separating children from their parents at the US/Mexico border. Adults went through a long prosecution process while their children were handed over to strangers in American agencies.*

After the parents were processed, there were no efforts made by the US government to re-unite the families. As a parent and grandparent I saw the situation as torture for the children and parents. This situation was the final straw that pushed me to write this story. Poor immigration policies, and institutionalized racial prejudice were my motivating themes.

From the time I was a young man, my literary influences included J.R.R. Tolkien, William Shakespeare and Ernest Hemingway. I imagine these giants among a few others whispering in my ear as I write.

AUTHOR’S BIO: James Moore is a husband, father, grandfather and oh yes, a writer. Even though James is a relative newcomer to the literary world, he is working on several projects simultaneously. His current works include a feature length movie screenplay Kiki Diamond: Bounty Hunter and the screenplay adaptation of Charlotte: The Price of Vengeance, his debut novella. James types out his inspiration at a small dining room table in Virginia Beach, VA with the love and support of his wife Donna.

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