

Southridge Wednesday

13-14
No. 35

A Weekly Publication of Southridge School

June 4th, 2014

Head of School

There's Something About May

I don't know what it is about the month of May in schools, but it is probably the craziest of the ten school months - perhaps not the busiest but certainly one of the most draining. You'd think that after living through twenty-six Mays as an educator, I would learn to predict the inevitable and prepare myself for the unavoidable emotional toll it takes.

Despite my best efforts, though, May always depletes me. By the time I manage to reach the final day (why does there have to be 31 of them in May?), if I can still manage to put a coherent sentence together and express a thought without feeling as though my brain is slogging through molasses, I am overjoyed. I know I am not alone because I look at my colleagues and I can see them thinking the same thing. As Ms. Lew said to me last week as we entered school together one morning, "My claws are out and I am holdin' on the best I can."

But then along comes the Café Concerto. Thank goodness for the Café Concerto. It is scheduled at just the right time. The Café never fails to inspire me, to give me energy and to elevate my spirits. I watch in awe and with pride and joy as our talented students perform so incredibly well. I am also rejuvenated by watching our excellent teachers engage with their students in such a caring and supportive manner. You can watch the entire Café Concerto as the Video of the Week.

The Arts have always played an important role at Southridge for many excellent educational reasons, but there is little doubt in my mind that the Arts also influence our school in ways that reach well beyond the "conscious" curriculum. For me, the Arts literally breathe life into our community. It is well known that music, in particular, can elevate one's mood (the Café Concerto does that every year), but, when taken together, all of the Arts work in their own special ways to add energy to our school. An energy that helps define us and unite us.

As far as I am concerned, our mission statement really says it well, "appreciates the Arts and their contribution to a richer life." During the month of May, however, my appreciation for the Arts is certainly elevated to new heights; for when May depletes me, the Arts fill me up again and give me the energy I need to tackle the month of June.

Have a wonderful week!

Mr. Drew Stephens
Head of School

Important Dates			
Event	Date	Time	Location
Junior & Senior School Parent Laptop Information Evening (New MYP Parents)	Thursday, June 5 th	6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.	Junior Great Hall
Golf Tournament	Friday, June 6 th	1:00 p.m.	Morgan Creek Golf Course
Athletic Banquet	Thursday, June 12 th	11:40 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Alan Brown Great Hall & Cafeteria
Grade 7 Band Concert	Thursday, June 12 th	6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.	Junior Great Hall
Senior School Prize Day	Wednesday, June 18 th	2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Senior School Gym

Important Dates			
Event	Date	Time	Location
MYP Certificates Ceremony for Effort and Honours	Thursday, June 19 th	8:15 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Junior Great Hall
Grade 7 Early Dismissal	Thursday, June 19 th	12:00 p.m.	Junior School
Grade 7 Graduation Ceremony & Dinner/Dance	Thursday, June 19 th	5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Junior Great Hall
Junior School Closing Ceremonies	Friday, June 20 th	9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Senior School Gym
Senior School Commencement Ceremony	Friday, June 20 th	4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Senior School Gym
Grad Dinner/Dance	Sunday, June 22 nd	6:00 p.m. - 11:59 p.m.	Vancouver Convention Center

Junior School News

How Will You Finish?

June has arrived and the feeling of summer is definitely in the air. This month is a particularly exciting month with all kinds of different activities happening at the school. It is really easy, with all the excitement and opportunities for distraction, to get out of our good routines and procrastinate with our studies. We still have a few great weeks of learning left, and we encourage the students to really apply themselves to do their very best. I look forward to a strong finish; one that reflects all of the hard work put in throughout the year by students, teachers and parents alike. Have a great week!

Will we finish out strong?
 Complete goals on our list?
 Our regret that we allowed
 opportunity to be missed.
 For how your year started
 is not the whole story.
 It's how you will *finish*
 that'll determine your glory.
Edward Paz

Ms. Alison Graham
 Interim Head of Junior School

Forms, Forms, Forms

Packages were sent out last week from our offices with all the forms required for the 2014-15 school year. Please sign these forms and return them to Ms. Schaub at the front office by **Friday, June 6th**. Thank you for tending to this in a timely manner.

Assemblies

There are only 4 assemblies left for the school year: Thursday, June 5th, Monday, June 9th, Friday, June 13th, and Tuesday June 17th, 2014. We encourage parents to attend these final assemblies, as the last merits of the year will be presented.

Grade 5-7 Parent Laptop Evening

Thursday, June 5th from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Junior School Great Hall

As the year draws to a close, we want to prepare our existing Grade 4 students and parents for the upcoming MYP programme. Perhaps the most exciting addition to their educational programme is the use of the computer laptops. We view the laptop as an educational tool, and work with the students to teach the proper care and usage of the laptop. We are also mindful that the students have access to the internet and email with the laptop, and we teach the appropriate use of these tools as well. We do feel that it is very important for our parents to understand our philosophy for these laptops, and

also our expectation for their use at home. As such, we are hosting a parent laptop information session on Thursday, June 5th from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. Our education at Southridge School is a partnership, and Mr. Anderson, our MYP Technology Coordinator, welcomes you as he presents the goals of the laptop programme, and our recommended use.

Senior School News

The Senior School in June

For much of our year, our day is governed by our eight day cycled timetable. Whatever day in the cycle it is, it is quite clear what is happening throughout the day. For the odd day in the year we change up the schedule such as our Speech Day or the last morning of Term 1; however, it is mostly consistent.

And then June arrives and everything gets changed up and we begin a different schedule with different expectations in terms of attendance. We have been communicating this to the students for some time and you will have noted the Southridge and Provincial Exam schedule in the Wednesday. The focus for the next two and half weeks can be summarized into two words: exams and celebrations.

I want to clarify the expectations about the next few weeks to help alleviate any questions you may have.

Friday, June 6th to Thursday, June 12th

Southridge Exams

- Students must wear their summer uniform WITH blazer in order to enter the exam. Please ensure you have the proper uniform for each of your exams.

During this time, students are only expected at school to write an exam. If they do not write an exam on a certain day, they are not expected to attend school and may study at home. The exam schedule has morning and afternoon exam times. Students that have a morning exam must arrive at 8:00 a.m. and be present in the Alan Brown Great Hall by 8:10 a.m. ready to write the exam with all necessary materials. There will be a brief but important assembly for instructions and then students will enter the gym to sit their exam. Exams begin at 8:30 a.m. sharp.

For afternoon exams, students must be at school for the assembly at 12:15 p.m. and the exam will begin at 12:30 p.m. sharp. Lunch will be available for those students whom have a morning and afternoon exam. Students are more than welcome to set up tutorials or contact their teachers to get help prior to their exams.

Thursday, June 12th

The Athletics Banquet (Lunch) is at 11:45 a.m. in the cafeteria and Alan Brown Great Hall directly after the morning exam.

Friday, June 13th

Students do not attend school this day. This is a marking day for faculty to complete exam results.

Provincial Exams

There are 5 Provincial Exams that are written in the Senior School - English 10, Math 10, Science 10, Social Studies 11 and English 12. Please refer to the exam schedule for these exam times. Start times for morning exams are 8:30 a.m. and afternoon exams begin at 1:00 p.m. with a gathering 20 minutes prior to the beginning in the Great Hall. ***One exception is the English 12 Provincial which begins at 8:00 a.m. due to it occurring on the morning of Commencement (June 20th) to allow for more time for Graduates to prepare for Commencement.***

Tuesday, June 17th - Exam Return/BBQ

On this day, students arrive at 8:00 a.m. and will have a modified timetable in order to see each class to review their exams and other work being returned in non-exam courses. Students wishing to have a longer period of time to review their exam may set up an individual time with their teacher on another day. At the end of this morning, we will enjoy a BBQ and also ensure that lockers are clean out!

As already explained in a previous Wednesday article, we have two events to celebrate student achievement – Senior School Prize Day and Senior School Closing and Commencement. You should have received an invitation to attend both of these events in the mail.

Wednesday, June 18th - Prize Day

2:00 - 4:00 p.m. in the Senior School Gym

Prize Day will have a Grade 8-11 focus in terms of awards and acknowledgements. Last year we changed the timing of our original Certificate Ceremony to be in the afternoon in order to allow parents to attend. All Grade 8-11 students are expected to attend and parents are encouraged to attend this important celebration. Grade 12 students are not required to attend this event.

Friday, June 20th - Closing and Commencement

4:00 - 6:00 p.m. in the Senior School Gym

Closing and Commencement will focus on our Grade 12 graduates combining all of the awards and scholarships awarded to this group along with the graduation ceremonies that include the Valedictorian address. All students from Grade 8-12 are expected to attend to celebrate the graduation of our senior grade of students. As a community, this is an important milestone to mark and I encourage parents to attend this event as well.

At the final assembly I shared a “word cloud” describing Grad 2014. I asked all faculty and staff (K-12) to share with me 3 words that they would use to describe this group of students. The image you see is a result of this culmination. The larger the size of the word in the cloud means that particular word was used most often by people. A smaller word means that perhaps only one person used it to describe this group. You will note that all the words show how much of a positive impact this group has made. I hope that you will attend the Commencement Ceremony to help celebrate their graduation.

I wish the very best of success to all of the Senior School students on their upcoming exams and look forward to seeing many of you at the end of year celebrations.

Mr. Doug Palm
Head of Senior School

Southridge School Examinations

The last day of classes for Southridge students will be Thursday, June 5th and school exams will begin the following day on Friday, June 6th. I would ask you to review the schedule and our examinations policy, (see attachments) very carefully with your sons and daughters. It is really important that students get enough sleep, exercise, relaxation, and quiet study time in order to be at their best. Southridge exams are designed to be completed within a maximum of two hours, but students may take up to three hours for each exam if they wish. In the event of illness, or any circumstance that prevents the student being on time or able to write the exam, please contact Mr. Palm, Head of the Senior School, or Mrs. Holt, Senior School Academic Program Director as soon as possible.

Mrs. Jan Holt
Senior School Academic Program Director

Senior Boys 1st XV Rugby Captures 5th in the Province at the BC Provincial Championships

Southridge is a small school. A "Single A" school playing rugby in a "AA" league against bigger schools with twice as many boys. However, our rugby program has a strong history of qualifying for the BC provincial championships, and we show our merit by playing a creative brand of open rugby, competing well against the bigger lads from around the province. Our top finish prior to this year was 8th place.

This season, we entered into BC AA provincial championships placing 3rd in the Fraser Valley, and we were then seeded 9th overall in the province. Our first game of the tournament saw the boys travelling up to Kelowna to play the 8th seed, Kalamalka (Vernon). Our boys had a stellar match in the Okanagan sunshine, and rode out of Kelowna with a 39-10 victory and a great start to the tournament.

Having won our first match, we now occupied the 8th seed and this pitted us against the #1 seed, Rock Ridge (West Van), in the second round of games. Rock Ridge, the eventual provincial champions, were massive, fast, and very physical; they

humbled our young side 46-3. However, our boys never gave up and played tough for the entire 60 minutes. It was a pivotal game for us, as the boys learned quickly how to manage a fast, tough and hard style of rugby.

Our third round match had the Storm playing our nemesis, and Fraser Valley champions, 5th seeded DW Poppy (Langley). The two teams had played twice already this season, with the Storm losing both times in very close and very physical matches. Moreover, DW Poppy knocked Southridge out of qualifying for provincials in 2013 in a dramatic upset win in April last year.

So, our boys were hungry for a win, and they stepped up their game. The experience of playing hard-nosed rugby with Rock Ridge proved invaluable, as our boys laid it all on the line. We emerged victorious, winning 20-0, allowing our team a chance to play the final match of the season to battle for the 5th/6th placing in the province. It was a sweet victory, but more work lay ahead on the final Saturday of the tournament.

The fourth and final game of the tournament had Southridge playing another nemesis, Mulgrave. The Mulgrave Titans laid a blow to our boys two years ago in the final 7/8 place match, and several of our Grade 12 players had a memory of that defeat. Mulgrave was very confident in their approach to playing Southridge, and may have considered themselves a favourite before the match. However, our boys once again showed their skill and character as the battled hard and opened up the scoring early, taking a 12-5 lead into half. The final 30 minutes of the game saw exciting scores from both sides, but the Storm weathered on and won convincingly, 24-19, to capture 5th place overall in the AA tournament!

Congratulations to all the 23 boys on our senior squad. And, it was a great final victory for our five Grade 12s, Drew Coles, Nick Collett, Leland Pope, Tim Stephens and Nick Tennant. These boys have been a solid core for the program, and upon their leadership and skill, our team was able to reach new heights.

I would also like to thank Mr. Chris Collett, as his guidance and leadership in coaching our boys has been invaluable over the many years that he has dedicated to building our program. With his son, Nick, graduating, it was an extremely satisfying season to witness the culmination of all that he has contributed to rugby at Southridge School.

And, finally, I would like to thank all the parents for their support of Southridge Rugby. It is a tough and hard sport, with the boys arriving home from training and games, tired, hungry, dirty, but always satisfied and happy with their accomplishment on the pitch. I am immensely proud of these young men - they are the model of what we strive for in building character at Southridge School.

Well done, boys! Go Storm.

Mr. Paul Doig, Rugby Coach
Upper Division Coordinator

Ascendance: A Collection of Dystopian Fiction

In April and May, our Writing 12 class had the opportunity to work with Danika Dinsmore, author of *Faerie Tales from the White Forest*, on a speculative fiction project that was funded, in part, by Artstarts, a not-for-profit organization that brings professional artists into BC schools for performances, workshops, residencies and exhibitions.

After exploring the various genres that are contained within the world of speculative fiction, the students were challenged to explore the possibilities of writing a dystopian short story to explore a social justice theme. As their ideas started to take shape, Danika challenged the students to undertake a series of pre-writing tasks that, eventually, culminated in the creation of fourteen original and inspiring works of dystopian fiction. If you would like to share in my amazement at the quality of the work that our Writing 12 students completed this year, please see the attached PDF file and enjoy, "Ascendance: A Collection of Dystopian Fiction." Special credit must be given to the brilliant and amazing Mike Zhang, who created the cover art for this publication.

As this year comes to a close, and the Writing 12 class is about to leave Room 222 for the last time, I would also like to address the students by publicly acknowledging that it has been an absolute pleasure to work with you this year. You are courageous, creative, compassionate and smart human beings who fully understand the power of both the written and the spoken work to move, not just mountains, but people.

As you take your passion for writing into the world, think of these words from Barbara Kingsolver, “*Don’t try to figure out what other people want to hear from you; figure out what you have to say. It’s the one and only thing you have to offer.*”

I will miss you and I wish you all the best.

Ms. Gail Robinson
English Curriculum Leader

Kettle Valley Railway Biking Trip

Last week marked the end of the Outdoor Ed year. The bikers on the KVR biking trip arrived back at the school in the afternoon a week ago Sunday. The trip was, as usual, fantastic! The views were spectacular and you couldn’t have asked for better weather. The route in which students went was different from that of last year, and there has been lots of positive feedback on this route. This trip was a four day biking trip mainly going through the Myra canyon, with Penticton as the final destination. Some of the photographically inclined students took some amazing pictures throughout the trip. One of the most amazing opportunities was at the Chute Lake campsite where we were able to capture some pictures during the meteor shower that night. The final excursion of the year was the stand-up paddle boarding, which we did on Thursdays. This was the first year that this had been done and it was a smashing success! Students came every week with rave reviews! This was definitely a great addition to the Outdoor Education Program and will continue on next year.

On another note, anyone wishing to use trips at the start of next year for their Duke of Edinburgh award must complete a practice journey prior to going on the trip. This means that you will probably need to do your practice journey during the summer, so please plan accordingly. More information will be given at the start of next year, to those who are interested. The dates of the trips are as follows:

Hiking - Mr. Dods:

Dates: September 13th – 16th

Location: This trip has gone to Garibaldi many times in past years. The location is still being determined but may go to Garibaldi or somewhere similar.

Duke of Ed: Qualifies for Silver

Canoeing - Mr. Burrage:

Dates: September 25th - 29th

Location: In the past, this trip has generally gone to Ross Lake. This location is still to be announced at this point, but there are some great contenders.

Duke of Ed: Qualifies for Gold (Available for current Grade 10 and 11 students doing Duke of Edinburgh Gold)

I hope everyone has a great summer!

Jake Strecker
Outdoor Ed Steward

News for Both Schools

Uniform Shop News

Protection from the sun! Our new Era hats are now available in both Royal and Black.

Reminder, if you need ties, blazers, shorts or shirts from the uniform shop for year-end ceremonies, please come see us before we close our doors for summer on Tuesday, June 17th!

Don't forget our hours of operation are Monday to Thursday:

7:45 – 9:00 mornings

2:00 – 4:00 afternoons

Barb Collett
Southridge School Uniform Shop
604-542-2337

Southridge Event Videos Now Online!

As we all know, Southridge is a very busy place. We attempt to capture as many of our events and activities as possible in photos and video. One of the benefits of summer is that we hire a Southridge alum to be a summer video intern and their role is to edit the many videos that accumulate over the year that I don't have time to edit and put online. Arjun Hair (2012) is this year's summer video intern and he has already edited a number of videos that are now ready for your review. Here is a list of the videos and the links to their respective pages that you can send to friends and family to view as well. You will need a high speed internet link to view the videos.

Café Concerto

http://www.southridge.bc.ca/events/2014-05-28_cafe_concerto/index.aspx

Senior School Speech Day

http://www.southridge.bc.ca/events/2014-03-11_speech_day/index.aspx

An Evening in December – Senior Concert

http://www.southridge.bc.ca/events/2013-12-12_an_evening_in_december/index.aspx

Dr. Vanessa Lapointe - Anxiety 101

http://www.southridge.bc.ca/events/2014-02-19_dr_vanessa_lapointe/index.aspx

Dr. David Helfand - Changing the Face of Education

http://www.southridge.bc.ca/events/2014-03-05_dr_david_helfand/index.aspx

Jazz Studies 10 at Blue Frog Studio

http://www.southridge.bc.ca/events/2014-04-16_jazz_studies_10_at_blue_frog_studio/index.aspx

PYP Exhibition

http://www.southridge.bc.ca/events/2014-05-15_pyp_exhibition/index.aspx

Enjoy!

Alan McInnes

Manager, Web and AV Services

Southridge Examination Schedule

June 2014

Students will write their examinations in the Gym with the exception of those students who are authorized to write in the alternate setting. Southridge examinations are designed to be completed in under 2 hours but students may take up to 3 hours to complete any examination. **Please remember to return all your books prior to the examination. Please return your laptop, including charger and backpack, to Mr. Latta immediately after your last examination. Summer dress with blazer is mandatory.**

MORNING EXAMS:

Advisor Groups: 8:05 am

Assembly: 8:10 am

Exam Begins: 8:30 am

AFTERNOON EXAMS:

Assembly: 12:15pm

Exam Begins: 12:30 pm

8:30am Start	Friday June 6	Monday June 9	Tuesday June 10	Wednesday June 11	Thursday June 12
8	ENGLISH 8	SOCIALS 8			MATH 8 & MATH 8 (Accelerated)
9	ENGLISH 9	MATH 9	SOCIALS 9		FRENCH 9
10	ENGLISH 10 (Literary Essay)	MATH 10 (Mock Provincial exam)	FRENCH 10	SCIENCE 10 (Mock provincial exam)	SOCIALS 10
11	SOCIALS 11 (Mock Provincial exam)	PRE-CALCULUS 11	ENGLISH 11	CHEM 11/11H	PHYSICS 11/11H
12	CHEM 12	PRE-CALCULUS 12	HISTORY 12	PHYSICS 12	CALCULUS 12 FONDATIONS of MATH 12 (ALL CHAIRS & DESKS RETURNED)
12:30pm Start.					
10			<u>Math 10 Exam Return</u> Rooms 240, 236, 235	<u>Science 10 Exam Return</u> Rooms 112, 114, 116, 118	<u>ATHLETIC BANQUET</u>
11	FRENCH 11	BIOLOGY 11 (2hrs) A. Szymczak Practical Lab Exam 116	BIOLOGY 11 (Hons) Gym	<u>Social Studies 11 Exam Return *</u> Rooms 200, 210, 202	
12	FRENCH 12		BIOLOGY 12 A.Szymczak	ECONOMICS 12 SPANISH 11/12	

*Students writing Economics 12 and Spanish 11/12 should go to Room 200 after their exam.

BC Provincial Examinations 2014

Date	08:30 AM – 10:30am * (*Students may take up to 3 hours to complete)	1:00PM – 3:00pm*
Monday, June 16	Math10 (E-exam)	
Wednesday, June 18	Science10 (E-exam)	
Thursday, June 19	English 10 (E & P exam)	Social Studies 11(E & P exam)
Friday, June 20	English 12 (E & P exam) *	NB. 4:00pm Commencement

*Please note this exam will commence at 08:00am



SOUTHRIDGE SCHOOL

Final Examination Policy, Senior School

MORNING EXAM SCHEDULE:

7:55 – 8:05am	Faculty distribute exams in the exam hall (gym)
8:05 – 8:10am	Advisory
8:10 – 8:20am	Assembly in the Great Hall
8:20 – 8:25am	Student Book Return
8:25 - 8:29am	Students enter the exam hall (gym) in silence
8:30am	Exams begin

AFTERNOON EXAM SCHEDULE:

12:00 – 12:10pm	Faculty distribute exams in the exam hall (gym)
12:10 – 12:15pm	Student Book Return
12:15 – 12:25pm	Assembly in the Great Hall
12:25 – 12:29pm	Students enter the exam hall (gym) in silence
12:30pm	Exams begin

EXAM INSTRUCTIONS:

Students

- 1) Unless otherwise specified, exams will be written in the senior school gymnasium. Only students with prior approval of the Senior School Academic Program Director, and the requisite documentation, can write in the alternate setting (room 120).
- 2) Students must bring the appropriate writing implements and calculators where applicable. Soft pencils are required for filling in SCANTRON sheets. Pencils will NOT be supplied.
- 3) Full school uniform (summer or winter) with blazer is required at all exams.
- 4) Unless in distress, students are not allowed to visit the washroom during an exam period. If necessary, an invigilator must accompany such exits.
- 5) An exemplary standard of honesty is expected. Notes of any kind (on paper, hand, arm etc.) are not allowed. Talking during an exam is unacceptable and any infraction of examination protocol will result in serious academic penalties outlined in the school's Academic Integrity Policy.
- 6) All requests for re-scheduling of exams must be arranged through the Senior School Academic Program Director.
- 7) No student is required to write more than two exams per day. Although every attempt has been made to avoid conflicts, it is the specific responsibility of each student to make the Senior School Academic Program Director aware of any conflicts in a timely manner.

- 8) In the event of illness, it is the responsibility of the student and his/her parents to contact the Senior School Academic Program Director or the Head of the Senior School prior to the exam.

Faculty

- 1) Exam invigilators must take attendance at the beginning of the morning and afternoon examinations and bring it promptly to senior reception.
- 2) Faculty of the subjects being examined must be in the exam hall for the beginning of the exam (for questions and/or problems) and at the end of the exam for the collection of their students' papers.

ENTRY:

Students

- 1) Students are required to enter the exam hall IN SILENCE and remain silent for the duration of the exam.
- 2) Students are advised to leave their cell phones and electronic devices at home. Those who bring them to school must, on immediate entry to the exam hall, place them in the containers provided.
- 3) Students must promptly go to their assigned seats and keep their exams face down until the Senior School Academic Program Director or Head of the Senior School gives the signal to begin.

Faculty

- 1) The Senior School Academic Program Director or Head of the Senior School will commence all exams.

DISMISSAL:

Students

- 1) Students are not allowed to leave the exam until 1 hour and 30 minutes have passed, after which point, dismissals will occur at 15 minute intervals.
- 2) When students have finished their exams, they must raise their hands to have their exam papers collected.
- 3) No student is dismissed until his or her exam has been collected.
- 4) When the allotted exam time is over, students must remain silent and seated until all exams have been collected.

Faculty

- 1) A table is placed at the back of the gym and labelled by grade, class section and teacher for ease of exam collection.

Ascendance

A Collection of Dystopian Fiction



Ascendance: A Collection of Dystopian Fiction

LEAP – Drew Coles.....	3
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After the world is abandoned by humankind for broader horizons, one man has a chance encounter with a strange young boy that changes not only his life, but the fate of humanity itself.

Full Circle – Katelyn Ball.....	9
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In a world where resources run low and the divide between the rich and the poor is ever present, one misguided flight captain must find a new planet in order for humanity to flourish.

The 99% – Aaron Basi.....	15
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Today, the 99% grow tired of the unfairness of the economic system. Through democracy, they turn America upside down and one man does what he must to ensure his family's survival.

Flight 370 – Sarah Grimm.....	18
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When a boy is sent back in time, he must face the difficult choice of whether to kill Hitler, and become a murderer, or save the friend he has come to know.

Tiranico – Kara Van Donkersgoed.....	24
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Where pirates rule, a group of rebels secretly plot to overthrow them by growing back the valuable trees that the pirates have stolen.

Prossimo – Jill Brockman.....	30
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A young woman, delirious of her addiction to technology and social media, discovers a book that changes her perspective.

Hazel Barrier – Alka Batta.....	34
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Where gender roles are taken to the extreme, an ambitious eighteen year old girl attempts to avoid prejudice and protect her dreams before being transported to the outside world.

Ascendance: A Collection of Dystopian Fiction

Endless Space – Geena Dhaliwal 37

Against the face of reigning terrorism, a clever eighteen year old girl defies hijackers who use hostages to build a destructive intergalactic weapon.

23 – Brent Mosher..... 39

A young boy and his father struggle to change the status quo of New New York athletes as they battle not only an oppressive government but their own consciences.

The Runner – Austin Chang..... 43

In a world where the impoverished are hunted for sport, a young boy’s resolve to put others before himself is pushed to the limit.

Trinitas – Amrit Bhurji..... 46

A girl is brutally ripped away from her mother and father at a young age and is harshly thrown into the current world of cruelty and dehydration where she ends up discovering a deeply hidden truth that she never could have imagined existed.

Numbers – Mike Zhang..... 50

Two brothers struggle against their fates as their lives start to countdown to the end.

Choices, choices – Sami McBryer..... 57

They set in place an ultimatum – your family and your home, or your boyfriend.

Libertas – Abby Wells..... 59

In an unfortunate patriarchal world, two sisters endeavor to change the future with an act of rebellion against thousands of years of tradition.

LEAP

Drew Coles

In the end it was not a malfunction or breakdown that took down the machine, but a small, pale rock.

*

The man sat in a well-worn metal chair, feet propped lazily up on his desk, while he sipped his coffee absentmindedly; barely tasting the bitter bite it brought. The chair itself was a piece of history, the once-bright silver seat worn down to the harsh copper layer underneath, the lettering on the back which read *Argo Enterprises* faded down to just *go Enter*. A deep sigh originated in the man's chest and slowly crept its way along his throat to his mouth where it culminated in an exhausted yawn; it was another monotonous day on LEAP.

The machine at which he sat seemed to sigh along with him as it continued going about its various tasks. *All Systems Normal* read the monitor above his desk. The man looked out the window, if you can call the heavily reinforced polycarbonate porthole a window, to his left and attempted to estimate how long he had left in his shift.

About 35 degrees to the north-west is the Earth, he thought to himself, around one tenth of a cycle before rotation.

The man knew all too well the joys of rotation; when the Shepherds would arrive and notify him that his shift was done and bring in the next Custodian to watch over the machine. He could then return to his own habitation quarters and grab some much needed rest. Rest that would be so rudely interrupted when another flock of Shepherds would come to notify him of his next task; such was the life of a Custodian on LEAP.

Why couldn't I have been born a Tender, he pondered regretfully to himself, then I could spend my days cultivating the tree-beds that supplied their oxygen. Or a Keeper, their maintenance duties, although difficult, could at least provide something to occupy a person's time.

But no, the man was not a Tender, or a Keeper, and especially not a Shepherd. He was a Custodian and as a Custodian his task was to keep an ever vigilant eye on the precious machine he so carelessly sat at.

Pssh, the man scoffed, *precious* and *vigilant*. The two words tasted bitter in his mouth, they were the polar-opposite of what he believed his post to be. The *precious* machine in front of him did nothing but suck energy and flash *All Systems Normal*. Almost as little as those bastard Pioneers ever did for him and his fellow workers.

Ever since the discovery of the basis for LEAP technology from unidentified materials on the moon, there have been people like the Pioneers; people that do nothing but take. In fact the project-lead at the once prestigious NASA, who was in-charge of the famous Apollo 12 mission that made the discovery, had this exact mindset. Instead of listening to the reasonable voices telling him to use it for furthering mankind's scientific journey, he gave in to the cries of the public for its commercial use and sold the rights to a shrewd engineer and business-man by the name of William L. Bailey. Mr. Bailey founded Argo Enterprises and immediately poured all his resources into researching and developing LEAP for widespread use as an intergalactic transportation system. For a small fee of \$3,500,000 you could join the select few in humanity's expansion into the universe and live a prosperous life on one of the newly discovered hospitable bio-planets.

That worked out well, the man thought with a mocking smirk on his face, pretty soon every man from the powerful to the penniless were finding their way onto the emigration lists; often through not entirely legal means. By the year 2029 half of Earth's population had left for bigger and better things, by 2040 seventy-five percent were gone, and finally, in this year of 2074, the only people were remaining were the Argo executives who resided in what was once the United States of America, and the inhabitants of LEAP.

The man was shaken from his train of thought with a beeping coming from the machine's monitor. Normally a beep here or there would be no cause for alarm to the man; however this beeping was steady, rapid and incessant.

Odd, he thought to himself, that's not a noise I've heard before.

Taking his feet off the desk and pushing aside his coffee, the man reached inside his stationary overhead compartment and retrieved a thick yellow book labelled *Linear Expulsion and Accelerated Propulsion - Custodian's Manual*.

Flicking through the pages thick with age and neglect, he searched for the section describing the machine's various notifications and alerts.

"You've got to be kidding," the man says with disbelief. There was information on the meaning of three alarms then a flat tone or six claps and a siren but nowhere in the entire chapter was there any mention of a rapid, consistent beeping.

The man threw down the book in frustration and thrust his head into his hands. If this noise did not cease immediately he was going to lose his mind! He stared down at the floor where the manual had landed spine-down and noticed it had opened to the back pages where the *Notes* section was located. Picking it up apologetically, he brought it closer and upon further inspection discovered two small inscriptions on the top right-hand corner of the page.

Beep – Repeated, High-Frequency, Consistent read the top line. So someone else noticed this noise, the man puzzled, maybe they'll know a solution. He read the next line:

Backflow

One word sat there staring him in the face, judging him and his sanity.

Backflow, he puzzled to himself, what on this godforsaken rock could that mean? That term never came up during my Custodian training.

The man flipped the manual over to check who it belonged too and let out a short, sharp gasp as his eyes fell on the name scribbled into the bottom corner.

William L. Bailey

But that can't be, the man gaped, this book cannot have belonged to him; the man who built this station, the man that organized the emigration of eight billion people, the very man that created and engineered the LEAP technology.

As the man sat in his worn-down chair staring dumbfounded at his hands, he failed to notice the commotion going on at the machine's entrance to his right. A bright red light had begun to flash above the air-lock and the beeping grew ever intense. There was a loud pop, a sharp hiss and the air crackled with the smell of roasted chestnuts.

Before he even had a chance to register what was happening, the doors to the air-lock flew open in a brilliant flash of light and the man was thrown to the ground by a shockwave of heat and sound. Coughing and sputtering the man slowly regained his feet while being very aware of the sharp pain in his right side. But he did not feel this pain because, standing in front of him, with long brown hair and piercing green eyes, was a little boy.

The man rubbed his eyes vigorously and shook his head but no matter how hard he tried he could not shake the image of this boy at which he was staring. This can't be real, he reassured himself, you just had a bad batch of coffee and it's gone to your head.

"Excuse me," the boy uttered in a voice not unlike a small bird, "But could you please tell me where I am?"

The man by now had abandoned all attempts at regaining sanity and decided to just indulge in this very realistic dream he was obviously having.

"You are on LEAP," replied the man and suddenly he is aware of who he is talking to, "I mean, err, you do know what LEAP is right?"

The boy shook his head and tilted it inquisitively to the right.

"Well you see young man," the man continued, "LEAP is stationed on the moon, it is a space-station and it is where I live. Where do you live?"

The little boy sat puzzled at the man's words for a minute before replying "I'm not sure what a moon is but my sister tells me I live in a place called Odyssey." He fumbled over the last word, it's meaning clearly lost on his young mind.

"And how did you get here?" the man asked.

"I'm not sure," the boy replied, "I was helping sister with her fuel-duties and we were putting the week's harvest into our exporter when all of a sudden there was a bright light and a big noise and now I'm here."

Harvest? the man wondered to himself, is he some sort of farmer?

It was now that the man noticed how the little boy was dressed. His clothes, if you could call them clothes, seemed to be the remnants of a vegetable sack sewn together into a ramshackle tunic, while his shoes were two cardboard boxes flattened and tied loosely to his feet. The mats in his hair and dirt smeared across his face gave this young boy of about nine-years old the look of a time-worn old man. What kind of life does this kid live? he wondered.

"Does everyone you know dress like that?" he asked.

"Well yes they do, it's all we have to wear. The Shepherds take everything else that we can make." The boy said, staring sheepishly down at the floor.

Shepherds, thought the man, now that's a name I know.

"And what do these Shepherds make you do?"

The boy looked at the man as if he had two-heads and took a minute to collect his thoughts before replying: "They take the harvest."

"And who does this harvest go to?"

The boy looked up at the man with round, full-eyes like a puppy dog and took a moment before stammering out "The top."

The man, his interest peaked by the young boy's vagueness, was about to question him further but stopped himself as he noticed the upset look splashed across his face. He motioned for the boy to sit in his chair and crossed the room to get him a cup of water. He was not used to dealing with children, child-bearing being prohibited for anyone but the Shepherds; but he had to decipher the puzzle that is this boy's life.

Moving over towards him, the man kneeled down and slowly began to coax the truth from the boy's timid mind.

After a few painful, tedious minutes of gentle interrogation, the man began to piece together the grim-reality of this boy's life. He was born, raised and spent his whole life on the Argo colony of Odyssey, located 7000 light-years away in the Eagle Nebula. Here the inhabitants of the colony

spent their numbered days toiling in the planetary mines for a precious resource they call ‘fuel’ which they would then be forced to hand over to the Shepherds in return for food and water rations. The whole operation was over watched by a group of people that the boy would simply refer to as ‘The Top’ and nothing more.

The man slumped on the desk in an overwhelming heap of enlightenment as the reality of this boy’s life dawned on him.

The Pioneers were not sent to expand humanity’s horizons, he realized, they were sent to a life of slavery. William L. Bailey had used mankind’s naïve and eager lust for expansion to his advantage, sending billions of people to the farthest reaches of the galaxy where they were forced into labour with no way back; all the while reaping the various planetary resources for himself and his close group of executives to consume on their own private earth.

If there is no way back through LEAP, the man thought to himself, then how did this boy get here?

He once again began questioning the boy, however this time it was of the moments before he was sent to this station. The child, who initially could not recall anything from his experience, slowly began to remember the incident. He had been hoisting the weeks’ worth of fuel into what he called the exporter, a household sized LEAP system capable of transporting goods back to earth, when he accidentally kicked a rock into the gap between the door and the machine. The system’s gravitational pull seized the boy, transporting him instantly to the lunar LEAP station instead of its regular destination.

The man, overcome with the exhaustive burden of truth, fell to the ground with a great sigh. What was he to do now? Surely this madness must be brought to light.

That is when his eye fell on the object lying inconspicuously to his right. At first he thought it might be a piece of debris left from the shockwave that shook the room upon the boy’s arrival, however upon further inspection he realized that it truly was.

The rock that jammed the door.

The man reached over and picked it up, eyeing its every feature; the sheer weight and density it felt in his hand, the small film of dust that covered its yellowed surface and the dull luminescence it seemed to give off in the darkly light LEAP station. Then it hit him.

If this rock could bring that little boy from his homeland to our station, he thought deeply, then perhaps its purpose could be duplicated.

Rising from his defeated position on the floor, the man hurried to his desk, gently removed the little boy from his seat and placed him on the desk corner. The boy was confused by this hurried flurry of activity but did not question the look of determination in the man's face. His hands flying over the controls, the man watched the monitor as he began to put in calibrations for an emergency emigration. The machine hissed and began to come alive as its intricate circuits woke from a deep slumber, sighing like an old man getting out of bed. The monitor flashed the words *Calibration Complete – Expulsion in 10, 9, 8...* and as it counted down these final seconds, the man stood up, rock in hand, ready to deliver his small yet important package.

The number reached zero and as the lights on the air-lock flashed rapidly, he thrust the rock forward, lodging it in the now widening gap between his room and the machine's transportation chamber. The system shuddered and shook as it tried to dislodge the foreign object from its body, yet no matter how hard it tried the rock would not budge. It had worked.

Now, the man thought nervously to himself, we wait.

A minute went by, then ten minutes, an hour, the man growing increasingly agitated as each moment passed. He sat in his desk with the boy beside him, wondering if he had just made a huge mistake, when a huge noise rocked him from his seat. A flash of light filled the room and the man felt a familiar wave of sound and heat pass over him. Hoping for the best, he looked up from his position on the floor and smiled at what, or who, stood before him.

"Sister!" cried the boy as he leapt from the desk and ran into the girl's arms. The two figures stood embraced for what seem like a millennium before separating with broad grins slung across their faces. The girl gripped her brother's hand tightly and turn to the man who had just gotten to his feet.

"Were you responsible for my coming here?" asked the girl politely.

The man nodded nervously, unable to speak due to the shock in seeing his experiment's unlikely success.

"Well I thank you deeply," the girl replied courtly and turned to her brother, "the others have heard of your journey and are preparing themselves for one of their own."

"This is it then," the man breathes with a sense of certainty, "soon everything will change."

The girl smiled at him warmly and grabbed his hand with her callused yet tender hands, "yes, yes it will... and I believe this belongs to you?" she removed her hands from his.

And there, lying deceptively innocent in his palm,
Was a small, pale rock.

Full Circle

Katelyn Ball

The Captain took a final glance of his apartment. Dim natural light streamed through the large windows, highlighting the small glimpses of diamond in the polished mahogany. The rainbow reflections danced around the space. With his hands in his pockets, he stepped into the master bedroom. His lips curled when his mind drifted to the memories made in this room. The chandelier dripping with crystal that stayed lifted above his bed was not as striking as the countless women who dozed under its sheets. All at once, the Captain was content. He was aware his life was one of great odds, however he felt as though he deserved it. Every hour of indulgence drenched euphoria he engaged in was perfectly matched with a days worth of rigorous training, flight simulating and skill testing that pushed his mind and body to daring limits. He was surprised he made it this far.

The sharp call from the buzzer in the foyer knocked the Captain out of the nostalgic daze. The signal meant the driver was downstairs, ready to take the captain to the airport. His prior calmness was quickly chased from his mind by an anxious twist of his stomach. “This is normal” The Captain quickly calculated. Without another notion, he composed himself, flipped on his shoes and exited through the wooden french doors. “This is normal,” he repeated, as his slacks made contact with heated leather seat. It was his last day on earth after all.

After pulling out of the driveway, it didn't take long for the Captain's silver plated lifestyle to be tarnished by the reality of normal civilization. Small cotton huts, trading posts, and a surplus of beggars bound the streets that connected the Captain's house to the airport. A photochemical gaze gently blanketed the slums. Even though everyone on the street seemed to be immersed in a daunting task or conflict, they all popped their heads over their clutter by the sound of a working engine. All at once, the Captain appreciated his tinted windows, and the car's steel plated locks.

Like any other day, the driver kept quiet as he weaved through the disorder of people on the road. His dark sunglasses made him anonymous. The Captain was aware of the fact that the driver was instructed not to make conversation, but he always assumed he would of made the odd comment over the 17 years of loyal service.

When the driver made the familiar turn into the airport's parking lot, tearing away from the improvised streets, The Captain realized this was the end of his mortality. The few people that could pick him out of a crowd will soon be informed that he perished in a flight simulation. A dignified end to a noble life, he concluded. By the time he could reflect on the creation of his

virtual demise, a condensed group of officials circled the car. They assisted the driver with a single suitcase from the trunk, and then opened the Captain's door.

"Welcome Captain, did you follow the initial preparation plan enclosed in the departure package?" A suit and tie stated distantly.

"I wouldn't dare not to," The Captain joked. "I completely understand each and every word printed on the page, and I plan on following through, besides, the future of humanity depends on me right?"

One of the officials pushed out a snicker. "Well, you can think of it that way, but we all prefer not to."

Even though the Captain was reassured that his journey was completely fool proof, he still imitated by the sheer magnitude of what he was about to do. Nevertheless, the Captain never dared to showcase his apprehensions. Being cool, calm and collected was essential for this mission.

In a matter of minutes, the Captain was filed into cardboard box of a room filled to the brim with people in white jumpsuits. They were all buzzing with anticipation.

"Alright people," Said an Official, "Meet your Captain. He is here to fly the ship, keep you safe, and establish an initial campsite once you arrive at your destination. Say hello."

35 white jumpsuits faced the Captain's way. Admiration sourced from their faced reflected off the Captain's. It fueled his anxiety.

"When do we fly?" An adolescent voice piped from the crowd.

"In a matter of hours, sweetheart, stay patient." Soothed an official.

The official then turned to the Captain. "Would you like to say a few words?"

Without thinking twice, the Captain stepped in front of the officials and cleared his throat, along with his trepidations. He trained his whole life for this sort of leadership, he knew he was ready.

"All right folks, I will make this short and sweet, we have a long journey ahead. The training, planning and technology that were put into this project is finally going to reach its peak potential, and I couldn't be more elated. It's an honor to say I am the Captain of the first attempt of human extension. Every hour spent preparing will soon be worth it, I promise. Just remember, no matter what happens to the present earth, we will be the ones to ensure a bright future for mankind. And what a pleasure that is."

The speech stole the attention of every person in the cardboard room. Their hopeful eyes drenched the with honor. Without any other communication, the officials migrated the Captain to the door of the plane, and he took a final breath of earth air. The air he breathed in and out each

and every day wasn't the fresh rich oxygen he read about in the history books. This air was ripped of its riches by the greedy hands of humanity, leaving an absence in his lungs. At this moment, he knew it was time to leave. He bid his last farewell to the inexpressive officials, and stepped into the ship.

While flying, the Captain searched the control panel for anything he didn't recognize, but came up with nothing. The flight simulations he had done countless times back on earth proved identical to the actual experience, making his job simply routine. He decided to turn on the flight control and stretch his legs. Only after three hours the constant sitting took its toll. He peered through the window positioned behind his seat that showcased the cockpit. Like him, the people in the white jumpsuits were more or less loners back on planet earth. Each had trained for a different purpose, while keeping a low profile to repel suspicion. After making eye contact with an elderly woman, and waving at a youngster, the Captain let out an impatient sigh and headed back to his seat.

The Captain awoke to the flashing orange lights, signaling it was time to land the plane. He remained calm as he clicked the necessary buttons for safe docking procedure. The next few hours will be tough, he concluded. Scouting out the available resources, organizing the group and setting up base camp can present problems. If all goes well, he thought, they would make a home out of this new planet by sunset. The plane automatically sensed a clearing in the foliage to land. Automatic test results supported the presence of an earth like magnetic field, temperature and air composition. The Captain let the plane do its mighty job.

The wheels met the ground with a discomforting jerk of the cockpit. The Captain heard the passengers stir with impatient hope. In a matter of seconds, the ship had halted, and the clicking of seatbelts resonated throughout the space. The Captain opened the door that connected the control center to the cockpit.

“Alright people, we are finally here. The tests came out positive, meaning we are good to exit the plane. Remember, every trait this planet possesses is the same as the natural earth we just departed from. The natural wonders and dangers are ever present. I will now open the doors. Everyone in the ship rose from their seats to get a good look at their new, unspoiled home. However the oxygen rich air that the Captain had expected wasn't present. As he peered out the door to take a deep breath, his lungs filled with smog.

His feet hit the ground and billows of sand wafted into his nostrils. A new, hotter sun beat down on him. Where were the lush trees, and vast oceans? The plentiful resources not yet spoiled by man? He scanned the landscape looking for answers. All that came to eye was a rusted landscape, blanketed by a haze of photochemical smog

He started to choke.

Shortly after, the passengers started to jump from the plane take it in for themselves. Children started to wail, as mothers covered their tiny, moist mouths with the bottoms of their jumpsuits. An elderly woman collapsed. The Captain looked back at the plane and ran towards the control centre. He rapidly clicked the communication buttons to bring in some sort of sign of aid from planet earth. However, there was nothing of the sort. Connections were naturally supposed to fail half way through the journey; an attempt to communicate would be a lost cause. No such simulation could of prepared The Captain his situation. He collapsed into his leather chair and buried his head into his hands.

“Excuse me.” A weathered voice piped up from the entrance of the ship. The Captain lifted his head, and jumped towards far side of the control centre. A small, leathery face boy with long black hair popped up from under the plane. The Captain stared for a few seconds, and believed he was hallucinating. However, the boys hot breath was felt through his slacks.

“Please come with me, I can help you if you want.” The boy pleaded, in an accent unrecognizable to the Captain. He nerved his way to the cockpit door, and opened it to reveal an empty interior. Every passenger had exited the plane, and was too busy adapting their new environment to realize the presence of this small, extra terrestrial human. The Captain then stared at the small-shriveled boy, and made his decision. He placed his finger to his own lips and exited the scene without a sound.

The small boy ran fast but the Captains lungs prohibited him to take deep meaningful breaths. The hazy soot that danced around his face caused limited vision, making the boy merely a silhouette at times. However, the Captain quickly followed. He could not bear to be alone.

The Captain never thought of his passengers again. In the wake of a failed mission, he could not grasp the composure needed to lead the large group.

After following the boy for several minutes, he saw multiple silhouettes seated in a circle. The boy quickly took his hand, and led him to the group. When the Captain came closer, a startling scene appeared. Around ten other humans, alike the little boy, were sitting around each other eating the flesh of some poor, scrawny animal. Each face was scarred and calloused, hair matted up and down their faces in irregular patterns. The women wore no tops, and their breast hung like beaver tails. The Captain immediately realized the mistake of following the boy, as each buckskin-like body rose at the sight of him. He quickly started to back up, but the little boy tripped him backwards

“Welcome,” Commanded one of the leathery humans over the cowering Captain. The human held out a charred hand, and helped the Captain back to his feet.

“Why are you here?” The Captain asked in exasperation. “This was supposed to be new planet, a new start! Why are you here?”

A man stepped in front of the small crowd. His eyes were the only white part on his body, small and watery. His face was stained pitch black with dirt.

“I assume you’re the Captain.” He blankly stated.

“Yes”

“We have a lot to fill you in on, please sit down.”

The Captain took a seat around the small circle and kept eye contact with the small watery irises. He was too afraid to look anywhere else.

“Groups of ‘pioneers’ have come to this planet hoping for a new start. A chance to make humanity change for the better, an extension of life. However, this is sadly not the case, my son.”

The Captain was astounded, not only by the knowledge his man held, but of the calmness set into his voice. He had made this speech many times before, he quickly concluded. The Captain continued to listen.

“Humans have been doing what you just accomplished for thousands of years, finding a new planet, stripping its resources, and moving on. I’m afraid to say it’s just a part of human nature now.”

In a state of utter panic, the Captain quickly got up and dug his feet into the sandy earth

“You mean to tell me, this has happened before? I have never in my life heard of other human extensions, let alone hundreds. Now you tell me truly what’s going on!”

The two small irises enclosed in the black skin drifted to the ground and back up again. The man took a large breath.

“Three thousand years ago, we all assume, is when the first Captain did the noble deed of performing the first human extension, and departing from this original earth. Our ancestors were unaware at the time, of course, as the government wouldn’t want impoverished people to gain knowledge of a better life on another planet. Since then, over 7 Captains just like you have accidentally landed on this earth, and were shocked to see a world in which humans had already destroyed. At least in our small group, all of us have come to the conclusion that humans have spoilt every planet spoilable, and have made a full circle.”

The Captain was dumbfounded. Why wasn’t he enlightened on the full ordeal of the situation? Why didn’t they warn him this would happen?

“I don’t understand,” The Captain said in an fearful tone, “Where is a government official I can talk to.”

The old man chuckled. “From what we gather, no proper leadership has been put in place for the last 300 years. After the first Captain returned in search of a new life, the government dissolved. So many people had perished from the gluttonous actions of past humans that it just didn’t seem necessary. There weren’t enough people to lead.”

The Captain looked around, and wafted his hand through the chemical haze. It was thick. He couldn’t quite capture the magnitude of his situation in his mind, as he continued to stare blankly into the liquid irises. Shortly after, he fainted from lack of oxygen.

The Captain spent in 60th birthday hunting squirrels. No longer a man of admiration, he wore nothing more than a pair of cut off slacks. His lungs had become hard with calluses. After many hours of searching he hadn’t made any progress, and he decided to turn back to the group. Before he could turn around however, the not so small boy who had saved him from his ship so many years ago was dancing at his feet.

“Yes son, what is it? Can’t you see I’m busy?” The man lied.

“You have to come back to camp, the others need you!”

Never in the 7 long years living on the original earth has the Captain been needed for anything. He was lucky that the group took him in as one of their own. Without another word, the little boy pivoted and started running back to the camp.

“What is it?” The Captain repeated as he picked up his pace.

“A ship just like yours landed close to the camp,” the boy said with excitement, “A new Captain has arrived!”

The 99%

Aaron Basi

“Tomorrow is the day of the big election eh, Trevor? Who are you gonna vote for?” said Jim.

“That even a question, Jimmy? Obviously, the Red Party. I am so flippin’ tired of all this bullshit. Paul and Tim was workin’ here for over twenty-five years and they have the balls to kick him to the curb like that. It just ain’t right, Jim” I said as I swung my pickaxe at the rock with all the force I possibly could.

“Yeah! Let’s tax the hell out of these corporate buggers. It’s about time they see what it feels like to be like the rest of us. This is America and this is a democracy and there is a hell of a lot more of us than them”, said Neal.

I grabbed my pickaxe and thrust it into the air “F*** the rich.”

Suddenly 20 other miners in unison raised their pickaxes and yelled “f*** the rich.” They proceeded to swing their pickaxes back down at their respective rocks with full force creating an echo so loud that probably fifteen bats woke up from their nocturnal slumber and filled the air with their shrill cries.

The second swing at the rock by the crew also happened to be in unison. The third swing, however, proved to be fatal. The rocks above Jim, Neal and I began to shift. Our ear protection is virtually soundproof so we could not hear the rocks shifting. Nick, from across the mine, yelled toward us, “Rock slide! Run guys!”

Before we could process what Nick was saying, the rocks came crashing down at high speeds striking Jim to the ground. “Nooo, Jim!!!”, I yelled as I instantly dropped to the ground grabbing and throwing rocks behind me as I tried to unbury Jim. The others rushed to help me. When we got to him, however, he was already dead.

One week after the funeral, Neal and I decided to go for drinks. Neither of us have been to work this week, we don’t even know if we can ever go back.

“How could this happen?” said Neal as he swigged back a glass of beer.

“I will tell you exactly how it happened. Those rich bastards won’t pay us the money we deserve, we have awful working conditions, and they are overriding our union whenever they bloody please”, I said.

“I am so glad the Red Party won the election. The 85% tax on the rich will change everything”, said Neal.

“Yeah, the future doesn’t look half bad Neal”, I said.

I picked up a rock the size of a baseball and hurled it through the kitchen window. The glass shattered instantly upon impact. I quickly grabbed all the food I could and threw it into my 2002 Ford Ranger and got the hell out of there. I went straight for home where my two daughters, ages twelve and fifteen, and my wife sat in front of the TV watching the news, not even turning their heads to acknowledge me. I laid the groceries down on the counter and grabbed a seat next to my wife.

“Unemployment rates have now risen to around 80%. Never before in the modern era has the United States of America seen such turmoil”, said the news reporter.

“Do you expect anything less of those unpatriotic you know whats? I knew they would flee. Now, it’s up to us true Americans to rebuild this place from the ground up. I am going to get you girls through this”, I said.

“By doing what? Stealing and hurting other people?” my wife Julia said unsettlingly.

“No one said anything about hurtin’ other people alright! I am going to do what I have to do to make sure that my family stays alive, period. If it comes to that then I don’t know alright!” I yelled.

It takes me about a week of raiding houses to gather food for two weeks. I only go to the empty houses. After doing this for so long you get into the rhythm. One house before lunch, one after lunch, and one after dinner. The more that I get into the rhythm the easier it becomes.

It started out as a regular old day of raiding houses. I saw this one medium sized-house at the end of a cul-de-sac that looked to be abandoned. Like usual, I checked all the doors and windows looking for an opening. The side bathroom window was open so I climbed through. I went upstairs to search all the rooms, like usual. The master bedroom door, however, seemed to be locked. I kicked the door open. Two young girls, probably about the same age as my daughters,

sat in the corner. The younger one clutching the older one's shoulder, who had a shotgun pointed at me. I quickly pulled out my gun and aimed it back at them.

Flight 370

Sarah Grimm

I hear dull footsteps, but can see nothing but darkness. Panic immediately sets in as I try to open my unwilling eyes, proving to be harder than I imagined. Finally, my eyes pop open, my heart pounding beneath my chest as my head whips around from side to side taking in the scene around me. Children are playing and running around, cots lined up in rows upon rows. Women dressed like nuns and all I can think is: *Where am I?* My head is throbbing so I lay back on my pillows, but the panic inside me has not settled.

I look beside me and realize that my red backpack is placed next to my cot. I go to reach for it just as a woman marches towards me and starts talking a language that I don't understand, "Wie fühlen sie sich?"

My heart starts pounding even harder as I shake my head replying, "I don't understand." I feel tears and an overwhelming sadness welling up inside me, but I do not want to start crying in front of a stranger. The only thought that settles into my mind is that I am nowhere near home and all I want is my parents. I have never felt so lost in my life.

"You speak English?" she says as more of a question to herself than me. She doesn't wait for my response before she starts talking again, "I asked how you were feeling?"

"Dizzy. Where am I?" I say, hearing a rasp in my voice, reaching for a pitcher of water that is lying next to my cot.

"You are in an orphanage. You were found lying in an abandoned park and you were brought here," she simply replies. I notice how factual she talks. She helps pour me a glass of water and hands it to me.

"In Germany?" I ask hesitantly. She nods in acknowledgement. I gulp down my water feeling my stomach threatening to send it back up.

I look around again and notice how everything is ... different. I cannot explain it, but there is this feeling deep in the pit of my gut that something is not right. "What is the date today? I mean what year is it?" I ask, hating hearing the fright in my own voice.

She looks me up and down, implying she thinks that there might be more to my injuries than she first thought. She gives me a questioning look and replies, "1906," before walking away and leaving me by myself.

I sink into my bed, not knowing which emotion to unleash first. They all seem to crash down on me at once. I turn my head into my pillow sinking farther down as I cannot hold back

the tears that are now soaking my face and the pillow beneath me. I am seventeen years old and I have never felt as young and scared as I do now.

When my sobs finally quiet I just lay there feeling completely numb. My brain spins at all the questions that keep bombarding my mind. I try to think, think of the last thing I remember. I turn my head to the side and my eyes settle on my backpack again. I stretch out to grab it, putting it on my stomach and open it up, that's when it hits me. The plane. I was on a plane.

I went on a school trip to Malaysia, I begged my parents for months and months to let me go on this trip. I knew it was expensive and we really didn't have that much money to spare but I promised them that I would pay them back. I remember now. I was on the plane headed home and then everything is dark, blank. Could the plane have been some sort of time traveling transport, or could we have gone through some sort of time warp? I know I am sounding ridiculous right now but how else could I have ended up over a hundred years in the past? I look around me again and my gaze settles on a boy that is a few rows down from me. He looks familiar. The boy catches me looking at him and I can see the look of shock on his face. I look down at my backpack trying to piece it together and when I look back the boy is gone.

I have been at the orphanage for a week now and I haven't seen the boy again. I figured out where I knew him from; he was on the plane with me, just a few rows up. What I don't understand, however, is that if he recognized me why would he run away? Wouldn't he want to talk to me to try and figure out how we got here or how to get home? I haven't accepted my fate yet. I am not going to be stuck here. I have to find a way to get home. I have to. Determination has taken over the pain and loneliness that I have felt for the past week. I have gone over and over how I could have ended up here to the point where I am sure I could be committed if I told anyone my thoughts. Today, I have to start my first day at a high school, in Germany. I was assured that students there could speak English. The nurse that I met when I first got here, which I now know her name is Greta, gave me my uniform for the school that I will be attending. This is the first time that I actually feel some sort of happiness. I always loved school and maybe going to this school will provide me with some familiarity, or clarity.

"Jacob, the bus is leaving in five minutes," Greta said from across the room. I zip up my backpack and head towards the door and out to an almost full bus. I walk towards the back of the bus sitting beside another boy.

"Mein Name ist Franz. Sie sind neu hier, oder?" He says extending his hand towards me.

"Sorry, Franz is it? I speak English," I reply taking his hand in mine.

"So you are the new guy that everyone is talking about," he says, not having as thick of an accent as Greta. Franz is tall, a little taller than me even, with blonde hair and blue eyes. Franz sits back into his seat as the bus heads down the road, away from the orphanage.

“Who is talking about me?” I ask. I don’t like that people are talking about me, it makes me nervous. I don’t want to draw any more attention to myself than I already have.

“Just some kids around the orphanage. They all are wondering where you came from or why you don’t speak German,” he says. He must have seen the look on my face because he swiftly adds, “Not that I am prying or anything. It’s just some people were talking.”

“I ... I don’t really want to talk about it,” I say looking down at my hands. I don’t want to think of my parents or how much I miss them because every time I do, I get this uncontrollable pain in my heart that spreads throughout my body until I can no longer breathe. “My name is Jacob, Jacob Goldberg,” I offer instead, desperate to talk about anything else.

“Goldberg? You’re Jewish?” He asks.

“Yes my grandparents were Jewish,” I say nodding my head.

“Do you have any siblings?” He asks, he has a puzzled expression on his face, “Are you related to Jedidiah Goldberg?”

“No, I ...,” I stop talking because yes, yes I am related to Jedidiah Goldberg. In fact he is my grandfather, but instead I reply, “No. No, I am not.”

The bus lurches to a stop and the doors fly open and everyone on the bus get up and starts moving towards the exit. I follow Franz into a classroom because he told me that he was the same age as me and we would be in the same class together. This made my uneasiness fade just a little knowing that at least I am not alone. We walk into our classroom and there are rows and rows of desks packed into such a compact room. Franz heads to the back of the classroom and grabs a seat. He motions for me to join him so I sit to the right of him, in the corner seat right beside the wall.

A group of boys walk in and wave to Franz, heading over to take the remaining seats to the left of him. They started talking and all of a sudden I could feel their gazes landing on me. I turn to look at them all and my eyes dart to Franz for reassurance.

“Jacob these are my friends, Adi and Andreas,” Franz says to me. Andreas looks a lot like Franz, he also has blonde hair and blue eyes. However Adi looks different from the two, he has dark brown hair and dark brown eyes. They both give welcoming smiles while shaking my hand.

The day goes by fairly well; I just stick with Franz and his friends. They all are really nice and it is strange how normal things feel. When I get back to the orphanage that afternoon I am surprised to see the boy from the plane standing beside my bed. When I see him I rush up to him but now that he is here I seem to be at a loss for words. I have so many questions but all I can manage to say is, “Hi.”

“Hey,” the boy replies looking down at his feet.

“I know you were on the plane. The plane that brought us here,” I motion around the room. “Why did you run away when you saw me? Where have you been?” I ask him, keeping my voice low so that no one around us can over hear our conversation.

“I was doing some research,” he replies. “I was shocked to see anyone else from the plane here. I woke up a few days before you had arrived and I just assumed I was alone. So I ran to the library that I had been going to and I found out some interesting things that I would now like to share with you. I think I know why we are here,” the boy says as he sits down on my bed.

“You found out how we got here?” I ask, sitting down across from him on my bed.

“Yes. We died,” he states it so calmly as if he was talking about the weather outside. I could feel my heart start to pound in my chest ... but I can feel my heart. I can feel my heart pumping blood, I can feel my pulse, and I am not dead.

“It is called purposagotory,” he continues. When his statement is met with my blank stare he elaborates, “Purposagotory is kind of an in between stage of being. Technically we are not dead but our bodies are gone from the world we lived in. We were sent into a time and we cannot return home until we finish our purpose, the reason why we were sent here,” he finishes.

“How can you be sure. How do you know that this is real? How do you know we didn’t go through some sort of time warp or something?” I was starting to sound hysterical, even to myself.

“I am very certain of this. I have spent every day since I arrived here trying to figure this out and I have read many books on the matter.”

“So if this actually is true, how do we know what our purpose is so we can go home?” I ask, a glimmer of hope creeps into my mind.

“The books say that we are not to search for our purpose but wait for our purpose to present itself to us,” he replies. “My name is Joshua by the way.”

“Nice to meet you, I’m Jacob.”

Another couple of weeks have passed me by and I have settled into somewhat of a routine. I go to school, hang out with Franz and his friends and then come back to the orphanage and discuss the day’s events with Joshua. He told me that he thinks he is really close to figuring out his purpose. I have been giving a lot of thought to his whole idea of the reason why we are here and I am starting to get impatient about finding out my purpose, every day I spend here I get more and more discouraged about finding a way to go home.

It is a Tuesday today and we are learning math from our mind-numbing teacher, Mr. Frieberger. Adi just made a really funny joke and we all start laughing really loudly. My Frieberger turns

around and glares at us all. “Würde es Ihnen etwas ausmachen teilen, was ist so lustig?” I didn’t have to speak German to know that Adi was getting in trouble for talking during class. Mr Frieberger then added in English, “Don’t make me talk to your parents Adolf. They will not be happy,” Mr. Frieberger turned back toward the chalk board and continued writing the lesson for today. I could feel the colour drain from my face, my laughter soon replaced with pure terror and hatred for I just realized that I am friends with Adolf Hitler.

As soon as the bus pulled up to the orphanage, I was the first one off the bus headed towards the yard behind the building. I needed to be alone before I could explode with the rage I am doing a good job of containing. I make it around the building and head for a secluded spot, hidden by trees. When I get there, I throw my backpack to the ground and I unleash this frustrated roar as I scream because there are no words to express what I am feeling at this moment. I start picking up rocks and throwing them as hard as I can against the trees until I run out and crumple to the ground. Angry tears fill my eyes as I rock back and forth trying to make sense of what I just learned. Adolf Hitler. I am friends with Adolf Hitler. I am friends with the man who tortured and killed millions of my people, Jewish people; the man who tortured my great grandparents, and my grandparents when they were nothing but children, innocent children. Joshua had never been so right. My purpose would find me. I know what I have to do. I have to kill Adolf Hitler. That is my purpose, that is how I am going to go home, that is how I am going to see my parents.

The next day at school I hardly say anything. Franz asks me if I am alright, and I reply that I am not feeling well. And it’s true, I feel like I have betrayed any Jewish person I have known by befriending the entire world’s most cruel human being. I have decided how I was going to do it, to kill him. Tonight we are all going over to Andreas’s house and I will lure Adolf outside and stab him with the knife that I stole from the kitchen in the orphanage. A tiny knot in my stomach forms, how can I look my friend in the eye and kill him? I worry that I might not be able to do it, for how can I live with myself if I kill an innocent boy. Then I remember he isn’t so innocent.

When I get to the orphanage after school that day, I head straight upstairs towards my bed. I accidentally run into Greta as I round the corner entering the sleeping hall.

“Where are you to in such a rush?” she asks me.

“Just going to get changed before heading to a friend’s house,” I reply walking around her and toward my bed. In a matter of minutes, I am changed and ready to go. With the knife in my backpack, I walk down the room to Franz’s cot and we walk outside and start towards Andreas’s house.

We have been here for two hours and it looks like I finally will get my chance to be alone with Adolf. We were outside playing around when Andreas and Franz went inside to get some water. I reach into my backpack and slowly pull out the knife turning around and pointing it at Adolf.

“I know who you are,” I say bitterness seeping out of each word. I look at him with such hatred I cannot see clearly.

“Wo, Jacob what are you doing?” Adolf replies. His eyes are wide with terror and his hands are raised, acting like he is harmless.

“Don’t pretend to be all innocent. I am from the future *Adolf* and I know what you have done or what you will do and I am here to stop you,” I take a step towards him but when I look at him some of the anger fades. When I look at him I see the person I met only a couple of weeks ago, someone who was nice to me when they didn’t have to be. I look at the boy standing before me and I don’t see Adolf the murderer. I see Adi, my friend. I also never thought about how this would affect the world as I knew it to be. Would everything change? When I am sent home will I even have a home? What if killing Adolf paves the way for another person to commit such violent acts of racism.

Beep. Beep. Beep.

I look around wondering where the noise is coming from and turn back just in time to see Adi rushing towards me and everything goes dark.

Beep. Beep. Beep.

I hear that noise again, the rhythmic beeping. I hear voices, voices around my head. I jolt upright, remembering that I was just under attack from Adolf but am surprised to find myself in a hospital room staring face to face with my parents. I can see relief cover their worried faces as they both rush toward me enveloping me with their arms, and I can finally breathe.

Beep. Beep. Beep.

I look to my side and realize that it is my heart monitor that was making those noises. But for the moment I no longer care and just focus on re-familiarizing myself with my parent’s smell, the way their hugs feel and the way that my heart finally doesn’t have the pain that I have grown so accustomed to. I am home.

My parents are in the hallway talking to some doctors. After a very long hug, that I wish had never ended, I never want to leave their side again. I cannot help but wonder if my time in Germany was all but a dream. My mom told me that they found the site of the plane crash almost a month ago and I have been in a coma since then. The doctors weren’t sure if I would make it or not. And little by little the memories are fading and the more and more I believe it was all just a dream until I see my red backpack sitting on a chair beside my hospital bed. When I unzip the bag and look inside I see nothing but a knife, a knife covered in blood.

It has been almost ten years since I woke up in that hospital room. I went on to get a history degree and have been teaching as a professor for two years now. It is almost summer break and I am sitting in my office reading a journal, Hitler's journal. I am reading an entry written about the year 1906 when he was attacked and stabbed by a Jew, a Jew he considered his friend and this betrayal was the reason for all the deaths that he caused. No, I didn't kill Hitler, but I am the reason Hitler hated Jewish people. I am the reason that millions died.

Tiranico

Kara Van Donkersgoed

Tiranico looms over the whole city, broken black sails like molten lava in the winter wind. Its oppressive flag, a snake and skull, glare through the dense fog down at Tuiste and the young man climbing undetected, noiseless, up a rope dangling from the side of it. He hates the ship and all the tyranny that it stands for, the oppression with which the pirates rule over Tuiste, the way that they had come in and left the massive expanse of green forest that provided a canopy over the town as short, charred stumps that provided no shelter for the city. Gritting his teeth, Kwin climbs faster, propelled forward by thoughts of Grace and her recent demise, how the pirates had added her to their long list of victims.

With a grunt he lands on the deck of the ship, triumphant, and pulls his sword out of its sheath. The night is thick with darkness and the silence bears down on him, whispering that stealth is essential. Kwin takes a step, and the creak of the wooden deck under his foot pierces the air and he winces, frozen in place. He lets his breath out slowly, and dares to take another step.

Two pirates sneak up behind him, catching him entirely unaware. They pull swords and yell as they run towards him, jabbing their weapons forward, missing his head by inches. He brandishes his sword back at them, deflecting their advances. He surprises them with his agility and knowledge, his comfort with the weapon, and after slashing the first pirate he turns and catches the second pirate, who'd stopped to look at his falling companion, square in the middle of the chest. Bulls-eye.

One thing Kwin can always rely on is that though the pirates have the power, they don't have all of the information.

Grace had built up a secret forest of Tuistan trees with the intention of growing them back in order to restore some of the natural wealth that Tuiste could brag of years ago. After the pirates had taken over Tuiste for the trees' valuable wood in order to build up their fleets, Tuiste had lost all of its value. Upon discovering the existence of Grace's secret forest and her plan to restore Tuiste to what it was, the pirates had murdered her on sight. Their tyrannical regime demanded complete cooperation from the Tuistans, and any resistance was destroyed before it could get too out of hand.

The good news was that though Grace had died building up the forest, the forest itself had not gone down with her. Her secret forest was still that; a secret.

Running away from the two fallen bodies, Kwin turns a corner and comes upon what must be the Captain's cabin. Tiptoeing quickly so as to not alert any more watchful pirates, Kwin bends low and peeks over the window ledge into the dark room beyond, and realizes why this was going to be a lot harder than he'd thought.

His first impression is of a dark canteen, all dark brown furniture with red accents, about a dozen chairs in the middle of the room surrounding one massive table stacked sky high with trinkets. Locked chests line the walls, globes scatter the black surfaces and gas lamps light up the occasional corner just enough to make out unmistakable signs of wealth; regal books, gold statues and coins, jewelry of every variety.

A fire of precious Tuistan wood crackles in the corner.

Just as Kwin is about to give up, he spots through the gloom a golden head of curls, and his heart skips a beat with sadness and longing. But his mind is playing tricks on him, and the girl he'd thought was Grace turns out to be a figment of his imagination.

Turning his back on the room, he lets down his guard.

Kwin's eyes, not as adjusted to the gloom of the room as the Captain's, had glanced over the Captain, decked entirely in black and ultimately invisible, hiding in a shadowy corner of the densest darkness. After spotting Kwin, the Captain had risen, slowly, so as to not alert Kwin of his presence. With Kwin's back to the door, the knob slowly turns, and Kwin finds his shoulder covered by a hooked hand caked with dried blood.

The Captain.

Heart pounding, Kwin barely stifles a scream as he stumbles forwards fumbling for his sword. He tries to turn and run but finds his way blocked by more pirates, evidence that the Captain had alerted his crew of the fugitive on his ship without Kwin's knowing. A deafening cry rings out from the crew, as they advance forwards, swords brandished, mutinous eyes fixed on Kwin standing motionless between the oncoming crew and the Captain himself. Kwin launches himself to the side just as a colossal bearded man's sword plunges into the air where Kwin had been standing.

Kwin sprints to the other side of the ship, and the crew follows obediently. A few of the more agile pirates catch up to him, but he turns and swiftly disposes of them as though they are nothing more than irritating flies. He reaches the end of the ship and turns around, staring terrified into the advancing pirates, fear nailing him frozen and rendering him useless in the fast approaching fight.

Suddenly, a memory overcomes him. He no longer sees the wooden deck, the dark, foggy night sky and the menacing crew looming over him, but rather, sees a powder blue room with white trim, dainty lace curtains and a brass bed in the middle with a floral bedspread perfectly pressed upon it. Upon the bed sit two children, a young boy and a young girl, the latter with the fairest of ringlets bouncing around her petite featured face.

"Kwin," she whispers, her expression serious, comical on her seven-year old face. "My dad told me that if the trees died, we would die too."

Kwin laughs. “The trees aren’t important!” he giggles.

“I think they are,” Grace counters. “I’m going to save the trees one day.”

“Then I will help you,” Kwin whispers, the beauty of her passion for the trees taking root in his heart.

The clash of metal on metal brings him out of his reverie, and he is stunned to find himself staring at, not a herd of enemies but at a beautiful blonde head of hair, a girl with a sword raised defending him from the pirates in front of her.

“Who are you?!” Kwin shouts.

“Help me out, will you?” she screams, but he can hear the laughter behind her voice.

The girl reminded him endlessly of Grace with her quiet determination and long blonde hair, and his heart broke. He remembers the flash of blonde hair he saw in the Captain’s room and he realizes that this was this girl that he had seen.

Kwin raises his sword once more and runs out from behind her, and before long half the crew lies dead at their feet, no match for the ferocity that the pair displayed. The other pirates continue to advance, but Kwin and the girl work together in bringing them down.

“What brings you on the ship?” the girl asks, raising her voice through the continuing clash of swords.

Grace’s face fills his head, and his quest to finish off the pirates and avenge her death sparks his ferocity. “Just trying to do my duty,” he says. “And you?”

Before she can answer, a resounding *click* fills the silence between his question and her answer, stuffing the gaps of the conversation with tangible fear and despair.

The Captain has pulled out a gun, and it points directly at Kwin.

“Don’t move,” he warns. “Or I’ll shoot your brains out and hers won’t be far behind.”

“Oh, I’d *love* to see that,” the girl snorts sarcastically.

“Shut up, you!” the Captain barks. “You’re supposed to be in my office.”

“Yeah well, you’re supposed to be dead but we can’t all win,” she smiles.

“What do you want?!” Kwin asks indignantly, heart racing and confusion mounting, but hating the thought of revealing his fear to either of them.

The Captain’s long eyebrows lift, the left one appearing beneath a massive eye patch to do so. “Why, isn’t it obvious?” he grins. “She’s so like her sister with her tree-hugging nonsense, and we can’t have any of *those* lying around anymore can we. Clearly the disease is contagious.”

Kwin's confusion must show on his face, and the pirate in front of them scowls at his evident stupidity. "The pirates of Tiranico rule over Tuiste, we've made that much plain, haven't we? This girl and her stupid club have been growing trees to build a fleet to overtake us." He scowls. "I took *this* one to find out where they're hiding." His frustration shows. Clearly this girl was stronger than he'd thought, and she wasn't letting up any information.

"So she's your key to finding the rebels?" Kwin whispers. "To get rid of Grace's trees?"

The girl looks up with a start. "What did you just say?" she asks with wild eyes. "You knew Grace?"

"This is no time for cosy catch-up!" the Captain yells, splashing spit into Kwin's face, revealing a full mouth of rotting teeth, a few encased in gold. The few remaining pirates behind the Captain growl and show their teeth, brandishing their swords in disgust. "Would you like a minute to say goodbye, or would you rather go quickly?"

Suddenly, the Captain's eyes widen and he lowers his gun, just long enough for Kwin to grab the girl's hand, spin her behind him and run. When he turns, Kwin sees what the Captain was afraid of.

A fleet of a dozen or more ships made of Tuistan wood advance towards Tiranico, cannons exposed through the gaps in the sides of the ships. Through the thinning fog, Kwin can just make out Tuiste in the distance, so much closer than it had been when he'd boarded the ship.

"It worked," the girl whispers. "My flare, it worked!"

Suddenly the ship lurches from the fleet's connecting cannons, pirates drop like stones to the deck, blood flowing down the now slanted ship. Kwin grabs hold to the side of it just as a piercing cry echoes through the night. Lying on his side a few feet from them, the Captain clutches at the blood blossoming on his chest from a new gunshot wound. Bewildered, Kwin turns to see a gun held in the girl's hand, her chest heaving and her face set.

"I picked it up off a dead pirate," she says. "I didn't have time to take it out before."

She drops the gun and turns to Kwin. "I'm Louise, by the way. Grace's sister."

Kwin stares in disbelief, and they continue to look at one another even as the Tuistian crew climbs aboard Tiranico and pulls them onto a ship from the fleet to safety.

How like Grace she was.

The captain of the ship who had rescued them takes them both straight back to the town, and upon recognizing Louise, to the lair that Grace had set up for the secret forest of Tuistan trees.

Kwin and Louise are guided even as far as the front door though neither is hurt and both are completely capable of finding their way to the lair. Before she can knock, Kwin takes Louise's

hands into both of his own, and looking determinedly into her eyes, he holds her. His heart beats faster than it had on the ship, than it had in his whole life. "Thank you," he whispers to her. Pulling away, Louise's flushed and bewildered face smiles into his as the door opens and a worker sets his eyes on the missing leader of his society for the first time in weeks.

With an exclamation they are hugging, and Kwin stands off to the side observing what love looks like. His eyes fill up, the memory of Grace's absence washes over his mind. He can't go without her.

He would have to go without her.

It was Kwin who hadn't believed Grace in the first place when she'd fretted as a child over the possibility of losing Tuiste's many trees. It was Kwin who hadn't been an active member of her society, Kwin who had failed her when she'd needed him most.

Kwin who had allowed her to be captured and killed by the pirates of Tiranico. His only love, gone, and instead of keeping his promise to Grace, he'd allowed her sister, whom he'd never even known, to be the one to carry on Grace's legacy.

He'd never been so disappointed in himself.

With one last glance at the embracing pair, now joined by more onlooking workers celebrating Louise's return, Kwin turns and disappears into the foggy night.

Louise pulls away from her friends at last and turns to thank Kwin for saving her, but through the dense fog and blackened night she is met with silence. In the distance fireworks can be heard, celebrations of the newly freed Tuiste as the fleet's news of the destruction of Tiranico finally meet the ears of the citizens. After a decade of oppression and political turmoil, Tuiste can breathe, and its trees can grow. Louise searches the night for Kwin, the boy she knew her sister had loved, but the only face she sees through the darkness is the face of a new Tuiste, free at last.

Prossimo

Jill Brockman

Light snuck through the blinds and slowly adorned Chelsea's face, her eyelids fluttered in protest and a groan escaped from her lips. She didn't need to open her eyes as she reached for her phone, knowing it was exactly where she left it the previous night, waiting patiently for her to be revived. Sliding her index finger across the screen, she woke up her phone with a sequence of four numbers that were engrained into her head. Quickly she opened up her email and tapped her foot impatiently as she waited for the new ones to download. The scholarship she had applied for was supposed to announce the recipients today and she needed to know if she got it or not. Thirteen new emails appeared in her inbox and she scrolled past them eagerly, looking for the one she wanted, but it wasn't there. Frustration erupted inside of her and she threw her blankets onto the floor while getting out of bed. Pulling her auburn curls up into a knot she glanced out the window not long enough to see how the sky was a brilliant blue with wisps of white floating through the air. The sun seemed innocent, bright and in high spirits, but the darkness was just minutes away, it always was these days. Sighing audibly, she slipped on her shoes, grabbed a coat and headed out the door to go to work.

As the clock got closer to 7:00pm, each minute became twice as long as the last. She knew that watching the clock made time pass slower, but she couldn't help it. As soon as the clock changed from 6:59 to 7:00, she sighed in relief and twisted the lock on the door to the left, securing her freedom for the night. Untying her apron from around her waist, she dusted the remaining flour off and her eyes fell to the device in her hand as it pinged to remind her to meet up with her best friend, Luke, at a nearby park. He was too stubborn to "give into technology" to own a cell phone, so she was forced to actually talk to him in person which ended up really strengthened their friendship in the long run. The evening air was crisp and cool making her thankful she grabbed a coat this morning. Untangling the headphones she found at the bottom of her bag, she shoved them into her ears to drown out the sounds of the real world. Turning her back on the place that had imprisoned her all day, she started making her way towards the park, still scroll through her messages looking for that email.

Since her headphones were in, she couldn't hear the noises of the city around her or the sounds of nature as she got closer to the park. The sounds of children laughing and squealing in delight were drowned out by the pounding bass in her ears. From her peripheral vision, she began to see less concrete and more green foliage around telling her she was at the park. When she finally lifted her eyes from her phone she saw that the meticulously manicured park was full of fall leaves, changing colour from lush green, to vivid orange and red and yellow, before they would soon fall into the abyss.

Looking toward the bench they always sit at, a smile instantly formed on her face as she saw Luke sitting there, waiting. After pulling him into an embrace she sat down next to him, the same smile still plastered on her face. Sometimes, Chelsea wondered how she functioned before she had met him. He was the best friend she could have hoped for and he came at a time she needed him the most.

“So what did you want to tell me?” Chelsea asked him trailing off slightly as her phone buzzed to get her attention again. She tried to resist the urge to look down but she couldn’t help it. Seeing that she had a new email, she quickly tapped her password, unlocking her phone once more. Luke cleared his throat faintly in a feeble attempt to get her attention back but she was much too absorbed to acknowledge him so he started talking anyways.

“Well, you see, my uh, sister had a couple of tests done last year,” he began but as soon as he started she interrupted with a squeal of delight.

“OH MY GOSH! Look, look, look! I got it, I GOT THE SCHOLARSHIP!” Chelsea jumped up from the bench, and shoved her phone in his face. He blinked twice in pure shock unable to focus of the pixilated screen before she snatched it away. Despite being shocked from the interruption, Luke couldn’t help but let out a chuckle and smile at the pure joy exerted on her face.

“Congrats Chels, I knew they would be crazy to give it to anyone else!” he exclaimed.

“I can’t wait to tell my mom, she is going to freak out! Oh and my boss and Chris and ...” she trailed off in obvious happiness as she began typing furiously into her phone. It took her a couple of long seconds before she realized she had cut Luke off.

“Oh sorry,” she looked up sheepishly, embarrassed at her sudden outburst, “You were saying something about your sister?” Luke sighing knowing that is wasn’t the right time to tell her yet.

“You know what, it’s nothing, don’t worry about it,” he said as earnestly as he could. She absentmindedly nodded still typing furiously away on her phone. Luke watched her with a bit of amusement which quickly changed to sadness as he realised how addicted she really was. This was finally supposed to be the day that he was going to tell her about his sister. Her condition was detraining daily and the doctors didn’t know how much time she had left. As usual, Chelsea had that stupid phone in her hand scrolling through this or that, reply to emails and messages. To be frank, it felt like she was ignoring him. He said goodbye and left her sitting on the bench too connected with her phone to care or notice. Turning his back on her, he resisted the urge to turn around, go back and throw that stupid phone of hers into the river. He wished there was something he could do to save her from the path she was going down. When Chelsea finally glanced up she realised he had left and felt a wave of disappointment washed over her.

It was close to dusk and the streets were starting to get dark as clouds were filling in the sombre sky. She heard a faint rumble and a single rain drop fell straight onto her nose. She swore under her breath as yet another rain drop couldn’t fight the force of gravity, this time, hitting her phone.

Her phone beeped and her heart sank low into her stomach when she saw the message. Only 5% of her battery was left and she still needed to get home before the rain really started. There was anger and resentment flowing through her veins as she cursed the phone manufacture for not creating a longer lasting battery. Seriously, she thought, it's the twenty first century and nobody has created a phone that can charge itself? Bitterly, she continued to hurry along, sheltering her face from the rain. She didn't see that the curb ended just a few feet in front of her so she stumbled quite ungracefully and was unable to catch her fall, landing in a large puddle. Her phone, no, her *lifeline*, now lay lifeless in her hand, soaked with water. Tears welled up in her eyes and she couldn't stop them from falling. Chelsea had long since given up hope to get home and was now searching for any sort of place to shelter her from the storm that was brewing. She noticed an old building on the other side of the street as she checked her phone again, 3% remaining. Desperate to find an outlet to charge her phone, she picked up her pace, splashing rather angrily in the shallow puddles that were beginning to form on the sidewalk. There was an old lantern hanging on a post beside the door. It squeaked and faintly flickered in the wind. The bricks that covered the building were crumbling with age. Approaching the door she prayed it would be open.

With some apprehension, she reached forward and grabbed the door handle. The cool metal knob robbed the heat from her hand as she twisted it to the left, opening the door to safety. The soft light from the lantern lit up the doorway and she squinted her eyes to be sure of what she was seeing. It was a library. As her gaze fell upon the books, she immediately felt comforted and secure. Rows and rows of dusty books lined the walls from the ceiling to the floor.

"Hello?" she called out the question but was answered only by the return of her own voice echoing back from the empty sanctuary. How strange, she began to marvel but didn't question it again as she remembered why she was there. Her eyes dropped towards the floor, searching the room for an outlet. After looking along every wall she could find, she was dumbfounded to realize there weren't any. Partially outraged but mostly frustrated, she decided to leave and get back home before the storm got worse. Walking towards the door she came in, she saw an oak table that she didn't notice before. Upon the table sat two books and she found herself walking towards them, like a bee to honey. One was angelically white, emanating light throughout the dark room. Shifting her gaze, she looked upon the second one. It was glossy and crimson gleaming in the light of the first, to the point that she wondered if it had been dipped in blood before it was casted with a cover. Written on each in bold cursive were the words "*Prima*" and "*Prossimo*." She traced the unfamiliar words with her fingers as she slowly tasted each word on her lips, impressed by how smoothly they seemed to roll off her tongue. Further intrigued by the books, she revoked her previous decision to leave and decided to stay a little bit longer.

Chelsea tried, but couldn't remember the last time she had read an actual book made from paper; it must have been years. For this reasons alone, she found herself drawn to the books, wanting to feel the crisp pages beneath her fingers as she gets lost in a new world, word after word. The white book seemed to glow in the dark haze of the room so without thinking, she picked it up first. Knowing it would take some time for the storm to pass, she settled down into a nearby

chair. As her hands embraced the spine of the book, it seemed to quiver beneath her fingers. She felt a slow rhythmic beat pulsing from the inside out. Startled, she dropped it and sucked in a breath as it fell open; the pages had a distinct glow to them like fireflies. Turning the book in her hands, she heard the pages begin to whisper words of enticement to her. Gingerly she turned the page of the first book and noticed there weren't any words written. Confused, Chelsea reached to flip to the next page, and as she did that, a soft haze took over her vision and the room she was in seemed to spin with each blink. Her legs collapsed and she fell off her chair, sinking to the floor slowly and lightly like a leaf falling off a branch. She could feel a gust of wind fly past her and she was falling and she couldn't move or scream or do anything for that matter. Then everything went black.

When she regained consciousness she found herself surrounded by a blur of green, which she slowly recognized as trees. It took her a second to realize where she was, the park. Still disorientated Chelsea stumbled slightly as she caught a glimpse of a familiar face. Luke was sitting on the same bench they were talking at only hours before. She called out to him but he didn't respond. Instead he looked the other way and a smile appeared on his face as a girl approached him. Unable to see who it was Chelsea inched closer, concealing herself behind a nearby tree. Wait a second, she thought squinting her eyes to be sure of what she was seeing, that's me! And indeed it was. Chelsea watched herself migrate towards Luke by the bench with her cell phone in her hand. She noticed that her eyes barely left the screen as Luke engulfed her in a bear hug. Next she watched herself opening the email she had gotten about the scholarship. Now embarrassed by her reaction, Chelsea felt foolish for reacting how she did.

She remembered that Luke said he had something to tell her, so she decided to follow him after he had slipped away from her. Instead of turning left out of the park towards his apartment, he surprised her and turned to the right. She quietly followed him as he crossed street after street until he stopped in front of the local Hospice. Chelsea froze when she realized that this was his final destination and panic arose inside of her as he trudged up the front steps. Standing under the liquid sunshine that the clouds couldn't hold in anymore, she saw a light turn on in one of the windows on the second floor causing her heart rate to increase. The drapes were drawn for the night, but Chelsea was able to make out Luke's silhouette as he approached the bed and gently sat down beside it. Her mind was racing. Why hadn't Luke told her who he was visiting here? Didn't he trust her? She began jumping to all kinds of conclusions until she started to remember. How many times had Luke requested they meet up so they could talk? And how many of those times did she not really give thought to what he wanted to say? He had tried, countless times. She had just been too engrossed in her own selfish life to care about what anyone else had going on in theirs, even her best friend. Silent tears formed in her eyes and if she noticed when they started to fall, she didn't bother to wipe them. Her voice was hoarse and tight with tears as she choked out in a whisper,

“What have I become?”

Hazel Barrier

Alka Batta

“Today, you choose your destiny. This world is about knowing who you are and where you belong. The choices you make today are the ones that will carry you through life. If you choose wrong then that will be detrimental to yourself and most importantly society. However, if you are wise you will know exactly where you belong and go through any means to achieve what you want. Our world belongs in your hands so choose wisely.”

Those words brought shivers down Hazel’s spine. “Today, you choose your destiny.” These words played in her head like a broken record. “I have to make the right choice. But what is the right choice? I grew up in Receme all my life but it seems as though I have not found myself in the way I should. It baffles my mind that I am expected to choose a job at the young age of 18. Not only that, but out of a list. There has to be more options for women than being a nurse, teacher, secretary, cook, waitress or hair dresser. Mom has always wanted me to be a hair dresser like her. What is not to love? She comes home exhausted every day, sits on the couch, watches tv and goes to sleep. On a good day we will say eleven words to each other, most of which will be “Hazel, be quiet! I am trying to rest.” Eight of the eleven words wasted on those two sentences. Dad is a doctor. Or at least he used to be. He died when I was fourteen. He was the type of man that loved to go against society in small quiet revolutions at home. He would tell me to follow my heart and it does not matter what anyone else thinks.”

“Times up! Please pass your papers ahead. The girls will put their pink slips on the left and boys will put their blue slips on the right. Once that is completed, we will ask you to stand in the designated area for job training. Congratulations on this special occasion.”

“Congratulations on what exactly? That I picked my future based on six options that was given on a pink piece of paper? That I decided that this job looked the least revolting? Yes, congratulations on “choosing” your destiny everyone. You should be so proud.” Hazel thought in a sarcastic manner.

After all the names were read out, Hazel joined the nurses’ line. She put on scrubs and headed to the second floor of the hospital to begin training. The hospital overlooked the wall to the outside world. No one knew what was out there for sure, but the citizens of Receme meant to be afraid of it. They had to protect ourselves and isolate whatever corruption that lied outside the city. Corruption. What corruption lies outside this city that we should be so afraid of? What kind of corruption does the president not want this society to know about?

“Today you join training for your future. If you listen to me, you will succeed. If you don’t, then I will be forced to press this button on you. This button right here will automatically transport you to the outside world. You will be electrocuted and sent directly to train tracks to be specific. Trust me, you are better off listening to me than going out there. If there aren’t any questions then we will head this way.”

It was finally lunch time and the nurses and doctors were all sitting in the same room, segregated. Hazel thought the boys would mature over time but clearly our society is not advanced enough to do that. She felt like being in elementary school and the girls have cooties that the boys cannot catch or they will become a girl. She could hear their whispers from afar. “Is this the type of stuff I will have to deal with from now on? I looked over at them and I could see them mocking me. I was in this disgusting salmon coloured scrub while they wore their spotless white lab coat.” Hazel thought to herself.

“Hey, what are you looking at? You have no right to look at me. I’m a doctor and you’re only a nurse. Why don’t you sit down at your table and eat your food in silence.”

“Excuse me? Are you four years old or something? What gives you the right to look at me? I am just as important as you and that kills you to know that,” Hazel said with a snap in her voice.

“What makes you think that anyone will care what a nurse wants? Everyone knows that nurses are assistants to the doctors and women are not important. If they were, then they would be doctors but you weren’t given that option. Why would you be? It’s not like you would know what you’re doing. Nurses only cleanup after the patients and doctors.” said the doctor with a smirk on his face. Suddenly, he spat on the floor. “Clean it up, I mean that is the only thing you know how to do.”

“How dare you?!” Hazel could feel her hands morphing into a fist and her adrenaline pumping. Then her fist made contact with the doctor’s face. There was an electric surge going through her body. Everything went black for a moment.

Hazel woke up on the tracks with a car fast approaching. She tried run away but was too weak for any movement. A young lady, maybe thirty-five jumped out of the car and ran towards her. Hazel could not see straight but she was smiling.

“Welcome to the outside world or as we like to call it, the United States of America! If I can just help you up, I will explain everything to you on the way.” She said this is such a calming matter that it put my mind at ease for a moment. “I forgot to introduce myself. I am Amanda. Nice to meet you Hazel.”

“H-how do you know my name?”

“Well, that can all be explained. You see, I work for the government of the United States and we have been watching your society. Our goal was to create a perfect society. You see, we wanted to make your society perfect in every way. We wanted everyone to feel like they belonged somewhere and we wanted to make sure that everyone had jobs. Your family has been part of this project since the beginning. Your great-great-great grandparents were considered the first generation.”

“Are you telling me that you created a society and messed with people’s lives because you wanted to have a so-called perfect society? Do you understand the type of harm this has caused? You have toyed with peoples lives because you were not satisfied with what was going on here! How could you? HOW COULD YOU?!”

“Now Hazel, please understand. We were doing this for you. We can talk more in the morning. We are about to pull up to headquarters.”

As they pulled up to a large grey building with a room that reached up into the clouds Hazel began to feel tense. Then she looked over at the garden that had beautiful flowers popping with colour. Everything you could imagine from tulips to roses. And on the right-hand side there lay an orchard to grow fruits and vegetables seasonally. Hazel and Amanda got out of the car and went into the building. Inside were computers and people. On each screen there were different views of Receme. She could see her mom lying on the couch watching aimlessly at the tv and the hospital which she was zapped out of as the head nurse must have pressed the button she was warned about. “It seems as though no one misses me there.” Hazel said with tears welling up in her eyes.

“Hazel, I know this may come as shock to you but I assure you it will get easier over time. Please stay here and everything will be sorted out in the morning.”

Hazel did not know what to do with herself and now more than ever she did not know who she was. She walked down the hallway with Amanda to her bedroom. Already laying there were pajamas and a night shirt on top of a box chest and blankets and pillows on the bed. Hazel dragged the covers on top of her body and laid in bed as a single tear fell down her face.

Endless Space

Geena Dhaliwal

My eyelids began to flutter and while slightly cracking open, I was exposed to the sight of the dim airplane lights. As I sat up, the view was out of focus and I was unable to comprehend where I was. I blinked several times and my vision gradually returned to normal. As I looked around the airplane, I realized that most passengers were fast asleep and flight attendants were nowhere in sight. I thought to myself, where are the flight attendants? The intercom above crackled and a booming male voice echoed throughout the entire plane.

“You have now arrived at your awaiting destination; we hope you had an enjoyable flight and if you have any concerns or requests, please touch the ‘help’ button on the touchscreen TV ahead of you.”

I got up abruptly and walked down the ramp that led from the exit doors of the airplane to an open waiting room. I entered an eerie room where the walls were painted white and in front of me stood unfamiliar faces, they wore jet black clothing; and their facial expressions were sinister. I looked around to see no seating area, no luggage pick-up area and no friendly faces. I stepped forward from the rest of the passengers and swallowed nervously.

“Hi, I’m Kristina, I was wondering where are we?” I asked.

Some passengers murmured quietly and I immediately stepped back, unsure of what to do next. A young man walked towards me, his body was well built and he wore a black jacket and pants. His brown hair was styled neatly in a quiff and his dark complexion and sneer only contributed to the menacing look in his bright hazel eyes.

“I’m responsible for what happens around here. I get to ask the questions young lady. By the way, all of you can call me Damon,” he said harshly.

He stepped closer to me and tugged at my green jacket. I slapped his hand away and walked backwards slowly. The group dressed in black clothing mocked me, jeering and laughing. Damon threw his hands in the air dramatically and spoke in a stern voice.

“You are here for one reason and one reason only. As a group, you must assist us in building a weapon. If you do not comply with the rules, you will be held at gunpoint, along with your loved ones. If you are wondering where you are, assume you are in a remote location. Your darned cell phones will not work here,” he said in a severe tone.

I took a long, deep nervous breath and looked around. The passengers who once seemed ecstatic to arrive now looked frightened and alarmed.

“Now I would like you all to follow me and my friends here....” Damon motioned towards the group dressed in black clothing.

“But first, I must do something. This young girl here spoke without being asked to. She disrespected me,” Damon said fiercely.

He looked in my direction; his eyes piercing mine. Two guards brought out an ornately designed gold framed mirror, and soon I was facing it. I wore black boots, black leggings, a pink top and a navy green jacket. My blonde hair was curled slightly but a smile barely reached my lips. Damon suddenly grabbed me, and I screamed as I saw a black glint being pulled out of his jacket pocket. The passenger’s horrified expressions were in unison with mine. Damon was holding a gun, and his eyes were livid.

“Say goodbye to that reflection in the mirror, Kristina. By the way, if you were wondering where you are dying...” he motioned towards the plain white walls.

The white walls were propelled up, revealing clean windows and a mysterious atmosphere, filled with glowing white silhouettes that sparkled in the gloomy night sky. I realized that we had been transported to a space station.

“You can’t kill me! I didn’t do anything, I was just wondering where we were,” I shouted.

However, Damon moved the gun to the side of my head, the cold black metal making my whole body shudder in fear. I can’t die, this can’t be happening, I thought. Damon clicked the trigger in place, his devilish sneer reflected in the mirror. The passengers stood by, watching as I frantically tried to escape Damon’s iron grip, my legs kicking him in the shins. As the sweat dripped down my forehead, I pleaded for my life. I pleaded but my cries weren't good enough. Before I could say anything, I heard the bullets propel out of the gun. The connection of metal with my skin was quick. As the hard, cold, malicious lump of metal penetrated the side of my head, my eyes began to close, and the last thing I saw was my reflection in the mirror, and Damon’s hand gripping the gun, hold it close to the side of my head. Suddenly, my vision became blurry, and I fell back hitting the ground with a loud thud.

“This is how it is done, ladies and gentlemen,” Damon said.

The passengers screamed in unison, their shrieks echoing throughout the entire space station.

Brent Mosher

“Come on, let’s go, hurry.” John said under his breath, pulling on his sons hand willing him to walk faster. Lights flashed around them, with hundreds of holo-photographers surrounding the two as they hustled up their front steps towards their house. John burst through the front door slamming it behind him. The sound of shutters clicking and lights flashing was extinguished, leaving John Woodson and his son Wallace in the darkness of their home. “No TV Wallace, not tonight.”

“But Daaaaaad.” Wallace moaned, pleading with his best puppy dog eyes.

“No! That’s final, go to your room and shut the blinds.” Wallace groaned and trudged up the stairs, dragging his backpack behind him. The sound of the backpack slamming against each stair echoed around the house, bouncing off the walls surrounding John. Once his son was upstairs John headed straight to the living room, shutting each set of blinds as he went by. Holo-cameras flashed as he passed each window, momentarily blinding him as he paced. Finally after each inch of his house had been safeguarded against the paparazzi John sat down on his couch, bracing himself for what he was about to hear. The TV screen flashed, becoming alive, ready to explode with information. A familiar voice barrelled out of the TV, ready to spread the news of the day.

“Our top story today, boy stuns local city by refusing his award at his basketball game. We bring you live to the house of Wallace Woodson in Queens New York.” The screen switched to a projection of John and Wallace hurrying across the street and into their home. John turned the TV off, plunging the living room back into darkness. He sighed, and closed his eyes, trying to imagine the chaos that was approaching him.

“Did I do something wrong Dad?” Wallace whispered from the bottom of the staircase. John spun around, finding his son sitting on the bottom step. His eyes were watery and he looked at his father like he had never met him, a fear of the unknown poisoning his young mind. John ushered him over and put his arm around him, trying to bring him back to reality and settle his nerves. “Why were all those people outside taking pictures of us?” John sighed.

“Son, why didn’t you accept your ribbon today?” The frustration started to bubble up inside of him as he tried to keep his cool. “What were you thinking? Everybody gets a ribbon you should know that. You’ve played sports since you were old enough to walk. What went through your head?” John stared at his son, trying to see inside his head. Wallace sat silent for a moment looking around the room for an answer to his dad’s questions; however all he found was a blank TV screen and a stack of old newspapers piled to the ceiling.

“I don’t know Dad, I didn’t play very well. It seemed like the other team scored more baskets than me. I didn’t deserve a ribbon.” He looked up at his dad, who stared ahead at the wall. “I don’t know why I should get a ribbon if I didn’t play well at all and they scored more than me.”

“Look son, you know that there is no score in any of the games. You played great; nobody has ever refused their ribbon. Do you know why?” John asked his son. No response came. “It’s the rules. You know the motto: *All are one. All are-* “

“Equal. I know Dad.” Wallace cut John off; he could tell his son was getting frustrated. He took a deep breath and disclosed all the information he could remember.

“Yes but do you know why? Many years ago, before the FAPSA was created not everyone was equal. There were no jumpers or collars to keep everyone on the same level, and they even kept score. There were winners.” Wallace sat up straight, his eyes lighting up.

“Does that mean that some people were better than others?”

“Well, some people were simply stronger than others, and before jumpers came along they could use that strength to their advantage. Others were simply smarter than their opponents; they could tell what the other team was going to do before they could.” John stopped, wary of giving his son too much information.

“Winning would feel good right? Cause then you would have earned your ribbon. How did you win? Why did they stop having winners? Who was the best?” John could see his son’s excitement in his eyes, the fear wiped away from his conscience, leaving only a youthful exuberance ready to learn.

“Well Son...” He hesitated, unsure if it was the right thing to tell his son about winning. The punishment would be severe if anyone ever found out John had told his son. For nearly fifty years the FAPSA had controlled the population, allowing everyone to play at an equal level. “There was one player who was better than the rest, the greatest of all time. His name was Michael Jordan and he won six championships with his team.”

Wallace was not looking at his father anymore, rather staring at the TV imagining lifting a trophy over his head being named a winner. John swore under his breath as he realized he had broken the rules, he had set his son’s imagination loose. “Tell me more dad, what was it like?” Wallace asked. It was too late, there was no point holding information back now, Wallace was already inspired. For hours they stayed up, pulling newspapers from the pile and reading each and every sports article. Just as they were dozing off a shrill alarm sounded from the kitchen. It was morning. John got off the couch and headed towards the kitchen, however before he could exit the room Wallace asked the question that his father dreaded answering. “If winning was so great, why was the FAPSA created?”

“Well...in order for there to be a winner, there must be a loser. You see, not everyone can handle being a loser. There were some...complications not too long ago, the FAPSA was created to deal with them.” Wallace was quiet for a few moments, his brow furrowed as he tried to process the concept.

“Well that’s sort of what happened to me today and I don’t feel that bad.” He said quietly. John stared at him, unsure of what to say. “I worked really hard, and I had fun while doing it so losing isn’t all that bad Dad and I doubt I’m the only one who thinks so.” He smiled up at his father, who sat in silence. “People should experience winning.”

“It’s not that simple, there are rules.” John replied.

“I know there are, but they’re bad rules! I bet there are other people who would want to win too. Please dad.” Wallace grabbed his father’s hand, squeezing it as tight as he could trying to convince him.

John stayed quiet for a few moments, and then looked up to see the sun piercing through a small crack in one of the blinds. The ray of sunlight slid through the crack and fell upon Wallace, illuminating his figure. “Alright son, here’s what we’re going to do.”

It was an overcast day with clouds blanketing the world, creating a calm atmosphere around the city. Skyscrapers towered over the streets, watching over the inhabitants of New New York. Trains sped through the city, passing over and under rows of cars sitting motionless in traffic. Wallace sat beside his Father, watching skyscrapers zoom by as they headed towards the FAPSA headquarters. The train dipped underground and the city disappeared from sight.

“Dad, is this going to work?” Wallace whispered. John stared out of the window for a few seconds, then looked at his son and managed to smile.

“It’ll work. Don’t worry.” He said in the calmest voice he could manage. The train crept out from the underground, revealing a sight that made John’s stomach shrivel up inside of him. Directly ahead of the train was the tallest skyscraper in the whole city. Standing at three hundred stories tall, it dwarfed the rest of the buildings and cast a shadow on the city surrounding it. Across the last ten stories the FAPSA name overlooked the people of New New York. As the train grew nearer it became impossible to locate the top of the building, and soon enough the train stopped and the doors opened. John walked in and looked around, seeing that the entire building was made from chrome. There were no decorations or fancy signs around the room, however scrawled along the walls in what had to be the chancellor’s handwriting was FAPSA’s motto: “*All are one. All are equal.*” John took Wallace’s hand and they stepped into the elevator. The door closed behind them and instantly leapt towards the sky, there were no buttons or windows in the elevator, just a single portrait of the Chancellor hanging above the doorway. He

was a shrivelled old man, being no taller than five feet and no heavier than Wallace. However in this portrait he appeared to be much taller, and sat with a smile on his face, though his eyes showed no such joy. They were cold and seemed to scan John as the elevator rocketed upwards.

“Two hundred and ninety-ninth floor: conference room.” A cold woman’s voice said. The doors opened and hundreds of holo-cameras began to flash, blinding the two men. John grabbed Wallace and guided him to the front of the room towards the podium, shielding him from the holographers. They climbed several stairs and stepped onto the stage and the holo-cameras stopped. Wallace walked, step by step, towards the podium at center stage. He looked out and saw hundreds of cameras, reporters, and spectators waiting to hear him speak and apologize for his misbehaviour. He cleared his throat and began.

“I would like to thank the Fair and Pure Sports Agency for giving me the opportunity to speak in front of all of you. I am here to renounce my actions from a week ago...” Wallace looked to his father, a bead of sweat slowly trickling down the side of his face. John simply looked at Wallace, towards the crowd, then back to Wallace and nodded. Wallace coughed. “Excuse me; renounce my actions from a week ago... and to spread a message to children around the world. I don’t know how much time I have but I urge you to listen to me! We must unite and force the FAPSA to change their ways!” Cameras began to flash again, there was yelling coming from the crowd. Wallace looked to his father who yelled at him to keep going, there were security officers starting towards the stage. “The FAPSA has led you to believe that this is how sports were meant to be played but it not true!” A loud thud came from the left of Wallace so he looked over and saw his father standing over one of the security guards who was now unconscious. “You need to see what sports are supposed to be about! Do not let the FAPSA brainwash you anymore!” Another thud, this time coming from the sound of John hitting the ground. “Refuse your ribbons!” A guard grabbed Wallace and began to drag him away. As he was carried away the world heard just three more words from the young boy. “Find Michael Jordan!” He screamed as he was taken out of frame, disappearing before the viewer’s eyes. The podium now stood alone, with an old news clipping draped over the front, showing Michael Jordan holding the Larry O’Brien Championship Trophy for the sixth and final time.

The Runner

Austin Chang

Wanted. Illegal Unregistered Runner. \$10,000 Reward.

Joss stared at the poster that illustrated his pixilated, frantic face. He didn't think The Watchers would have found him so quickly in the vast regions of The Grounds. As he strode past the bright red poster, a loud grumbling sound emanated from his stomach. He shrugged off his backpack and rummaged through the mess of supplies, looking for a scrap of food. Finally, he triumphantly pulled out two protein bars and sprinted into the forest, disappearing into the endless green brush. He approached a large tree that seemed to be no more significant than the rest and ran his fingers along the length of the trunk, feeling the familiar bumps and indents that streaked the tree's torso. Putting the bars in his side pocket, Joss leapt up and caught hold of a thick branch. He wrestled himself up and proceeded to work his way up the tree until he was surrounded by a sphere of dense foliage and branches.

"Took you long enough."

Joss smirked. "You know, Kip, I have no problem eating both of these protein bars I found at the bottom of my bag."

Kip's face lit up, "I thought you didn't have any more food in your bag!" Joss threw the protein bar over to Kip in a graceful arc and opened his own wrapper with his teeth.

"Well tomorrow I'll definitely have to start to put my bow and arrow to use. I just hope I can figure out how to clean and cook a deer."

"Mack knew how to do all that stuff..." Kip said quietly.

"Yeah." Joss mumbled. Mack was Joss and Kip's best friend, who had died just two weeks after entering The Grounds. They had been watching together when they saw Mack's memorial picture underlined by his red time counter flash onto the television screen followed by the cold, steel blue eyes of the Hunter who had killed him. After his death, Joss had vowed to enter The Grounds without registering so he couldn't be tracked and help other Runners in need. He met up with Kip by chance and learned that Kip was trying to help provide for his family and honour Mack's memory as well. Together they had teamed up and started creating shelters for other Runners while living out of their own base shelter. They were doing well but now their lack of food was beginning to take its toll on their bodies.

"Joss?"

Joss snapped out of his daydream. "Yeah? Sorry."

“I was just saying, I heard from another guy about a group of seven Runners who have been out here for a while and I guess they’ve figured out how to live off of the resources on The Grounds. He said they mostly just go shrub hopping to keep out of sight. So I was thinking that maybe we could go and try to find them. Maybe see if they want to use one of our shelters and they can teach us how to live off the land.” Kip explained.

“Alright, but I’m going by myself. You stay here and keep yourself concealed.”

“But Joss—”

“No, Kip! I can’t put you in danger. I’m going to leave you with one of the knives just in case, but I want you to stay here until I get back. Okay?”

Kip nodded reluctantly. Joss placed the hilt of the knife in Kip’s open palm and carefully climbed out of the base shelter.

Joss turned to a sudden rustling sound that came from a nearby cluster of bushes. Deciding to preserve the precious arrows in his quiver, he drew his knife out of its sheath and raised it in defense of the invisible assailant as he slowly approached the bushes. Suddenly, a boy slowly emerged from the bush.

“Don’t worry bud, we’re all Runners here. You’re that unregistered Runner from the poster right?”

“Yeah.”

“Guys, he’s cool.” Six other figures rose out of the shrubs behind him. “Hey, I’m Foles. Me and these guys have been running around for quite a while and we call ourselves the Shrub Seven.”

These must be the seven guys Kip was talking about, thought Joss. “Yeah, I’ve heard of you guys. Are you guys maybe interested in a little deal?” Joss explained how he and Kip were creating tree shelters and offered them one of the shelters if they taught him how to clean and cook the wild animals that ran through The Grounds. Then, after a little deliberation within their group, Foles spoke up again.

“We can definitely do that. We’re kind of tired of shrub hopping all over the place.”

“Great! I’ll bring you back to meet Kip and then we can show you the shelter!” Joss gestured for them to follow him and turned around, starting back towards the base shelter.

“So have you guys encountered any Hunters yet?” Joss asked curiously.

“We’ve come pretty close to being caught quite a few times. Living on the edge like that for so long is pretty scary as I’m sure you understand. That’s one of the reasons we’d like to have

the comfort and security of a shelter. By the way, if you don't mind my asking, what made you want to enter The Grounds unregistered?"

Joss began to explain just how he got involved with the sport known as Vorak, barely able to croak out the single syllable of his deceased friend. He then continued to tell the Shrub Seven about how he snuck onto The Grounds. "There's this huge fence at the Vorak boundaries with barbed wire and everything and—"

Joss saw a flash of grey in the corner of his eye and stopped. He calmly raised a finger to his lips and gestured to the Shrub Seven in the direction of the movement. They turned to see a crazed-looking Hunter with his gun raised up. Aimed at Kip. Joss looked closer and recognized the Hunter's steely blue eyes.

"Oh my god. That's the guy that killed Mack." He started to run but felt a tugging at his shirt.

"Wait," Foles reasoned. "If you go over there, he'll try to kill us too. As hard as it is to let him go, you have to accept that he's gone now."

Joss looked at Foles and the rest of the Shrub Seven and back over to Kip, who was frozen in the path of the Hunter's unfired bullet. He took a deep breath and took a step forward.

Trinitas

Amrit Bhurji

Her boots crunched the gravel, kicking up dirt into the air and back into her lungs as she tried to breathe the polluted air. She held up her knife by the handle, mimicking slicing left and right, beating the air in different directions that left soft swishing sounds. *The heart, the head, the shoulder...* she kept meeting her invisible targets and smiled with satisfaction at her victories. She was dreadfully bored, again, and this was the only form of entertainment that kept her mind occupied so that she wouldn't relive her past in her mind, again. She felt herself uncontrollably slipping into her memories and her heart thudded loudly because she was about to relive the pain all over again.

Bliss had been trained by the Reiders, the only form of government left in Trinitas, or as the Old Generation called it, New York. She was taken in the very day her parents died at the young age of only five years old. A government official named Dalton found her sobbing on the ground, crouched over a man and a woman who were soaked in their own blood, still flowing fresh. Although the Reiders were trained to be indifferent and cold the man felt something as he looked upon Bliss's face, as her pale hair framed her face and he stared into her bright blue, young and innocent eyes he couldn't condemn her to a fate worse than death: being a Brazen. The Brazen were classified as children who had no families and were therefore forced to live outside, often turning brutally violent resulting in their own deaths, among the deaths of others. Dalton tore Bliss's hands away from her parents, ripping her away from the only family she had and he led her to the government base in the middle of the city. She let silent tears slip through her eyes and fall down her cheeks the whole way there.

The Reiders had the right to choose who entered the facility and who couldn't. As a high ranking member of the government, Dalton easily acquired boarding and clothing for Bliss and as he had already done more than he should have, he left her on her own, mistakenly looking back as he walked away to see the pain in the child's eyes as yet another person abandoned her. Bliss began her new life at The Compound and grew up faster than most children as she watched over the training procedures. She saw the fierce look in the eyes of the soldiers as they confidently beat their opponents and a fire lit inside of her. She wanted to be in possession of that look, in possession of her life and in possession of control so at the age of eight, after sneaking around the training area she was finally caught by none other than Dalton himself.

The senior officer, nor anyone else, had realized that Bliss couldn't talk until he directly tried speaking to her.

“What do you think you're doing child? You could have been seriously injured!”

Bliss shrugged, indifferent to his comment.

“When I’m speaking to you, I expect a ‘Yes, sir.’”

“Yes, sir,” she replied.

“Now, would you like to tell me what you’re doing in the training area?”

“I want to learn how to fight, sir,” she simply stated.

And that was the moment that Dalton started to love Bliss as his own. He smiled at her brashness and saw something in her that he hadn’t seen a long time in the New World; Dalton was witnessing fierceness and raw bravery.

There weren’t many children that had the patience that Bliss did and she trained with Dalton night and day until she was twelve. Those four years were the easiest of her life as training was the only thing that took her mind off of her parent’s unfortunate death. Bliss still couldn’t believe that the Old Generation had clean water at their disposal all the time and was often jealous of the stories that she heard where anyone could simply purchase a bottle of water, anywhere. She would give anything for a taste of *pure* water; the kind that wasn’t recycled from gallons of urine. Trinitas had been in this state for over 300 years now and she was tired of it but instead of focusing on her anger she focused on training instead.

After she successfully passed the guarder’s test she was placed in a position to guard the only pure bottle of water left on earth, otherwise known as the Holy Sancta, a pathetic piece of memorabilia from when the world had water to spare. She often tried to focus on other things but definite thirst and dehydration led to her thinking about her memories that followed her around like an unwanted sickness so she practiced training. She stood daily, waiting at that water bottle, often finding herself wanting it desperately and little did she know that the want would consume her whole.

Bliss regained knowledge of where she was and clung to the present so she wouldn’t slip back into her memories. She looked around, wondering as she often did what the world looked like for the Old Generation. All she could see for miles were electric lights attempting to brighten the city but only resulting in a modest glow. She had heard stories as a kid about magnificent balls of light that lit the sky once upon a time and wished she could travel back to experience that as she looked up and saw nothing but darkness. She was often consumed with darkness these days, unable to think about anything but that stupid bottle of water she was meant to guard. Bliss had often heard stories of guards going crazy and killing themselves because they couldn’t deal with the torture of staring at a bottle of pure water all day. She promised Dalton that this would never happen to her, and determined to keep her promise, fought off any feelings that she had about exiting this world; the world that had been only cruel to her so far.

When her replacement reached the Holy Sancta, Bliss walked through empty streets since a guard was the only person allowed to be awake at that time and fell asleep fast, silently praying that tomorrow she wouldn’t wake up.

Bliss opened her eyes to the electric light on her ceiling and dressed rapidly, putting her knives in their usual holding spots and her gun in her holster. She whispered before she put in it, like every morning: *I hope I don't have to use you today.* Her footsteps were light as she paced towards the Holy Sancta and she saw something that made her jaw drop. There was never any activity around the Holy Sancta which was the main reason she accepted the job. Guards were practically famous in Trinitas for their brutality but Bliss was not one of them. She realized quickly that she was the only guard in the area and that she was the one who would have to deal with the situation.

Bliss watched as a young boy, around seven years old cautiously approached the bottle of water. He had tears in his eyes as he clung to a pathetic and floppy stuffed rabbit, clearly a new recruit of the Brazen children. He stepped slowly towards it and something snapped inside Bliss.

"You must kill anyone who approaches the bottle, no matter what the intent. Trinitas law states that all citizens, excluding guards, must remain 5 feet away at all times or they will be rightly punished."

Dalton's words were screwed inside her head and she had repeated them thousands of times, breathing them in and out so that when the time came she would be able to act upon reflex without thinking about the fact that she was about to take another human life. She replayed the words over and over again as she watched the boy continue to approach the bottle. *'Please stop! Please, please, please turn around!'* she hastily thought. She tried to convey her thoughts to the boy yet he was only focused on the bottle. She kept praying for him to stop, hoping that her silent begging would somehow make him turn around. She didn't even realize that the words had started slipping out her mouth and accidentally whispered:

"Please, don't do this. I can't help you if you do."

The boy turned around, shocked and her bright blue eyes locked with his tear stained ones. That was the longest moment of her life as the seconds ticked away and her hand gripped her gun she hoped that he would turn around. She didn't want him to encounter the force field around the bottle as that was the most painful death anyone could ever experience. If anyone made contact with the force field they would be infected with a skin eating disease that would rip them apart for days until they died in complete agony. She kept her eyes locked on him when she pulled the trigger and Bliss was shocked as he started to smile; it was the most beautiful, brightest and genuine smile that she had ever seen.

"See you on the other side Miss," he said as he clutched his side.

Bliss snapped on the inside, unable to comprehend what had happened as she watched the little boy fall to the ground, his little stuffed rabbit covered in blood. She watched the red liquid ooze out of him and tears started falling from her eyes rapidly. Bliss ran towards the boy and angrily looked at the bottle of water, the one that had caused so much pain over the years. She

was tired of it, tired of everything it stood for and she shot at it with all her force, screaming violently as each bullet unleashed.

Bliss was unaware that the Guard's bullets had the potential to penetrate the force field and her eyes widened as she watched the impossible become possible. The bottle of water had been pierced by a bullet and was leaking. She ran towards it, drinking the water that gushed out of the sides and started laughing with relief until the ground started to shake. Natural disasters didn't happen in the New World so she wasn't aware of what to do as the earth shook violently, throwing her back and forth. It took her a while to realize that the ground wasn't shaking, but rising and she was blinded when Trinitas reached the top.

For a moment Bliss couldn't see and started to panic when the bright white light seemed to consume her whole. She blinked her eyes and looked around her, immediately she, and every other citizen of Trinitas started to cry, tears hitting the ground as they looked up. Bliss had never seen colour before but she thought that this might be 'blue.' She looked around and saw people dressed in strange, bright clothing that were staring at her, just as confused as she was. Her eyes watched signs that flashed brightly and real, live working automobiles and she didn't understand what was happening. The other citizens of Trinitas were in complete shock, unable to fathom what was happening. When one of the flashing signs started talking, they all turned around.

Citizens of Trinitas, welcome to New York! This is the President of the United States speaking informing you that we deeply regret what has happened to you. 300 years ago, this New World was formed and your parents and grandparents were all volunteers for a program called 'Trinitas' to see what would happen to a society if water was a limited or unavailable resource. We cannot thank you enough for your participation and are happy to have you rejoin the real world! We no longer need your services but your country will never forget what you have done for the future of the United States.

Everyone around them clapped and applauded them while the citizens stood in utter and complete shock. Bliss realized that her whole life was a lie all for a government experiment and that her parents had died for a government experiment. She had killed a boy for a government experiment and almost killed herself for a stupid government experiment. Before the so called "President" exited the screen she walked up towards it, took out her gun and shot at him, breaking it into a million tiny pieces. She angrily swore to herself that she would take down the man that implemented the "experiment" and looked down at her gun, whispering only one thing: *vengeance.*

Numbers

Mike Zhang

Bracelet

School is the worst time of the day for Christopher. He finds going to school every day as a hassle and considers it as an unnecessary part of his ordinary daily routine. Ever since the first day, Christopher has complained by yelling to himself of the boring school contents and the immature peers surrounding him. He walks down the hallway with slow steps and stares at others with his eyes of a hunter. His unique personality repels others except his brother. Edward, Christopher's twin brother is exactly the opposite of him. Although they come from the same family, Edward is much more athletic. Most people look up to him as the ideal role model as he is always confident and easy going. He socializes often and participates in school activities. It often seems as if Christopher lives in the shadow of his older brother, Edward. Yet, few see the strong brotherly love between the two. They know that they have each other's support and are not reluctant to ask or help each other in the time of struggle.

Today was a day when Edward needed to stay after school for football practice, so Christopher decides to take the long walk home first to have a light snack before dinner and prepare for another test the next day. The road, the sunset and the flow of traffic together seem motionless in the eyes of Christopher. As he turns around the corner and arrives at the street before his house, an object in the bush reflects a glimpse of the fading sunshine and blinds him for a split second. As a teenager full of curiosity, Christopher looks into the bush and pulls out the object with care. The fine material made out of gold in the hands of Christopher weighs much more than what it seems. It is obviously a hand bracelet, but crafted to the very finest details as it continues to dazzle Christopher. He examines it under the sun, looking closely at the carvings and small scratches. To his great surprise, the bracelet can be detached into two smaller bracelets. He cannot help himself but to try the whole piece on, and he squeezes his hand through it. The golden bracelet shines more brilliantly as he holds his hands towards the sky, but only for a brief moment. Suddenly, the wind starts to blow with incredible force and the dark clouds soon swallow up the last glimpse of sunshine. Edward can feel the drops of rainwater as he reminds himself that he should continue to head home. His rushing footsteps, the blowing wind and the rain together seem motionless no more.

Encounter

Soaked and hungry, Christopher tries his best to push himself off the ground as his mind slowly tries to piece together what has happened. He remembers standing in front of the crosswalk waiting for the lights after finding the bracelet. A car slipped as it turns the corner. He

convinces himself that perhaps it slipped because of the heavy rain as it crashed into him with incredible speed.

“Or maybe I just fainted.” He whispers to himself, thinking that he never would have lived if the car was going as fast as he thinks it was. As he pushes himself off the ground, he does not feel any pain from a broken bone or internal bleeding. He pulls out the phone with his right hand to check the time and sees that the golden bracelet is still with him.

“Half past five already! It’s already dinner time.” He realizes. Without a second thought, he rushes across the street and opens the door to his house.

The dinner does not last long as there is barely any talk on the table without Edward. Christopher walks into his bathroom in an awkward motion, uncomfortable due to his soaked clothes. He takes a shower and almost screams as he looks at himself shirtless in the mirror. It seems like a tattoo in the middle of his chest, a very familiar diagram with the number of 10 in the middle. He looks at the golden bracelet and finds that it has the same carving as the tattoo on his chest. He steps into the shower and hopes the pouring water will calm him down.

“There is no point of telling my parents, they can’t do anything about it either.” He thinks to himself and decides to keep it as a secret, even to his trusted brother.

The sound of the early alarm clock marks another ordinary day, but not for Christopher. Yesterday’s events have left him in shocked and curios. He slowly gets up and walks towards the bathroom. He takes off his shirt just to check if the mark in front of his chest. The mark surely has changed to his surprise. It has not faded even one bit, but the numeric number is now 9. The mark and the bracelet together now seem like an unknown curse. Christopher dresses up quickly and departs for school with his brother, but before he leaves, he takes off the bracelet and leaves it in his drawer.

Relate

Resting his chin on the palm of his hand and leaning slightly to his right, Christopher’s mind is miles away from the classroom.

“That’s a beautiful bracelet you have there.” The voice of a girl interrupts.

He looks to his right and meets the eyes of Melisa. Melisa is a slim girl with a rebellious attitude. Her dyed blonde curly long hair and her attractive looks draw attention everywhere she goes. Christopher remembers her as the girl that always frustrates the teachers with her attitude in class and her constant chewing of gum. He seems a bit surprised because his classmates rarely have any conversations with him.

“Thank you.” He says and looks down to his wrist and at the bracelet.

Melisa sees Christopher all of the sudden freezes and his eyes widen with shock.

Out of curiosity, she raises her eyebrow and asks him if he is okay, but Christopher does not even flinch one bit. After a brief moment, Christopher stays motionless but starts to move his lips.

“Yeah, I’m fine.”

“Hey, where did you get that?” She smiles at him and strokes her hair. To Christopher, it seems like as if she is trying to show off her ear ring.

“What, the bracelet? I got it at a garage sale.” Christopher stops looking into her eyes and pretends to focus on the teacher, trying to end the conversation.

After a brief moment of pause, Melisa turns away from Christopher and looks forward towards the board.

“Then, have you died yet?”

Christopher tilts his head and stares at Melisa with suspicion and curiosity, carefully examining this girl from head to toe to figure out her intentions.

“Meet me at the roof during lunch if you want to know more.” She says with a mocking tone and ignores him.

She grabs her bag and leaves immediately as the class bell rings. As much as Christopher wanted to follow her to demand an answer, he held back and watched her steps as she left the room. He waited patiently as the last hour before lunch passed.

Impact

In another classroom, Edward leans on the side of the desk, having a brief chat with Mr. Dobson before he leaves.

“Yes, Mr. Dobson, I have already finished spreading the posters around the school.”

“That is very kind of you. I will see you in the afternoon.” Mr. Dobson smiles at Edward and is very pleased by his hardworking ethics and effort.

As soon as the conversation ends, Edward walks out of the classroom with quick steps and searches for his brother. He looks for Christopher because he finds two big slices of banana bread in his lunch bag and he figures that their mother has probably made a mistake by placing Christopher’s slice in his bag. He finds it odd that his brother is not near his locker or on the 2nd

floor where most of his classes are at. While wandering through the hallway, many of his peers greet him as he asks every one of them if they have seen his brother.

“Oh, I remember, he was on his way to the roof top to meet Melisa.” One of the students who sat close to Christopher says.

“They had an interesting conversation.” The student adds.

Edward looks at him with confusion as he cannot believe that his brother talked to a girl today, but heads towards the roof anyways with his lunch box in his hand. It seems as everything is a little off the usual routine today. His steps become larger as he starts to worry a bit for his brother.

Christopher fulfils Melisa’s expectation when he opens the door knob and steps through the only door to the roof. He sees her leaning on the railing at the end of the other side, looking down from the 6th floor at the crowd of students during the lunch break. For a moment, he sees her true beauty and does not wish to distract her. He becomes reluctant to approach her as he stands there and holds his emotions back.

Melisa senses Christopher’s presence even though she does not turn around and witness her belief. She can feel the tension in the thin air around her and prepares her fate.

“So you have become one of us, one who possesses a mysterious item. Your death remarks a new chapter of your life. The number counts down as day by day.” She says in a loud voice, making sure that Christopher hears every word from her.

Christopher steadily walks towards her but stops to make sure he keeps distance from Melisa as he tries to piece the clues together. The bracelet, the car crash and the number in front of his chest are all not coincidences but related. He watches Melisa lift her right hand and covers her ear, her index finger in contact with her ear ring. With his very own eyes, Christopher sees the ear ring glowing. It transforms into a handle. As Melisa wraps her right hand around it, it stretches and forms a sharp golden sword with its edges looking extremely sharp.

“To kill is to live and to live is to kill.” She turns around and smiles at Christopher. With her empty left hand, she pulls her collar down enough just to show Christopher a glimpse of her own number. All of the sudden, her smile becomes a laughter that sends chill through Christopher’s spine and her expressions become desperate and horrific. She charges at Christopher like the harbinger of death and attempts to kill him with her swing of the sword, but Christopher quickly jumps to the side with his instincts and the tip of the sword misses him by a fraction of an inch. While dodging the sword, Christopher makes his way towards the door, and holds on to his bracelet, wondering if the bracelet would transform into a weapon too.

All of the sudden, his hands become lighter as he finds the bracelet along with the weight of it disappear. Out of the thin air, he feels the texture of a smooth handle in both of his palms and without another second of thought, he grabs them and holds on to them tightly. He looks

down at his weapons while making sure Melisa stays within his sight. He looks down and sees two golden daggers in each of his hands, but realizes that Melisa still has an overwhelming advantage over him as he looks at her sword.

Before he can catch another gasp of air, Melisa catches him off guard and swings her sword at her. He figures that there is no time to dodge it, so he bends his knees to stabilize himself and holds the daggers high, making an “X” shape to defend. He sees sparks as the impact leaves his right knee numb and his left hand possibly fractured. One of his daggers flies out of his hand and makes a metal clashing sound as it bounces up after the fall. Christopher drops to his right to avoid the devastating blow. His face shows that he is in deep pain and he continues to sweat and breaths heavily.

Out of nowhere, a tall figure jumps in between them. Lying under the figure’s shadow and slowly trying to get up, Christopher looks at the back of the figure and recognizes the person as no one else but his brother Edward.

“I don’t know what my brother has done to you. Can you lay down your arms? Whatever the problem is, I’m sure we can talk it through.” He picks up the other dagger on the ground and holds it firmly with both of his hands.

“Okay.” Melisa smiles, but as soon as Edward breaths out a sense of relief, she swings her sword across and slashes his throat. He sees his own blood gush out and dripping on the floor. He immediately grabs his throat with both of his hands. He tries to yell and scream but instead falls down to his knees. Behind him, Christopher watches his brother fall and then immediately stares at Melisa furiously. In a split second, he launches himself off the ground and towards the demon with all his remaining strength and pushes the dagger right through her heart.

As the dagger pierces through her heart, her expressions show as if she never expects to end this way. As she continues to scream in the top her long, she solidifies from the top to the bottom into stone like material and eventually breaks into tiny fragments of dust, blown away by the wind. Christopher stands there and helplessly looks at his brother soaked in the pool of blood. Just when he is about to pull out his phone to call the police and explain the situation, Edward’s hand twitches and this catches Christopher’s attention.

“Your death remarks a new chapter of your life.” He remembers the words of Melisa and rushes towards Edward, holding his hands while praying for his brother to come back to life. His prayers have been answered as Edward slowly opens his eyes and the cut on his throat slowly disappears. Christopher’s tears of joy drip down his cheeks as he cherishes the miracle, but reality soon strikes him. The other half of his golden bracelet rests on Edward’s wrist. He pulls down Edward’s collar to confirm his assumption and turns away as he as soon as he catches a glimpse of the dark permanent mark.

The two of them sit on the ceiling and skip all the classes until dawn. Christopher explains to Edward the events that have occurred since yesterday afternoon. Curious of his new life, Edward looks at the bracelet and glances through his collar at his chest.

“So what now? Now we are going to be hunted by strangers out of nowhere?”

He let goes a long deep sigh and then starts to laugh. He laughs because he is powerless, he laughs because he fears the new future, but most of all, he laughs because he now accepts his twist of fate.

They hold on to each other’s shoulders and carry each other home, both troubled by fatigue and hunger. They know now that fate was winded the strings of their lives together since birth, but now they know that fate has pulled both ends and tightened it more than ever.

Theory

Christopher walks out of the fog of mist after his bath. He wipes the large wide mirror to see the mark in front of his chest again. Instead of the number 9 in the morning, the number on his chest has become 23. By now, he and Edward assume that the number is a countdown until their death, but they have no idea that it can increase. Christopher quickly gets dressed and knocks on Edward’s door to discuss his findings.

“What number do you have on your chest? You haven’t told me that yet.” Christopher asks.

“I have 23, what about you?” Edward replies while lying down comfortably on his bed.

Christopher pauses for a moment and leans against the door. He frowns and stares at the floor.

“I have 23 as well.”

“Well, isn’t that interesting.” He smiles and shakes his head.

“Maybe it’s because of her death. I remember she said that ‘To kill is to live and to live is to kill.’ Maybe she was after me for my numbers from the beginning because she knew the secrets behind that bracelet meant.”

“Even if that means we have to kill to live, you know I would be against it right?”

Knowing Edward for so long, Christopher knows and expects this response from him, but it still upsets him a bit because it means that he only has 23 days of life left. For a brief moment, he even wishes that others will come to hunt him so he may fight by using self defence as an excuse to live another day.

Yet, life has gone back the way it was for both of them. Although Edward approaches life with more passion and lives everyday fully, the countdown worries Christopher more than ever, day by day. Christopher continues to question himself his own definition of life and its purpose, but cannot find the answer.

Flight

The numbers in front of their chests continue to diminish on a daily basis. On the night before their numbers turn to zero, they eat their dinner slowly and take their time chewing every bits of food. They say good night to their parents and head up towards their individual rooms, ready for whatever fate has prepared for them.

In his pajamas, Edwards tries to fall sleep but the uncertainties keep him awake. He tilts his head back and forth, trying to find himself a comfortable position. Eventually he gets up and sneaks across the hall way to Christopher's room, looking for a midnight chat. He knocks on the door gently and whispers his brother's name. He toes sense the cool wind blowing by the tiny gaps below the door. After knocking several times without a response, he opens the door and sees the window widely open and the room in a mess as his brother's belongings lie everywhere across the floor. He approaches the window and looks down to see Christopher nowhere in sight.

Months later, a young man approaches a grave and looks down to it without any words. He is unshaven and some parts of his clothes are torn apart. He seems tired as if life has been torturing him. He opens his palms and looks into them. Although his hands are clean, he rubs his hands back and forth, trying his best to get rid of the permanent blood stains.

Choices, Choices

Sami McBryer

Sitting alone in her pod it's hard for Ro Archer believe that the station keeps running, everything keeps moving, people keep living, because her life is over.

Living with her parents she was raised on steady doses of hatred. She was taught, often subtly, that she was better. Her fair skin was a treasure, her facial features ideal, her naturally blonde hair a prize. Two arms, one on either side, and two legs that match are preferred to more than a couple of arms or none at all. Essentially, being human is better than being alien. So when she hit sixteen and began dating an alien boy, her parents were livid. They set in place an ultimatum – your family and your home, or your boyfriend. Ro figured if she could hold out until she got married to Jet and had a place of her own, she would be fine, so she continued to date her boyfriend when her parents weren't looking. Obviously they were looking closer than she thought or else her boyfriend wouldn't have been arrested.

When he was arrested, Ro and Jet were in the commonspace meant for civilians between the age of eighteen and twenty-five, Vacaans. This meant no parents, and no police – until they came in to take Jet away. It also meant no Ro; she was only seventeen, a year away from being allowed in. Jet on the other hand was nineteen and so when she wanted to see him away from prying eyes she would sneak into Vacaans, no one would expect her to be there. Just before they came, the couple were snuggled up on a couch watching a movie. Harmlessly cuddled under a blanket, Ro was softly stroking Jet's chest while he played with her hair. Then, rather suddenly and with a loud crash, several police officers burst in. The first officer was a tall green fellow built like a brick wall, two of his four arms holding weapons almost as large as him. The second, a yellow and orange blob-like man who left a slimy trail that the officers following him carefully avoided. Last was a pair of twins that seemed to be half human, half alien, with skin tones similar to Ro's but more than their fair share of eyes and a few extra arms each.

When these four men bashed down the door to Vacaans, the first man, identifying himself as Officer Wanu, shouted “JETHRO MELAIR! WHERE IS JETHRO MELAIR!?”

Jet, without a clue as to why these terrifying men were looking for him, straightened up in fear. “I, uh, I'm Jet,” he stuttered, “What's, uh, what's, um, going on?”

“JETHRO MELAIR, YOU ARE UNDER ARREST FOR THE SEXUAL ASSAULT OF A MINOR.” Officer Wanu announced as he walked over to Jet and Ro.

Jet bolted upright, shock replacing the fear on his face as he asked, “Whoa, what? What are you talking about?”

Ignoring his question, Wanu requested that Jet turn around so he could be handcuffed, a request to which Jet complied. He was then hauled off to the containment rooms shouting and asking what he had done.

Ro ran up to the twin officers, demanding that they tell her what was going on. “I’m his girlfriend!” She cried, “I deserve to know what’s happening!”

“Your *boyfriend* had sex with a minor, a girl named Rosemary Archer. I guess that would be you, huh?” They answered in unison.

As soon as they said that, Ro knew this was all because of her parents. Her and Jet had never even ventured close to the bedroom, so the charge was false. But her parents knew that, and they also knew that no one would believe a seventeen year old girl over her parents, especially since her father is a police officer himself. It would be her word against his, and she would lose.

Ro remembers it vividly, as if she was back in Vacaans, rather than sitting on her sleeping pod in her room, if you could even call it that. It was really more of a prison, a cage with two exits. She could either denounce Jet and stay with her family, the people that love her, or she could run away with Jet, leaving her family behind forever and become a fugitive. The choice should be obvious, her family is beyond constrictive and strict, she couldn’t fathom leaving her little brother Toby alone with her parents. He needed her, but she couldn’t take him with her either, she couldn’t turn him into a ten year old fugitive.

All she wants is to escape her parents with Jet, run away and be free. Leave the mental abuse behind. But she could never really be free; knowing that she left her brother to crumble under her parents’ wrath would kill her. So what should she do? She has two choices. Choices, choices.

Libertas

Abby Wells

In the middle of December, under the mantle of their fireplace, a quaint, amiable family of five prepared for their annual photograph. The Father brushed the dust off his Son's tweed blazer, and the Mother smoothed out the wrinkles in her Daughters' dresses. From across the fireplace, the Father caught the glance of the Mother, and smiled a charming grin, which the Mother cordially returned. And all was well.

The Photographers began to prepare the dark room, and held up the flash, indicating that the picture was ready to be taken. Together, the Mother and the Daughters reached for their lips and began unweaving the black satin ribbon that sealed them shut. The Son observed rather inquisitively, as the silky ribbon slowly made its way through the Mother and the Daughters' lips. He turned to the Father, and questioned ever-so innocently why the Mother and the Daughters bound their lips with ribbons. In a blasé and unsympathetic manner, the Father elucidated that they merely had naught to say.

For as long as they could remember, the women of Nezerp were bound to a stringent and simple life. Hundreds of years prior, a very intelligent woman named Suu proved to be wiser than all, and therefore, a threat to the patriarchal government. Naturally, Suu was promptly eliminated. A decree was soon issued that all females studying in schools must create three holes in their top lip, and three in their bottom. Through these holes, they must weave a long black satin ribbon, to remind the world that women were much more obliging when seen, and not heard.

The ribbon became glorified. Billboards of beautiful women trendily sporting it littered the streets. Government propaganda promoting its seductive elegance was extensive in the media. It soon became the societal norm that all women leaving their homes during the day ought to wear this fashionable tool of censorship. Shortly following this was the austere law that all females must wear the ribbon from the day they turn eight until the day they die.

When instructed by the Photographer to do so, the corners of five mouths twitched faintly upwards, five bottom lips dropped terribly slightly, and five sets of front teeth were revealed in the most jovial manner, for one second, to the radiant burst of the flash.

Daughter had known no life different from the bindings of the ribbon, and in her naivety, made a series of horrible mistakes one day. First, came the terrible mistake of *feeling*. The women of Nezerp know that *feeling* leads to *thoughts*, *thoughts* lead to *words*, and *words* is a crime punishable by death. Yet, Daughter could not ignore the surge of *feelings* that radiated from her heart one day when staring out her window at a fiery sunrise. From her *feelings* spurred her next horrible mistake; on a piece of blank parchment, Daughter scribed these emotions. What a thrill it was, to have her thoughts stare back at her! Daughter was so excited about her newfound *thoughts*, that she committed her next horrible mistake, by revealing them to her sister. The Sister reached under her mattress and uncovered pages and pages of her own written *feelings*. They fawned over these for hours.

Sister divulged that there was many more like them— more who defied the rules of the ribbon, the rules of Nezerp. She explained that the women of Nezerp had not always had to hide their *thoughts*, and that many believed the time had come to oppose this conformity. They thought, they pondered, and then, they decided.

After the photograph, without even having to be told to do so, the Mother wove her black satin ribbon back through the blood-crusts holes in her lips. The Sisters, however, did not. The Father looked puzzled at this act of disobedience. His furrowed brow of perplexity soon turned to a deep-set frown of anger, demonstrated by palm of his hand across each of their faces. The Father smiled a charming grin, to which the Mother cordially returned. And all was well. The teary-eyed sisters, however, picked themselves up off the floor and exchanged a meaningful glance. Their gaze drifted out the window, knowing that the fiery sun must soon set on their patriarchal world.

That evening, the Father, Son, and Mother came home just in time for dinner. They entered the kitchen where the Daughters were to be preparing a meal. Instead, however, they were quite horrified to find the sisters hanging from the ceiling beams, at the neck, by black satin ribbons. The same black satin ribbons that once kept them silent, had finally given them a voice.