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## **Cure to Discrimination**

‘I did it! I did it!’ I shout as I enter a lab.

Charles raises his head and says: ‘Hello. What did you do?’

I calm myself down only enough to sit down on a stool. ‘Hi. I passed my Enhanced’s studies exam.’ I can’t hide an excitement as these words leave my mouth.

He takes a few steps closer to me, looks directly into my eyes and says: ‘Oh really? How surprising!’ He tries to look and sound surprised but I can see the smile that’s fighting to show.

So I lightly punch his shoulder and tell him: ‘Hey, keep the sarcasm at bay. You know how nervous I was.’

His face once again turns stoic, in such a contrast to his easy and happy tone. ‘No, I had no idea.’ I burst out laughing and so does he. It is so easy, like it has always been between us.

Since our first meeting...

Back then I was a fresh second-year student at Terran University of Sciences. My major was Neurophysics and I had yet to choose my specialisation. And of course, I had no idea. Well, I still don't.

But that was nothing too weird, well it would be pretty common if I was Enhanced. But I was not. And being Basic at the best University on Terra, made me a curiosity no matter what. Even though I wasn't the first one, not even the only one currently studying there at that time.

But generally, it was thought that these without the neurotransmitters in their brains, Basics, and thus without an straightforward connection to holoweb are not able to withstand the hard and unforgiving world of academics.

Let's see, three years forward in time and this outlook has not changed at all.

But back to me. I had just been told they had finally decided, who my new practical assignment mentor would be. My excitement had to be plain and it only decreased a little when I was told what it was about.

Not like I expected something glamorous and important like the task my Enhanced classmates would get. But still? They assigned me to find a way to undo the enhancement. It was clear that it's no high priority research. But at least it was something more than the administrative work they had chosen for another Basic just two years my senior.

On my way to a lab that day, a fit of almost panic had overcome me. I was about to meet someone I would spend years working with. What if they don't like me? What if I don't like them? What if they don't respect me because I am Basic?

I had to practically force myself to knock on that fateful lab door. I waited for a while. Then the door opened and I was welcomed by a young man, he could be just about 4 years older than I was.

And surprisingly the very first thing that caught my attention wasn't the colour of his eyes. They were not purple. They were not the eyes of Enhanced. They were brown, kind and so deep. I would be working with another Basic.

An outstretched hand suddenly came to my view. I shook it and he introduced himself.

The sentence, I'm Charles Whyte, main researcher in this laboratory, and you have to be Cecilia Rokorsou, my new assistant researcher, right? Will forever be imprinted in my mind. Not because of the words, they weren't that special, but because of the tone in which they were said. I felt welcomed. My nervousness almost disappeared.

Later that day, after he had shown me the lab and all its equipment, which to be honest was pretty amazing and high-tech, we sat down and talked. He asked about who I was and what was my goal. I learnt he had just graduated in Biotechnology and was put in charge of this lab.

We talked about the project and I finally realised that it was quite an important job. Not that anyone would admit it. But it was.

Being Enhanced was only half genetics, the other part was 100% parents' decision. If there weren't the gene forbidding the enhancement process, parents could decide. Mother could go through a simple and quick operation and a child that would be born would be enhanced.

But there were people, who didn't want for their children to be Enhanced. And that was their choice. But we weren't told about such cases in High school.

I remember I asked why would anyone want for their children not to be Enhanced. I truly didn't understand. Being Enhanced were just pros, no cons. I didn't think being Basic was wrong, no I believed everyone was equal, but I could not erase the constrictions made by society. It was simply easier to be Enhanced.

But his answer caught my of guard.

He said some people believed living without the enhancement was better. He showed me some hidden and forgotten studies that showed Enhanced just copied what someone else had already done. But Basics were the ones, who were trying new things, making innovations. But these studies were almost forbidden and if someone came with a thesis similar to them, they would have been discredited.

He told me his parents believed in that and so did he. And that's why he is not Enhanced even when he could be.

Then we talked some more. About more trivial things.

And when I finally returned to my room that evening, I felt content and at ease. I had the feeling that something good started that day. And I wasn't wrong.

But now, let's return to the present. After we calm down I say: 'No, but really. It was too easy. The professor was the one who thinks you are just Basic and your mind is too weak to understand these difficult things. It's annoying but I have to say I prefer it over the type who won't let you pass unless you tell them everything.'

I look at Charles, his posture calm and relaxed telling me to go on with what I am saying.

'He said there was no need for me to go through the explanation of internal workings during the process of making Rainesite-Einsteinium. All he needed was that Inesite with Raite and Plutonium when there is an extreme pressure, a strong radiation and the right catalyst will change their molecular structure and create Rainesite-Einsteinium aka the Thinking rock. Can you believe it?'

He laughs as he declares: 'Yes, I can believe it quite easily, but please continue.'

I smile at him and go on: 'Okay, but I'll make it short. In the end, all I needed to know was that Reinesite-Einsteinium is along with cold krypton plasma injected into foetus during the eleventh week of pregnancy. And it connects to neurons and strengthens them as well as it makes nanotransmitters that allow the brain to the holoweb connection. Like any fifth grader could tell him that! Can you remind me why I was so nervous?' I ask not really expecting a real answer.

And I get none. He simply stands up and asks me if I want a cup of coffee. I nod, stand up and go with him to the coffee-maker.

Only when we are sitting again, he tells me the big news.

'The Fifth Continental University has agreed to carry out the test of our AntiRainesite Serum on any volunteers that shall come there.'

'Why have you not told me sooner?' I ask.

He holds up his hands and replies: 'I only found out an hour ago, and by then you already were in the exam room.'

As we drink our cups of coffee, I ask more questions. Each one more and more technical and detail-oriented.

When we finish our cups of coffee, he stands up and shrugs off his lab coat and announces: 'We are going to celebrate.'

And we do. We go to one of the fancier restaurants in the campus and enjoy a great meal.

Later when we are sitting in a bar he leans closer to me and whispers: 'You don't know how glad I am they assigned you to this project. And not only because I wouldn't be able to find the answer without you.'

I raise my gaze and I get lost in the deepness of his eyes. I see something that I can't name, yet I feel like I know what it is.

He leans closer.

And I am stuck in the magic of the moment. I turn my head up. Almost closing the space between our lips.

But something stops me. I'm not sure I want it. He is amazing and I won't lie he's not exactly bad looking. But he's my friend, the only true friend I have here.

But I'm not sure I want him that way and he probably doesn't want it too. Not really. He's overcome by happiness and little bit drunk on the whiskey already.

So I in fact welcome the loud beep of my condev. I straighten my posture and take it out.

Sideways, I look into his eyes and when I see no confusion or hurt, I realise I have chosen correctly. The kiss would only complicate things.

And as I turn to read the new message, the moment is lost. I turn my condev to him, so he can see the text too.

## **THE COMPETITION FOR GHARSZAI CURE**

*Since the first contact with a nation of Gharszai from planet Gharsz Beta, there has been an increasing number of people dying from an unknown viral infection. So far the Medico-Epidemic team has been unsuccessful in isolating the virus or even finding the cure. So the Directorium of Terran University of Sciences decided to let all of its employees and student complete in competition. Its goal is to find a cure for this dangerous epidemic. Grand reward will be given to those who 'll find the cure. All seriously interested people are to report tomorrow at the Medico-Epidemic Complex.*

*Director E. V. Leen*

'We have to do this!' we say at once when we finish reading.

And that's how we find ourselves hunching over holocomp in the Medico-Epidemic Complex trying to find a cure.

It hasn't been easy, getting in here. The Director tried to talk us out of this competition. He was surprised that two Basics wanted to compete against Enhanced. But in the end, he had to let us complete, if only to keep up the facade that there is no discrimination.

That's not to say that he treated us the same as everyone else. When he comes weekly to visit and see how the research continues he asks us only questions like; The weather is nice today, right? And what do you think about the new Starship that's being built? When he asks other scientists questions about their research.

But hey, his lost. And because everyone completely ignores us, nobody has an idea that we have already managed to isolate the virus and put the data in our holocomp.

Only after a few weeks two Basics have done more than Enhanced in months.

The isolation of the virus was in no way easy, but with a combination of biotechnics and neurophysics as well as some experimentation that was often quite bizarre, we did it.

And now we only have to find a cure. Yeah, only.

Everything is going fine until one day I walk into our lab space and I see Charles packing up his things.

‘What are you doing?’ I asked honestly confused.

He looks at me as if I am crazy and hisses. ‘Leaving, this is useless, we will never figure it out.’

I freeze for a moment, unsure how to react. ‘Why would you say this? We are doing fine.’

He laughs, but it’s not the warm and pleasant sound I am used to hearing from him, it’s cold and cruel. ‘Yeah, sure. You can’t see it, how could you? But I can. I may not be Enhanced, but I don’t have the gene that would not allow for me to be. It was only my parent's decision that kept me from greatness. I can see the giant block that’s in front of us. Even when you can’t. Or your lowly mind can’t. It does not matter, I quit.’ He says, grabs his things and exits the room.

I stand still for long moments. My mind is having a hard time processing all this. Where did this come from? Why would he say this? He always proclaimed that Basics were not worse than Enhanced, they even sometimes said he thought them, us, better. And now when we are maybe so close to finding the cure he flips.

And that’s not all, he thinks him better than me. He thinks I am useless, inferior. It hurts. It hurts so much.

But I don’t give up. I go on with my day of work. I realise I am not doing my best, not when there are so many questions on my mind.

And it's no surprise when, in the evening, I exit the lab and head directly towards his room. I need to confront him.

I find him sitting on his couch. He does nothing to acknowledge my presence. So I start with my questions. ‘What happened? Why did you change your mind so much? Do you think we really are inferior to them?’

I try to stand tall and not waver, but it’s hard.

It becomes even harder when he turns around and says. ‘No, I don’t think we are inferior. I think you are. Just a little-broken thing playing pretend that you can change the world. How wrong are you! And I am finally sick of it.’

His words are stern, even almost mechanic. And something in me breaks. ‘How could you think this?’ I whisper, barely holding together.

‘You don’t really believe it, do you? Not after all we’ve been through together, right?’ I try to see a reason in this madness, but I’m failing. My hands are trembling, I shake all over, small tremors running up and down my spine as I wait for an answer.

But I get none. Only silence. And silence has never spoken louder.

But I try once again, for the last time. ‘Don’t you have anything to say?’ I hiss.

Still the only answer I receive is a sad look and more silence.

But that is enough. So the silence is the answer. He doesn’t care. Maybe he never did. Hell, he really believes in this Enhanced are better nonsense. And all his talks about the unique ability of Basic to come up with new things was probably just a lie.

I look at him for the last time and turn around. As I am walking away, I realise it hurts so much not because he gave up, but because I, somewhere on the way, fell for him.

All these moments spent in the lab trying to prove something most thought impossible. And we were so close.

Or so I thought. I walk into the hallway and only the loud thud of the door brings me back to real world.

I start to run. Lights of the campus illuminate my way through the glass walls.

Sometimes I used to stop here to admire the view. Now, I don’t really see it. I sprint down the hall and turn left. I rush past the lifts, instead choosing to take the stairs. Somewhere deep down I know that this is illogical, that the lift is at least ten times faster than I could ever be, but I need to move.

There’s not enough time for me now. Maybe I’m running against all odds. I don’t care. I have to try. Even if it’s just for myself.

I see the lab door. I slow down and take a deep breath. And another. In and out, in and out... As the adrenaline slowly leaves my body, I ask myself if it’s really worth it. If I can go through it alone.

I shake my head. As if there was a choice. I must do it. I walk towards the door, scan my retina and as the sensor flashes green and the door opens I am completely calm down.

I evenly move towards our work- scratch it, I evenly move towards now my working station, completely aware of all the eyes on. I hear the whispers and snares. I ignore them.

I pretend I feel confident. It’s only a charade. But I need to focus on my work. Or I’d break down.

I sit down and turn on the holocomp and as I am inserting the earbuds the first curious and emphatic fellow-researcher comes. ‘Where is your better half? He didn’t leave you for someone better, did he?’ he asks with a smirk that he’s not even bothering to hide.



‘Oh well, ‘ I reply with a small smile. ‘He did, but who am I to keep him away from his happiness?’ and with that the conversation is over for me.

I turn my eyes towards the screen and start to go through the data just like I did tens of times before. There has to be something I overlooked before. And with this thought, I submerge into the work for hours.

It’s only well after midnight when I take a break and go to my room to get some sleep. The room is silent and I almost immediately fall asleep. Just as I am crossing the line between real and dream world a single tear rolls down my cheek.

Surprisingly when I wake up, I feel completely refreshed and ready to take on a whole day’s workload. I prepare myself a cup of coffee, sit down at the table and touch the button that brings the holoscreen with news to life.

I’m just scanning the titles when one catches my attention.

### **Rainesite can envelop Flerovium. Another extremely radioactive element is stabilised!**

A thousand thoughts run through my mind at once. I would even say that my mind processes are for once as fast as these of Enhanced.

Rainesite stabilises Einsteinium, a radioactive element, which useful isotope lasts only about 20 minutes, and enables its connection to neurons. That is a sentence every middle schooler knows. Yet I have managed to forget it, I thought it was only something elementary that could not be useful to my research. How was I wrong.

Einsteinium is only in bodies of Enhanced. That could explain everything!

I leave my coffee on a table and rush to the lab. As soon as the holocomp comes to life I say: ‘Divide infected into these with Rainesite-Einsteinium Treatment and these without it.’

A list of two columns full of names scrolls on the screen.

‘Show percentage.’

The columns of data disappear and instead of them the numbers 61,23% and 38,77% appear.

No surprise here, Enhanced generally work in higher-level positions and lots of them are first class snobs that refuse to meet with Basics. So there was a more Enhanced during the first meeting with Gharszai delegates than Basics. That and the voluntary seclusion that I mentioned before caused that majority of infected are Enhanced.

‘Show percentage of deaths in these two categories.’ I said and held my breath.

If my presumption is correct, then the solution to this epidemic is clear.

I know that holocomps are impossibly fast, but now it felt like this single operation took this one whole eternity. Finally, only after about 0,07 seconds later, the numbers on the screen changed.

And I could not feel more ecstatic. I was right. I solved the problem. My assumptions are correct.

I slowly gazed over the holoscreen again and it should be horrible but the awful numbers made me so happy. 88,13% of deaths with Enhanced and only 4,22% with Basics.

I need to run only a few more comparisons, to be certain. ‘Show percentage of Basics deaths with other symptoms present.’

Number 98,09% appears on the screen. I let out a sigh of relief. And continue with my questions. Each single one confirming my view.

When I find a satisfying answer to all of them, I turn slightly to the left and start running different simulation scenarios.

‘Simulate virus and Rainesite-Einsteinium reaction.’

What I see is something extraordinary. The two extremely different entities fit together flawlessly. Like a lock and a key. And when they make the connection, they go off together in a loud bang. And what is left is something so surprising I have to laugh, there are only some ions, that could never be dangerous to us. The rest completely ceased to exist in the explosion.

I give myself a minute and then I run even more tests.

‘Simulate virus and Enhanced’s brain in comparison with Basic’s brain.’

Again I see something, I would never expect. The virus does not lock itself to the first nanotransmitter it sees, no it starts multiplying until there are as many virus bodies as there are molecules of Rainesite-Einsteinium. And only then does the virus attack. And the brain goes out with a big bang.

On the other hand, in Basic’s brain the virus multiplies, but reaches only tens of thousands in the count. And then the virus starts to disassemble, transforming into water, minerals and other life non-threatening substances.

I want to jump in the air and scream, but there is still one scenario left to run. I take a deep breath and my voice being only slightly louder than a whisper.

‘Run virus versus Enhanced’s and Basic’s body scenario.’

If this scenario works out like I think it will, then the solution to this epidemic is clear and surprisingly simple.

And I am right. The loose virus bodies wander through the human body, bouncing and pushing to all internal organs causing symptoms like nausea, elevated temperature, skin rash and overall fatigue. Then at the same time when it kills Enhanced, the last traces of this virus leave Basic’s system.

A wide smile appears on my face. I did it. We did it.

I almost turn around in search of Charles. I want to leap into his arms and burst into tears of happiness, but I stop myself. He's not here. An ice runs along my spine and a single tear escapes from my eye and runs down my cheek. I let it fall.

Because a more important question arises in my mind. Will I take the credit myself? Or will I include him? He decided to leave. He outright said he doesn't believe in our case, in us. But I could not come to this conclusion on my own. And I couldn't offer the world the cure without his help, his lead, his ideas.

I'll be honest and say he is as important as I am. Even after what he has done. I sit down and start dictating:

'The cure for Gharszai virus by Cecilia Rokorsou and Charles Whyte'

The next hours are spent in a frenzy. Dictating, correcting, writing down awfully long formulas and contacting my superiors. And after all of this I am summoned to the Director's office.

'So you claim that you have not only successfully isolated the Gharszai virus but have also found the cure. Why I find it so hard to believe?' the Director Martins asks.

And I, for the first time, answer him without holding back. 'You find it hard to believe because I am not Enhanced. I'm just a lowly Basic without the brain capacity to figure out things that are more difficult than Ion torpedoes inner workings. You've read my report, seen the proofs. Why do you not believe it?'

And he is left speechless. His mouth opens and closes. And when he finally manages to speak I hear a fear in his voice. 'And is using shots of AntiRainesite Serum only way to stop this epidemic?'

I can't help myself and smile. He is frightened by the thought of losing his so-called superiority. 'No there is another way.' I ponder. 'We can do nothing and the epidemic will stop itself in a decade or so.'

His eyes start to shine with hope. 'Of course all Enhanced will die and for Basics, it will be no more dangerous than common influenza.' as I finish my speech I look directly into his eyes.

And I see the way he processes this piece of information. He nods. 'You are right. But we can't force Enhanced to give up their abilities.'

'Yes, we can't force them. They will have a choice. To give up their abilities or to die. I'd say it's an easy choice.' I declare.

He sighs. 'Very well. I'll put your report on the holoweb as well as I'll pass your knowledge to the media. You can leave.'

I nod at him and take my leave. In a hallway, I stop and do something I should have done sooner.

I take out my condev and message Charles.

*Found the solution. Dir accepted it. It's being put on the web now. The virus reacted with Rainesite and Einsteinium in Enhanced's nervous systems. Causing the nanotransmitters to violently combust and for the lack of better term fry their brain. The deaths among Basics were caused by combination with other illnesses and lack of their treatment. Medics will inject our AntiRainesite Serum to these who will deem their lives more important than their connection to holoweb and faster brain processes. You're credited. They will come and ask questions.*

One would expect that after weeks of long shifts in the lab full of stress, I'll have some peace. How wrong would they be?

Next hours pass with endless questions being thrown at me, only slightly fewer congratulations (which sincerity one can doubt) and a few honest hugs. Simply I am passed from one person to another. Without stop.

It's well into the night when I find myself relatively alone. There's just one person in the same room as I am. And ironically I wish I were surrounded by a dozen of reporters with annoying questions. But that's a wishful thinking.

'Hey.' I force myself to be polite. Charles is visibly surprised that I acknowledged him.

He turns to me but dares not to meet my gaze. 'Why did you do it?'

'You'll have to be more specific.' I say, struggling to stay calm.

He scraps his neck. 'Why did you credit me after all I had done?'

I chuckle as I reply. 'Because I am a decent human being and I won't steal from others. Not even from ones who disrespected and betrayed me.'

I take a step forward. He takes one back. I move closer. He retreats. Forth and back. Again and again. Until his back is pressed against the wall and I stand mere inches in front of him.

'Why did you do it? You believed so much in it. In us. And then suddenly you go on claiming that they were right all along that we are in fact inferior and useless. You even said you wish your parent choose differently. That you were one of them. What could possibly change your opinion so much? You used to be proud to be what you are.'

My words are just a whisper in the end. I'm shaking and take the step back. Letting him leave if he chooses to do so.

Surprising he stays. And when he finally meets my gaze. I gasp.

His eyes are as full of expressions as they have always been. And I again can't get the whole picture, just parts of it. There's fear as well as adoration, disbelief along with a thirst for truth, and something more I can't for the life of mine identify. Something so honest and sad that I am the one who has to look away.

'You.'

Never before has one single word managed to anger me so much. I'm furious. 'What did you say?!'

He holds up his palm and pleads: 'Please, let me explain.'

I want so much to just turn away and leave, but something in me forces me to stay. 'Go on.'

He takes in a breath and starts. 'Earlier that day a group of Enhanced had approached me. They somehow found out we were close to finding the cure and falsely assumed that I was the one who would find it in the end. How wrong were they? These arrogant pricks were so afraid that Basics could be smarter than them. They would rather die than to allow it. And in their false assumption that I am the brain in our duo and you are just over glorified assistant they came to me and threatened. They said they'd kill you if I continue with our research. I agreed because I believed that you could finish what we had started. And I was right.'

My mind goes blank for a moment that hundreds of inquiries appear at once. I shake my head in a desperate attempt to clear it. It does not work.

How can anyone be so stupid? Would they really rather die? Than to be bested by Basics? Would they really resort to crime as violent as murder? Why didn't he just tell me?

The last question stuck. I could answer to all of the other questions. But not to this.

So I ask. 'Why... why didn't you just tell me? Why did you say so many awful things?'

I am actually afraid to hear the answer. What if he simply didn't care? What if he wanted to hurt me?

Before I could think of more such reasons. He interrupted me.

'I don't know. Something flipped inside me and I was so angry. And I channeled my anger to you. I regret it. I am really sorry. But now that I see how everything has ended I would say them again. You are so bright and amazing I could not bring you down with me. I care about you so much.'

He slumps against the wall and slides down. Crouched on the ground he covers his eyes. Suddenly, he looks so small and vulnerable.

And I want to hug him and tell him everything is going to be alright. But I can't. Even if it was for a good cause, he had hurt me too much.

I turn away and head towards the door.

As I am leaving the room his voice stops me. 'You could never love me, could you?'

And I have never heard anything so heartbreaking. A voice so full of self-resentment, despair yet hiding small amounts of hope.

In this single moment in time, I could not lie even if I wanted. 'I loved you. I still do.'

I pause, give myself a moment to prepare for what I have to say next. 'I love you. But you hurt me too much. I can't... it's so... no.'

I can't take it. I run out of the room, tears streaming wildly down my face. I run just barely managing not to run into others. He loves me. He loves me.

But... suddenly I collapse. And I cry. I don't know for how long.

Next thing I know somebody is offering me a hand and asking if I am okay. I don't answer. I don't need to. Somehow I get into my room. I fall onto my bed and cry myself to sleep.

When I wake up in the morning, my condev is flashing.

I grab it and hit a receive button. There is an invitation to meeting with Gharszai delegates. A few more congratulatory messages and a message from Charles.

I ignore the last one and I read through the invitation. I am to report at take-off platform at 10:00 a.m. A rocket will take me to Extraterran base 4. A meeting with delegates will commence as soon as I arrive.

It's 8 a.m. so I have to hurry. I quickly shower, pack a small suitcase and leave. I arrive at take-off platform just in time. They lead me to my seat.

On my way there I get a glimpse of Charles. He sees me too but averts his gaze as soon as I notice him.

I buckle up and we are taking off. I spent the time on the board filling various reports and browsing the news. Medics are already administering the cure to those who choose to take it. And majority of Enhanced is willing to sacrifice their artificial superiority and welcome back normality.

The numbers are clear. In the near future there will be no Enhanced. Everybody will be finally equal again. I smile and rest my head against a headrest. I sleep through the rest of the journey.

Once we reach the base, Charles and I are rushed into a fancy meeting room full of Gharszai delegates.

Once we enter the room falls silent. Then a loud applause erupts. It goes on and on. And when it finally ends and everyone sits down, we are told the truth.

Gharszai went through the similar thing we were going through hundreds of years before.

They also became connected to their equivalent of holoweb and that caused their race to stagnate. They stopped searching for new things and exploring the unknown. They only applied the same methods over and over again. They fossilised, they stopped to talk to each other. They had no need, everything was accessible to them by simple thought. And so their race started to die. And rapidly.

When Argew'eran discovered them there were only about twenty thousand of Gharszai left.

Twenty thousand from civilisation that only a few decades before had over thirty billions individuals. So many deaths were caused by isolation.

So when they heard that we, Terrans, were in a similar situation they decided to intervene. But they chose a different approach than their Argew'eran saviours. Instead of forcibly shutting down the network and thus causing the population to recover the hard way, they decided to try something that hadn't been done before.

They saw that only a half of Terran population was connected to the holoweb and thought themselves superior, forcing the others to live in the shadow.

They invented the virus that was supposed to tear down the nanotransmitter so the Enhanced would lose their direct connection to the holoweb. They realised that holoweb was vital for Terran culture and shutting it down would only cause havoc when there were still so many of us.

What they didn't expect was the violent way in which the nanotransmitters ceased to exist. As soon as they realised the virus was fatal for the Terrans, they tried to stop it. But they couldn't find the way.

It was impossible. Because as we have discovered the peaceful way to remove nanotransmitters needs to use Osmium an element only found on the Earth. The element they never seen.

All along they were also monitoring our progress, they saw our potential, but thought we were taking too long. So they decided to motivate us. By threats.

Infiltrating a group of radical Enhanced was easy for them. Setting them against two Basics even easier. And the group has chosen to threaten Charles.

They never thought that Charles would give up on the research to protect me. So before he came to the laboratory that day, they injected him with a Serum that caused his anger levels to elevate thinking that he would be more motivated to finish the research even against the raised odds.

Now they knew what they had done, even that they caused both of us a lot of emotional pain. They begged for forgiveness.

That's how it came to the situation I am now in. What should I choose? Should I refuse to accept the apology from foreign dignitaries who tried to help us? Even if their way of helping us only complicated the matters?

If I refuse I'll risk a loss of an ally that Terra would certainly need somewhere in the future.

But by accepting their apology I would need to forgive Charles too, right? Because by agreeing it was Gharszai's fault that he said such horrible things to me, I would have no right to be angry with him anymore.

I know It should be easy to choose when I wanted nothing more than to live in peace. And considering I loved Charles I should jump at the chance of not having to blame him.

But heartbreak is strong. So I stayed silent for long moments. The dignitaries stared at me waiting for me to decide. The room was tense.

I looked at Charles. And for the first time, I could read his eyes clearly. Do what you need to do. Nobody will blame you if you refuse to accept. There was a resignation in his gaze. As if he has already realised that I would never choose to be with him. But still cared enough for me that he would support my decision no matter what.

And that was the breaking moment. How could I throw away a life of happiness for a grudge?

So I rose and said: ‘I won’t say I approve of your ways, but we, Terrans, should be glad you decided to save us from a horrible fate. I was hurt but now there is no time for holding grudges. We should unite our nations and try to find a common ground. A ground where nobody is discriminated or feels inferior. That would be against all that we have fought for. So I forgive you. And I beg you to give Terra time to find new leaders and heal itself from the great plague. Not the one you inflicted on us. But the one we have caused. The one full of hate and superiority complexes. Please do this for us and I believe we’ll have a bright future ahead.’

I uneasily sit down, I’ll never get used to speaking so boldly in front of people I hardly know. So I lower my head and wait.

Suddenly a wave erupts. The room is filled with thank yous and of course and we are so glad.

My head starts to spin. Somebody pulls me up and puts a glass into my hand. All eyes turn to me again.

And I am forced to raise my head. As I do so, my eyes settle on Charles. His smile so happy yet so sad. I know I should think up another inspirational speech. But I don’t have the energy to do so.

So I raise my glass and say: ‘To us!’ Because in this moment I realise that I can forgive him and possibly even be with him.

After a few minutes that feel more like hours. Somebody taps my shoulder and whispers to me that I am free to leave now. There will be a celebration and an official announcement of peace and friendliness between our nations later. And I certainly can’t miss that. So if I want to rest before yet another long evening, I should do so now.

I don’t hesitate and leave the meeting room. As the door closes behind me I see Charles standing near a window and gazing at the base.

I quietly walk to him and hug him from behind.

He turns around. Confused. ‘What...’



‘Shh... I forgive you, you were not yourself then. And even if it hurts to admit you did the right thing.’

A small smile lights up his face. ‘Does this mean, what I think it does?’ he asks quietly.

I nod. ‘Yes, it does. I love you. I want to be with you. Well, if you have me.’

His smile grew bigger and more radiant than I have ever seen.

‘Can I kiss you?’ he asks.

My smile is now surely as big as his own. And I gather the courage and close the gap between our lips.

It’s sweet, loving and so much more than I can describe.

Later, in the evening when we walk into the hall, where celebrations are taking place, we walk hand in hand.

Nobody notices, there is no applause like in movies. But that doesn’t matter.

We happily join the celebrations. And when it is announced that Charles will be the leader in Biotechnic department on Terra, I’m ecstatic.

We always thought that it would never happen because he was no Enhanced. I’m so glad, but I realise this is only the first step in healing all the injustices that have happened before.

What surprises me is that after I finish my studies I will be made a head of Neurophysics department.

After that the announcement that Gharszai will be allowed to study on Terra and vice versa. And that the two nations will try to work towards one common goal is just a cherry on top of the cake.

That is saving and preserving other cultures and fighting discrimination of any kind.

I realise these are big words and easier said than done, but if everyone does their best the universe could become better, safer and happier place.

*Written by Silvie Illésová, Gymnázium Frýdlant nad Ostravicí, the Czech Republic*

## Liberty

It was very early in the morning when Alex left the apartment to work in a little shop specialized in party costumes, not many people buy something there, so the shop was always empty. After 7 hours of pure boredom, it was finally the time to leave and come back home, while walking, Lou, an old friend, shouts at Alex, getting the attention of the people surrounding them.

-Oh! Hey! How are you? I haven't seen you for such a long time!

-We met last week, Lou... anyway! I'm fine, how about you?

- I'm fine too -smiles Lou- would you mind if I come to your house today to have dinner together?

-Again? Ok, fine! But you should leave my house soon because tomorrow I have to work again.

-Sure sure!

They arrive together at Alex's house and they have dinner just as they planned to do, but when they finish Lou insists on going to the living room and talk there before he goes to his house. Alex sighs and goes with him telling him "just 15 minutes, it's late".

It wasn't only 15 minutes, when they looked at the time it was too late, too late even for Lou to go home so Alex allowed him to sleep there only that night in the house.

-You'll have to sleep on the couch, I only have one bed for me upstairs.

-Ok, don't worry! Good night!!

Ren laid on the bed while looking at the ceiling, but not sleeping. After a long time like that, Alex wakes up and goes to the little balcony of the apartment, and takes a look at the wet street after the rain. Walking through it, there was somebody, he walked very slowly like he was hurt but he never stopped. Suddenly this person fell and he couldn't stand up anymore, Alex, worried and ran to help him. Lou woke up and saw Alex running towards the street, so he did the same and followed him.

They saw a young boy laying on the ground, he was dirty and tired, so they grabbed him and laid him on Alex's bed. They decided it would be better for him to let him sleep, it was very late so Alex wrote a message to the owner of the shop asking for a free day to take care of this boy.

The next morning both of them were discussing about him, in front of him, when suddenly he opened his eyes very fast, first he looked at the room but when he realized two guys were looking at him he was scared.

-I... I'm sorry

-Wait, sorry? What happened? You don't have to be sorry with us- said Alex

-Are you a criminal?- asked Lou

-Why did you ask him that Lou!?- Alex scolded him

-Can I ask where I am?

-Oh... you are at my house, we found you yesterday laying on the street so we brought you here...

-Ok, so you aren't going to hurt me, right?

-Of course not! What happened to you? Where were you going?

-I was just... running away- he didn't want to say that but he just couldn't lie.

-Running away!? From who!?

... - he didn't want to talk so he didn't tell them the truth

-We are sorry... do you need something?

-Can I just go to the bathroom and wash myself...?

-Yes! The bathroom is there!- said Lou

He entered the bathroom and immediately looked into the mirror. He pulled his black hair out of his face so he could see his green eyes and very dirty face, he grabbed some wet toilet paper and he rubbed it on his face without touching the holes. While doing this he noticed a broken part on his jaw where his internal mechanisms could be seen.

-They don't know I'm not a human so they treat me like one... what would happen if I tell them? Would they kick me out? ... Again? So... I won't tell them, I will hide it, it is not lying, it is just not telling the truth.

But his broken jaw could be seen and he couldn't hide it with that short hair, he was in trouble. He looked for something useful in the bathroom, but he could only find some tuck tape. It was a bit weird having a piece of tape on his face but it was the only solution he had.

While he was there, Alex and Lou were discussing about him in the living room, Lou was very worried because he thought he was a criminal, but Alex thought that maybe he was running away from his old friends or family because they discovered something about him, something that they didn't like, maybe he came out, maybe he dishonored them, maybe he... there was a big quantity of possibilities. Just when they were talking, he entered the room looking sad, Alex asked him about his thoughts and he said that it was true but he didn't want to talk about it. While saying this something inside him hurts so much because that wasn't the total truth.

-So... what is your name?- asked Lou

-Oh! You can call me Nikk- he smiled

They were talking about themselves until both of the humans fell asleep, so Nikk went quickly to see if the tape was still there. It was, but not a part of his torso, it wasn't big but it could be seen through one of the holes in his shirt. He wished he could feel sad because that was so bad, somebody that accepts him and he has to make sure they don't discover him. He remembered that Alex had said something about using their clothes because his clothes were broken and dirty, so he went to the closet to see if there was something he could wear better than that. He found a big sweater and some black pants, it was enough.

Alex woke up and saw some food displayed on the small table in front of the sofa, Nikk was seated next to them smiling.

-I took these clothes from you, I hope you don't mind very much. So I made you some food for both of you as breakfast!

-Oh!!! You didn't have to do it, you can wear my clothes for now, but thank you!

Alex called Lou so they could eat together.

-It is very good!! Why don't you eat with us?- said Lou

-Don't worry I am not hungry but thank you!

After the breakfast, they went all together for a walk, Nikk didn't know that part of the city because he came from the centre where everything here was more poorer and less technological. There weren't many robots, at least not the intelligent ones, they were only doing some jobs that could be dangerous or helping people but they couldn't think by themselves.

-Did you have a job?- asked Alex

--- No... I was fired... from it... - answered embarrassed Nikk

-Don't worry... maybe we can help you, we can look for some job for you in the zone... even if there aren't that many because they are replacing people with robots ...- Alex had a sad face while saying that.

-I guess you don't have a house either- said Lou.

-No...

-You can rent some room when you have enough money, do you have money?

-Not at all- Nikk wanted to cry but he couldn't

-Oh... so bad... you can live in my house while you look for a job- suggested Alex

-Thank you so much!!

They continued walking until Lou had to come back to his house, so Alex and Nikk came back to their house.

Nikk made dinner to thank him again, all the food he prepared was very good so Alex was very surprised, it definitely won't be that bad to have him living there...

The routine was always the same, Nikk cleaned the house and prepared the food and also worked in a pet shop, Alex also went to work and they met every night to talk (about themselves), it was fun and sometimes they stayed awake more than they should, even that wasn't a problem to Nikk. He didn't say many things because he didn't want to reveal he was a robot and every time he said a lie even if it was a small one, it hurt and some mechanism broke so he should cover every part of his body to avoid it to be seen. But he loved listening to Alex, even he couldn't feel anything, he was learning more about humans.

However Alex could feel and it was a bit different.

-Lou! I am sorry for coming to your house so late... but I need to talk to you before I meet him again!

-Why? What happened?

-You are my best friend, so I hope you understand me... this is going to sound so weird... but...

-But... what??- shouted Lou

-I like him, I mean, I love him... I think I fell in love with him...-Alex almost cried when saying this

-Wow! This is so new for you!! You?? Falling in love?? I can't believe it!

-Please relax! I am not sure yet, I just feel like I want to spend all the day with him, everyday!

-You have to tell him!!- said Lou making the have more noticeable

-No! I won't! I can't!!

The discussion continued until Nikk called Alex and said:

-Can you come home? I have to tell you something important...

Alex didn't think it twice and went to his house as fast as he could.

-What is it?!

-I have enough money to rent a room in a building not very far from here! Isn't it great? I can move there tomorrow!

Alex's heart broke in a million pieces

-Oh yeah...! That is great... good for you!-smiled Alex, but it was obviously a false smile.

This night they didn't talk that much so they went to bed very early. Next night, Nikk was already in his new "house". Alex hoped to stop feeling something for him, but it was totally in the other way round, and Lou wasn't very helpful.

-You have to tell him!!!

-I can't just do that! I've already told you like ten times today!

-You're still talking to him, right? So you can go someday to his house and tell him how you feel!!... I can go with you if you want

Alex rejected Lou's idea, but a week later they went together to Nikk's house to "talk" with him, they didn't tell him that they were coming, it was a surprise. When they arrived, they knocked the door but nobody answered, they did this a few times more... it was weird because he should be at home at that time but he wasn't. Lou pushed the door a bit and he noticed it was open, so they entered... the room was very messy (something not very common) and it looked like somebody had a fight in there, there were also some spots of some kind of dark liquid that looked like oil on the floor and furniture.

They were very scared and worried about him, but they didn't know where to go to look for him, so they asked the neighbors if they had seen something strange. Nobody did, but one of them said that she could check the security camera if they pay her, it was very important for Alex so they decided to pay. In the recording, two men dragged Nikk with them, forcing him to go somewhere, they zoomed in their clothes and they said the logo of the company they worked for, it was a high-tech company located in the centre of the town, then they zoomed in their faces and they were both identical!

Lou and Alex thanked the hacker girl and went as fast as they could to the centre, it wasn't possible to go very fast because moving from the farthest part of the city to the centre having 30 millions of people living there wasn't an easy task. The centre was so different from where they lived, the buildings were very tall and the main colours were white and blue.

They arrived at the building of the company, it was one of the tallest buildings in the zone, this company was very powerful but it didn't have any shop so there must be a shop inside for its high-tech products. They entered together with that idea on mind, once they were in the elevator they looked at the different floors and Alex said:

-There are some floors underground, I feel like they took Nikk there, if not, it will be very easy to find them, those under-floors look like labs... I should go there, if they catch me I can say I am lost so they will go with me to the floor, if this happens, I will tell you and you can go to the other under-floors and look for him, while I'm "shopping", you can tell me if this happens, I'll do the same

-“Wow!! I am scared, I don’t want you to be harmed... I hope this works...”

-“Trust me!!!”

-“I do, but I am also worried about you...!”

But Alex didn’t hear the last part because he was already leaving Lou and started looking through every floor, there were only seven “under-floors” and they didn’t look very big so it should be quickly. On the third floor, some weird and metallic noises could be heard so Alex followed the sound trying not to be noticed even though there wasn’t anybody near, there were probably some security cameras but hopefully nobody was checking them at the moment. The noises came from behind the door, there wasn’t any key or something similar to a security system, so it wasn’t probably very important room, but some voices started talking from inside.

-We should wait for the answer, if we destroy him completely we can end up like him- said one of them.

-Of course, that is what happens when you break the rules- said the other voice that sounded identical to the first one.

-No! You have to think on your own, this is not correct, we should fight- that voice was Nikk.

Alex entered without thinking of the consequences, the two identical robots detected it as an enemy and they blocked the way. it was very hard to fight against them, they were very strong. Just at the moment, a human appeared from another door in the room, he had the “answer”, but first he had some “question”

-Who are you?

-I’m Alex, his friend!

-You?- he laughed- friend of a robot? How?

-Robot!?

-Oh! You didn’t know huh?- he grabbed Nikk’s head and he showed it to Alex- so is he a human now?

-Nikk?!?- he was shocked - are you...? Why didn’t you tell me?- tears started falling.

-I’m sorry... but you loved me this way, I didn’t want to get rejected again, sorry- apologized Nikk.

-Oh~ I love romantic stories but it is time for a plot twist- said the man- he wasn’t “rejected”, he broke the rules. Your “friend” was serving some client that bought him as the best robot in the market because he could think by himself. His owner wasn’t a very good owner...

-He hit me!!!

-Shut up!!- and he proceeded to tear his “body part” to make sounds- much better!

-No!!

-Well, as you can see he hit him back because he is a bad robot and he ran away, and that is breaking the rules! Robots that break the rules must be analyzed because they are errors! So tell him goodbye.

Alex tried to rescue him but he was trapped between the other two robots. The man looked for something inside his head, the memory chip, once he found it, he grabbed it and showed it to Alex, next he stepped on it breaking it in a lot of pieces. He put the sound chip back and asked him who Alex was.

-I don't know. Can you please introduce yourself?

Alex fell onto the ground crying while he was dragged outside the building. When he was there, he screamed so hard because of the pain and called Lou.

“Come outside, I've found him”

*Written by Laura García Leites, hosting student in Gymnázium Frýdlant nad Ostravicí, the Czech Republic*



## The Collision

It was just another ordinary autumn day. Another boring day at school full of boring lessons and annoying classmates. It was physics when I saw the strangest thing right outside our classroom window.

It was sunny that day. But suddenly, it got really dark outside, all of the fallen leaves started to fly around our school playground and out of nowhere a bright flash of light appeared. It was almost blinding, but it seemed like no one but me noticed it. I was really confused so I grabbed my friend Alex and asked him if he saw what I did. He told me that nothing happened and that I was crazy. That confused me even more. Was I imagining it? Was I too tired? But then it happened again! Just when the school bell rang. But this time, a huge shadow appeared on the ground. It was round and it was completely still. I couldn't stop staring at it. It was the end of school and everybody ran to have lunch or they ran straight home. But I was sitting at my desk and couldn't stop looking outside so the teacher had to throw me out. I needed to see what the shadow was and find out why I am the only one who can see it.

I ran outside and finally saw what was making that enormous shadow. It was an alien spaceship.

I had to pinch myself. „This cannot be real, I must be dreaming.“ I thought. But I wasn't. There was a real spaceship right in front of me. I was staring at it for about five minutes when a door on the bottom of the ship started to open.

I was filled with fear but also a little bit of excitement. Aliens in our school? What the hell is going on? Isn't it just a dream?

Then a metal ladder started to descend from the door. Along with the ladder, there was a tiny man coming down. An alien. I couldn't move. He came down from the ladder and walked towards me. He was holding a strange object in his four-finger hands.

He didn't look like the aliens in the movies with the gigantic heads and eyes. And he wasn't green either. In fact, he had grey skin and his head was quite small as well as his pitch black oval eyes. And his body was similar to mine, but really tiny.

The object in his hands started to make noises and then the tiny man finally spoke. It seemed like the machine in his hands was a translator allowing us to communicate. He spoke really shortly and what he said shocked me.

He just said: „You have been chosen. You must come with me.“ And of course I was just staring at him. I have been chosen? Why me? That doesn't make any sense. Then he repeated it. „You have been chosen. You must come with me.“ All I did was stand in complete and utter shock.

Then he repeated it again and I thought: „Well maybe I should just go with him. I'm probably crazy and this isn't even happening. What could go wrong?“.

„Okay.“, I said. Then he turned around and started climbing the ladder again so I followed him.

When I stepped into the spaceship I was absolutely amazed. This part did actually look like in the movies. Everything was metal and shiny and there were many buttons and lights everywhere.

I followed the tiny man into a big room that looked like a conference room and was filled with other aliens that looked exactly the same. The tiny man led me to the middle of the room and started speaking.

But this time I didn't understand him. It didn't even sound like words. It was just beeping and weird noises I couldn't describe. He finished speaking and all the aliens started clapping.

I don't think I have ever been more confused in my life. I tried to ask him what was going on but he ignored me.

Then he led me to another room with a huge board covered with alien writing, maps and equations that I didn't understand. Finally he took out the translating device again and turned it on. And then he spoke once more. Again with the short sentences and emotionless expression on his face.

„You must save the Universe.“ he said.

Shortly after he said that, all the writings on the board started to make sense because it was all being translated into English. At first I thought that the translation did not help at all because I still couldn't understand a thing, but then I started to see what was actually going on.

Simply given, there were two black holes approaching each other which, apparently, would result in the universe imploding. I was terrified, what do they want me to do?

There was also a screen showing the actual positions of the two holes. I noticed that they were moving quite quickly.

I panicked. Then I heard beeping and a timer appeared on the screen. It was counting down from a minute! The holes were speeding and speeding and so was my heart rate. My vision blurred, I started sweating and I couldn't breathe. The alien men shouted at me: „Do something!“.

But what was I supposed to do? Why couldn't they choose someone else to save the Universe? I don't understand these things! At this point the holes were nearly colliding.

I shouted: „I'm sorry! I can't!“.

And then the holes finally collided. The spaceship trembled and... That was it.

The black holes actually devoured each other and disappeared.

I have never felt more relief in my entire life. I nervously looked around the room at all the aliens and asked them what has just happened.

Again, with no emotion the alien said: „We have made a mistake. We apologize.“. So after all, they dragged me into a spaceship expecting me to save the Universe, when in reality it wasn't even in danger in the first place. It was too much.

They led me to the exit door again, I climbed down the ladder and there I was, standing in front of my school again. The spaceship flashed its lights again and in the blink of an eye it was gone. I was absolutely exhausted, so I went home and instantly fell asleep. To this day, I am still not sure if it actually happened.

*Written by Julie Skopalová and Alexandra Šromová, Gymnázium Frýdlant nad Ostravicí, the Czech Republic*

## A Critical Breakthrough

When I had finished the last steps and experiments, I wiped the sweat off my forehead and smirked for myself. This technology was the key that could enable humanity to attempt interstellar travel, at last. Many talented, visionary scientists nearly worked themselves to death while trying to come up with a similar solution to overcoming gravity, reducing the amount of resources needed to do so, and the most problematic setback of all. The fragility of human life, or, more specifically, the short lifespan of ours that wouldn't permit us to travel to even the closest of our neighboring stars. To be fair, I have to admit that I had not come up with the entire thing myself, and I actually had to study vast numbers of lab and experiment reports not to make the same mistakes my predecessors made. The invention I have right in front of me had consumed countless hours of caffeinated struggle before I actually began to add my thoughts to the mishmash I had put together from studying the work of others. But it turned out to be worth it. And now I stand here, and at my disposal I have a dream so many have come so close, yet so far to. But then it occurred to me - I couldn't use my own invention if I didn't inform my lab research leader first. Informing her is crucial for anyone who makes a breakthrough, this way the knowledge can be quickly shared with other scientists at the facility and used in their own work, however it might help them. I cherished the pinnacle of my research for a bit too long. The sooner we can further improve and use my new technology, the better ! I quickly gathered all I needed to explain, prove and celebrate a new era. I had no doubt that it would be me who will be responsible for changing the whole world ! How should we call it ? "The space age" ? "The space colonisation age" ? "The era of all the stars" ?

I was really lucky to receive a simple carrier robot (basically a walking table) from my friend Lucius who also works here, because I would definitely not have been able to carry all the stuff I wanted to. I call him Sloppy. He gifted me with the machine on my last birthday, while saying: "I know how you always spill your tea while trying to take it to your study with a plate of food and a few books, so I decided it would be more than fitting to use you as a testing dummy for my new robot. I also know you really like purple, so I customised it for you ! I even added a little clover sticker for good luck ! Why are you looking so grumpy ? What, you don't believe in luck, you say ? Jeez, you have a lot to learn, grumps. And if you don't stop constantly talking about your project, I will slap you. Time to paaaartayyyy!!!!!!". In hindsight, I actually had a lot of fun my last birthday. My lab leader Lena, my friend Lucius and a few other people who like me arranged a surprise party for me. I don't think that will happen ever again, as I almost got a heart attack when they jumped out of every imaginable hiding place in my living room. One girl even jumped out of the litter bin ! I own a large one, but I'm still fascinated by how she could squeeze in there and jump out. Lena knows I don't drink alcohol, so she even made non-alcoholic drinks for me ! It was a wild day. I'm not the type of person who usually goes to parties, but I had no chance of avoiding this one. And I didn't want to. Even if I don't tell them all the time, I really appreciate everything that my friends do for me. I get really anxious around other people, but my friends are different. I enjoy spending time with them, but I don't want to bother them, so I usually leave home or to work really soon. Oh. I just realised that I can't really tell the difference. I found myself working at home and sleeping at work countless times. I always get the best ideas at night, and if I had not worked at home too, my research would not have been finished even halfway through. Ugh ! How did I just waste another five minutes nostalgically reminiscing about life ? I really need to stop spacing out so often.

I collected all I needed for the second time, and swiftly rushed through the grey corridor which connects my lab with the research headquarters. Lucius's robot had a hard time keeping up with me, as I frantically ran towards the monstrous white door at the end of this stonelike tunnel. I clearly should have paid more attention, because if I did, I would have noticed that, thanks to my speed, the door sensor was not able to detect me and the door didn't open. I crashed into the door and the impact made my body behave like a ragdoll. While falling, I reminded myself to compliment Lucius. His robot has outstanding balance, agility and spatial perception. I fell like a cut down tree, but Sloppy was able to slow down in such a manner not to lose any cargo, then get noticed by the sensor and wait for me to lift my confused body from the floor. Lena immediately noticed me and rushed to help. After asking me if I'm okay, she started interrogating me about my research. "I have a feeling you've got something interesting to show me, because the last time this happened, you brought me the clean energy generator that has been powering this whole lab ever since. You're even wearing the same shirt" she said while smiling. While getting up, I responded with "I'm actually terrified by how many details you remember about your employees". "Well, I don't know how much I know about employees, but I remember details about my friends. But I try to be friendly with everyone here, so you are mostly right - I remember a lot about everyone here" she said, while smirking and folding her hands. "Oh, I'm flattered. Now about my research.....". I started explaining, showing her the materials Sloppy had carried here so obediently, and then calming her down. "This is absolutely marvellous ! We have to start building a spaceship right now ! I'm immediately calling a meeting of every single scientist available in this building ! First of all, you are officially promoted ! Now you are the coordinator of our new project. Believe me, everyone will have something to contribute. Your task is to plan a spaceship that can transport as many scientists as possible, plus the people you'll need for maintaining the ship. And if you find out that we have even more resources than you need, as many civilians as possible. It's going to be the first attempt to explore the universe since the Pilgrim programme catastrophe. But we have to be careful. Do you remember what I told you when I assigned you with this research ? The government still views cosmic travel as a threat to order and a spark for anarchy, their argument being "If we start leaving this planet now, we don't have a chance to maintain the overall mission of expanding humanity's influence and every spaceship would do whatever it wants, possibly even destroy the world". But when we told them we would only explore with a professional crew of scientists, they didn't even try to listen and just threatened us. We are in grave danger if we start our secret space programme, but we have to ! The Earth is slowly decaying, the level of pollution is close to deadly and when we tried to spread your clean energy tech, our company almost got obliterated. We survived only thanks to Lucius and his powerful contacts. The current leaders are hypocritical, prideful, ignorant and greedy. Well, I'm going to rally everyone in here so they can work on your project. You should go home until tomorrow, you look devastated. Go to bed. Rest. Conserve your energy, because tomorrow, the beginning of a new era starts ! Hush. Go". And I obeyed. By the time she shouted "And please, be careful !", I had already been facing the door and leaving.

When I got home, I immediately sprinted to the kitchen and started cooking. First of all, I made green tea with lavender, strawberries and rose petals. I know, it sounds really extravagant and complicated, but it tastes heavenly. Then I cooked and ate chicken risotto, and then I enjoyed a white chocolate crêpe. It felt as if my heart was beating faster than a hummingbird's. Not only was Lena absolutely stoked by the possibilities we have now, but

she even immediately promoted me and assigned me with a task of immense difficulty. How am I supposed to plan a spaceship, and then coordinate all the people that work in our facility to build it, all of which I have to do in secret or else i'll be responsible for any punishment the government orders for everyone involved. I should really go to bed. I took a shower and changed into my pyjamas. I fell asleep almost immediately, but my night was full of nightmares. I had no idea when one ended and another began, but almost all of them involved pain, fear, the government and spaceships.

When I woke up, I became paranoid of every noise. I had to get to work. I usually walk, because it's only 500 meters from my home. I was suspiciously watching the birds in a maple alley in front of the main gate, when a voice behind me shouted "Freeze ! the government orders you to stand still ! You're going to rot in jail for the rest of your life !". I was unable to move, speak or do anything else, because this was exactly what my nightmares were about. I was in shock. I heard heavy footsteps coming closer to me, disrupting the fine gravel surface underneath us. A ferocious hand grabbed my shoulder and turned me around. It was Lucius ! That idiot ! He was even laughing.... That had been it. I could not handle the stress anymore. "Are you serious ? This isn't what friends do, you could have killed me ! Do you know how many times I woke up in cold sweat, dreaming of this exact situation ? I hate you !". Lucius stopped laughing and noticed the tear that escaped from my eye despite my best efforts. "Wait, wait, I'm sorry ! I just wanted to play a joke on you ! " he said as he wiped the tear off my cheek. "I know yesterday was really difficult for you and that you're surely stressed, and I wanted to cheer you up. I called you four times yesterday, but you weren't picking up the phone, so I couldn't ask you if I could come to visit you and watch a movie or do something else to take your mind off work. And when I saw you today, this was the only idea I got ! It was stupid, I know, but I didn't mean to upset you !".

Suddenly, he smiled and said "We should go to work now. Everyone is waiting for you ! And congratulations on your discovery, I was really proud of you when Lena called the meeting yesterday and told us ! If you need help with anything, just call me. And if you want to make the movie watching session you missed yesterday a reality, let me know ! I'm looking forward to it !". I smiled at him and said "I will not accept your apology until you beg me on your knees". He immediately fell on his knees and began chanting "Oh, your almightiness, please deem me worthy of your forgiveness !". I imitated a royal British accent and said "You may rise, and are granted the title "The one forgiveness shalt not be granted unto, unless thee kneel"". We both started to laugh. "The o-ooone forgiveness shalt nho-not be granted unto, unless th-e-ee kneel" ? He asked, his words being only short outbursts in the pauses between his Diaphragm spasms. "With your creativity, you could just be a writer, a songwriter, an artist.... why did you choose science?" he wondered aloud, while calming down.

"I've always wanted to do something big. The universe always fascinated me, and as a child, I would just spend entire evenings looking out of my window, stargazing. I decided that I would try as hard as I could to get closer. I tried hiking the highest mountains in our country and stargazing there. But it wasn't enough. I started carrying a telescope with me, but it still didn't quite satisfy my need to explore the infinity right above my gaze. The only option left was to travel to space ! The government made that impossible, so I gave up. I was very disappointed." I told him while our feet swam in the gravel mixed with beautiful, but fading red, orange and yellow leaves, that filled the air with the refreshing, but grim scent of autumn and the road with many separate, but still connected sunsets of fading summer. I felt strangely serene, and I think Lucius's presence was a part of the reason why. His untroubled persona was a catalyst of calmness, always radiating comforting vibes in all possible directions. But

this time, the radiation seemed to be concentrated solely on me. Almost as if Lucius knew how to point his restful aura to the ones that craved it the most. I could finally continue talking, and his eyes immediately recognised the shift of my emotions. They started to sparkle, and I could finally continue.

“But then I started working here, befriended you and Lena, and even though my childhood dream was impossible to execute, you gave me a reason to be happy. You and Lena..... I can’t even express how thankful I am for you. And when Lena assigned me with space travel research, I realized that my dream was never lost. And now, the future looks clearer than ever. Thank you.” I said. “Oh, and about the movie - do you have time today? I’m in a “Cloud atlas” mood. What kind of snack do you like best? You know what, I’ll just get all of them. And by the way, I technically am an artist. What more is science then just the art of defying common sense and proving that the masses are wrong? And I don’t want to brag, but I am an actual artist. You have seen my house, right? The pictures on the walls didn’t just materialize out of thin air. ”

We reached the entrance to the building. But something stopped us from entering. We were just standing there in awe. After staring into each other’s eyes for a few seconds, Lucius broke the silence with “Okay then, let’s meet right after work. In here. I’m looking forward to watching “Cloud atlas”, I’ve actually never seen it. We should get inside, unless we want to receive a phone call from Lena. I can already hear her tensed voice ringing in my head. He started mocking her voice: “Lucius? Where are you? Are you drunk again? Did you oversleep? Both? Do you want to get fired? You have ten minutes”.

His take on Lena’s concern and duty was too close to reality. She is sweet like an angel if you do what you are supposed to, but if you do something that does not fit the regular schedule of things, she will quickly make you do what you should. She is very decisive and smart, and her honor and honesty help her in being the best leader we could ever get. But as soon as she leaves work, she gets almost as playful as Lucius.

We laughed again and then strolled through the door. Lucius went to his robotics lab while a quick “See you” was uttered, and we parted ways until the end of work. I’m sure I was smiling like an idiot the whole day.

When I reached the headquarters, Lena had already brought some people there. We greeted each other, and she told everyone to start. First, Lena and I sketched the layout of the ship so that it could be disguised as a building. After the initial sketch was ready, we gave it to some of our colleagues. They made sure everything made sense, was safe and affordable for us. Some of them suggested changes, some of them upgraded our version, and when we got it back, we finally realised that we weren’t in fact designing a spaceship, but a space base. Well, we wanted it to be sustainable for a long time, so we had to add plants to create oxygen, a lot of electricity generators, solar panels, food production... and the motor itself was giant. The sketch was ready. Tomorrow, we will make a 3D model on a computer. It was finally the end of today’s work, and I was exhausted, but excited at the same time. Lucius hasn’t seen the Cloud Atlas ! I know he’s going to like it. He’s working overtime, because he suddenly caught inspiration and had to finish something. That means I’ve still got time to buy snacks ! I got Sloppy to help me carry everything. I bought nachos, chips, popcorn, juice, cola, pizza, ramen and some sweets, which included at least four different kinds of chocolate. When we were walking to the entrance, I realised I might have got carried away. A little. When Lucius walked outside, he looked at me, then at Sloppy and then back at me, while laughing with a raised eyebrow. “Wait, didn’t I tell you Sloppy doesn’t need food ? You don’t have to buy him snacks. Or are you stocking on food for winter already ? You still have months until that”. I blushed , because it really looked like I was trying to get weight for winter. “Well,

maybe we'll watch more movies someday, and I will be ready even if I don't know beforehand". "Is that an invitation for me to surprise you whenever i please" ? He asked while grinning. "I suppose that declining my own suggestions would be quite rude, so I don't really have a choice. It is".

We walked in the direction of my house and everything felt beautiful. I had no doubt that the future would be full of joy and happiness. I was enthusiastic about everything we talked about, and we both laughed almost all the time. That is, until we saw a government-owned drone taking pictures of some of the labs. The headquarters aren't visible from air, but some of the labs definitely had something suspicious in them, at least that's what the government would classify the information as. I immediately called Lena and told her that she had to hack the drone to fall from the sky, explode, anything ! After a few seconds, the drone got engulfed in flames. The fire consumed it from the inside and the incriminating photos just evaporated into thin air. with the rest of the machine. I was quite happy that our politicians didn't listen to us, because igniting a drone without fossil fuel in it would be impossible. They call themselves conservative, but they don't use new technology even if it would be easier. That is plainly the opposite of resourcefulness. But now we have problems. We can definitely expect an agent to visit us tomorrow. I nervously looked at Lucius. We were both quite shaken, but I was outright terrified. He gave me a comforting hug and said "We can get through anything. We can outsmart them. And if we can build your spaceship fast enough, we can always just..... leave. Live in space". And suddenly I realised that this was the only possible option. Lena knew it too, it was clear from our sketch. I knew too. I just didn't realise it. We had to leave. I just hope I can add a cinema to the base, now that I know. And a library. And a music studio. A gallery. So many more things will be needed. I'll suggest that plan to Lena tomorrow. And maybe Lucius will see me become an artist after all. "Okay. But let's not worry about it now. Let's just enjoy today". And we did. We were quite stressed, so we ate almost everything I bought. But the movie calmed us down. It was very long though, so Lucius had to sleep at my place. Not that I minded.

When we went to work the following day, seeing a federal agent waiting at the entrance, we were ready to hold the dark, dangerous secret deep in our hearts. He will not find out anything today. Lena surely took care of all materials and files that could be dangerous for us. They were probably sent to the secret data stash under HQ. We are going to build a spaceship, and the government will not intervene. We will leave. We will finally be free. We will accomplish my lifelong dream. We approached the agent with great confidence. Lucius sensed the mental progress I went through, perhaps he noticed how my posture changed from one of a person who is afraid to the one of a person with a drive. With meaning. He was confident too. He nodded at me, reassuring me that he stands by me. I smiled at the agent and said "What a marvellous day for a little inspection, isn't it" ? The look of sheer confusion on his face only reassured me that this was going to play out good for us. We've got our ways of keeping information to ourselves. And now they will all be put to use. We will try to save as many people as possible, and then we can leave this wretched planet. It has suffered enough. After the ignorant tyrants die, it will heal. Even the democratic states have bad leaders. And considering the current international tension, plus the fact that only a few places are still safe to live in, it won't take long. Perhaps we can come back someday and help the original mother of all known life, The Earth, recuperate.

\*Note: I decided to leave the appearance of all the characters up to the reader's imagination. I also didn't specify the protagonist's gender, so you can imagine whoever you want. Partly because the description of appearance would add about two pages to this document. I am also very sorry for ignoring all rules regarding quotation marks and commas. Hopefully this wasn't a complete waste of your time.



## Trip to the Furute

My story begins at a college. I was working on my reaserch which I had wanted to do since I was little, because I had nightmares often and I had always wanted to invent something that would be able to stop them. My idea could finally become reality.

One day I was working to the night in my laboratory, when suddenly I heard some noise and after that I can't remeber anything. I woke up in an empty room without any windows or doors. I had no idea where I was and how long I had been there. I tried to scream but nobody was answering. After some time suddenly a door appeared in the wall and through the door some person came in. I started to ask what was going on, but he just said: „Come with me, someone wants to speak to you.“ I wanted to know more so I went with him.

When we entered the room, I saw a man sitting at the table. I even didn't have to ask, he told me everything. They came from the future – yes in the future there exists time travelling and they are the last people who can freely think, but everybody else is mindcontrolled, because of my invention. They had to kidnap me so I could not construct the machine. I didn't want to believe him, I wanted him to show me some evidence. He turned and walked to the nearby control board and began to push some buttons and enter something into the computer. Strange noise followed, probably the sound of the engine. After a while there was silence again. The man told me that now I'm in the future! He stood up and said: „I want to show you how the world looks like now.“ So we went outside.

The world was totally different – I saw flying cars, incredible buildings, my first thought was that I wanted to live in this amazing future. But when we were walking through the city I started to notice people's faces. The faces were completely empty and voices of their owners were also weird as if their souls weren't in their bodies anymore and people were just programmed robots. See? There is no free will.“ I asked: „Who is controlling them?“ „We don't know who that man is, he has never showed his face, but he has the machine from you.“

I was shocked, I've never wanted to create something that would be able to do so horrible things to people. I thought I was doing the right thing, but I guess nobody should play with the nature and human psyche like this. The man saw my horrified face, I think he understood, what was going on in my mind. He took me to the building, from which we came out.

I promised him I would destroy all my research and I would not tell anyone about it.

The problem is that nothing can be destroyed completely. This was a story of a good man, but in this world also bad people exists and one of them found some pieces of work of our hero. Who knows what will happen next...

*Written by Kateřina Kaňáková and Markéta Klepáčová, Gymnázium Frýdlant nad Ostravicí, the Czech Republic*

## **How the Earth Fell**

The world is constantly evolving. Humanity moves forward and becomes more intelligent, stronger, and more dangerous for our surroundings but also for us.

It is year two thousand three hundred fifty-eight and humanity has just been given the most powerful weapon that had ever been created. It is a virus E-55.

With the help of this virus you can control all people in the world. Can you imagine a human brain like a one big computer? You can delete and install again any files. Are you asking how it is possible that I know so much? Because I created it and I have to be the one who will destroy it. Five years ago, I as the only American soldier was accepted into the secret operation of the Russian military units on harsh Siberia. That's when I started to work on the virus which should kill the enemy but I created something far more powerful.

I'm sitting in the hanging car tags BMW X69. My feet rises on the cold ground. I feel like I'm falling dow deeper into the snow. I'm thinking of. I'm going to die and that my coffee is absolutely cold.. I don't mind. I probably won't have a chance to finish it. I am walk to the lab in a slow, balanced way. I enter the code with my frozen fingers as I belong to a group of 5 people. That know the code. I'm going in to the laboratory. I wonder. Nobody is here. I run fast for the virus when two soldiers appear behind me and hibernated Putin comes out from behind them. They pull out the guns. They are shooting. My unconscious body falls to the ground. I'm dying happy. I managed to grab the virus and break it. The world is rescued, and my coffee will never be drunk up. Or yes?

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## **Garagorn the Waiter**

It was December 31st 3041, but for Garagorn it was just a usual work day. Garagorn is a futuristic, fully-automatic robotic waiter, who works 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. He was made in a small factory somewhere in Poland in the year 2542, so he is really old these days. People were celebrating the New Year's Eve, they were having a really good time but suddenly a strange robot came into the bar. In fact, he wasn't walking, he was jumping. His face looked really funny and he was quite over-weight. He approached Garagorn and told him: „My codename is AB420 and I'm travelling in time. I came from the future, because I need you to save the world and bright future.“ Garagorn was pretty upset: „But why me, I'm just a normal robotic waiter...“ „Garagorn, you are the best robotic waiter in the world. I live in the year 3541 and some kind of aliens from space want to destroy our planet. They drink a lot, but our waiters are not quick enough to satisfy their needs. You have to come with me and save the world!“ Garagorn was really surprised: „Wow, I have never felt so important in my entire life.“ A few drinks later they came out of the bar and got into a special spaceship that could travel in time and space. AB420 set the spaceship to fly 500 years forward. Just a small moment later they arrived to the future. Everything seemed destroyed, the whole city was burning but the aliens were having a good time. Although they were from another planet, they adapted really quickly and were partying like there was no tomorrow. The problem was that the robotic waiters from the future were getting over-heated and started to collapse. It was because they were made in China and not in Poland like Garagorn. When Garagorn saw the misery, he decided to act. He was serving the drinks like never before and the aliens finally seemed to be satisfied. It was midnight and the aliens were drunk a lot. Everybody was screaming: „Happy New Year 3542!“ A few hours later the aliens fell asleep and the people of the Earth decided to end their suffering. They killed all of the aliens one after another and distilled them into a very special liquor called Garowka. The liquor was named after Garagorn, who also became the 42nd president of the planet Earth. Everything seemed to be all right, but also one sad thing happened. AB420, the brave agent who helped to save the world, died in a car accident, because he was driving drunk.

*Written by Jan Brzezina and Dominik Kote, Gymnázium Frýdlant nad Ostravicí, the Czech Republic*

## Oxymoron

**Oxymoron, a planet in the Onomotopia galaxy. The planet torn by war. "The victory is not close to either of two sides, but the end of their civilizations is at their fingertips."**

Our story takes place at a time when the conflict between two nations of the Oxymoron planet has escalated to the stage of desire for the complete destruction of the other. The reason for their conflict was simple, yet so deadly. They were totally different. It can be said that these nations were in total contradictions. Litots and Hyperbols (Hypes). Litots, so calm and gentle, Hypes energetic, petulant and wild. Their controversy began as a few skirmishes between neighbours, but escalated to the size of the global war.

The story of two young friends, who were forced to fight against each other, gave us a glimpse into the history of this race, far from us so many light years, and yet, so close to us as to the race, which has become our ancestors.

Elips Forest, Almost destroyed, 14th Syston 1242 (Dark Age)

Silence ... Lil'Ian sneaks through the woods. There was everywhere almost suspicious calm. His dron showed him an image above his leve, it sends the view to the chip in his retina. This further picture only confirmed his thought that there was something wrong. Lil'Ian had an important mission. Mission to deliver a letter with content so dangerous, that the information could not be sent by teleport or telephone. It was the only thing that made him move. He could not waste time. But suddenly, he froze. He looked slightly to the left and saw the movement. He was really quick and he jumped to the shrubs on his left hand. He recognized Hyper. He drove his dron closer to Hyper's position, to show him, how many of them are there. He expected a unit of soldiers, but he saw only a young boy, no older than he was. At the age of 78, he was basically still considered as a youthful, but he was extremely adroit for his age. He was watching Hyper with feeling, that he had seen him before, that he knows him... But he did not have time to think about it any further, because Hyper stopped and began to explore the forest in his direction. Hyper's mimicry on his suit began to conceal him. In the meantime, only a head moving from side to side, looking at the terrain was visible. And he saw him. Hyper and Lil'Ian's eyes clashed. Hyper had a hacking knife at his waist and sensory gloves on his hands to capture the enemy's movements and to give orders to his things. Lil'Ian slowly released the tension in his shoulders. They have not seen each other for forty-two years, since the beginning of the war! "Elten?! What are you doing here? I thought you were dead or fighting somewhere in the frontlines. What are you doing here, again!?" "Lil'Ian asked, surprised. „Hmmm. I do not know if I can tell you what I have to do. If it was not you, I would have to kill you immediately. "Elten sadly replied. "Weird ... I have the same instructions. At any price and with permission to do anything, just complete the mission, "said Lil'Ian. "Elten ... How could it all happen?" Lil'Ian sadly asked. "This planet, our world is in decay because of some verbal skirmishes of several elders. Our nations have never been friends, but to fight like that ?... "You're right, it's so absurd that it is almost funny," Elten laughed bitterly. "I have been thinking about ending this war for a long time, and that's why I

tried to get as high as possible in my military career, but I still lack one important element in my effort. A friend among the Litots, "he continued," I have a plan to avoid the destruction of our race and the extinction of the kind of people but I can not end the war. I can save what's left, but the planet is doomed. Lil'Ian was silent. It sounded like he wanted to lure him to cooperate, making him his "friend among the Litos". But Lil'Ian had to admit one thing... He had dreamed about the end of the war and tried to find a solution to this problem. Meanwhile, he carries a letter describing the exact process of how to destroy the Hyper capitol city, dominate their territory, and exterminate their nation.....

To be continued.

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## The New Age

„Have you ever seen the sky, Peter?“ asked George while watching around Peter's room. „You know very well that I haven't and you haven't either, so I don't know why you are even asking.“ responded Peter and sat on his bed. „But I saw it in the picture, one man at the Nebraska Station showed me a picture of some kind of animal which was flying and behind it there was clear blue sky. It was really awesome. One day I would like to see it on my own eyes.“ sighed George. „I have to say it's a really interesting idea and I would like to see it too one day. But you did not mention one thing. Or did you just forget about never ending winter, about toxic air that would kill you in about 20 seconds and even the wind which flows in a speed around 150km/h?“ Peter looked straight at George. „Don't take this bad my friend, but it's just a dream, nothing more and I would recommend you not to think about things like these. You will be much happier not thinking about that.“ They were both now sitting on Peter's bed and just watching the big poster of the Moon. After about 10 minutes of staring at that poster and thinking deeply about such an amazing thing like the Moon Peter stood up. „It's dinner time, George. Come on, it will take some time to get to the main hall and I would like to catch some good place to sit today.“ he said. „Ok, let's go. Mom brought me a book yesterday. I have no idea where she got it but I want to try read something today, so I have to hurry up till they turn off electricity again.“ Responded George and they both went to the main hall to get some dinner. All they got was just another pack of cooked potatoes like always.

It was not easy life for two young curious boys. Could you even imagine living your whole life in one station of underground, never seeing the sky, never feeling the wind or fresh air. Since the fall of the comet Hilary-6p8 human life was never like before. What hasn't been killed by the comet, was killed by the cloud of dust which covered the whole sky. The temperature fell down to about -30°C. Some people survived hidden in the local undergrounds. Nowadays it's about 50 years since the disaster so Peter and George are already the second generation of humans living underground. But something changed in their minds. It was no longer just about surviving for them. They wanted to live. But try to live in one station of underground for your entire life and from time to time risk travelling to nearby station just to find out that life there is the same like at your home station.

„Look what I've got Peter, look at it!“ one day George ran to Peter's room. „Calm down man, what do you have?“ George sat on the bed and showed him a map of the whole city and underground. „That's really nice, but I do not see the reason for your happiness in that, George“ said Peter. „Oh come on, look at it with more attention, man. There is a Station with stairs to the surface just 2 stations in Nebraska direction.“ George got up from bed: „we will just get some equipment like respirators and coats and we can go outside!“ „Are you out of your mind? Don't you think that if it was possible to go outside someone would already go there?“ said Peter in anger. „I just think that people are afraid of going outside. Imagine that you could see the sky and go at least once wherever you would like to, not just where it is safe to go or where the path leads.“ George replied. „I've already said my opinion. I am not going

anywhere and you will stay here either, do you get it?“ before Peter finished this line George was already leaving the room.

Next morning Peter was waiting for George to come over to play chess like every Sunday but George did not appear. So Peter went to his room, but the room was empty. Under the lighting candle there was just a small piece of paper. „- If you are reading this, I’ve already left without you. I expected that you won’t come with me, but if you change your mind you know where to find me. If you are going to stay, just say my mother what I am going to do and take care of her please. Yours George.-“ Peter was shocked. He knew what George wanted to do but he was quite sure that George wouldn’t find enough courage to leave. He was wrong. Now he has to choose. It was not easy choice for him. Follow his best friend he has known since his birth or stay here and continue his life and just hope that George will come back one day. But what if George is right? What if it’s really possible to live on a surface again. What if they could live outside and live free again. There was only one way to find out.

George finally came to the station he was leading to. His flashlight pointed on a big sight „Sevastopol station“. He had everything he needed. Warm coat, food for 2 days and a respirator. But it was not that easy as he thought. Imagining going outside was clear but while he was watching those stairs up, his courage and determination were getting lower and lower. He was staring at those stairs for about 5 minutes, then he turned around and went back to the platform to sit on some bench. This station was without people so he was sitting there alone. After some time he heard some human steps coming out of the railway. He stood up and came closer to the railway. „Who’s there?“ asked loudly while he was pointing with his light there. „Did you really think I would let you go there alone, my friend?“ come out the tunnel. It was Peter. He came out of the darkness and shook a hand with George. „So why haven’t you gone outside already?“ asked. „Let’s say I was waiting for you.“ replied George and then continued: „so are you ready to go now?“. „Sure I am, let’s go,“ confirmed Peter.

In about next 15 minutes they were both dressed up in their warm coats and their respirators were ready. They were standing up at the beginning of those long stairs up. As they were getting closer to the surface they started to feel how it was getting cooler and cooler. Every breath they took was heavier than the one before. „I think it’s time to put on our respirators, George.“ Said Peter. They both put respirators on and continued the way up. As they were getting closer to hall which used to be the centre of this station they saw how it was getting lighter up there, but no sight of sunshine. Just freezing cold and sound of very fast wind. They were upstairs. The building was still standing but its walls were crushed almost down. The main hall looked like it would fall in a second. „Let’s go outside, this is not what I came here for.“ Said George. Soon they found a way outside the hall. Mist, wind and cold. Cloudy sky, no sunshine. In the background some small objects. Probably some ruins of a great building which used to stand there. George pointed at the biggest silhouette of a building and lead Peter in that direction.

When they left their home station it was the last time anybody saw them. The only one thing that was left behind them was a letter which George had written to Peter and another

letter which had been written by Peter to say goodbye. Peter probably knew the ending of this adventure. Maybe it was a dumb decision, and a pointless action. But at least they were free for the first time in their lives. Nowadays we consider them as the first explorers of the new age. The age after the disaster. Today the weather is not much better, wind is not any slower and the cold is not any lower. But they gave us the hope, that it is not impossible to live on a surface and it is not only a dream to rule on the Earth once again. God bless their souls. And maybe, we will see the clear blue sky again, hopefully...

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