

**VISIONS OF THE FUTURE**

**A short story competition from Xaverian College and the International Anthony Burgess Foundation**

***Take the Light***

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**2014 WINNER Under 16s Category**

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## TAKE THE LIGHT

### Prologue

I was confused when people went missing, even more so when the investigations were cancelled. There was outrage. Anarchy. Destruction. Nothing we could do made a difference. Rumours went around, rumours about the 'lost'. Of course we knew the situation: increasingly large amount of us humans overpopulating the Earth. The scientists so called 'work' eased our worries with relaxing antidotes of "everything is going to be okay" bullshit. That didn't catch me out for a second, not one. And as soon as everyone started disappearing, you knew it was only a matter of time before it was you.

By the scythe of death most were soon somehow gone. Very few remained. Not because they were special, it just wasn't their turn. Their turn for what, you ask? How was I supposed to know at that time, back then...? I was totally oblivious. Of course that was until the day, sorry, 'The Day'. The day they came for me. Imprinted in my head, my last living memory on Earth. For now, I was bewitched by the bowels of Hell; the howls at night and the demons of day. The arrival of light is the price we shall pay. At least that's what they say. In the dark we cry. In the day we are shattered and slain. But when the fire comes we shall know true pain.

### Pain And Gain

Days of ease were very hard to come by. The days when we weren't beaten as severely. Fragmented, our peace interrupted, as was our hope. From what we could tell, our being there was to reduce the Earth's population, the mindless torturing however was beyond our understanding. The ones awaiting public combustion. Even though capital punishment had not been used in the last 97 years. From what I could tell, humans were all the same: be displayed power and fall before it. Demanding naught but gain. We want more, it's our nature, it's natural. Just like human life, giving is harder than taking.

As far as the degraded human eye could see, we were enclosed in a metal box. 500 cubits per side, 250,000 square cubits in total. There were exactly 500 left of us in the box now, seems symbolic does it not? A perfect amount of us now to fit in the box. Without squashing or overcrowding. Our own personal space to weep and bang our heads on the floor. It didn't take long for the insanity to reveal its dirty self of course. I started to think of it like a game, masquerading with us, our minds. Our lives. The 'Men' hadn't come for a long time now. To burn us. We - the 500 – were starting to ridicule and fight back with what strength we had. The rebellion was weak but would hopefully establish our ground.

Days of starvation passed by. 'The Starve of Ages' I liked to call it. The fighting had come to a halt. This was when the Men made their legendary return.

In the mist of darkness they had anticipated our ultimate demise. Sneaking in while the multitude was at rest, goggles on their faces and tanks on their backs. 'Hazardous', it read. The flames from the incinerator illuminated just enough to see them stepping over our bodies. They closed the door quietly behind them without locking it. I decided to make a move that would lead the way for the rest of my uncertain life. Glints of light, gleaming from the fuel being spilled over my 499 fellows trickled and drizzled their way into every corner. Was this what humanity had been waiting for? Momentarily the four men turned their backs. Knowing every single person in this room is what gave us the advantage. I knew that none of these men and women, children or elderly sleep at night, they're too paranoid to even care. And that's how the legend came about, the myth, the stories. It started with us, the revolution of mankind. Could anyone stop us now? Ever so gently I stood up. Vengeance bleeding down my face and my entire body, I raised my arm and pointed onwards. My hand clenched, forming the fist of Glory. This, this was our time to rise and revolt. My mouth opened and my dry tonsils screamed out in everlasting hope: "CHARGE!" The outbreak was massive. All together the 500 rose up and overtook the Men, ripping them to shreds. Luckily for them, they hadn't turned around. They sprayed their weapons of flame in every direction, the fuel covered individuals spreading like predator upon prey. 'I have to escape', was the one single thought circulating my

mind, before I would be roasted alive like the rest. I ran for the door, pulling it open with what strength I had.

From that point onwards, it was just murder. With absolutely anything I could find. The will and need to survive is immense. Something I couldn't control. Pockets of my memory hold such information I can barely maintain. Slicing throats open and taking hostages, blasting heads and blowing brains. A few seconds later, from over the handlebars I was wringing someone by their neck with my shoelace. I would only let go on the click, there it was. And when I dropped down I was on the ground floor. This was my one and only chance to prove to myself that my life was worth something. That I deserved a second chance. To live, to survive. I walked to the door, my palms and face streaming with blood, mine and otherwise. My palms sweaty and my clothes stuck to my skin. Pressing my hand against the door handle, I pushed.

Haidar Nasir- Burnage Media Arts College



*Janet Amrani*

**21984**

I'm pretty sure curiosity is a natural trait in teenagers. However, being an upper-class girl and (although I hate this title) a "superiority" was rather lonely; I never had any reason to go out as I was home-schooled, always had been and always will be like every other superiority child. My holographic teacher, Miss eWare wasn't too pretentious though, certainly not like the other superiorities' teachers.

I hadn't had Miss eWare as my teacher forever. I remember in the past having an inferiority as a teacher, Cassandra. She was super skinny, with intelligent blue eyes as bright as the latest crossbreed of azure finches. She had golden hair which she was obviously very proud of, as she told me how her name meant to shine, and Cassandra had been a Greek princess way back in the past. She said she was lucky to get the opportunity to work in the Capital State, although I still recall the days her hands were covered in sharp scars. I have no idea whether my father ever heard about Cassandra's mysterious injuries, but I'm sure as hell he didn't know about the books and

pictures she used to bring and show me. These unbelievable, unimaginable images altered my perception as the inferiorities being dirty, inhumane peasants. The pictures showed small houses built ridiculously close together, but there was field after field of cheerful people playing those ancient games, like football and rounders. I was seven, seven years and forty-eight weeks, the day Cassandra apparently decided to return to her own home. From then on, I had the latest updated “TechnoTeach”, mine being Miss eWare.

When my teacher decided to set an essay titled “The Wider World”, I naturally thought of the poorer areas of my city. Since Cassandra left, I’d always, always, always wanted to take even just one step into their ‘territory’ but as the daughter of one of the richest, most powerful men alive, that would be seen as inconceivable. The headlines would fly up on those huge glass bulletin towers straight away: “Zoe Parkland spotted in the restricted zones” or “Daughter of multi-millionaire, Vincent Parkland, caught crossing the barrier to restricted areas”. However, this was my chance! I would have a legit reason to be there – curiosity was never going to be good enough.

I told Miss eWare I was going to visit Elle, my awesome, admirable - but secretly non-existent - best friend and then hurriedly got changed. I put on some simple, slightly older clothes so as not to be spotted too obviously; my aim was to fit in and observe rather than be “the posh girl that visits the poor society to look down on everyone”. Knowing my father and all his guards were having a meeting, I was able to sneak out of the back door and hop straight onto the travelator, heading to the edge of the lower-class area. I checked my wrist phone-watch device for the time: 13:20. Perfect; I had all afternoon. During the whole journey, feelings of excitement and apprehension decided to have a mini fight in my belly.

Eventually, excitement won when I saw the beautiful landscape, just like I’d seen in those glorious pictures almost eight years ago. It was green. Like, really green. I’d never seen grass in the upper-class estate; there were just travelators and vehicle-charging points everywhere. I then noticed a lively stream running alongside the pathway at the edge of the small field. There

was a family having a picnic there, smiling beaming, radiant smiles and laughing altogether. A real family.

I don't know what came over me, but I felt the urge to join them, to be part of their outing. I started to walk towards the family. The woman turned her head slightly and noticed. Her facial expression changed as rapidly as Internet pages load: instantly. How can one person look so joyous one moment and then so tormented the next? That's when I stopped and realised... it was Cassandra. For no longer than a second we stared at each other, recognising each other suddenly. I began walking again. She immediately stood up and started flailing her arms around. It wasn't difficult to see the tears that began to pour down her petite face.

Although confused, I continued to walk forwards. I must have been only about three metres away when Cassandra grabbed an apple from the picnic basket and threw it directly towards me. I ducked...no need. The apple disintegrated at one point in mid-air and a huge dome-shaped barrier lit up bright green, just for a couple of seconds. Looking up, I saw the sky change from a perfectly turquoise colour with glorious, gleaming sunshine to a horrible granite grey colour due to the murderous clouds. This dome barrier then returned to its natural, invisible state. I looked back at my poor, past-teacher and a gasp escaped from my mouth in exchange for a lump in my throat.

There was no grass. There was no stream. No picnic. Before me stood five emaciated, skeletal beings, obviously undernourished and...barely even human. They looked so weak and futile. The paradise-like setting I had seen just a few seconds earlier had vanished. What was left was a dire scene, far worse than anything I had ever heard about.

Suddenly, four hoverdrones appeared out of nowhere and came to a halt beside the family. Unable to move from the spot my feet had glued themselves to, all I could do was watch as these pitiful creatures were vaporised on the spot. I felt my cheek which had become soaked with my tears.

That's when I noticed it. The hoverdrones had a name on the side of them: 'Parkland Human Disposal Management'.

Could these hoverdrones actually be part of a company whose aim was to exterminate innocent civilians? What even was this wonderful land I had seen first and why had it shown me its true colours, just from that one apple hitting this invisible dome? But the question that was taking up the most space in my mind, pushing all the other thoughts and questions that were racing around my brain out of the way: how could my own father have founded this organisation?

I started to think that I should never have been so curious.

Isabelle Strong