

Liam Guthrie

It is the year 2080. Sarah walks up to the front of the history classroom and begins her presentation, “A long time ago the city of Kingston, Ontario was like most cities. It had homelessness, air pollution, and litter across the land. People were politically divided, the government was making cuts that unfairly impacted peoples’ jobs, and there was always something upsetting in the news. But with people fighting back and building a better future, over time Kingston became what it is known as today.”

“One of the ways we have improved our city is by making these, cars that don’t need gas because they can charge up in the sun. With these, the use of fossil fuels went down and with it the threat of climate change.” Sarah clicks through her presentation, showing the next slide to the class. Blueprints for a solar-powered car.

“The city also encouraged its citizens to use reusable shopping bags and bring reusable cups with them when they visited a coffee shop. A practice we still use today. Soon around Kingston you will find recycling boxes and trash cans on almost every corner, encouraging the city folk to recycle more instead of litter. Green zones built around the city allow people to enjoy more time in parks, which brings us to the utopia of today.”

After Sarah shares a few more slides showing off the big trees in the green zones around today’s Kingston, her presentation ends. Sarah returns to her seat as her classmates and teacher give her a round of applause. The bell rings, and everyone makes their way out of Regiopolis-Notre Dame Catholic High School, also known as Regi for short.

Sarah sits on her bike and starts pedalling towards her house. On her ride she sees all the houses with backyards with one or two trees. In one of the houses, a little kid swings on a tire swing that is hanging from a big oak tree. A few decades ago, in 2050, the city made housing more affordable and gave grants to the homeless.

As Sarah rides from Division Street to Pine Street, she sees a group of Origin supporters protesting on the street with signs that read “Mayor Skyler Oatsman is a LIAR” and chanting their slogan “Bringing back original values!” The Origin is a political party that is committed to

taking things back to how they used to be. They want gasoline cars, more buildings, and old-style factories. Bob Brick, the founding member of the Origin, is going to run for mayor in the next election.

Sarah parks her bike in her garage and walks inside of her house. Her father is cooking dinner, which is eggs and noodles. She logs onto her computer to check on the election news, and it turns out everyone is in favour of Bob Brick. This is confusing, because before this everyone liked the views of people like Josh Sun and Trisha Fatu (who want to continue the city's strive for a more green lifestyle), but now everyone wants to go back to using gas instead of solar power.

As Sarah eats her noodles and eggs, she digs deeper into the cause of this. It turns out that Bob Brick is being hosted on the popular podcast *Kingston Watch* to try to win everyone onto his side. He only lists the benefits of going back to fossil fuels and having increased deforestation, but he never mentions how fossil fuels release harmful gases into the air and helps cause global warming. And if global warming ever gets back to how it was in the 2020's, then the world might very well be over.

The sun dawns on a new day. Sarah puts on her school uniform, eats some porridge, and gets on her bike to ride to school. When she enters her school she hears students chant "Bringing back original values!" She overhears a couple of kids talk about how they support Bob Brick as she enters her English classroom.

Sarah takes out a copy of Justine Pucella Winans' bestselling novel *Bianca Torre Is Afraid of Everything* and her laptop so she can do some work on her book report. *Bianca Torre Is Afraid of Everything* is required reading for Sarah's Grade 12 Applied English class because of its themes of anxiety and identity, and everyone in the class enjoys the book too.

Sarah's friend, Sam, sits next to her and says, "Hey, have you heard that everyone likes Origin?"

Sarah replied, "I heard, and it's awful! If Bob wins, our city will become the only city in Canada that uses fossil fuels and suddenly everyone will blame us for air pollution and our air pollution will get so bad that the world will end and..."

“Calm down, deep breaths,” Sam says, “if you don’t like this, then be the change you want to see in the world. Run for mayor.”

“But... I’m still in high school, how am I supposed to run for mayor?”

“Sarah, you turned 18 a few weeks ago, you are legally able to vote and are a citizen of Canada and you also reside in Kingston. You are eligible to run for mayor,” Sam says.

“But how will I get anyone to listen to me?” Sarah asks.

“How did Bob Brick get anyone to listen to him?” Sam asks.

Sarah answers, “The podcast! The Kingston Watch podcast!”

“That’s it! Just get on that podcast and tell everyone you are running for mayor and mention how fossil fuels negatively impact the environment, then hopefully you’ll be on almost everybody’s side.”

Sarah quickly enters her nomination for mayor on my laptop. After she submits her nomination she looks up the contact information for Fred Guthrie, the host of the Kingston Watch podcast. She finds his email and writes him an email asking if he would like to interview her on the podcast. After Sarah sends the email, her English teacher Mr. Laframboise starts the lesson by having the class watch a video of Justine Pucella Winans talk about the themes of their book *Bianca Torre Is Afraid of Everything* and their journey of writing it.

During religion, Ms. Armstrong is teaching the class about when Jesus encountered the Devil alone in a desert. Nature calls for Sarah and she asks for permission to leave the class to go to the bathroom. As Sarah enters the girls’ washroom and sits her bum on a toilet, her phone vibrates in her backpack. She looks at it, it’s a notification from Fred Guthrie! The email says that Fred is interested in interviewing Sarah, and he wants to meet her at his house at 6 PM.

Sarah texts her mother to get permission to be interviewed by Fred Guthrie, and she says she could as long as she comes home by 7. The day passes by quickly, and she finds herself riding her bike to Fred’s house. Fred’s living room is all set up for the podcast, and once the recording starts the questions start coming in, Sarah starts to debunk Bob Brick’s campaign and tells Fred about how fossil fuels contribute to global warming by releasing greenhouse gases and trapping heat in the atmosphere. Once 6:30 rolls around Fred and Sarah say goodbye to the

would-be listeners and they end the recording, Fred thanks Sarah for her time before she leaves to go home.

The week leading up to the election is one of the most exciting weeks that Sarah has ever experienced in the year of her high school career. Everybody says, “Hi” to her in the halls, there’s an even divide between supporters of Bob and supporters of Sarah, and teachers and students even stop Sarah to ask her a few questions about the environment. Though the closer the election day comes, the more nervous Sarah gets. What if she actually gets chosen as mayor? Beyond making sure the city stays green, she doesn’t know if she is ready to run a whole city.

Sam notices that Sarah looks worried at lunch break, so they ask, “Sarah, what’s up?”

“Oh, just worried that if I get chosen to be mayor, I might not actually be able to do my job well,” Sarah says.

“Don’t worry about it. It’s better that you run the city than that Bob guy,” Sam says.

“You’re right, but there’s better people than me,” Sarah says, “like Josh Sun. I’ve been following him for a while and I like how he talks about stuff, he seems more ready to be mayor than me.”

“Well, you can always learn from Josh Sun, and maybe you can run for mayor again if you want,” Sam says.

“Yeah. Or maybe I can run for Premier of Ontario, or maybe the Prime Minister!” Sarah says.

“Now you’re talking!” Both Sarah and Sam give each other a big high five.

Election day comes around, and it is announced that Josh Sun is in fact the winner. He got everyone’s attention when he talked about how he would fund more money into schools and libraries.

On the day after election day, Sam says to Sarah before English class starts, “At least you tried.”

“Yup, but I’m happy that Josh Sun won,” Sarah says.

“There’s always a next time,” Sam says.

Indeed there would be a next time for Sarah Tulloch, Canada’s next Prime Minister.