Martyría

I would like to start at the beginning but to be honest with you I’m not sure what the beginning was. All I know is things are the way they are because of the war; the final war. Not final because mankind had finally found a way to make peace on earth but because the devastation of the war nearly destroyed it. 90% of it actually. Left uninhabitable, a virtual wasteland due to the toxic air left from the chemical warfare. Shortly before the end of the war domes where constructed as part of a secret government plan to keep a small percentage of earth protected from what some were predicting as THE END. The predictions… were right. And that is where we are living today- in the domes, or Centres, as they call them. The advances in science and technology that contributed to the war also led to great advances in medicine. They have been able to stop the human aging process and cure all diseases. Man has finally achieved immortality. But now there was only one problem. In a place where people are born every day but no one ever dies the domes began to overpopulate rapidly. Luckily a few years before the war ended scientist Dr. Al Omega discovered a new planet that was suitable for human life. Well better than suitable. Some say it was like earth at its beginning. I guess that is why they named the planet Parádeisos, which is Greek for the word Paradise.

So why are we still living in the Centres? I’m not sure; some say that there is only room for so many on Paradise, some say that it’s just the Council’s way of controlling us by saying who can go and when. Some say that there is no such place as Paradise and others say that despite what the Council says that everyone goes to Paradise when they leave the Centres. Since no one ever dies any more every person has what is called a life event. Once their live event happens if they have accepted the rules of order issued by the Council they can go to Paradise but if not they are sent to live outside the Centres in the wastelands. The timing of one’s life event is decided by the Council or by the person’s own decisions the Council says. That is why I’m leaving. My brother had his life event today and he has not accepted the rules of order. I am going to the main Council building to stop them from sending him to that horrible place. Jacob is only 17, he is too young to go to the wastelands! Growing up you hear horror stories of the wastelands, of people’s skin burning from the chemical laden air and the screams of pain. He is a good person and should go to Paradise. Maybe if he had more time he would accept their precious “rules of order”.

The main council building is 65 miles away and if my calculations are correct I should make it there in about 3 days, just in time to stop them from sending Jacob to the wastelands. I packed some trail mix, some jerky and water in my back pack. I told my parents I would be at my friend Julie’s house for the weekend and Julie and I have a standing agreement that if one of our parents call we would say that we were with each other even if we weren’t. Since Jacob had his life event this morning my parents have been fighting. I know that doesn’t sound like a normal reaction for parents to have after their teenage son just had his life event but Jacob’s life event was a result of a car accident. And since my mom let Jacob take the car even though he was grounded dad feels like it’s mom’s fault or something. Of course no one can die from injuries from a car accident anymore but the Council chooses life event occurrences to coinside with events that might have caused “death” before we started living in the domes. I told them I was going to Julie’s and they just nodded without looking at me. I’m not even sure they heard me but technically I toId them and technically they nodded so I should be ok unless they find out where I am really going.

When someone has their life event they are first taken to their branch council building. The next day they are taken to the main council building and the third day they are either sent to Paradise or the wastelands. We live in dome two which is not far from the main council building so if I don’t make it to the branch council building in time I should be able to make it to the main council building. There are twelve domes total each with its own council building and member. Dr. Al Omega always travels from Paradise to the main council building for every life event. He travels to the domes frequently and even though I’ve never met him I have talked to people that have and they say that he is a very kind and fair man. Maybe if I could just talk to him I could get him to let Jacob stay in the dome or let him go to Paradise. I know that if Jacob went to Paradise I would never see him again unless I went there but I can’t stand the thought of him going to the wastelands.

I have been walking all day stopping for breaks here and there to rest or eat a snack. It’s getting late and it’s a little colder than what I was expecting it to be. There is a house up ahead with the lights still on so I decided to see if they would let me come in for a few minutes just to warm up. I’m a little scared but I guess I’m colder than I am scared so I knock on the door. A lady with a friendly smile opens the door. “Hello”.

“Hi my name is Kelly and I was wondering if I could come in for a few minutes to warm up?”

“Sure, honey. Are you ok? Where are your parents?”

Since I walked through the door without saying anything she asks “Are you lost?”

“No, I’m just going to see my brother;”

“Alone?” Do your parents know where you are?”

Since I don’t answer she asks me if I would like some hot cocoa to help me warm up and I say yes. While she is in the kitchen I notice all the pictures she has in her living room of a little boy with blue eyes and blonde hair. As she walks back into the living room I say “Is that your son? He’s cute.”

She hesitates a moment and says “Yes, that is my son Chase.”

“Oh, is he sleeping?”

Her voice shakes and she says “He had his life event 3 years ago when he was 2.”

“I’m sorry.”

“That’s ok, you didn’t know. Since he wasn’t old enough to accept the rules of order he is on Paradise now and once my life event happens I will be with him again.” She says as she grasps her necklace. Everyone that accepts the rules of order is given a necklace. They say there is a computer chip in the necklace and you can use it to communicate with Dr. Al Omega himself.

“What happened, did he get sick?” I ask, wondering how she could still be wearing the necklace after the council let her son have a life event when he was just a baby.

“Yes. I desperately begged the council to let him stay but they said it was his time.”

“Why do you still wear the necklace? Aren’t you mad at them for taking him?”

“If it wasn’t for Dr. Omega I don’t know how I would have made it through. I know that the council would not have taken him unless there was no other choice.”

“Choice, who’s choice? The councils?” I now realize that I am standing **and** angry.

“Honey what is wrong?”

“The council has taken my brother and I am going to stop them. That is *my* choice!” I say as I grap my stuff and run out of the house.

As I’m running down the driveway I can hear her, “I will talk to Dr. Omega and ask him to keep you safe.”

I run until I can’t run anymore. I fall down to the ground tears running down my face. When I wake up I remember what she had said about talking to Dr. Omega. If she tells Dr. Omega and he tells the council and my parents they would all be looking for me. I knew there was only one place I could hide-the anticouncil. The anticouncil is just what it sounds like. They are a group of people that refuses to accept the rules of order and say that everyone has a right to go to Paradise. Some say that they have found a way to get there without the council or Dr. Omega. There are anticouncil buildings everywhere and there is always a few around the council buildings. I have almost made it to the branch council building and I know where the anticouncil buiding is nearby. Maybe they can help me rescue Jacob. I knock on the door. A young girl about my age opens the door. “Hey.” She says brightly.

“Hey.” I say back.

“Are you lost?”

“No. I hear you take in runaways.”

“Are you a runaway?’’

“Sort of.”

“Well come on in and you can tell me what ‘sort of ‘means. My name is Kristen.’’

“Thanks, my name is Kelly.’’

After walking through the entry way she leads me into a big room. I look around and see kids playing pool, watching big screen tvs and listening to music. “Are you having a party today?” I ask.

“No, it’s always like this, these are some of the kids that live here and their friends. Come on outside and I’ll show you the pool.”

After she finishes showing me around. She asks. “So what did you mean by ‘sort of’ when I asked you if you were a runaway?”

I tell her about Jacob and that I came here for help.

“My mother had her life event 4 years ago. My dad didn’t even try to stop them. That is why I came here. Luca said he could help me find my mother. Luca is the leader of the anticouncil, have you met him?”

“No, but I have heard of him. Do you think Luca could help me save my brother?’’

“Of course he can. He’ll be here in a few days.”

“A few days will be too late, they are sending Jacob to the wastelands tomorrow!”

“That’s just another lie the council tells everyone. No one gets sent to the wastelands, who would do that? They just say that to scare people into accepting their rules of order. Don’t tell me you believe that stuff do you?”

“I don’t know, but I can’t take any chances.”

“Look I’ll call Luca and have him come back early so he can help you. I’ll make sure he’s here in the morning. Come on, you look like you could use some fun.”

And we did. I had a great time that day and I was able to, for a while at least, not have to worry about Jacob. And as she showed me to my room I knew that I could rest. Tomorrow Luca himself would be here to help me save Jacob!

The next morning I awoke to the smell of bacon and eggs, my favorite. I breathed a sigh of relief; today we are going to find Jacob. As I walk into the kitchen I see that Kristen is the one that is doing the cooking. “That looks good.”

“Thanks, my mom taught me. I think I’m the only kid here that knows how to cook.”

“Is Luca here yet?”

“Well, Luca can’t make it today but he’ll be here first thing in the morning.”

“No, I can’t wait that long. They will be taking Jacob to the wastelands today!”

“I told you, no one gets sent to the wastelands, we have plenty of time.”

“I can’t take that chance. I’m going to get my brother today!”

As I start to walk past her she grabs my arm. “What are you doing? Let me go!”

“I said we have *plenty* of time.” She says with a look in her eye that tells me I need to get out of here. I break free from her grasp and take off running toward the door. I hear her behind me. I don’t have time to get my backpack but I don’t care. As I open the door a man is standing there. He reaches out his hand and I grap hold of it. I don’t know who this guy is but if he can get me out of here I’ll take my chances. We both take off running down the steps and onto the road and we don’t stop till we reach the branch council building. As we make it into the building I stop to catch my breath.

“Thanks for saving me back there. Who are you?”

“My name is Gabe and there is something I need to show you.”

“Listen, I really appreciate your help and all but I’ve got to find my brother.”

“This is about your brother… and you.” He says as he takes me by the hand again and leads me down a hall to what looks like a large library.

“What is this place and what does this have to do with my brother and me?”

“This is a room of knowledge and every branch council building and the main council building has one. They each have an original copy of the rules of order.”

“Like I said, I don’t understand what this has to do with me and my brother. We both received a copy of the rules of order like everyone else in the dome but no one in my family has read it or accepted them.”

“The rules of order not only contain a code of conduct but also our history…and future.” As he says this he opens a larger version of the book that is sitting on a podium in the middle of the room. As he is talking and flipping through the book I see newspaper clippings and what appears to be journal entries.

“Wow, I didn’t know all that stuff was in there.”

“Everything anyone would need to know is in this book. What has happened, what is going to happen and why.” As he said this I was confused. This whole time I had a book with the answer to everything?

“When Dr. Omega first discovered Parádeisos he and a crew of 12 other scientist chosen by Dr. Omega himself went on a secret mission to the planet to confirm that it could sustain human life. Once he and the 12 others discovered that it could they sent 10 more ships with people of various professions such as physicians, carpenters, farmers and engineers to try and set up a colony so that they could start sending everyone there before earth was destroyed.”

“I thought that’s what the domes were for.”

“The domes were just a contingency plan.”

“So everyone does go to Paradise then?”

“Well, that was the initial plan. But there were complications. Dr. Omega’s right hand man Luca didn’t like the way he was running things. He didn’t like the fact that Dr. Omega wanted him and the other “originals” (the first settlers to the colony) to help the others as they arrived on Paradise. He felt it was beneath him and he also felt like he was a better leader than Dr. Omega. Some others agreed, about a third of them and they followed Luca in his rebellion. They started a war on Paradise. Dr. Omega being a great leader and strategic genius was able to end the War quickly but he also realized that in time the nature of man would destroy Paradise as it was about to destroy earth but only quicker, since mankind was bringing with them the technology it took them thousands of years to attain on earth. Dr. Omega made a hard decision. Only people that make the decision to live in peace could come to Paradise. And since the domes where already being constructed he could use them as a place to prepare people to come to Paradise. They could be observed to make sure they are prepared before being transported from earth. And as for Luca and his followers they were kicked off of Paradise forever and were sent back to earth to live among the people in the domes and wastelands.”

“So Dr. Omega himself decides that if people don’t want to follow his “rules” then he sends them to live forever in the wastelands?”

“The colony Dr. Omega built has enough room for everyone. He doesn’t want anyone to go to the wastelands. Going to the wastelands is their choice. If it wasn’t set up this way Paradise in a very short time would also be nothing but wastelands. Then what would become of mankind? This is the only way.

“Well why can’t the people that don’t want to accept the rules of order stay in the domes?”

“Not many people know this but very soon the domes will be collapsing. Soon all of earth will be wasteland. Paradise is our only hope.”

“If this is true why would Luca choose to live in a wasteland instead of Paradise?”

“Some people would rather be a leader in a place like that than a servant someplace else.”

“Why are you telling me all of this? Isn’t it top secret or something?”

“Everything I have told you is in the rules of order even the fact that the domes will someday collapse. Only Dr. Omega knows how long the domes will last but from the recent deterioration fractures we have been seeing in the domes we know it will be soon. When Luca and his followers were first sent back to earth after the rebellion they found a way to damage the domes. They thought they had found a way to ruin Dr. Omega’s plans; soon all of earth would be wastelands and would be separated from Paradise forever.”

“What did Dr. Omega do?”

“The only way to repair the domes was from the outside which meant someone would have to go into the wastelands to fix them. Although he knew that no one could withstand the toxic air he tested everyone on Paradise to see if anyone would be able to do it. Unfortunately the only one that passed the test was his son, Jay. Pregnant women are not allowed to travel to Paradise because the trip is too dangerous. Now everyone is tested first but when Jay’s mother took the trip to Paradise she didn’t know she was pregnant so Jay is the only person that has never been to earth and therefore he doesn’t have even the slightest amount of toxins in his system. Since everyone else had at least some in their system they wouldn’t be able to withstand the toxic air as long as he would be able to. As soon as Jay knew this he insisted on going. Dr. Omega knew that the domes would not last forever but he also knew that if they weren’t repaired no one would be able to make it to Paradise. Reluctantly Dr. Omega let him go. Everything had been set up so that Jay would be in the wastelands as little time as possible. But one day while Jay was working on the last of the domes Luca and his followers found a way to trap him out there longer than he should have been. He survived but was badly burned. He still has the scars today. In honor of his sacrifice Dr. Omega put him in charge of people being transported from earth to Paradise. He wanted Jay to be the first one they saw when they arrived so they could see the sacrifice he made so they could live on Paradise.”

There is something else I have to tell you. A few days ago your brother had his life event… but so did you. You were in the car with him. I am telling you all of this so you have one more chance to accept the rules of order.”

“How do I know this isn’t just a lie to get me to accept the rules?”

“Dr. Omega always says ‘When people hear the truth, they recognize it.’”

“Wait, I didn’t accept the rules of order before my life event.”

“That is the way it works but Dr. Omega knows everyone in the domes, he knows everything about them and he knows the ones that are ready to accept the rules even though it may take their life event for them to realize it. Not everyone gets this chance. But it is still a choice, your choice.”

“How is it fair that you have showed me all this and others don’t get to see it? Maybe everyone would decide to follow the rules of order if they knew.”

“I along with the other “originals” were sent back here to show the people left on earth how to make it to Paradise. Everyone in the domes is given a copy of the rules of order and an “original” is assigned to them to help them see the truth. Everyone in one way or another has been told the truth but it is their decision as to whether they believe it.”

“So you came to my brother and told him and showed him all this too?”

“I wasn’t assigned to your brother but whoever was, yes they told him everything I am telling you. Some will actually reveal themselves like I did to you but not always. And some will be given only one chance to hear the truth and some will be given many. It just depends on the person. Dr. Omega has followed everyone in the domes since they were born or since selection for Paradise began so he makes sure that if someone has their life event without accepting the rules of order He has done everything possible to change their minds. Some people, even if they were given till the end of time and saw everything with their own eyes would still choose to not follow the rules of order.”

“Who would want to go to the wastelands?”

“Of course no one wants to go to the wastelands. Everyone wants to go to Paradise but not everyone is willing to do what it takes to make sure Paradise remains Paradise.”

“Luca says he has found a way to Paradise without Dr. Omega or the council.”

“Luca is a liar. There is no other way except through Dr. Omega’s son Jay.”

“Why is he telling people there is?”

“Because he knows that he can never return to Paradise so he wants to convince as many people as he can by whatever means he can to stay. The more people that stay the more people he will rule over once the domes collapse and everything becomes wasteland. He also knows how much Dr. Omega has followed everyone in the domes and cares deeply for them and wants everyone to come to Paradise so it is also a way of getting back at Dr. Omega.”

“If Dr. Omega cares so much about us why doesn’t he stop people from getting sick? He has the technology to heal people so why does he heal some and not others? And why does he allow people to hurt one another, especially kids?”

“You are right. He does have the technology to heal everyone so that no one will ever be sick again. And he could also stop violence from ever happening again. That is what Paradise is for. What happens in the domes is only temporary and if nothing bad ever happened in the domes a lot of people would not want to leave until the domes started collapsing and then it would be too late they would become contaminated and once that happens it is too late even for Dr. Omega to save them. Also Dr. Omega doesn’t want to control anyone. He lets us make our own decisions and sometimes those decisions hurt others and ourselves.”

I began to cry. Dr. Omega is right, when you hear the truth you know it. I am not sure what my brother’s decision was but I do know that only he can make that decision and I have to make it for myself. “I choose to accept the rules of order.”

“Great, we can have you on Paradise by tonight.”

“What about my family? I would like to tell them where I am going and maybe try to convince them to accept the rules of order too.”

“Don’t worry, like I said they each have a copy of the rules of order and an “original” assigned to them to make sure that they are told the truth. Dr. Omega doesn’t allow people to talk to anyone once they’ve had their life event. In some cases such as the ones that don’t accept the rules of order it would be too painful. Sometimes he does allow us to pass on messages, letters, that sort of thing. It’s called a martyría, or testimony. He really does try to do everything he can to make sure everyone knows the truth and for some people that means hearing it from someone they know.”

“Can I give you my journal? I have been writing in it since I left home. Could it be my martyria? I would also like to write in it that I’ve accepted the rules of order. Can you give it to my family and let them know to let others read it also?”

“Sure I’ll make sure they get it.”

To whoever reads this know that Paradise is real and there is only one way to get there despite what anyone else may say. I will be there tonight and hope to see you there someday. It is your decision alone to make but remember we never know when our life event will happen so don’t wait until it’s too late…