

## CHAPTER 1

My name is Skip, I was born a Jonah, but I have been and always will be a Skip with how I've lived my life and how people have treated me. At a younger age, I was sent out to investigate the surface of the planet my community lives under. Our history is long and bland, mostly led by politicians too cautious to look out of their front door. But finally they've come around, and for some reason, picked me as the first one to go out and look around at what happened to our surface. They didn't give me much information, but told me a name that has been passed down for years with some importance: Jefferson Glass.

As I was starting out, I wanted to get around to calling the title of the report: *The Harmony Without Choice*, but I never got around to finishing it.

The journey started out like I would expect seeing the outdoors for the first time: lush greenery mixed with the rough smell of the ground's perfume. It was like nothing I had experience before under the ground where we were still theorizing over all the different tweaks to the environment that were uncertain to us like heat, humidity, light, composition of the soil, and so on. Whatever that experience was, it had to be just right. I continued for a couple days through the greenery, not really knowing where I was going nor expecting to see anyone else at all. Bugs were the only signs of intelligent life I saw, but I doubt they've gotten any smarter than from a couple thousand years ago.

Eventually I found someone worth talking to, a woman at the top of a hill far off into a clearing. The greenery I was wading through had created a hard and clear line between where the forest began and the broad clearing resumed the rest of the space. As soon as I stepped out I could see the rest of the line of trees and such going on for miles. At the time I found it to be such an odd occurrence of nature that I could not really understand, but as I came to learn was a part of the new nature which has taken over the world so far. I had stepped out from a protected zone of the old nature and into a plane of existence my people have yet to truly perceive yet. And it was so overwhelming to me, that I collapsed right there and saw the women running to me

## CHAPTER 2

The woman woke me gently. I looked around to see what looked to be a kind of hospital room like anything else, white walls, chairs, a sink, a poster with my own language on it. At the time that made me feel very strange, where I could be in something similar to a cage or zoo on display for whoever wants to view me. Instead, I was taken care of like I was one of their own. The woman who I saw rushing towards me had come in and started talking to me like she knew me,

"You took quite a spill there, are you feeling any better?"

"Um, yes... much better actually."

"Good! I'm not sure if you've noticed, but we had to make an alteration to your attire."

I did a body scan over myself and quickly discovered what she was talking about. I had a hard cap over the top portion of my skull.

"It's a Tin Hat, we know that it blocks out waves you don't want in your head."

"Waves, like electro-magnetic?"

"Kind of, we're honestly not sure how it works, just how to reduce it."

"Well thank god for that."

"Thank who?"

## CHAPTER 3

This created a curiosity within me to figure out more about these supposed waves. They were obviously a major part of the surface world today and unknown to the community.

I did eventually find out what caused them, as they emitted centrally from the center of the planet's core like a large central broadcasting to practically every inch of the surface. Due to the nature of the waves themselves though, they are only effective past the surface and the communities below the earth were able to block patches of the waves. This doesn't really help the people on the surface because they depend on a portion of the waves to carry on with their lives and to be in a void means to lose yourself from nature and life itself.

#### CHAPTER 4

The waves came to represent not just a physical part of the beings on the surface, but an important abstract meaning as well. Some may call it religion and others may call it direction, but in the end both are correct. The waves guided individuals through both big and small decisions throughout their lives whether they knew it or not. This was not a constant set of decision making for each individual, but would happen randomly every once in a while. Some groups in the large community embraced the deferment of decisions and happily rode through life as if each decision were based off of chance. Whereas others sought to limit as many choices as they could and attempt to live their lives by their own means. Limitation of the waves was of course done with the tin hats but were not completely effective. Studies done by researcher and professor Dr. Newton Braggs.

#### CHAPTER 5

After my initial conversation with the woman who I came to know as Lola, she explained the properties of the tin hat I donned from the work of Dr. Newton. She said that it was not just Tin, but a mix of several different mixtures of metals that were carefully placed around the shell of the cap. This allowed for a blocking of many different frequency bands of signals that could interfere with one's head, but it is more of a dulling than a complete blocking off. No one knew how to completely block it off, but just being able to get a handle on their own decisions was good enough to try and be free. Since it seemed like these waves were such a big deal, I asked if Lola knew how I could contact Dr. Newton to ask him more.

"Write him a letter, he loves responding to letters."

So I did.

#### CHAPTER 6

I wrote Dr. Newton a short but thorough letter explaining my situation of coming from the underground and sent to learn more about how things are operating on the surface. He took this as a chance to explain all that he could within the one page he sent, where I later learned he had to limit himself to one page per letter as a means of self control from writing larger bodies of work that overwhelmed his relationships with others. It started off like this:

Welcome to the surface of the planet! We call this place Gaia, based off an ancient term describing the world. It is my presumption that Gaia has been kidnapped or hijacked by one person or a group of people that intend to make all the decisions of the individuals in the world whether they want it or not. My work has been largely against this notion where I was able to develop the hat which you are hopefully wearing now. Without it, I imagine your brain would be barraged with a multitude of scrambling signals that your body would not know what to do with. We are not sure why we are so susceptible to these signals, but with studies of the children to grown adults I have not seen any kind of effect to the signals which you have exhibited when Lola first picked you up. It gives me hope that you are different in some way and I hope to meet you soon in the chance of knowing where our differences lie.

#### CHAPTER 7

Not uncommon, I received a second letter that served as Dr. Newton's loophole for continuing to write letters to others.

I understand that you are here to learn more about what these waves from the planet do to people. Please come and visit me at my lab. Have Lola lead you there and we shall meet up and have a grand time. I'm eager to hear more about the underground life from you and what differences you've seen immediately so far. The fact that it's not just you, but other people that are not effected by the waves is such amazing news to me that I want to jump up and down while writing this letter, but I've already made enough typos in here. Please come see me soon!

With happiness and love,  
Dr. Newton Braggs

## CHAPTER 8

I caught up with Lola the next day after receiving the letter. I learned that she too was a researcher and good friend of Dr. Newton, so it was not too out of her way to escort me to his lab. Doing so was not what I would have expected, where to prep for leaving took over an hours worth of our time, but the traveling part itself took less than 5 minutes. I'm not entirely sure how fast we were going, but the makers of the transportation were nice enough to give the curious bunch of people a window to frame our reference of travel, which is funny within itself because there was nothing more than a blur during that time. I then immediately vomited as soon as I could exit the vehicle. "It's okay," said Lola, "they should really have a warning not to look out that window when traveling. Everyone knows that."

## CHAPTER 9

We arrived in Dr. Newton's lab which was filled with cages of small animals and electrical equipment of various kinds that glittered and buzzed sporadically throughout our visit there. He suggested I should be examined with some of them for the supposed differences between us.

I expected to be there all day going through multiple tests and we started with a blood sample.

"We'll use this to see if you have the same bits and bobs in your blood that we do."

"What else is there other than regular blood?"

"You'll see"

DAY 2 11/02/22

## CHAPTER 10

The doctor turned on a large visual screen in the lab which showed a projection of what my blood looked like magnified.

"Incredible! You lack any signs of sanguimata in the blood."

"Sangui-what?"

"Blood robots" said Lola.

"Why would there be robots in the blood? And everyone has these?"

"Yes"

“Okay, but why would they be there in the first place?”

“Oh, uh”

Dr. Newton looked at Lola.

“We’re not entirely sure.”

It was around this time where I remembered I had a name to ask about it and find out what it means.

“Have either of you heard of the name Jefferson Glass?”

The pair looked at each other again in a confused manner.

“We have never heard of the name Glass, who told you about them?”

I then went on to explain that I didn’t really know either, but was told to learn more about the world and the associations it has or used to have with Jefferson Glass. I’m sorry that I did not press them more at the time, because they were both familiar with Jefferson Glass but were unable to tell me.

## CHAPTER 11

No one really knew Jefferson Glass, but he knew of them all intimately. He is the reason for the waves from Gaia and the sanguimata in the blood of every being on the surface. Not only the people, but the plants and animals as well. The sanguimata invaded all living space and locked themselves in for the intended purpose of control. They receive the waves sent out through Gaia’s core, and the core receives the information from the waves by the will of Glass himself. Not many knew of this but the clues were there to be found out.

## CHAPTER 12

After the interaction with Dr. Newton and Lola, I received help from them in trying to get acquainted with the new world. They put me up through the local government where I had received an apartment to live in and a couple weeks worth of food. A news crew came by and started interviewing me.

“Where are you from?”

“I’m not supposed to tell exactly, but I’m from the underground.”

“Then how are we supposed to believe you.”

I shrugged, “I don’t have the blood robots?”

“Let’s move on, you say to have been sent here to learn about our society, what would you say are some key points you’ve learned so far?”

“Well you’re a gracious bunch of people. I’m surprised to have almost no true suffering when walking the streets of your cities. The government has provided me with more supplies than I could have thought. When I started this mission, I half expected to be dead on the streets by now. Instead, I’m here talking with you and learning all that I can.”

“We know you’re not completely satisfied with your journey so far, could you tell us why?”

“Yes, I’m supposed to try and learn more about the name Jefferson Glass and the effects he’s had on the society thus far. I have not heard a single thing about this name and I’m hoping this news-cast will help spread the word.”

His words fell on death ears. Not a soul could tell me about Glass and what happened. They were all unknowledgeable and forced to be nonreactive to the name. As if complacent to the fact that I'm asking about it and hopeful for someone else to help me.

The interview ended and I moved on to investigate myself.

## CHAPTER 13

I started at the library like any sane investigator would. I was surprised to find so little books to begin with, I called to the librarian.

"Are these really all the books you have?"

"Yes, books are very rare these days. Nobody finds any use for them. We have plenty of videos and audio to reference though."

"That would work wonderfully, how do I access these files?"

"Go to the lobby and take a left towards the first room, you can't miss it."

I didn't know it at the time, but it makes perfect sense why books were out of style. Trees had gone practically extinct from the perspective of the people. Although I saw trees on my initial travels to the surface society, I saw no more once I got past that line and into the clearing where I collapsed. Since there were no trees available, people had to resort to silicon and other materials to focus on computers and such to get by. Not that there was anything wrong with that, but it's so sad to see no one able to have the opportunity to hold books unless it's some kind of novelty.

## CHAPTER 14

As I entered the computer room of the library I was completely overwhelmed by the number of people it could hold. This was the real part of the library now where hundreds of people were standing or sitting at a desk with a glowing screen in front of them. Rows upon rows were filled and little drones were zooming back and forth above bringing food, drinks, and drugs to help them keep going with their tasks.

"Looking for a spot?"

Asked a young person behind a desk facing the entrance.

"Yes, how do I get on one of these computers? And I've never been on one so I'd love some help if possible."

"Oh it's easy, just say what you want into the microphone and it'll do whatever you need."

She took me to a desk about 20 rows down and showed me the microphone and screen.

"Say whatever you want it to do and it should be able to interpret for you."

I thanked them and they gracefully left. I stared at the glowing screen and started with the one name I knew nothing about.

"Jefferson Glass"

I then received 1,627,310 different files to choose from.

I was appalled the search actually worked but yet no one knew about the name. How could these files even exist if they were not written by someone who has at least heard of the name? I didn't ponder it too long and dived in to learn more about this mysterious figure.

## CHAPTER 15

Jefferson Glass was born in the year 2222 AD. He was the son of a paralegal and a painter in the small city of Little Rock, Arkansas, United States of America. His painter father was world renowned and went by the name of Gillette. His father often had to leave the family behind when either creating his incredibly large works of art or touring the world. The art itself had to be stored in 2 story warehouses and he bought cranes to help him move around to each part of the painting. He was known to have spent hours on just one small square block of light cotton canvas each day. There was a certain respect for the material since it was such an important material and Arkansas was the main source for it throughout the United States. He tried to source most of his material to come exclusively through his local area. This act of using what's closest to you reverberated not just through his art work, but his family.

## CHAPTER 16

Jefferson Glass thought about following in his father's foot steps but was actively encouraged not to do so directly from the man himself.

"There's nothing you can do about the world if you're an artist, you make something that's purely from the inner most part of yourself, but no one can understand but you. And when you show it to someone, they just think about themselves and move on. None of the work is worth it unless you know how to make others please themselves."

Jefferson had no idea how to learn the knowledge to help please others and his father did not want to help him learn. He hoped that his son would be better than him in some way.

In a way, Jefferson did succeed Gillette. He went on to rule the entire world without them knowing. He went on to learn from the only place his parents never went.

College.

## CHAPTER 17

Jefferson Glass attended the local, public school under his parent's wishes to try and get a normal experience with life. No one knew his father was the famous painter Gillette, mainly because no one asked him. He cruised through school as if he wasn't there. His classes were nothing but time sucks and information overloads. His lunch was only for sustenance. Going between classes was dedicated for traveling only. His friends were nearly non-existent. He was only able to connect when a fellow classmate was trying to get answers from him.

"Could you help me with today's math homework?"

"Yeah, let me get back to my locker and get the sheet."

He always sulked when alone, and as he shared his material he always reflected on his life thinking that being copied is all he's good for. No one actually wants to know him, they just want to say they are on his level and not falling behind like everyone else.

The stragglers leapt onto him since they could see him floating in his studies. As long as they held tight, they too could float enough to get out of the collective hell hole they are all in.

## CHAPTER 18

One day, as seen on the police records, Glass broke down at school. There was a reported 12 injuries due to a rampage of physical violence towards the people that said they were close to him. The injuries sustained were non-life threatening as they were a mix of fingernail scratches and bite marks.

In Glass' opinion they were nothing but extensions of himself that he wanted to be rid of, they did nothing but leech off of his work for their own gain. Acting as if the real work actually came from asking another person to work for them, or paying the person that helps with their company. Glass couldn't stand being used in such a way. He felt no real benefit from helping these people in ways that still make them think of Glass as nothing more than a ticket to the good life. Or at least a ticket to another phase of copying others. He couldn't stand it anymore and found a way out of school and was cast into home schooling. There he was able to finish with fairly good marks and still make it into college.

DAY 3 11/3/22

Nothing.

DAY 4 AT 10PM

CHAPTER 19

I got up after researching a bit and tried to find somewhere to get water. I looked around and everyone was still plugged in and chatting in their little isolation booths. The glass was see through and their mouths were moving constantly. The mass of blundering mouths all for some information. They were all likely professionals compared to me at the time, where I thought simple commands were good enough, they knew all the hot keys that were not even words, just sounds like a science fiction laser going off or ringing of the bells to do whatever needed to be done.

After I quit staring, I finally was motivated to get something to drink. I was hoping for something publicly accessible, so I went to go back to the librarian for more helpful information.

"Say, do you know where a guy can get some water around here?"

She delightedly obliged and handing me a small packet from behind the counter.

"I'm supposed to eat this?"

"No, you should go to the rest room and insert it."

"Um."

"Sorry, kidding! Yes, leave it in your mouth and let it dissolve on your tongue. It's dehydrated water."

Although I wanted to ask her more about how one can even dehydrate water, I felt it was better to just trust her and ask the computer later.

I popped the blue, spongy-like pill and a light fizzing took place in my mouth at a slow but consistent and comfortable rate. It was like bubbly water and tasted amazing.

"Thanks!" I said in my most gargle voice, and then headed back to my isolated computer space.

CHAPTER 20

I continued looking up through the files on Jefferson Glass. After seeing his early childhood being sufferable and well logged for some reason, I decided try and save time by going through some of the more high level descriptions of what he did and where he went.

For starters, he didn't go to college until he was 27. You could say he was a late bloomer, but it was more like a failed entrepreneur. He started three businesses but they all went under about three years at a time. He first tried to make it with a restaurant of all his favorite foods called Favorites. He was unfortunately a terrible cook, and when he hired others to do the cooking, they made even worse food under his instruction. No matter what he told his workers, they couldn't make the food he described taste any better than when he tried. To make ends meet, he got sponsored by a local distributor and only sold their products. In defiance to his newly shackled business model, he would periodically try to create something original or introduce a new dish he loved, but no one else would love it. These numerous ventures would cut more of his cost each time, and he finally did so much when trying to bring back mini cupcakes because he felt they needed a comeback. Those were not it.

## CHAPTER 21

The second business he started went in the complete opposite direction. He attempted to become an internet influencer by reviewing battles and interviewing people from the Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) Wars of 2140. Although it had been over 100 years ago since the events, he was able to find some of the few still surviving during those days as part of the Metaverse, which is basically a retirement home where they copy the brain functionality of human beings. Most users have it happen when they're 80 years or older. One can imagine the vast hellscape of the multiple generations of family which survives as a part of the meta verse where today when one is born, the whole family is already watching you, as if heaven was now an actual place on earth, buried between tiny distances between traceways and atoms. And through this mix of family trees and general connections can lead you to just about anyone. So Glass took it upon himself to find the old veterans to once again hear their side of the story by asking the same questions like everyone else, and hearing the same answers, like everyone else. He never really earned any money during this period because he never got past the threshold of interactions to claim monetization status, where the adjusted rate at the time equals 10 million views greater than 1 second per day. But he did get collateral money for a time when he had videos of attempting to resurrect an AGI for a fair and unbiased interview. Extremist nerds flooded to his videos to ooo and ahh, but most importantly, harshly criticized for giving air time to one of the most deadly figures in history who currently holds the highest kill count of 120 million humans. His small channel was immediately canceled and became a banned user from the social media sites and meta verse. But thankfully he bought cancellation insurance which has a clause that if the accused canceled person gains more than 10 million views from videos featuring said person in criticism, then the company must pay twice than the amount paid to the monetized criticsers. With this, he was able to abandon his second job and start his next business.

## CHAPTER 22

With a new amount of financials, he decided to invest his money in others. He became an angel investor in new technologies. Since his fame primarily came from his role in reigniting AGI debate, he tried to make up for it by funding technology firms that were creating more human-centric software and hardware. It again all took a turn for the worse when he was successful. The companies, inside the influence of Glass' opinions, created a new type of nanobots that could be put into the blood, he helped create sanguimata.

Sanguimata came about as a way to measure blood temperature, heart rate variation, heart beat, and detection of real-time hormone and neurotransmitter levels. They could tell if you were happy, sad, lying, or telling the truth. But people could know other people's levels if there was a mutual agreement, but they also had to make this mutual agreement with the company, and Glass, too. Glass and his compatriots found ways to advertise explicitly to groups of people either on the road or watching tv. They found out by subconsciously showing people images that were geared specifically to each individual or group to feel a way for just a fraction of a second, then they could create a rolling influence effect and end up with massive groups of people doing their bidding by buying up commercial products and choosing political platforms that only benefit the company. Of course, after widespread adoption, people finally discovered the truth.

## CHAPTER 23

San Francisco burned that night. There was a complete revolt against the tech world and the influence of Jefferson Glass' money. Sky scrapers and compounds burned to the ground, the servers were disconnected, and the CEOs



fled. After that night it was assumed Glass was killed during an assassination attempt at a press release about the accusations located at an In-N-Out. They never officially found the body, but it's claimed to have been burned or the ashes are buried somewhere.

But I can tell you for a fact that to this day Glass is still alive. At the time, this is where the digital paper trail ran cold for me. It seemed so suspicious that the general population was known to have blood robots floating around and that I did not, and the people who I know most likely do not have them either. So why were they still around? But as I came to learn, Glass is still alive and using the sanguimata is able to control. And he never went to college as Jefferson Glass, but Josh Jefferson. God no.

## CHAPTER 24

So, at the time, I logged off of the computer for the day. Learning that Glass was dead, I had thought that there must be some kind of connection between the people who decided to get nanobots inserted into them and the others who did not. But I didn't know what exactly.

I got up and went back to the librarian and asked when it's closing.

"In about 15 minutes, do you need something?"

"Um, no" I stammered, "but do you have anything going on after this? I'd love to ask you some questions."

"Um."

I tried to convince her that I was a person from an underground society. I told her I don't have any sanguimata. I confided in her my task to learn about the surface world. We agreed to meet at a cafe.

I went over and waited. Crossed through the crowd where everyone was walking in a specific angle, stopping and going at precise times. It was so beautiful, but so controlled, I began to think this life of control is still in the world somehow. Or they are just incredibly self sufficient. I couldn't tell what's improved and what hasn't. It was almost a good thing to see all this change which seems to be for the better, but is it the personal choice of the people involved. Do they still have a say for it all? And why was I wearing this tin hat? What is it really protecting me from and no one else is wearing it?

I got into the cafe and ordered whatever drink was at the top of the list of the menu. I didn't know what it was, I only know I can rely on whatever's at the top of a list.

I look around and see people on their own, looking down at the ground or the table. Taking in the beverage but only out of utility, as if there was no real enjoyment of the action, but just because it's a stop between wherever else they need to go. It wasn't a busy place, it was perfectly moderate in both traffic and patronage. The music bopped at a simple tune with only a couple instruments playing. One was obviously drums or at least percussive, the others, being synthesizers swinging back and forth lazily against each other, with timbres unique and sustaining meshing well while fading in response to the drums. It was magical, almost perfect.

## CHAPTER 25

She came into the cafe. She was dressed in street clothes, mostly just plain clothes arranged in a casual way. Everyone has more or less the same dress style, but she had enough of natural talent to shine through. Her hair was long and dark, she had sparkling eyes I could trust.

"Hi, so what do you want to know?"

"So does every have sanguimata"

"Yeah, but we don't call it that, just smata. They usually make you smarter."

“So you know when it’s working on you?”

“Yep, happening right now actually.”

“Do you ever not feel them?”

“When I sleep I guess, but you mean when I’m awake?”

I nodded.

“Yeah, there is a way to do it, I’ll try.”

She then recited the first persona I’ve heard:

On days as sweet as this

I’m asked to step aside

Asked questions for another’s bliss

I will gladly compromise

“Was that a poem?”

“We call them personas, they’re artistic representations of our thoughts, or so people say.”

I asked her how many people do that.

“Pretty much everyone if they’re really trying to get a point across. You should check out the Glacier Church. I can take you if you like.”

So we paid our tab and headed over.

CHAPTER 26

We walked through the streets to the nearby church. We talked more about where we were.

“Welcome to Yalima by the way, one of the few more liberal cities in this land.”

“Everyone seems to be getting along fine, what would you say makes this city liberal?”

“The church mostly, so many people go to try and be who they feel like themselves and share those feelings with others.”

“I can only imagine.”

We got to the church and it stood out in a city full of various hues of neutral cement, this place was covered in artistic sweeps of colors and motifs to the mind and world. One that stuck out to me was a giant representation of a balding head. On top was a ring of people holding hands and actively spinning in unison around a roaring fire. Towards the top of the building was a large diamond like figure that was elongated more so on the bottom with a white top and a deep blue shade on the bottom. Underneath said Glacier Church of Greater Yalima.

We went in through the large doors and saw a large open space with congregants bundled in small groups. I could hear the rhymes and tones of voices dancing with word play as they conversed with each other.

“Come, I will bring you to the pastor here.”

She took my hand and led me towards the back where there was a stage with a person looking down at the many groups.

They then saw us and said this persona:

Upon thee I look and wonder why

The tin hat dons you which strikes my eye

It is rare and according to me I must try

To understand your condition, please do not lie

I decided to try my best to respond in a persona as well to not seem rude.

My tin hat upon my head

Keeps me from lying  
On the cold hard ground

Forever denying.

I seek information

Of this land

What is this creation

In which we stand?

They smiled and said:

Look long and look near

We exhibit strength and sound mind

Against the control we fear

Takes away from our time

Within these walls we are safe

With a cage of Faraday

To express the lives we wish to create

Every single day

CHAPTER 27

Our conversational personas continued where I was led to believe that this place was used to express themselves. The Faraday cage they talked of was a wire mesh that is continuous throughout the building where no electromagnetic waves can go in or out, and in there they feel the most free to express themselves without the control of smata leading them through life's choices and keeping them bound to a certain path.

I asked how long has then been going on.

Not too long we have been

Seems like just days since we've held

Onto the lives where we gave in  
The control of our selves

Not too far we have spread

For our outreach is botched

By who like to be lead

Like time leads the hands in a watch

The pastor was describing the opposition to the Church who endure the simple nudges through life. They prefer that no one is more or less content with their surroundings than they are because of faith that it is for the greater good.

It was then where I first had exposure to the opposition when a large explosion broke through the walls and let in the waves and the people the church-goers were trying to avoid.

## CHAPTER 28

The small groups of people were all knocked to the ground. Rubble was scattered throughout the floor with smoke and dust swirling around trying to settle back to a calmer state. My ears were ringing as a I to my tin hat that was came off as I fell to the ground. My mind was flooded with thoughts and strains as I struggled to get back the hat on. When I finally got to my feet, there rushed in a number of people in all black coverings with glowing rods. They touched them to arbitrary people and moved on.

I decided it was best to leave. I then ran away towards the back where I found a door to the outside. I did not look back as I ran through the dense crowd of people meandering from place to place. My panic set in and I could feel that I reached a dangerous part of my journey and decided maybe it's time to spend my time elsewhere.

I did not feel like I could trust Lola and Dr. Newton, for they seemed content with the idea of smata. They never showed me signs of persona either, so it seemed like I should go on my own. I went back to the living quarters assigned to me and packed enough supplies and water capsules to last me a few weeks or so.

At the cover of night I left the city with a pack on my back and an aimless direction.

## CHAPTER 29

The border of the city mirrored the hard stop of the forest trees I exited, where tall skyscrapers ended abruptly to find vast grasslands on the outside. The streets ended with no tracks or worn paths to follow, just natural grass swaying in the dark cover of the night winds. I looked up and saw what I thought were shooting stars, they were more stills during the nights I was in the forest, but as I came to learn they were not star but fast moving cargo ships. The stars roared as they flew by into and out of the city. I tried to pay no mind as I went on. I spent about three days walking

aimlessly into the world. The lands continued to be rolling hills of the same species of grass throughout. The lack of diversity and wildlife was unsettling. In our underground simulated environments we knew to appreciate the ecological diversity to maintain the strength of individual species in a balanced way. We refrained from excess of any one species. This was excess, from what I could tell, or at least the signs of a static world where nothing was meant or allowed to change. I could not imagine that this was all planned, I presumed it was just left alone and came this way, but the controls of the earth's waves traveled here to control not only the people, but the plants as well.

## CHAPTER 30

On the fourth day I was abruptly awakened by another explosion. Initially I scrambled for my belongings and ducked down to see where the disturbance was coming from. I saw nothing but the swaying plains of grass around me. Then another explosion, it was in the direction of a nearby hill. I wanted to go the opposite way, but decided it'd be best to at least recognize what kind of danger could even be nearby in this vast nothingness. So I crept towards the top of the hill with my body low to not attract any attention.

I saw what seemed to be a battle between two distinct groups of people in a level field of grass. One group was in blue and yellow attire and the other group in red and green. Volleys of bright lights were sent from one side to the other, but only striking near the group in the front, as if there was a limitation upon which one could aim their sights.

The formality of war seems to have come back from days of guerrilla like assaults. There was a mutual respect for the dignity and livelihoods of the persons involved. There were no lethal means against each group. Instead, they used weapons to stun the other side in both long and short range attacks. I saw groups of people dragging downed opposition to their own encampment. The opposition was then placed inside a quarters towards the rear of the group, where the opposing colors went in and only alike colors came out. They cycled through the opposition until one side dominated completely.

I was in awe as I watched this process for hours. When one row of soldiers were depleted in a group, another stepped up in complete unison to continue the affront. The group numbers oscillated in size slowly until an equalization of one color won over. The red and green dominated the other, where at the end everyone cheered in unison, rhythmically saying: "EW AH, EW AH, EW AH".

At this point I had seen enough. I didn't know whether to stay and see them leave or try to sneak away myself, but as I saw them scatter outwards from the field in all directions, possibly to look for stragglers, I quickly gathered my things and chose to run.

## CHAPTER 31

There was no outrunning them as much as I tried. They caught up to me but were confused to even see me without any colors other than my drab clothes. I raised my hands up when they arrived, they asked me if I was a deserter and I tried to explain that I was just walking through and watched when I heard the noise.

"We have to bring you to processing anyways."

I didn't fight it thinking that they could somehow tell that I'm not in the right shape for whatever battles they were commencing. Four people surrounded me and escorted me to a tent. It was green and red on the outside with at least 4 poles holding up the insides with points going up. I came in to see a group of commanders sitting on blankets in a circle.

"Who is this? Why do you bring them?"

"We found them on the outskirts of the battlefield claiming to be a wanderer."

"In these parts?"

They were clearly confused anyone would be out this far from a city. They asked for me to come to the circle and questioned who I was and where I came from. I explained coming from an underground society and I was sent her to learn more about what's happening on the surface.

My convincing was sloppy at best. I'm sure my fear was showing but they did not mind.

After our conversation they looked around to each other briefly and then the one furthest from me said,

"We're traveling to Tree City. You will come with us."

This person was General Dennis Delaware. He was a small man but with a thick build and gnarly face, as if he was squinting at the sun constantly.

I agreed, as if I had a choice, and I was sent to a tent of my own. They put guards on the outside which I imagine was to help me stay put. I tried to look on the bright side as I now had a bed, but with that came the dread of what could possibly happen next.

## CHAPTER 32

The next day we traveled to Tree City where I was to ride with the General and his company. It was a flying machine that had no wings but long feet that extended outwards but retracted as we flew. I'm not entirely sure how we were able to generate flight. The vehicle had an X on the top that extended out past the vehicle. In between each of the X's arms were floating elongated cans that stayed still throughout the entire flight. I asked the pilot how it worked. "It's a mixture of magnets and ionization. They explained it to me once in school, but I forgot."

"Then how do you know if it's working properly or not?"

"Instinct!" He shouted joyfully, as if that's what he always says to his friends.

In fact, they all had their own answers to these kinds of questions about how they operate in the world. This answer of blind faith for their instincts to help guide them through their decisions has been successful for them so far, and if they felt otherwise in any case, the situation could always be rationalized to be for the best interest of not just them but for the society around them.

## CHAPTER 33

I then turned my attention to the General.

"Do you mind if I ask why you were battling with that other group?"

"No, I don't mind. It was a territorial dispute. Both sides bring their representatives to see in which way fate determines who rules the other's city. We won, and now control the territory they once held."

"What's going to happen to the territory you gained?"

"We have representatives going over now to discuss the transition of power. There will then be conditioning of all people living there, resources will be inventoried and reallocated, and so on."

What he meant by conditioning is similar to what happened in real time on the battle field. All souls will have to go through a meeting of sorts to understand the new laws and behaviors they can exhibit.

"Do the city people have any problem with the conditioning?"

"Why should they? It's a small change in their lives that ultimately accounts for nothing. They still live, eat, interact as they would otherwise, but they understand the limitations of that and what happens when said limitations are exceeded in anyway. They had their chance to not have it happen, but fate was not on their side. Instead, we were favored and won."

The reliance to fate confused me. There was a spiritual tinge that was near the opposite of what I saw in Yalima. The Glacier Church found ways to avoid the waves and urges it produced within them, these people totally surrendered to these urges and accepted each nudge it tossed their way.

"So either side was willing to succumb to this fate of conditioning depending on the battle?"

"Yes, we here are trying to bring harmony to the world."

"Hmm."

"And that means we must see who wins in both strength and endurance."

"That's all that matters?"

"On the battlefield? Yes, but fate is dependent on more than just that, but the people in the what they stand for. Not every city is perfect, with each battle and new conditioning, society becomes better. Sometimes people lose happiness while others gain, it is the equalization of life itself."

#### CHAPTER 34

I sat there on the plane in silence. Not sure who to talk to or what to do. The general was giving me pretty straightforward information and the pilot I couldn't really trust specifically, but I could at least figure that the influence within them both would get us to wherever we are going next. Our destination, Tree City, is one of the largest metropolises in the surface world so far. It's named after the large lone tree at the top of their highest building artfully called the Tree building. It was the only space in the entire city that held any kind of nature. All else was mixes of concrete and metal, with the people there as rigid as the structures that surrounded them. They got along with the bare minimum and persisted through their tasks for each day because it was their duty to do so. They found no reason to do more or less than what they needed to, it was the nudges that ruled, not them.

"We'll be landing in 15 minutes." Said the pilot over the intercom.

I looked out and saw Tree City for the first time. It's horizon went on past the horizon. And towards what seemed to be the center was the large building with a 200 foot tree right at the top.

#### CHAPTER 35

We landed on a platform near the middle of Tree building's structure. As we exited the vehicle there were troops there to receive us.

"Squad, please welcome Skip here to Tree."

"Welcome Skip!" They yelled back in unison.

"Hello all, so where do we go from here?"

"Let's start with going inside."

The inside of the building had walls of incredible height, at least 30 feet tall. The halls held multiple levels with windows and terraces filled with workers with their nose deep in labor. The halls had people scurried in a controlled traffic in all directions, no one stopping for each other but a near perfect interweaving of travel with planned routes perfectly executed for each individual. As we walked on, the people around us adjusted their own routes to make way. An elevator dropped and opened as soon as we reached it.

"This is where I leave you. Get on here and you'll go to where you're needed."

"Do you know where I'm going?"

"No, but I expect that it is necessary."

With that, I entered the elevator and the doors closed as soon as I stopped moving. I went up an alarming speed, there were no buttons or indication of where I was going. I tried to brace for anything. I raced past several floors that looked very similar to where I was, with each level having less light than the last.

When it finally stopped, the doors opened smoothly and a well lit room showed itself to me. It was a lobby with seating and a tables throughout for anyone to make them selves comfortable for casual talks and so on. I got off and went to the center table and found a note on it with the words SKIP on the top. Then underneath was written this:

Please, make yourself at home.

#### CHAPTER 36

I was located in the executive suite of the building. The space was generally used for important guests of the leader of Tree City who I was set to meet in the coming days. I had no idea of this, so I spent my time trying my best to make this gargantuan space as homely as possible. I felt as if I was a prisoner there, so I tried to make the best of it because I could see they were openly not trying to torture me. The architecture was detailed with standard shapes one commonly learns when they're young. Circles, squares, triangles, but all in different sizes and intimately symmetrical along the edges of every wall and ceiling. It was a kaleidoscopic array of imagery.

I explored the rooms and mostly found bed chambers that all looked the same. My main interests lied in the library I found which held the largest collection of books I've seen so far. It turned out to be the largest collection of bound books in the all of Tree City. I perused them with my head cocked sideways reading the titles of each spine as I walked by. The one I eventually picked up to read was titled "Living with the Life" which was leather bound and seemed short enough to read pretty quickly, so I did.

#### CHAPTER 37

Living with the Life was a small 57 page book written by Augustus K. Edward and spoke of accepting the influence that the world gives to you. With each gust of wind one feels to any chance encounter one has with a stranger is something to embrace and accept as a machination of the world's desires. The reader is urged to follow through with each choice and intuit how to flow through the situation in respect and reverence of the influences. To make its point it kept referring to the singular person as its chief example through several parables.

On kindness to the present and the future people, it detailed the story of a person walking through nature and finding sharp material implanted in a walking path. The person has the means and ability to pick up the material and hold it on their person until they find a proper location to dispose of it. The question posed is should they pick it up? If not, another person could be walking by, not see it, and hurt themselves when they blindly step upon it. This could happen at any point in the future, from tomorrow to decades from now. With this thought in mind, the person picks it up and continues on their way. A few steps later the person again sees similar dangerous material on the ground, and with the same justification as earlier, picks it up and moves on. This continues until he reaches another set of dangerous



material to pick up but finds themselves unable to carry anymore, what are they to do? The person ponders on this and says to themselves,

"I can only help to my capacity and I can only hope that other people do the same."

They then carry on with the faith and hope that others will do the same.

#### CHAPTER 38

The same person exhibited another trial on their walk to a destination that is never cleared up in the book. The person stops when a fresh vegetable is seen ripe and ready to be plucked. With no knowledge of the food, they eat it and experience bliss beyond anything they've felt before. As soon as the vegetable is finished, the experience diminishes back to the neutral state they were at previously. Should they seek for more vegetables like this or keep moving on the path they had planned on walking? The conclusion was ultimately no. The feeling of bliss was only momentary and they could not know when was the right time to stop eating the vegetable to feel bliss. Would it be when they are full from eating? Would the blissful feeling eventually subside from eating too much of the food? The uncertainty of it all led to them to think it was best to refrain from the vegetable entirely, for its temporary effects do not help in the long term, so he walked on.

#### CHAPTER 39

It was then when someone walked into the room. I was pleasantly surprised to see the librarian who I abandoned in the Glacier Church of Greater Yalima, but also slightly embarrassed to have to face her and apologize for my leaving. What I didn't know was that she was one of the more recently conditioned people from Yalima since Tree City's representatives were the ones who destroyed the church and conditioned the main deserters of the worlds influence first.

I started with the obvious,

"What are you doing here?"

Her expression remained flat and unchanged from the moment she walked in to the moment she uttered this,

"I'm here to help you."

"With what exactly?"

"For you to understand, please follow me."

I left the book where on the seat and got up to follow her out of the room.

"What's your name anyways?"

She told me her name was Tulsa and left it at that. The conversation didn't really flow between us as we walked. She was intent on showing me something and I was still too embarrassed and uncertain of what was going on.

We walked past several rooms in the hallway until we came to a dining area. She instructed me to have a seat at the end of a 50 foot long table that was only 4 feet wide. There were two seats, one for me and the other for her on the closest immediate edge. On the table were two plates of food made of three sections of pastes with different hues.

"Please, eat."

I couldn't say no, so we sat and ate together in silence until I felt like it needed to be broken.

"So what am I supposed to understand?"

"You are not a prisoner, but a guest. Your host would like you to read as much as you like and come with questions in your meeting two days from now."

"Will you be staying here as well?"

She nodded,

"I'm to be liason for the time being. If you have any concerns, please let me know."

"If anything, I'm not sure how long I need to stay here, I'd like to get out and explore more if I can."

"I can assure you that your host knows your intentions and is willing to let you explore as long as you please when the time comes."

I rested easy with those words, thinking I'd be out in a week or see what else this world has to offer. What I didn't know is I'd be exploring the world without leaving the building.

#### CHAPTER 40

I spent the next couple of days pouring through the books as much as I could. From what I could tell, there was no instances of fiction books in the library. Literature consisted of mostly classical philosophies, some of which I've read before like Reasons and Persons by Derek Parfit and Leviathan by Thomas Hobbes. The pieces started to fall together that the theme of the library was the study of society itself. How does it operate and in what ways do individuals contribute to causes not entirely within their influence? Were there answers to be had with my meeting with the host? My uneasiness increased with each hour. The static interactions I held with Tulsa showed no signs of the emotions I first heard from her. I had tried to come up with attempts to coerce her to reply with a persona after saying some of my own, but nothing of more than reserved necessity exited her lips. I had lost her. It seemed so easy to lose anyone here, as if no one was worth leaving to their own devices, and all were able to be controlled at the whim of whoever was the controller. The anticipation of this meeting distracted me from reading any more. I felt like I had to talk to Tulsa, but every time I tried it led to nothing but a wall with no more information than what was immediately necessary for me to be comfortable in the moment. I was encouraged to keep reading and wait for the call of the host. I dreaded the meeting, so I stopped and waited.

#### CHAPTER 41

I was asleep in my bed when the lights were suddenly flicked on.

"Your host will see you now."

Those words sent a shock through my body and I immediately sprang up and collected my clothing. They had provided me with some clean clothes that were as bland and earthy as the rest of the clothes in this world. None of the clothes really mattered, I'm sure I could have been without anything and we'd get along just fine, but I did it out of sheer politeness and to live in as civil of a society as I was raised in previous to this.

I followed Tulsa to the elevator where I entered these quarters, still with no buttons or signs, and it started as soon as we were still. We rocket upward again, but I could feel no acceleration or force upon my body. It was smooth as we rode yet the flashes passed by with speed I could hardly fathom. We were going to the top, not quite to see the tree at the top, but close enough to see the roots.

The elevator stopped and doors opened to reveal another large space but with low lights and spotlights over certain areas holding artistic renderings of landscapes and figures.

"Please, walk with me to our destination."

I followed, uncertain of the questions I were to ask, and when I might ever see the light of day again.

## CHAPTER 41

Tulsa brought me to a room with no windows and filled with electrical equipment. The only lights were emanating from these machines that surrounded the walls. The main source being that of a large structural orb with glass inside. As we stepped forward the large light shut off, bring the room to a dim glow such that only outlines and faint details could be seen of all people. Jefferson Glass stepped out of the cylinder and greeted me like an old pal.

"This is Mr. Glass." Announced Tulsa.

"How great of you to make it, please come in. I can't wait to talk with you."

"Hi, how do you do?"

"Well, very well. Can Tulsa bring you anything?"

I shook my head. Glass looked towards Tulsa and motioned her away. I watched her leave as I was know left with this stranger who has been hosting me so long. I remember hearing of the name Glass but couldn't help but think he was dead, a son perhaps? I decided to play it safe as if I knew nothing of the name.

We sat down at a nearby table. His face looked pale as if this windowless room is all he experiences. No light must have touched his wrinkly face for years and he moved with such careful precision as if not to overexert any part of his body.

"You have questions I presume?"

"Um, yes. First off, who are you?"

"Ah of course, I rule the lands you see before you. We've met a couple times already, but I'm not sure if you've noticed me."

"I'm not sure, were you at the general's tent?"

"Yes, I was there. I heard your story there. I heard it at Dr. Newton's as well."

This puzzled me, I only really talked directly to Lola and Newton. What he meant to say was that he heard me through Lola and Newton. He could hear through anyone he connected with through the smata.

"Are there recordings in those offices? I only really talked to them of my purposes here. "

"No recordings, and I'd love to help you understand more on this subject. But for now, do you have any questions on other topics?"

"What do you know of the sanguimata?"

"It was one of my own inventions. Everyone I know has them throughout their bodies as far as I can tell. Except for you of course."

"Yes, how'd they all get them?"

"They are passed down from generation to generation. At first people elected to have them, but they are so common place that it is rare to be without them."

"Should I count myself lucky?"

"I would say so, in a way, but not because you lack them. I have an opportunity for you."

"Oh?"

"Do you find yourself wondering more about how the people you've met so far act in such a way?"

"Of course, there is something driving the sanguimata as far as I can tell, but I'm not sure how they operate."

"What if one were to show you how they operate?"

"That would be interesting to know, would that have been in a book at the library?"

"No, it's more of something you experience for yourself. Please."

He got up from the table slowly.

"Come with me and I will show you if you'd like."

I was reluctant. I could tell there is something he was not telling me about this proposition. I followed anyways from pure curiosity of what could happen. To know more about sanguimata would have given me the information for my whole purpose here. Once I knew, I could write it all down and let the people I know back at home be aware of how this world has changed since they retreated to the underground. So it turned out not just to be curiosity that drove me, but duty for my people.

I followed him to the sphere he emerged from earlier. He opened the door to show me an enclosed seat. It smelled of sweat and age. The lights glowed brightly to show a pure white that bounced off the metal chair in the center.

"Please sit in there and your questions of the sanguimata will be answered."

I sighed and sat in on the seat. It was rigid. The white lights surrounded me from luminescent panels all around.

"Enjoy"

A small smile crept on his face as the door closed and the lights brightened beyond my ability to see all around me. I saw nothing but white. Then, I saw everything.

## CHAPTER 43

The floor fell from under me. I could feel nothing on my back as I felt like I was falling, but no air was around me. Free falling as my body tumbled end over end continuously. I felt sick. I felt amazing. The colors danced as I tumbled downwards, sometimes they would slow down to match the speed in which I felt as I was going, other times they sped by in blurs and vibrated and grew to large proportions bigger than me, bigger than the machine I was once in, bigger than the building I entered to come here. I forgot about it all. The reasons for being here, the reservations I had for entering in the machine, the way to live as I thought I could. I felt alive and dead. Everything and nothing.

I looked for my hands and I could find nothing of the sort. My body left me or I left it. I wasn't sure. I'm still not sure. I stretched out to find any part of me, but I couldn't stop reaching out into the void. The feeling like I was reaching endlessly for nothing. I got scared and tried to pull back to be whole again and nothing retracted. I had no sense of movement. It was like I was born again to a different way of living where I had no control.

I gave in to it all. There was nothing left for me to do as the immense complexity of colors grew and contracted as if it were breathing. It was my breath, I breathed with the colors. I am the colors and they are me. I took a deep breath in and the colors turned to one solid white enclosed around me. I breathed out completely to find a solid pitch black. I thought of where I was and I could see the tower. I was standing at the base and looking up. It was raining and the clouds were dark. The rain hit my face, it was refreshing in the warm air. The rain brought out the smells from the ground on which I stood. It was musty and thick. Only I seemed to notice, no one around me cared as they all walked by in a constant speed. No one outpaced another with equal parts distance between each one on the sidewalks. I thought of who they must be.

One was a store owner who just closed up. Their husband notified them earlier that dinner was ready and to get home whenever they were ready. I had not eaten since morning, I was losing weight to fit into my old clothes again to refrain from getting new ones anytime soon. There was no reason to get new ones if I could help it, there are other things to spend money on that are more important. Lease money for the store, food for the kids, get the plumbing fixed in the bathroom. I would call them tomorrow. Right now they're probably trying to get home too. Or they're out on a job that took longer than expected.

This home owner tried doing their own plumbing before I got here, I should bill them for twice the work trying to fix their mistake. It's against regulation and I might as well inform the authorities of their attempt. We have these rules for a reason so no one will get hurt and insurance or new home owners won't have to pay for the mistakes of the ones who were negligent.

Negligent.

Negligent to what? The future, the past, right now.

#### CHAPTER 44

Right now, I'm getting up from bed. I look over to my wife still asleep. I couldn't sleep with the light from the window coming through. Her mask helped her keep away from the light a little longer. I should check on the kids. They were already up and watching TV. It was educational. It's always educational in some way. At least it's entertaining, more than anything else around here. I'm wondering when breakfast will get ready. It's the weekend and that means we might get sweets from the store downstairs. I love anything with sugar and butter. I can't help it, there's just something about it. Sometimes I get extras from the lady at the counter. I love seeing her every weekend, she makes me so happy to see her. She's always there on the weekends either cooking or yelling for people to pick up their food.

"Rebecca!" I lay down the plate of eggs and cheese on the counter. I see someone stirring out of their seat. It must be theirs, okay, what else can I do around here? Another customer,

"Hi, how are you doing today?"

"Yes, one coffee to go please."

"What size?"

"Oh, um, medium?"

I hit the "Grande" button on the terminal. They see the price and pay. I can't believe they pay so much for this. I've seen the invoices for the supplies. It's a fifty times mark up for each cup of coffee, regardless of size, it doesn't matter. The value is only there to make people think it's better to pay more. All they want is more.

More.

#### CHAPTER 45

I wanted more. I didn't know where to get any. I needed money first. I can't do it again. I've had enough pain and bad luck trying to talk to these people. No one can hear me. They don't even look at me when I ask if they have anything to spare. They know I can get food after walking a couple miles, but I could lose my spot over here. It's not fair to have no place to stay. I would do anything for a place to stay every night. I take my chances whenever I lay down, I could be woken up at any moment due to weather or someone trying to kick me out. Trees are my favorite. Anyone can sleep next to a tree and look completely normal. The trees aren't harming anything, they just take in some of the air, and put some fresh air out. Over and over again.

Swaying with the wind. The sun is bright today. Leaves are just starting to open up. I can feel the air being drawn out from every green leaf. Water and sugar flow through me, upwards, delivering what I need to every part of me. I can feel myself growing outwards. I can feel my roots growing downwards. Every second I move a tiny bit, exploring for nutrients to sustain me. Drawing the water from the ground underneath. It's just right. I've been here for years now. When I was younger, there was nothing around me. No one visited me except animals every once in a while, but they were deterred by the cylinder at my base. They wanted me, they couldn't have me. Years have gone past where people have come and gone continuously. I see semblances of them throughout the years. Familiar faces in all of them. They never really change. Just walking by either alone or with others. Some have stopped by me for a while. I help shield them from the sun on hot days. Or from the rain on wet nights. I don't mind helping them. I'm not sure if they ever help me, but I'm happy to assist.

Assist.

#### CHAPTER 46

I should go check on them to see if they need any assistance. I got up from the chair and went to go see how they're progressing with their talk. I knocked on the door. No answer. I waited for a bit more. It was weird, they should at least say something. I looked around and then knocked again. Still no answer. I took a deep breath and went inside. The room was still dark, but with some lights around. There was a loud whirring from the round figure towards the back of the room. The lights it made was perplexing. I was mesmerized and walked closer to see what it was. I took a few steps and saw something on the floor. A dark large clump sitting there still.

"Hello? Is anyone here?"

Still no answer. I went towards the clump to see if it needed to be picked up or moved out of the way. It was heavy as I tried to push it. It was a body. I turned it over and saw the expressionless face of Mr. Glass.

I screamed.

#### CHAPTER 47

Tulsa helped me out of the machine. She was shown how to by Glass himself after I first went in.

"He said if it was ever for any kind of emergency. I didn't think it would be this."

I emerged feeling as if I could hardly walk. Being back in my own body felt normal after a while. The shock of finding Glass helped the process go by faster, we didn't know what to do. Tulsa called for security and they helped deal with his body. Nothing ceremonial followed, we didn't really hear anything about it afterwards either. People were expecting it more or less, and nobody could really tell anyone else about it either.

I began telling Tulsa about my experience. How I faded in and out of peoples experiences. The tree was especially odd, I never thought of it having any kind of perception, much less just to be able to experience it myself one day. I asked her how long I was in the machine.

“Over a day, he expected it to be about that long. That’s why I came to check to see if he needed any help getting you out.”

I guess he did. Initially there was no explanation to his death, but as the years went on I was able to find something he documented about the occasion:

“I will soon be gone from this world, for I’ve seen the light at the end of the tunnel arrive today.”

That was dated days before I arrived to Tree City. I imagine it was poison or something to that effect. He was hundreds of years old, incredibly past the average lifespan on the surface which is about 140 now. The wonders of modern medicine and what money, or power, can buy.

#### CHAPTER 48

I was uncertain what to do next. My initial thought was to destroy the machine and free the people from this rule of an omnipotent being who could see all. It didn’t seem right, and the influence this machine had on people all throughout the world was invasive of the privacy of every person.

Then I started to think more about it, is there anyway I can use this to help liberate people? What has Glass done so far, is this not the best way to study the people on the surface throughout the world? The information I could bring back to my people would be incredible and exactly what they were wanting. But they already knew what was happening, they knew it all this time. I was sent out here for this very job of continuing to use the machine and influence, but I didn’t know why me or anything else.

I decided I would try to use it for good and to collect information without interfering with the how the world is set so far. I would be a fair and just leader, only influencing if I ever had to for something important.

I told Tulsa what I had decided.

“I’m going to use this machine, so when I do I’ll need you to help me get out of here, could you help with that?”

“I could, I’m sure it’s what I’m here for anyways.”

I thought about this situation, how could she just stay here, does she not have a life outside this place?

“Do you have any family you need to get back to? I know you were brought here after we got raided that time in Yalima. What was your life before that?”

“I...” she paused, “don’t recall anything.”

“Wow,” I paused for dramatic effect as well, “I’m going to get you back to where you’re from. This isn’t right.”

This information didn’t do much for her. She just slightly smiled and agreed. I couldn’t believe that they could just take away any memories she had of her past. I don’t know if I could get them back for her, but maybe I can find someone that could help her remember. My first task was to find out more about Tulsa and her life before me.

#### CHAPTER 49

We began getting ready for my next attempt in the machine.

“Give me one day in there, I’ll try to go back to Yalima and see what I find.”

So I got in and she turned it on for me. Again, I saw white, and then everything started fading in, my thoughts turned to Yalima. I was where I first woke up. I saw the bed where I once was. My computer monitor showed statistics that I was working on. I’m writing a paper for an upcoming showcase of more research into the origins of sanguimata. With the first signs of someone without them arriving from afar. There’s been no trace of the individual for a week now,

their apartment was empty and most of the food supplies were gone. It'll be hard to write this paper without them, but we have enough to get by. The data showed there was more randomness in the cerebellum than the usual patterns we see in control patients. The hippocampus was overdeveloped as well, with possibly improved ability for spatial and temporal perception. I wondered where he could have gone, the last place we recommended for him was to visit the library. I should go there and visit to see if they remember seeing him. Last time wasn't very productive, where the person there had no recollection of seeing anyone with a tin hat. She wasn't working that the day. She works every other day of the week. On her off days she likes to visit her brothers and sisters back home. They're still getting through school, I never really liked school, just reading whenever I get the chance and tidying up. It's all I get to do at the library too. Occasionally someone will chat me up after asking about how to operate the computers or when do we close. It's been a little more hectic than usual though. Tulsa left suddenly, pretty close to the same time the crack downs happened on the churches. She was always mumbling to herself when working. Almost like she was singing, but with a very quiet voice. I never really got along with her. She was like anyone else who I worked with, she came in and did her job, then went home to her family. She only talked about them every once in a while, like reasons why she might be late or not able to come into work today. She had to bring her father to the doctor or something like that. She never minded for the services that could help with that, always had to do it herself. They are paid for with our taxes for a reason. To help the elderly have an easier life. Always going around in their special cars with ramps and assistive devices. I love working with these people. The good ones love to talk about the past and how much the city has changed from when they were younger. Others didn't like to talk at all. They were mostly the newer conscripts, always uneasy with us as strangers. I don't mind being patient with them though, it's a new way of life to depend on others almost entirely. After years of being independent, it'd be hard for anyone to finally admit they need help. It's almost always after some kind of event, just like with drug addicts, where they hit their lowest point and find themselves with the need for help from us. One of the latest is a weird case. They said they lost their daughter recently. I didn't have the heart to tell him about the latest raids, they could get anyone. That church was dangerous business anyways. If I told him, then he would just worry more, and likely not want our services anymore. Or it could bring him solace to just understand, but would this make him worry more or less? I wasn't sure, and I wasn't in a position to make him think about these things. He should just worry about himself now. Not his daughter who was everything to him. He was so proud of her and how nice of a person she had become in society. She would always tell me stories of what was happening in the street. She even taught me how to write personas... When will she return? I've tried calling her work, but they never got back to me. She can't still be there. She was going to come over a couple nights ago for dinner. I waited all night for her. I ended up eating alone on the couch watching entertainment like always. It's not hard to do, but I miss the interactions we had... Love is such a wonderful thing. How can I get her back in my life again. I don't know who to call. Maybe the police have found something on her, it's been a week so there must be something. For now I'll just get ready for bed again and try for the morning.

## CHAPTER 50

The next thing I saw was Tulsa, I traveled through a ray of light and saw her face front and center with my real eyes.

"I found your father, he misses you, but he's being taken care of."

"That's good."

She didn't seem that concerned.

I told her more about the experience. What was going on with her job and the type of person who was taking care of her father since she was gone. I told her about the sentiment of the raids that happened in Yalima and how we were both there for one together.

"Why would they do that? Were we doing anything wrong?"

"Personas, the church was practicing ways to be outside of the influence of smata. It's a form of improvisational poetry to bypass our brains filters, or at least that's what I'm interpreting so far."

"What's wrong with that?"



"I'm not sure, I can understand trying to not be influenced, but I'm not sure what they're even fighting against."

"It's.."

"It's like a guide, an intuition, I always feel like there's a set of plans to follow with most of what I do. I always feel that drive within me."

"And maybe personas let people dull that drive."

"Maybe."

We were quiet for a bit.

"I'm going to look more into what this influencing means, do you think it has anything to do with this machine. It has to be connected somehow."

"You could always try."

"Could you help me out one more time? Then you can go back to your father?"

"Honestly, I'm not even sure if I can go back."

"You mean you want to stay here?"

"Well, he's being taken care of right?"

"Yes, somehow."

"I don't even remember him."

I didn't know what to say to that. She could likely have a relationship with her father still, where he would know her and she could learn about her life. I tried to tell her that but she still wouldn't budge, she didn't want to leave. I had a feeling it was part of the conditioning she had before we came here, to resist any temptation to leave here. Would I have to find a way to condition her to leave? Did I even want her to leave? She's been with me for this weird trip and she knows how to stop the machine.

"Okay, well stay with me for a little bit and help me understand this machine, and then I'll try to help you get out of here."

"Whatever you say."

With that, we both thought it'd be best to eat and try to find some information about how it operates. We found some notes that detailed a couple things. First, what I've been doing so far has been called mind-skipping, jumping from one person to another and experiencing their point of view. One of the other methods was what we're looking for, how to influence populaces to perform behaviorally in a certain way. It said to start from the point of view from a person but then jump out a level of perspective, and to keep doing that multiple times until one gets to where they want to be. There were no details after that, so I thought it'd be best to try it out and see what happens. I told Tulsa to let me out again after a day like last time, she agreed and I went in again.

## CHAPTER 51

I started where I left off, Tulsa's father again. He was getting up for the day. It's not easy getting up but I can't stop doing it. If I don't stop then my body will, and I'm determined to keep going. And going. And going.

I see the community, an apartment building with different families. Each different with how many people living there. Some single, some with kids, some older. There seems to be a routine. Most leave early in the morning, and then it's quiet except for a few who stay behind. The rest spread out throughout Yalima.

One is an accountant that works to verify which items can be taxed and which cannot. She does this endlessly because when people buy things they don't know nor care about the tax, but she does. She has to because the company requires her to do so, the company. The company.

It's large, it expands to more than just one city. They're trying to expand, they sell components for air vehicles that travel from one place to another. Each doesn't hold any people, but supplies and mail that needs to travel. These vehicles move incredibly fast and only travel in one lane in the air between them. Almost like traffic, or data transfer between computers, but for economies. Both economies need each other for growth, no one wants to stay the same. One place is good for growing certain foods, another for skilled labor of turning the foods to something more concentrated to help sustain communities. Do they really need each other? Why can't they concentrate on their own cities? Do they really need each other?

CHAPTER 52

I saw Tulsa's angelic face again.

"How was your experience?"

"I was able to jump outside of one's mind and then to that of many others, I thought of two cities that did trade with each other."

"Oh?"

"Yeah, but the last thing I remember is questioning why they would be trading with each other constantly. Thinking of it now, seems pretty obvious that it's a reciprocal trade."

"Hmm, well that's good."

"Yes, I think so."

Just then, someone we've never seen before rushes in.

"Sir! Are you Glass' protege?"

"Um, not exactly."

"Sir, Yalima and it's sister city D'Neir have stopped all economic trade. Is there anything you can do?"

I looked towards Tulsa, and then back to this stranger.

"I think so."

"Great, I'll inform the others. Please let us know when things are back to normal."

I agreed and they left.

"Do you know that person?"

"I've seen them, but never talked to them."

"Could you get to know him more? I'm going to try and go in the machine."

"Yes, and I'll get you out in day's time."

"Thanks, I really appreciate it."

#### CHAPTER 53

I went back to where I left off. All flights of goods between the two cities have ceased. There was no reason why other than distrust. I could feel it between them. There had to be something to be done. Without one another, there would be shortages. It had to be for the good of the people in their cities.

I don't know what to do.

I don't know what to do.

I tried to think positive. As if I wanted them to trade again. They need each other, they are sister cities, they have the same form of government and values. Why not trade with each other? When they do so, then both can benefit from the transaction to help each economy.

From the perspective of both cities, I was then able to see something move between them. Another fast vehicle, then one came back. Slowly, but surely, the trade amongst cities resumed. Again, I was woken up.

#### CHAPTER 54

"Did you fix it?"

"I think so, I tried to think of the positive aspects of trade between cities."

"How do you do that?"

"I'm not sure, I'm looking down over both cities from a high up perspective and I can see them both. I can feel them both too, I left them once with a question of why bother trading, but this time I left them with a feeling that trading is beneficial for both."

"And they started trading again?"

"Yes, I saw it happen. Just based off of a feeling I had."

I had an uneasy feeling about all of this, how could I influence the two cities from a one-off question and feel okay about. I wasn't equipped to operate this machine, I don't think anyone should do it. I always believed in the rational actor or at least societies that could self govern. For a hundred years or more, Glass had ruled this surface society with soft nudges, am I meant to do the same? To take away the liberties of individuals to guide them in whatever way will benefit the world as I see it? For what? What possible benefit could this have on society, or humanity itself?

#### CHAPTER 55

After looking, I found more documents that detailed why this can be beneficial for society, but they have yet to come to a conclusion. It was Glass' motivation to see what was possible. To see if society could be good.

First, we had to let this guy know about D'neir.

"All clear between the two cities."

"Thank you, thank you!"

"You mind if ask you a question?"

“Certainly.”

“Who are you?”

He was Shoe Gus. But people mostly called him Gus. A liaison between my now office and the outside world. There needs to be feedback from time to time, as we found it out, there were people outside of my perceptive views that were able to talk with me. If they paid, of course. When there was an appropriate aggregate of alerts or questions then response could be warranted. This happened often.

I learned that I could fully view the world sometimes. It was not an easy state to maintain. Like I would keep falling back to one person or one state or anything. It was like jumping up and down in different states of perspective, different planes of existence from one being to another.

The smata were everywhere, in the air and in the bees. They could penetrate and measure the smallest amounts of tissue and recognize each part. They would send signals all over the world because they all worked cooperatively, almost as if they were one. An ether for information surrounded the world like an infinitely large cloth, all tangled in webs, all for one person to look through it, and make some alterations every once in a while.

## CHAPTER 57

Years passed by, I never left the machine. Tulsa never left me, we didn't think it was right for anyone to have access to the machine other than us. No one talked to us about leaving, we were all just assumed to be there for as much time as needed, and had no reason to go anywhere. I was able to go anywhere in the world. See anything, ask any question, suggest any answer. It was humbling, it was hell.

There was a constant issue throughout the world, where pockets of disappointment or crises of some kind popped up. We were relayed information to look into it, we were sometimes the cause of it, whether from a day or two, or months, we could always see a question come in that needs to be addressed. As long as they paid.

Each question cost one percent of any unit of currency throughout the world. People could over inflate questions by buying thousands of questions just to make their point heard. Others would hope that people in their in-group would submit a small amount of questions, mostly asking the same thing or on the same subject. It became a lagged way of working out issues.

They were called penny-wishes. It was a form of democratic vote with a couple extra layers of complexity. The questions and the subjects all intermixed into a huge mess of data that had to be interpreted. That's why we had Gus. He would tell us what the machines or groups of people had to say, and then we could respond appropriately. It was always a step removed with the people, to let them have a little bit of blind faith.

Well, almost, it has been influenced to this population of people by my predecessor. They were to toss their pennies into a metaphorical well to ask it for something. Without ever seeing anything other than this well, it delivered a kind of mystery, for they knew not why they did it other than their parents did it, and it worked. It's nice to have things that work, whether they know why or not.

## CHAPTER 58

There were three main nations that stood out in the world, all dominating their range of latitude respective to the planet. The largest one resided on the northern most third of latitude, named Alkeron. It was there where I resided with Tulsa. There was plenty of commerce and other economic activity. The cities were far removed from each other, with sprawls of empty land used mostly for agriculture, fields of battle, and natural growth of the world without the people's influence. They were closest to my own influence, who I generally think of first in most instances. It could be said they hold the most traditional values of the world built from the help of the smata. Expansion started from there

and went more south as time went on. The expanders eventually founded Sunda in the middle-most latitude and Sh'Lay in the southern-most region. They all had rule over the latitudes in which they presided, but it was more like they were the antennas in which information emitted towards their people from my influence. I had to go through and learn of these cultures and their machinations. Each were different in their own way, where the more south one went, the less influence I held on them. Not because of a distance thing, but the influx of influence I have to use to control these people are not much at all. It's said to take generations to have gotten Alkeron to be as tame as they are, through constant conditioning of submissiveness to faith and the hierarchical societal structures that create the laws, Glass' was able to guide the populace to be incredibly sensitive to his demands.

Sunda was the second easiest to influence, as people from Alkeron migrated southwards years ago. The spread of smata was like genetic material, it could only be passed down from a parent to their child. Glass was able to get 100 percent of the surface population to have smata, but influence was still in question.

## CHAPTER 59

I emerged once again from the machine to see her shining face.

"Tulsa?"

"Yes?"

"I think I'm ready to begin our next experiment."

She agreed. We had been working on a way to isolate my body not for a day, but for years within the machine, only to get out in case of emergencies that Tulsa would deem appropriate. We worked out an intercom system that had worked for any kind of feedback necessary to address from the wishes of the people. We had lines for sustenance and waste to be addressed from my body, where very little is necessary while in the machine itself.

Why do this long term? Because we found that time was wasted in between sessions, time sped by so fast while in the machine, that being in there for a year could feel like a little week or two, it all depended on what perspective one chose to perceive from. While looking through the eyes of an individual, time passed relatively normally, but as one shifts either to another or on a higher level of perspective, then it takes time. Time is perceived faster the higher one rises away from the planet itself.

That's where I wanted to be, have influential control on the highest level. After years of planning and trying to get the people to be as uniform in well-being as possible, it seemed like the appropriate time to now start experimenting with long-term, mass-influence of the world as we knew it.

I said goodbye to Tulsa and Gus, and went in.

## CHAPTER 60

I started where I usually do, the tree on top of the tallest building in Tree City. I watched the city be still, it was night time and most were asleep at this time. I knew others were awake, but not here. In other time zones were the people I was interested in. The ones I had very little influence over, those in Sunda and Sh'lay. Those regions have been causing me trouble for a while and now it's time to do something about it.

I broadened my gaze over the region of Sunda and dove into the cities randomly. I found an area of commerce and community. They traded freely and had love for one another. Was I the cause of this, or do they do so naturally. Although I've been working here for years, I was not sure anymore. Without my work I feel like things would not go so well. As if the distrust would develop amongst them so fast.

I must stop.

I'm here for positive influence and must not affect these people in ways that may harm. I move towards the crowd and weave amongst them, sampling how they feel each for a brief second and instill any positive feelings I may be able to give them. With these, I hope they use these feelings to spread their well-being to others.

Their well-being is what's important to me most of all. It's not easy thinking about how to handle this problem. It's unsolved to this day and I have still no philosophy on the matter. I want there to be as many happy people as possible. By happy, I really mean they feel like their life is worth living. That they never wish that they were never born, that they are happy to live and go on each day.

I still hear of suicides from time to time. I often go to console the family of the individual who decided to end their life, but grief is still there, and cannot be overrun at the time. I feel it now, for every hour of every day just about, there is another suicide. These figures don't make sense to me. Why would anyone want to kill themselves? Who do they think they are? I loved them and tried to show it every day when we were together. I raised this person and now they're nothing. All for them to end it for what. No note, no reason, no anything to tell me why. I can't believe it. They were meant to be happy, we're all meant to as it's seen. There was a place for you in this world but you refused it, and now what am I supposed to do? Just move on, and forget what happened? How can I ever forget this? How can I ever not think about the moment you last talked to me and the time you left me? Is this what you wanted, my attention? Now, you have it forever, only me, everyone else might forget, but until the day I day, I will never forget you and how you left me for reasons I know I'll never understand.

Understand.

Understand.

#### CHAPTER 61

I tried to understand. I backed out and saw the people close to this person. They had friends who went to the funeral. I followed some as they left. There was a bar they sat in, where drinks were being delivered to them. They shouldn't be spilled. Here's theirs, and theirs, and they had the water. Nothing else was needed, so I just sat at the table next to them. It was a slow day at the bar. It was almost time to start getting ready for the night shift so I thought I should rest before hand. I love hearing what others have to say, one of the weird but good things about working in this bar is the amount of people watching and hearing I get to do. I think they're talking about the church. I heard about that place. It's amazing from what I've heard, where people can speak without feeling as they they are led to speak, to truly feel the liberating feeling of improvising. I couldn't do it myself, my life is too good as it is, there's no need to disturb it. They all clinked glasses, good for them, dedicating it to a person whoever that is. They say they can't believe they did it, and how great it was. The ultimate form of poetry.

#### CHAPTER 62

I rose to the level of the city in which I was in and my blood boiled. They honored the one's who killed themselves. For what, the church? I cannot stand this. For too long I've let this church fall by the wayside of my influence, even though I'm often unsure how to find them. The best way I know how to stamp them out is through shear force and fear.

I focused on the government body of the city, thought of control. Thought of the insubordinates and unlawful. There was to be no church of the glacier here nor anywhere in these lands. I cannot abide by our city with these people out there convincing others to live a way in which they find themselves capable of killing themselves. It's unnatural! They were born to live their lives to their fullest extent, we all were! Our parents and fore-parents raised us not to die, but to live! While we stand here arguing what to do, the church out there is convincing more and more people of ideas about killing oneself being the absolute best thing you can do for yourself and the people around you. I deny that completely, our lives are worth living, and if we can't convince them otherwise, well, we'll have to make them see it.

#### CHAPTER 63

The raids began, I used this energy to raid not just in this city, but in every city. To the whole world as I found myself on the edge of the planet looking down at the developments. It was necessary. The church had no right to induce violence in anyway, even to help one do it to themselves as a final act. I watched the world progress, it seemed to be for the better. Weeks passed while I was up there observing, so I decided to dive back into a different city to see the results of my influence.

The city was smaller than most, with a small community that knew of each other. Where about half the people know about half of the other half of people. It was close-knit. But division was becoming rampant amongst them. The show of force on the church demanded a defensive response upon the people who stood with the governmental representatives. The idea of right to life became prominent. It showed that some people did not find their life worth living, especially when my influence was involved. As if their choice in the matter was not accounted for and I invaded their lives.

In a way, this is true, why should there be anything going on in one's head from someone else. It doesn't make sense that I can't live my life the way I think it should be lived. They may have set this world up and the people around me, but if I can break free, then I feel as though I'm actually free. All day, I could hear the influence...

I couldn't hear anything, so I went to the other side who was indeed listening to these people talk. They talked with such eloquence as the words oozed out of their mouth with rhymes and rhythm that allowed for an emotion to sway over me as I listened. Something I like hearing and am entertained by the fact that I both understand it and am intrigued by it's creation.

Lies have been fed  
Where we are led  
To believe in ourselves and others

Cries where we've shed  
Tears on our bed  
Thinking of what's left for us

Like vessels we sink  
To the bottom of the sea  
No captain remains between them and me

Looks like the collapse  
Of our souls can zap  
The power from keeping us from taking a nap

## CHAPTER 64

What could I do? If I invaded the minds of these people who were against any of my influence, it would make them dive further in their pit of despair. I could try to influence the people around them to attempt to console them, but that too would only leave them skeptical of why they're being consoled in the first place.

Instead, I went for the radically honest route, something I didn't know I could have done until I actually did it. Nor on this level as well. I placed my gaze upon the world as a whole and felt that all were in a conflict of similar levels with one side against another. To those I felt had not abandoned me, I took control of all who were able to speak in unison, and with each mouth, I said this:

Those who deny me  
Do not despair  
I hear your troubles  
I want to repair

Freedom is yours  
If it's what you claim  
From shore to shore  
I wish to proclaim

I release you from  
My influence for all  
What you do after now  
Is entirely your call

My mind went silent as I awaited the response, it was still. And it was only then that I could ever say that the world knew peace, if not just for that second of reflectance.

#### CHAPTER 65

I once again saw Tulsa's face.

"We felt what you said, you wanted to stop?"

"Yes, it's what the people wanted whether they knew it or not, so I gave it to them."

"But what will happen?"

"I'm not sure, but I'm not going to stick around."

Suddenly Gus came out of nowhere and tackled me.

"You were supposed to keep it alive!"

He struck me constantly. Repeating the words over and over.

I don't remember what happened next, but I was told by Tulsa later that she killed Gus with a weapon of her own. Whether it was something she found or always had, I'm not sure, but I'm thankful for what she did.

I was nursed back to health by her. I laid in my bed with her bringing me food and supplied when needed, keeping me company. I told her about what was happening in the world, the suicides, the riots, the people, the division. It had to be over. I couldn't do it anymore, and I thought no one should.

#### CHAPTER 66

When I recovered, I decided it'd be best to write all of this down, so here is me, closing off. I'm still not sure if what I did was the right choice. I constantly tried to get the people all to be happy while still growing, but that never lasted. I tried to isolate them into discrete groups, still that did nothing to help them. Every time there was a scale from the well off to the lowest in "luck" and I couldn't make them all happy.

I think it's an impossible feat, to make all of the world happy or at peace. There must always be a sacrifice, or at the very least, an understanding that there cannot be peace without war, or love without hate, all must balance, all must dance, and eventually fall.

THE END????



**Preliminary**  
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