

Dystopian Visions

a short
story
collection

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with contributions
by students
of E GK11MK

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Foreword

From April to June 2020 members of the 11th grade English course (E-GK3) at Kaiserin-Augusta-Schule, Cologne dealt with several literary visions of the future. Among these works were dystopian classics like Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) as well as more recent novels like *The Hunger Games* (2008) by Suzanne Collins. Students also discussed the pop song *Fitter Happier* (1997) by Radiohead and feature films like Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* (1998). In the process they reflected on topical issues such as genetic engineering, mass surveillance and media consumption.

The short stories of this volume were inspired by work done in class as well as by the extraordinary changes to public and private life due to the Covid-19 related lockdown. The latter required the course's distance learning during that period.

Valeriya Chernina and Mathilda Lenz compiled and edited these both entertaining and thought-provoking narratives by their fellow students. Mathilda Lenz also designed the cover. They deserve special thanks.

Enjoy the read!

Sebastian Muschik (teacher)

Cologne, 25 June 2020

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Being a Laboratory Rabbit

by Marlene Dietze

When I woke up all I could see was white. The last thing I could remember was how I fell asleep in my bed. I had no idea where I was. The room had no windows and I was lying on a couch. I slowly got up and looked around the room. I did not know what time we had. I guessed around 8 am. In that moment the door swings open and a woman and a man enter the room. I don't know either of them.

"Good morning. I'm pretty sure you have many questions that soon we'll give answers to." Begins the woman. "You know about the Covid-19 pandemic?"

"Of course, who does not know about that! But what am I doing here? Where is my family? I want to see them. Are they okay?". The man comes closer to me. "Your family is fine you don't have to worry about them." "So, what am I doing here?". I am looking into the woman's face, but I cannot see what she wants to tell me. "The corona pandemic is more advanced than we ever thought. You are one of a few people who are resistant to the virus. We needed to split the country in half and now try to find the cure with your help."

"With your help". That was 2 months ago. I'm literally in captivity. I'm not allowed to go out and the worst is that I cannot talk to my family.

I see that the world and the country is changing. Almost 50% of the people lost their job, could not pay their bills and need help. Nobody is helping them. The government built several facilities for the one half of the country that could pay enough money to help finding a cure. The other one has to fight for survival and everyday thousands of people are infected or are dying. It bothers me that I can't help. All I do is sit here and wait for them finding a cure.

They come in my room every day and take some blood from me. I don't know what they do with it. They tell me nothing. I'm slowly getting insane in here. I tried to escape but all I can do is go to the toilets and into the dining hall. It is like a fortress. Big walls around the building and bars in front of my windows.

It is time for dinner. On my way to the dining hall I hear loud voices through a door next to my room. "I deliver the next packages of the cure". The cure? They already found a cure? Why do I know nothing about that? "We need more blood it is no longer enough to supply the one half". Only the one half. I'm confused. When they already have a cure why do they not give it to all people? I bend down and try to look through the keyhole. The whole room consists of several screens that show different people in different situations. One screen shows the facilities the government built with healthy people living in there and the other ones show people who are in bad health sitting on the ground in dirty streets. I am shocked. Some people starve, other ones stay in the ruins of their houses. I knew the country was

split in half, but I did not know it was that bad. My thoughts were directly going to my family. On which side are they? I have to find out. I hear someone come to the door, so I get up and walk to the dining room as if nothing had happened.

My first thought was: "I need to get out of here". That is not okay what they're doing. They use me and the others for the cure and only help people that can pay for it. I can't get out of here on my own. I have to initiate the others.

I sat next to a girl that is also resistant to the corona virus. The others, two boys and another girl come at the same time with me. Robots are serving our food. At the door are two bodyguards that always check if we steal knives or anything that could help us escape. After the food was served, I told them everything that I saw a few minutes ago. As I suspected, they knew as little as I did. We discussed what we should do about it, but we had to be careful. We were only five people. We could never make it past the guards. Suddenly I got an idea. What if we could distract as many guards as possible, so that there were not enough guards at the big gate I can see from my window. "We all agreed and wanted to think about something for the next day.

In the middle of the night I woke up because of a loud sound. A loud bang...

Covid-19

by Amelia Riedel

At regular intervals, a soft clicking sound was heard. A click which reminded me of the ticking of a clock. I became more and more nervous. About 20 more people, then it was my turn. I looked over the shoulder of the woman in front of me. She seemed to be in her mid-40s. She had probably been through this procedure dozens of times before. The man at the counter was in uniform and holding a syringe. His gaze was motionless. None of this was new to him either. For him it was the most normal thing in the world to inject a liquid into an entire city. Behind me stood a boy my age. He seemed as nervous as I felt. You could see that it was also his first vaccination. I wanted to talk to him but nobody spoke here and I did not want to attract attention. He noticed my look anyway. I wondered when all this would end. It's been six years since I first heard Covid-19. Back then, I was still able to hang out with friends and we all lived normal lives. If someone had told me then what today is, I would have shown them a bird. The deadly virus changed the whole world. Only a few survived, including me and my family. We weren't allowed to leave our homes. Only to work and buy food. From one day to the next, a country's entire economy collapsed. Many became unemployed and many suddenly went hungry. In order to protect the rest of us, the government ordered an annual vaccination of every inhabitant over 18 years. Since I turned 18 last month, this was my first vaccination. I looked again into the faces of the people around me. As if in a trance they took a step forward as soon as another click was heard. When there were only 10 people in front of me, a scream sounded. "They are lying to us. Believe me: Everything is a lie! Everything!" A traitor. That's what the government called them. At least once a day there was one in the media, talking crazy, stuff about conspiracies about the government. Every one of them is shot. In front of camera. That's how they scare us. And that's how they secure their power. All around me chaos broke out, the traitor, a man ran around like a wild man while the guards tried to catch him. Desperately the man shook everyone in line: "Wake up, you have to wake up!" But his words did not resonate with the people. They did not seem to understand him. My eyes met his and for some reason I saw hope flashing in his eyes. He came up to me and grabbed my hand. "Meredith, I'll explain later. Your father... him. trust me. Please. Take it". Before the guards dragged him away, he squeezed my hand again. I looked at him with irritation. How did he know my name? He knew who I am. Why had he talked about my father? My father died some years ago. He had worked for the government. One day he didn't come home and two officers told us he'd had an accident. That's all they told us. For my mother, my little sister and me, a world fell apart. So how could he know my father? And what was I supposed to take, anyway? "In your hand, you have to take it, hurry up, it's your turn". Startled, I flinched. What had the boy behind me said to me? I looked at him questioningly. He pointed to my hand. Confused, I opened it. The man had discreetly pressed a small bottle into my hand. I looked at it. There was a bluish liquid in the vial. What was going on? Who was that boy? He

seemed to know me too. My head is spinning. I was about to turn around again when he discreetly pushed up the sleeve of his shirt and I could take a look at his tattoo. In disbelief I stared at it. It was the same tattoo that my father had worn. An eagle. At that moment I knew that I had to trust him.

All this had been going on for three months now. I was wearing this tattoo myself now. An eagle. It was the symbol of the resistance fighters. After Ashton, that was the boy in line behind me, the tattoo showed me I knew I could trust him. After inoculation, he led me all over town to the Resistance headquarters. The whole way there, he didn't say a word to me. When we got there, everyone was waiting for us. I had so many questions and there were more. But especially when I saw a face I knew so well. I couldn't believe my eyes. In front of me was my dad. I fell around his arms and it felt so good. For the first time in a long while, I felt hope. How could that be? I couldn't believe what I was hearing then. It's all a lie, a damn lie. The government did not want to protect us, they wanted to control us. Every step. They had a tremendous power over every single one of us. Covid-19 existed in the beginning, but soon the government realized how to use it to their advantage. Through fear. Every day they reported countless deaths and showed it to us in the media. They made us believe that taking our freedom was the only solution. Vaccination is the only solution. The inoculation, with which they could weaken us and monitor and control us with a microchip. My dad found all this out one day in his government job. He overheard a conversation. When he didn't show up one day, he hadn't an accident, the government found out that he knew something he wasn't supposed to know. They arrested him, but he managed to escape to the resistance 5 months ago. From then on, he only wanted to bring my mother, my sister and me to him. The man who pushed the antidote into my hand and Ashton who stood behind me, it was all my father's plan to bring me back to him. I was deeply grateful to the man because he took a risk. Just for me. And yet when I heard this whole lie, I felt nothing but anger. I got so angry at the government, I felt like I was gonna crack. How could they take the right? But most of all, why? I couldn't understand it all. And so, I sat here with the resistance that was growing. More and more people joined it. That made me feel confident. Confidence in a life like before. Confidence that things could go back to the way they were. Because I had a feeling that everything was gonna be okay.

Hygu-World

by Daniel Altmeier

The alarm clock is ringing. I hit my bedside table indiscriminately until the bell finally subsides. I torture myself out of bed and go to my Hygufix. I close my eyes and let the procedure happen. It is the same sequence every day. Water, foam, water again, a blue acid-tasting liquid, water again and a disinfectant burning in the nose. After the huge fan has dried me, I put on my work clothes and go to the kitchen. My personal assistant informs me about the current situation.

In my state of Pennsylvania, the State Force found and removed a hiding place with Sordidums. Sordidums are wild unsanitary people who wash only once or twice a day and do not use a Hygufix. Some of them refuse to wear masks. These people are enemies of society and enemies of the Party for Hygiene and Civil Protection.

In 2020, during the corona pandemic a civil war broke out in the United States because a black person was murdered by the police. Everyone got ill because there were many big groups of people. When the leader of the Sordidums Donald Trump finally fell, the military took over. The virus was contained using strict methods, one of them was the legal killing of corona patients. But the fight against the Virus took 7 years.

Our savior was the great party for hygiene and civil protection. Because of the fact that everyone had developed a compulsively washing, they introduced the Redeemer. This so-called Hygufix is the best in hygiene. It keeps us clean.

I put on my gloves, wrap my tablet in my bag, put on the mask and at least my Hygu-helmet and enter my floodgate. After another disinfection, the air in this extra room is exchanged and the door to the outside world opens.

I get into my car and drive to my office. It is on the other side of the city and so I drive towards the car-train-station. When the light turns green, I carefully roll my car onto the train. Recently I saw a report that in the past people used to sit on the train next to each other without protection. It is the most disgusting thing I have heard in a long time. Fortunately, we now live in a better world and everyone is sitting in their own cars. Usually in cars and buildings the people only wear their mask, but I always leave my Hygu-helmet on for safety. Again and again it happens that the masks mysteriously break and people die due to lack of air. Recently there was a small group of demonstrators in front of the town hall who all died of a mask defective at the same time. The local government has announced that this was due to an interference signal that affected the mask's internet chip.

When I arrive at my office i am shocked. Someone must have violated the hygiene regulations because the state force has moved up. In the hallway I see them standing in front of another office. I watch them arresting a big guy. I have only seen him a couple of times before but I thought he was an honest human. I can hear the voices talking about the

man had taken off his mask briefly. He says he had a bad breath, so he takes it off but the state force doesn't seem to care and call him a Sordidum. Suddenly there is shouting. The man seems to be fighting back, the troops push him back into his office. There is another outcry. I hear a dull click. Then it's quiet. One officer walks down the corridor and asks everyone to stay in their offices. I watch through the crack in the door as three officers bring a dark package to the back door. Everyone is gone within five minutes. I carefully step outside the door. My office neighbor, July, also comes out to the hall and asks me what was just so loud. I tell her what I saw and she looks at me in shock.

I think they killed the man. It's not that I'm really surprised. You only ever speak of "removing dirt". The common disappearance of criminals is accepted in society. But seeing it with my own eyes is different. They have ended a human life because he temporarily took off his mask. I mean, of course, it is very dangerous. He could have an illness and infect us. Generally breathing in the air that other people have already exhaled is disgusting. But to kill him about it...

I share my thoughts with July because I trust her and she agrees with me. She mentions that while the HCP party says its ultimate goal is to protect people, they kills them every day for small offenses. Sometimes she wants to change everything. Like a Revolution.

I think about her words but I come to the conclusion that there is probably nothing we can do about it. Protests are not allowed since every demonstration has been considered terrorism since 2020 and the formation of other parties is futile since only so-called "selected representatives" can vote. These are all in the HCP and earn tons of money.

We have to surrender to the system. Maybe it's better that way. At least there have been no epidemics in our country since 2022. And since banning all forms of physical sexual contact, even the flu and other diseases that have been dangerous for centuries have been eradicated. Even if the activities are sometimes hard, acceptance is probably the only key to happiness.

When I almost want to get back into my office, I notice the camera at the end of the hall, which has turned in our direction. The moment July asks me if the camera has noticed what we said, I have to start coughing. A fog in my mask disturbs my view. It stinks and I can't breathe. I also hear July coughing. Darkness before my eyes. I slump on the floor.

Again and again it happens that the masks mysteriously break and people die due to lack of air. Recently there was a small group of demonstrators in front of the town hall who all died of a mask defective at the same time. The local government has announced that this was due to an interference signal that affected the mask's internet chip.

Manhattan

by Leila Radermacher

As our boat is getting closer to the wall surrounding Manhattan, I can feel the sweat coming from the unbearable heat tearing down my body.

But I am used to the heat which was created by a society knowing how to ignore the climate change for over a hundred of years. The rich part of society I am talking about, now lives on the only existing piece of dry land left on this earth, called Manhattan which is surrounded by a wall to protect it from the ocean which has already buried the rest of the World under its mass of water.

The water and the heat are only a few out of many problems we need to cope with in our daily lives.

The missing of habitable, dry land had caused the death of humans and many different types of animals all around the world and had forced the government to come up with strict rules and ideas which can guarantee the survival of our species.

And even though Manhattan enables many people to live in its big skyscraper there is still not enough space for all of us. This fact resulted in the rule that only the ones with a perfect DNA and IQ are allowed to live in the protected city and the unwanted rest of society either gets killed directly after their birth or is sent out to live on one of the four boats which are surrounding Manhattan.

The people on these boats are treated like slaves of the rich and the lucky part of the population who lives inside the city and the survival of the unwanted ones directly depends on the leftovers and the pity of the lucky people living in Manhattan.

To my bad I am one of those unwanted ones. But in this case I didn't get used to the horrible living conditions on the boat like I got used to the daily heat and the bad air full of carbon dioxide.

No! I am sick of seeing my family and friends living with a daily hunger and I am sick of fighting over every single piece of food or clothes.

And although our boat community lives in lasting competition over live essentials there is one thing which is able to hold us together and which made us found our own revolutionary system together with the people from the four other boats. This one thing is the anger towards the people inside of the wall living like they are literally the only ones on this earth.

There were many, many times the people from the boats tried to change something to their god or to get inside the city by digging tunnels or destroying parts of the wall but they always failed right in front of the target.

But I know this day is going to be different to the many days of failure, today we are going to be successful!

Me and my friends spontaneously got inspired for our secret plan while reading through some history books about the twenty-first century in which the worldwide pandemic caused by Covid-19 played a big role.

The many changes and measures the world needed to make because of the Virus got us coming up with a similar idea when it came to our planned revolution.

The key to our freedom and to the power over the whole city will be the infection of the city with the virus which was spreading on our boats for the last few months. We found a way to heal our people and to beat the Virus in the liquid of a seaweed we are eating in hunger and the knowledge about the seaweed will make it possible to blackmail Manhattan's government.

And today is the day we will make our plan come true by sending Peete who is still infected with the Virus to the city.

Only one contact with a person from the city will be enough to infect the rest of the city and make the dream of revenge come true.

Even though this world is at its worst point and the climate can't get back to what it was before we can still make the end of the world be the best time in the life of those unwanted ones who have been living under horrible conditions their whole life.

Because sometimes those privileged people need to stop being selfish and have to change their mind about the system and about what makes a life worth it or not. And then they need to use their power to change the reality of those non-privileged.

Sometimes this change of mind comes by a structural force of the non-privileged ones because the suppress has went too far or it simply happens by one little video which is powerful enough to wake up the feeling of guilt which can and in a revolution of both sides.

Picovacc

by Iris Wottawa

I open my eyes, blink and see the sun rays shining through my window. Today, I'm feeling so much better than in the last weeks. I'm getting myself up to check for the others. They still sleep, I realize, how battered they seem. Emaciated and pale. The last weeks were so hard because we did a withdrawal by ourselves and by no one else realizing. This was very difficult and needed a good plan, which we started to design about one year ago. But the plan isn't fully carried out yet. The hardest part is still ahead of us. In the year 2020, a pandemic, named Coronavirus, broke out. Many pharmaceutical companies tried to create a vaccine. In the end of the year, the company named Picovacc was successful and everyone had to get vaccinated. But, and this is the reason for our hard time, the active substance wasn't only something to immunize against the Coronavirus. A drug has been included and everyone was addicted from the point he got vaccinated. As me. The addiction is different and much worse to other drug addictions. Your mind is influenced that way, that you really need to get the drug again to be happy and the withdrawal symptoms can lead to death. Also, the beginning of those symptoms is really hard to endure.

With this requirement, the mentioned company took power in Germany. From then on, they control over its people and give them their drugs. It's 2108 now and the people usually forgot the coup. They are more thankful to get their drugs every week for free. They also forget the strong surveillance, which is connected with the pickup of the drugs. The propaganda makes people think they have to be grateful to the government. When the drugs are for free, they produce side effects. When you have money, you can afford some in a better quality.

I'm living in a poor area in Cologne and we are determined having a headache the most days a week, when the drugs lose their effects. That's the normal daily and weekly routine. In Cologne, there is a big office. We call it the Picovacc-office and almost nobody knows exactly what's in this massive and cold building except the hall behind the entry, where officers monitor you while getting your weekly drug supply. My pick-up-day is Wednesday. When I was about 11, I already had a bad feeling because of the regulation which affects every life in many ways. I always imagined a life with no mistrust to the government and without the influence of the drugs. While sitting on my bed and thinking about all of this, I was getting confidence to fight the government.

After I made myself a big breakfast, I'm checking on the prepared system on the computers. Everything seems as it should be. I hear some noises from the other three, they are slowly getting up. At 11 o'clock we want to start. 10 minutes before, we sit very jittery in front of the screens. In 10 minutes, we will see if the unbelievable hard work was for nothing or not. We had to hide our long stay in the apartment because it would have been striking. After

this phase, we couldn't let the bad side effects of our withdrawal show. But we had a good plan. We are those people who are inconspicuous. I wasn't even notice at school and spent the most time before my screens. Me and my associates met the past years. The thinking that there is something wrong with the system definitely connects us. And we created a way to hack into the system of the Picovacc-office.

Now, the last seconds count down. A live recording approved our hopes. The deafening noise that comes out from the building of the government in Cologne will irritate everyone because it isn't the sound of any known alarm system or something like that and was never heard before. Only the initiated know that this is the sound of a secretly programmed self-destruction of the big office. And: we are the only ones who know that the sound is a fake and the building won't destroy itself.

Now it's my part. I grab my backpack and go out of our apartment. When I arrive a few minutes later at the Picovacc building, I see what we expected: everyone flees in panic. I hear my associates through the stud in my ear telling me that every person left the Picovacc-office, included the most important initiated. But of course, they will guard the building and I have to hurry because they will realize very soon that this could be a fake. But one small door, we found weeks ago, is free right now, when I arrive. From then on, I know my way through those thousands of corridors by heart and arrive in less than three minutes in the big controlling room. The first thing I do is to set all doors and entries to be lock up so no one has a chance to come in.

The government of Cologne was successfully taken over. We are one step closer to achieve our main goal: to establish a new democratic system by involving all people. Our next aim is Düsseldorf and from there whole Germany.

Poor or Rich – Endangered or Safe

by Timo Consten

Chapter 1

I wake up. It's 10:46 am. The TV is still on because last night I forgot to turn it off. The news is on and they are talking, of course about the public violence, medicine, and the vaccine, which becomes more expensive from day to day. I get up and go to the fridge. Unfortunately, it's empty and there is only a slice of cheese, some milk, and a bottle of cola. I drink half of the cola, get dressed and want to go the supermarket when my phone rings. It's an unknown number. "Hello?" I say after answering the call. "Hello here is the Johns Hopkins Hospital. We have bad news for you. We...". I hang up the phone because I already know what they want to tell me. My grandfather, who is infected by the coronavirus died because he and our family had not enough money to buy some medicine for him. Even if we had enough money it wouldn't be a guarantee to heal him, because it's extremely hard and risky to get the medicine. I saw a few people buying it and getting robbed or even killed by other people waiting in front of the pharmacy for people, who are not as poor as the rest of the population. Since the WHO found a vaccine and they said that it's extremely limited and expensive because of its rare ingredients the mood between people is very tense. Especially the upper class and the super-rich are very unpopular, and the other people hate them. Many politicians and celebrities are getting protected by the police, military, or bodyguards. The Government even built a whole new city for selected people who are most important or endangered for example the new President, who is not even a real president. Some potent politicians decided that he is the new leader of the USA after Donald Trump got killed through an assassination attempt.

Second try. I take my stuff and go outside. I'm shocked even though I knew that the people are overly aggressive, and everyone tries to survive. This sounds awfully hard, but unfortunately it's not exaggerated. Through the crisis the economy of the USA...no...the whole world economy collapsed, and it will take many decades to restore it. The gap between rich and poor people is as big as no one would ever think about. On the way to the supermarket I see many posters, which advertise the new medicine, even though it's not even new. It exists for almost 2 years, since 2021. I see a mother with her kids kneeling on the ground and begging for money and food. I'm lucky I'm not that much affected since I won 200000\$ in the lottery, but I need to make plans for the future because I'm sure that the economy crisis won't find an ending in the next years. I enter the supermarket and see people fighting each other. I hear people screaming. I see blood. It feels like a movie and even though it's already a normal situation and it happens every day I'm still shocked when I see it. Outside there are already the police. I'm going straight through the store, grab a few things and go to the checkout. I'm always scared when I'm paying because of the greedy, aggressive people. That is also the reason why I'm going to the supermarket every day and

buy only a few things and I'm not doing a bulk buying, because it's not safe and I would get attacked. On the way out I see the policemen going to the fighting with raised weapons. "BOOM" I turn around. There lies a man. The Policeman shoot him for no reason. He didn't even try to solve the problem without violence. I go outside and try to think about something else but it's impossible in this chaos. Everyone is talking about the currently situation and there is nothing else you can talk about. To be honest you're in general not talking to many people since the situation you can call a civil war. It's very lonely and gloomy and there is nothing encouraging now. I'm on my way home and meet the mother with her kids again. I stand still and rummage in my bag. I take the bread I bought in the supermarket and give it to the crying woman. She is a bit overwhelmed, because usually the people are just going straight their way and ignore everyone else to save themselves, which is understandable. She stutters from crying and thanks me. I'm going home.

At home I turn the oven on, put a frozen pizza inside and throw myself on the bed. I turn the TV on. The news is on and they are talking about the incidents happened today. It's crazy how many things happened because it's just 12 o'clock. They are also talking about the police operation in the supermarket. I think about the phone call from this morning and just realize that my grandfather is dead. This morning I was too tired to realize, I just took the information like it was a news on the TV. I'm so exhausted that I forget about my pizza. I fall asleep.

Sequel follows

Sky

by Valeriya Chernina

It was a day like every other day. Skyler woke up and immediately got up of the bed. She was not a long sleeper; it would not be helpful for her work. Carefully she folded the clean white bedsheets and walked to the big see-through TV right in front of her bed. Next step was the daily check-up. Temperature, weight, blood pressure, heartbeat and everything else were within the normal range. After the program had saved the data, she switched the TV into a mirror and quickly combed her shoulder length ginger hair and braided it into a braid. Then she put on her black working overall and walked into the empty kitchen. All the rooms, the whole house was clean and white, the same as the one of their neighbours and of their neighbour's neighbours. Long rows of black, grey and white buildings. Even the weather was the same, every day. The only thing she saw when she looked up were dense and grey clouds, nothing behind. It never seemed to bother her or anyone else, because it was normal. They got used to it.

In the kitchen Skyler found a handwritten note from her father saying, *'See you tonight. Take care of yourself. Love you!'* She had so many of these notes, she could cover up the whole house with them. And the house is really big, in her opinion even too big. Quite a large family could live here and everyone could have enough space. But unfortunately Skyler has no siblings and will never have, just like everybody else. The government introduced the one-child-policy after millions of people had died in several pandemics due to the former large population. Now they want to control the size of the population growth so that this will never happen again. Before leaving her house, Skyler quickly checked the latest news. Nothing special, as already expected. Besides good news, every day they list all the people who got deleted from the system that day. For them it is normal, but secretly everyone is scared to get deleted. Especially Skyler since her mother got deleted just from her working place at a factory. Factories are places where workers can easily contract the virus and if somebody gets ill it is usual that many other workers are also infected. That is exactly what happened to her mother. Despite mild symptoms she was brought away and deleted. Nobody really knows where to but there are some theories about it. Skyler always wondered what happened to her mother. Her favourite theory is that the infected people are brought behind the big wall that isolates their country from everything else. But if you try to cross the borders, the guards put you in jail and this is only one of many rules you should not break unless you want to spend the rest of your life in cell.

Just after the heavy door closed behind her, Skyler felt their home lock itself and the self-cleaning process start to entirely sterilize it. Once you leave your house it cleans itself just like a dishwasher. Over the night the streets are cleaned with special cars. It helps to stay safe and clean so there are less bacteria around.

Skyler looks back at the day as if it was yesterday. She was so nervous. It is one of those important days one looks forward to their whole life. But if it does not turn out as imagined, one gets disappointed for the rest of their life. Once a child turns sixteen, they get a job assigned in front of all the other peers. A very exciting event for a young person. Due to pandemics, the economy had a hard time and there was a major crisis. That is why young people have to work so early. The work mostly depends on the social status. Skyler is from the lower class. When it was her turn, she expected to be selected as a worker in a factory, just like her mother but, instead, she was sent to her father in the IT sector. It was not usual for a girl to get assigned a job like this. Furthermore, people from the upper class mostly work there. At first Skyler was unhappy but later she has adapted to the new environment. Surprisingly, she became one of the best and later she was even promoted at work. It turned out that she was a natural talent. At that point she already knew that she was different from the others. For her it never felt real what she was doing, more like somebody else controlled her. Time passed and Skyler got so skilled in her job that she really thought she could get into the Central-Station for all the IT. If she had to leave her previous workplace it would not be a tragedy because she had no real friends there anyway. Working for herself was the only way to get better.

A year has passed since her mother's disappearance. On her way to work Skyler thought about the time when her family was still complete. Actually they were never really happy. Skyler only saw her parents in the evenings. Sometimes they watched the news together, however, those were the few moments Skyler enjoyed. But since her mother has gone, it has become worse. Skyler's father barely talks to her and comes home from work really late so sometimes Skyler does not see him for days.

As she entered her working place a guard came right up to her. A guy from the upper class, tall with brown gelled hair, his eyes were so dark you could not even see any reflections. His eyes were so empty that Skyler felt a cold emanate from him. The white overall, the guards and all the others from the upper class wear, contrasted to his dark hair and slightly brown skin. He told her something in a rough voice but she was so shocked by his appearance that she was not even paying attention. Skyler flinched when he said in a louder voice: 'Miss Elpis¹, I will now take you to the Central-Station for the IT Sector. Follow me, please.' It took Skyler a few seconds to realize what just happened. She was actually chosen for the Central Section. Then she noticed that the guard had already left and she had to hurry to catch up with him. All the way none of them spoke a word. Skyler could feel the tension and the excitement build up in herself. When they finally arrived, the guard showed Skyler her new working place and walked away. But as she took a closer look at her computer, Skyler noticed something strange. It was labelled with her father's name. Skyler looked around nervously, but none of the people in the room seemed to notice her presence. If this was the computer of her father, he must work here, she thought but could not find him

¹ Meaning of 'Elpis': Hope (Greek)

anywhere in the room. All workers in the room wore white clothes except for her. They gave her weird looks and Skyler knew that none of them would talk to her. She desperately turned on the computer by placing her finger on a sensor so that it could scan her fingerprint. Surprisingly, it worked out but as the computer turned on there was only one file. She opened it.

'Warning, this message will delete itself after reading!

Dear Skyler, while you read this it is already too late for me. They took me and now it is your turn to fix everything. I knew that one day it would come to this point, so I have been planning for a long time. At your birth I inserted a chip into you that will dissolve after its usage. Unfortunately, I could not use it on myself so I needed you. My grandfather gave me this chip to keep all the information on it safe. In a few minutes you will find out the truth. Please do not tell anybody! I know that you are a strong girl and you can do it! Go find her! Good luck sweetheart!'

Skyler had so many questions but she could not even open her mouth. Then everything went black in front of her eyes. Suddenly her eyes closed and she saw a mysterious code. She quickly typed it into the computer before it faded again. The next thing she saw on her screen was a video surveillance of a land she had never seen before. Many people were walking down the street, a colorful street just like their clothes. They were laughing and talking to each other. But the most beautiful was the blue sky. Sky – just like her name. Only a few clouds with the bright sun shining through it. While she literally sank into this dream world, a very specific person caught her eye on the screen. No, that could not be true, Skyler thought. But she would recognize this ginger hair everywhere. Skyler's mother. How could her mother still be alive? She was close to tears but when she recognized a high wall in the background of a camera shot, Skyler knew exactly what to do.

As she got home she took a very hot bath so that her skin almost burned and heated her forehead with a hair dryer, a very old trick that she still knew from her grandfather. The only thing she had to do now was the evening check-up. Before doing this she prepared herself because she knew that the system would immediately send guards to her home. But there was not much to take with her, only the last note her father gave her this morning. Skyler wished she could have said goodbye to him. A tear flowed down her cheek. As expected, the system raised the alarm and the guards came quickly. Skyler let herself be led away without resistance and in a few hours she was driven to the wall by a car. On the way there she already imagined what it would be like to see her mother again. When they got to the wall, suddenly Skyler did not want to leave. 'No, this is a mistake!' she screamed. But the guard pushed her towards the big metal door. 'There is no way back once you go through the door,' he told her. Her knees started to tremble. What is there behind the door? Has she made a big mistake or was it not this what her father talked about in the letter? What if there is nothing behind the door, does she have to die? Skyler closed her eyes.

Someone hugged her with a warm long hug. When Skyler opened her eyes, she recognized her mother. Her face was so bright and her cheeks were red. The sun gave her freckles on her nose and she was smiling as never before. 'I knew you would make it,' she whispered, 'They informed me about your coming and since then I was so impatient to see you.' Skyler turned around and saw the big door close behind her. There was a kind of a dome above the city she lived earlier. It was very strange to look at it from the outside if you have lived there for years never knowing what is behind the borders. 'Are you still ill?' Skyler asked concerned. 'Thankfully, no. I recovered really quickly like many others here. The government is scared to take us back because they think we could get ill again. Most people here are from the lower class, you understand.' 'But mom, where am I? What is this all?' she asked her mother. 'This is the real world. Everything you saw there,' she pointed behind Skyler, 'was not real. The government wants you to think everything is perfect in their sterilized world and that they can easily erase any problem they have. But no. Here you can fully experience life with all colours and emotions. It is part of our lives to be ill and to experience negative emotions or problems.'

It was true. Since Skyler entered the real world and the sun touched her skin, she never felt happier.

The Curse of Covid-19

by Enes Melliti

Who should have known that something cruel happens to mankind? "Code Geass" will be running soon.

There is absolute chaos in the world. More than 50% of the world's population has died. Today is Monday January 26, 2058 and about 24 years have passed since that day. It all started with the Covid-19, which broke out in 2019 and caused a lot of problems in 2020.

As late as 2021, a spacecraft was sent to Mars on behalf of all governments to deploy a robot to analyze whether life on Mars is possible and to install an antenna for effective and fast transmission of information. After returning in June 2023, it did not take long and suddenly someone showed symptoms of the Covid-19 virus, for which luckily an antidote had already been discovered.

In 2034, the robot had a defect that could only be repaired manually, so that a team of 3 people was created as quickly as possible and sent to Mars. A program with improved AI was developed to get even better and automated results.

One year after the team's return in 2036, Dean Silver, one of the astronauts, contracted an unknown disease and died on November 24, 2037. Throughout the year, cases of illnesses with the same symptoms, which were rashes, nosebleeds and sneezing cramps, as well as muscle cramps and blood spitting, increased. These signs spread fear of a repeated pandemic after Corona and as it turned out then, according to the computer, it should be a modified version of the Corona Virus. So they started doing research for an antidote, and a secret organization was supposed to lead this operation. When asked why the symptoms appeared in Dean Silver only a year later, there was no answer. However, the assumption was made that the use of viruses has been delayed due to the different space-time relationships between earth and space.

"Yami, there is food." Says a voice behind me. This is William, a boy I grew up with. By 2037, 50% of the population had fallen ill, apart from a handful of children who stood out and showed absolutely no symptoms - all between the ages of 0-3 years. The organization then tracked them down and put them together in some kind of orphanage. William and I are one of those children from back then and have lived here since we can think. It's really like in the orphanages from the books I read. A woman who is like a mother to us takes care of us. I am now 22 years old and help our mother in the household. Since I was 4, our knowledge has been tested three times a week on a sophisticated computer. There are regular blood tests and other medical examinations. Until I was 18, the situation in the world was hidden from me. This is more like a citadel than an orphanage, because the area is gigantic, yet fenced and well monitored.

How do I know all this? My father was the team member who died on November 24th, 2037. I am Dean Silver's son, Yami Silver. Since I learned about it when I was 18 and got my father's legacy, I have been working with the organization and research team to find an antidote.

"Yamii! Come on, eat at last. "" YES, on the way! ", I answer and go to the dining room, a huge room with a gigantic round table. "We are looking for Vector Bruce because of treason at home ..." The radio is playing in the background. It's the news right now. Again, the call from the revolutionary. I was the last one to sit down, but the scent ... That smells really good! "I made you your favorite food.", A woman's voice. It is mother. Her real name is Susanne O, but I do not know more. "I need to talk to you for a minute after dinner," she continues in a serious tone.

The meal lasts 20 minutes and then, like every Monday, the groups for the dishes and everything were selected. Mother and I go to the back room ...

"Yami ...", she hesitates, "You surely remember your father's legacy ... don't you?" Why does she suddenly ask me that? I mean, yes, I remember it exactly. It was a box with an inscription in English, on which everything was written, from him personally and the first meeting with my birth mother to the scientific research of the organization "The Guardian of mankind".

"Yes, why are you asking?" I answer. She holds out a letter to me. On the front I can see the initials DS ... The initials of my father! But what are they supposed to do on this letter? He passed away a long time ago!

"This is the 2nd part of your father's legacy. He asked me to his bedside a few days before his death and gave it to me personally. I don't know what's in it, but he said you should get it today." I open the letter and unfold the sheet.

It says: "Hey, you are probably 22 years old now, a grown man to be proud of, I think :) Your mother and I loved you dearly and I am sorry that you were born in such a future were. But so that you can still have the possibility of a happy life, you have to read this carefully and must not show it to anyone. Are you alone in one place now? "

I look at Mother, she understood and left the room.

"Then read it through and light the letter afterwards ... Go to Vector Bruce, his real name is Enes, he will help you. I only know his name, if you name him opposite, he will trust you. And you should trust me too, even if he could be considered a traitor in your time. Only he still knows the truth ... "

To be continued

The Little Seed

by Mathilda Lenz

The day they take your child is the day your life starts to end.

They say it serves a cause – that your child will serve a cause but little do they know about the system they put us in and what it means to lose a worker. Meaningless are them reasoning that you could never feed another child. That they'll give them the education you cannot give them. Because when you are a single mother like me, you'd rather have another mouth to feed that one less hand at work. You'd rather give up your meal than watch one of the Guards take your eleven-year-old boy away.

But they took Eithne² anyway. That was after the Guards got my husband and his friends at one of their illegal meetings. Before they cut his head off in front of the whole BeeSector and send his belongings to our home, where I sat over the bloodstained jacket, cried for the last time in my life, before I burned his dirty clothes together with the letter that came with them. The letter in which they informed me, that I couldn't provide for one child and I should be happy about the fact that they'd get Eithne to NewPrinceton.

I knew Eithne was too old for NewPrinceton. They normally take the children before they turn six. Eithne was eleven when they dragged him out of our little room. I think they knew that my husband took him to a few of the rebels' meetings. They couldn't execute a child. So they brought him to their *school*.

Five days after Eithne was gone I had to ask our neighbours for food. That was three years ago.

And as humiliating as it was to ask people of a lower economic class for help – in the end we're all the same, crammed in the BeeBlock. The block is big, but not big enough for all the workers from the plantations to have room, forget privacy.

The people who live here work on the poll plantations where we *play bees*. That's what they call it on their big screen on our building. One of the less technological devices the Sectors own, besides the hospitals, the cameras outside our living Blocks that check us and the system that counts our Economic Points, scales our economic classes and keeps track of our economic usage so they can sort us into classes.

How much do you work for the economy?

How much do you help society?

² The name Eithne means "Little Seed"

It's also the system that tracked I would be unable to cope with a child. Then there are the little chips they insert us at birth – to let the cameras track our identity. It is one of the two times we see the small hospital of our sector from the inside. The other time is when you turn six and they somehow check whether they can take you to NewPrinceton or whether you're more fitting for another Sector. A lot of the boys are being send away, because their anatomy is needed in Sectors that have harder work.

The only technology we really use ourselves are the bags to pollinate the plants. They have some kind of technology in them I don't understand. They teach us enough to know that we cannot change anything. That our ancestors destroyed and exploited the planet in an economical war, when winning the war was more important than the persistence of the ecological system and they overruled the laws which protected the environment. If the EZ hadn't interfered, there would be nothing left to save.

That's why we have to do the job that little insects used to do back then. To save our lives, to feed what's left of us since the Bees and other insects have become extinct.

After the war between the middle state and the west, the Eastern Zone, EZ, build up the system in which we live now. Or in which we try to survive, for nothing has become clearer to me in my 28 years on this planet than that there is a difference between living and surviving. And that difference lies within the distance between the Sectors and The City.

They divided the lands that were not marked of the war in Sectors. I don't know how big this whole economy is. I just heard that most parts of the planet are too dangerous to live there after the war.

At least I live in one of the Sectors with the safest weather conditions, because the plantations need enough sunlight and more or less regular rain periods. I heard stories about the Sectors where they have the animals (meat is only for The City of course) or even one of the technology sectors where the generating stations are. They have either drought or thunderstorms for a month.

I heard that before the time of the Economic War the weather didn't try to kill us. But after decades of exploitation and the final war days, when the last hectares of the big forests burned to ashes, the planet seems to have enough of us. Every time I see how a crop is lost because of the circumstances I feel how the earth below my feet wants to get rid of me. Of us. But we won't let her get us. The EZ won't. And that's why I endured them for such a long time.

Even when the Guards got Eithne. Even when I thought I'd starve if it wasn't for Gerna, the women in the room next to us who helped me. Every morning when we took the train to the plantations I thought *They saved our ancestors. The system has to work when I want my grandchildren to have a better life. So they can profit from whatever they do in their research laboratories in The City.*

So even if my child is gone, I could do it.

Until today. Because today is the day, Eithne came back. I was on one of the big fields together with Gerna. It was midday and the sun burned our skin. There was only the rustling and whispering in the air of the workers in the line next to ours.

The fields are next to the wastelands which are on the west side of the BeeSector. Sometimes I imagine I can see the glimmering houses of The City in the distance but I know that's impossible, for The City is too far away. The only way you can get there is by the train which gets the vegetables from the plantations.

Sometimes rebels try to get to The City. They never come back. And on midday everybody is working. That was why Gerna and I were so shocked when a figure crawled from the dried bushes. We always work on this lane and never there was someone coming from the lands next to it.

The figure wore a loose uniform and I recognized the pale green colour from the few times I saw pictures of the children from NewPrinceton. It collapsed on the ground, coughing and although I knew it needed help, I didn't dare to go near.

The children never come back. It is said they get trained to work for The City. Some say, the EZ is experimenting with them.

But I couldn't think further. Because the figure, the child on the ground said my name. And then it whispered: "Mom."

....

Eithne is laying to my feet, he grabs my sleeve and whispers something I cannot understand. I can't hear anything; my heart is beating so loud I don't think I'd hear him screaming. He must've remembered that I always work on this part of the field.

Gerna is standing next to me, she thinks faster than I do and grabs Eithne to pull him under a tree. But the cameras around the field must have noticed him by now. My brain cannot comprehend what they will do when they find him here.

"What happened to you?," Gerna asks. She knows who he is. He and her daughter used to play when they were younger. "How'd you get here?"

"Dad, where is Dad?," murmurs my son. "He told me to come back."

I looked into his eyes. They are clouded, like he isn't really awake. Like he's in a dream. A dream, in which his father hasn't been killed because he resisted the EZ.

"Eithne," I whisper and knee down next to him. "Your father is dead, you now that."

"Feyna," Gerna calls my name. "They will come soon. You know they have their eyes everywhere. And I don't think-" She stops but I know what she means. They will not let Eithne stay. However he escaped them, they will take him back.

"Dad told me to come back. It was his plan," repeats Eithne and it fills my heart with sadness to see him like this. He has grown but is thin under his uniform. His eyes are red and he radiates a heat like he has a fever.

"That's what he told you at those meetings?," I ask carefully. But he couldn't have known that they would take Eithne, could he? My stomach twists at the thought.

Suddenly a siren rips through the air and Gerna swears. Then she comes next to us.

"Can we get him away from here?," I ask but I know the answer.

"Eithne, you have to tell us what you know," Gerna whispers. I stare at her but she ignores me. "Your father clearly had a plan. The rebels had a plan, they wanted to find out what they do at NewPrinceton."

"Mom I'm so cold," Eithne says and I pull him close to me.

"It's all right, Eithne. We will find a way. Maybe we can keep you. Or they will take you back...they have doctors there, haven't they?"

He shudders and as I reach from him his collar shifts and exposes his chest. I gasp and Gerna next to me swears again. Eithne's skin is red like he isn't bleeding outside but from within.

"What happened to you?," asks Gerna and I want to scream. It doesn't it matter *what* happened. We have to save him. But Eithne looks up and answers: "It didn't work on me. I was too old."

"What didn't work?," presses Gerna and I shove her away. She always was one of the rebel supporters without ever going to their illegal gatherings. Surely she wants to reveal what they do to the children. But what does it matter when my son is dying?

"Mom," says Eithne and grabs my hand. "It's too late. Dad wanted me to find out what they did. He showed me how to escape. He knew they would bring me there if they found out what he did."

Eithne's breathing is getting louder and Gerna shakes him as he stops speaking. "And what do they do?"

Eithne has his eyes closed and I think I hear someone coming from afar.

"The land, the whole land, its contaminated. That's why we can only live here. That's why there are no insects no more. They killed them with their weapons."

I try to order my thoughts. He must be talking about the EZ.

“They inject us something so we can work there. We search for old bombs, war technology. We also try to farm the lands. Some of their experiments only work on the radioactive fields. But the serum only works if you’re young enough, it protects from the radiation. And even then... Some children get ill.” He winced as I reach for his face once more. “I did get ill. But that’s not important. There is a way out, there are old bunkers and tunnels under the war field. Dad told me that that might be a way to escape.”

“They let our children work on the old battlefields?,” asks Gerna and stands up. If only the parents knew, who think their children serve a good cause. Who think they have an easier life. “And they teach us that it were our ancestors who destroyed everything.”

“They say, they had no choice,” coughs Eithne. “That there was no other way to stop the war. But if we want to get the land back... And the serum only works on children.”

Gerna laughs, joyless, and a cracking sounds through the field. They’re coming.

“Eithne, what can we do?,” I ask, shoving what he just said in the deepest corner of my head.

Gerna shakes her head, looking sad. “Whatever this *radiation* is doing to him, it’s too late.” She lifts her head as steps come through the field next to us. Then, like an shadow she vanishes through the bushes on the other side.

Before I can call after her, a Guard breaks through one of the bushes. More follow behind him.

“I found him,” he screams and runs toward us. I try to shelter Eithne but the Guard shoves me aside. In seconds we are surrounded by at least ten Guards. I realize, that this has never happened before. An escape. We’re not supposed to know what they do to our children. We shouldn’t know, how they ended the war, that they are not the saviours.

“Eithne!,” I scream as one of the Guards pulls him up. He murmurs something and the Guard looks up.

“He is her son,” he speaks.

“Tell us how you came here!,” shouts he and pulls at Eithne’s uniform. He tears the sleeve and as it rips, I get a look at Eithne’s arm. And I wince. His shoulder is misshapen, his arm red and swollen. His wrist is bloodstained, he must’ve cut his chip out. A Guard hauls me back and commands: “Get him away from here.”

Eithne coughs and collapses, the Guard can’t hold him and lets him go. His head hits the ground.

“Let me go! Let me help him!”

They don’t listen. The Guard just orders: “Get her away. Make sure she keeps silent. And we have to contact NewPrinceton. They’ll need a replacement for this one.”

I want to swear that I'll keep silent, if they only help him. I just want to get to my son. But I can't.

They drag me away. I bite and kick and scream. Something hits my head and the last thing I see is the silhouette of my son, being tugged from me. I don't think he moves anymore.

Now that I have woken up from being unconscious, I feel that him asking for his dead father were the last things he ever said.

■ ■

I'm laying on a mattress and I recognize I'm at Gernas room. In the dim light I see her shadow beside me and while I try to adapt my eyes to the dark I feel my head aching. I don't have to feel for my forehead to know I must have a lump there.

My throat is hoarse as I speak but Gerna doesn't answer my questions. After two minutes she looks up and meets my eyes. Her gaze is empty, her face blank.

"They took my girl," I hear her whispering through the dark. "They said they needed a replacement for yours. Eithne...I think he didn't make it."

I see the look that must've been on my face three years ago, my own fears reflected in her eyes. Although I want to scream at her for not helping Eithne I know it's useless. My chest is empty were I always felt the certainty of my son, even when he was gone. But the longer I sit here the hole fills with anger.

All the questions in my head - knowing what they did to Eithne, what they will do to me, when they come back- crystallize to one thought. I cannot let this break Gerna, I cannot let this break me or other parents.

"They know, that you saw," says Gerna. "But they don't know what he told us. They don't know I was there. I waited at the train and told the others the Guards attacked you so they couldn't just bring you away. They don't want the rage of the whole BeeWorkers."

I feel grateful for what she did, but I know that they will not let us go away. They may have let Gerna bring me here, because it would cause attention if I didn't came back after work, but I saw too much.

I stand up.

"Where are you going?," Gerna asks but I just grab a piece of paper and a pen from her small desk, the only furniture in this room besides her bed. I don't answer her but start to write, with my few years of school but all the words I have.

Then I search the room for something sharp. Gerna winces as I cut in my underarm to remove my chip. They mustn't know who I will visit.

Then I turn to Gerna.

“Gerna, I want you to stay here,” I insist. “They mustn’t know we are good friends. Later you should go to one of the other workers, maybe they won’t come after you.”

“What about you?,” she asks, clearly stunned by my determination since she always was the one who acted like that.

“I know they will get me; I have to make sure, Eithne’s death wasn’t pointless. I know where the rebels are.” Gerna nods and I hug her before I leave through the door.

I go down the small hallway, full of doors that lead to the even smaller apartments of the workers of the different classes. It’s dark outside and they’re all asleep. They don’t know, what we found out. But I’m going to change that.

I never attended one of the meetings but I know some of the rebels who live in my Block. And even if I can guess that it was my husband’s plan, their plan, to get Eithne to NewPrinceton to let him do the research, I know I have to tell them what Eithne told us.

I hold my bleeding arm to my side and knock on the door, with the number on it my husband has told me about.

A woman opens the door and as soon as she sees me, she turns around and whispers in the dark room behind her: “Hadi. It’s Edans wife.”

She tugs me inside but I hold back. I put out my unharmed arm and give her the letter.

“My son came back,” I press under the stinging feeling in my arm. “They will search for me but I wrote everything down. What happens there. How he came back.”

The woman musters me and then, suddenly, she hugs me. It is something so rare and unfamiliar with someone who isn’t as close to me as Gerna, that I cannot respond.

As she lets me go and steps back, I see the silhouette of her husband behind her.

“His sacrifice will not be in vain. It will change something,” she promises and I believe her. I believe her because even if we all suffered under the EZ, what I found out today is different. Maybe it is the one thing that will rouse the workers and turn the system upside down, now that we know what happens with the children. What happened on the battlefields.

I stumble through the dark corridors; my head is still aching and my hand is numb. But it doesn’t matter. It doesn’t matter that as soon as I will leave the building, they will catch me.

Because the day they took *my* child, something started. Something that will bring a change.

The Lost Letter

by Walter Kusnezow

June 2034

Dear Diary,

I am sorry, I didn't write that much in the last few weeks, but there was nothing particularly special that happened to, until today. Since the radiation is not that high anymore, at least not everywhere, we can go outside more frequently. But it is dangerous anyways. We try to avoid these crazy Highwayman groups and villains, so I try to plunder run downed buildings and old bunkers sneaky and quiet.

It's now 9 years ago that the great war began, and today I found that letter. I rarely find remains like this letter.

Today was a very hot day, the sky was clear and blue, and the air was fresh and clean. I put on my Camouflage suit, and got outside. I had already planned my route through the area, to hunt animals and looked for materials to craft something. My roommate went exploring the area in another direction, to create a map, since we didn't find one yet.

I hunted a deer today and some birds. It was in the evening, when I stepped on a metallic surface, walking through the dry forest. I wiped the dirt aside, to see what it was. It was a green hatch with a small window. It was dirty, and I could see a rusty blue ladder that went around 3 meters deep into the ground. I opened the jammed hatch, and climbed down. It was an abandoned bunker.

In the first room there was a small shelf with stash and food. I grabbed them, and putted it inside my bag. There were two other rooms, with two beds, one safe, clothes, a Colt M1911 pistol, a m16 machine gun, some ammo, a rusty grappling hook, an old tv and movies, books, 3 old photos, a camera and three large shelves, which were only slightly filled. There was also a small bathroom.

Suddenly a water dripped on my head. I looked up and found a leak in the rusty pipe. If I hadn't seen the pipe, I wouldn't have found that letter at the top of another shelf with supplies. I grabbed the letter, and put the other supplies, some old cans, as well as the camera and other useful stuff, into my bag.

I began to read:

25th of March 2025

Dear Will,

You know what I told you last Wednesday? The government is watching me. Two men were watching me, out of a car directly to our front door. They probably suspect that I try to

attack the president. Will, I want you to leave the City today. I need to write this letter, because they probably also listen us through our smartphones. I heard that China and North Korea will launch a new type of bombs onto several places in the earth, and also on ours. It is for sure a virus bomb, like Covid 21 or something like that. It is certainly Covid 20 but deadly modified. They have planned it well in advance.

If you read this, I have already planted the bomb at the stage of the president. I want you to go to the bunker I build, it's in the National Forest, where we camped the first time with dad. I built it since October, and we have enough food to survive for nearly 5 months. Just take my truck, I will meet you there.

Your Jack.

Meanwhile 24th of March 2025, Jack:

I look on my watch. 2am. I quickly wrote down the letter to will, and went outside. My remote explosive, my grappling hook, and my balaclava are already in my bag, and I went straight ahead to the baker-station. The Us-president will take a speech today. Finally, I can kill this bastard and his dictatorship, I thought.

The metallic train pulls in. Without the announcement I wouldn't even hear it on its magnetic rails. Since the quarantine in 2020 so many things changed, I thought. Nobody thought that the 3rd world war could happen now, and nobody is really ready for it. I don't know what will happen. Nuclear war? A new virus? Both? Luckily, I built my bunker for Will and me.

I got out at the Zimmermann station. At the end of the Arthur Street, 500 meters away from me, the president will take his speech. I moved quickly to the large white building. It has wide windows, you can see the hall and the stage trough. In the back is a blue wall with the flag of the united states. Four guards armed with weapons stand at the four large columns at the main entrance. Its dark outside, except of some shops and the street lanterns. The red propaganda posters reflect the bright light of the lanterns. "I will give you America back" – that's what the white capital letters say. Lies, of course.

To get into the building, I have to go on top of it. I put on my balaclava. At the backside of the building I threw my grappling hook on the railing. It grips, with a "clonk" sound. My pulse raises. One last time I look around before I climb the 12-meter-high wall. I entered the building through the glass dome by roping down. Quickly I hide the bomb under the microphone platform. Hoping no one will notice me, I climbed the rope back to the roof. I waited some hours, and put on my wingsuit. On the other side of the building one of my accomplices is waiting for me in a black Audi.

Finally, the convoy of the president arrived, and he get into the building, surrounded by 6 armed guards. "No one will save you ha-ha" I said quiet and maliciously.

A crowd of people is already in the hall waiting for him. The crowd screams: "Asshole!", "Rat!", "Liar!". The President appears on the stage, and the crowd gets quiet. "Dear people of America –" I pull the trigger of the remote controller. I hear a loud explosion, the dome cracks. Screams, shouts, a giant Fireball appears in front of me. Smoke rises out of the building.

I ran to the railing, jumped over it, spread my arms and legs, and glided to the car. Opened my parachute, take my bag off, and quickly I get in the car. "Go! Let her rip!" I shout. The driver stepped on the gas, I am pulled into my seat, like an astronaut during the lift off. 2 Miles away a helicopter was waiting for me, to fly me to my hideout. The only thing I had to do know, is waiting for Will to arrive.

25th of March 2025, Will:

I finished my work at 2pm, then I drove home. I open the door. "Jack? Are you there?" Silence. I get into the flat. I put my jacket in the wardrobe and turn on the Tv as usual. "...He was critically injured by a bomb attack. Eyewitnesses say that his body was completely discorded... "Finally, I thought.

Suddenly I noticed the letter on the table. I read it. "They're gonna find me, and kill me and Jack" I said to myself. Rapidly I got out of my flat, to drive to the Bunker Jack builded.

I arrived after 2 hours, and we got into the 3-meter-deep hideout. We turn on the radio.

Suddenly a dull bang and a blast reached us. "We're safe in here" said Jack. I said nothing, and though about how lucky we are, and how many people will die. At least we got rid of this stupid totalitarian corona dictatorship. We have already experienced how to live half a year in isolation twice.

June 2034, 9 years later:

I took the letter in my bag, get out of the abandoned bunker. It was already dark outside. I went to my hideout. The stars where bright, and the Milky way was very clear. I wonder what happened to them. Kinda interesting to know now who killed the president then. See you later.

I took my Diary under my pillow, and went outside to watch the stars. Things changed a lot since the war, I thought. But was it really necessary? I look at the milky way. I see the bright stars. Some brighter than the others. The big clouds between the stars look impressive. I listen to the flow of the calm river nearby. I close my eyes, and stop complaining.

The New Era

by Anton Auerbach

It was about eight years after the Corona-crisis when the new virus started to keep the world in suspense. People died again, but this time, we seemed to be prepared. The tremendous technological advancements of the early 2020s made us feel safe. However, you could feel that something was going in the wrong direction, that something worse was coming. The society was more divided than ever, resentment and racism were dominating the whole country, and public riots began to get out of control since large sections of the German population were suffering from poverty and unemployment due to the worldwide economic crisis of 2022/2023.

As the new virus spread, extreme hygienic standards were set, shops and schools were closed again, and we were taught to stay at home as we did years ago, and everybody could simply not believe that this nightmare was back. But something was different. We all felt stunned, we were quiet. Within two weeks, the number of deaths reached 3,000. You could only leave the house with a license, the streets were empty, many of the homeless died. The old invidious left-liberal government was on the brink of collapse.

I do not remember these days at all. In the second week of October, I didn't even send my postal vote for the parliamentary election to the district office. Finally, there were these hours of laying on the sofa and being shocked about what was happening; with a total turnout of not even 40 percent, the AfD won 36 percent of the votes, more than twice as much as the second and third strongest party, the Left, and the new founded populist catch-all-party Movement *Germany First*. We just sat there, watching TV, waiting for the next day as though everything would be over then. In this night, there were assassination attempts on the three former most important politicians simultaneously from which two were successful. Then, in almost every big German city, notably in the capital, riots began to escalate despite the shutdown. 52 people died. It didn't take two more days until the new right-wing government coalition declared a state of emergency.

The government could not contain the pandemic at all, despite the constant digital surveillance using hi-tech drones and compulsory GPS localization apps. They closed the borders. Most of the riots ended in a brutal fight between the protesters and the military that was sent into the respective areas. Lots of men and women were arrested. In November, the parliament was on fire.

In January everything seemed to calm down. The number of deaths had reached 30,000 within three and a half months. The infections were constantly decreasing. When the situation stabilized, the government – that meanwhile had more powers than any other government in Europe – decided to deport masses of refugees and immigrants who were waiting for the German citizenship. Due to the reintroduction of the compulsory military

service, the number of German soldiers increased from about 200,000 to almost 300,000 men, as women were no longer allowed to serve in the army. Whilst the chancellor extended his powers, the unemployment and poverty was not expected to decline at all. Too, the internet and social media as well as some of the newspapers were censored by and by. People started to yearn for unity and a scapegoat to fight their desperation.

During the crisis, the country had changed fundamentally. In March, six months after the virus had broken out, several occupation groups returned to their jobs. A new police task force patrolled in larger towns and cities from dusk until dawn. From time to time, an important opponent of the regime disappeared.

Everything seems like a final war is coming. They seem to prepare for something like that. Between 2020 and now, almost exactly nine years later, more than two million people lost their lives during two pandemics. This was something like a war – two wars –, of course. It was these pandemics that made misery real for us, that lead into a total new society, dictatorships, autocracies, that let us forget almost everything we achieved to free us from the past. Now, I am as powerless as almost everyone. There are only very few people risking their lives to fight the system. The end does not seem very far away, but I do not know. It is just that I have learned you can't rely on anything – it depends on the circumstances, which sometimes are unpredictable. Many of us return to God. Most of us despair.

Today I am 27 years old and I have lost touch with reality. I learned that it does not take much for everything apparently immortal one grew up with to die. Have I lost my faith in humanity? I am not sure. Change is always possible.

The New Lockdown

by Jannis Trapp

After an awfully bad and unrelaxed night I wake up on a small bed without a mattress. I wonder how I have got in this very tiny room without any window. The room is quite dark, only a small lamp spends a bit of light. After a while, my dizziness fades and I suddenly realize in what kind of room I am in. It's a jail! Now my memories slowly come back, so I am able to remember the reason why I am arrested in jail.

All began four months ago, it was June in 2020, when the serious problem of the Coronavirus was over and there was some relaxation of restrictions to personal liberty, so people were able to meet friends and other persons more often. The number of Corona-infections have decreased for about two weeks. Then there was a big second wave of new infections. There weren't many free beds in the hospitals and a lot of people died from the virus.

As the government did not want to go back to the restrictions a group of people joined. This uprising was called "The New Lockdown" (TNL). These people thought that people's health was the most important factor. They were afraid of the virus. To increase membership, they created advertising campaigns on television and showed pictures of people who died of a Corona infection. After nearly one million people had entered this rebellion, they were able to take over the power and create a new regime, the TNL.

After the regime was established, they imposed an extremely strict lockdown and got a lot of encouragement from the general population. One of the biggest supporters was my brother, Mike. He organized demonstrations and was an important speaker for the TNL. After a while, the TNL decided to lock up potential Corona infected people in prisons. This decision made me think about the TNL more critically for the first time. But I was still a supporter, until my best friend Joe got arrested for a potential Corona infection. He thought that he only got arrested because of his critical view of TNL in the past. He promised me, that he did not have any contact and had not left his house for two weeks because of his broken leg and I believed him.

This change of mind made me look more critically and detailed at the methods of TNL and I was shocked about these. I tried to convince Mike of my opinion, but he was only upset and angry and wanted me to believe him. A long persuasion followed, and I was able to convince my brother of asking people of TNL why Joe had been arrested. He had a conversation with the vice boss of TNL. Then he came back to me and told me that the TNL had suspended him for the meetings in the following two weeks. Because of this suspension he believed me and asked me what I wanted to do against the methods of TNL.

A few hours later my brother and I came back together, and I told him that I had a plan. I wanted to inform the people about the TNL's methods. Due to his insider-information my

brother said that the new Corona-App which was created by the TNL would be our chance because many people use it. He also remembered that there was a security issue with this app so it would be easier to hack it.

So, we had a plan, the only thing we needed from that point on was a person who had much knowledge of programming and hacking apps.

After a few weeks of searching this person we found one who we have met on a critical TNL-Blog. First, we had chatted with him, later when we confided him, we made an appointment, where we could meet him.

On this day Mike and I were extremely excited. We went to the place where we wanted to meet, but there was no programmer, there was the police who had waited for us. They had got the information from the programmer. After they had arrested us, I could not remember anything.

So, I'm now sitting here in jail, I have no idea, where my brother is and when I get outside. I am very hungry; I can't remember when I ate the last time. It is very cold, and I think how long I have been in this jail. Then I hear a few steps coming closer to me. The door opens, and I can see a man with a blue uniform. He looks like a police officer. He tells me with a loud and angry voice that I have to follow because it is time for lunch.

He walks away and I follow him. After a few steps and doors, there is a very big room where any other people are sitting. The policeman takes me to a vacant seat where he handcuffed me to a massive iron table. Then I notice my brother who also follows a policeman. I want to give him signals to recognize me, but he does not look at me.

After lunch I go back to my small room where another person is sitting. She is a woman who does not wear the police uniform, she wears normal clothing. She wants me to sit down on my bed and then says that she is from the TNL and is my therapist for the following six months. During this time, I have to learn a lot about the importance of health and big mistakes I had made in the past she says. Before I have the chance to ask her any questions, she gives me an injection and I fall into a deep sleep.

A Strange Encounter

by Daniel Zinn

She runs towards a house, to hide in it.

As she enters, she sees a table high enough to hide under.

“One, two, three, four, five“ she counts down and then sighs in relief.

Remembering her mother telling her to run, as “they“ arrive, then she must hide and count to 5.

If that's all done, “they“ have lost her trace.

But deep down she knows that there is more luck than skill, required for this “maneuver“.

Suddenly she stops breathing, as she hears footsteps.

She begins thinking “is that it, have they found her?“

Then a male voice appears from the person entering the house “Hey kiddo! I have seen you, don't worry I'm not part of the covenant!“

While she first doubts the man, she thinks to herself “I suppose it makes no difference now.“, even if he lies, sooner or later she is going to be confronted with “them“ and it seems the man is alone.

The odds might be against her, but they are still better than against a full squad of them.

She opens her backpack revealing a knife, which she uses to charge the man.

Yet the man can stop her mid leap saying “What the hell kid? Have you lost your mind ?

You could have killed me with that sharp thing. Calm down.

With a big sigh she lowers the knife and begins to talk “So if you do not belong to them, who are you?“

He answers her “Let's introduce ourselves first, the name is Kenny and who are you Kid?“

“Well, my name is Maria“ she says “So Kenny, what are you doing here?“ she asks again.

Kenny answers in a more serious tone “I am recruiting“, “recruiting for what“ Maria asks.

“I am recruiting for the resistance“ Kenny continues.

“ You are building a resistance against the covenant?“, “Yes, we need everyone we can get, eh well I can offer you, to take you to our headquarters... you know you can refresh there.“

"I accept." Maria says, "What? You are going to accept it just like that? Without asking more questions?" "No!" she shouts "I stopped caring for risks, just show me the resistance, or are you going to loot me or something." "Of course not" says Kenny.

He then proceeds to walk out of the house and says "Follow me Kid."

As they walk through the ruins of a city, whose name seems to be long forgotten, Kenny begins a new conversation "Hey Kiddo can I ask you something?" Maria nods "How old are you? You seem very cold, I does not match your looks." "I suppose I am 13 or 14 perhaps", "What do you mean perhaps? You do not know your age?", "Well the last time I remember myself being aware of my age, was when my Mother was still alive. Back then I was 9 years old, but that's a long time ago."

"Damn." Kenny says in disbelief.

As Kenny suddenly stops, Maria runs into him, she looks up and sees a massive building.

"We have arrived." Kenny says in a serious tone.

They enter a dark room, as they reach the center of the room, the doors, at which they entered, closed.

Silence.

Maria suddenly hears footsteps.

She thinks to herself "Perhaps those people have a chance against the cov-" Lights turn on revealing "them".

In front of Kenny and Maria stood two Covenant-Agents in full military gear.

One of them says "Good job Kenny! We tried capturing that brat before, but she is quick as a rat."

The other one has a more serious tone to him as he says "That is your fifth one this week, the contract concerning you and your family will be renewed for another three weeks."

"Three weeks? It's supposed to be a week for a person. What the-" Kenny is interrupted by the first agent "Well, the more deviants we get, the less value they have, it is a simple calculation-", "You-", "Stop arguing or we take you and your family in, be grateful for the time you have left in freedom" the guard chuckles "Just bring us more people, if you want to renew our contract, with that our exchange ends."

One guard grabs Maria by the arm and pulls her along.

It seems she completely ignores Kenny.

The other guard turns around, towards Kenny, and says "Happy hunting!"

Via a Truck the guards leave with Maria.

Kenny thinks to himself "This is ridiculous!"

Maria, who is now sitting in the Truck between the two guards asks "What happens now?"

The rude Guard says " Shut up you deviant trash, have no right to talk to us, if you ask me you shoul-" the more serious guard, who is also driving interrupts his comrade and answers Maria's question " You are now property of the covenant like the rest of the deviants, you are going to be assigned to a landlord, who then will decide your fate."

With a chilling aura Maria says "I see."