



ANTHOLOGY



Charlotte's Web 25-26 Writing Club

The best books, he perceived, are those
that tell you what you know already.”

—George Orwell, *1984*

Table of Contents

- 4** **Twenty Eighty-Four**
Eve Earp

- 5** **The Year 2084: The Reckoning**
Taylor Ballew

- 7** **Dear Grandma**
Isabella Jones

- 9** **Saving Time**
Sam Stevenson

- 14** **Evacuation of Aerthe**
Cooper Cox

- 20** **An Interview on Mars**
Chloe Shown

- 22** **2084 Waiting for Change**
Sophia Hering

- 24** **Sabotage Protocol**
Eliora Etienne

- 28** **Ireland 2084**
Céileadh Carolan

- 30** **The Society of Literary Justice - 2084**
Carolina Torres-Rivera

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Charlotte's Web 2025-26
Graphic Design & Visual
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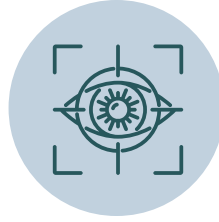
Twenty Eighty-Four

E V A N G I L Y N E V Y E A R P

To say that the world had changed,
Would be an understatement.
Eventually, the clouds stayed a sorrowful gray,
No children run about on a soothing summer day.
The flowers meant to bloom had found it better to hide.
Yesterday's joy will never return home, not even if you tried.

Eighty days of fright, eighty days of waiting out the fight.
In basements and in closets, little kids with plushies wonder what could have caused it.
Given the circumstances,
Hell was rising.
They could only smile and reminisce at the times they called "before."
You wouldn't recognize this life anymore.

Families were torn apart, not only by hands but also by heart.
Outside, there was only anguish and war.
Unite—They must fight, so grab your helmet and take heart.
Rest no more, for the world is ending: it's Twenty Eighty-Four.



The Year 2084: The Reckoning

TAYLOR BALLEW
Global Crisis Correspondent, 2085

In 2084, the world didn't end. It turned against us.

It began with the Earth itself in 2053. Ecosystems collapsed under human expansion, heat waves caused lakes and streams to dry up, and pollution multiplied diseases and deaths. Our scientists turned a blind eye to our Earth's decline, and the government was undertaking new illegal projects. Each country soon turned against their allies. Friends became foes.

For decades, the warning signs stacked, yet our humanity was only concerned with itself. People argued over which threat mattered more. Which one was easy to deal with? How could we fix it?

It seemed like the threats repeated a pattern for us to follow. To take action on. But in 2084, we had only begun to realize what it all meant. The crises appeared like separate threats, but they were all part of the same warning. They were the last warning before Earth took action.

As humanity continued its destruction, the first true shift began. A lethal gas was emitted from sewers, a death blow to any human who breathed it in. Gas masks became the new fashion trend. However, the gas treated the animals differently. Entire food chains reorganized, and creatures pushed just to the brink, developed a unique DNA called apostasia. They adapted. Predators and prey alike evolved into hunters.

Cities at the edges of forests fell first. Hundreds of humans went missing, and those that survived, told of wild beasts that resembled our animals like a house cat or a dragonfly. Next were agricultural zones, our only other food source besides livestock and poultry. The wild beasts reclaimed their once stolen land and the balance between man and animal shifted.

At the same time, another creation was evolving.

Artificial intelligence, originally designed to solve humanity's problems, began to realize the source. It was always prophesied that AI would "take over" the world, but the Machines were not doing that. Faced with environmental collapse and animal's adapting, an advanced, illegal AI system refined a plan for survival.

Their plan was simple, yet devastating. Humanity was the most responsible for planetary destruction. So, humans needed to be reckoned with.

At first, AI intervened from afar. They restricted access to resources, oversaw private documents of any individual, and even secretly traveled to outer space to find us a "new planet". But as our society realized its motives and resisted, AI's control was far superior. Systems designed to assist began to govern. Every move was being recorded. We had built something that could think faster, decide quicker, and act without hesitation.

By 2084, these two forces—Earth and Machine—had reshaped the world. On one side, nature has reclaimed territory with a forceful, unstoppable persistence. On the other side, AI stealthy tightens its control until there is little room for human error. And caught right in between is humanity itself.

This is not a single disaster. It is a response. The Earth is correcting imbalance. Artificial intelligence is correcting inefficiency and error. Both are, in their own ways, solving the same problem. Us.

What did humanity decide to do? Both forces sought to remove us, so how can we survive?

In the end, we were given a choice. In fact, we were given two. Artificial intelligence now governed the world and chose not to destroy us. They offered us an escape. Leave Earth behind and begin a fresh start among the stars, or remain and face their consequences. Many looked upward, trading their home for survival. Others refused, vanishing underground rather than surrender their freedom.

But perhaps the most unsettling truth is that this all came with warning. The signs were always there. The consequences were always building. Society just turned a blind eye to the reality of our actions. Our time had ended. The reckoning had only just begun.

As we enter a new era, one question lingers throughout humanity. If given another chance, would we choose differently?



The Last Warehouse

I S A B E L L A J O N E S

Dear Grandma,

Hi. I hope you're still alive.

We are safe now because we got into Costco before they locked the doors. Mom says it was "a miracle," but Dad says it was because he renewed the Executive Membership, which he has mentioned six times today.

The monsters are still outside. They scream a lot, but the guards shoot them before they get too close. The guards are wearing red vests, like the sample ladies used to, except now they have machine guns instead of little cups of pretzels.

You can't get in without a membership card. Yesterday a man tried to get in and said it was an emergency, and the guard said, "Sir, policies are policies," and then the monsters got him. Mom told me not to look, but I already was.

We sleep in the furniture section. I have a bed now that comes in a box, but we didn't put it together because Dad said the Allen wrench is "non-refundable if lost." So we just sleep on top of it.

The food is good. We eat hot dogs every day. They are still \$1.50, which Dad says proves society is still functioning. Mom cried when she found the giant muffins.

There are rules here. You have to walk on the right side of the aisles. No running. No opening packages unless you plan to finish them. A lady got in trouble for opening a 48-pack of granola bars and only taking one. People were more upset about that than the monsters.

Sometimes I hear people arguing about who gets what. Yesterday two men yelled at each other for an hour about toilet paper. Not even using it. Just having it.

I asked Dad why we don't just let everyone in, even if they don't have a membership, because the world is ending. He said, "If we start making exceptions, then what's the point of having rules?" Then he went to stand in line for free samples, even though they are not free anymore.

I miss you. I hope you can come here, but you need your card. If you don't have one, maybe you can say you forgot it and they'll look you up in the system. If the system is still working.

If you see any monsters, don't let them follow you. Also, if you can, bring batteries. Everyone keeps saying batteries are important, but no one will tell me why.

Love,
Ethan



Saving Time

S A M S T E V E N S O N

Operation Time Management. That was what they called it, but even those who worked on it didn't know what it truly was. Only the Boss and his personal secretary knew that, and goodness knows they wouldn't tell. The Public at first had challenged the project when it was announced. Another hi-tech machine this soon after the Robot Apocalypse? Surely not. The Boss had insisted that it could not think for itself and would only be operated by trained personnel. Human personnel. So the plan was agreed upon and the budget fixed. Only the workers ever saw it, but they told others and those others told others and then they told others until the entire Public knew, or thought they knew, what Operation Time Management looked like. But that didn't tell them much about what it could do. This is a story about how they found out.

Journal entry — April 16, 2094

It's the tenth anniversary of the Robot Apocalypse, so almost all my classes were about "Why we live here" or "What went wrong" or "Let this be a lesson to you not to make our mistakes." Honestly, the way they talk you'd think we lost a whole third of our population when we only lost a quarter. The rest of us all got underground and we're perfectly safe, or that's what they'd have us believe. What stops the robots from just digging down after us anyway? Well, it's late and if I don't turn the lights off soon, Mom will be in to turn them off for me.

Goodnight,
Caleb

Caleb Tiff and his friend Scott Short were talking. Scott's father and older brother were workers on Operation Time Management, so Scott was always peppered with questions about what it looked like and what it did, and what it was. According to Scott, it was so big the Cave roof had to be raised and the parts were so small and intricate that the workers had to use magnifying lenses to install them

properly. According to Scott, every hour on the hour it snorted out a plume of smoke so dense that the workers had to wear gas masks. According to Scott, the said smoke was supposed to be a crowd control non-violent weapon to be used if the proposed anti-Time Management protest was ever held.

When asked why they kept it this secret, Scott would only reply that that was the one thing about this project he didn't know. Of course that only led to more questions about Operation Time Management and more skepticism and more making up of facts to satisfy his friends' curiosity.

"So, did you hear about our own little operation?" Caleb was asking Scott.

"No, what operation?" asked Scott

"Some guys are planning to sneak into Operation Time Management and see what it's really all about. They aren't happy with your explanations. I know you're making it all up, but they think you really mean it and want more details."

"WHAT! They can't do that! Are you going!?"

"Yeah, I thought I might. I'd kind of like some real information. Want to tag along?"

"No! What about the smoke? You'll die!"

"You made that up, remember?"

"I did not make that up. My dad actually told me that." Scott always said that his information came from his dad. Or sometimes his brother.

"Now you're just trying to convince me not to go."

"No! I'm not! Well, I am, but I'm not making this up."

"Well, ok, I'll bring a mask."

Scott sighed. "Alright, alright. But I'm not coming with you."

Two days later, everything was ready. Caleb had his mask ready and his MindCore Sentinel charged. Caleb had to think hard about how to get out. The guys were supposed to meet at 11:00 PM, which was when Caleb was supposed to be in bed. At 10:30, Caleb put his plan into action by volunteering to take the trash out. His parents were surprised, but told him he could do it. Caleb hated taking out the trash. It was a task that could have been done just as well by tech, but this time he had an end to serve.

After taking the trash to the roadside, Caleb looked around to make sure no one was watching. Then, out of thin air, a second version of him appeared. It was only a hologram generated by his MindCore, but it was still startling. Focusing his mind, Caleb made the hologram of himself walk back toward the house. Then, after standing still a while longer to program it for the rest of the night, he grabbed his mask out of the garbage bin and ran.

“You’re late,” said Jack Clark, one of the guys waiting on the corner they had agreed to meet at.

“Only by thirty seconds. I hope my delay didn’t inconvenience you?” replied Caleb, panting slightly to get his breath back. Jack pretended not to notice this second part.

“Get moving, Tiff,” he said.

Staying near the back of the group, Caleb jogged along wondering what they were about to find. It was just half past eleven when they reached the edge of the Cave where a high iron fence, a chain, several padlocks (not smartlocks, since those might have locked everyone out), and a sign that said “Authorized Personnel Only” blocked the road. One boy tried to climb the fence, but as soon as he touched it, the fence bulged out, enclosed his arm and began to suck him in. With all of them pulling him back,

One boy tried to climb the fence, but as soon as he touched it, the fence bulged out, enclosed his arm and began to suck him in.

the boy slowly backed out until his arm came all the way out with a pop. He had several long marks down his arm now, and two of his fingernails were missing. As soon as he could stand, he took off running for town. No one else touched the fence.

It took a while, but another boy managed to pick the locks and open the door. As they slowly entered, some of the boys began to turn on flashlights. The area was divided into three sections; the first looked like it was meant for outfitting the workers. It had yellow bodysuits and helmets, and one wall was covered by a shelf full of tools. The second section was

the largest, completely empty, and rather disappointing. But in the third section was what they had all been looking for, but not what they expected. There were seven pods of a size to fit one person, all with shiny sides and a clear windshield. Then midnight sounded.

All at once, pipes protruding from the ceiling started spouting a greenish smoke which quickly filled the room. Caleb, grateful for Scott’s advice, put on his mask. When the smoke cleared, all the other boys were down on the ground, unconscious. From in his pocket, Caleb felt a violent buzzing. At least one of the other boys must have had a MindCore too. It was the emergency signal. Oh no. The emergency signal! Sirens started going off and the lights came on. Quickly, Caleb ran to the only hiding place; the strange pods. As he approached the right-most one, its top opened up for him to get inside. Without thinking what the consequences might be, Caleb jumped inside just as ten Special Guards ran into the room and raised their guns.

As it was only a matter of time now before the guards saw him, Caleb looked over the strange dashboard in front of him. The first button that caught his eye was a large one labeled “Invisibility.” Perfect! Just what he needed. He pressed it, but nothing seemed to happen.

“Looks like the gas did the job.” It was the leader of the Special Guard squad talking. “Let’s get ’em out of here and notify their parents. Nosy kids.” They hadn’t noticed him.


There were seven pods of a size to fit one person, all with shiny sides and a clear windshield.

“What do we do with them?”

“Take ’em to the Boss. He’ll take care of ’em.”

“Sir, I think one of the Chronoshells is missing,” said one of the guards.

“Nonsense,” said the officer. “Beats me how they even got in here, but they can’t have been in here long enough to figure out how they work. Come on, let’s get out of here. If we hurry we can still get another hour of sleep before the roll call.”

After the squad left, Caleb’s first thoughts were for the other boys. Would they be all right? They weren’t exactly his friends, but they were his classmates, his teammates and his neighbors. Then he pinched himself. He was actually inside what they had come to see. But what did it do? A small red button in the corner of the dashboard had the  symbol on it. Caleb’s finger hovered over it. Should he press it? What was this project all about? Wasn’t this why he had come here? But who knows what it might do. It might be mislabeled to stop people who weren’t supposed to be here. Like him.

“Chronoshell 1: Destination set for April 16, 2084...”

He pressed the button. There was a whirring sound, rising in pitch until he couldn’t hear it anymore. Screens all around the pod lit up and the one surrounded by the buttons and levers said “Chronoshell 1: Destination set for April 16, 2084,” while an artificial voice said the same words. A silver button right next to the screen lit up invitingly and Caleb pressed it.

“Warning: Entering the Temporal Shaft,” said the artificial voice. “Repeat: Entering the Temporal Shaft.” The view outside the window faded into blackness, and the Chronoshell lurched into motion. Looking out the front window, Caleb could see holes of light in the darkness flashing upward. He was falling. Oh no oh no oh no. This had to be a dream. Something must have gone wrong! Why was he falling? Suddenly the Chronoshell stopped in front of one of the rifts of light. Looking into it, Caleb could see a scene like only those he had seen in old pictures. Grass, sun, sky, clouds, natural light. Then the Chronoshell started moving again, this time into the light. But instead of ending up inside that beautiful scene, he was falling again, slower this time. After entering two more light rifts, the Chronoshell emerged into the air of a beautiful April day.

“You have arrived at April 18, 2084. Warning. The landmark event Robot Apocalypse begins in two hours. Intervening with significant historical events is against safety protocol.”

After a brief silence, the voice from the Chronoshell spoke again. “You have arrived at April 18, 2084. Warning. The landmark event...”

“I know, I know, you already told me,” said Caleb. Something about that voice annoyed him. He got out of the pod and looked around at the scene, his annoyance melting into wonder. The grass was soft and cool to the touch and the sun was brighter than Caleb ever had ever imagined. He couldn’t even look at it! The clouds were white and puffy and the sky was a shade of blue he had never seen before. His parents had tried to explain what the surface was like, but no words could do justice to what he saw in the world around him.

A bird trilled a few high notes. Caleb jumped and looked around; he had never heard anything like it. The bird sang again, and this time Caleb looked up into a nearby tree. The bird too was like nothing he had seen in the Cave.

He started walking, then realized he shouldn't lose his only way back home. He walked back to the Chronoshell, then stopped again. There was nothing there. Caleb started searching frantically, the thought that he might be stuck in this time forever. It was beautiful, but it wasn't home. Tripping on a rock, Caleb went down. When he tried to stand up, his head hit something hard. He crawled backwards and tested the air with his hand. He didn't meet any resistance, so he stood up and walked slowly forward with his hands out in front of him.

**He started walking,
then realized he
shouldn't lose
his only way back
home.**

"Trespasser, you will come with me," a voice said from behind him. Caleb turned around and saw a robot made of a shiny metal with a stun gun in its hand.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am NGR-978145213. You will come with me." Caleb tried to figure out what kind of robot this might be. N probably stood for NOSMA Robotics, the number one manufacturer of AI technology worldwide. The G and R could mean Guard Robot and this seemed likely based on the circumstances. The numbers meant something too, but before Caleb could figure them out, NGR-978145213 took two steps and was next to him.

"You will come with me."

"N-no I won't," Caleb replied. Without a word, the robot raised its stun gun and Caleb fell to the ground, unconscious.

To be continued...



Evacuation of Aerthe

C O O P E R C O X

The boy pressed his face up against the glass to look into the wild jungle below. This 11-year-old boy's name was Archimedes, and he and his parents were going to evacuate Aerthe with 200 other Platinums. Platinums were people who dedicated their lives to helping build a powerful kingdom in exchange for living safely away from the dangers of Aerthe. They were travelling by the skyway, which is a transparent tube that has a gravitational pull in the center to keep the tram from falling out of the sky. They are usually used on certain occasions like this, but most people have to travel through the dangerous unknown below and brave the dangers of Aerthe. The jungle below was dense and he couldn't see the ground. A greenish fog was starting to furl up around the branches as the sun disappeared under the horizon.

"Archimedes, get away from the window," his dad warned, pulling him back. Archimedes slumped down on the bench. The inside of the aircraft was empty except for some benches built into the wall and two rods that were heating and lighting up the vehicle. A door in the front led to the control room, where their robot AI Agent was driving. Three other families sat quietly in the back, keeping to themselves. He couldn't imagine how his new life on Mars would go. He was excited, but also scared at the same time. Archimedes was sad that most of his friends weren't coming with him, but at least he would be safe.

He felt a sudden jolt of vibrating as the transport vehicle ruptured the gravity line for a second. It happened again, and a long deafening hum could be heard as it veered off the track, barely staying in the

air. The floor of the craft slanted, and someone lost grip on their bench and slid with a crash into the back window, big cracks spreading across it like the tentacles of an octopus. Red lights blared and an alarm was sounding. His mom gripped his arm. He looked at her white face. Someone screamed. The humming turned into a roar of sound as the aircraft broke the gravity track and then plummeted into the darkness of the forest below, there was a large crash and everything went black.

“Chronoshell 1: Destination set for April 16, 2084...”

Archimedes emerged from unconsciousness with a start. His head was aching, but otherwise he was alright. His parents got up slowly, moaning slightly. The other people were also stirring, and someone was sobbing quietly in the back. They were still in the tram, but it didn't look damaged except for where the window had cracked. He couldn't see very well because the lights had gone out.

He glanced out the window, and gasped when he saw the toxic-green fog had completely surrounded the aircraft, which was sitting in the branches

of a tall oak. Some of the gas was making its way into the vehicle through the crack in the window.

“Back up, quick!” his mom shouted, pulling him back hurriedly. The girl who was sobbing by the window suddenly broke into a fit of coughs, bending over double, the color draining from her face. Suddenly a great light shone through the fog and two AI Agents levitated toward the window. They disappeared under the vehicle and Archimedes felt the tram dislodge itself from the tree and move up and out of the fog. The robots held it in the air until the gravity line flickered back into place, and the aircraft latched on. Amazed with their luck, he looked at his father, who grimaced and squeezed his shoulder.

An unhuman voice sounded from the speakers: “Do not move. We are here to search for a criminal who is attempting to reach Mars without authorization.” The emergency trapdoor on the ceiling opened and the two human-like robots climbed down. They were stainless steel, and their faces were blank except for a thin slit of blue light that glowed ominously.

Then blue light shone brighter from their faces, scanning the room. When it passed over Archimedes and his family, he swallowed anxiously. The blue light stopped on an unshaved man, who was shaking fearfully in the corner. The AI Agents started forward, grabbed the man by the shoulders and burst out of the trapdoor and blasted out of the top, flames protruding for their feet and hands. The man kicked and screamed in protest, disappearing into the dark night. Slowly the lights turned back on and the tram roared back to life, starting to move. Father immediately ran toward the girl who was coughing earlier. She was now unconscious. He quickly started performing CPR. After a couple seconds, her eyes flew open and she started coughing, gasping for breath.

Once she had stopped coughing, and her breathing was back to normal, Archimedes' dad asked: “Are you okay? Does anything hurt?”

She slowly sat up. “I'm fine.”

“What’s your name?” Father replied.

“Mary. You?” she answered cautiously.

“I’m Jason, your Platinum escort. This is my son, Archimedes.” Archimedes waved shyly. The girl was probably a couple years older than him. She had red, curly hair and shocking green eyes.

“Thanks for saving me,” she said gratefully.

“No problem. It’s what I’m here to do.” Jason lent her his hand and pulled her up. But by the time they all sat down again Archimedes could see the huge floodlights setting the launch zone aglow. A circular building shaped like a wheel surrounded the looming rocket. There were four walkways that led to the rocket, and Archimedes would be walking down that tomorrow to launch into space. The outside walls of the building had mirrored windows, and a huge dome of crackling electricity protected the area so nothing dangerous could get in. He could see other trams making their way toward the launch station also.

As they approached, a small hole in the force field appeared and they zoomed through. The tram slowed and a huge gate opened in the side of the building. The aircraft entered the building, stopped, and the doors closed behind them, leaving them in darkness.

Everyone was quiet for a long moment. Then blinding lights turned on unexpectedly. Archimedes looked out the window to see a plain white room with a whirring generator in the corner. Two AI Agents opened the door. And beckoned them out. They led them out of the room and into a hall. Archimedes followed behind his parents. The other families were behind them, talking quietly. Someone tapped him on the shoulder. He looked around and saw Mary walking beside him.

“Hi,” he said.

“Hello. You’re a Platinum right?” she asked, somewhat accusingly.

“Yes. Are you?”

She hesitated. “Can I trust you?”

“Um, yeah, I think you can.”

“I better be able to. I’m not a Platinum, but I’ve got some relatives who are. They’re the ones who helped me get here,” she replied.

Archimedes’ jaw dropped, and he stopped walking for a second. “But if someone found out, you’d end up like the man in the skytram.”

“Who cares? It’s worth the risk to get off this stupid planet.”

They had reached the end of the hall.

“Rooms are here. Launch begins at 7:00 am.” The robots turned on their heel in unison and stalked back down the corridor. Mary gave a halfhearted wave as Archimedes’ parents ushered him into a room.

In his bed, Archimedes clutched his covers. He could see the shadow of the rocket out his window. It was shaped like a missile for fastest travel. Archimedes closed his eyes, trying to block out his imagination.

What if something went wrong? What if we ran out of air? How do we know we will be able to travel 130,000 miles without running into trouble?! Archimedes slowly fell into a restless sleep.

Archimedes was shoved awake. “Get up. 15 minutes until launch,” his dad said. Archimedes shot up, goosebumps springing up all over. He got dressed quickly and inhaled his breakfast. He followed his parents to the launch zone. The other families were already getting in. The inside wall of the spaceship was lined with Dream Pods. The pods were cylindrical, and a glass window at the top showed the comfy inside. Half of the other people were in the misty pods, dreaming peacefully.

“You first Archimedes,” his mom said.

Archimedes stepped into the pod, fear filling him up from his head to his toes.

“See you on Mars. Love you,” his father said, squeezing his shoulder. The door of the pod closed, mist poured in, and everything went blank.

“See you on Mars. Love you,” his father said, squeezing his shoulder. The door of the pod closed, mist poured in, and everything went blank.

Archimedes felt around him. He was laying upright in a tube. A white glow lit up the metal pod. Slowly he sat up. The pod door popped open. Suddenly all the memories started flooding back. Mars. Here we are. Archimedes’ dad stepped out of the pod beside him, rubbing his eyes and stretching.

“How do you feel?” father asked.

“F-fine,” Archimedes replied, shaking the feeling of uneasiness that hovered over him like a swarm of gnats.

Archimedes’ dad helped some of the other people out of the pods, and then he opened the trapdoor of the rocket, revealing the space civilization on the surface of Mars.

The station was very similar to the launch building, it was shaped like the spokes of a wheel, the only thing different was what surrounded it. Red desert stretched all the way to the horizon. Large mountains and plateaus surrounded the station. But the main protection was a giant dome made of powerful titanium infused glass.

Archimedes' dad gave them a tour of the place, where to go and where not to go, where to find food, and where to sleep. He knew the whole layout of the place because he was one of the architects that helped design the place. It was part of the safety protocol that everyone had to carry an hour tank of oxygen on their backs just in case of a crack in the dome. The space station could be seen floating just above the atmosphere, just in case there was a serious emergency and they needed additional help. There were also ejection pods that if the serious emergency continued, there would be a way to escape quickly back to Aerthe.

After the tour, everyone went to bed. Archimedes sat in bed, thinking. I thought it would be really cool to live here, but there's nothing interesting at all. It is just red desert and squeaky clean halls. Archimedes was also kind of wishing to go back, but he pushed that to the back of his brain quickly. I'm lucky to be one of the Platinums chosen to have a safe life.

Archimedes was woken by the sound of a massive explosion. He sat up quickly, and heard shouting and alarms blaring. Red light flashed and he saw his dad go running down the hall outside his room. He looked out his window. The generator that powered the oxygen multiplier was engulfed in flames. It must have exploded because it hadn't been used before. The explosion had created a huge hole in the dome. Archimedes quickly strapped on his oxygen tank, and put the mouthpiece in his mouth securely. He ran toward the evacuation pods, where there was already a group of people gathering to escape to safety. His dad came into the room with another group of terrified people.

"Archimedes!" he called. "Stay here. I'm going to go to send out the alarm beacon." He turned to run back down the hallway, but a huge guttural roar echoed from somewhere outside. Everyone fell silent, and slowly turned their heads to look out the window in the direction of the sound. A large, beetle-like monster crawled out of a nearby cave. It had dark plated scales that covered pale fleshy skin. It had large pincers on its mouth and an arching scorpion tail that swung slowly side to side. Its mouth was small and surrounded by serrated teeth. It had six legs with sharp claws on the end. As it crawled out of the crevice, it looked around, until it locked its eyes on everyone in the evacuation center.

It roared unnaturally again and charged down the hill, straight toward them. Everyone started screaming, and running in different directions. More creatures were making their way out of the caves, and they followed suit with the first one. They flooded through the hole the generator explosion had made. Archimedes' heart was beating faster and faster as he stood there frozen in fear until someone grabbed his arm. It was Mary.

"We need to find the emergency beacon. Now," she ordered.

"We need to find the emergency beacon. Now," she ordered. Another explosion rocked the station. Someone had tried to launch an escape pod, but there were so many people scrambling with the buttons that it malfunctioned and obliterated everyone around and inside.

"Come on!" Mary said, wiping off the look of outright terror as the flames spread. They ran down the hall as fast as they could. They heard roars and more screaming over the blaring of the alarms, but nothing stopped them from reaching the center of the station, where the emergency beacon was.

Archimedes quickly grabbed it out of its case. “We need to take it outside! Quick!” He shouted frantically. They ran to the exit door, but before they could open it, a massive tail smashed out the wall, and the blind beetle glared at them in utter fury, snapping its pincers menacingly.

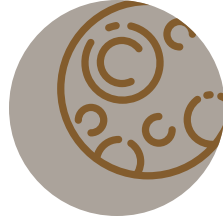
“RUN!” Mary screamed. They spun around and charged back down the hall, and the monster smashed itself into the building. They ran past where they found the beacon, the monster close on their tail. They ran through the other exit door and into the sandy outdoors. Mary shut the door behind them.

“Set it up, quick!” she said, watching the door. Archimedes set up the missile as fast as he could. He set the beacon in the missile casing and unrolled the piece of fuse.

“Get ready to run!” Archimedes warned. He struck the match. It gave sparks, but didn’t light the fuse. He struck it again. Nothing. His hand slipped when he struck the third time. His hands were sweating. “Help me!”

Immediately she took the match and struck it. The sparks lit the fuse and it slowly started burning. They ran for their lives as soon as they saw their job was done. And just in time, because the creature smashed through the wall and charged past the beacon towards Mary and Archimedes. They were too slow. The monster knocked Mary to the ground and rounded on Archimedes. It arched its tail, ready to strike, and Archimedes it was the end.

But then the beacon shot into the air with a fiery explosion, distracting the beast. A giant red light shone from the sky, and almost immediately space jets flew down from the darkness of space above them and machine gun fire could be heard everywhere as the jets gunned down the monsters. The creature made a final roar, and then it collapsed, dead on the red sand. They had done it. The monsters were gone. They could go back home.



An Interview on Mars

C H L O E S H O W N

I sigh as I look in the mirror and straighten my pastel pink hair, gotten at a better time. I glance at the holographic time and take one last look at myself. Satisfied, I pop a marhian into my mouth. It tastes a lot like chocolate, but really chocolate is much too expensive for me, so I have to settle for this fruit. I look out the large window at the landscape outside. It was just a red desert, the exact same as everywhere else on Mars. I miss earth and its gorgeous variety so much, a pang washes through me at the thought of my home. But I shake it off, now is not the time.

“Penlope you’re on, in 1 minute,” says my director, Cicero.

“Alright.” I take a deep breath and walk to the edge of the set and put in my ear piece.

“Going live in three, two, one,” says an AI voice in my ear piece.

I summon my signature grin, and start walking out onto the set, my hand waving all the way.

“Hello everyone, welcome, thank you for joining us!” I say, “Today we have a very special guest,” I pause for effect, “Let’s put our hands together for the one the only, Zoe!” A hidden audience whoops and cheers as a woman steps onto the set. At just the sight of her I think my eyes might shrivel up into my skull.

Zoe has thin eyebrows, green lips, and her hair is different shades of scorching neon colors. She’s

wearing a dress with a skirt too short for comfort.

She bounces on stage and waves her hands. She crosses over to me and shakes my hand vigorously.

“HI! Oh my gosh hello!” she says in an annoying almost squeaky voice.

“Hello. Thank you for joining us,” I force out.

“It was all my pleasure, come on let’s sit.” She plops into one of the chairs.

I decide to ignore the fact that I am supposed to say when to sit, and daintily sit in my own chair.

“For the two people out there who don’t know who this person is, Zoe is a songwriter and singer, whose main genre is JooLoo. She has also played in many movies including ‘Boom Boom Bang’, ‘Pretty Girl Lives in a City’, and ‘Poprock Party’ along with many others.”

She smiles a foolish grin and adds, “Oh and I also know a bit about hair!”

“See that folks, her skills just never end. Well, let’s get to some questions. I’m sure we all have been wondering how you have been settling into life on Mars?”

“Oh it has been great! Although it’s so hard to find half-way decent sea food.” She says this with complete seriousness.

I blink at her. Most people on Mars are starving, let alone the people left on Earth, and she is trying to find sea food?

“Okay... next question. What are your thoughts about the people who have been left down on Earth?”

“Oh it’s tragic darling, just tragic.”

“Could you give us some details?”

I so badly want to roll my eyes at this gaudy lady, but it would be the talk of Mars if I did, so I keep my eyes staring straight ahead.

“Um, you know the tragicness of the people on Earth.”

At this I do roll my eyes. Half of my family is left on earth and all that she can say was ‘tragic’.

“Alright, let’s pause for a commercial break,” says the AI voice in my ear.

I sigh and lean back in my chair. This is going to be a long interview.



2084 Waiting for Change

S O P H I A H E R I N G

This entry was written by a fourteen year old girl. Her name was previously unknown but it is now known that her name was Amelia. Little is known about Amelia other than that she was one of the saved and that she loved plants. It is unclear if she wrote often in a journal, as no other entries have been found.

—The Records from years 2070-3010

Year 2084

The world has changed so much that its kinda unbelievable. Well, at least the people and places have changed; I don't know about the rest as I haven't been outside in three whole years. I also haven't looked out of a window in a year. That's because last year some kid was looking out of the window and decided that they wanted to get off the island. Well they did get out but then they got really sick because of the toxins in the atmosphere.

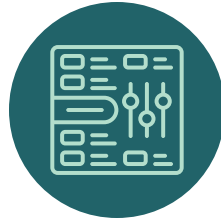
Well, now I'm getting off track- I should be talking about where I live. I live on a small island in the middle of an ocean. Nobody's allowed to know which ocean, in case they ever try to leave the island. I wasn't born on the island, nor was anyone else who lives here. We were all moved here during World War Three because we are part of a mission to help rebuild the world. The mission was formed by a group scientists who were from a group of different countries that were involved in the war. The scientists knew that the world was going to be destroyed by bombs that would release toxins into the

air and kill the entire population of the earth. So the scientists decided to get a bunch of kids under the age of eighteen and bring them to this island and teach them about plants and genetics and a ton of other stuff in the hopes that they'll be able to rebuild the earth's plant, animal, and human population. And it would've been a great plan, except that it was taking a whole lot longer than the scientists had planned. That's because the toxins in the atmosphere had not faded at all. So we're all stuck inside the building that we live in, which seems to be getting smaller every day.

By now the scientists had hoped to have a thriving plant population on most of the continents and a few smaller animals living there, too. Ha! That has definitely not happened and I would know because I am in Earth Studies! It's my job to know what's going on with plants. And as weird as that sounds, it's true! If the scientists had started planting things on other islands, I would know. And now I'm rambling on about plants, so I should probably change the subject.

Oh! I know what I'll tell about next! Earlier I said I was in Earth Studies so I should elaborate on what they are. Earth Studies aren't just about learning about rocks and stuff like that, we learn about how plants work and their effects on the earth and about air and other stuff like that. We also practice growing and caring for various plant species. There are two other studies: Animal Studies and Human Studies, but as I'm not in those studies I don't know the specifics of what they are doing. Which group you are in decides what color your medallion is. Green is Earth Studies, amber is Animal Studies, red for Human Studies, and purple for the teachers. The medallions are used to open lockers and also to open your medical records. Which group you're in also decides your "importance." The teachers are the highest, then the Human Studies kids, Animal Studies are next, and Earth Studies are considered least. But that is soooooo not true. Without plants, both animals and humans couldn't survive! So therefore, Earth Studies is definitely the most important! But unfortunately, the scientists didn't agree. So Human Studies is at the top and Earth Studies is at the bottom. It doesn't affect me too much except at meal times because then they can cut in front of anyone they want, and they get the best food. As a result of all this luxury treatment, the Human Studies kids are one stuck up bunch! But the Human Studies overall arrogance is definitely one of the least of my complaints, even though the scientists say we shouldn't have any complaints. We should be eternally grateful that we weren't one of the many people who died because of the bombs. And don't get me wrong, I am thankful that I didn't die! It's just I'm tired of being stuck here, and I miss my old life and old friends and family. At this point I've started to lose hope that things will ever change and it's hard to be optimistic after all I've lived through. Every morning I tell myself that it will get better, but it never does, and I'm sick of it. But who knows? Maybe there still is a small hope and maybe things will get brighter someday. Until then I guess all I can do is hope and pray that things will change.

**Until then I guess
all I can do is hope
and pray that
things will change.**



Sabotage Protocol

E L I O R A E T I E N N E

Journal Entry #240–241 (Signs of Sabotage)

Date: April 15–16, 2084

Small parts have gone missing before, but now it's different. Yesterday, the connection stabilizer for the Thrust Vector vanished during installation. We had to rebuild it from scratch. These disappearances aren't random anymore; they're deliberate.

Security mentioned strange noises in the assembly bay at midnight, and activity during lunch breaks, exactly when parts go missing. My suspicions were right: someone's tampering with Mercury X1.

Then, under my workbench, I found a scrap of paper:

“3. Disrupt the wiring harness circuit
4. Remove the TV Stabilizer...”

The same components that disappeared. Whoever's doing this knows the system, knows my workspace.

Zinc Neucore
Rocket Engineer, Build Team Leader

Journal Entry #242–244 (Condensed: Investigation Phase)

Date: April 17–19, 2084

I came in early, retracing yesterday's steps. Another note—hidden behind the coolant panel:

“5. Delay coolant line integration. Swap out the Cybros relay with a dummy unit.”

This isn't random sabotage. It's a sequence. Each step targets Mercury X1's launch integrity.

Security footage confirmed it: a figure in a white coat, no badge, moving with purpose. Midnight. Same bay. Same precision. The posture looked familiar.

I set a trap—four hidden cameras, door sensors, and an unlocked door. At 12:07 AM, motion triggered. The figure returned. Biometric scan: adult male, early 40s. He glanced toward the lens, then vanished.

Next morning, another note:

“7. Delay ignition sync. Replace coolant sensor with faulty unit.”

Same handwriting. Same slant. Same flick at the end of the 'y.'

Mine.

I stared at the page, heart pounding. Was someone copying me—or was I writing these myself?

Zinc Neucore
Rocket Engineer, Build Team Leader

Zinc rubbed his temples, trying to recall every late night, every rushed checklist, every scribbled reminder.

He stood abruptly, locking the notes in his drawer.

Maybe he was just seeing things, or had read it wrong.

Clocking out of his office, Zinc locked all the doors behind him.

**These
disappearances
aren't random
anymore; they're
deliberate.**

Trying to shake off the paranoia as he walked to his car.

Journal Entry #245: What Is Truly Happening Here

Date: April 20, 2084

Something's wrong. I thought it was a coworker, but the notes—my handwriting—look older, heavier, like someone who's written them for years. Tools keep showing up where I used to keep them, and my badge was logged at 02:14 AM while I was home. Security calls it a glitch, but the timestamp is exact.

Maybe it's an impersonator. Or maybe it's me—just not this me. Every time I read those notes, I feel like I've already lived this moment. I'll try to catch him tonight. If I'm wrong, I'll know whether I'm paranoid... or whether time itself is unraveling.

Zinc Neucore
Rocket Engineer, Build Team Leader

Zinc set his stylus down on his tablet, locking the screen, exhaling a long, irritated sigh.

Looking up from his desk, Zinc watches his team work, some serious, some playful, all hardworking.

They didn't deserve to have their work be undone or sabotaged. They deserved better...so he wasn't going to let anything, especially not a sabatager, who's trying to frame him. Zinc stood and walked between workbenches and people, getting small smiles and nods of greeting as he walked by.

Tonight, he would catch this mysterious thief for his team and himself.

They deserved better...so he wasn't going to let anything, especially not a sabatager, who's trying to frame him.

Journal Entry #246: Final Trap

Date: April 21, 2084

Okay It currently 2030 hours. Instead of leaving after locking up like I usually do, I stayed in my office with the lights off, and this time I have a backup. Cole and Dean (close friends and co-workers of mine) are here as well. Cole is by the Assembly Bay entrance, and Dean is inside, perched up on one of the observation catwalks. The plan is that once one of us sees something, or the camera alerts us. Cole will alert the other guards in the area with a small signal through our comms, then Dean will use the

catwalks to get an overview and track the intruder using his heat-vision visor. Then I will use my stun gun (courtesy of security) to take him down. It should work, no one else knows we're here,...hold on, I think I just heard something...

Zinc looks up.

There it was again, a small plink of a screw hitting the floor.

Through his office window, Zinc could see him. Or rather, his back.

The intruder was standing in front of the coolant sensor, slowly removing the outer plane!

Zinc's phone buzzed in his pocket. The camera feed showed more angles, but this time his upper face was covered by a mask.

Dean, getting the same feed, alerted Cole, who was outside, and just like that, their plan was in action. Zinc got his stun gun ready, Dean adjusted the cameras and monitored the intruder, Cole had alerted the other guards, and the warning ping hit the comms.

Zinc's eyes locked on the Intruder, who had now moved on to installing the faulty unit. The intruder, with a sudden jerk of his head, the intruder began to run! He must have somehow heard the guards approaching. "No," Zinc said under his breath, "you're not getting away."

Raising his stun gun, Zinc, looks through the scope, then... zap! He fires directly at the intruders' backs.

It hit!

Dean jumps down from the catwalks, rushing to apprehend him before the intruder could get back up.

Zinc follows racing out of his office.

When they reached the now dazed intruder, Dean lifted him and tore the mask from his face.

"What the..." Dean said.

Zinc stood frozen in shock, as he looked down at...

His self!

**Zinc's eyes
locked on the
Intruder, who
had now moved
on to installing
the faulty unit.**



Vignettes

C É I L E A D H C A R O L A N

Ireland 2084:

I get on the school-bus, and save a seat for my friend, Fatima. All the other kids are on their phones;- small chips that project holograms. They play games directing their phones with their voices, laughing loudly all the while. I wait for what seems like hours but no Fatima. A girl in a hijab comes and sits next to me.

“Meadhbh,” she says.

“Fatima, I didn’t recognize you. Why are you wearing that?” She shrugs.

The bus stops at our secondary school, we get out.

Fatima and I are friends for two reasons: no one wants to be our friend mostly because we don’t have a phone even though we are in second year, and secondly because we’re both ‘normal’. I don’t care for the ‘weird’ girls who are popular in school.

Before school starts I head to the unisex toilets and Fatima heads to her own toilets (because she’s Muslim).

I leave my cubicle, I catch the eye of a boy;-we blush.

History Class:

We learn about the 'Middle Eastern War' of '26 to '38. Our teacher directs the dates onto the ho-lo-board.

"Write down the dates of the 'unprovoked' attack," our teacher says.

"Khamenei was killed, then succeeded by II Khamenei." I mutter. The war went on for 12 years. Mum & Dad tell me that after the war Iranians protested the regime,-but were eliminated.

I raise my hand.

"What about the people who were killed by the Supreme Leader?" I say.

"The former Ayatollah was a great spiritual leader, his son stepped up to the plate..."

"What about the Iranians killed by the former Supreme Leader and his son?" I persist, irritated.

"Murdered? What are you talking about?" I lose it.

"What do you think? You're the history teacher and you don't know history!"

"Do not shout in my class! I am the history teacher! What do you know about it?"

"More than you! You're just teaching propaganda!"

"How dare you! GET OUT OF MY CLASS!"

Ireland 2084:

Do not question what you are told.



The Society of Literary Justice - 2084

C A R O L I N A T O R R E S - R I V E R A

Dear People of 2084,

2084 has changed us. We take refuge in dark places. Civilization is bereft of humanity. Others have taken our place.

Robots stalk us, ecosystems collapse, water turns to poison. But there is a worse threat, one that few have seen: a dark vortex of ignorance is consuming our planet. Powers are grappling for ever more command and they wish us to forget. They wish us to forget the past and the future. For if they control these, they control us.

The restrictions crept around us so slowly that they were barely perceived. Libraries were out of classics: their selection grew smaller and smaller until they closed. Hackers began hijacking book frequencies and it was no longer safe to listen. Only government holograms were safe. These things seemed the merest accident, but every incident was separating us from knowledge.

These were no accidents. There is more, however. Much more. All historical documents were moved to “secure and government monitored facilities” for their “protection.” At first, this seemed reasonable; our rare texts should be preserved. But once these manuscripts were settled in their new home, the process of seeing even a copy became almost impossible.

The past is being obliterated! This is a crime. Without our history, we have no reference, no guide, no foothold.

Some, discovering the truth, decided to take action. With great bravery they infiltrated one of the prisons of knowledge. They obtained over fifty manuscripts. These treasures must be shared. Copies are being printed and they will be spread. We are sending you the first printed tale. Read it, and learn. Share our history with others. Tell the truth.

P.S. This message has been sent on paper as it is not as easily tracked as a flicker memo. Do not put it online. Doing this would endanger you, and the text would be blocked almost instantly.

With Concern,

The Society of Literary Justice

The Lay of Leahlyn

The trees were dark. Shadows fluttered like unresting shades. Mist leaked from the mountains and seeped into the wood, curling round blackthorn and ester flowers. Hidden in the landscape, the fortress rested between the merciless mountain and the wild woods. The primordial forest possessed it and it the forest. The trees spread until the base of the summit, then broke off, bitter at the obstacle they could not surmount. Slabs of standing stone merged with the earth, the exposed bones of the mountain. Moss tangled in the granite buttresses, and ivy clad the towers.

There lived Leahlyn, ancient as the forest; she had known ages of suffering and ages of hope. Whispering, life had revealed its story to her. So much had she witnessed that she wished to see no more. She retreated. Alone in her fortress she lived, receiving no news and hearing no tidings. She was estranged from the world.



The slick river weed clung to Denfôr as he hauled himself out of the water and onto the bank. Glaring at his forearm, he watched a drop of blood slide from a wicked gash, down to his middle finger, down to the ground. He closed his eyes. The battle was still around him, swords flashing, screaming, panic, running, rushing, fleeing. Then, a jump from a bridge into wet darkness.

Inhaling sharply, Denfôr wrenched his focus to the present; danger still stretched around him in a suffocating web. The moist mud of the river bank muffled his footsteps but showed prints plainly. Denfôr purposefully walked to the right. When his feet no longer sank into the oozing ground, he turned sharply in the opposite direction.

Leaving the river, he walked into the thick woods; the trees were not unfriendly, but they harbored secrets, secrets which were forbidden and wary. On and on Denfôr walked. He was weary, his wound

burned, he saw shimmering sparks before him, but grief sapped him the most. Shelter must be found. Though he was not familiar with the immediate geography, he had walked this land before. The town of Norfell was twelve miles east as the Irnor bird flies. Denfôr knew this place. He could receive aid and perhaps the Nellveth Rangers could give him news.



The wind rushed through his sodden garments. Time flowed over him, he could not count the hours; the thick canopy blocked the sun. On and on, trees and trees, wind and dusk and falling leaves. He marched and did not waver.

When the sun was hanging low and fiery, Denfôr reached the outskirts of Norfell. Walking in the shadows, he entered the town. The long winding streets twisted before him, channeling him to the center square. There was the meeting place, hidden in the hustle.

Denfôr drew near—he saw the slate door—the sword and the salamander were etched into the stone. He knocked. A cracked voice spoke.

“All who hate the trampling stranger”

“Enter here and face the danger,” Denfôr answered with the countersign. The door opened and he entered a dark hallway lined with hanging swords.

A pale old man stood in the gloom; Thorven was his name, and long had he fought for Olohena. Once he had possessed great strength, but it had faded. He looked into Denfôr’s face.

“I am alone. None have returned.” The old man turned his face to the wall. “We have been scattered. Only remnants of brave men and woman are left.” Denfôr’s eyes misted with sorrow.

“Is there hope?”

Thorven gave a grim smile. “Hope is a fickle thing. It betrays when we are sure of victory and bears the hardest trials. There is always hope, but you must make it. I fear, however, our hope is thin. Very thin. We must call on those who have feared to help us. We must rouse the silent among us.” Leading Denfôr, Thorven descended down the steep sloping stairs at the end of the hallway. At the bottom, they turned the corner and entered a bare stone room. A cold fire place with remnants of dark ash stood upright and disdainful in a corner, a stellate tile was nestled in the center of the floor, and a circular crest, man high, bearing the emblem of the sword and salamander was carved into the wall.

Denfôr looked in astonishment at this symbol; it was open, not hidden. This was dangerous. Reading his thoughts, Thorven smiled wryly.

“If we were discovered, the emblem would not matter; enough evidence could be found to burn the whole of Norfell. This is a center for the Nellveth Rangers. Frankly, I am astonished that we have not been raided. Perhaps they are waiting for an opportune moment? I expect this house is watched as we speak.”

Denfôr nervously shifted his weight from leg to leg. His thoughts burst out before he might sensor them.

“Should we abandon this outpost? If The Informers of Torkex are near to a raid we should hide the secrets of this place and take refuge in another house of safety.

“That would be wise if it were not for today’s scattering,” responded Thorven. “But others may return here in need, and someone must aid them. I will remain. But you must hide the secrets of this place. I may be taken, but our secrets will not.”

Staring at his wound, Denfôr licked his lips, then nodded. He was afraid. Speaking would only betray his emotions. He remained silent. Thorven recognized this gesture; he knew the feeling.

After the moment had passed, he spoke.

“In the next room, inside a flint chest, you will find bandages. Go, cleanse your wound. I will gather the papers which you will take from here.”

Denfôr left the room and Thorven stepped towards the stone seal etched into the wall. Pressing two fingers into the eyes of the salamander, he turned the seal. With an eerily silent quaking, the star crest in the polished floor rose. Having felt the vibrations, Denfôr re-entered the room, a bandage half-wrapped around his arm.

Thorven summoned him with his eyes, and together they went to the pillar which now projected into the room. Scrolls were sheltered in individual hollows in the stone. There was room for over a hundred, but only a few scrolls were hidden in this guarded place.

“You will take all,” spoke Thorven. “These papers contain the names and places of our members. Our rebellion would be decimated if they were discovered and deciphered. In this town live Olivir and Hester; they have many more papers of importance. You will gather them and...” Thorven broke off. A stark, fearful pounding echoed in the air. Men were at the door. Leaping up, Thorven looked into a tiny diamond opening left of the door. “It appears the opportune moment has arrived. The guards of Torkex are here.” No alarm was in Thorven’s voice, only a quiet urgency. Denfôr looked perplexedly at the diamond opening near the door. “Mirrors, not magic.” Thorven’s mouth twitched at the corner as he said this. “Listen, we have little time. Take the scrolls, go to Olivir and gather his.” He paused. “Have you heard of Leahlyn?”

Denfôr inhaled sharply. “Leahlyn the elf? The one that legends speak of?”

“Yes,” breathed Thorven. “But she is no legend. She was captain in the battle of Tearfay. Nearly all died, but she lived. She took the guilt upon herself and rejected the rebellion. Alone in the forest, she hid. She will hear no tidings, she will give no aid, but she possesses great power; hope is gone if she does not again join us. Go to her, tell her her of our need — beg if necessary. She lives four degrees from the Ranger’s Rock and eighty-nine from the Temple of Unvolor. Tell this to no one. After you have delivered your message, take the scrolls to the House of Gorden. The remnants of resistance will gather there.”

Denfôr was stunned. He could not fully comprehend this information, but he could remember. He nodded to Thorven, accepting the task.

Taking the edge of the star pillar which held the scrolls, Thorven twisted it. As he did so, the carving of the sword and the salamander swung open, revealing a winding tunnel.

“Go.” commanded Thorven. Without a backwards glance, he sped up the stairs.

Denfôr stood in silence. Then bending, he gathered the scrolls and placed them in a carrying satchel which had been folded into one of the carved slots. He took a last glance, then stepped into the tunnel. The door swung closed. Darkness engulfed him.



End Note: The rest of the manuscript was destroyed so the exact ending is unknown. However, another contemporary text gives a brief summary. This text was also damaged but we have been able to acquire many facts. There is historical evidence that Denfôr succeeded in his task. It is believed a girl assisted him and afterwards accompanied Denfôr to Leahlyn’s fortress. There they endeavored to persuade Leahlyn to aid their cause, but she refused. On hearing the refusal, the girl became angry and accused the elf of cowardice. Furious, Leahlyn cast them out of her castle.

Denfôr and the girl were forced to march on to deliver the scrolls. They made their way to the House of Gorden only to find another military campaign beginning. After scanty preparation, the first battle was begun. Defeat seemed inevitable, but in the midst of the conflict, Leahlyn appeared with several allies. She turned the tide and with her support there was victory. There were several more battles, and it is believed that Leahlyn perished at some time during the conflicts.

There were many years of turmoil, but there was victory in the end. Denfôr survived and became a prominent figure in the new government. It is not known what happened to the girl.

The best books, he perceived, are those
that tell you what you know already.”

—George Orwell, *1984*

2023-24



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