

## May

May felt the hair on the back of her neck rise. Robin and Arthur stood beside her; Lily had to hide in the cubby behind their closet. The patrol would come around soon to make their reproduction checks. Every day at this time she panicked at the thought that they could find her third child. There was a knock on the door.

“Everyone be silent.”

The men in the black uniforms marched in silently, they opened closets, ransacked cupboards, and ripped apart the neatly made beds.

“Clear,”

May felt her body sigh with relief.

“Achoo,”

“What was that?” A soldier in the back turned.

“Oh, I apologize, that was me.” May tried to cover up Lily’s sneeze.

“No, I watched you and your kids, you didn’t sneeze.” another soldier said.

“Look around again.”

They tore through the apartment once more, this time more aggressively than the first. May thought her heart may stop; the kids had an expression of horror on their faces.

“Over here,” They pulled the closet away from the wall gripping the frightened girl. She was only four and had been hiding all her life, just because she was the unlucky third child. It was against the law to have more than two kids, punishable by death.

“Take them into custody.”

Havoc broke out, Robin screamed and tried to release herself from the grasp of a soldier. Arthur tried to fight them off and Lily cried, caught in a soldier’s arm.

Meanwhile another soldier grabbed May and pushed her out. As the kids saw their mother disappear, they followed, giving up the struggle.

They were led out into the dirty hallway. The building had many apartments; all doors looked the same. The only way to tell them apart was by the number assigned to each family. Supplies like food and water were limited; to keep order humans were labeled. Each person had a number encoded in his or her chip. Chips were inserted into the back of your neck when you are first born. Lily didn’t have one, but both Arthur and Robin carried one.

“Mom?” Arthur looked at his mother for reassurance that things would be okay. He tried to stay strong for his siblings. May could see the fear all over his face and it was killing her inside because she knew that she could not reassure him.

They took the elevator down to the trains that ran under the building. Exiting the lift they stood directly on the platform. It was empty. Curfew had already passed and at this time everyone was required to be inside. They turned right to go to the special train reserved for troops. This part of the station was unfamiliar to May. The lift was smaller than the public trains, they were herded inside and May finally had a chance to comfort her kids.

“It’ll be okay,” but there was no certainty in her voice.

“We’ll take them to Government Building 469982-7745” a soldier announced to his comrades.

“What’s going to happen mom?” Robin cried.

“I don’t know honey,” She wished she could reassure them more.

The train’s movements were unnoticeable, unlike those reserved to the public. The tunnels were dark. They didn’t need lights, lifts were programmed to take you where you wanted, all you had to do was think it and the chip could transmit the command. May knew they were headed to the center of the city, but she couldn’t help trying to command the lift towards the hortus complex. She received a strong shock that forced her on her knees. May paused a minute expecting the guards to yell, none of the guards even glanced. They didn’t seem to care.

“Mom, are you okay?” Arthur helped her up, concerned about her fall.

“Yes, I’ll be fine” May realized she couldn’t protect her kids.

They followed instructions given to them. When they exited the train they were ushered into another elevator. Outside, clear corridors greeted them. This was the rich part of their compound. The people that worked there sickened May.

Finally they ended up in a small, clean room. There was nothing but a table and just enough chairs to fit May and her children. A small window fascinated the kids. They had never seen a window. It wasn’t a pretty sight. Truth was, no one knew what the world used to look like. It was said that the world used to be green and there used to be pools of water, now there was nothing left. The world was brown, and the air was no longer breathable for extended amounts of time. People had to stay inside, transportation was underground, and the city center was where all tracks ran together. Food was grown in special rooms where humans had learned to imitate the weather conditions of the past, and water was harvested from underground reservoirs. Supplies were always rationed here, but the actuality was that the rich could afford anything and the poor were left to starve.

The kids admired a hovercraft coming in from visiting a neighboring city as the door slammed open.

“Come with me,” a male soldier commanded.

May and her kids moved after the soldier.

“No, just the woman,” The man barked.

“No, mom! Please.”

“Please don’t separate me from my kids.”

“Terms are non-negotiable.”

“It will be okay kids, we will see each other again.” May tried to assure her kids.

May was led through the building again. They went down several floors; this level was darker. She was pushed into a gloomy room. Compared to the other room this one was dirty; the only furniture was a small bench in the corner.

“Wait here.”

Her heart raced, she knew there was no escape. The last time she was in a government building was to say goodbye to her husband. John was an honorable man. He was executed for helping the poor. He had worked on the underground farms smuggling food and supplies to families who needed them most. He never kept anything for them, although they were just as needy. John had always taught May to believe in what she thought was right. He disagreed with the corrupt distribution of wealth; the rich could afford everything, while the poor were left to starve. When he was caught he was sentenced to death. They said he was a bad influence; they couldn’t risk him changing the social classes. In other words the rich wanted to keep the unfortunate contained.

A woman entered, her eyes stared coldly at May.

“You broke the laws, you must know what the punishment is.”

“Please, I have kids,”

“Well that’s what got you in trouble in the first place.”

“I’m sorry, it wasn’t planned.”

“It never is, people like you pollute the human race and rattle the status-quo.

When one person thinks they are exempt from a rule, then pretty soon everyone believes they are. Your husband was meant to be an example, but you clearly didn’t learn, only confirming the fact that when people are exposed to rebellion they are contaminated and must be silenced before they can do more harm.”

“Please, kill me, but spare my children. They are young they can still learn and conform to your laws, they are not contaminated yet.” May clambered at the woman’s arm.

She brushed her suit as to brush of the dirt May could’ve smudged on her. She felt her hair to secure her tight bun.

“I have little say, but you will face the head of the compound and you will pay a debt for your crime.” She turned around without further explanation and left May alone in the cold and uncomfortable room. Her steps echoed through the corridor until the sealing of the door silenced them.

The rest of the evening was a blur for May. She was transferred from one room to the next. All were similar; she heard little about her children, only that they were contained in different cells. Robin and Arthur were able to stay together because they had similar ages; her poor Lily was all alone. May was transferred to a cell. She must have been deep below the earth because the walls were made of rock. She lay down on a board attached to the wall; all she was given was a thin blanket that did not warm her much. She did not want to sleep, although she felt herself drift off occasionally, only to be plunged into restless dreams.

“Get up, you have a visitor.” May was pulled off her bed. She followed another soldier to a visitor’s room.

“Faye” May rushed to her friend. Faye was her neighbor; her daughter worked with John and was killed alongside him. Since then Faye had become part of the family, and she spent a lot of time taking care of them.

“I heard and came as soon as they let me.”

“You can’t stay long, I don’t want them to think you could be involved in any way!”

“I have to make sure you’re safe, I’m asking for the kids.”

“Someone will be punished, I’m prepared for that. Just please . . . don’t let them kill my children.”

“I will do everything I can, Love.”

“You have to go now, otherwise your visit will become conspicuous.”

Faye gave her one more motherly look, she expressed concern, then she left. May was led back to the lonely cell.

“When is my trial?”

“That will be decided by someone else and judged on how urgent the matter is.” The soldier left.

May was left in that cell for a full month. She got no information concerning the outside world; neither did she know where her children were or how they were doing. For the time being visitors were prohibited, the only people coming to her cell were guards bringing her food. She didn't leave her cell until they finally allowed her visits again. Faye expressed concern, but brought no news. They had denied her the right to take any of May's children, but she was still fighting. The visit was short, it was the last she would be allowed, and May was returned to her cell where she stayed another 6 weeks.

"Get up, your trial is today."

"Where are my children?" May was hysterical, she had never been apart from them and they'd never been alone this long.

"The older ones are with your friend, but the illegal one will be tried for her crime."

"What crime? She did nothing, it's not her fault, her father and I committed the crime."

"You would do well to stay silent."

The courtroom was high in the building. She sat down in a chair facing a long table. Time passed and people started trickling in. She recognized a few of them, some were famous members of the cabinet, others were insignificant. Lastly, the head of the complex arrived. He was a tall male. His eyes were disapproving, as if the intimacy that led to Lily's birth disgusted him. He sat down at the middle of the table.

"So, you know why you're here today," He glanced at her, "You know the law. Do you have anything to say to us?"

"Only that I apologize and that I take full responsibility for my actions. I just beg of you to spare my children."

"Your children Robin and Arthur will be spared, they committed no crime." A woman at the far right of the table spoke.

"Yes, but what about my youngest? She committed no crime!"

"Well you see, she is the crime. We cannot dream to let her go, we must set an example so people know that disobedience will not be tolerated."

"But she is only four."

"Well, age does not matter, she took part in a crime and must be punished."

May recognized the woman speaking as the agent from her first night.

"How will we be punished?"

"The usual,"

"You mean to kill my little one?"

"Yes,"

"Please, Please No," She was fanatic.

"She can return to her cell now." The leader waved her away.

"Please No!" She cried and begged on the way to her cell.

When she was finally alone she just sunk into despair. She would have crying fits when she thought of her dear Lily.

The date of the execution was scheduled, until then she was allowed visits only from Faye, who was now responsible for Arthur and Robin.

"How are the children?"

"They are alright." They both avoided speaking about the execution, "I'm worried

about you dear.”

“Don’t worry about me, I worry about the kids and their future. From the moment I met John I knew that we would die fighting. I just fear it never got us anywhere, the kids still live in the same autocracy as before.”

“You have done more than you believe. You may not have changed the world, but your husband’s work has kept many families alive.”

“Times over.” A man in the familiar black uniform ushered Faye out.

“Make sure the kids are alright.” May called after her.

“Always.”

May was returned to her cell. Finally, she was allowed to meet Lily. Administration agreed that since the crime was already committed their being together could not hurt. Days passed, the date of the inevitable was scheduled for only a few weeks away. May was given one more visiting date a week before the end.

“I came as quick as I could, I can’t stay long, but I needed you to know: You were wrong that your work could’ve been for nothing.”

“I don’t understand.”

“The news about your execution has spread around the complex. Every family your husband ever helped, everyone that ever knew your husband, they all want to help. There is a huge gathering in the center. People are blocking the tracks, more than half of the entire compound is there. You’ve inspired them and they are tired of the high society controlling them.”

May was speechless at the news. She was amazed that anyone cared.

“It is unbelievable the effect you have had. You could never be forgotten.”

“Times up!” The guard tore at May’s arm.

“But it hasn’t been five minutes.” Faye argued.

“The warden wants you.”

“Thank you Faye, I can never repay what you have done and continue to do for my family. If this is the last time I speak to you, tell Robin and Arthur they will always be loved and that they must fight for what they believe to be right.”

“I will dear, I will keep them safe. Good bye . . .” May was pulled away before Faye finished her sentence. May looked back one more time to see tears streaming down Faye’s face. The grip on her arm was tight and bruised her. She was brutally thrown in her cell to face the woman she had met on her first day. Her expression was weary and her eyes changed from their icy cold to furious.

“Your family has committed crimes beyond belief and now our world suffers.”

“In my opinion the world is finally breaking free. We have suffered all our lives and the only ones suffering now is the aristocracy.”

“Well your death will make you suffer for your atrocities.”

“I no longer grieve, you’ll relieve me from my suffering.”

“That is enough, as an example for the rest of your kind, you and your daughter will be put to death in the center.” The warden stormed out.

May was shut in again, oblivious to events in the outside world. Occasionally she heard news from the riots. Little had changed since Faye had visited. May slept little and cried a lot. When her death neared her tears dried, she knew what was coming. Days passed, her visits with Lily were restricted, but she was able to see her once more before

the death date.

The day finally arrived. She was pulled out of her room early. They led her to a small room where she met with Lily.

“Mama? What’s going to happen and where are Robin and Arthur?”

“Don’t be scared baby, it will all be over soon.”

They were left in the cold room for hours. May cherished the last time she could touch human skin, and embrace her poor child. The tears that soaked her cheek were for her lost baby. It must have been afternoon when they were led outside. They took the elevator all the way down to the station. May was shoved into the black train, clinging to Lily. When they entered the center the train slowed. There were millions of people, it looked like the entire network had gathered. They were led onto a large platform, their faces amplified by the large screen. The warden received them with a satisfied smirk.

“This is the end, the end of your treachery and the end of the damage you’ve caused.”

“I believe you’re wrong, I believe this is only the beginning of your troubles.”

“Take the girl first.”

In a matter of seconds Lily was torn out of her mother’s arms. They threw her onto the middle of the stage and three large shots were fired. The crowd silenced, there was no time for the little girl to cry out. She died fast, painless. May’s shrieks were heard through the entire composite. They were the sounds of a woman in pain, true despair. Then chaos broke out, enraged at the blood of the girl dripping down the stage. The guard removed the body and hid her from view.

May was forced to the center of the platform. Her shrieks had silenced, but her tears flowed. The warden looked at her as if she waited for May to say something, but May just stared back. They were the eyes of a woman that said “just kill me, relieve the pain”. Her prayer was answered, three shot echoed through the tunnels. The body was removed the blood now flowed off the stage and stained the floor.

May would never find out the effect she left, the inspiration her pain was. It did not take a full year for the government to fall. Her family’s sacrifices were never forgotten, and the new world was modeled after the kindness and bravery shown by May.