

A rain is drizzling down from the skies, on its own business and with no time to lose. Its mission, perchance, is to cover all England with a soft cover of mist and rain. It goes on like a proper businessman, and its soft pi-pit sounds almost like a man on his way to work.

Looking at the Lichfield park far down below, children run and sing in bright colors. The rain is going slowly now, and mist is coming, and the children are yelling and squealing happily, looking and finding all the life that has come to see the mystical, magical water that flies in from the clouds. They are singing little songs of their design.

*The rain it came and life it brought,
The rain gives life yet helps dead rot,
The rain it shone and of it we sing,
The rain it came and mist moves in.*

The children are overjoyed when they find an exceptionally long worm. Boys and girls together, finding life where no one looks. In every way and every place, they find one more thing to see, one more joy to have.

In most places, some decades after childhood, people lose that love of life and nature. But there are yet some places, little ones indeed, where people never lose the magic of discovery and knowledge. There are yet some people who love life in all forms, some who care not of normal life, some indeed, who love to live.

*The rain it came and left us love,
The rain it came from skies above,
The rain it shone and of it we sing,
The rain it came and mist moves in.*

The parents of the children sit on the benches, talking of oddities like cars and bread, of prices and love and children and school. One murmured word comes up and flees quickly, as a small child might from a grumpy old man down the way, and yet it leaves a last withering wisp of itself, no more than a quiet whisper.

One word unlike the others, for it is confusing; pain it caused; pain it's causing; and pain's causing it. The three letters, which are a worry and a terror, the three letters. An a, r, and w, but not in that order. There are fundraisers and food-sends to those far away, fighting for beliefs of

others and land not for them and money for rich they never will meet. War.

The rain is yet drizzling. Does it never fight? Does rain have peace, never fighting, never disagreeing or squabbling, arguing or battling. But closer in you see, the rain never touches. No fights, but no contact, staying distant and apart. Of course rain fights not when it never meets. Is there no happiness with no war, and no friendship without fights, no love without disagreements?

And where does rain come from, sky indeed, but it yet feels to be much different. Some rain feels as if it traveled through all space, through all time, from before 2014, Year of the New Earth, when the weather was so bad people turned all resources to help the planet, or from the future, where we may only see with time.

Yet the rain joins eventually on this common ground, on grasses and leaves and sidewalks and benches, children and clothes and buildings and mailmen, and the newspaper blown off its stand.

“Bloodless war” over after children hold non-violent protests on all sides

There is more than one ending to a war, other than straight victory and loss. There is love and peace and life as well. Whenever a war is over there is not laughter but relief, but a war without death has both, laced with joy, with a sprinkle of love. This is not what comes of war, but of its blood-free end.

In thousands of places in so many countries there is love and peace and life and rain. But the rain is going away now, far away.

*The rain it came and blinded us,
but the mist was there and we lost no trust,
Love and life and peace and joy
A thousand strong, do not toy
With us, for through the rain,
Though we may never meet to talk again,
We had mist of love, mist of hope.
Goodbye, old friend, I'll see you.*

Philosophy of Snow

Paris, Twenty Years Later

Winter, 2045. It has been 20 years since the "Bloodless War" - a series of arguments so vehemently made concerning the world economy it seemed war was inevitable. But the children of the world joined hands and simply refused to let it happen. They showed the leaders of nations and continents how to make sacrifices and to be happy. The children of the world, at peace.

Amelia Groveworth is now 23. She was one of the frontrunners of the Lichfield branch of the children from the Bloodless War. She has made several important contributions to the cosmological society, and is pulling in 900,000 quid a week. She is living in Paris now, happy, restless. She still feels unfinished.

We see her now, leaving a cafe, walking towards the metro. Clad in oxblood leather and tight blue jeans with her burnt autumn-leaf colored hair, she is a striking figure as she goes down the steps. The instant her feet touch the base of the stairs, she feels something is wrong, and her violet eyes flash, showing golden flecks. There is somebody new here, in the time when no tourists are around. She looks over the heads of the other commuters, not hard because of her high stature, and she smiles. Nothing odd, just a new ticket-man. She walks up and gets in line, but she still feels like something is wrong. The ticket-man is writing names down.

People are muttering now. "*Appeler la police, il est un criminel echappé!*"

"*A la recherché d'un scientifique.*" whispers a young man next to her, leaving the station. She looks at him, and he winks. "A scientist? He's looking for a scientist?" she says to him in a low voice. She's speaking in English now, hoping the ticket-man doesn't know it. The young man nods and walks away.

She is about to slip out of line when she realizes the ticket-man is watching her. To leave, so close to the front of the line, would make it all too obvious she knows what he is up to. She composes herself and walks to the front of the line.

"Mein name ist Charity Pisten," she says in a perfect German accent. She gives him a cold look. The man grunts and hands her a ticket.

She looks at the train number. It's a new train. She exhales. It's already pulled up and she hops on the nearly empty train, with half the seats full of boxes, leaving her sitting next to a blond old lady with too much makeup. As the train starts up, the old woman starts to frantically wash it off. *She must be going somewhere important*, Amelia thinks.

It takes her a moment to realize something. Something the ticket-man did, or rather, didn't do.

He didn't write down her name.

She stands up. "So why am I here?" she asks. The "old lady" looks up. She can see how young she is, now that all her makeup is gone.

"You know I speak English," the lady says.

Amelia rolls her violet eyes. The tiny gold specks in her eyes glinted. "The French aren't so covert," she states flatly. The woman nods her agreement, long blond hair bouncing behind her.

The train stops, and the woman brings her out. They enter a large laboratory, full of every high-tech machine that Amelia has heard of. Her eyes widen for an instant then narrow.

"You didn't answer my question. Who are you?" she snaps.

The woman laughs, irritating Amelia more. "Call me Victoria. We are G.U.A.R.D. Global, Universal, And Regional Defense. We defend against all threats from space."

Amelia smiles. "So someone took me seriously," she laughs. Five years ago, she had discovered a radio signal from deep space, which seemed to be in a different language. It would not stop transmitting, unlike the Wow signal, but the government had told her it was one of their experimental satellites, and that was the official line. Amelia shut up, though she knew it wasn't human, but she also knew that the government would be all too happy to have her conveniently forget everything, with the help of some drugs. GUARD would probably be the ones giving me the shot now, she realized.

"Why do you assume you must defend yourself? Have there been any attacks?" Amelia asks.

Victoria shakes her head. "No attackers, yet. So far, we've only found one alien in person, and he's no threat. But we must assume aliens are a threat."

Amelia sighs. "Why? Does 'Innocent until proven guilty' not extend to visitors?" she questions. Victoria looks straight ahead.

"We must be prepared," she states flatly. It's more a motto than a fact.

"We are. For war, not diplomacy." Amelia felt something rise in her. A memory comes, of whispers in a park, so long ago. She vows, barely knowing it, never to let the fearful sound

spread, certainly not because of some stereotype her governors held.

I never want to hear those again.

“We cannot assume that all other life is coming to harm us.” Amelia looks up. “For all we know, they’re as harmless as the snow,” she murmurs.

Her eyes snap forwards. “Why am I here?”

Victoria nods, relieved. “As for why you’re here, we don’t even know. One of our...allies, if you could call him that, asked for you. Probably because of your signal- what did you call it? The Shakespeare signal?”

“O brave new world,” Amelia remarked.

Victoria laughs, and now Amelia can appreciate her optimism.

“Our ally, he’s a.... he’s an alien,” the woman tells her. “Not the kind from another country, I’m afraid.” They’ve come to a door, and Amelia knows who is behind it. “This is where I leave you,” Victoria whispers. “Bye.”

Amelia is left, standing alone, in front of a cold metal door. Behind it are things she has always wanted to know, to meet, and to learn. A new life.

“That has such people in it,” she says, and opens the door.

Philosophy of Stars

A human-looking person sits in a chair calmly, hands folded and legs crossed. His hair is brown and short and a little curly. His bright green and teal eyes are watching her through brown-tinted, frameless glasses. It seems to be a similar strange mixture of eye-colors to the ones carried in Amelia. She takes the chair across from him and sits, facing him. And looking at him, she knows.

He is the young man who warned her. He is the young man from the station.

“Amelia,” he begins, “You do not know me, not well, but you’re so calm, facing the unknown. Who are you to see such strange things so calmly?”

“I am not afraid of the unknown. I simply want to know.” she answers.

He laughs. “A good motto. I should take that idea seriously.” His face sobers. “But you are something new. Don’t you view me as a threat?”

Amelia jerks a thumb at the exit. “They do. They’re also idiots.”

He smiles gratefully. "You seem so alien yourself."

"Not surprising. To you, I am an alien." Amelia's face is straight, analytic.

"By your terms, I mean. You are something new. And your eyes," he murmurs. "Violet and gold. Always told that it was a mutation."

She nods. "Yes. The Lichfield mutation. It only started the year I was-2022."

"You were the first."

"Yeah." she mutters. She isn't looking away, but her voice is softer. He seems to be looking at her differently. For the first time, she realizes he has the same kind of mutation in his eyes, and she relaxes.

He laughs, this time bitter. "They don't know yet."

"Care to explain?"

"This...*mutation*...is easily explained. There was a temporal...bend. The energy irradiated the town, and you were the first child to be born with the mutation, which I have as well. It's a bit more than that, though." He sighs the last words. She raises an eyebrow.

"How so?" As she says the words, she wonders if she wants to know.

"You have a different relationship with time than most people do. Some control. But the difference is that you're...human. And the thing is, humans are connected with time in a very strange way.

"Most humans keep themselves fairly disconnected from their technology and science, but not all. If you have a human child who is interested in science, or especially temporal science and quantum sciences, adding the temporal energy will make them almost invincible, maybe even able to control time."

Amelia feels a need to interrupt. "How long has there been a possibility of humans gaining this mutation?"

"Thousands upon thousands of years. There have been two names, I think, which have been widely used to describe those affected on your planet. *Tydgene* and *temporisore*, which is Latin. Both roughly mean 'Time Healer'."

"So I'm not the first," Amelia sighs in relief.

"First since the year 1000." He observes.

“Oh.” She pauses. The silence stretches awkwardly on.

“So why do you care? It’s not like I’m going to be out blowing up planets or something. Unless you want me to help your army?” she finally says.

He smiles, a soft, sad smile. “No. But trust me, the rest of my people are going to take a large interest in you.”

“So you won’t bother me, but your planet will.”

“They won’t want you to join any armies. Just go to school.” he says sheepishly.

“Give me an education? Good. Assuming I’ll be allowed to leave afterwards. Which I’m guessing isn’t the case.” She’s leaning back in her chair now. He’s burying his face in his hands.

“Listen, even if you were allowed, you wouldn’t have a reason to go home.” He’s pleading.

Amelia sits up straight. “Why?”

He keeps his face in his hands. “The school takes a century to graduate.”

“I won’t live that long.”

He looks up, his head rising. His face shows sadness, and sympathy, and wretchedness.

“Yes, you will. Having a different relationship with time.... Your aging stalls out physically around 20. I’m sorry.” His voice is hollow.

Amelia feels like shrinking. The room is cold and dark, even under the bright fluorescent lights. His next words are floating out of a suffocating quiet, and she cannot speak or breathe.

“When you die, everybody you know will be dead.”

“I can’t stay,” she says softly. It’s been a half hour of silence.

“I’m sorry,”

“I can’t go to your schools.”

“I’m sorry,”

“What do I do?” The whisper through the dark is less question than statement. He looks up.

I don’t even know his name.

I can’t just leave her.

They stare through the bright darkness.

But I have to go. I have to go to their schools. It’s their rules.

The air is so impossibly thick.

But I have to let her go. I have to follow my people's rules.

Their eyes close, then open.

Rules. They're stupid. But we must follow.

Stupid thing, rules. But I have to follow them.

The darkness moves a little and they both realize something.

Why?

The darkness moves to some other part of the world. Their minds are clear.

“Come with me,” he says, “and be free.”