

The horn sounds once. It rings rudely throughout the dark town, waking the children for school; that means me. I kick my covers off and step onto the dirt ground of my bedroom. I watch my little brother do the same. We have to share a room; it's a law for all siblings. They don't want houses taking up too much space, to support our population. The town was only intended to support one hundred and fifty people.

I hurry to get my once white clothes on. I try to keep them as clean as possible, but dirt still stains my shirt from Monday. At least tomorrow is Saturday; washing day. Water can't be wasted where there is a limited supply, so nothing is cleaned until it's filthy. The pipes are above us, with droplets of water trapped inside, trickling down to the buckets.

The horn sounds once again. People say that there weren't always horns. They say that there used to be real time, and it was kept with clocks. But one day, the clocks stopped working, and there was no more time. Now it's just made up; the horn sounds once for school, twice for lunch, three times for dinner and so on for other events. But there is no definition of when school, lunch, or dinner is, the time is only estimated. The people at Town Hall decide when to sound the horn. I hear a loud click and know the lights just came on from outside.

Mom must have already gone to work. Most adults work for the generator company. They create the energy for the lights. The business has been passed down sixteen generations, and the man who now owns it, Louis Margo, has a large house with power in almost every room. Sometimes, enough energy is saved up to power every individual house, but that hasn't happened in a long time. Only the important people have fully powered homes.

I walk out of my room and into our living room which is the only luxury-type room we are permitted to have. I grab my book and put my long blond hair in a bun before leaving. I'm greeted by the blinding lights I remember too well. I look up at them; so hideous and fake. I wonder what the real sun was like. It was probably beautiful and brilliant. How much I would give to view it. My little brother steps out of the house and stands next to me. His shirt is even dirtier than mine. He observes me staring up at the lights, then walks away shaking his head.

Everyone thinks I'm crazy. I walk to school alone, kicking the dirt with my feet and watching the clouds of dust that rise. My Dad had told me that there were once clean white clouds that floated in the air. I believed him, but no one else did. I was dying to know more, but after he died, my questions were left unanswered, and the truths were left untold. No one reveals anything about above; we aren't supposed to speak of it. In school, we are taught that we came

here because of the war. We lost, and our land was taken and used for the New War between the victor and another country. So, we “disappeared” and built underground towns. No one claims to know what lies above now.

I look up from the ground, Evelyn Margo stands in front of me at the school door. Her father, the owner of the generator company, whispers something in her ear, forging a smile, and then leaves swiftly. Evelyn stares at me with eyes the color of emeralds, and I stare back expressionless. I’ll never understand why her eyes look so kind, when she and her friends act so hateful. Her well-dressed posse soon surrounds her. They stare at me with antipathy. Evelyn now does as well. She is always treated with importance, just like her father. I observe him now walking away. A slip of paper falling out of his pocket catches my eye, but he doesn’t even realize it.

Where did he get paper? I think. The only paper in this town is held in the Artifact Room at school. But we never use it; we aren’t even permitted to touch it. Evelyn turns away from me and walks into the building with her friends. I continue walking, but have a different destination; I want that piece of paper. I casually walk over to the slip of paper and inconspicuously bend down to pick it up. The horn sounds again, indicating the last chance to enter the school. My heart skips a beat. I spin around and see the mechanical doors closing. Once they close, I’ll be locked out, with no way of entering again. I stuff the paper in my pants pocket, and sprint to the door. I extend my arm for the handle and for the second time today, I hear a horrible click as it locks.

Silence. That’s what I hear now. Some people think that silence is impossible to hear, but I can. My mind now thinks rapidly. *I can’t be seen outside of school during education hours. I must find somewhere to go... Home!* I run to my house as quietly as possible, but the patter of my feet never seemed louder. When I reach home, I disappear into my room and dissolve into my bed covers, dreading the trouble I’ll be in. I remember the paper. Reaching into my pocket, I yank it out and begin reading:

Dear Sir August,

Meet me tomorrow in the tunnel under my office. I will be there all day. With your misfortune in losing the last few battles, joining together to win the New War could not have been a more genius idea. I know where most of the other towns are hidden, and can lead you to

them. We can make them fight alongside you and your men. But I need your word that afterwards we will both rule the land, together.

Sincerely,

Louis Margo

I read the letter twice more to confirm what I read. A tunnel? Joining together? Make us fight? Rule the land? I sit upright in bed puzzled and shocked that Louis Margo would construct such a plan. The plan I interpret is not genius! I fold the letter into a neat square and push it into my pocket once more. *The letter is obviously from above*, I think. So, the tunnel Louis Margo wrote of, must lead there. Without even thinking, I slip out of bed and leave the house. I am no longer in control of my actions, but I know where I'm taking myself. This is my chance to be able to look up and not see hideous lights, but to be someplace where time is genuine. This is the only chance I'll be able to see above.

As I creep through the town towards the Margo house I imagine the sights of above. I envision the sky with the clouds and sun. When I finally reach the large home I stop. I realize the risks I'm about to take. I haven't even formed a plan. I feel my heart pounding, almost bursting in my chest. My body trembles with fear as I prepare myself for the potential dangers of entering the house. *What if it's locked*, I think. I slowly walk to the door and push it sluggishly. It creaks as it opens and at the same time that I cringe at the noise, I'm relieved that it's open. I'm confident that there isn't anyone home. Evelyn is at school and Louis Margo is most likely at the generator company with his wife Marie...hopefully.

I tiptoe inside the house and examine the superior furniture and rooms. I focus solely on finding the office. I pass a doorway with a desk inside and immediately identify it as the room I'm searching for. I step inside. The room is plain and has only two pieces of furniture: a desk and a chest. An ornate rug lies lifeless on the floor. I lift a corner expecting to find the hidden tunnel. I'm wrong. Underneath lays nothing but the dirt ground. The chest is opened a crack and I walk over, curious as to what's inside. I lift the top and peer in. The inside could not be more wonderfully unexpected. The chest has no bottom. Instead it is placed around a hole about four feet deep. I know it's the tunnel I'm looking for.

I jump inside and my feet hit the hard ground. I reach up to shut the chest, leaving a crack for light. I crouch down and see the extended tunnel ahead. I pray that the tunnel walls don't collapse on me once I start on my way. As I get further into the tunnel, the light fades and I run my fingers along the tunnel walls to avoid collisions. At last I feel a wall in front of me and the tunnel ends. I reach up to feel what lays above. I feel a large rough stone. Lifting it with all the strength I have, and move it to the side. Light floods through the hole above me.

I hoist myself up, leaving the tunnel. I feel warmth on my skin, and see beams of light shoot through the air. I look up and finally see the sun. It's positioned in the middle of the sky. It glows and radiates the colors of yellow and orange. My eyes sting and fill with water but I keep looking. Tears roll down my cheeks. It's so bright, so alive! I see white puffy clouds floating. A light shade of blue, I have never quite seen before, serves as their backdrop. Birds soar high with the clouds. It's impossible to imagine how stunning the sky really is.

I breathe the fresh clear air. It flows deep into my lungs, soothing me. I beam like the sun as I run with the wind, gulping the clean air every stride I take. My hair waves with the rush of wind passing by. How much I would give to stay here, to wake up every morning to the warmth of the sun and not the lifeless light down below. I stop, something stands in the distance; a sign. I distinguish few words, freshly painted white and carved on a large slab of stone. The sign is held up by a newly cut piece of wood. Only a few feet tall, it stands conspicuously below a large hill. I walk closer, still breathing deep from running. I soon become close enough to read the pallid lettering:

This land once owned and dictated by Sir August, was surrendered the morning of January 21st, 2793, and now belongs to the people.

Millions of questions flood through my mind. What will happen to Louis Margo's awful plan with Sir August? Does Louis Margo even know about the surrender and the outcome of the war? I push my questions away to enjoy my moments in the place I know I'll never see again. I begin climbing the hill for one last view. When I reach the top I look over the opposite side. At the bottom, an unforeseen, town is situated. I hear the joyous laughter of people and see children playing games while their parents converse with other adults.

I crouch down, making myself invisible to the people. With fear of being seen, I turn around and hurry back down the hill. I run back freely to the tunnel and before hopping inside, take one more deep breath, and one more glance at the sky. Then I vanish from the place I now love. As I go through the tunnel, I continue visualize the sun and the sky as I remember, promising myself to remember them forever. I assure myself that I will never forget how the wind and sun felt. When I finally see a crack of light, I know I've reached the chest. I raise my hands and push it open. *School has probably ended*, I think pulling myself out of the hole.

“What are you doing?” a voice roars, interrupting my thoughts.

I look up. In front of me stands Louis Margo. He looks down on me, infuriated with rage. He grabs my arm and shakes me like a rag doll.

“Answer my questions! How much do you know?” he growls.

He shakes me again. The letter slips out of my pocket and floats to the ground. We both watch as it plunges to the floor. I say nothing. Neither of us picks it up.

“Did you read the letter? How much do you know? Answer me!” he snarls, craving answers.

“I don't know anything!” I lie, terrified of his wrath.

Evelyn appears in the doorway.

“Father, what is going on?” she shrieks, taken aback.

Louis Margo completely disregards her. He doesn't even look her way. Evelyn stares at me with her green eyes. I see them glisten in the light.

“How do you know about the tunnel?” He continues, interrogating me further. “Tell me how you know or I'll-“

“I told her,” she interrupts, lying, in a hushed tone.

I turn to Louis Margo, in shock. His neck snaps in Evelyn's direction.

“What's that?” he asks, even though he heard her.

Evelyn glances at me. My eyes now remain on her.

“I told her about the tunnel,” she says louder, so he hears.

Louis Margo lets me go, pushing me slightly backwards. I look at Evelyn as her father saunters toward her. She stands with poise, knowing he won't harm his own daughter. Louis Margo struggles to compose himself, taking deep breaths. I see his jaw tense and he clenches his

teeth. He knows Evelyn is lying. It must infuriate him even further that he has been betrayed by his own daughter. He still doesn't accuse her of anything.

He knows I obtain harmful information that could easily be used to sabotage him.

"So," he says, attempting to act informally, "this is all just a...*misunderstanding*." I see him wince at the word.

"Yes," Evelyn replies, promptly.

"I am terribly sorry Miss...", he says forging his kindness and seeking for my name.

"Jordyn, my name is Juliet Jordyn," I reply.

The game we all know is going on, finally ends; I won.

"I have to go now," I say politely, "My brother must be wondering where I've gone."

I feel Louis Margo's eyes glued to me as I walk out the doorway. Once I'm out of the house, I sprint home. I pace back and forth, in my empty house, pondering what I should do. When I make my decision, I head for Town Hall. I disappear into the building, determined to inform everybody the untold truth I now acquire.

Honesty is something that only some people attain, and yet, the truth is always desired. Lies are what most people tell, and yet, they are things that no one wants to hear. When the horn rings four times throughout the town I know what I'm going to tell at that meeting: the truth. I am one of the people who attain honesty, just like my father did.

A crowd gathers in front of town hall, for the assembly. I stand boldly on the steps watching people I know come. At the moment, I have no trepidation. I string words together in my head, preparing what I'll say to everyone. When it appears that everyone in town has arrived, the man I persuaded to sound the horn signals me to begin the meeting. I take a deep breath, skimming over the faces of the people. Louis Margo is nowhere to be spotted. But Evelyn stands in the crowd, watching me with her green eyes.

"Above us," I say, "the New War has ended."

The people look at each other, bewildered.

"You must believe me when I tell you that Louis Margo was going force us to fight again in a new war. In return, once the war was won, he was going to rule the land with him," I pause for a moment, letting the news sink in. "But Sir August surrendered, and the people won."

"Those are lies!" Louis Margo barks, appearing in front of the crowd. When he gets nearer he whispers at me lividly, "I knew you lied to me!"

He stands on the steps next to me, glaring at the crowd, dreading that they'll believe me and not him. I ignore his words and continue my attempt at convincing the town.

"You can all finally see above!" I say, "You can escape from underground and observe the land originally intended for us! There's a tunnel! Whoever wants to leave can come with me."

The crowd stares at me vacantly. I wait on the steps for any movement. Then Louis Margo begins laughing, trying to make my words sound like a joke. My stomach churns and I grit my teeth. No one volunteered to come. Then, I see the crowd separate as someone walks towards the steps. It's Evelyn.

"I'll go with you," she announces softly.

I look at her and a smile sneaks over my mouth. Her father stares at his disloyal daughter, astonished. I hear the crowd begin to buzz.

"Then I'll go, too," another voice declares.

"I'm going," someone else proclaims.

I begin walking towards the tunnel with Evelyn at my side. Some members of the crowd join as we march, but I don't turn around to see who else follows. The remaining crowd watches as we leave.

I lead the people to Evelyn's house, into her father's office, and through the dark tunnel walls. When we exit the other side the group behind me feels the warmth of the sun for the first time, just as I had. They breathe the clean air and their eyes, too, sting from the brightness. The wind rushes past, taking us along. Where I'm headed sits a village awaiting our arrival. As we embark on the journey past the sign and up the hill, I feel confident and thrilled, ready for what lies ahead.

I finally turn around to see the group; only sixteen people stand behind me. The rest of the town had been too unsure of what was really the truth. I look over their faces searching for two in particular. Then I realize something. Even my mother and brother had doubted me, and they watched me as I left. A tear slides down my cheek, which I wipe away. Just as I had pledged to never forget the sky, I promised myself I would never forget their faces. But maybe one day they will join us.