

“Renewed Hope”

By Tamryn LaFromboise

When I was a little girl, I would watch the trees sway outside my window whenever a storm came. I remember all of the neighborhood kids would come to play on the tire swing in front of my house. On sticky summer afternoons, I'd make grass angels on my lawn, which my father always ensured flourished and shined in contrast to our neighbors front yards. In the many years that have passed since girlhood, the grass never could retain the life it once held and forever remained a sickly yellow, and raw stumps stand in place of the trees that we all once cherished.

I met my late husband Eric before the climate apocalypse, at the very beginning of the Willow Project era. I saw him on the front page of the newspaper with the headline “Protester arrested after 30 hours chained to tree”, which happened to be a couple blocks away from where I lived. He had spent his youth as a passionate activist. He frequently hosted protests for environmental and social justice. My daughter took after him, even after the ecosystem collapsed when she was about 11.

Around that time, most people relocated to more inhabitable areas and job scarcity was intense. Us both being teachers, we couldn't afford to live, and there were little to no jobs left to take. I took a job packaging government sanctioned food, which was practically pink mush since no crops could grow and most wildlife was on the brink of extinction. Eric had no choice but to get an oil drilling gig in Alaska, which inevitably led to his death at age 37 due to toxic chemicals he inhaled while working.

My daughter Havana is now the age that Eric was when he passed, though we've hardly spoken since my 63rd birthday, nearly 7 months ago. Havana thinks that her fathers death could've been prevented. She thinks that we gave up on saving Earth far too early, and she doesn't understand that the way humankind was living was unsalvageable. Havana was a part of a nonprofit organization called Natives against Climate Apocalypse, which sparked tension between us because of the circumstances of her fathers death.

I wasn't able to teach my daughter our cultural practices and beliefs as much as I wanted to. Our resources plummeted with the drought and super storms, and most people focused on surviving famine and extreme weather rather than preserving our ways of life. I wish Havana and my grandson Toby could have experienced life the way that I did, and I wish that they could have felt the hope I felt when I was Toby's age of 15 . Back then I imagined we'd see the revitalization of our languages and traditions before we saw the end of civilization as we knew it.

In 2063, the government set up a plan to ensure our resources that we have left last as long as they can. What used to be the Flathead Reservation is more known as “Area 12”, which contains around 1 village per each town. The same goes for each reservation in the United states, and off the reservation goes by counties. Each village receives weekly rations which vary

by the size of each settlement. In area 12, there are 26 villages in total. Transferring between settlements is prohibited as a way to establish authority over the people.

Even now, in 2070, society has struggled to adapt. Some areas have been deemed unlivable and the people residing in them must transfer units. Money is a thing of the past, as we only are allowed our rations of pink mush (which supposedly contain all the nutrients we need) and water. Trading is allowed, and people will trade clothes and books and other goods that we enjoyed pre-crisis. We still have schools, which are all AI and only teach what's necessary to communicate with the people within your village.

We don't know much about what's going on outside of the United States as the only contact that the government allows is monitored, and we aren't allowed to speak about the crisis in any context. To me, it hardly mattered as I knew of my own fate, and the fate of everyone else. That is, until I discovered last week at the government library, one of the computers didn't have any monitoring or restrictions. I knew that this opportunity was rare and I had to act now or else I'd lose it. I snuck out into the library past curfew, and I wrote a broad message to see if I could get into contact with anybody anywhere.

I received a response after only 15 minutes of waiting, which appeared to be from Australia. They said that they've been trying to communicate with someone from the United States for years, and that they know of our living conditions. They said that the scientists of Australia have cracked the code on how to fix our planet; fungus. They figured out a way to produce vital fungi at an overwhelmingly rapid rate which inherently de-escalates climate change, our biodiversity depletion, and restores/supports life on earth. According to the scientists and every other source I've researched, every country besides the United States is in the process of recovery.

I wasted no time getting the word out there about the secrecy and democide that our government has subjected us to. There was outrage. A series of riots began across the nation when I uncovered this truth. Havana and I led the revolution until the eventual demise of our lifestyle and newly established freedom. Only time will tell whether our planet as a whole will heal, but with me and my daughter's passion for change and my late husband's ideology of environmental justice being social justice, we have an opportunity for growth and preservation for the first time in forever. I only wish that we would've respected and protected Earth beforehand.