

April 8th, 2086

Mother gave me a journal today. She told me to write about my life in it, she tells me it creates a log of my memories. My name is William, and I am ten years old. Mother tells her friends that I am a bright child, and my teacher agrees. I like to watch television. Mother says that it is one of the sources of the corruption of my mind, whatever that means.

Today, I went to school. My teacher, Mr. Power, taught us about our leader, Derek, and how he is going to help us in our time of need. Mr. Power told us that something called the Flooding caused the our world to be covered in water, and that we used to live on the land, not in the sky. I wonder what living on the ground would be like, it would probably be cold. Mr. Power said that before Derek took a million people into the sky with him, the world used to have over ten billion people living on it. That is a lot of people, more than we could possibly feed. Mr. Power showed us pictures of what it used to be like on the world. It was weird, there were people with skin like chocolate, Mr. Power said that they were a different kind of person, and that they did not survive the journey to the sky in 2061. We also learned about how Derek makes life in the sky better than the way it was on the earth. We always have food, shelter and clothes.

Once school was over, I was sick of hearing about Derek, he is all we ever hear about. Melissa invited me to her house. She has a bigger television than I do. She says it is because her Father has a good job working for Derek. I never understood why Melissa has a Father, while I have a Mother. We were told it was to secure the correct mating of our people, what that means I do not understand. I wish I had a Father, he would understand me more than Mother, he would know what boys like to do. I would be allowed to watch television all day long, like Melissa does.

After watching television with Melissa for an hour, Mother called and told me to come home. She does not like me spending too much time at Melissa's house. She says that her Father is a bad influence on my mind, another one of these sources of my mind's corruption. She tells me not to watch

anymore television today, and to help her make supper instead. We make a chocolate cake along with our daily meat Derek gives us. I cannot eat the cake, it reminds me too much of the chocolate men from Mr. Power's pictures.

After supper I do my homework, I have to write about what life would be like on the flooded world had Derek not saved us. I say that we would have died along with all the other people that Derek did not save. I show it to Mother, she laughs and tells me to change it to say that life in the sky with Derek is perfect and that I cannot imagine it any other way. She says if I make the change, she'll tell me about the way the world was before the Flooding. I make the change.

Mother tells me that the world was in constant war, which is when people fight amongst each other. She says that they had these weapons capable of killing millions of people in a split second. She told me that people we split into groups, called countries, and that she was a part of the Leader country before the Flooding. This country, she says, used to kill other countries that did not listen to the way it said they should live. This went on for many years, and one of the Follower countries decided to stop the way they were living, and set giant fields of ice in north and south of the world on fire, and it all melted, and the water levels began to rise. Betrayed, the Leader country destroyed every other country in the world. Around this time, she tells me, Derek decided to save people. He took five hundred thousand children, half boys, half girls, with him into the sky. Mother says she was eight at this time, so she was taken with Derek, and separated from her parents.

Once she finished her story, she gave me this journal, told me to write, and then go to bed. Now that I am done writing for today, it is bedtime. Good night.

April 14th, 2086

It is Sunday. Today is the day Mother brings me to the weekly Update from Derek. For breakfast, Mother gives me the bacon that Derek sends on Sundays.

At the Update, I sit next to Melissa. We listen to Derek tell us over the large television that he is the savior of our lives, and that we owe him greatly for everything he gives us. He tells us this at the start of every Update. After his greeting, he talks about last weeks events. Last week, our population doubled from the original five hundred thousand, there are now one million people living in the sky since 2061. He then reminds us that the anniversary of take-off is coming up, May 13th, this time it will be our 25th year in the sky.

Derek now brings two men out onto the television with him, they are both wearing pink shirts. He says that these men were caught mating incorrectly. Incorrect mating, he goes on to say, is the one deadliest sin a Sky Dweller can commit, and that these men are going to experience retribution. They are placed next to a large white wall. Nails are drove through the ir hands and into the wall, they are now stuck there. Derek draws out a sword. He then cuts the men in half from the torso down. Screaming in agony, the men are still hanging from the wall, which is now painted red. Once the screams fade, Derek laughs. He tells us that we've no longer doubled out original population. The hanging torsos are then thrown out into the sky, destined to float in the water below for the rest of time.

I invite Melissa over after the Update. She does not want to come over because Mother will not let us watch the television, and Melissa invites me to her house instead. Mother tells me I cannot go, and I walk home with Mother.

Mother has a vanilla-cherry cake made for supper, I cannot eat it.

May 13th, 2086

Today is the 25th year in the sky. We have school off today, and we attend the celebration instead. Mother arranges for me to meet with Melissa there. We play many games, such as Flood the World, a competition to see who can melt ice with a flamethrower the quickest.

Once we are done playing the games, Melissa and I go to the special anniversary Update. Derek

is there in person this time. He tells us about how he managed to get us into the sky. He began developing the technology to float an entire city back in the early 50s. He figured out that the city would have to be encased in a bubble, to prevent the heavy winds in the sky from blowing our people over the edge, and to discourage jumping off. The city is lifted by three hundred enormous propellers, which are constantly spinning and are always under maintenance, to ensure that we never plummet from the sky. On the top of the city bubble, there are thousands of other propellers, some of which use the naturally strong winds that the bubble protects us from to power everything in the city, including the propellers, and other propellers which keep the city from blowing around in the sky. Derek tells us a story of how he stole the first propeller that he was going to use from a military base.

In the base, there was a large propeller, fifty meters in diameter. It was made out of a light alloy, so that it would be large and not too heavy. Derek entered the base from the back, climbing a fence to get in. Inside, there was an airplane hangar, a place where gigantic metal birds called airplanes rested. These airplanes had many propellers on them to help their flight, and Derek wanted one. Derek waited until the soldiers all went to bed, and he broke into the hangar. Inside, there was a lone propeller attached to a truck, which, according to Derek, is a primitive means of human transportation. Derek took the truck, and began to drive, the act of moving the truck, out of the hangar. Unfortunately, the truck created a great noise, and it woke up the soldiers, who thought they were under attack by the enemy. To escape, Derek had to drive at full speed. He tells us that the soldiers began to swarm the front of the base, the only way out. Derek says that there must have been three thousand men with guns armed and pointed at him. He says he drove through all of the soldiers blocking his exit, killing them all. Once he was out, he attached the propeller to his personal airplane, and flew away from the base, undetected.

Derek says that his stealing was viewed as an attack on the Leader country. The Leader country, unable to attain the identity of the attacking country, started putting living rules into place. Every Follower country had to abide by certain rules, they had to give the majority their resources to the

Leader country, they had to cut their army's size down by sixty percent, and they were forced to turn over any powerful mass destruction weapons to the Leader country. Many countries did not comply, and were instantly wiped off the face of the planet, the countries that did comply, however, started wars amongst each other, since they were now of roughly equal power. This caused tensions, which as we all knew, ended in the Flooding.

The Update continues with our weekly praise of Derek, and as is tradition of the anniversary Update, Derek demands Tribute. Tribute is the act of choosing three young women to be presented to Derek. Derek asks them each one question, "What have I done to enrich your life?" They all get a chance to answer, and Derek picks the woman with the best answer to live with him for the year, while the other two are executed for not living up to standard.

This year's women walk up on Derek's stage. Derek asks his question. The first woman says that Derek always gives her food to eat. The second woman says that Derek saved her from the Flooding. The third woman says that Derek is the greatest man alive, and that he enriches not only her life, but everyone else's life as well. Derek chooses the third woman, saying that giving out food so people can live doesn't enrich the first woman's life, and that he did not save the second woman from the Flooding, but one of her parents. The first two women are taken away, presumably to be killed, but it is never shown to us in person. Derek then ends Tribute, and in the process the Update, and leaves with the third woman.

After the Update, Mother and I walk home, and Melissa leaves with her Father. Once we are home, we have a meal of steak and baked potatoes. After dinner, Mother tells me a story of how Derek was not always the way he is today. Mother says that Derek never used to hold Update, or Tribute or anything involving the killing of our citizens. He used to be a nice man, who was nice to all of the citizens, but if the need for something arose, he would go to great ends to satisfy that need, as shown by the stunt he pulled to obtain the propeller. He made sure everybody had food to eat, water to drink, and shelter to live in. Life was good.

However, one day Derek began to claim to be the greatest human being alive. She said that the programming on the television changed shortly thereafter, into what is being shown today. People began to agree with Derek, and he was worshiped by the citizens, or as he began to call them, the Sky Dwellers. He became obsessed with keeping his legacy alive, and ordered the immediate killing of the people who he called the improper breeders, and ten percent of the population was wiped out. Mother told me she was never really a large television watcher, and that she did not worship Derek as a result. She calls the day that Derek changed, the Day of Decline, and that it happened on June 8th, 2070.

June 14th, 2086

On my walk home from school today, I overhear two men talking about a group of people called the Climbers. They said that the Climbers are a group dedicated to overthrowing post-Decline Derek. They talk about theories about how the Day of Decline could have happened, and they both agreed that the meat from one cow from Derek's beef and milk farm, where cows are bred and raised and turned into food, was contaminated. The meat from this contaminated cow went to Derek's house. The mean defiled Derek's mind, and he started to think and act differently. His obsession of spreading his legacy, and to "weed out" the imperfections within the Sky Dwellers became more and more apparent as time passed. The men also mentioned a Day of Descent, something I have never heard of before. I must make sure to ask Mother about this sometime.

August 27th, 2086

Today, I learned more about the Climbers. Derek came on the loudspeaker, which the whole city can hear, and told us about the Climbers. According to Derek, the Climbers are a group of people who are against him, the greatest man to walk the sky. They plan to overthrow Derek, and lead the Sky

Dwellers into hell. He says that the Climbers are nothing but faulty Dwellers, who have become crazy and believe that Derek is a tyrannical leader. Derek tells us that if we know any Climbers, we should report them to the administration, and the Climber will be dealt with accordingly.

September 7th, 2086

After my supper of chicken and rice, mother reveals to me that she is, in fact, a Climber. She tells me of what the Climbers are. According to her, the Climbers are a group of people who did not watch the television after Derek's Decline. They were the people who were left uncorrupted, the ones who could remember the way life once was. They have the philosophy that the Sky Dwellers will never be the same as before Derek's Decline, and the television corruption. She tells me that since Derek found out about them and what they stood for, he started to take action against them. Anytime a Climber is found, they are arrested, then questioned shortly thereafter. This questioning involves extreme torture, and even accidental murder in their attempt to identify all of the Climbers. Mother says that nineteen Climbers have been located, and that there are seventeen left.

I am needed by the Climbers. Mother says that she raised me for this day, that I am the only uncorrupted child of my generation. She says that I would make the perfect candidate for the person who sets the Day of Descent into motion. Mother explains to me what I am to do on the Day of Descent, once the time comes.

October 31st, 2086

Today is the Day of Descent. While the other children are outside Trick-or-Treating, I am putting the Climber's plan into place. Mother gave me a costume to wear, I am dressed as Derek, as is the custom for the boys. Inside my candy bag is not candy, but something else that Mother has not

explained to me as to what it is. The plan is that I enter Derek's facility, while looking like a normal kid just looking for candy. From there I am supposed to find my way into the maintenance room for the propellers. Mother tells me to open my candy bag once I am there. It is now time to start the Day of Descent.

I made it into the propeller maintenance room. As Mother instructed, I shall open my candy bag. Inside of it is a large, metallic object with an antenna sticking off of it. There is a button on it that says "William, press this." This must be Mother's further instructions, since there is nothing else in the bag. I press the button. The object begins to emit a deafening, whirring sound. The motors in the room that were once humming ever so softly have now fell quiet. The whirring sound stopped. I feel a rush in my stomach. I look out the windows, and I realize that we are below the clouds now.

We are falling.

Falling.

Fall...

The Sky Dweller

By: Lawrence Bouzane