

It's been two weeks since i started walking. I am dehydrated and feel like I could drop dead now at any moment. All I see in front of me is desert sand leading on for eternity, a few cactus here and there. At the edge of the horizon, where the newly risen sun sits on are the mountains. Mountains that have trees and water. Mountains that have life and growth. However, this is still far from me, and even though my weakened limbs protest, I keep walking. The air is hot and crisp, the sun toasts my bare back and arms, leaving me soaked to skin in sweat. I lost my shirt a while back, all i have was the shorts I was given years ago. I thought to myself, if i had my shirt I would be able to wipe the sweat away, but it would eventually get more drenched than i am.

As I walk my mind wanders away to different times, to when I was a young boy. I remember the days of growing up in Jabberson, with my brothers and fathers. I think back to my days of poverty there. I lived there in a trailer park until I was 14 years old and called up to the Hanassay. I remembered when me and my brothers would escape the trailer park at night to go see the city, dressed up as Hanassians with dresses and bright colours and long haired wigs, of course, so we wouldn't get caught past curfew. It was more interesting than the weekly breeding dances. We'd see what it would be like to be Hanassians. The Hanassians always went out every night, and stayed in the homes or worked during the day. We'd sneak into their clubs and dance on tables. We started this when we were 6 years old, until we were caught. We'd drink the booze and- since our voices was much more high pitched before puberty, we'd get away with it too. We got caught at one point when we were eleven, so the gates of the trailer park were monitored more.

The guards at the gates weren't nice either. Most Hanassians were like that. Tall, burly Hanassians in uniform with sunglasses so you can't see their eyes. They'd pat you down, check your pockets, and if you were in a car, check the insides of the car, even the boot and the hood. There was 4 different one that would stay everyday- usually middle-classed Hanassians- Patricia and Mary-Ann would monitor the day, and Betty and Emma monitored the evening and night. Betty and Emma were the scariest, because they both carried a gun with them, and sometimes if you were even walking around before curfew, they'd randomly pat you down, and sometimes they'd even touch the restricted areas of a young boy. Take their times with it, light up a cigarette and smirk at you. I was groped a few times by them, but I was always thought it was normal until I join the Politykos.

The sun began to set on the horizon behind me, the mountains ahead getting darker as i began to set up camp. By camp i meant by just lying on the dust, itchy sand. I stared up at the now twilight sky, specs on stars showing up now, purple and blues painting the sky above me. Again, my mind brought me back to my memories. I remember the times of me and my dear birth-father, Richard, when our trailer was taken for checking- when i was 11 years old, before I went to my first breeding dance. We lay out on the grass, and looked up at a night like this.

'I don't understand why I have to go Father, it's pointless,' I sighed, tracing the stars with my eyes.

'It's just the way it is, Simon,' Richard said, getting tiresome of my constant complaints. 'If I had a say, this wouldn't be happening. The Hanassians wouldn't even exist.'

I stayed silent, sulking. A thought appeared in my mind. 'Why do we have Hanassians father?' I asked cautiously. That was a difficult question for that time.

Richard paused and then turned on his side to face me. 'You really want to know?' I nodded, and turned to face him too.

'Hundreds of years ago, Hanassians didn't exist. Men and women worked in harmony- however women became more powerful than men, and began to manipulate them. They first created governments and then companies and eventually got to where they are now. Then the Semaines came into power and then they put in rules and obligations to put us into trailer parks like these and work for them- they called themselves Hanassians.'

I was shocked. I didn't say anything after that.

'That's unfair.' I muttered, rolling on my back. 'We let them do that to us. We should revolt!' I exclaimed and stood, suddenly feeling outraged. 'No we shouldn't.' Richard sat up. 'You're not the first to feel as if this is unfair. There has been plenty of revolts and protests before you, and you know what happened?'

I could only guess. I looked down.

'The farm. You dont wanna spend your life in a warehouse stuck to a machine, half-dead every day because you don't like the rules.'

'But father-!'

'Not another word! It's just the way it is,' Richard got up, and I followed him into another trailer to get ready for the dance.

I stood by the dirt old sink of the trailer, getting the water from the tap and using it to slick back my hair. I was wearing my church clothes, a hand-me down pinstripe yellow shirt from one my brothers, a loose worn, red silk tie and some black jeans. They were both too big for me and heavy on me, but they were the best I had. I put on Richard's leather jacket, and slipped a small bottle of booze I swiped from a Hanassians club in my in pocket. I planned to hide out in the bathroom and drink it with my friends whilst the dance went on. I walked out the trailer door, my fathers, Richard, and my brothers sat around the fire, heating up after a long day of working.

'Alright. I'm going,' I said rather awkwardly, putting my hands in my jeans pockets. I didn't usually announce when I'm leaving, but Richard asked me too.

'Oh great, come here,' Richard said, motioning for me to come near. I went over to him and leaned down.

'Now listen, alot of the girls there may be older than they look, and they might try to take you down out of the gates- don't let them try anything on you.' He passed me a small packet, it was a condom.

Before then I thought those things only existed in movies to prevent farming- this spiked my anxiety, I put it in my pocket and nodded thanks.

'Have fun,' Richard said finally, I stood up straight and left.

I walked down through the valley of trailers and caravans. I remember looking at the fires and people of poverty sitting around them. Young boys wearing worn rags playing with sticks. In front of me was a small, building, the size of maybe a classroom or a break room at one of the Hansyassan clubs, bright lights trying to escape from the blinded up windows. Emma and Betty stood by the door, guarding it as the cars from the outside dropping off girls crowded around the building. I had snuck around the back and waited for my brothers, James, Paul and Finn. We knew each other all our lives in the trailer park, they had come from different birth fathers, although the only father that stayed in my area of the trailer park was the father of James.

James was my favourite out of all of them, he was the first to help me sneak out of the trailer park. James had brown hair and he spiked it up with some gel his birth fathers stole from his Hanassan boss. He had a grey pinstriped shirt and lose black tie and baggy JENCO jeans. He stole some chains from a hanassan a while ago and wears them around his neck, his pride and joy.

We walked down to front after a nod hello and got signed in with Betty, who gave us a sinister smirk on our way in. Music played and lights flashed, young girls stayed on one side of the room, boys on the other. The girls were like angels before they rotted- before they became Hanassan. They were all beautiful- with pretty flowly colourful dresses, makeup all done and hair done too. They were all around the same age as us too- some were older, more confident. Somehow that was even more pretty. The younger girls were as nervous as us- shy and giggly, yet they looked at us as we were something, not someone. I didn't realise that at the time.

I woke up from my slumber in a cold sweat- having a nightmare back to the night when my birth father died. I have often dreams of his death, and him reaching him to me from the death bed I so vividly remember. I've been have these dreams since the Politykos were found and invaded, and since I had to run away to find new life.

I shook my sweat ridden hair and got up to begin walkmg again. The loss and remembrance of Richard pulled at my insides and I couldn't help tears roll down my cheeks.

The day he died I was 14, just after I became newly attained by Haynassay heir, Sarline. He was close to death for 2 years; he used to work for a old Hanassan upper-middle class, but she lost him in a game of poked to the Haynassay. They put him in a farm when I was twelve- I remember the car coming to take him away, guards grabbing him and throwing him in- I wouldn't see him again until he died.

When he was about to die he asked to see me. I brought to the farm infirmary, and saw him on the bed- it was a terrifying sight. He was like old wrinkly leather- his skin pale and his eyes barely being able to open. We barely spoke to each other- I was in shock because how terrible he looked. Finally, he grasped my hand and he died. I cried then, but I was called back to Sarline so I didn't have time to cry for long.

I look down and I can see my feet bleeding, the sand was rough and every step felt like walking on shredded glass. However the mountains were closer now, so I keep walking. We used to talk about the mountains, before the invasion.

It's dark again, it's not as hot right now- yet it's still able to make my breath run short and soak my shorts with sweat. I sit down on the dusty sand ground, my feet screaming at me, blood covering the soles of my feet. I try to wipe away some of the blood with my knuckles and fingers, only for it to drip everywhere. I rip a piece of my shorts off, enough to wrap around the biggest cut on my left foot. The pain shot up my shin and through my knee- tears prick my eyes. I lie down and sigh- I didn't need this right now- I am so close to the mountains. I'd need to rest tomorrow here, before I can walk again.

I recall back to my first breeding dance, I was standing with my brothers, looking at the pretty girls. James mutters to me,

'What do we do now? Do we go over to them or do they..?' He was cut off short when a girl came over to me, the first girl to make a move. She was the same height as me, with brown hair done up in curls, she had a light pink dress, that went over the shoulder, and was flowy until the end to her ankles, where she had white ballet flats, with slight heel on them to make her taller. She had her face done too, with some white eyeshadow and some red paint on her lips.

'What's your name?' She said to me with a smile, her voice was raised slightly for me to hear over the music.

'You talking to me?' I asked, leaning in to hear her better. I didn't believe I'd be the first one of the girls would talk to. Particularly this girl, she was beautiful.

'Yeah, you. What's your name?' She repeated, still smiling.

'Simon, what's yours?'

'Sarline, how old are you Simon?'

'I'm 12 this March, you?' I wanted to seem older.

'I'm 11.'

We were quiet for a moment, I looked at the floor then back at her. She was as shy as I was. I didn't know what I said. I think back to what I heard something Richard told his Master before; she seemed to like it so I said it.

'Your really pretty,'

She smiled even more and looked down, 'Thanks,' She paused, looking back into my eyes. 'You wanna dance?'

'I ain't a great dancer,' I admitted, feeling sheepish.

'Oh come on,' She touched my arm laughing, pulling at me. 'You don't gotta be a great dancer to dance with me,'

I glanced at Paul and James beside me, Paul didn't seem to see what was going on, he was watching Finn dance with another girl, James smirked and nodded.

I looked back at Sarline at nodded finally, letting her drag me onto the dance floor.

Her pretty little face still lingers in my mind in my loneliest times- causing butterflies to eat at my insides. A mosquito bites at me blood tidden feet, I curl inwards, covering them both with my hands so I wouldn't be attacked by the mosquitos, in the future.

We danced for a long time on the floor, when the slower songs went on we were able to talk more. Sometimes when I close my eyes and imagine it, I can still feel what it's like to have her close, her arms around my neck, mine around her waist. She told me she was a middle classed Haynassay.

'My mom is so strict- she told me before I came to this dance, 'don't be afraid to play some of these young boys- the most important part is that you find a good suitor with good looking features and a good capabilities.' I couldn't believe she said that.' She said, she was open and wasn't afraid to talk to me. I liked that.

'How can I be sure that you're not playing me?' I teased.

'You can trust me,' She said, smiling a little when she looked in my eyes.

'My birth father said to me that some girls may be older than they look and try to force to breed me,' I admitted.

'Oh,' She muttered, her eyes going down to the floor. Oh shit, I thought to myself, look back up, look back up

'Yeah,' I sighed. 'But hey at least, you're not trying to breed me,' I said trying to lighten the mood.

She smiled finally looking up at me, 'We'll see.'

'We'll see?' I smiled at her teasing.

'Yeah, just you wait,'

Most of it was mindless talk, I wouldnt be able to remember now it all now- but I could make her laugh and she could make me laugh. We got on fair, and I really liked her. She distracted me so bad I forgot about the booze in my pocket.

That night I came home smiling.

'You look sure happy,' said James as Paul and Finn began walking home. I looked over my shoulder to see her looking at me as she was put into a car by a guardian. I looked back in front of me at my shoes.

'Maybe I am happy,' I said, hiding my shy smile.

'Don't tell me it's that girl who let you dance with her,' James scoffed, making it sound ridiculous.

'Why? Didn't all the girls you danced with make you happy?' I said defensively.

'Girls aren't meant to make us happy, Simon. It's a breeding dance, for fuck's sake! You know, they're only there for one thing. And that's to get them pregnant to see if we're fit for the farm! Or to work for the Haynassay!'

I was quiet. 'But this girl was different-she listened to me, she understood how we're to be Politykos!- she felt bad for us-'

'She's deceiving you, there's no woman on this planet who will feel sorry for us! How are you sure that she's just luring you in? How are you sure she's not.. one of them?'

'I don't know James! Stop asking me these stupid questions that I don't know!' I exclaimed, sick of these questions. I didn't want to believe him. I walked into my trailer. 'You're just damned jealous 'cause you got a girl who likes me!' I snapped and slammed the door, waking up Richard on the couch.

'Sorry,' I muttered, sitting on my bed. 'Go back to sleep,'

Richard was already sitting up though. 'No, I'm up anyway. How was the dance?'

'It was good. I met this girl, Sarahline.'

'Yeah?' The old man smiled, lying down, lifting up the thin cotton red and white blanket to cover him.

I smiled back at him, 'Yeah. She's real pretty,' I got up, hanging up my jacket and taking off my shirt and tie, leaving me in my vest and jeans.

'That's good, Simon. Be careful, okay?' Richard nodded, I knew what he meant.

I nodded, sitting back down on the bed, leaning back and looking outside at the starry night through the dusty trailer window.

James was always protective of his brothers and fathers- I would only find out later when I joined the Politykos, that his birth father was killed by Haynassay right in front of his eyes for protesting when

James was six years old. His birth father, Christopher, was once the eldest of the group, he was one of the first Politykos to protest when the Haynassays came into power. Christopher

died aged 106- I never met him but I was always told he was as fit as a fiddle, charismatic and kind. He didn't want things to go back to the way things were a hundred years ago, when Pilotos were the main race and Haynassay were slaves, he just wanted equality.

Christopher was raped about 7 times by the Haynassay, resulting in James and 4 other sons, which I were really good friends with. James was the youngest son. When Pilotos were raped, the women would have the children and if it was a boy, it was sent back to the birth father- or the victim shall I say- if it was a girl, it would be kept to be groomed into the Hanassian society.

I knew James since forever, we were inseparable. I remember the day his father died in front of him. James ran in to my trailer shaking and crying. It was the only one open at the time. The murder happened a few yards away. I was 6 years old too so I didn't know what was going on. I just sat there watching as Richard went over to the young boy, getting down to hug him, as James sobbed and shook. He said some things, and so did Richard, but I don't remember what they said- I remember seeing blood splattered on James shirt. I didn't realise it was Christopher's, I was just starstruck, was it blood? What is that? If it's blood, whose blood is it? I was traumatised for a few weeks- mainly because I never seen James cry like that before. Richard turned to me after he put James in his bed to sleep and said, 'You better look out for that boy,'

And I did. When we used to sneak out of the trailer park I always made sure he kept a hand on his drink, and make up a story for him if we were almost caught. And he looked out for me. Every time we were walking around the trailer park at night and Emma or Betty would call us over to 'pat us down' James always distracted them by throwing rocks at them as we both ran away. We both looked after each other in many other ways- but I wouldn't be able to name them all right now. Not with this mind.

Tonight was the longest night I've ever stayed awake. There is no sign of sleep for me with this foot- everytime I try, a sharp jolt of pain up my legs hit me, and wakens me. The only thing keeping me from dying of boredom at this moment is my memories. Memories of life back in Jabberson, of Sarahline, of the Haynassay, and the Politykos.

After that breeding dance, I recall, I didn't dance with any other girl than Sarahline, and she didn't dance with any other guy. For my birthday, she gave me a 20 jab voucher for the ration shop. When I showed Richard, he jumped up and down for joy, telling I was a lcuky man. James stayed cautious though, he didn't like Sarahline, he'd dance with every girl in the hall- sometimes even had sex with one at the end of each night. For Sarahline's birthday I got her a pack of her favourite cigarettes and a lighter- which cost me a lot of my ration money. She loved it- it was worth it to see her smile.

We'd dance at the breeding dance every week, after I turned 13, we used to sneak out and go to the cliffs looking out over the desert and smoke and drink a bottle of booze one of us snagged.

'Simon?' She said to me one night, wearing a pretty white dress with gold lines on it. We were lying together in each other's arms by the cliffs. It was nice, we've been doing that for months now. She was half onto of me, her arms around my waist, her head on my chest. My arms were around her neck, my head leaning against her soft hair.

'Yeah?' I leaned back my head to take a swig of whatever was in the flask.

'What's it like? Being a Polito?' She asked cautiously.

'I'm not a Polito yet,' I muttered, dreadingly. 'Not for another year.' You had to be 14 years of age to become a Polito. 'It's okay, I guess... we're cold. Poor. Hungry.'

She listened, that's what I loved about her. My hand went into her hair.

'It's not fair, I guess. We have curfews, and we don't get an education, we don't know what goes on behind the gates of the trailer park until we come of age and get a job. The Hanassans aren't nice to us either.'

'I don't know why they're so cruel to you guys. I'm supposed to hate you, I'm supposed to treat you different- that's what they tell us in school.'

Sarahline told me that girls like her have to go to Hanassay school to learn about how to be a Hanassay. She lights up a cigarette with the lighter I gave her the year before.

'They say you are soon to be savages- and when you turn into Politos you are cruel beings only wanting to control and hurt the Hanassians- even before you become of age, all boys are wicked beings.' She pauses, looking at me. I take a swig of the booze, looking at the view of the now darkened desert and the mountains far away in front of me.

'I don't think that, Simon. You're not cruel- your kind and funny. And- and, I think they're teaching us lies.'

I look at her finally, we hold each other's gaze for a moment. Then her crystal blue eyes looks down at the white silkiness of her dress, her feet dangling at the edge of the cliff like mine. She seemed distant- like she was hiding something

'Sarahline.' I said solemnly, taking her soft hand in mine. 'What's wrong?'

'I have to tell you something Simon,' She said quietly. I listened, watching her face.

'My mother- my mother.. is Evangeline Semaine,' She admitted quietly. My eyes widen, but I didn't pull away. The Semaine's were the rulers of Jabberon- and leaders of the Haynassay.

'I'm not like her Simon, I don't want to hurt Politos- I don't want to hurt anyone, especially you.' She sighed. 'I'm sorry I didn't tell you.'

I was shocked of course, it definitely wasn't expected that Sarahline was the daughter of Evangeline. Sarahline was kind and sweet and- at the time, I couldn't believe it.

'Do you hate me now?'

'No! God no,' I said. 'I'm.. just shocked.'

'I'm only telling you now because-' She struggles on how to say what's next.

She looks up at me. 'I'm going to be the throne in 2 years time. But when im 13 I become a the lady of West Jabberson, I can start keeping Pilotos... and Simon?'

'Yeah?'

'I want you there by my side, as my right hand man,'

My eyebrows raised. I waas quiet for a moment, not bothering to think about the fact that she lied to me.

'How drunk am I?' I smiled, trying ,to lighten the mood. She laughs but she was still nervous I could tell.

'I'm not her Simon, when I'm heir- I'm gonna get you Politos out of the trailer parks- and start treating everyone fair. No more of these lies, no more farms.' She squeezed my hand. 'And I want you by my side when I do it,'

We were silent, thinking together, she takes a drag.

After a moment she says, 'What do you say?'

I took her wrist and took a drag from the cigarette from her fingers, looking at her eyes and smiling and nodding.

She smiled finally and hugged me, catching me off guard but I hug into her back. This excited me, I thought to myself, we'll be free- we'll all be happy and free. Utter joy filled my heart at the moment. I'd be able to get all Pilotos, and young Pilotos free- Hanssans and Pilotos would live together and free, and I'd do it with the girl that I love the most at my side. She stood up smiling and laughing. 'Oh, it'll be great! It will! It will! We'll fix it! We'll save the world!' She cheered as I got up and joined her, saying the same thing, laughing and shouting, as we began running down back to the trailer park.

Somehow I was able to fall asleep, but not for long, it was dawn when i fell asleep, I wake up with birds surrounding me when the sun is in the middle of the sky. I sit up, and the fly away, cawing as they did. My feet don't feel as sore right now, but I wouldn't be able to walk for hours. My body is sun burnt and I feel like a freshly fried crisp piece of bacon. I'd do anything for a cold blast of water right now or some aloe vera cream, my skin is red and browned and freckley. This was amusing to me because I was always made of fun of for pale skin as a child.

I change my position, lying on my stomach, looking at the cliffs of Jabberson far away. Adding some comfort to my burnt front, the sand somehow feeling cold- maybe my mind is playing tricks on me. Now my back will be sunburnt. Behind Jabberson was the forest, which wasn't burnt down when we, the Politykos, were invaded.

I remember the day Sarahline became the lady of West Jabberson, she snuck me in her car and let me stand in the back with a wig when she had her coronation. That was my first time being in the Haynassay Palace. She said she wanted me there for 'emotional support,'

I hid behind a big silk curtain,- the coronation being in the Church of the Haynassay. It was white on the walls, with grey, blue and white stained glass. The sunlight streamed through the stained glass, causing a cold, icy blue effect on the whole church. In my travels I saw what once was a Christian church from a hundred years ago,- now that I'm describing the Haynassay Church, it was similar, with pews, small stain glass window by the wall of each pew and one big stain glass window. The altar of the Haynassay church was a hole in the ground for the sacrifice- every year, one Polito is sacrificed- for peace and harmony for the Haynassays. It's usually a Polito who has disobeyed the law- like rebelling, fighting with a Hanassian, refusing to work, or liking with another Polito. I remember before I left Jabberson, Paul was sacrificed for telling Finn he loved him- I don't know if it was out of friendship or that he fell in love with Finn.

Behind the altar, was the throne where Evangeline would sit, two guards would sit by her altar for protection. Beside the throne was the curtains where I was standing behind. These curtains they used to cover the queen in her throne before she was seen by the public.

At the time, I was peaking out of the curtains- the pews were filled with hundreds of beautiful Hanassians, watching the ceremony. Evangeline was sitting at the throne, I could only see a glimpse of her at the moment but she was the most beautiful Hanassians that I've ever seen, other than Sarahline. She was wearing a long white dress with gold sparkles coming from the waist up around off the shoulders- it looked like it was fading into her skin. The dress had beautiful flowy movement when she moved- made from thick expensive fabrics. She was thick, almost white blonde hair, and her eyes were a light blue, with white eyebrows and eyelashes instead of brown and like the other Hanassians. She had similar facial features of Sarahline- but she seemed colder, meaner and sharper- though she looked like angel from heaven.

Then came Sarahline, her 2 younger siblings behind her, a guard in front of her and a guard behind the siblings. Her siblings were also girls like her, maybe 5 and 6 years old. Sarahline was just as stunning as her mother, wearing a light purple dress with sparkles on it too. It was darker at the bottom of the dress, lighter around her chest. It had no sleeves on the dress, and she had a small gold necklace on her. Her brown hair was in a bun, her face painted like it was for the breeding dances.

Evangeline spoke in Jabber, only Hanassians spoke Jabber at ceremonies. Then the ceremony began- I couldn't understand what was being said. The crowd stood up, Evangeline asks Sarahline questions and she answered each time 'Ketv,' is which I can only assume is yes. Eventually, Evangeline stood up and Sarahline and her siblings kneeled, Evangeline then marking Sarahline's head forehead with red liquid which I later found out was the blood of a sacrifice.

At the end, Sarahline stood up and faced the crowd, they all kneeled and she bowed, which they all stood up and cheered and clapped. Then she was carried out of the palace on the guards shoulders, as everyone threw flowers and cheered, she smiled and waved, as her siblings followed behind. I watched from the curtain, thinking to myself, how lovely it'll be when Sarahline becomes queen and we could set the Politos free.

A few days after that, I became a Piloto on my 14th birthday. Our ceremony wasn't grand- it wasn't a ceremony at all. I was sitting on the couch of the trailer, Richard came in with the knife. 'You ready boy?' He said roughly, pushing his hair back with his free hand, I nodded. He got on his knees below me, I rolled up the sleeves of my jumper. I stretch oit my arms to him, and in an instant he slits the skin above my elbows. I bite my lip but i dont cry, blood runs down my arm to the floor, Richard putting a cup under my arms on the floor for the blood to drip into.

'It hurt?' Richard asked, the air was awkward, and the blood was cold against my skin.

'Yeah,' I muttered. Silence followed for a while until he thought there was enough blood in the cup. 'Alright,' He grunted, getting tissues to bandage me up. When he did, he took the knife and the cup and gave it to me. 'Drink.'

I swallowed and looked at Richard, I could tell by his eyes he felt bad for me. But I swallowed my fears taking the cup and downing it. 'Well,' He sighed, digging a hand in a pocket of his black cargo trousers. 'You're a Piloto now,'

'I guess I am,'

'How does jt feel?'

I didn't feel anything except pain and disgust from drinking my own blood. If this is what a Piloto feels like, I didn't want to be one.

'It's okay I guess,' I lied, with a sigh, slumping on the couch.

Richard gave me a Jabber penny. I look up at him when he placed it in my hand.

'Well, it's a special day- you deserve it.' He said with a smile, his old features crinkling. 'Go buy a coca cola at the dance or something.' I knew he just wanted to see me smile. I smiled at his smile and rolle down my sleeves.

'I'm not going to the dance tonight, Sarahline's calling me up to be one of her Politos now that I am one.' I said as Richard washed his hands at the sink. 'Really? She was serious?'

'Yes she was, Da, I think I might love her.'

A few days after that, Richard was taken to the farm.

Although my foot is still sore, it's sunset again. I have to keep going- if I don't, they'll eventually find me. And if I sleep any longer, I might become bird food. I stand up and begin

walking, my whole body aching now, particularly my sores on my feet, screaming at me to stop. I don't listen. I keep walking as the night progresses- trying to keep my mind off the pain, bringing myself to happier memories.

I remember the day I was called up to the Hanassian, I was 14, a few weeks after Sarahline's ceremony and my own milestone of becoming a Polito. A few months before Richard's death. A blackcar came up through the gates of the trailer park, and all Politos stood and watched. It was strange to see a Hanassian car in broad daylight. The car parked outside my trailer, James and I were chopping sticks for the fire. We both looked up, I stood up. Politos surrounded the car, looking in. Out of the car came 4 or 5 guards. One of my fathers came up behind me and James. 'What are they here for?' Asked James.

'The daughter was put into power a few weeks ago i heard.' Said the old man.

'Then why are they here?' James crossed his arms, standing up, trying to look intimidating.

'To collect Pilotos- to be their slaves.'

Sarahine got out of the car finally, I watched silently. She was wearing black sunglasses and a long white coat, her hair in a braid. She looked around and saw me. She smiled a little for a minute at me and then went back stone faced. Then she pointed at me and the guards took me by the arms, rolled up my sleeves to check for Polito scars. I let them, I didn't know what else to do. If I didn't, I might not go and join Sarahline, and then I couldn't help free the Politos.

'Hey! Leave him alone!' James exclaimed, pushing one of the guards away, but he was met with an even bigger push, which left him on the ground. I said nothing. I regret now saying nothing. But at the time I was in too much shock to utter a word.

When they saw my scars, they were satisfied, they dragged me towards the car.

'Hey! Hey! What are you doing?!' James shouted, jumping up immediately, taking my arm, pulling.

The guards said nothing, one just taking James and pulling him away. I looked at a James, who was distressed. I felt bad because I'll never see him again- I never told him my plans about me and Sarahline. Guilted gnawed at me, as James struggled against the guard shouting 'Don't take him! Don't take him!' I was put in the car before I could say goodbye. After Sarahline had rounded up 6 or 7 other Politos, and had them checked, and put them in the car too. However she put me in her end of the car, which was closed off to the Politos.

Sarahline took off her sunglasses and looked at me, she smiled. 'Are you excited?' I nodded, still feeling the adrenaline from earlier, and the guilt of leaving James behind. I smiled though at her, and she hugged me.

When we got to West Jabberson House which she lives in, I was out in a basement with the rest of the Politos, some were some of my brothers, some were really old men, some really young children.

There was 20 bare beds, no windows, and only one large fire at the end of the room for light. The ground was pure concrete, the walls were old brick too. There was an intercom at the door that would be later used to call us up when we are needed. There was a door into a bathroom which had 20 urinals and 20 sinks, and old, rusty white tiles on the floor. The guards shoved us in here and locked the big wooden door, and stood outside it. The Politos wept by the fire or started talking to one another, I went to a bed by a corner of the room and curled into a ball. I don't know if I cried too because of the situation, or was excited I'll be around the girl I loved. I just remembered laying there in the dark.

Once I reach the edge of the mountains, I collapse on a tree. The air is significantly cooler now- or maybe I am delusional. My stomach growls loudly when I see a fruit bush. I rush to it, crumbling into the vines and thorns, it ripped at my skin but I do not care. I eat whatever I can get my hands on- animalistic behaviour taking over me. When I have the whole bush almost eaten I go back to under a tree and begin to cry. Not because of shame what I have just done- I have done a lot worse- but because I finally made it, after weeks of walking and dehydration, I made it to the trees and mountains. I am free and alive. I slump down on the tree, allowing my body to rest and immediately fall into sleep.

My dreams that day were invaded of memories of the invasion. It's one of the few things I can remember in detail. I remember every second, every breath, every bomb- every scream. I remember the sound of the sirens calling out and other Politikios yelling and shouting. I remember the army invading our homes, and stealing our men and killing my dearest friends. I remember running away, far, and I kept running, and escaped to the desert. It feels like it was yesterday, it was only a few weeks ago. Maybe that's why I remember it so clearly.

I wake up from my slumber and it's day time. My heart still pounding from the dream. I immediately stand up and look around, my chest heaving heavy. I look behind me at the desert. The dreams are still fresh in my mind. By looking back, I feel like I can see where our village used to be. Memories flood my head, I remember walking out the front door to see a Hanassian standing in front of my roommate, just after chopping off his head and feet, blood searing everywhere on the grass and path, his guts spilt out to my feet from where I stood. I remember the Hanassian's mask, made from black iron, and his army gear, and a gun in his belt and a knife. The Hanassian tried to charge at me but I ducked down and ran as fast as I could. The heavens were dark and red, and the village I know so well was in bombings and in fire, most people dead on the ground. Hanassians killing everything in sight. Some people half-dead grabbing my feet with tears in their eyes, begging me to save them. The sight hurts my heart.

I refuse to think about it. I look back into the forest, where I can see the bottom of the mountain. Nearby there is a stream so I run to it, going to the edge, sitting by the bank and putting my feet in to check how deep it is. Not too deep. I get in completely. The water cold on my sunburnt body, but I didn't care. I dive in, what little hair on my face and head I had getting soaked. I can't help my mind going back to the invasion, when it does, tears prick my eyes.

I lift my head out of the water, cupping the water in my hands and drinking some of it, and then splashing my face with water. My chest and stomach hurts from the memories and I

can't help but cry. I weep silently, dragging my body out of the water and lying on the grass by a nearby tree for shelter. I feel like I've wept all the water in my body. I lie there for a long time, crying silently, not knowing what to make of myself. The grass is hot and dries my wet body and shorts quickly. I close my eyes, lying on my stomach and letting the pain consume me as tears roll down my cheeks. My body somehow feels weak and unable to move, so I just lie there and eventually fall asleep.

In West Jabberson House, we were woken up at 5-am every morning. By each age we were given different jobs- I was given a job in the garden harvesting crops, planting and weeding from 5am to 9am, then we were given a breakfast of some sort. It was porridge and bacon, and it wasn't bad, honestly it was better than what you'd buy at the ration shop at the trailer park. We were called to a small room in the back near the kitchen that had a long wooden table and stools. After breakfast, I was put in the kitchen washing dishes until 2, after that I was cleaning the house until dinner, which was brown bread, potatoes and beetroot. Dinner was at around 7.30pm. After dinner, I had to go outside and kill birds for tomorrow's dinner.

My first few days there, I was hopeful. I had faith that Sarahline would eventually call me up and we can start making plans. Everyday was the same, work, eat, work, eat, sleep. My body hurt from digging everyday, my hands were all scabs because I was allergic to the dish soap I had to wash dishes with. In my mind I thought it was all worth it- and it was better than doing nothing all day at the trailer park.

The other Pilotos were awful bitter too. Most of them would hardly talk to me, the older ones ignoring me or calling me stupid, my brothers in too much pain to speak, and the younger ones too afraid to talk. I felt bad for the younger ones in particular, because sometimes they'd be beaten with sticks for doing a job wrong- even though if we did something wrong, we wouldn't be beaten. I felt bad for them- they were just children they didn't deserve it

I was giving up hope, starting to feel maybe I was being used, maybe James was right all along, maybe she forgot about me, my heart hurt with these thoughts so I tried not to think them.

When these thoughts began, I was cleaning one day and Sarahline came in the room.

'Sarahline,' I said when I saw her and smiled. She gave me a small .polite smile but didn't come over to me. She was stunning as usual, but something was bothering her.

'Simon, how are you?'

'I'm.. good.' I lied, weakly. 'How are you?'

'I'm good.' I knew she was lying, I could see in her face. She looks older somehow, her hair in a tight bun, her posture stiff, and she wearing a gray dress which was thick and frilly.

'You sure?' I asked, going back to my dusting.

'Well..' She sighed, her shoulders slumping as she walked over beside me. 'Being Lady of West Jabberson is alot harder than I thought, I've got lessons non-stop on how to be queen, and constantly visiting the public and I'm constantly doing paperwork.'

'Sounds stressful' I muttered, going to the bookshelf by climbing on the ladder to get up to it.

'It is, Simon. And I miss you. All of this is so boring and pointless and I just wanna have fun with you like old times.' She complained, walking over and looking up at me, her beautiful big eyes making me feel sorry for her.

'I miss you too,' I begrudged. 'Being a worker here isn't a piece of cake here.'

'Tell me about it. I have 30 minutes of rest before I have to go to the palace for another lesson,' She said. I looked down to her, my eyes softening. What was I thinking before? She could never forget about me. I thought to myself. I would happily stop my work to talk to her, even if it cost my dinner tonight or for a few weeks.

I got down off the ladder, and she took my hand, and led me to the couch, lying me down, crawling beside me and putting her head on my chest. I put my hand in my hair, her arms reaching around my neck. Her dress was heavy on my body, but I didn't care. She talked about the difficulties of being heiress and all the pressures her mother gave her, I talked about all the hardships of being one of the servants.

'-and if I'm caught here with you, I probably will not be fed for a few weeks.' I said with a self deprecating laugh.

'And I would be probably be locked in my room for a week, forced to read etiquette books.' She said looking up at me.

'We'll suffer together.' I smiled.

She nods. 'I haven't forgotten about our promise, Simon. I know it's gonna take a while, but you will be my right hand man.'

'I never doubted you,' I lied.

'Good, and you shouldn't. I am a woman of my word.'

We both lay in comfortable silence after that. 'Simon?'

'Yeah?'

'You know when I become queen I have to choose a mate to breed with to make an heir.'

I did know that for once. All Politos knew because Evangeline made it very clear who she mated with and when she did in the papers. I knew it would have to happen to Sarahline too, I just hadn't given it much thought.

'Yeah I do.' At the time I hoped she'd ask me to be her mate.

'I'll choose you. If.. if you wait for me too.' Yes

'Yes, I'll wait for you.' I would've waited for eternity for her, even though I didn't know how to breed.

As children we were always warned of breeding factories- and Hanassians who would take advantage of us, we were never told what breeding was or why the Hanassians were obsessed with it.

A bell rings by the door.

'That would be my cue.' I sighed, reluctantly sitting up.

'Alright. I don't know when I'll see you again. But hopefully soon.' She said, sitting up too. Then she kissed me. For the first time. And the last. My ears turned red when she did it and I felt immediately awkward and not knowing what the hell to do. I didn't know how to kiss a Hanassian, and I still don't. At the time I didn't even know what she did to me. 'Bye Simon' She said and left, leaving me shocked and red. I stood there for a moment, reeling what happened, then I came back to myself when the bell ring again, more aggressively and urgently. I quickly get my cleaning things and run down to the basement.

I would dream of her for weeks on end after that interaction- but I wouldn't see her for months after it. I was delusional about it though- I didn't like to think she had forgotten about me again, or that she wouldn't fulfil our promise. I'd constantly make up pictures in my head of us being successful and life finally being fair. And sometimes scenarios of us being in love. Sometimes I still imagine all the old times, when I feel lonely or when I'm in a lot of pain or can't sleep. I still wish it was all real.

When I wake up, it's dawn. The sun is rising in the east, on the horizon of the desert. I turn my head, looking through the bushes and trees and seeing a small bit of the desert- the sun illuminating the ground and casting pink and orange waves across the sky, eventually fading into a dark purple and blue that was once the night sky. I stand up, my body feeling heavy- but at least I'm not sweating anymore. I wipe off the pieces of grass off my front, and look around- my gaze eventually landing on the mountains. I stretch out my arms and crack my back and begin walking again. The edge of the mountain wasn't far away- it was covered in grass, with specs of trees and bushes here and there . It would be an easy walk until I start reaching the rocky cliffs. But I don't worry about that right now. My mind is empty, my only thoughts being ones of the past.

In my seventh month of being a servant in West Jabberson house- a few months after Richard died- a few more servants got appointed. A lot of them I didn't know. I was sitting on my bed in the basement, tying my shoes when a few more Pilotos were thrown in. Some were old Pilotos, some around my age. None were any young children thank god, I remember hearing the children cry every night after being beaten- it was a sound from hell. Anyways, one Piloto sat on the bed next to mine, and starting talking to me. He was the same height as me, he had black buzzed hair, and hazel eyes, good form too.

'Hey Handsome, what you here for?' He said roughly with a smirk. He was being sarcastic. He looked as straight as a line.

'None of your business,' I muttered. 'You?'

'Protestin', my village got invaded in the west- got put in a trailer park. So I tried killing a few guards at the gates. Got put in the back of a train and now am here.' He said. He had a twang in his voice- like from Texas. I only heard a Texan Accent on the TV, back in the trailer park when we were allowed movie nights.

didn't know why he opened up or why he wanted to. I wasn't friends with him- nor was he a brother. But on the other hand, I had hardly talked to anyone in months. At the time I'd rather listen to him than listen to no one.

'What's your name?' I asked.

'The name's Mark. You?' He put out his hand for me to shake it. I look at his hand for a split second, wondering should I touch him but then I shake his hand.

'Simon,'

He shook my hand with a smile. 'Nice to meet ya Simon.'

'Likewise.' I said looking at him.

'So, Simon, you been here long?' He asked, letting go of my hand and leaning back.

'About seven months now.'

'So not long?'

I nod slightly. 'It's felt long though.' I muttered. He smiled at that but kept asking his questions.

'How old are you?'

'14 now, you?'

'14.'

Mark kept the smile on his face and watched me- probably deciding in that moment I was his best friend. After that, we practically were, although I wasn't as keen on him. We'd talk at lunch, in the morning and evening, sometimes during the night if we both were up. I have to say, it was nice looking back having someone there- even though I didn't like him that much at the time. But he wasn't James. Every time we talked and laughed together, I kept in the back of my mind he's not James, he's not James. And he wasn't.

He wasn't as funny as James, and we didn't have the history of course. We didn't have any inside jokes- and it took me a long time for me to trust him and open up to him. He wasn't as funny as James. He was the next best thing. He was there for me when James died, and didn't judge me when I cried, and that was something.

My journey up the mountain was hard, my legs beginning to feel weak again. I could feel the grass and stones beneath my feet. I was sweating, but there was a slight breeze, so it cooled me. I didn't dare look back at the desert- I climbed up the mountain with my hands and feet. I grabbed a stone and tried lifting my body up to grasp another rock- however the stone I was already depending my body weight on broke, I fell down. My heart gave me a jolt and I frantically scrabble anywhere and everywhere to another stone as my knees scrape down off the rocks- the only thing slowing me down was my nails and fingers digging into the mountain side. I somehow grasp a stray branch, and hang there- as my feet tries to find footing. My knees are now bleeding.

I am panting, fear radiating through my arms and legs, my heart racing in my chest. My biceps hurt, and somehow does my chest. I look down and see it's bleeding too. I grab the tree branch and begin to pull myself up to put my feet to a rock. I do that and quickly reach a ledge, gripping it and pulling myself up to it.

Thankfully this was a place I could stand up straight. I crawl onto my stomach, and lie there- tears pricking my eyes as rocks get into cuts. I sit up after a minute and finally look out over the ledge. I can see the rainforest which I was in a while ago- and the desert far away. Past that I can see the mountains where we were invaded weeks ago. My eyes are still full of tears as my heart hurts when I remember the invasion. I stand up, my cuts and limbs screaming at me, my hair wet from sweat, my eyes hurting from tears. I put my arms around myself, cradling myself as I cried silently again. I have been climbing for what feels like hours but I'm only a quarter way up from the ground.

I look behind me. A cave. Shelter. Good.

I need to rest now. I walk into the cave and sit down, letting my mind traverse back to simpler times.