

# EMBRACING UTOPIAN HORIZONS



Novi Sad, 2014

UNIVERSITY OF NOVI SAD  
FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY  
Department of English Studies

Editor-in-Chief:  
Dr. Ivana Živančević Sekeruš, Dean

Editor:  
Dr. Zorica Đergović-Joksimović

Reviewers of the volume:  
Dr. Darko Suvin, McGill University (Emeritus)  
Dr. Ivana Đurić Paunović, University of Novi Sad  
Dr. Bojan Jović, Institute for Literature and Arts, Belgrade

Proofreader:  
Elizabeth Salmore, MA

Graphic arrangement and digital typesetting:  
Igor Lekić

A PUBLICATION TO MARK THE 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY

ISBN  
978-86-6065-274-6

Filozofski fakultet u Novom Sadu  
Odsek za anglistiku  
Dr Zorana Đinđića 2,  
21000 Novi Sad  
Tel: +381 21 485 3900  
+381 21 485 3852  
www.ff.uns.ac.rs

Available at:  
<http://digitalna.ff.uns.ac.rs/sadrzaj/macura/embracing-utopian-horizons>

# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	5
EXCERPTS FROM REVIEWS OF THE VOLUME.....	7
Marija Macura SHERDEN .....	9
Daniela Hodak THE LOST COLONY OF ROANOKE .....	13
Milica Teovanović LEMURIA.....	18
Marko Đurišić THE FORGOTTEN UTOPIA.....	21
Naida Rastoder – Ilda Ramović ARCADIA.....	26
Miodrag Regodić HARMONY .....	29
Seada Buljubašić UTAH, RWANDA .....	32
Katarina Marković THE LAND OF TWO SUNS .....	36
Ivana Mihaljuk – Smiljana Živkov ELYSIUM .....	40
Vuko Jovanović MOS 6581 .....	46
Danka Džida THE CITY OF BLISS .....	48

Aleksandra Kokora AIPOTU .....	51
Jovana Zorić – Marijana Stojanović THE COMMUNITY .....	56
Vesna Savić – Viktor Sakač ANIXITOPIA.....	62

# INTRODUCTION

This collection of fourteen short utopian stories, written by students attending my MA course Utopia in English Literature at the Department of English Studies, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad, is the result of a creative assignment given to them in the 2014 winter term. Altogether, nineteen students took part in the project, with six of them deciding to write their stories working in pairs. Only one story is not included in the collection because it will soon be published in an American journal.

Each semester since 2007, when the course was first introduced, students have been given a similar assignment. In the previous six years dystopian stories were prevalent among students. This particular group was told explicitly that they should try to write a *eutopia*, a piece of writing depicting a good place. Each story was to be a maximum of five pages long. Another equally important aspect of the project was the discussion about the students' utopian stories. Therefore, all the students were asked to send their stories via e-mail both to me and the rest of their colleagues. Upon reading their colleagues' utopias they were to prepare questions for their authors intended for the ensuing debate. I must say it is a pity the debate itself could not be presented here, too. All in all, the obligation to send their stories to the others and be prepared to stand up to their quite provocative questions made them fulfill their task with utmost seriousness and earnestness.

At the time when they were given the assignment the students had already become familiar with two definitions of utopia, one by Darko Suvin and the other by Lyman Tower Sargent. According to Suvin,

utopia is the verbal construction of a particular quasi-human community where sociopolitical institutions, norms and individual relationships are organised according to a more perfect principle than in the author's community, this construction being based on estrangement arising out of an alternative historical hypothesis. (Suvin 1979: 61)

On the other hand, Sargent defines several types of utopia, among which eutopia is classified as

a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably better than the society in which that reader lived. (Sargent 1994: 9)

Apart from being introduced to the definitions, the students were presented

with the long and rich history of proto-utopian forms in various cultures around the world as well as Thomas More's groundbreaking work *Utopia*. Thus, they were acquainted with the essential formal demands of the genre and well-prepared for their writing assignment.

I am deeply convinced that imagination and creativity can broaden and improve our cognitive abilities. As Karen A. Franck, who has given a similar task to her architecture students, affirms, "truly imagining touches parts of our minds and ourselves that other kinds of more rational and directed forms of knowing do not" (Franck 1998: 126). Also, I have to thank here professor Lyman Tower Sargent of the University of Missouri who advised me on introducing utopia writing as one of the central aspects of the course. As confirmed in the results of the anonymous questionnaire submitted at the end of the course, eighteen students (94.73 % of the respondents) found both the course and the writing assignment useful and interesting. Moreover, six of them (31.57 %) assert that utopia should be studied more and that creative teaching methods such as utopia writing should be applied in other courses as well.

As for the stories themselves, they encompass various utopian concepts and topoi – from insular and urban, to utopias set deep in space. A few of them use the "sleeper awakes" technique, two are set in the past seen from the perspective of an alternative history and several of them center upon apocryphal lost manuscripts or diaries. Recognizable ancient models, such as Arcadia or Elysium, or newer ones, such as Lemuria and New Harmony, have been reinterpreted and placed in a new context. Only one story is a futuristic satirical utopia, ridiculing a capitalist consumer society.

The utopian stories are brought to you in their original, raw form. As different as they are both in their contents and literary quality, I am sure that the stories from this collection will make for interesting reading. Whatever form they take, they confirm that our students are not only exceptionally creative but also capable of discussing the most important social issues. Only time will tell whether what they depict in their stories is impossible.

Zorica Đergović-Joksimović

## References

- Franck, Karen A. (1998). "Imagining as a Way of Knowing: Some Reasons for Teaching 'Architecture of Utopia'". *Utopian Studies* 9/1: 120-141.
- Sargent, Lyman Tower. (1994). "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited". *Utopian Studies* 5/ 1: 1-37.
- Suvin, Darko. (1979). *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*. Yale University Press.

## EXCERPTS FROM REVIEWS OF THE VOLUME

Ovih tuce i nešto više priča unutar su zadanog dosta kratkog volumena, čitko i dosta jasno napisane [...] Moglo bi se primijetiti da ih dobar dio naginje više u stranu beskonfliktnih idila, tj. naglašava odbojnost prema autorovoj sadašnjosti više nego li neku specifičnost “drugog mjesta” [...] zbornik ispunjava uvjete za štampanje kao uspjela akademska vježba. On takođe dobro svjedoči o uspjelom pedagoškom i kreativnom radu Odsjeka za anglistiku Novosadskog univerziteta i nastavnika koji je vodio projekt.

Dr Darko Suvin, F.R.S.C.  
Emeritus Professor

Tekstovi su i sa jezičkog i stilskog aspekta vrlo uspeli [...] jer se već i u samim naslovima, originalnim ili preuzetim, vidi razumevanje potrebe autora da svoje imaginarne utopijske svetove očude i izdvoje iz poznatog toka [...] Neki od radova se zadržavaju na deskripciji utopije (“dobrog mesta”), neki su bogati dijalozima, s vrlo solidnim pokušajima karakterizacije, ali svi zajedno čine utisak skladne celine i dokaz su uspešno savladanog gradiva.

Prof. dr Ivana Đurić Paunović  
Filozofski fakultet  
Univerzitet u NovomSadu

Знатно више од пуке стилске вежбе, радови младих проучавалаца-аутора представљају занимљиво штиво и са становишта описаног (утопијског) опита али и из шире перспективе – изазивајући, наиме, упитаност, да ли је утопија као идеал и жанр још увек привлачна како за ствараоце тако и за читаоце. На основу свега прочитаног, може се устврдити да нада још увек постоји.

Др Бојан Јовић  
Институт за књижевност и  
уметност, Београд



## SHERDEN

The city of Peleset rose like a large thorn in the desert sun. It was said that the old gods had chosen the spot for a lark, to see if anything could survive the harsh conditions. One would have to cross the desert to get to the northern lands of Syarin, and that had never been a good idea. The desert was a treacherous place, and dangers lurked in the distance. Those who wanted to avoid the blazing day by traveling in the night would usually have a rude awakening. The nights were cold, even freezing, and hungry beasts came out to hunt. Only the more experienced trackers knew how to safely navigate the desert.

No sane person would actually choose to live there, yet Peleset was full of people. They moved in the streets like ants. Many of them were chained and yoked, and the rest were heavily armored guards and mercenaries from the South. Despite its terrible climate, Peleset had one thing going for it: it was the slavers' headquarters.

For the last decade or so, the number of slaves in Syarin kept growing. At first they were only needed for heavy labor, such as building the great pyramids. Then the masters began using their slaves in place of regular house servants. Soon after that, a strange thing occurred: the demand for slaves became far larger than the supply. Ever industrious, the slavers began casting their nets wider and wider, until all of their wells dried up.

A smart slaver knew how to pick his chattel. The Southerners were far too barbarous and inconvenient. They were good warriors, but their love for drinking and fighting made them terrible slaves. Once you broke their spirit, they were useless. To the west lay the sea, and none of the desert folk would ever be good sailors. While they held drinking water in high reverence, anything bigger than a pond was not to be crossed, in a boat or otherwise. In the opposite direction, the east of the desert slowly gave way to rockier terrain that turned into mountains. Nobody ever went to the East, since there was nothing good there. Still, scouts were sent to the East, in hopes that some of them would return with information about new lands to plunder.

That was how Athanasius found himself heading for the mountains.

\* \* \*

It took almost three full moons for him to pass through the mountains. He was capable of surviving in the wilderness for longer than that, but even his nerves were tight with thoughts of failure.

It was pure luck that he decided to follow along the cliff, or else he never would

have seen the narrow path, hidden by the boulders overhead. He climbed down, until he reached a spot where he could rest and have some water. The view was strange, he could see distant specks of white on the yellow hills. Even further in the distance, there was something large and gray glinting in the sun. He had to figure out what it was, and go back home with a map.

The closer he got, the clearer it became that the white specks were... moving? They turned out to be animals grazing on yellow grass. There were several herds, which meant that someone was shepherding them. Soon enough, he could make out a couple of humans, and he warily headed in their direction. He was capable of defending himself should the need arise, but he would rather not have to fight his way out of a strange country. The two shepherds noticed him, and went out to meet him.

They were shorter than him, but stockier and in good shape. One had a shepherd's crook and the other appeared to be his son, but neither one looked threatening, so he chose to focus on their faces. What he found there was a mix of curiosity and excitement, so he relaxed a bit. However, their questions confused him. These people spoke a foreign language, and if he was to get any valuable information, he would have to find someone who spoke the desert dialects. He pointed at himself and said 'Syarin', thinking of Peleset. The older man smiled at him, and said something to the younger one. The younger one said 'Syarin', and pointed in the direction of what he was now sure was a town. So he would take him to the city. *Great.*

The shepherds were really hospitable to him, and offered him food and some blankets. He took out his drawing supplies and worked on his map, trying to remember the exact route he used. Tomorrow morning, he and the boy would head for the city.

\* \* \*

They called it Sherden. Whether that was its actual name, or just their word for 'city', he thought didn't matter. Sherden was surrounded by walls made of white and gray stone. Other than the walls, there were no visible defenses. There were no soldiers, no guards. People were moving at a fast pace, but they didn't look over their shoulders, nor did they keep their heads down. Those that noticed him just nodded in his direction, and went about their business. His fears subsided, and he took his time observing the city streets.

The first thing he noticed was that there were no animals in the city. No horses or mules were carting goods or their owners. There was no stench usually associated with places where a lot of people lived. The streets were oddly clean, and free of beggars and children. The men were dressed in trousers and loose tunics, and women were nowhere to be seen. He did a double take. Some of those men

were actually women, wearing pants!

There were no shops that he could see, no street vendors hawking their wares. He wondered how these people got their food and supplies, but his questions would have to wait until he found somebody who spoke his language. Two streets to the left, and the shepherd finally stopped in front of a blue door. "Syarin", he pointed at the door. Athanasius knocked, and moved away.

The woman who opened the door was middle-aged and stooped a little. The boy started talking fast, and she nodded, then looked at Athanasius. "Feel free to enter my home", she said, then she ushered them inside.

Her name was Lania, and the young shepherd was Habiru. Apparently, Habiru felt responsible for him, so he didn't want to leave until Athanasius was settled. Oddly enough, he was more comfortable with the boy's presence than he was with Lania's sharp stare.

"I'm sorry, am I staring?" She smiled, then went on talking. "It's been years since I've seen one of my fellow Syarinians. I've been living here since I was Habiru's age. What brings you so far from home?"

He had to answer carefully. "I am a traveler and explorer, and I want to see faraway lands for myself."

"Oh, how interesting! You must have a love for learning. Sherden is a great place to learn," she said, then she offered them refreshments.

He couldn't contain his curiosity, so he had to ask: "Sherden does seem like a great place. How do you keep the city so clean? It's very different from what I'm used to, for sure."

"It is different from Syarin. Everybody's equal here. We have no kings or nobles, and nobody's rich. But nobody's poor either. We all have what we need, and we do what we're good at. There is no shame in being a shepherd like Habiru and his father, or in being a city cleaner. That's how the city is so clean, by the way." She smiled as she sipped her tea. "It's all honest work, and it's all needed to make things run smoothly."

It sounded like a fantastic tale to him, but he couldn't deny that the city looked good. "I'm sure. I was also surprised a bit that there were no children playing in the streets. It sure cuts down the noise." He tried to smile at Lania, but deep down he thought that seeing no children around was strange. She said something to Habiru in their language, and they both laughed.

"The children are in school at this time. They have things to learn, like reading and writing. And the older children are apprenticed to those in their chosen profession. In fact, my apprentice should be here soon." It turned out that Lania was a healer and a midwife, and her apprentice was a boy!

The more he heard about Sherden, the more questions he had. How could the women be seen as equal to men when they were weaker by their very nature? How could it be that every child learns to read and write? Everyone knew learning was

only for those who were smart enough, or wealthy, not for every little snout-nosed bugger. Why would a shepherd learn letters? It boggled his mind.

After Lania's apprentice, a pimply-faced boy, appeared, Athanasius excused himself, saying he wanted to see more of the city. Lania explained to him how to get around and where to go if he wanted something to eat. Apparently, the city had a communal silo and the food was divided equally among the population. Thanking her for her invitation, he promised that he would return to her house that evening for dinner, and then left to explore the city on his own.

\* \* \*

The dinner was lovely, much better than his standard fare of dried meat and fruits. The good people of Sherden only ate meat if they were recovering from an illness. They were excellent at growing plants and had a large variety of vegetables, fruit, and grains. Not every citizen lived in the city, some of them lived on small farms in the neighboring areas, growing vegetables and tending to their flocks. The sheep were kept for their wool and milk, and that was it. He was a bit surprised by the lack of mules at first, but it turned out that the people would make special carts they could draw themselves. Nobody had an issue with being their own mules. Just another in the line of weird notions of these people.

Still, his hostess was kind, and as she offered him a place to sleep that night, he didn't have to worry about a thing for the moment. Tomorrow morning he would go and explore the neighboring farms, and see how far it was to the next city or land. Then he would finish his map, and go back home. He had what he had come for.

He was tired from walking, and needed rest. His eyes were getting droopy. He began to excuse himself, then realized his hostess wasn't in the room. When she came back, she was carrying his bags on her back and in her hands was his map.

"What are you doing? How dare you go through my things! That is mine!" He couldn't even yell right. Something was wrong with him. He looked at her again, and she looked... sad?

"I thought I recognized it. You're from Peleset, and you don't look like a runaway slave. I can draw my own conclusions, and I did." She took the map and threw it into the kitchen fire. As she stood again, her back was no longer stooped. "I gave you something that will knock you out soon. Until I decide what to do with you. I won't have the slavers destroying this peace."

He could feel his body shutting down and he thought how stupid she sounded. She could stop one man from leaving her house, but she could never stop those who would one day conquer her city. Maybe not soon, but soon enough.

Daniela Hodak

## THE LOST COLONY OF ROANOKE

Boston, Massachusetts  
October 13, 1775

Lt. Mercarius Blackbird of the British Royal Navy was impatiently waiting outside a large wooden door to be allowed an audition with General Thomas Gage, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Province. His hand kept clutching around a small stack of old, yellowed papers as if they were the only thing he had left to hold on to as a proof of his own sanity. He had been sitting in the same spot for over an hour, now in a clean uniform and a white powdered wig, with only a haunted, overly tense look on his face indicating a restless mind. It was difficult to imagine this man covered in mud and in tattered rags struggling out of the swampy waters.

The heavy wooden door finally opened and a young man wearing the uniform of a British soldier beckoned him inside. Stepping in, Lt. Blackbird performed the official greetings and impatiently waited to begin his story for General Gage. The older man looked up from a stack of papers and maps on his desk.

“Lieutenant, welcome back. I have been told you have a particularly curious story to tell us about the disappearance of Arcadia. It is not every day that a two-decker ship just disappears off the map along with its crew.”

Lt. Blackbird exhaled and put forward the stack of papers in his hand. He had been waiting for this moment for the past two weeks since he had found his way out of the river. Whomever he told his story to had called him a liar, a jester or even a traitor. He’d been accused of abandoning ship, of covering up for his captain switching sides and of killing his crewmen and covering his back, hoping the authorities would believe his insane ramblings. This was the moment his name would be cleared, for he had proof of what he was saying: the handwritten letters of his superior, Captain Walter Kelpius.

“Sir, I know my story sounds strange, and I have been the object of every single form of ridicule possible, but I implore you to read these letters. Captain Kelpius wrote them himself before I decided to try to return here. He had hoped that if I did survive, it would be enough to tell the tale of our unwanted adventure.”

General Gage took the first ink covered paper into his hand and started reading.

Roanoke Island – perhaps,  
April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1775

**The first account of Captain Walter Kelpius to the authorities of the British Crown. To whom it may concern.**

Dear reader, I have set out to document the most of my memories of how my faithful Lieutenant and I stumbled upon this uncommon place and of all the unbelievable things we learnt during our stay. Let me start with the description of the peril that made us land here. Two weeks ago, we received an order to crush the uprising that was spreading throughout some parts of the colonies. Twenty-eight of my men and I sailed off on the Arcadia from Boston and kept close to the shore of Virginia when we spotted a suspicious looking boat. It seemed to us that it might be carrying unusual cargo, so Lt. Blackbird suggested that we enquire about its business. The boat sailed into one of the small bays along the coastline and proceeded up into a river, leading us further and further inland.

At some point after dark, the ship was engulfed in a fog so thick we could barely see each other sitting only a few feet apart. It seemed to have come out of nowhere, and please dear reader, believe my words when I tell you that there was something unholy lurking in those waters. We must have not seen the stones or the logs, or whatever it was at the bottom of that river that soon caused my beloved Arcadia to be flooded with gushing water. I regret admitting that I did not fulfill my duties to go down with it. Four of my crewmen and I managed to reach the shore.

After nearly two days of wandering around what seemed an uninhabited part of the land, we were found by the most remarkable group of people. Two women, a man and several children of various ages found us struggling for our lives. Unfortunately, only Lt. Blackbird and I were alive at this point. The three other crewmen died in the night.

These curious folks came to our aid immediately and took us, barely conscious, to their home. Despite my being tired, hungry and worn out, I saw that this was anything but an ordinary place. The village (if I can call it that) consisted of several hundred men and women. They lived half way in and half way out of the woods. Thick layers of climbing plants covered wood and stone houses, tree logs served as resting spots and enormous trees provided shelter from whatever might fall from the sky. The people, however, were peculiar, too. They did not seem to be of this period, for their clothing, although new, was of older fashion. They fed Lt. Blackbird and me, tended to our wounds and kept us warm. I must have dozed off, for I woke up when the sun was setting. In my room there was a woman of about forty, with long dark hair, waiting for me. I learned soon enough that she was what we would refer to as a teacher or a healer. Anna, as I soon learnt was her name, took me around their little forest town introducing me to everyone and explaining their way

of life. In my next letter I shall inform you in greater detail about all I learnt here, in the lost colony of Roanoke.

Signed, Capt. Walter Kelpius

Roanoke Island,  
May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1775

### **The second account of Captain Walter Kelpius to the authorities of the British Crown**

I have been in Roanoke for almost two weeks now. I counted the days myself, unable to let go of the habit. Here in Roanoke, they do not seem to use calendars or devices of any sort for measuring time. To them, it comes naturally as life and death. Dear reader, the architecture of the place is just amazing. As I have already stated, meeting points in the village do not seem to be planned out but created by people's own habits and conveniences. For example, the paths and walkways are almost never straight, but weave and curl around the town where most needed. The colors of the place also help bring about the vision of a heavenly garden, greens and browns covering the houses, and flowers of all sorts growing freely wherever they take root. Makes one wonder what the place looks like in the winter. The most remarkable part is by all means the water fountain in the approximate center of the village. Standing almost ten feet tall, chunks of moss-covered white stone are piled up forming something vaguely resembling a round column. Water seems to be coming from somewhere on top and it cascades down in small streams down to the small pool at the bottom. It seems to be by far the most favorite place for the people to congregate.

Anna was kind enough to explain to me their way of life, for I was confused to see so many little children running around, each after what seemed to be a different chore or a task. She explained that all children were brought up equally by the village. Although every child knew its own natural mother and father, everybody shared responsibility for taking care of all the children and each adult assumed a different task in teaching the young ones. If one was good at growing plants, he or she would try their best to pass that knowledge on to any child that was interested in it. If a child was developing extraordinary capacities for artful woodwork or masonry, the child was encouraged to learn as much as possible about it from whomever he or she chose.

Knowledge in itself seems to be highly valued here. Reading, writing and arithmetic are taught to children at a young age along with enlarging their knowledge about the world that surrounds them. The peculiar group we first encountered was in fact a class about medicinal herbs and the animal world, and the adults were instructing the children about the herbs and encouraging them to playfully explore

their surroundings. I was surprised to learn that one of the buildings was a sort of a library, and that apart from some books I was familiar with, many of the books there were written by the folk from the village. In order for the knowledge they gathered in their lifetime to be preserved, they often wrote texts about everything and anything that they had learnt.

At one point, I asked Anna whether they worshipped the Lord, to which I got a somewhat confusing explanation. At first, such religious views seemed incomprehensible to me, but I soon realized that their way of life undermined many of my presumptions about civilization. She explained that they had all indeed read the 'good book' and still followed many of Christ's teachings. Their religion, however, is nothing if not unorthodox. They believe in no places of worship but the one found inside oneself and they pay little mind to the punishments of Hell. As Anna told me when I asked her if they did not believe in Heaven then either, "God is everywhere. In every blade of grass, in your every breath, and whether you name Him or not, or whether you pray to Him or not is irrelevant. He does not want your obedience or your morality. He just wants you to exist." The people of Roanoke seem to have their own different versions of spirituality, and it is accepted as such.

Signed, Capt. Walter Kelpius

Roanoke Island,  
May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1775

### **The third account of Captain Walter Kelpius to the authorities of the British Crown**

Dear reader, I have just returned from the town meeting concerning yesterday's incident at the vineyard of the good old Magnus O'Rilley. Apparently, the poor man had slipped and fallen from his ladder. The entire village, including the children, gathered around the fountain to debate what was best way to help him, since he was unable to take care of the vines himself. His wife had to tend to him most of the day so she needed help. Several of the villagers volunteered to cut and tend to the vines, and in the end she agreed to get help from two men living in a house right next to the vineyard. One of them was, in fact, Magnus's apprentice when he was a boy and it would be no trouble to help his old teacher.

This incident helped me learn a few things about how things were handled here in Roanoke. Whenever there is a matter that requires the involvement of the entire village, they gather at the fountain and discuss the problem and the solutions. Everyone is on an equal footing in the meeting and everyone gets a say in the matter. The meeting itself, however, is loosely governed by several villagers known for their wit and an open mind. Anna, my guide, is one such person. They believe that violence and oppression breed more violence and oppression and they

live by the principle of helping their fellow men.

I've had a lot of difficulty reconciling my way of the world with theirs, for where I am from the meek do not inherit the Earth, they inherit the cross. I do feel that the key to why their little village endures and they carry on living a full and fruitful life, is the children. The children are brought up doing what they love, and they are shown equal respect as the adults. They are respected and encouraged to hone the skills that make them happy.

Signed, Capt. Walter Kelpius

Roanoke Island,  
September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1775

### **The last account of Captain Walter Kelpius to the authorities of the British Crown**

My dear Lt. Blackbird has decided to try to return to the colonies. I have been very disappointed and heartbroken by this news, for even though we have always been close, we have become true friends since our fortunate arrival at Roanoke. However, in the spirit of my newfound home, I have decided to bid him all the best on his voyage, hoping he finds happiness wherever he may seek it.

Signed, Walter Kelpius, former commander of the ship Arcadia of the British  
Crown

## LEMURIA

Because of my great passion for travelling, in my fifty two years of living I have managed to travel nearly all around the world. During my travels I met all kinds of people and came in contact with a lot of different cultures. However, one place in particular caught my attention. That place is an island country called Lemuria. Apart from breathtaking natural landscapes, there are also plenty of other things which make this country stand out when compared to all the others. Here are the things I have seen and learned about this country.

It is not known for sure when this island was first inhabited. Because of its great distance from the nearest continent, Lemuria has for a long time been without contact with the outside world. As a consequence, the first wave of settlement did not begin until only a few centuries ago. Being surrounded by ocean and thus cut off from the rest of the world, Lemuria has never been involved in world wars nor been of interest to conquerors (except in the very distant past of this island). For this reason, the country had the chance to develop and prosper without having to go through the horrors of war and destruction. In addition to this, its geographical location and climate make this country very suitable for living. Lemuria is located outside the zone of volcanic eruptions and devastating earthquakes so the people do not have to fear any of these natural disasters.

Being detached from the rest of the world, Lemuria is characterized by a great diversity of flora and fauna. The combination of moderate and mild maritime climate makes this land a real paradise for plant and animal species. Although Lemuria is an island, it is a land of incredible and diverse landscapes. There are mountains and glaciers, white-sand beaches and lush rainforests. It is highly unlikely that anything like it can be found anywhere else in the world. The natural heritage of Lemuria is very well preserved, primarily due to its isolation and not having such a large population but also due to the very careful attitude of the people towards their surroundings. The Lemurians believe that human communities and the rest of nature interact as a functional unit. This is why they think that, just like all humans, nature should also have the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles.

Just like every island country, Lemuria largely depends on the ocean. Long before the rest of the world, the Lemurians had discovered its potential and started thinking of the ways in which they could make the most of its power. Nowadays most of Lemuria's energy supply is derived from renewable energy sources such as tides and waves. Also, a lot of attention is dedicated to solar energy so that the

majority of buildings are designed in such a way as to make the maximum use of this free energy source. No other country in the world has succeeded in developing such an advanced technology that reduces the use of conventional fuels to the smallest possible amount. Instead of importing raw materials that it is deficient in, Lemuria is more engaged in using what is available. This is why science and technology in this country are primarily focused on improving the use of solar and hydroelectric power.

Lemuria has always been self-sufficient and in touch with the rest of the world just for the sake of trade and the exchange of knowledge. In their early history the Lemurians were allowed to leave the country whenever they wanted but if someone spent more than two years in succession abroad, he or she was not permitted to come back. Today, this prohibition does not exist but, in spite of this, a very small number of people want to leave. When it comes to foreigners, Lemuria has always been welcoming to foreign visitors but if for some reason a non-native wants to obtain Lemurian citizenship, it is possible only through marriage to a Lemurian. Thanks to the foreign visitors and modern means of communication, the Lemurians are always in touch with all the trends. However, they are not that interested in conforming to global trends as they'd rather create their own.

Regarding the organization of the country, it is divided into districts. Every year, citizens of each district elect a representative. Representatives of all the districts get together to discuss ongoing issues or potential problems, and to collectively make decisions concerning the entire country. This meeting is held monthly and each time in another district since in this country the notion of "the capital city" does not exist. The sense of equality and unity is highly cherished so that each district is of the same importance. Districts always help one another because the Lemurians believe that each part of the country contributes to the stability of the country as a whole. Therefore, a small change in one place can have considerable consequences for the whole country. Each year district representatives elect a person among themselves who will be the representative of the entire country of Lemuria. However, the role of this person is rather formal since all the decisions are made in accordance with the opinion of the majority of the representatives.

Primary and secondary education are compulsory and available for all the people so that everyone between the ages of 6 and 18 is required to go to school. Because of this, illiteracy in Lemuria does not exist. School classes are small so that teachers can devote enough attention to each of the students. Secondary schools offer students a lot of elective courses. In this way, they can pursue other interests they may have. After finishing this part of education, young people are given two opportunities: to find a job or to choose among a great variety of universities depending on their personal preferences. Very often, the Lemurians are given a chance for professional development in some of the renowned foreign universities but only on the condition that these people later return and use the knowledge they

have gained for the benefit of their own society.

In Lemuria everyone has a job. In fact, everyone except children, the sick and the old and pregnant women is required to work and contribute to the society. The Lemurians are allowed to be jobless for no more than six months at most. If someone doesn't find a job during this period he or she is given one of the jobs available at that moment. Usually, it is something related to taking care of sanitation or greenery in the cities, or recycling.

Lemuria is a material-recycling society whose goal is to produce as little waste as possible and recycle and reuse wastes as resources in order to prevent environmental pollution. This is why Lemuria has developed the most advanced technologies and systems in this field. There is a law in Lemuria that anyone who drops litter in a public place will be fined. However, this happens very rarely since from the very early age the Lemurians are taught the importance of the environmental protection. There is a compulsory subject in the lower grades of all the primary schools that teaches children the importance of preserving the environment.

One of the characteristics of Lemuria is that in this country every profession is equally valued so there are only slight income differences among the people irrespective of the work they do. In this way the Lemurians have created a society in which each individual has just enough but nobody has too much. Instead of being based on competition, Lemurian society relies on cooperation. In contrast to other countries, unjust distribution in Lemuria is replaced with the equal distribution of goods. The Lemurians do not strive for material riches because it would look ridiculous to do so given the riches that nature has given them.

Life on the island is peaceful, quiet and carefree but by no means boring. After work, the Lemurians usually spend time with their families. A number of couples can be seen strolling along the beach, and barefoot children run around collecting seashells or playing with their pets. Working hard is considered a virtue in Lemuria but enjoying and taking advantage of all the recreational opportunities and wide open spaces is also very important. Almost everyone in Lemuria is "crazy" about healthy living – running, biking, swimming, boating and hiking are some favorite forms of recreation.

If you ever decide to visit this country, plan on spending at least three weeks there. However, even that is not enough time to get to know this country, its history, and its people. But when you get there, take a deep breath and keep in mind that there aren't many people who have the privilege of experiencing this extraordinary place.

Marko Đurišić

## THE FORGOTTEN UTOPIA

Hermit's log, day IX

I have reached India and decided to spend the night in the small town of Dharamsala. It has been a long and arduous journey from Talarion, but I feel that my quest might be over soon. To tell you the truth, I'm not even sure I needed to take the journey in the first place. Maybe I was supposed to stay home and look there. Well, at least I know what I'm looking for, and that's one step closer to finding it. Something in the misty skies of this mysterious town tells me that revelation is near. The people here seem strangely placid; most of them just meditate among idle cows. Wait, I actually remember seeing one or two cows moving about but with no apparent reason. There are a lot of things I find fascinating here, but for now I'll just focus on the strange chunk of paper I found shriveled up and tossed below the sink of a public restroom. I wouldn't have picked it up had I not seen something written on it. It turned out to be some sort of an essay titled *The Forgotten Utopia*, and signed by a certain Jozef Kowalsky. At first it seemed interesting, but as I continued reading it looked more and more like the ravings of a madman. I don't know who this person is or why he wrote it. Maybe it was supposed to be published somewhere. It could have been a school project even, the reason eludes me. Nevertheless, I saved it in case the potential readers of my log might be interested in its contents as well. It reads as follows:

"To make sure the reader fully understands my vision of a utopia, I will first briefly describe my philosophical viewpoints regarding the nature of existence and human beings. I find the quiddity of existence to be centered around the duality of Mind and Reason. Now, seeing as how many people don't know the true difference between these two notions, a disambiguation follows. The Mind, sometimes called the Universal Mind (especially in the teachings of the mystical Kabbalah) is a spirit that engulfs everything conceivable and inconceivable. The Mind is unconditional love, a force that creates. Many would recognize this definition as God, but we needn't be bothered by semantics and abstractions of nominalism. After all, I believe that a concept such as the Mind cannot and should not be defined, but merely experienced through revelation. However, due to these particular circumstances, I have attempted to give some sort of elaboration. Reason, on the other hand, is essentially nothing other than the shattered Mind. This is most apparent when translated into Serbian (*razum = razoreni um*). I do not know why this particular language holds the truth, and only those lucky enough to speak it will

clearly understand the elaboration which is integrated in the words themselves. We adopted reason when we fell to Earth from the Garden of Eden and trapped ourselves in bodies. Reason rules the physical and material world and we have to use it in order to function and survive in such a world. It is what gave us senses and what connects us with animals. Many rationalists would argue and say that reason is what separates us from animals but they have clearly forgotten about the Mind or have no clue about it whatsoever. However, they aren't nearly as confused as those who say that humans are, in fact, animals. These souls are lost in what I believe is the bottom plane of Reason. They have completely surrendered to it and in return are so confused that they don't even know what they are anymore. In this sense, surrendering to reason is so dangerous that it not only breaks your connection with God, but with humanity as well. Reason is fear. Reason is skepticism. It is Reason that tells you what you can't do, what you can't believe. Skepticism is nothing but the absence of truth, and it is thanks to Reason that many cannot see it. Again, as was the case with the Mind, Reason is best understood when experienced through revelation, or epiphany if you like. Defining it may create confusion, but I believe that the reader now has some general sense regarding the duality of Mind and Reason and we can move on to utopia.

Utopia, as I see it, would not be a place but rather a state of consciousness. People could live in utopia only if they achieved balance between Mind and Reason. Why is this equilibrium so important? Simply because inclining toward one or the other extreme may result in disturbances further distancing us from peaceful existence. Many Eastern cultures realize the importance of balance (take the symbol of yin and yang for example). Of course, inclining towards the Mind is much less harmful than towards Reason and it can even be gratifying. But, if we find ourselves completely devoted to the Mind and reject Reason in its entirety, then we would not be able to function and live among other human beings. After all, we return to the Mind when we perish from the physical plane, so there is no reason to do it while living.

In my younger days, I was fascinated with lunatics. I formed an opinion that people go crazy because they realize a certain truth in life which is so great and illuminating that they simply cannot handle it and they go insane. I had a great wish to visit asylums and study mentally depraved individuals, but, unfortunately, that wish was not easy to fulfill. My opinion regarding insanity has not changed much, except that I now realize that no truth on its own is big enough to make you go crazy. A permanent stay in an asylum requires the complete abandonment of Reason. On the other hand, going to the extremes with Reason results in what I have already described as animalism and other deviations. The difference between the two extremes is that you can still live among others while under the complete influence of Reason. Many people can be slaves of Reason without anyone else noticing it. That is because we live in what is believed to be "civilization". In reality,

it is yet another product of Reason that gradually developed throughout the course of history. It would take some time to explain why civilization as we know it harms humanity, so I will leave it for another occasion. I will, however, explain another product of Reason from which all evil stems. This product is, of course, the Ego. Everyone knows to some extent what the Ego is. It is used mostly as an adjective (egoistic), to describe those who think too highly of themselves or someone who is self-centered (egocentric). In a neutral sense, it is described as your own identity or sense of self. These are some good starting points, but they are still far from the true nature of this devastating concept. People take the Ego for granted; they treat it simply as another negative trait and can't see how it really shatters humanity. In the end, the Ego is what prevents us from peacefully coexisting with each other and, when combined with a lack of empathy, it becomes a killing machine. All human troubles came when we forgot that we all existed in the same way. How can you be better or worse than someone else when you exist in the same way? How can you be faster (motion is yet another illusion of Reason), or more important, when we are all the same? These illusions are evidence of the presence of the Ego and they create a false sense of reality, a simulation. Now it is clear why it is better to be inclined towards the Mind. Inclining towards Reason might leave you lost in the illusionary world of the Ego.

In my utopia, humans would be Beings (capitalized to differentiate from any ordinary life forms) completely void of the Ego and balanced between Mind and Reason, living in peaceful coexistence. Everyone would feel love, and not only towards fellow humans. They would feel the essence of love itself, which stems from the Mind. A saddening fact is that most people today seem to have forgotten the importance of love. That ignorance would not exist in my utopia, where love rules above everything. The essence of love is explained in Plato's *Symposium*. It has four stages, or levels: first there is physical attraction, then spiritual love, then love for knowledge, and finally, the idea or essence of love. Unfortunately, many individuals do not go past the first step. You may think you are happily married, but then you get a divorce, and in reality, you never moved from the first step. Divorce or not, love can elude any two people who don't see its essence. People often rush the decision to get married because it's expected of them. Society imposes these norms and turns you into a screw of its machinery. Take the American dream for an example. Get a job, get married, start a family, own a house, a car, and before you know it, you are trapped inside the vicious circle that prevents you from exploring the beautiful truths of life. What is the American dream other than a false utopia designed by God knows who. Could it be the Freemasons, the Illuminati? Probably neither, but it's fun to imagine them secluded somewhere, enjoying the truths of life while the rest of us live in an illusion simulated by their machine. Let's get back to love for a moment. Sure, many people have found true love and nothing can deny their happiness, but they are still exceptions. Not in my utopia though,

where romantic love is of the purest kind. Everyone has a person they are in love with and they cannot love someone else. It doesn't necessarily mean that your love is returned, because true love is unconditional and therefore has no requirements or conditions. It simply radiates with its existence. Since love inspires knowledge (remember the third stage), everyone would seek to learn more and more things. Learning would be a natural process full of wonder and awe. People would admire all sorts of art and see beauty in everything. That is the reward for being content with existence. It creates a feeling of indifference, but not in its usual sense (lack of emotions). This indifference is a joyful experience of life when you cannot be disturbed by anything. There are no negative thoughts that stem from the confusions of an illusionary world created by the Ego. Only that way could people see beauty in everything, because they see it in life itself. People would have a strong sense of center and stability which comes from belief and faith. Everyone would believe in something, it wouldn't matter what because nobody would judge them. People with no beliefs are metaphorically cast out into the outskirts of existence, never knowing when they would fall off the edge. Not believing in something higher than yourself results in solipsism. This is a state where the mind encloses itself completely, cutting all ties with reality and eventually collapsing into itself. In my utopia, everyone is in the center, connected to the Mind and ruling over Reason, using it only when necessary. If you imagine this duality as a vertical line with Mind on the top and Reason on the bottom (Aristotle's golden mean usually used excess and deficiency as the two extremes), the center would not be in the middle of the line, as Aristotle saw it. It would be a section of the line just above the middle, because we are open to the Mind and control Reason. Balance cannot always be accurately represented visually, especially not with two-dimensional lines.

If I have to give an account of the physical world of my utopia, one major difference from the world of today would be the lack of modern day transport such as cars and airplanes. Motion is an illusion, it doesn't exist. Philosophers from the ancient town of Elea were among the first who realized this, so I won't go into details explaining it here. Sure, people would still recognize movement and know when something is moving, but they wouldn't pay much attention to it, knowing that is a property of Reason, now under their control. We would ride in carriages and there would be roads only outside of town. Why ride in carriages and not in cars? Simply because there would be no need to go faster than the speed of nature, whether on horseback or in a carriage. Just think of the millions of people who died in plane crashes and car accidents! Toying with numbers can very easily result in death, so would you rather live or live faster? If only we all listened to Parmenides and Zeno...

So, to sum up my utopia, it can be observed as a kind of meta-existence. Living on Earth, but with a state of Mind from the period before we fell down.

In the end, we must face the fact that every utopia is subjective in its entirety,

even though it seems to concern everyone and appears to be objective. Almost every utopia describes either the entire human race or a hermetic group of people, isolated on an island somewhere, living in some sort of harmony. In reality, it describes only one person – its creator. I'm afraid that the true nature of utopia in that sense is totalitarian. No man, no group of people can know what is best for everyone, even if they all agree. Such utopias always result in some sort of a society, and it always resembles a machine, which is non-human in its nature. Lastly, a utopia designed the way most see it cannot exist, not because we all want something different, but simply because we all want and need. We are guided by the blind will for life which makes us forget that we already have a life, that we already exist. The will is not only blind on its own, but it's made us blind as well. It creates a false reality we all yearn for, an illusionary utopia. It's a shame we can't open our eyes to the utopia we have already been given, and that is sheer indifferent existence."

## ARCADIA

The editor has asked me to write an article on homeless people with an aim to enlighten our citizens and point to the organized mendicant group. He came up with the idea because an article was circulating around about children being drugged and laid on beggars' laps seeming never to be awake. Thus in this late hour of the night, under the lamp's light, I look at the pictures of horror. Diseases, tattered clothes, a girl in her early moral destruction, wearing make-up and her hair dyed, uncombed like the other children.

"Lice, lice, they are our food. The Red Cross only lies to us. You know nothing but recording us and making us the subject of laughter on the Internet when we answer your questions. Look where we live! Eight of us in a single room!"

I am already dazed. These photos I've succeeded making in secrecy and the video of a Gipsy speaking about naming his son Conan, hoping he could be brave and courageous, attack my thoughts with inexplicable force, creating the confusion in my mind. With my head falling down from exhaustion, losing myself between reality and dream, at some moment I hear a whisper "Arcadia, Arcadia..."

There it is — the green field of Arcadia and everything else I am about to organize in my dream. The sound of fairies' jewelry spreads all around tingling so nicely on their white dresses. A forest there is and between the trees locks are braided and a country dance is performed. Everyone is singing and enjoying the company of writers. Among them are muses they admire. One of them, accompanied on the *gusle*, is singing about his beloved and the fairies are not jealous about being compared to her. After him another plays the tune accompanied by the fairy's lyre. He extolls his beloved above any fairy proclaiming her the goddess of his inspiration. The fairies keep on dancing merrily, their steps as light as leaves carried by a breeze. As soon as one writer finishes, the other continues until I realize that they are competing in singing about their loved ones. It is summer and the folks are gathered on a hill.

After a while, I turn my head and a foaming river reveals itself, where boys and girls are shouting the lyrics of the writers' songs at each other. At noon they head towards a hill. I follow them curiously, not looking back. I find myself facing a huge wooden construction with the balconies all filled with greenery. The scent of nature is everywhere. The young hurry happily to enter the building. Puzzled by what is inside, I follow them and discover a huge library. On every floor there are books of different genres. When reaching the last floor I head towards a window, where in front of my eyes a huge park appears. It is nothing other than a vast reading room

where everyone, with their faces lit up, is devoted to a book as one would be to a beloved one. I descend and ask one of them what they are reading so passionately. This one says: "The Holy Book." I ask them if the holy books of all religions could be found there and whether that is all they are interested in. I am surprised to hear that someone's holy book is *Don Quixote*, for someone else it is *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, or *The Odyssey*, or *Moby Dick*, or *The Brothers Karamazov*, or *Wuthering Heights*. Those who admire the same book belong to the same religion. "Is there hatred among those hating the other's book?" I ask. He says: "Not a single holy book is to be hated here. We are brought up in love, tolerance, harmony, brotherhood and unity. The books are like wine to us and the wine is an opiate." Indeed, their youth is immersed deeply in reading their sacred texts. I ask them how they spend their spare time. To my surprise, they tell me that they go into the woods seeking poets. In order to feel the divine spirit they stay there until morning, awake or asleep.

Splashing is heard from the distance. Not thinking about anything else, I start running fast where my senses lead me. In front of me, the night reveals a vineyard extending to eternity. Standing by the harvested wine grapes, girls are singing with their baskets full of grapes, while muscular men are stomping grapes. It all looks like a holy ritual, and one would think they are dancing. The children are running all around, even around me, and are not afraid of me, an elderly grey-haired man. I bend over to take one of them onto my lap. "What is your name?" I ask. "We are all named after birds, flowers and stars. My name is Pigeon, my sister's Dove and my friend's Star." I ask him where his parents work. "In the field," he says. "And your friend's father?" "In the field," he repeats. "Does everyone work in the fields?" "Everyone. I am also going to do so. All we are interested in is nature. It gives us everything in abundance, and we take it singing merrily, dividing it equally among us. The only other crafts that are practiced here are shoe and clothes making. And we equally participate in that, too." "And who teaches you at school?" "The library is our only school. We all study in its park, and then, in the evening, we discuss everything we know with the forest writers and poets. Thus we learn by listening to each other."

Feeling sad that I have not been given a chance to live in a place like this, I turn my head in grief and proceed dolefully through the dark, under the full moon, not knowing where I am going. I take a nap under a nearby tree. I wake up under the same tree noticing numerous people heading slowly towards the central plain. There, on three stones, a greybeard, a middle-aged man and a child are sitting. In no way are they different from the rest. The whole political life of this nation is reduced to the process of children, middle-aged men and greybeards electing their representatives respectively. Each group must have its own representative since they believe the elders cannot know the children's wishes, nor can the children know theirs. The three representatives form a senate which meets regularly on this plain. Their sessions are open to the public. Major issues discussed at the meetings

are how to distribute the food fairly, what style of clothes to make in order to avoid discrepancies between the people, and how best to organize leisure time. It is only the poets who do not attend these meetings since they drink divine beverages, they wear what people give them and spend all their time in the forest.

A bird lands on my shoulder and I wake up. Pictures of beggars are still glowing in the lamp light. I pile them on other papers, folders and notebooks and finally go to bed.

## HARMONY

“Hey, are you all right? Sir, do you hear me?” Hearing those words, I woke up, and felt like I was still in a deep sleep, totally unaware of myself and where I was. The first thing I saw was a beautiful girl named Rose who was wearing a dress made of reeds, flowers and leaves. I felt very weak, so she gave me something to drink, and I immediately felt better. I realized that my clothes were torn and that my leg hurt. I was not able to move my leg, and could not stand up.

“Excuse me, do you know how I got here? What happened to me?”

The girl plaintively replied, “There was a big accident, be happy that you are alive after all.”

At that very moment, my mind cleared and I remembered that I had been on the plane flying to see my brother in Australia. I felt sorry for all the passengers who had not survived. Soon Rose’s father came, a muscular and healthy looking man despite his age. He held a stick in his hand, which was a sort of a status symbol. He approached and asked me, “How do you feel, can you move your legs?”

“It’s very painful...” I replied.

“Do not worry, there is a man in the village who treats all types of injuries and illnesses.” He assured me that I would recover quickly. I believed them even though I did not know where I was or who they were. Rose and her father explained that other people had no idea that this island existed.

They placed me in a house made of reeds and leaves — it looked like a house from a fairytale. I felt like I was a part of nature. For a couple of days an old man paid me visits in order to heal my leg. He healed everyone else on the island. It was good that he had passed his knowledge on to his son, who would continue his father’s tradition after his death. He gave me a variety of plants and drinks, which were not very tasty. However, I recovered very soon. I wanted to get to know the unapproachable island and its unspoiled nature, which was hidden from the rest of the world. No outsider’s eye had seen the island’s magnificent flora and fauna.

I learnt that the name of the island was Harmony, and from its name one could see that the most important thing for its inhabitants was to achieve harmony. I could not help noticing that people were always smiling, that they were very healthy and good looking. I asked the old man how come everyone was so nice and healthy and what they ate, and he replied: “On this island we grow plants that have a positive effect on the health and vitality of the people. We eat only those plants.” I was astonished by the fact that they did not eat meat, but they were used to this kind of diet and felt good. All this was confirmed by the fact that their life span was

almost twice as long as the life of an average person in the rest of the world.

Besides, they constantly sang songs about nature and its beauty, about life, loved ones, harmony and friendship. It was fascinating to see people who positively influenced each other and took care of one another. During the day, they all worked equally, with everyone having some responsibility. The women were with the children teaching them nice things, moral principles, good and evil and how to behave, usually through songs. On this island, people and nature lived in harmony. The people took utmost care of all the plants and animals. There were even some people who knew how to communicate with animals. No one had ever hurt an animal on the island. As I was told, on Harmony people did not eat meat, only fruits and vegetables. I noticed some sorts that I had never come across before. I felt like I was in heaven.

Yet, I missed my friends and family. However, the optimism and cheerfulness of these people helped me a lot. I met all the people from the island — there were several tribes and they were friendly to each other, there being no rivalry, envy or jealousy. There was only harmony and positive energy. In the beginning, when I had a problem with my leg, I spent my time with the children teaching them some things they had not heard before which I thought would be useful for them. I talked to them about various technological advances. The children were very intelligent, but some things were incomprehensible to them. When I told them that there were computers and mobile phones serving to connect people and for communication, it seemed strange and unreal, and they asked me why people would need this when it was much better to see each other in person, to socialize and talk. I thought that they were right, that technology somehow alienated people. But at that moment I felt it would be nice to have a mobile phone to call my family and say that I was alive. I decided to continue singing songs with the children in order to forget the whole situation.

The people had welcomed me warmly and acted like I was one of them. In the evenings we sat by the fire and talked about adventures and stories which were intended to relax people before sleep. These people living in the tropical climate knew how to summon rain. Numerous rituals and songs were performed during that act. It was very interesting and even I participated. Breakfast, lunch and dinner were always at the same time, and then each tribe would gather and dine.

The water was azure blue and clear, the temperature was perfect and I often went swimming. But, I also helped with the cultivation of plants, and took part in all the activities that were performed by the male inhabitants of that island. There was a clear division of labor, and there were no disagreements and no benefits, only in exceptional cases when someone was sick.

Was it possible that there could be an island where people lived in harmony? Was it possible that there could be a place where people loved and respected each other and where there was an egalitarian division of labor? People there were united

and worked as one. Special care was taken of the oldest, as well as the youngest inhabitants of that island. Animals were treated equally as humans, and children played with them. What made these people so special? Was their genetic code different from ours? It seemed that we had forgotten all about the power of kind words and a wide smile, which did not cost much. We had become selfish. There lay the whole wisdom, or maybe they were happy because they did not know what lay beyond the shore of their island. We had forgotten all the real values pursued by the inhabitants of that island. I realized how little it took for a person to be happy and fulfilled, that we were the ones who wandered, and that all the technology, and all that modern life offered, essentially alienated us from each other, and from ourselves. We constantly keep chasing after material things, but that does not make us happy. I wished I could see my family, but I really liked it there and the people who were very positive. I had to get used to the fact that I would have to stay there and that I should be happy that I was given a chance to live.

As the days passed, they all noticed that I was sad and that I still missed my world which was not perfect, but my friends and family made it perfect. Rose and her father asked me if they could help me somehow, but they had already helped me enough. What I wanted was not possible. In the beginning it was interesting to study their culture and customs, and thus forget the grief and despair because I could not be with my loved ones. We gathered by the fire as usual and I opened my soul and started crying. After that I went to sleep, saying to myself that tomorrow was a new day and that I had to move on. I understood what it meant to be with loved ones, and that every one of our days should be filled with love and that we ought to help and encourage each other every day.

All of a sudden I heard the sound of the phone. But, it was impossible. I thought I was dreaming, so I went to sleep. After a few seconds I heard the sound of the alarm again. I opened my eyes and I realized I was in my room. I could not believe that everything had just been a dream. I was very happy. I opened the window and saw cars passing by and people rushing busily. I missed that a lot. Realizing it was time to go to the airport, I said goodbye to my loved ones. I could not sleep on the plane and the whole time I read books and listened to music. As soon as I landed, I immediately called my family.

Harmony was just a dream. Yet, it was not a nightmare. The dream was a message. Even though the world may seem cruel, we could still make it a better place for everyone. We should help and take care of each other and try to make each day unique and beautiful.

## UTAH, RWANDA

Alexandra is a *New York Times* foreign correspondent. She was born in West Hope, Idaho, where she grew up in a healthy environment and graduated from university. She was always kind and careful, willing to help others and enthusiastic and ambitious enough to want to make this world a better place. Upon graduation, she worked at a local newspaper, and later when she gained enough experience she moved to New York. She thought a bigger city would give her more opportunities and she would be able to do more both for herself and for the world.

She had always been interested in history and politics. When she read about problems with wars in the world, both past and current, she would feel discomfort. She wanted to help the oppressed people, as well as children whose childhood had been violently taken away. She wanted to show the world a faithful picture of the people whose lives were filled with fear and death without being guilty of anything. Her first step was a trip to Rwanda. However, as much as Alexandra read about the atrocities committed there and as much as she thought that she empathized with their pain, she experienced real terror only when she witnessed one of the most brutal crimes against humanity. All the time that she was surrounded by death and human cruelty had led her to begin to fear for her own life. Now she wasn't just a reporter who would show the world the true picture of the monstrous events that were happening there, but she herself had become prey to the beasts disguised in human shape. Her hopes, dreams and faith slowly began to leave her. Her broken spirit brought her to the point where she began to doubt her rationality.

She and her friend Bud, a photographer, went to the village which had been attacked a few hours before. The scenes that she saw so often were terrible, and whenever she thought that things couldn't be worse, she would be proven wrong. While Bud was driving, she was writing something in her notebook. Busy with writing, she didn't even notice that there had been an explosion. She tried to open her eyes, but she had neither strength nor courage for it.

While she was lying there, she had the impression that she had been sleeping for a long time. Instead of pain and fatigue, she felt some kind of relief. As if her body and spirit had passed through some phase of reincarnation. The first thing that she thought of when she opened her eyes was luck...

Alexandra was lying beside a tree whose branches were long and colorful. She had the impression that there was a rainbow in the treetop. The sun's rays were passing through dense leaves caressing her face. She did not want to stand up. She could feel the scent of grass and flowers. She spotted a butterfly flying from flower

to flower whose wings looked as if they were made of glass. She had a feeling that she was far away from the hell in which she had been living a few moments before.

In the distance, she clearly heard the splashing of the river, and it seemed that she could overhear something else. She heard laughter... She stood up and in front of her saw a scene she could never have imagined. Nature was magnificent. Various flowers, rivers and waterfalls filled the whole area. In the air she felt peace and contentment. She moved forward and climbed the small hill from which she saw children playing. On high branches a swing was hung, and besides the swing there were wooden slides, balls of different colors, with rabbits and puppies running around the children. Looking at them, she wondered if she was dreaming or if she had lost her mind. She decided to approach them. When they noticed her coming, they all ran to meet her and showered her with hugs, kisses and laughter. One child peeled off and while running said, "She has arrived." A little girl named Faith took her hand and led her down a path. Looking at the path, Alexandra had felt as if they were walking across water. The path led them to the high walls which seemed familiar, or she thought so. The walls reminded her of a fortress from fairytales which she had dreamed of when she was a child. When they came closer, the rocks in the wall started to move, revealing a passage. They passed through it and little Faith said: "Welcome to Utah."

At first sight, the city did not seem special or different from those that she had already seen. However, Utah was special in every way. As they walked, Alexandra noticed skyscrapers reminiscent of Rockefeller Center, the Statue of Liberty, small houses with beautiful front yards, she even noticed an Eiffel Tower identical to the one in Paris, as well as ancient Egyptian pyramids. The city's architecture was varied, unusual and interesting. Every street reflected its tradition and culture. Despite the great diversity, the city was in complete harmony. Everything was orderly, nothing stood in contrast to the surroundings, everything, including the people, was in complete harmony. Utah was a place for all, for everyone's culture and interest.

As Alexandra and Faith walked through the city, a man called Gabriel met them on the street. He was Faith's father. He was glad that Alexandra had arrived and apologized for his wife's absence, but he assured her that his wife would join them when she had finished work. She stared at him in disbelief, but her intuition assured her that everything was all right. She decided to let Gabriel tell her everything that he knew about this place and people who lived in it. But, first of all, he would tell her how he knew that she would come.

Then Gabriel started explaining: "I knew that someone would come, I could not know who, but I knew that there were still good people 'outside'. People who empathize with others, people who do not justify everything that other people do, people still hoping and fighting for a better life. You know, just like you, I felt I was under pressure because of everything that was happening outside and I wanted to

live in harmony with all my heart. It looks like my wish came true, and to be honest, I could never imagine something like this. You see, right here in Utah live people of all ethnicities, colors and religions. Utah is a place for all the people from this world, all the good people. We all speak English because it is a world language, but also all the people speak their own native language, as well as many others.

Our clothes do not differ from the clothes that people wear 'outside'. We wear elegant and casual clothes; it all depends on who likes what. We like cars, sports and entertainment. People here go to school, some finish school and some don't. Some find a good job, some don't. It is not because they are not persistent enough, but because we all have different ambitions. Everyone here is happy because we all do what we love to do. Utah residents love what they are. All the people are tolerant and, above all, everyone is pretty. But I have to admit that it is not always easy to find the right person for oneself in an oasis of diversity. You know the old saying '*Similis simili gaudet*'.

Our children go to school, and all of them are good students because the class material is interesting and adjusted to their interests. After school, they have time for themselves and for games. Nobody scolds or abuses them because it is not necessary. They love and respect older people, just as we love and respect them. What they will become when they have grown up depends on them. We as parents give them advice, but they choose their path. Whatever they choose, they will always be our children. There is no inequality between genders. Females are as good as males at everything they like to do. We take care of each other and respect everyone's opinion.

Despite all the differences, here there is no inequality. No one is discriminated against because of his or her skin color, ethnicity or religious beliefs. People are created with purpose — not to be made fun of, oppressed or killed, but to meet each other and live in harmony. We learn from each other, and because of that we are all unique in our own way. Everybody here cherishes their culture and tradition. The thing that brings people of Utah together and what makes them so unique is that difference, their diversity. All people practice their religion the way they want. We do not fight each other because of different beliefs. Human beings are created to be different from each other. What you believe is your business only.

In Utah we do not use bad words or violent words because they are alien to us. We live to be happy, to fulfill the reason of our existence. We don't hate, we are not jealous and we are not envious. We don't crave material goods and we don't search for our happiness in someone else's grief. We are satisfied with what is given to us and we appreciate every individual no matter how different he or she is. Instead of competing with each other, we choose compromise and acceptance. We love science, we love art and sports, and we love life the way it is. The world we love is simple, honest and free.

There are no politics over here. We believe that all politicians are liars no matter

what techniques they use to persuade people. We are aware that all of them chase their own interests. That's why in Utah we don't have politicians. They don't have a clue about our existence and never will because politicians are not honest enough. In Utah there are no leaders, for we are all the same and we don't have the need to fight for something because we already have everything. All Utah's residents are versed in history and we all know what certain nations did, but we don't judge and don't punish each other for what our ancestors did. Utah is a fortress, but every day you meet someone new and you find out something new. Wherever you go, even down the road you have the feeling that it is your first time in that place, that you have never seen it before. You always learn something interesting and new. Because of its diversity, you have the feeling that every day is a new day for a trip around the world.

While Alexandra listened to Gabriel, she watched Utah, thinking about it. She felt it was what she had wanted her whole life, she felt she belonged there and that she should live there. It was just that she wasn't sure if she was dreaming or if Utah and its residents really existed. Was it a result of her, or who knows whose, imagination? She was sure that if it was real, Utah was the place where humankind rejected its ego and understood the meaning of life. Alexandra knew that she didn't want to go back to the "outside", there where she and thousands, even millions of good people could not fix what previous generation had destroyed. Honestly and with all her heart, she prayed that this was her final destination.

## THE LAND OF TWO SUNS

She had had enough of everyone and everything. Life itself made her sick. Her hands were shaking, her head buzzing. The urge to kick somebody was becoming stronger and stronger. The ex-boss or the ex-boyfriend, which one of them would be first, was the only dilemma. Finally, she arrived at her small apartment, and only got angrier. Her bills lay unpaid on her desk. Her fridge had barely any food in it. She was nervous, sleepy, and hungry, fed up with her miserable life, and most importantly, worried that her headaches were not only caused by nervousness and tiredness.

The night was silent. She had never experienced such silence, and it bothered her. She needed to get away from it all. The bed called her name desperately, but she knew there was one more job to be done. The exhausting task was in front of her, but she knew she had to make ends meet and decided to give her best to make it look decent. She sat in front of her computer and started typing. It wasn't long until tiredness overwhelmed her. The breakdown came abruptly. Her head fell onto her desk and she was instantly asleep.

The light that fell onto her face was what woke her up. It was the strangest light she had ever experienced. Her eyelids were closed and yet she was able to see the most extraordinary nuance of pink that she could ever imagine. The light seemed to enter her thoughts, her consciousness. She felt lighter and more relaxed every second. What she desired most was to keep the light shining on her face forever. However, she made herself open her eyes and that was the most shocking moment of her life.

What she expected to see and what she actually saw were so different that she was convinced she had lost her mind. Her logic was telling her that she should be sitting in her room, in front of her computer. On the other hand, her eyes failed to concur with her logic. She considered them traitors. How dare they see what they saw?! How dare they witness her madness?! How was it possible that she was now in the middle of a meadow, lying in the grass, while this pink Sun shone on her face so pleasantly? Wait, pink Sun? How could this be? She wondered whether the sandwich she ate for late lunch yesterday had been stale. Oh, dear. It was getting even worse. There were two of them. Two Suns. She turned her head from left to right, unable to grasp the meaning of all this. There it was, the star she knew and had seen her entire life, this big orange ball. But somehow, it seemed larger. Actually, it was giant. And, then, there was this other ball, somewhat smaller in size but much more radiant than the Sun she knew and loved.

A moment later she realized that a girl was approaching her. She was of spectacular appearance, not because of her exquisite beauty, but because of her carefree way of walking. She seemed to be floating in the air, she was so graceful. Our heroine was stunned. She could not move nor speak. The girl approached her and smiled brightly.

"She looks at me as if she knew me. She must have confused me with someone else," Emma thought. With those words in her mind, the confused girl started talking, but to her shock, she heard herself speaking a language she had never heard before. She spoke a foreign language and didn't know about it? Well, that was it; she thought she had lost it completely. However, it seemed that the unusual creature in front of her understood her very well. Not only did she understand, but she answered with the same sounds which Emma inexplicably understood.

"Welcome, my dear guest. My name is Helena. It is my pleasure to be your host and friend. Where would you like to go first, what would you like to see?"

"Um, hi, I guess. Um, why don't we start with you telling me what the hell is going on around here?"

"I am sorry; I did not understand you. "

"What is there not to understand? I asked you what I was doing here. Where am I?"

"Oh, yes, of course. I will resolve all your dilemmas. It is just that you have used a word whose concept I do not understand."

"What word? What concept?"

"You mentioned *hell*. What is *hell*?"

Emma was shocked. "You don't know what *hell* is? The place of eternal misery where you go after you die because of the sins you made?"

The strange girl smiled gently. "Now you have spoken more words I do not know about. I enjoy that very much. I love learning new things. Perhaps you can teach me just as much as I can teach you."

"What exactly did you not understand in my previous sentence?"

"The concept of misery. Of sin. And what does it mean *to die*?"

For a moment, Emma thought the girl was pulling her leg, but when she looked into her eyes, what she saw was honest curiosity and a desire to learn.

"People do not die here in your land? You do not stop living?"

"Oh, dear, no! How can one stop living? That is not possible."

"You do not die of old age?"

"No, we only get stronger as time passes by."

"And you do not die of illnesses?"

"What are illnesses?"

"And nobody ever kills anybody?"

"Again, I am not familiar with the word *kill*."

"Wait, are you trying to say you never even kill animals? How do you eat them?"

"Why would we eat animals? Animals are our friends."

"Well, I don't know, to get proteins?"

"The Suns give us all the protein we need."

"So, you only eat plants?"

"I guess our word for *food* is a synonym for your word *plants*."

"OK, so you do not have to deal with killers. But do you have thieves?"

"What are thieves?"

"Thieves are people who steal other people's belongings."

"Belongings? Like a house? And what does *steal* mean?"

"Nobody steals anything around here? Nobody takes something that is not his or hers without asking?"

"Why would we take anything from anyone? This is a vale of plenty; we have everything that we need."

"OK, now tell me something. How do you make decisions concerning you all? Do you have a government?"

"Everyone is entitled to their own opinion and to vote. We consider ourselves equal among ourselves and everybody's opinion is valuable."

"Everybody's opinion? A woman's, a man's? You respect an opinion of a child?"

"Of course we do. Children are wise. And so are all men and women."

"OK, now let me ask you something else. Do you have a boyfriend, a husband?"

"What are those?"

"A person of the opposite sex that you are in love with or married to."

"We are free to love whomever we want. But we do not have *husbands*."

Emma was getting more confused every second. She felt like a walking dictionary. She still did not know where she was or how she got there. She was going to put an end to this strange, yet somehow soothing, conversation.

"OK, this is all very fun and all, but you haven't told me anything. Where am I? Why am I here? How did I get here?"

"You are in the Land of Two Suns. You are here because we heard you call. You were not happy. We wanted you to be happy. That is why you are here."

"Well, that was very thoughtful of you. But how did I get here?"

"We used teleportation. See?" At this point, she blinked and the next second she appeared ten meters away from the place she was previously standing. Emma thought she was going to faint.

"Do you often teleport people?"

"We do, if their call is as strong as yours."

"You wanted to make me happy?"

"Yes."

"You heard I was unhappy."

"Yes."

"I thought nobody could hear me."

“We can always hear you. And we want to help. We want you to be happy. It is not that difficult.” Helena’s smile while saying these lines was so sincere, Emma felt tears gathering in her eyes.

“Would you like to follow me? You haven’t seen the city upon the hill yet.”

“Actually, would it be alright if I didn’t? I would kind of like to go home now.”

“I thought you were going to say that. Of course, I will make sure to return you safely to your home. Because that is your home, you know, even though you do not feel like it from time to time.”

“I know. I realize that now.”

“And you should not worry if anyone can hear you. We can always hear you. We are always there for you.”

“Thank you. I am not sure you know how much that means to me.”

“No need to thank me. I am here to help. Would you like me to send you home now?”

“Yes, please. And thank you. I feel far better now.”

Helena did not say anything else. She gave Emma her brightest smile, blinked, and Emma felt she was slowly falling into sleep. But before she was unconscious, she felt the bright pink light again. It penetrated her skin, her bones, her reason. It was comforting and warm. She knew she was now free of any kind of fear. All was going to be well. Somebody was able to hear her. She was not alone.

## ELYSIUM

Nobody was happier than me that the weekend had finally begun. It seemed to me that the previous day was never going to be over. I hate that time of the month: people come to get their salaries and then the million questions start to arise: “Where can I pay my bills?”, “Can you check this bill for me — something seems wrong with this electricity bill?”, “I want to pay my mortgage but I don’t have that much money right now with me. Do you accept credit cards?”, “How come pensions still haven’t been paid?”... And, of course, a bank clerk’s day would be a complete disaster if there wasn’t at least one fight between two old ladies about who went first.

And then, Saturday finally came. It was a beautiful day. There were a lot of things I had planned to do that day. However, since the weather was so nice, I decided to go for a walk along the river bank instead. I still do not know why I was surprised that there were no people on the river bank to enjoy this wonderful day. I guess nowadays people in London just work too much to have any free time to even think about the weather, let alone to enjoy it. While I was walking, thousands of thoughts were running through my mind. I had a feeling I did not know how to enjoy that moment. I was just too exhausted from all the work.

But there was one thing not seen very often in London — an old man sitting next to the river and crying his eyes out. Many people in that situation would just pass by without looking back and it certainly did cross my mind as well. Yet, there was something in that man’s face that intrigued me and prevented me from passing by. The old man was sitting on the bench and sobbing like a child.

“Do you need a handkerchief?” I asked.

But the old man did not reply. I sat next to him. For some time we just sat and watched boats full of tourists passing by. And after what seemed an eternity, the old man finally said: “I never thought I would live long enough to see such a beautiful day.”

“Is that why you are crying?” I asked.

“Yes... and no,” replied the old man. “This day reminded me of a place I once visited — a place where the sky is always blue and the sun is always shining.”

“It sounds like a perfect place, but it is hard to believe that such place exists,” I sighed deeply.

“Oh, but it does exist”, the old man replied and started his story.

\* \* \*

Fifty years ago I was given a unique opportunity, an opportunity that was not given to every Earthling. It was just an ordinary day after which I went to bed. It turned out to be the best sleep I had ever had in my life. I woke up and found out that I was not in my bed. I was standing under some kind of a weird tree, completely naked. The tree was not like any other trees. It was shimmering with such a light that it blinded me for a moment. Its huge, white branches were filled with small bright red fruits, a bit smaller than our apples. The scenery surrounding the tree was as breathtaking as the tree itself. In front of me, ranges of mountains were spreading as far as my eyes could see. Behind me, the running rivers were making a joyful melody. On my left side, amazingly green fields and valleys were bathing in the sun, and on my right side the waves of the turquoise sea were kissing the rocks. I was completely overwhelmed by the scenery surrounding me and just when I was about to pinch myself to make sure all of this was real, someone tapped me on the shoulder. An old man standing next to me said: "Welcome to Elysium."

Just when I wanted to ask the old man if this was a dream, he said: "No, my friend, this is not a dream."

The man seemed like he was around seventy years old. He had a long white beard and his clothes were simple and ordinary. But the first thing I noticed on this man's face was his soothing and calm expression. It was only when he gave me some clothes that I remembered I was completely naked. He gave me clothes identical to his.

"Where am I? What is this place? What happened to my clothes? And what's with this tree?" I started bombarding the man with questions.

"Slow down my friend, I will explain it eventually. Be my guest, help yourself with these delicious fruits from the tree," replied the old man.

I picked one of the fruits from the tree and ate it. It is hard to describe how delicious it was. It was a perfect mixture of flavors and tasted better than anything I had eaten before. The man told me to get dressed and we set off in the direction of the mountains. That is when the man started explaining everything.

"My dear friend, you are on the planet called Elysium. And before you ask me about the location of this place, I can only tell you that this place is invisible to Earthlings and that not a single Earthling can come here by his own will. You must be wondering now how you got here. First, bear in mind that this place is completely different from Earth and by coming here you must respect our way of living. The Elysians are born in this place and we live here, and you can become one of us if you want to. We Elysians have decided that every year we will give one Earthling an opportunity to live among us. This year, it is you. It seemed to us that life on Earth did not suit you well as you had many difficulties and you did not manage to find yourself. We thought you would find life on Elysium much easier. Now, before I move

on with my story, you must make your choice — do you want to stay or not?”

I was completely astonished and it was hard to absorb all the things the man told me. Besides, I was still not entirely sure that this was not a dream. However, as there was nothing that kept me on Earth or nobody who would miss me, I decided to stay.

I lived on Elysium for ten wonderful years and I still would be if I had not been such a fool, but later about that. The man who welcomed me to this place was called Ishai. He was one of the four sages. Elysium is a kingdom made of four smaller kingdoms: the Kingdom of the Great Mountain, the Kingdom of the Blue Sea, the Kingdom of the Rapid Rivers and the Kingdom of the Vast Valleys. It was named for the tree positioned in the very center of the kingdom. The Elysians also call it the “tree of life” as it has special healing powers and can heal any disease. Therefore the Elysians live to a great age. Each kingdom has a representative, the sage. Ishai was the representative of the Kingdom of the Great Mountain. The role of the sages is to take care of the kingdom’s welfare. They are in charge of the organization of jobs in the kingdom, but it is not an unusual thing for them to jump in whenever help is needed. They solve all the problems that might arise among citizens. Each sage solves the problems in his own kingdom unless the problem concerns the whole kingdom. In that case, the sages consult each other to reach a solution for the benefit of the whole kingdom. The kingdoms differ only in their geographical features and professions of their citizens, but they share the same values. There are no personal possessions, except for the house in which the family lives and a horse, which is the only means of transport, and every person is given one at birth. The Kingdom of the Great Mountain, as the name says, consists of large areas of mountain ranges covered with forests and many beautiful brooks. People in this kingdom are primarily shepherds. However, they do not have separate herds, but they all take care of one large herd that belongs to the entire kingdom. Each member of the community contributes to the kingdom. There is a division of chores between men and women. While men take care of the herd in the mountains working in different shifts, women work together in the town. They make dairy products, process wool, and make clothes of animal skin. There are no strict working times, they work until the job is done. However, as everyone enjoys their own work, they do not mind working several hours a day.

The Kingdom of the Blue Sea is surrounded by a turquoise sea and beautiful sandy beaches. People in this kingdom are primarily fishermen. While men work on their boats catching fish, women are in charge of the caught fish. They make sure the fish stays fresh, dry them and prepare them for transport.

The Kingdom of Rapid Rivers is the biggest of all the kingdoms. Its magnificent rivers cover vast territories. People in this area are primarily masons and miners. This territory is rich in many different ores, such as stone, coal, iron and copper. As mining is quite hard, men work only three hours a day in different shifts. They use

the ore to build houses and boats. This area is also famous for its fruitful vineyards. It is the women's job to pick the grapes and make wine.

And finally, the Kingdom of the Vast Valleys was named for the far-reaching fields of wheat and hay. It is also famous for its numerous orchards of apples, peaches, apricots and pears. The men's job is to plough and turn the soil. The women's job, on the other hand, is to pick the fruits and make different products out of them.

The Elysians are not familiar with the notion of money. And it seems they do not need it. Their economy is based on the trade of goods. Each kingdom supplies other kingdoms with the goods they produce. So, for example, the Kingdom of the Great Mountain supplies other kingdoms with meat from various animals, animal skin and other animal products. Each year, the four sages meet under the tree of life to discuss all the issues concerning the kingdom. Among other things, they discuss how successful the previous year was for each of the kingdoms. If any of the kingdoms had a less successful year, other kingdoms would be more than happy to jump in. All of the goods are equally divided among the kingdoms. In each kingdom, the goods are divided depending on the number of family members. There are no social classes as they are all dressed the same. Clothes are made out of natural materials that are available to everyone. At first I found these 'uniforms' very funny and refused to wear them. But eventually I was the one who turned out to be funny in their eyes because clothes mattered so much to me. This is something they just do not pay attention to.

Each family lives in an idyllic, wooden, ground house. The lovely houses are surrounded by even more beautiful gardens which are each woman's pride. One of the sacred things for the Elysians is marriage. When two people decide to get married, the first thing they do is get a blessing from the sage. The sage then puts the couple to the test. During this so-called test period, the couple needs to prove their feelings by doing three acts of true love for each other. Due to this test, in the whole history of the kingdom there have been only two cases of divorce.

Although there is no single school in the four kingdoms, education is high on the list of their priorities. From the moment they are born, the Elysians are taught the customs and crafts of their homeland. Parents and the sages are those who mostly pass their knowledge and experience to younger generations. Children are not obliged to take the same craft as their parents. If they wish to do something else, they can always ask for the permission of the sage and move to another kingdom. Although passing knowledge from one generation to another is the primary way of learning, it is not the only one. Whoever wants to learn more can visit one of the many libraries in the kingdom and become familiar with the notion of medicine, philosophy, literature, etc.

Religion is an important thing in their lives as they believe that everything that is good in man comes from his true faith. The Elysians don't have one ultimate God and they are free to believe in whatever they want as long as they don't impose

their beliefs and convictions on others without their consent. Many of them find comfort in nature, in the beauty of the Sun, the Moon or the stars. Others, on the other hand, worship a man or a woman who once performed a brave, unselfish deed and contributed to the people's well-being. Even though their beliefs differ in many ways, they all find comfort in one thing — the tree of life, Elysium, which not only brings health to them but also spiritual purity and peace. So, at the end of each year, people from all kingdoms gather to celebrate the gift of life and to give thanks for the prosperous year that has passed.

You might conclude from all of this that the Elysians never have fun but spend their lives working. You are wrong here, my friend. There are no people on Earth who like to have fun more than they do. Of course, their way of having fun differs greatly from that on Earth. Gambling is a game they have never heard of, and why would they, when they have everything they need in their lives so there is nothing they could lose? Instead, every evening they gather at the city square, bring all sorts of homemade food and spend nights talking and enjoying the music and the beautiful weather. They also often organize dancing and singing competitions or perform an outstanding play. I am telling you, there are no better actors on the entire planet of Earth!

However, their life would not be so idyllic if it weren't for the strict laws they have. Small offences, such as fights or any kind of physical or verbal violence are brought in front of the kingdom's sage. When he determines whose fault it was, the guilty person has to help the other one with his daily tasks throughout the period that the sage determines. If both of them are to blame, they have to help each other with their tasks. Imposing your own beliefs or convictions on others is considered to be a big offence. Committing adultery and murder are as well on this list. For these offences, people are sentenced to the worst punishment — exile to Earth. Though they do not know much about Earth, it is believed that it is the most horrible place that exists. Therefore, for the Elysians this is the worst punishment and their biggest fear. I was truly surprised when I found out there was no single rule concerning theft. The sage explained that no such rule is needed as the Elysians had everything they needed and a thought like that never crossed their minds.

I easily got used to such a wonderful life. I had a beautiful wife, called Marion, and two beautiful children, a boy and a girl. We lived in the Kingdom of the Great Mountain and enjoyed every second of our lives. That was a place one could only dream about living and growing old in and I certainly would have if I hadn't been such a fool. You see, one of the first things I was told when I came to Elysium was that talking about life on Earth was strictly forbidden. Talking about our cruel world would only confuse the Elysians and poison their pure minds. I was warned several times not to make such a mistake, but I guess one could not hear those warnings enough times. One evening as we were all sitting at the city square, I got carried away and started talking about my past, and, among other things, about our way

of life on Earth. Word reached the four sages and within two days they visited me. I was told to say goodbye to my family, and before I had time to say something in my defense, I passed out. The next thing I remember, I was in my old bed in London. It took me ten minutes to realize I was on Earth again. No matter how hard I tried, I never managed to get back.

\* \* \*

This is how the old man finished his story. At first I was a bit skeptical about his story, but as he continued there was no doubt that the story was true. I could see the sorrow and regret in his eyes.

“Words cannot explain how much I miss my wife, my children and life on Elysium. When you see such an idyllic life it is hard to come back to Earth. I no longer see myself belonging to this place. My biggest punishment is knowing about Elysium and not being able to get back.”

The sun was already setting and it was time to leave. We said goodbye to each other and parted. On my way home, I thought about the story the old man had told me. I must confess that a small part of me was still skeptical. The only thing I could do was hope that the sages would eventually feel sorry for the old man and give him another chance.

The mere thought of Elysium gives me a kind of hope, and who knows, maybe one day I might be lucky enough to wake up in a place like that.

## MOS 6581

MOS 6581 is a habitable planet in the distant Epsilon Eridani Solar system. With its specific parameters, it is completely habitable for human beings and is therefore classified as a human-friendly planet. With the exploration of hyperspace travel technology and black hole manipulation, mankind has opened countless windows of opportunities for the further development of the human race. With its long history of hostility and warfare, humankind has now turned to more pacific political solutions and with the technological progress of interstellar travel it seeks expansion into the unexplored galaxies, as well as a more satisfactory solution in the creation of the perfect society.

Scientists knew that this was going to be a very complicated task and that no simulation could prepare them for the results of the experiment. Many previous colonies had failed. They had enormous potential for success, but in the end they always fell apart. The scientists came to the conclusion that a human being as an individual was not capable of acting without a subjective point of view and it was exactly this which made previous colonies a failure.

MOS 6581 is the exception. Modelled as a perfect democracy, it plays its part sublimely. The colony is structured to act as a hive mind. Everybody works for the good of all. Having learnt from their previous experiences with human nature, the human inability to resist corruption, greed or simple yearning for chaos, scientists have now come up with the idea of using their own technological creation to help root out those undesirable urges. A system has been developed for the control of a microeconomics payment plan, which could be seen as the remnants of capitalism. The system has proved to be good; it motivates the inhabitants. And it has been designed to be incorruptible. It now encompasses all the basic accounting of resources, assignments, payouts of credits and it has preventive mechanisms for predicting malevolent and unlawful behavior. The computer maintains "The System" and "The System" controls the economy which is based on all of the citizens receiving their salary for their work. Those who desire to do more work are provided with more credits and therefore "The System" motivates them to produce and work more. The economy has been adapted so that the social system doesn't allow starvation of the people that do not want to or are not able to perform as much work as others. Credits are usable only for "luxury goods" like cars, better housing complexes and more diverse clothing.

Through advanced technological equipment all medical services are provided by the automatized system under the supervision of an educated citizen experienced

in medical science, and medical assistance is provided to everyone regardless of their social status/credits' rating.

Those who disobey the law and try to perform some unlawful actions are confined for smaller offenses and banished for more serious ones.

If in need of military action, the colony can use its automated defense system and wait for backup from the home world. And if it comes to the worst possible scenario, there is a weapons cabinet accessible to all citizens in need of defensive measures. In times of peace, weapons aren't allowed to individuals.

The colony is able to fulfill all of its basic needs. Ores are mined on the planet, and the raw materials are refined and produced in a controlled environment under the supervision of the citizens.

The colony's inhabitants are of mixed racial origins, have various religious and sexual orientations, and with a constitutional right to freedom of speech, thought and choice. And as a perfect democracy, every member of the society has the right to vote and a chance to make a difference. Children are raised by their parents and later on tutored by a more experienced member of the society.

The System is programmed so that the colonists don't have to do hard labor, only minor calibrations, technical repairs and supervisory duties. This kind of lifestyle encourages them to pursue their creative goals and enjoy most of their time socializing and sharing knowledge. The citizens have monthly meetings where they discuss matters that are important for the colony and by voting they come to a decision about how to deal with them. Every individual counts and every opinion matters.

MOS 6581 is the first colony to feature this specific type of social policy and it proves to be very efficient. It truly is the best place to live today! It is tailored to your needs and it IS your pursuit of happiness.

So, feel free to sign up and be a part of the next generation of colonies! Be a citizen of MOS 6582, for only 84,299K! Places are limited!

## THE CITY OF BLISS

Numberess 776534 looked with desperation at her son, Number 9876547. Days have passed and still she couldn't get to him, make him talk, open up to her, tell her what had happened during his trip to The Good Land. Something was troubling him, something he couldn't let go of, something he yearned for and yearned in pain. The food pills were on the same spot on the table where she had left them earlier this morning, and he, too, was in the same place where she had left him. His facial expression wasn't that of a lunatic, with his mind lost in a void or in chaos of his thoughts. His was a face of a man who suffered greatly, but who still had this light in his eyes, a sign of his ferocious and determined nature. He just didn't have time to do anything except to stare at multiple holograms in the room, making connections between them, transferring information to his brain. He, above all, seemed desperate to find the way back to the City of Bliss. His existence on planet Earth, in the district Grey Area 356b544, in the sterile bullet-room, seemed unbearable to him now. Yes, his existence seemed devoid of meaning, destitute and secluded. Life was something too joyful to be practiced here, on Earth. Existence was a more suitable and a more pragmatic term. Life was something he experienced in the City of Bliss during a short period of time he was 'stuck' there. He somehow found the Swing Between the Worlds and gained enough speed to transfer himself to this Other World, which was the Good Land, or more precisely, The City of Bliss. Once he had experienced life there, he didn't want to go back to his world. But he himself had limited the time he was supposed to spend on this other world, since he went there to do research and to gain palpable evidence that such a world existed, which would be an enormous contribution to the Common Research Engine. The problem was that the formula for decoding The Swing Between the Worlds was lost during his way back to this horrid world he had to call his home.

"Numby, please, take at least the 3 Basic Pills I left there. You can't be without energy the entire day," the mother said.

"I don't have time. I'm this close to finding the code again, I can't stop now. Just leave it all there and go," he said without even looking at her.

Numberess 776534 looked at her son helplessly and turned around to go when she noticed a pile of something that resembled an ancient paper form of information that they had learned about in the Center of Education years ago, when she was a student. She glanced at her son again to see if she was still invisible to him and started towards the pile under the Brain Charger and PhysiTouch Gloves, took them with her and left the bullet-room.

The pile of papers she smuggled from her son were blank papers mostly, only a couple of them had some writing on them and those were marked with numbers. She sat in the corner of her own bullet-room and started reading:

“When I landed on the surface of The Good Land, the Swing dropped me by some sort of a playground in the City of Bliss. A lot of children were playing, some of them singing, others were swimming or just running in a vast green field. There were a lot of animals there, those I had learned about in the Center of Education. There were the so-called Domestic Animals, but also a couple of Wild Animals. It was somewhat unclear to me how they could function together. People were playing with children, too. Not just the young people, but older, too. I guess I could tell that the people there looked emotional. I saw expressions of happiness, joy, irritation, impatience, anger and sadness on different faces while I went through the park. Couples passed me by holding hands. Later I found out that the only acceptable way of showing partnership in public was holding hands, hugging and a brief kiss. They mentioned something like embarrassment if this rule was broken. As I understood, it wasn't like they were to be punished, but just that they would have some sort of an unpleasant feeling for making others feel uncomfortable. In this place, each person has a one and only soul mate, as they call it, and there is no need for formal marriage, they just have to sign their names on the Board of Soul mates connected with a Line of Life that resembles waves, indicating ups and downs in their life as a couple. A couple can have children only after this act is performed and a proper celebration is held. Sometimes, they tell, it happens that more than fifteen couples perform this so-called Act of Love. People here don't have any official religions. There are no churches or mosques or synagogues or anything of the sort I learned my ancestors had. They meditate whenever they feel the need to and for that occasion they don't necessarily have to go any place in particular and the duration of meditation is not prescribed or predetermined. It all depends upon how they feel in that moment. They say that The Waterfalls of Joy, The Waterfalls of Peace and The Mountain of Endurance are the most preferable places when people want to spend days in meditation. People here are not ashamed of their bodies, but they all show respect towards others by not 'exposing too much flesh', as they call it, when they perform everyday activities. When the weather is too hot, they all wear light clothes and the 'exposure of the flesh' is the same for men and women. They all appreciate different forms of art and they all read a lot and whoever wants to can write their favorite poem or a quote from a book they like on one of numerous Blackboards of Inspiration in the city. The division of labor is done in cycles. People specialize in things they prefer, but they all have to perform a certain annual agricultural share of work. They have vast gardens, fields and orchards they all take care of and no matter what one's field of expertise is, they all learn about agriculture and work in the fields from an early age. When it comes to food, everyone is included in the chain of producing and using it — there is no selling and buying. The inhabitants

of my world would call this society a backward one, since they don't have so much developed technology, they don't pile up things they don't need and they live only having the bare essentials, but when you spend some time here (precisely three days, as I have) it becomes natural to lead this kind of life. The essence of life for these people is The Shared Happiness and they teach their children to focus on spiritual accomplishment, rather than the material. They have achieved this focus by fostering the idea of Mutual Labor. They are all in the Cycle of Creation, whether it refers to practical work or spiritual and they all make and share bare necessities like food and clothes, and they all get an equal proportion of these necessities. All forms of art are practiced and appreciated here and during the long winter nights they gather in the Amphitheatre of Shared Art and Science, where the renowned artists of the community, as well as all the people that have something of artistic quality to share, gather and make an exhibition or performance or poetry night. The similar scientific event happens annually in the same place, only during the summer. This is what I've learned so far about these people and this land of plenty. This is my third day here. I still have a lot to explore."

Numberess 776534 had just finished the last sentence when she heard a bump from her son's bullet-room. She knew immediately that he was on The Swing again.

## AIPOTU

“So, tell me again, how this society of yours works?” Mukuro wanted to know.

He was an outsider. I met him two days ago outside the Wall, while I was on duty. He was an interesting fellow. Since Tuesday, I’d been meeting him on a daily basis and we’d been discussing all sorts of things, about politics, education, and life itself. I enjoyed our long talks even though he was a stranger to me. Mukuro was young and very open minded, despite the fact that his country belonged to the so-called “backward” countries. He listened to me very carefully and asked a lot of questions that were very often quite amusing.

So, I took a deep breath and started explaining.

“OK. I think I’ve already mentioned that Aipotu is an isolated state that was created after the Great Revolution of 2666, when the First became our ruler. Back then, there was this silly thing called democracy. Have you ever heard about it? Never mind. Well, I guess that the people were sick and tired of the president’s tyranny and his so-called democracy so they revolted against it. Then a leader was chosen, a just and honest man, with a clear goal in his mind — to create a country for the people. He is said to have started the Revolution because he lost one of his sons due to the corrupt regime. Also, he d-...”

“But who leader now?” interrupted Mukuro in his lousy Ainure, the language of Aipotu.

“The current leader is the Third,” I responded quickly, ignoring the fact that he had interrupted me. He had done that so many times that I’d gotten used to it.

“He is the grandson of the First, and he inherited all of his qualities and continued implementing his grandfather’s will.”

“Do you worship him?”

“What? Like a God?”

This was one of the amusing questions that my friend asked sometimes.

“No,” I replied. “In Aipotu we believe in what we want, and in whom we want. From an early age, children are taught to tolerate and respect other people’s religions. Everyone needs something to believe in, and what or whom you will believe in depends on you alone. We do not have anything like those... what are they called... churmch... no wait... churches? That’s right, churches. Everyone prays at home. But sometimes you can see people praying in public. People do not mind it.”

“And you? Who you believe?”

I smiled and answered, "I believe in hard work and respecting and loving your family and friends. I guess that makes me an atheist in a way. Religion is a part of your free time. And what you do with that time is up to you."

The sun had already set. I looked at my watch and it was almost eight. I jumped to my feet quickly. "Gee, look at the time. I've got to go, my wife will be worried. Same time tomorrow?"

Mukuro gave a quick nod, and I left him lying on the grass thinking about what he had just heard. I liked him but he belonged to the outer world, or the "old world", as we sometimes called it. It is not that our world was new or anything like that. It was just that we had made a greater effort to lead a better life, to be better people. We knew that we had to, for our own sakes.

I approached Gate seven of the Great Wall. This octagonal wall surrounded Aipotu and separated us from the world. The entire country had an interesting construction. Seen from a bird's eye view, it resembled a spider's web. It was divided into eight triangular areas, called Areas (creative, I know), and each Area was divided into sectors, called Sectors (yes, that's right). There were four Sectors (A, B, C and D) in each Area, and in the center of the country lay the leader's tower, currently it was the Third's tower. In Sector A of each Area there was a gate to enter or leave Aipotu. If you still remember, I mentioned that I was approaching Gate seven. That's where I lived. Area seven, Sector B. All sectors and areas were treated equally. Every Area had a governor, and every Sector had a CR (community representative). The construction was far too big for the ruler to handle himself, so these people helped him. Every Sunday the CR met with the people in the Sector and they discussed their problems, if any. Three times in a month, CRs met with governors, and once a month governors met with the Third. This way, the Third was connected to all the parts of the country and knew everything. When I explained this to Mukuro, he laughed his heart out saying that it was too complicated.

I lived near one of the schools of Aipotu. Every Sector had a school. The First believed that education was the basis of a functional society, so education was to be free and mandatory. The children started attending school at the age of nine. At that age they learned through playing games and developing interactive skills. They were taught several different subject, nothing serious, just enough to develop an interest in a certain subject. Educators also guided the children through the development of social and interactive skills. They encouraged them to pay attention to other people's needs and interests, to actually care about them, and to have a positive attitude towards other people, other cultures and different environments. This enabled all children to take care of themselves, to be capable of making responsible decisions, to participate productively in society as active citizens, and to take care of each other. At the age of sixteen things got more serious. Then the children had to make their preliminary career choice. For another two years they could change their preliminary choice as many times as they wanted. However, when they turned

eighteen, they had to decide on one subject and stick to it. The following two years they spent honing their skills.

The following morning I went to meet up with Mukuro again. I was surprised to see that he wasn't there. He was always the first to arrive. I waited for him for an hour and as soon as I stood up to leave, I saw him rushing up the hill.

"Sorry I late," said Mukuro, puffing and panting like an old steam engine.

"Where were you? I was just about to leave."

Mukuro sat down on the grass and said, "I know. I sorry. We had trouble with one stealer."

"Stealer? What-... Oh, you mean a thief? Someone who steals things? "

"Yes, yes! Thief!"

As I understood from our previous conversations, Mukuro was a lawyer in his country, or something like that. Apparently, there was this guy who had broken into an old lady's house and killed her, thinking that she might have a fortune. After the trial he received a death sentence. I listened to him very carefully and did not interrupt him. When he finished his story he looked exhausted.

"What would your country do with he?"

I was waiting for this question, so I was quite prepared to answer.

"Well, we would have him exiled."

Mukuro was surprised. I guess he did not expect such an answer from me. So far, the stories I told him portrayed our society as a lenient one, but now that was not the case.

"Not all convicts are exiled. For example, a thief would get two years of jail. After that he/she is placed on probation. If the crime is repeated it's goodbye. We kick them out and they are not allowed to return again. It is obvious that they do not want to be here and do not wish for the same things we do. We work hard every day to maintain our peace and harmony, and we will do anything in our power to keep it from disruption. But this happens rarely. Our prisons are empty at the moment."

My friend was stunned. I chuckled at the sight of his face.

"Ok. Tell me, why do people steal?"

He pulled himself together and started thinking.

"Because they poor?"

"Yes! Good answer, Mukuro. When people have jobs they have money. When they have money they can feed their families. When you can provide for your family and live a rich and fulfilling life, there is no need for you to steal. You have everything you need. Right?"

It appeared that he was not satisfied with this answer. "But what if a people have more than others?"

"Well, that's just not possible. Our leader has taken care of it. As you know, there are different kinds of jobs. There are those that are more difficult than others, those that no one wants to do, and so on. So, what to do with that? The First did not

wish for our society to be created on the shoulders of slavery. He wanted us all to be equal. To make this happen, he had to start by raising awareness that all jobs were equally important for a fully functional society. This is even taught in schools. The country is like a beehive. Everything has its place and function. Secondly, all jobs are paid the same, but the working hours differ. This way, everyone participates in the construction of the society equally. For example, we have a cashier in the supermarket and a mechanic. The mechanic would work for four hours, while the cashier would work six, but they are paid the same. And so on, depending on the difficulty of the job. ”

“What other countries think about this?” he asked.

“Well, it is difficult to be different. So, in order to be regarded with favor we still have contacts with the ‘outside world’. We support other nations. We import and export goods, give donations and invest. Anyone can become a part of our world and anyone may leave if they choose to do so. We stay here and stick to the rules by our own free will. If we want a better life, that is.”

“You allow people to leave?”

“Sure. Anyone can leave whenever they want if they are not happy, and the leader will provide them citizenship in another state. However, if they choose to leave, they must never return again.”

Mukuro frowned. He said that it was pretty harsh to forbid people from returning. “That may be true,” I replied, “but it is necessary. Everyone here knows this from an early age. You have to be one hundred percent sure about why you want to leave and what you expect when you leave the Wall.”

He lay back on the grass and wondered quietly for a while. Then he sat up quickly and looked at me straight in the eye.

“So, you said you accept anyone? What one must do to become one of you?”

“Oh, well, nothing too difficult. We accept anyone who shares our ideals. Who, in other words, wants a better life, works hard for it and respects others that do the same. For a year those people are on probation. Some of them manage to adapt, some of them do not. Those that manage to adapt become official citizens of Aipotu and receive their own role in the beehive. But why do you ask?”

“No reason,” he lay back on the grass again and began pondering quietly. Then he opened his mouth as if to say something, but then changed his mind.

“Mukuro, are you considering leaving everything you’ve got and joining Aipotu?”

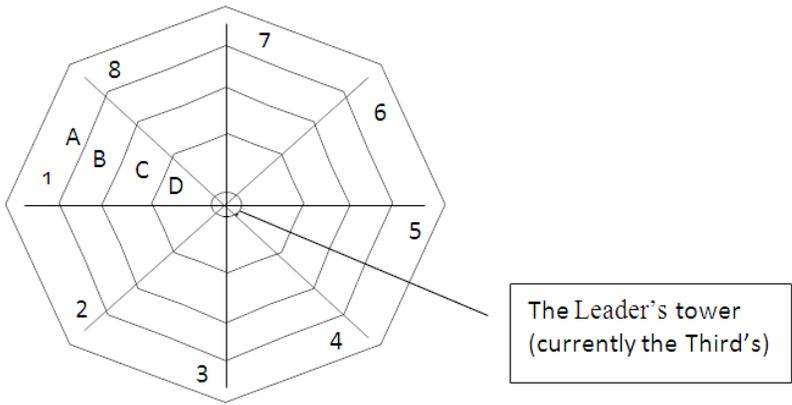
He stood up now, but did not look at me. He looked in the direction of his town. I guess he was thinking what awaited him there and what he would get inside the Wall. He mumbled that he had to go and ran away quickly. I did not know what to make of this. So I too stood up and headed home. Would he try and become one of us? I could not tell.

The next day, I decided to go to our meeting place just in case. Maybe he would

show up. And I was right. He was sitting there, on the grass, like he always had, looking at the sky, thinking about things I had told him the day before. Thinking about his future. Then he noticed me. I sat down on the grass next to him, and for a while we sat there in silence, looking at the sky. I could not stand that silence anymore.

“So, what’s it going to be, Mukuro?” I asked. “Have you made your choice?”  
Then he looked at me and said, “My friend, I have decided.”

Organisation of  
Aipotu:  
Areas: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8  
Sectors: A, B, C, D



## THE COMMUNITY

April 7, 437 N.W.

Today I found a diary that seems to have belonged to a woman from my family line. Her name was Laverne, and she was one of the few survivors of World War III and one of the founders of our Community. I remember all the stories my mother told me about her — of her bravery and sacrifice, of the turmoil that the start of the New World represented. She was one of the people who helped create the society that we have now. Laverne would have made an excellent Historian. I realized while I was reading her diary that her notes were a very valuable record of the past because of their detailed descriptions of our beginnings. I could not read the whole diary in one day, but I definitely intend to in the next few days.

The reason why I am writing this is because the diary has inspired me greatly and made me want to contribute to her records with my own. Though, what I have to offer may prove to be more humble.

It has been 437 years since World War III and the destruction of the Old World. Life is peaceful and steady now, but it was not always like this. It took many years for things to settle down, there was a long period of trial and error, during which our ancestors worked towards the best solutions in order to create the Community as it is now — the perfect society. Since then there has been a steady progress that continues to this day. One of the crucial elements was the disappointment in the Old World. Our World had to be as different as possible from that of the people who were capable of wiping out their own planet and civilization. Not repeating the Old World's mistakes was the greatest motivation for our ancestors, and it still is for us to live in peace and equality. Therefore, creating a utopia meant creating a different mindset in an individual, and it was not an easy feat.

What our ancestors immediately realized was that there cannot be one ideal society for everyone. Everyone was allowed to choose for themselves, so they went separate ways to create their own Communities according to their own needs and wishes. That is why there are several Communities in this area which are not governed by the same rules but are all on good terms with each other.

Our Community started with a few dozen members and has now reached around a thousand inhabitants. It is divided into ten districts and each district has a representative in the Council. The Council is the only authority in our Community, and it serves the people rather than governing them. Members of the Council receive no benefits from their position except for the great responsibility

and honor it brings. The Council meets once a week to discuss the matters that concern their districts but official meetings are held twice a year when all the propositions received from the people are discussed and then announced to them. The announcement takes place at a small square in every district and is carried out by none other than that particular district's member of the Council. Members of the Council are elected every three years by voting (everyone above the age of 18 can vote) and re-election is allowed. The member from every district is usually its most prominent and popular person, and he or she is often elected unanimously.

June 28, 437 N. W.

Today was an eventful day for the family. Even as I write this, I smile remembering how, just this morning, our very own son earned a thunderous applause at his end-of-the-school-year demonstration. Each kid was perfect in his or her own way, showing the skills acquired during this year. It is in these moments that we remember how invaluable children are to the Community.

What I gather from Laverne's entry, the educational system of the Old World failed in numerous aspects, but most notably in its availability. According to her, school had to be paid for, with the price being too high for many families to afford. This left countless children deprived of their greatest power — knowledge. Now, education is free for everyone and I firmly believe this is the Golden Age for our children.

It is in the Day Care where it all begins. When the mother's leave of absence comes to an end a year after her labor, the child is given to the Day Care, where it spends every morning, from sunrise to 1 pm. When the morning work is over, one of the parents comes for the kid. By socializing with other infants, children learn the crucial life lessons: sharing, love and friendship. My three year old daughter Galina is now there, and even though they say she mostly prefers naps to outdoor activities, I am not too worried. She shows great joy upon seeing her friends, and is the most curious little critter. Alas, I bore you too much with the stories of my children. I should return to the topic.

After a carefree six-year stay in Day Care, the children are then enrolled in the School. There, they attend classes until they are fifteen. They are taught English, mathematics... and other basics taken from the Old World, including biology, history, geography (at least what we know of the New one), science, arts and sports. Most important, however, are the lessons in field work, and dealing with cattle. With the help of family in this respect, the children are prepared for running a household when they grow up.

Specialization comes after Primary School. Between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, young people decide whether or not they want to become apprentices for more specialized positions in the Community: a doctor, a teacher, a trader, a

historian... An adult in this field takes them under their wing for those three years, so they become proficient in the trade of their own choosing.

It seems that only now mankind understands the value of intellect. Young minds are full of potential. If guided wisely, they can grow up to achieve great things; our teachers seem to have found equilibrium between nature and nurture: the Community's strength may lie in the sense of camaraderie and collective well-being, but we are aware that we are not all alike. Each person's individual skills can be an invaluable asset and so, for the good of the Community, for progress, we embrace the different, for the fear of only holds one back. Families and the School work together to raise great minds, potentially greater than our own: it is the young ones who will drive society forward one day.

July 14, 437 N.W.

This week, I work the morning shift. I like to work mornings because then I have the whole afternoon for myself and my children. I especially enjoy those weeks when both Daniel and I work the morning shift, and then we usually spend afternoons together as a family, go to the countryside and play sports or other outdoor games.

Work is a crucial part of our Community. Everyone above the age of fifteen has the right and obligation to work, unless they decide to continue their education and specialize in a particular field. Most of us work in agriculture but there are other professions such as cattlemen, postmen, traders, librarians, care givers, etc. I work in the fields, while my husband works in food processing and distributing. Every job is done in two shifts of six hours. The first shift lasts from 7am to 1pm, and the second one from 1pm to 7pm. So even if Daniel and I work in different shifts, after 7 pm, we have the evening to ourselves.

After each shift we get our daily portion of groceries as compensation for our work. Everyone gets the same amount of food which, depending on the day, usually includes animal produce, rice, corn, flour, vegetables, fruit, salt, sugar and so on. Many families have their own gardens where they grow vegetables, fruit and spices. They can use these for themselves, or they can trade them for something else in the marketplace.

Apart from work, we also trade favors. Since everyone is good at some kind of a craft, we trade our skills in exchange for something we need. This includes everything from repairing to cooking, and it is an excellent way of putting one's skill to use in a situation where everybody benefits.

Every day I look at my children and cannot help wondering what the future will bring for them. But, I am absolutely certain that Matthew will grow up to become some kind of a scientist. He is such a bright, inquisitive little boy. Even though he is

just twelve, he cannot seem to put the book down and never stops surprising me with his wits.

August 23, 437 N.W.

We have just returned from a meeting with our Council representative. A young man was murdered last night. My head is still spinning. I can't believe one could... A murder? There hasn't been one for over fifty years in our Community! And now, for it to happen over a... A man was capable of beating another human being to death, and over *what?* Over an injured ego. In the end, the reason doesn't even matter! You may argue, you may even raise your voice, or ultimately not speak to the other person for a few days... but take their *life?* I am baffled, shocked, afraid even! And it makes me wonder: *What kinds of thoughts brew in such a mind?!*

I suppose there will be more than enough time to find that out: the Council informed us of the crime today, and of the punishment. The punishments for the crimes vary depending on the severity of the crime, with banishment being the harshest one. In this case, instead of being banished from the Community, the criminal is to spend ten years in a quarry located on the outskirts of the town. There he will work, living in one of the penitentiary shacks with just enough to fulfill his basic needs. He will be assigned a Follower, a qualified person to police his labor in the quarry and track his mental and emotional state. After a ten-year isolation, he will (should the Follower deem him reformed enough) rejoin the Community, but with much less property than he had prior to his crime. From then on, he will work for the family of the murdered in order to redeem himself. In this, however, the Council has little to no involvement: the grieved decide what the criminal will do for them and for how long.

I would write more on this, but my hands are trembling again. Despite this elaboration having calmed my nerves to some extent, the image of the crushed wife and child of the murdered makes my throat swell. We are not a fragile society, do not mistake my shock for weakness — but we seldom tolerate *mindless savagery*.

September 12, 437 N.W.

Daniel and I celebrate our twelfth anniversary today. It is amazing how after all this time I feel as happy as I felt the day he proposed to me. This morning before I left for work, lilies were waiting for me on the kitchen table. Danny was making breakfast, pretending he didn't know anything about them, while children tried to hide their silly grins. Family is indeed one of the most important pillars of our society and this seems like the best moment to write a few lines about that aspect of our life.

It is of the utmost significance that one marries out of love. Only then can one

be truly happy and overcome all the challenges that life brings. This is, therefore, a prerequisite for starting a family. People in our Community are encouraged to get married but only after they have finished their education. And if they do decide to get married before finishing school, they must at least know the basics of field work and cattle breeding so they can earn a living for themselves and their children (if there are any).

When it comes to marriage itself, it is a monogamous unity between two people regardless of sex. Every family is allowed to have children but is advised not to have more than two for practical and economic reasons. Having more than two children is not forbidden, but it is significantly harder on the family since there is no child benefit for the third child. But I must say that Danny and I are perfectly happy with two. We have plenty of time to devote to each one and we always have enough food for everyone. Jennifer and Leonard from next door have three children and, although they are happy and love them all equally, they have to work longer hours and trade favors more often to earn extra food.

Another thing that must be mentioned along with marriage is divorce. It is not often that a couple gets a divorce, and, in fact, I don't know anybody who did. But there are no constraints whatsoever when it comes to this matter. Every couple who wishes to get a divorce can do so at any moment. Valid reasons for a divorce would be adultery or domestic violence of any kind, and in this case, the injured party gets the house and the children after the separation, while the other person has to find another place to live. The guilty party also has to give a part of his or her earnings (from work or trading favors) to the children until they start to work themselves. If, however, there is no valid reason for a divorce — the spouses drift apart from each other, or cannot live together anymore — the person who wants a divorce is free to leave and the other person is left with the house. In this case as well, children get a part of the earnings from the parent who left.

Interestingly, throughout the past few decades, it has become common practice for families to help each other. This is not one of the Community's age-old customs, but rather something we realized along the way — people help people. Compassion is one of New World's greatest virtues and it is now deemed normal to give a hand to a family in need. Older and more experienced families teach and advise the younger ones, and it is not uncommon for us to share some of our homegrown fruit and vegetables with the families with more than two children. Just the other day, I baked some bread and told Matthew to take some to Jenny and the kids. I know she would do the same for me.

October 4, 437 N.W.

It is a beautiful day, and I am finally at ease as our carriage rocks on the dusty road. This morning, just before dawn, Daniel and I were sneaking around the house

like mice so as not to wake the children while getting everything ready for the trip. Behind us, like a colony of ants, is a caravan of carriages and horses burdened with various trinkets and food, stretching as far as the eye can see. *This is the Road to Prosper.*

Ever since the founding fathers parted ways, it has become a custom to meet other Communities annually. We do so in the valley called Prosper, a patch of land owned by none of the surrounding Communities, which for one week becomes the epicenter of the most important events. People come from all around to exchange ideas in technological advancement, hand-crafted and tailored goods, food, cattle, and much more. This festivity that lasts almost all day and night includes makeshift stands with warm drinks, sweet foods, and games... much like the fun fair we read about in books about the Old World. Prosper is a rare opportunity for creating long-term connections with people from other communes, and for old friends to meet once again.

We have just recently had our local monthly celebration as well. Despite having every other weekend completely off work, the last weekend of every month organizers appointed by the Council prepare a series of art contests, sports competitions and science and medicine fairs for aspiring young Apprentices. One of the most interesting things is that most of these ideas for contests and themes come from the Community members themselves! The basic ideas are shared and built upon to make them perfectly playable. It is something the Community enjoys greatly, and it proves to be a really fun pastime for both adults and children. Young minds seem to thrive on showing just how capable they are, and a little healthy competition never did any harm. Matthew has won not just the swimming competition, but the Science fair for his age group as well! Now, I don't quite understand how the contraption he's made for the contest works, despite his numerous attempts to explain it to me, but one of the Council members seemed to have understood it. She could not stop inquiring about the machinery, mentioning a stellar future for him and occasionally glancing at Daniel and me in some strange... excited bewilderment.

## ANIXITOPIA

It was a sunny spring day, and on such days, when Zephyr was usually blowing, Steven was watching closely to what his old grandmother had to say. He loved her stories, because she was a feisty old gal and all of her stories were very interesting. Every day she would tell him stories of the world. Today was finally the day when he was to be told the story of how life on Anixitopia came to be. In his hands he held a do-it-yourself toy machine which he was trying to assemble. He got it as a present from his granny Sue for his eighth birthday, but even now when he was ten he still loved playing with it. Sue was a woman of eighty, and her mind was a pot of gold. Seeing his impatience, she took her knitting box, sat down in an armchair under the sunshade, and said: "All right, all right, I *know* which day it is. It is May 6, 3014, and today is the day when you're going to learn the History of the Creation of Anixitopia. You do remember what I've told you that name means, don't you?"

"Yes, of course", he answered. "Anixitopia is a compound consisting of two Ancient Greek words. The first component is the word *anixi-*, which comes from *anixios*, which means spring, and *-topia* comes from *topos*, which means place."

"Mhm, that's right, and that together..."

"...and that together makes the word *Anixitopia* which means 'the land of spring', because Anixitopia has such a good climate and spring is the favorite season of all Anixitopians. But, Granny, can I please, please, please hear the story of how we came to be?"

"Why of course, dear child. You remember I've already told you what *perpetuum mobile* is?"

"Yees, two years ago, when I was almost a baby!"

"Well, our dear Anixitopia is a land of eternal spring, as they say, but it is a special country. As I am telling you this now, my grandparents told it to me, and their grandparents told it to them, and so on. So, it all started on a planet far, far away, called Earth. You remember the Solar system we talked about two weeks ago? Well, that is the land of our forefathers. So, about a thousand years ago — around 2014 AD — and you remember that we still count the years according to that Christian calendar because we respect the tradition — so, after the turn of the centuries Earth was miserable, almost destroyed completely because of global warming and all those nuclear revolutions and the greatest evil that has ever existed: money. And the people were corrupt and hopeless... So, some of the people — three persons actually — decided they would not suffer anymore. They figured that life on Earth was soon to cease and they wanted to live. Since they were highly educated they

all had enough knowledge to share in the Project. The Project was about creating the perfect society, and they set up a sketch and started working on constructing that new society. One day the project was over and they called their dearest friends and families and they gathered all the animals and resources they needed and they headed for Madagascar. Madagascar was at that time deserted because the people had migrated and no longer saw it fit for them, which was perfect for setting up a new life there. So in Madagascar they wanted to create the Perfect Human, the core of the perfect society — with no physical or mental disabilities, perfectly moral and kind. They knew this was not an easy task but they had time on their hands, and they had science. But, most importantly, they had patience. They knew that the Perfect Human was going to take generations to nurture, but with their vision they knew they were on the right track. So, they nurtured their society and built at the same time their future planet — our Anixitopia. Now, this where we live is the same Anixitopia as the one made on Madagascar — it's just bigger; that's all. So, the years went by, the perfect generation was growing, and when Anixitopia was finally finished, they waited not for the Armageddon — but it was near, they could feel it in their bones — so they all packed, boarded Anixitopia and headed outside Earth's orbit into the deep space, basically, where we have been now for almost a thousand years. So, what is Anixitopia which they created? Well, Anixitopia is actually a comet in disguise. Outside we have a sort of a shield which protects us from unwanted guests, and that shield looks like a comet. But inside, there's a whole new world which flies around every corner of the universe, and it is a *perpetuum mobile*. This world of ours is very much like it was back on Earth. The Three made it look almost identical because they knew what nostalgia could do to humankind, but they also knew that Mother Earth was the best planet in the universe which had been destroyed by its own children, by their greed and corruption. So, our world has three leaders: the Man of Science, the Woman of Religion, and the Man of Society, and they are in charge of Anixitopia. The Man of Science is something like our driver — he directs our way through the universe and he directs the discoveries. As you may have noticed, we have a life of plenty. That's because our planet is based on a role-model, our dear old Earth, so we have rivers, mountains, oceans, animals, plants — everything there was on Earth before its final destruction. When our planet was just a mere project, the first Man of Science invented most of our everyday machines, but most importantly, he invented the Terraformer which enabled our forefathers to continue building the planet while in space. He also made our Sun — because without that Sun there would not be life here — so we can enjoy its warmth anytime. But, using the Simulator, he changes the weather when our crops need it, so that we can grow everything with no modifications, just as our ancestors did back on Earth. As I've already explained, we have all the knowledge in the world which we carried with us from Earth. We expanded it a bit, of course, and we keep it in Libraries and Museums of Knowledge which have as many copies

as there are people here, so that knowledge is available to everybody. Now, you may laugh, but a thousand years ago precious knowledge was only for the selected few, not everybody could know everything they were interested in because *some* didn't like it. Of course, that fact wasn't public and they had public schools back on Earth in which people actually learned how to be slaves, not people of thought. As you see, there are no schools here and all the knowledge you need you will get from me, from your grandfather and your parents. And some day, when you are a bit older, you can go to the Libraries and expand your knowledge based on your interests, which you will later transfer to your children and grandchildren as I am doing now."

"That is clever, Granny. You're such a great storyteller!"

"Thank you, dear. Now, back to the Woman of Religion. Well, on Earth they had many different religions and they fought religious wars because they were blind. The first Woman of Religion took all the best qualities from all those religions and created our Religion, which is practiced by the majority. There are a few who do not believe in gods, but we do not scold them because of that, and they do not try to impose their opinions on us. Thus we all live in harmony. The Woman of Religion is also in charge of marrying. She marries all men and women when they decide to. But, of course, they have to be old enough and honest and loving each other to form families. Since we respect our tradition we want our descendants to transfer it to their descendants and they to theirs, so that nothing is lost."

"What about the Man of Society, Gran?"

"Oh yes, the Man of Society is what keeps all this going. He is in charge of the functioning of the cities, as well as the division of labor. We all make goods and everybody should participate based on their preferences. Someday, you can go to the seaside and become a fisherman, or to the Farming District to grow crops, vegetables, fruit, or you can become a transporter and bring those goods to people, or you can become a Conservationist of Nature and help our planet in many different ways. It is your decision, you know. Oh, is it 5 o'clock already? Your parents should be well on their way now. Come, help me prepare dinner and later we will go to the Square with your Granddad to have some fun. And tomorrow we'll go to your cousins' and you can give them those presents made last week. They are sure going to like them."

In the distance they hear the sound of opening doors, and Steven runs to the house to greet his mother and father.

CIP - Каталогизација у публикацији  
Библиотека Матице српске, Нови Сад

821.111(497.11)-4(082.2)

EMBRACING utopian horizons [Elektronski izvor] / [editor Zorica Đergović-Joksimović]. - Novi Sad : Filozofski fakultet, Odsek za anglistiku, 2014

Način dostupa (URL): <http://digitalna.ff.uns.ac.rs/sadržaj/macura/embracing-utopian-horizons>. - Nasl. sa naslovnog ekrana. - Opis zasnovan na stanju na dan: 16.10.2014.

ISBN 978-86-6065-274-6

1. Đergović-Joksimović, Zorica [уредник]

COBISS.SR-ID 290456583