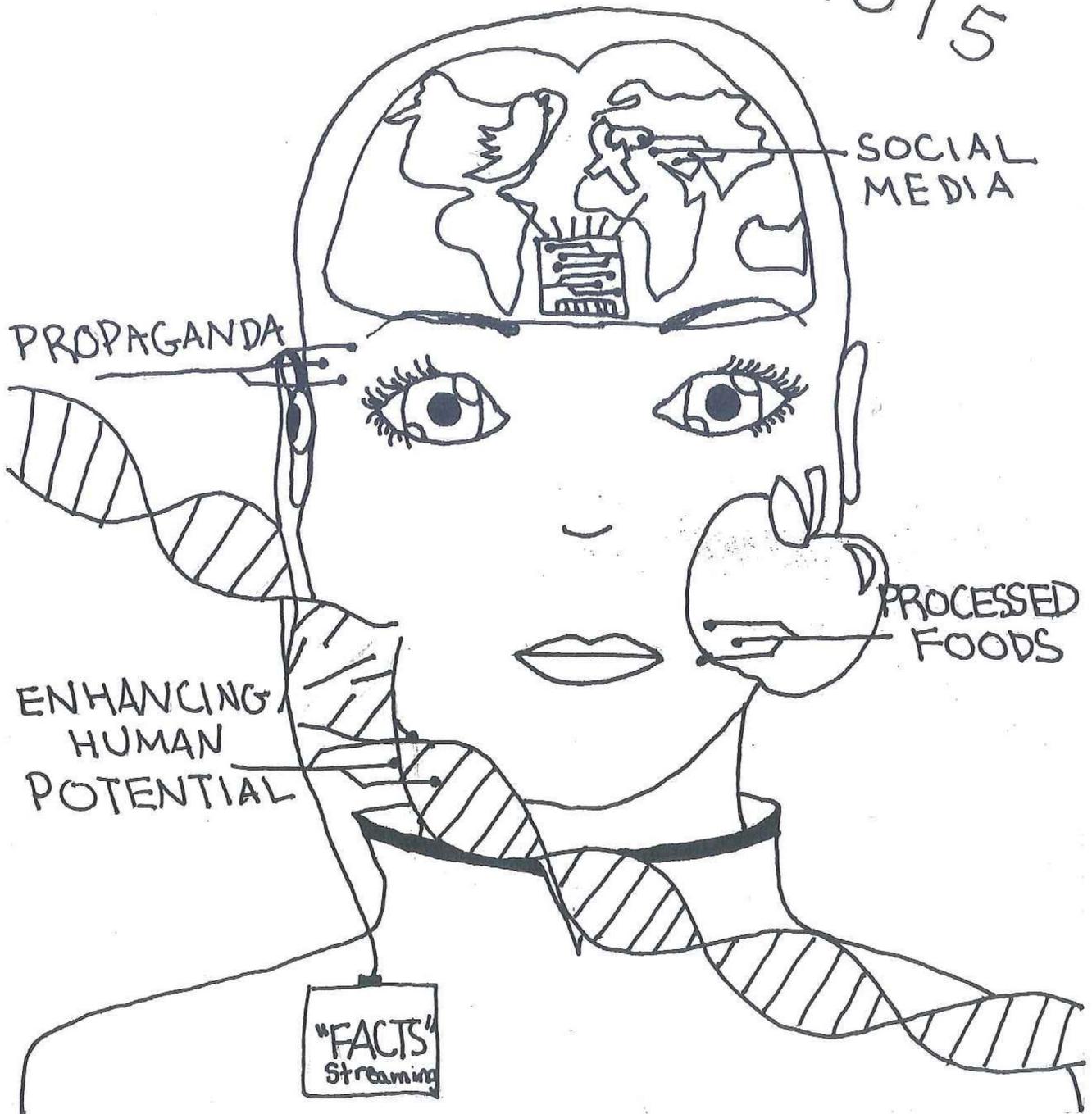


# MFPSP

Scenario Writing

2015



**The Michigan Future Problem Solving Scenario Writing Competition  
showcases the best futuristic writers of our state.**

**We are proud to showcase their work in this book.**

Students write their 1,500 word (or less) essay on one of the year's FPS topics. Each Scenario is submitted, randomly assigned to groups and evaluated in 2 rounds of evaluation with experts leaving great comments and giving feedback on the evaluation sheet. Within each division, all scenarios that receive a 1st or 2nd place in rounds one or two move on to round three. Round three looks at the best of the best and ranks them according to the evaluation sheet. This ranking provides our final results. The first 3 Scenarios go to State Bowl to receive their trophies. 1st place is then headed to the International Conference to compete with their peers from all over the world. Scenarios from 4th place on in round three are considered semi-finalists.

In the last two years we have been able to add a new feature to this program. Through a grant from the Ford Fund, we have been able to offer the Ford Blue Oval Scholarship to send our top three Scenarios from each division on to a special extra round of evaluation at the International level. This puts our top writers up against those throughout the world! If one of our scenarios ranks within the top 5 in the world they then receive a lottery invite to attend the International Conference!

**We are so proud of all our writers.**

**The Michigan Future Problem Solving Program  
hopes that all students consider this interesting competition in the future.**

# Michigan Future Problem Solving Program

## Scenario Writing Finalists

### 2014-2015

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On the cover: 1st Place Cover Design - Oijia Zhou

**First Place Senior Division**  
**Dylan Brewer**  
**Kearsley High School**  
**Coach: April Yorks**

**Cyborg Society**

The faint click of a transistor engaging a switch awoke Janet from her preprogrammed sleep cycle. She drowsily removed the electrodes on her hands, and languidly untangled the headgear from her silky, black hair. This could be the last morning with this antiquated setup, Janet thought as she stepped out of her warm flannel sheets, onto the cool digital floor.

As she casually walked toward the door, the floor below her ran her daily health checkup and genome scan. The MRI machine in the doorway let off a soft hum, preparing to scan Janet's body as she passed through. A human-like holographic physician – complete with white lab coat and stethoscope around the neck – briefly appeared in front of her to say "Your health is normal, Janet."

Janet let out a slight chuckle at the thought of her being "normal" in today's world.

The aroma of Arabica beans diffused through the air as unseen nanobots swiftly twisted her hair into a complex braid.

She was preparing for a teleconference this morning with George Croswell, the owner of the marketing firm she worked for. Her performance – at least according to the charts – was surpassed by the new employees this quarter.

New employees had the cBCI 1122, a compact brain control interface that allowed information to be uploaded directly into their minds. This made them extremely efficient at sifting through data and accomplishing routine tasks. With most work being done in the digital portion of the brain, it also allowed them to work beyond the business hours of the past. However, their inability to make unexpected decisions or solve problems beyond what they were programmed for left Janet with an immense workload.

Croswell had given her a week to decide whether she would get a brain implant or be let go from the company. Today, he was calling to find out her decision. She still did not know what she would do.

She frequently thought back to her youth, when human enhancement was a controversial endeavor. People used alarm clocks, and six to eight hours of sleep was considered normal. Acquiring information took effort, and mistakes were lessons to be learned from.

Janet's generation was the last to remember life before the cyborg revolution. She was born in 2025, five years prior to the end of Moore's law. The end of this law led to a brief plateau in technological advancement. The effects were felt in every aspect of people's lives.

Consequently, when quantum computing became a reality in 2040, enhancing humans became a priority. Many people believed that if humans became more advanced, such a stagnate time could never occur again. This mentality has allowed people to overlook the consequences associated with technology that continued to advance faster than ever before.

However, Janet needed this job.

## **Cyborg Society, *continued***

She silently contemplated the decision at hand. She thought of her 11-year-old son and 13-year-old daughter sleeping in the adjacent bedroom. Designer babies had become the norm, but Janet had made a tragic mistake. She designed both of her children to have advanced skills for the workforce when they were born; the constantly changing technology has already made many of their advantageous traits obsolete.

Without this job, she – the sole income for their household – would not be able to provide for them. She felt goose bumps appear as a chill went up her spine at the thought of this.

But, she would be in a financial fiasco either way. The surgery came with an upfront cost of \$100,000, and Crowell said he could only offset \$20,000 of the cost for her. This price, however, does not account for the yearly software updates or hardware upgrades to keep her a competitive asset. Those could be up to \$15,000 annually.

Her only option to cover the costs would be to participate in the government subsidy program. As if her ethics were not already being tested, this program would require her to do government work – no questions asked – and her memory of the tasks would be wiped everyday after completion. The work was proportional to the amount owed. Her boss would not like that; her time would be split between the government and her job. What about her kids? What about herself? She would be merely a pawn in a governmental botnet until the debt was paid.

That last thought made her spill the coffee she was hastily lifting up to her face to distract from the dilemma. How would she know when the debt was paid if her creditor could control her thoughts, actions, and memory? On top of that, how could she truly trust an institution that could tell her how to think?

She gazed at her watch as the seconds ticked by. Nearly in tears, she tried to make sense of the quandary she faced. Her job, her kids, her individuality, her health. Time was running out.

Beep! Beep! “Mr. Crowell is calling.”

She frantically froze. She tried to pick it up, but she was paralyzed.

Beep! Beep! “Mr. Crowell is calling.”

She tried to scream, but nothing came out.

Beep! Beep! “Mr. Cr...”

Janet had finally moved her hand 16 inches across the table to hit the answer button on the screen.

“Good morning Janet,” Crowell said with his emotionless, monotone voice. “I trust you have a decision for me.”

She nervously pushed her hand through her hair.

“I have,” said Janet with a trembling voice.

She slowly brought her black coffee mug to her face as she prepared to disclose her decision.

“It was a tough decision,” Janet began. “I had a choice between my individuality and my job; a choice between being there for my children and providing for them; a choice between remaining human and becoming machine.”

Crowell glanced at his watch as he gazed at the screen with a stoic face.

Janet began to speak again, but paused when the pictures of her children scrolling on the wall in front of her caught her attention.

## **Cyborg Society, *continued***

“Either option will transform my life, and both options pose serious challenges,” said Janet. “I have to think not only about myself, but my children. You do not understand this dilemma, because you do not have children, Mr. Croswell. I have spent the entire week stressing about the decision; I could not think about much else. I am typically optimistic, but I cannot find a bright side to this.”

“I have decided to provide for my children,” Janet announced. “I will keep my job at the cost of my humanity.”

A forced smile came over the blank face of Croswell. “I was hoping you would choose to stay with us. Now that this decision is over, I expect you will focus more attention on your work.”

I will have a surgical appointment set up as soon as possible,” Croswell continued. “Goodbye Janet.”

That was it? No compassion, no sympathy, no emotion at all? Focus more attention on my work?

And he said goodbye like he would see me again tomorrow, but after this surgery I will be gone forever.

Janet gazed at the sunrise out the window, determined to enjoy everything in the short human life she had left. The birds sang a poignant tune that brought her to tears. A black raven circled her backyard as a hawk swooped down to take the life of a squirrel. Even nature was grieving for her. It was not too late; she would not let herself be that squirrel.

She began to call her boss back, but was interrupted by the doorbell. The deep resonating tone of the bell comforted her momentarily. Who could be at the door this early in the morning?

She briskly walked to the door, eager to talk to anybody about her current circumstance. Her fingers jumped between the numbers on the keypad, and the door swung open.

“Good Morning Ms. Janet,” one cyborg said as another grabbed her and put hand and foot restraints on her. “The medevac awaits. Your BCI surgery is third in the queue.”

**Today's future solving  
tomorrow's problems**

**Second Place Senior Division**  
**Angelamarie Malkoun**  
**International Academy East**  
**Coach: Julie Hampel**

## **Unstoppable**

I don't know how much time I have left before they find me, so pay attention. This 2042 DigiWo will only screen this video again if you save it to any non-governmental system. Quickly—save it now.

My name is Scarlett Rose—*the* Rossett. I am an 18 year old world renowned celebrity, known for both my talent and my practically perfect looks.

I did something that I should never have done and *they* found out.

I was at the premiere of yet another one of my films, in which the Endimons finally attack us. They have been our world's actual galactic enemies ever since the beginning of this year, 2042. I was extremely worried about doing a film like this because it portrayed that, in the end, our government would crumble, and havoc would reign. There already was turmoil within our government, and was even talk of overthrowing it.

I should have stayed clear of that film and shouldn't have listened to the Birds on my Birdie profile...

I shouldn't have cared that Birdie was the hottest social site...

The day after the premiere, I received an anonymous Bird.

"Don't report this Bird. We have something of yours that probably won't go down well with anyone. Remember this?"

And there, on my DigiWo, was me. Or rather, a video of me that I'd made at the premiere night. I will not disclose what I did or said, just that it was terrible and I will never forgive myself for it. I now know that I'd fallen for the oldest trick in the book. *They* had put something in my drink.

"You'll do us a favor. Put a Bird on the National Profile, so that everyone in our lovely nation of Constance will see it. You must state that you, Scarlett Rose, utterly disagree with the current government and that you will fight alongside whatever group goes against it. And then, you must end with this very important word: Erupt. You have exactly 48 hours from when you read this to complete the task stated. We will be in touch."

It only took 1 hour for me to reach a decision. I did what they said. I had to. I couldn't let my family down after all that they'd given up for me, especially not with a horrendous video.

I thought no one would pay attention to the Bird. But I realized too late how much power I truly had. I'm trying to make up for my ignorance right now.

I hear them; they'll find me soon. I must hurry.

## Unstoppable, *continued*

*They* kidnapped me. *They* are people who are part of the Erupt Movement, a group set on overthrowing the government and creating something that they believe is better. The problem, though, is that if the government is overthrown now, the new government would not possibly be able to salvage anything. They would probably be overthrown too. Plus, our economic situation isn't so great.

I'd done everything they had told me to do, and yet they still kidnapped me. I think I'm somewhere in the main government building, the Dratica, which is in the center of Constance. See, it's publicly known that there is a double agent for the Erupt Movement working within the government, but the government hasn't been able to weed out the agent. So, it only makes sense that I'm here.

They took away every form of technology that would allow me to connect to Birdie or any form of social media. I was held in a windowless office with concrete walls and nothing but a cot in the middle of the room. After realizing my predicament, my second thought when I regained consciousness was that they must've taken me some hours after I put up the Bird they'd wanted. That way, I never actually got a chance to look at any responses. Something was very wrong. I forced myself to sit with my back against one of those concrete walls—the one facing the aluminum door—and waited, fear coursing through my veins. I looked at the ground whenever anyone entered, so I wouldn't have to see any faces and develop emotions towards anyone.

I knew what I had to do.

Someone had been in the room before me. Even with all the SuHo Tech Cams that I knew were watching from behind the walls, the person had managed to hide not only a dagger underneath the cot, but also the SuHo Tech Cams Destabler, which would shut down any and all STCams within 2 kilometers of the Destabler in any direction. I only knew of this since some paparazzi use STCams and I am normally always equipped with a Destabler to shut them all down.

I don't know for how long, but I waited.

At last, one of the people who always entered the room with food approached me. I checked to make sure that the dagger and mini square Destabler were still under my left thigh.

"What a catch," came a deep, masculine voice. "The Rossett. Can I get a quote from you?" He went on cruelly. "No? Well, I have a secret to tell you." He crouched and leaned in towards my right ear. I remember how his warm, sticky breath had poured over my skin.

I could barely believe the words he whispered into my ear, and I could not help but be filled with a sense of horror at what was going to happen.

I hit the Destabler.

My hand was shaking as I brought the dagger up and somehow managed to slit his throat before he could say anymore. All that blood...

The entire time, I would not look at his face. I searched the man and found what I was looking for: his DigiWo.

I glanced up and sighed in relief to see that the door remained slightly open. It was my chance.

## Unstoppable, *continued*

As I ran through the halls and up and down stairs, I tried every door that I came upon, but they were all locked.

I knew that I would never be able to get out of the Dratica. The only sane thing that I could do was to hide, inform you all on what I learned from the guard by creating this video, and put it up as a Bird.

I finally found a room that was unlocked. I quickly shut the door behind me and found the corner that you now see me in so that I could make this video.

Today, the leaders of the Erupt Movement were going to put up a national Bird through my Birdie profile. You must understand that they had prepped their masses already, and everyone was waiting for the Bird—it feels almost like what the Endimons did in my movie. The leaders knew that the post had to be at a specific time. It would start a chain reaction, from a bomb, to an ambush on every government institution all over Constance, to the killing of whomever got in the way. And it would all be done with the key word: Erupt. But if the reaction was started too early, the leaders knew that no one could win.

I can't let them go through with their original plans. I need to start it now, so that it can't be reset for another time. I will attach a post to this video with the key word.

Do what you must, for I know that chaos can't be evaded. Share this video, make it trend! I hope that you'll remember all the good things I've done.

There is one thing left to say: ERUPT.

*The metal door slammed open as the Bird finished uploading. A young man dressed all in black held Scarlett at gun point as others dressed in white body suits filled the room. But instead of looking at Scarlett, he was looking at the DigiWo in her hands.*

*"What have you done?" he growled.*

*Scarlett waited a minute before answering in a steady voice, "I couldn't let the Erupt Movement win." She slowly rose from her crouch, the DigiWo in her right hand.*

*"You do realize that everything will still happen?" the man snarled, testing her knowledge.*

*"Yes, but now it can't end with you people in power."*

*"You little—" Before the man could finish his sentence, there was a loud boom and the walls around them began to shake, the ceiling above them shuddering.*

*Over the cacophony of the building crumbling, the quick buzz of a laser gun sounded..*

*Scarlett fell, a puddle of blood slowly collecting around her head. The DigiWo slammed to the ground, too yet remained in one piece.*

*Had Scarlett been alive, she would have heard the screams and shouts, even the battle cries, from the nation outside.*

*The young man knew that all was lost. Scarlett was powerful, but with social media, she would not be stopped. The chaos, the revolt—it was too late. Birdie was*

# Unstoppable.



2nd Place Cover Design— Akul Arora

### **Third Place Senior Division**

**Mikayla MacDonald**

**Notre Dame Prepratory**

**Coach: Melissa Archer**

### **My Best Friend is a Mutant**

In 2008 we tied in the 100-meter dash, each having a time of 5.982 seconds, and for the first time in Olympic history, two gold medals were given for a single event. No one had run even close to a 5.982 second 100 meter dash before, especially not two people. This was groundbreaking! The 50-year-old record had been broken by not only one, but two people!

My best friend is a mutant.

Now, 10 years later, I look back on that day and wonder where it all went wrong. How could scientists turn my best friend into a robot? Why did they tamper with the human body? The Olympics no longer exist. There is no friendly competition, thrill of sports, teamwork, or entertainment.

In 2009, the first major breakthrough in sports performance was created by Dr. Kerr. He had the ability to recreate muscle structure with the use of his new surgical machine, the Muscular Reconstruction Generator. The MRG was evolutionary, due to its use of precision lasers and probes. Previously tested on lab-created human clones, it was time for Dr. Kerr to molecularly change a human. However, the human test subject was my best friend, Parker.

\*\*\*

Parker, astrew and unbound by gravity, stuck in a FRZ transmitting ray, didn't flinch at the sound of his name or pay attention to the athletes, doctors, and government officials crowding around him. The room was small and overflowing with people thrilled by what they saw but almost doubting their eyes. By some miracle, Dr. Kerr was able to turn my best friend, my friendly competitor, into a crazed, uncontrollable, athletic performance machine. Nine years of sports enhancing drugs, MRG treatments, steroids, and experimental surgeries had finally turned a human into a molecularly improved human robot.

When visiting hours were finally over and the world had digested enough of this "new man" through live holographic news reports, the public began to leave and I snuck in. It was Parker and me alone in his hospital room. I called his name and grabbed his arm as if to yank him out of his dazed state and of the FRZ ray. He didn't budge. Confused, I tried again. This time he quickly whipped his head to face me. Now we were at eye level, and he opened his eyes--black. His eyes looked like they had been removed in an experiment, but as I look closer, I could see that they were coated in black and were empty.

## **My Best Friend is a Mutant, *continued***

He painfully let out a gasp as if to speak, but quickly reverted to his original position and ignored me. The old Parker was gone, but I continued to try to talk to him. I updated him on world news and his family and friends back home. After about an hour of me talking to him and getting no response, I became disheartened and left him in that hospital room. Alone.

I turned right out of the hospital and jumped on the conveyor belt sidewalk. I heard much chatter over the excitement of Dr. Kerr's latest scientific breakthrough. Parker's face was already being projected on every street corner as breaking news. He was all anybody and everybody was talking about. They wondered with excitement whether there would be another Olympics, in which this "new man" would be used for or who had payed for this upgrade.

Disgusted at humanity as a whole, I jumped off the conveyor belt sidewalk and dragged myself the rest of the way home. Frustrated and needing peace of mind, I went into my home gym and worked out until I could no longer move a muscle.

I am human and will forever choose to remain this way. I want to feel the pain, soreness, struggle, and accomplishment after completing a race or an invigorating workout. I want to make my own choices and think for myself. The way I see it, human nature is not a weakness, it is an individualizing aspect to the human race.

One week after my visit with Parker, it was announced that Doctor Kerr had perfected his science of reengineering humans into stronger, faster, smarter machines into a 36-hour-incubation process now open to the public, for no monetary value. A new age was in our midst and by a few weeks time, roughly a hundred of these human robots were on the streets. I would see a friend or neighbor walk by, focused on one task and executing it swiftly. They were taller, leaner, and more muscular after their transformation, but the first thing I always noticed was their eyes, clouded with a black-gray coating. They no longer reminded me of humans.

With the world slowly becoming rampant with mutant humans, I mustered the courage to visit Parker again. This time, when I walked into his hospital room he was there unbound staring blankly at the wall, unfazed by my presence. I pulled up a chair and talked to him how I did before. I asked him questions, told him stories, and tried to show him the latest news hologram. With no response from him, I touched him on the shoulder to say my goodbye. He grabbed me forcefully and turned me to face him. Inches apart, his breath was cool and even, his eyes black and soulless, and when he gasped in an effort to talk, he was able to push out what he was trying to say. "Help," he forced in a whisper. I stared in awe, excitement, and fear. I gave him a nod as if to promise my help, but truly I nodded in disbelief. As I left the room I could see that Parker had reverted his attention to the wall, but what I noticed stunned me. Tears were rolling down his cheeks. I returned home with the image of Parker, a prisoner of his own body, burned into my mind. I had to free him, or at least end his treatments before he was lost forever.

## **My Best Friend is a Mutant, *continued***

Keeping my promise, I began to visit Parker more often. I took notes at his visits, the medications given to him, and the treatments he was receiving. I overheard the conversations between doctors, fans, and government officials. I was there almost every day, waiting to overhear what would be done with Parker when the experiment was complete.

Thump-click, thump-click, thump-click. My heart raced, I knew exactly who was slowly walking down the hospital hallway. This man, the one responsible for supporting Dr. Kerr's work, was also the U. S. Ambassador, Robert Lowe. He was short and had a robust middle. Dressed in all white with his signature 24-karat gold shoes, he slid into Parker's hospital room and closed the doors. I managed to hear his faint monologue over the beginnings of World War IV. How he was a proud self-proclaimed genius and how no one would see a total war coming. The United States would conquer with a mutant human soldier army and take back its rightful place as a superpower once again. The army would never have any memory of going to war, due to the film on their eyes that makes them see what the scientist controlling them wants them to see. Lowe let out a low chuckle and slowly left down the hallway.

I followed Lowe until he stopped to bark orders to Dr. Kerr. "Plan on removing your subject from testing no later than today. I need him ready to lead my army," barked Lowe in a low and daunting voice. Quietly protesting, Doctor Kerr responded, "I can't release him, sir. He is evolving too fast. He is fighting his body and winning. Somehow he has been triggered to fight internally. He is slowly regaining voluntary muscle movements on his own and is beginning to regain his vision. He isn't being affected by his medications anymore. It's truly fascinating."

"What a shame," Lowe blatantly responds. Entering the teleportation elevator, Lowe says flatly, "terminate him." And in the blink of an eye he was gone, nothing but the dumb-shocked expression and silence could be felt in the hallway. It was at that moment that Dr. Kerr realized he should not be changing the human body; he was not God; he would not murder for Robert Lowe. Dr. Kerr decided to take Parker home to hide him, fake his "termination," and heal him. Dr. Kerr slowly reversed the body changing drugs and Parker began to become more and more human again. After about four weeks, the effects had worn off, and Parker was able to regain his human identity. Dr. Kerr, interested in reversing his wrongs, had the cure to treat other mutants and Parker was his proof. Together, Parker and Doctor Kerr were able to work cooperatively to cure the human race.

# FIS 2015

Enhancing  
Human  
Potential

Love  
the  
Process



OVER 99  
MILLION  
USERS

PROPAGANDA

PROCESSED  
FOODS

SOCIAL  
MEDIA

50mph

3rd place Cover Design— Avani Govindswamy

**First Place Middle Division**  
**Luke Koski**  
**Holy Family Regional School**  
**Coach: Mary Nowak**

**The Truth**

Buzz, buzz!

Buzz, buzz!

Samarius DiFabio's Microchip XQ500 gently awoke him from his sleep. The microchip, embedded in his wrist, sent alerts to him through his nervous system. Due to his societal status, Samarius had the privilege of affording the latest technological chip system. The device worked with Samarius' anatomy to send alerts, view society's beloved social media sites, and do much more. Due to the expansion of social media over the last fifty years, sending text messages, communicating through emails, and using telephones were outdated types of communication and were no longer used. Though Samarius rarely physically visited with his immediate family, they often video chatted and shared many virtual tours and vacations. He was very grateful for his privileged life but often felt a sense of loneliness.

As Samarius awoke, a monotone male voice stated, "Good morning, Samarius. You have 295 new likes and 571 unread comments from 11:25 P.M. Please respond to Officer 519 for today's schedule."

Positive scanning by the iris identifier 600Z started Samarius' neon Aera vehicle. Automated driving allowed for Samarius to begin posting on Flashpost101, the central social media platform of 2062.

Samarius took his job as a Persuasion Officer for the government and for Flashpost101 very seriously. He enjoyed the challenge of persuading people who were not active on Flashpost101 to become more active and encouraged them about the positive influence of Flashpost101 on society via posting comments. His persistent personality and inquisitive mind made a great combination for attaining employment goals. He was recently awarded as the top officer in his position and won a virtual trip to Claude Monet's Gardens!

After checking into his office for work with the Iris Identifier 600Z and the Sony Fingerprint Scanner 2.0, Samarius was granted entry into his personal office. Strangely, he felt that something was different that day. However, he quickly pushed the thought aside and continued on. After successfully notifying and persuading 500+ Flashpost101 clients, Samarius was perplexed by a single client who continually declined all Flashpost101 notifications and comments. With an alias name of Hank Smith, the client refused to register his Microchip to his Flashpost101 account and log in. Therefore, the unknown client's account remained completely blank, with no posts, friends, likes, or even comments. Because the unknown client had not joined Flashpost101, his compound's location was not disclosed to the public. Samarius would have to personally and physically find him. Though this was a rare occurrence, Samarius was persistent in locating this client.

After much research, the microchip information for Alias Hank Smith was revealed by the investigative offices. Hank Smith was linked to a small compound near Samarius' office.

Upon arriving at the compound, Samarius knocked on the door. After a lengthy amount of time, the door slowly opened, revealing a pale, small, elderly man.

## **The Truth, *continued***

Awkwardly, Samarius introduced himself and revealed his reason for physical visitation. The man welcomed Samarius into his small, eclectic compound full of antiques of every kind. Samarius was amazed by the huge variety of miniature automobiles, trains, old fashioned telephones, cellular phones, tablets, and so much more. His eyes could not stop scanning the compound.

The old man offered Samarius a seat and patiently listened to his positive thoughts on the impact of social media on society. The old man then shared his views and reasons for not corresponding with the government's wishes.

The old man told Samarius about how wonderful life had been when he was a boy. Instead of only "commenting" on friends' social media posts, he had the chance to actually see and enjoy his friends in person. Instead of being tutored on Schoolbuzz7, a blog for the required schooling of all young people, he was physically taught at a school by real teachers, with other pupils. He had the freedom to choose whether to use social media. The old man spoke on and on, and Samarius was amazed by the freedom and clarity of life without forced social media usage and found himself at a loss for words.

Samarius' meeting with the old man went well over the office's allotted time, and his microchip was buzzing incessantly to return for his other clients. Breaking office policy and protocol, Samarius requested future meetings with the old man.

Each meeting was less successful for Samarius. He was making little progress in convincing the old man of how wonderful life was with Flashpost101. It seemed roles were being reversed. Samarius found himself reducing his Flashpost101 usage, trying rather to physically meet people.

At the end of their third meeting, the old man tearfully confided, "Samarius, you must know the truth. My real name is Joseph Allen."

For a moment, Samarius just stared at the old man, shocked and amazed. He was finally able to muster a quiet "thank you" before rushing out of the compound.

That night, Samarius decided to take a trip to the national archive building. Being a high-class citizen and a government employee, he was legally able to access personal information on citizens. After signing in with the customary fingerprint scan and iris identifier, Samarius scanned the long digital lists for a file on Joseph Allen. The name sounded oddly familiar to Samarius.

Finally, Samarius found a regularly sized digital file, titled "Joseph Allen: a Mystery". The typed font was ancient, one that was discontinued over twenty years prior. However, the usual information given in archive files was all present. Samarius scanned through reports of Joseph's marriage, children, grandchildren, refusal to register Flashpost101 account, and unknown current status. The file even listed the fact that Samarius was Joseph's Persuasion Officer.

The first time Samarius read through the file, it seemed that there was nothing apparent. However, after reading further, Samarius found what he was looking for. Under the list of children, Samarius saw his mother's maiden name, and under the list of grandchildren, Samarius read his own name.

Suddenly, memories of Samarius' childhood flooded through his mind. He remembered having loving, kind grandparents that visited often. Then, a memory of his grandmother's death overshadowed the others. He couldn't remember seeing his grandfather after the tragic death and funeral. Samarius' parents had told him that his grandfather had passed away less than a year after his grandmother. Samarius had been suspicious, as there was no funeral, no mourning. Now, Samarius knew the truth.

**Second Place Middle Division**  
**Grace Stalions**  
**Millennium Middle School**  
**Coach: Doug Host**

**Security?**

She awoke with a sense of security. The comfort of her soft mattress releasing any stress from the day before.

*Yesterday...*

The strange feeling that something of great importance had happened yesterday was nagging at the back of her mind. She pushed it away almost instantly. Everything that she had ever been taught told her to ignore the troublesome voice disturbing her mind.

*They're lying to you, and you know it.*

She didn't want to believe the disconcerting voice but something told her she should at least see what it had to say. By the time she finally decided to give it a small amount of thought, the mysterious voice had disappeared.

"That's odd." She quietly murmured.

"What is the matter Miss Idrina Chastity?" A robotic female voice retorted.

"Nothing." Idrina responded too quickly. She tried to calculate a way to cover up her mistake. "I just feel extra tired this morning," she easily lied, "and I was wondering if you were able to make me a cup of coffee."

She was obviously lying. The fact that she hated coffee was well known. No amount of milk or sugar could cover up the bitter taste of the disgusting brown liquid. She just hoped her falsehood would satisfy the robot.

"Of course." The voice replied. "Is there anything else I can get for you Idrina?"

"No thanks." She responded, relief flooding through her.

"Your coffee is on the way." the robot retorted. Almost as an afterthought, she sneered in a chilling tone, "*Miss Chastity.*"

The way the robot had said *Miss Chastity* sent a chill up her spine. She rubbed her arms trying to erase the goose bumps. She brushed off the unsettling feeling and got out of bed. As soon as she had gotten herself changed, Idrina turned on her television to the station that everyone watched each morning.

*More like the one that everyone is forced to watch.*

There it was again, the perplexing voice that kept invading her thoughts. But the more she thought about what it had said, she was suddenly aware that there was some truth to it. What would happen if someone just decided *not* to watch the morning news? Was it really a choice? And, if it wasn't a choice, then did that mean that we were indeed *forced* to watch it?

She was pulled out of her reverie when an annoying robotic voice announced that her coffee had arrived.

Dashing over to the sink, she picked up the mug and forced herself to drink every last drop of the awful concoction. She was relieved that the robot had not seen through her lie. Or so she thought.

## Security?, *continued*

Idrina grabbed her school bag and rushed out the door. With all the strange things happening this morning, the last thing she wanted was to be late for school.

She typed her school's address into the screen on the dashboard, and allowed herself to relax. Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed something extremely odd. A boy who appeared no older than herself was driving, as opposed to letting his car drive automatically. Why, she speculated, would anyone drive themselves, if their car could easily drive itself?

*Because you never really know where they are taking you.*

It was, yet again, the faint voice that had been troubling her thoughts. The same one from this morning. Idrina actually found herself starting to believe what it was saying. How could you really know where you were going when you weren't in complete control of the machine? Even though you typed in your desired destination, was the government still in charge of where the car actually took you?

What if someone could change the targeted location and make the car end up in a completely different place than where the passenger anticipated? Her speculation had given her a disconcerted feeling. She hadn't done anything to anger anyone, had she? Irina tried to recall what she did the day before, but came up empty handed.

The feeling unnerved her. What happened yesterday? If it was erased from her memory, then it couldn't have been anything good.

*Erased from your memory? Of course not. You just don't want to remember.*

How could you force yourself to repress a memory? The contemplation made her doubtful. Every memorable thing in her life, she remembered. Forcing yourself to forget something of great importance was an insurmountable task, yet the voice she had begun to trust told her that she had somehow achieved it.

Her car halted, and Idrina took in her surroundings. She had been so engrossed in her thoughts, she hadn't realized that her car had taken a wrong turn. It now sat parked in her friend Axton Dawson's driveway. She found this extremely odd.

*You might as well see if he wants a ride.*

Although she was about to type in the address of her school for the second time, she decided to trust the voice. It *had* been right so far, why stop trusting it now?

She got out of her car and rang the doorbell. Axton came running to his door. He was surprised to see Idrina. A small crease appeared between his eyebrows.

"Hey Rina. What are you doing here?" he inquired.

"I was just wondering if you wanted a ride to school." She proposed.

"Sure." He replied, indecisively. "I'll be right out."

She got back into her car and waited for Axton. While she was waiting, her car abruptly started to move. When she tried to open the door, she found that it was locked and began to panic.

She paid close attention to her surroundings, almost as a way of calming herself. At first, it seemed as though she were on her way to school. Although, after a seemingly random turn, she found herself in a part of town that was foreign to her.

When she had drifted off the main road, her car began to accelerate. The smaller buildings flew past her in blurs of color.

xXx

## Security?, *continued*

After about one hour, the car finally stopped outside of a massive building. She stayed in the car until a woman emerged and beckoned for her to go in. As Idrina stepped into the building, she immediately had the feeling that something was terribly wrong. The woman stared at her with a look of superiority as she followed behind her.

*She doesn't like you.*

Idrina didn't need the voice to tell her this information.

"I'm very sorry about the long drive Miss Chastity."

The way that the woman pronounced every syllable with a fake sweetness made Idrina dislike her. The feeling was mutual.

"Please follow me to a room," she instructed, "where we can talk privately."

It wasn't like there was anyone around to hear their conversation, but Idrina followed the woman anyway.

Once they were there, the woman began to explain with authority.

"You, of course, know that you live in a secure country, very safeguarded from the rest of the world. Your government has everyone's best interests in mind, and would do *anything* to protect citizens of the U.S. from any potential threat."

The way she said *anything* had made Idrina feel strangely uneasy.

"Although we greatly respect your privacy, the safety of others is our top priority. You see, anyone doubting the government could stir up a lot of trouble, possibly even start a rebellion. This makes them a potential threat to the peace we strive to preserve in this country."

Idrina's stomach churned, had she began to doubt the government? Is that why she was here?

"Each teen, between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, is tested. We provide a voice that feels like their sub consciousness, telling them to doubt the soundness of our government. If they decide to trust this voice, they must go through the process again. After failing a third time, they will be forced to leave our country. Today was your second time. You have one last chance."

Everyone was controlled by the government. Technology had advanced further than anyone could have possibly imagined. Only forty years ago the creation of a phone with a touch screen was an immense breakthrough. Now the government had resorted to mind control to get what they wanted. How could that possibly be justified?

"You will wake up tomorrow with no recollection of today's events. I hope, for your sake, that you are able to trust us. We really do care about the citizens of our country."

The room in front of Idrina began to disappear into blackness.

xXx

She awoke with a sense of security. The comfort of her soft mattress releasing any stress from the day before.

*Yesterday...*

The strange feeling that something of great importance had happened yesterday was nagging at the back of her mind. She pushed it away almost instantly. Everything that she had ever been taught told her to ignore the troublesome voice disturbing her mind.

*They're lying to you, and you know it.*

## Third Place Middle Division

Libby Jackson

Larson Middle School

Coach: Carol Rexer

### Crash Test Dummy

Arthur Griffin was just past 18. He was endearing, charming, and intelligent. Though his parents died when he was young, Arthur was a happy boy. When he received a message telling him he would be the first human candidate to test a scientific breakthrough, there were no questions asked. When the day came, a hover seat flew him to Nanotech headquarters, where he made his way to the top floor.

"Hello?" Arthur called.

"Hello, Arthur," replied a slender woman, jumping directly into the task at hand. "My name is Dr. Catherine James. I study the human brain and specialize in nanotechnology. We have a lot to prepare. First, let me explain what you'll be testing. LATCH is an injection into the neck transferring particles containing the neurotransmitter glutamate, as well as a combination of psychoactive drugs. These will work together to activate various regions of the brain. Once the particles reach your prefrontal cortex, they *latch* onto the 90% of the brain that's currently dormant. Within a week, some of these cells will be activated. This allows humans to use more than 10% of their brain at one time and expose abilities we've never had. After you're injected, you will fall into a brief coma. Upon waking, you will fully recover in a few days, and be held in a controlled environment for two years while we test your brain to find out what abilities you've acquired."

"When is this all happening?" Arthur asked, struggling to grasp this new information.

"First we have to do some blood testing and record your initial health status, but the injection will be ready this evening," replied Dr. James. "Follow me."

Once the examinations were completed, Arthur was led into a sterile room where a young nurse strapped him into a monitoring chamber.

"Hi, Arthur," she cooed, sterilizing his neck. "I'm Nurse Shaw, but you can call me Carol. I'll be handling the injection. Ready?"

Arthur nodded, the nano-injector buzzing softly in his ear. There was a slight pinch, the buzzing ceased, and Arthur's world went black.

\* \* \*

Days later, a bright light shone in Arthur's eyes. Dozens of black spots clouded his vision as he slowly made out the room. There were doctors speaking, but Arthur couldn't hear any words. Nurse Shaw unstrapped him from the monitoring chamber and led him to a room filled with artifacts so old he'd seen them only in holo-images throughout his ancient history classes. There was a pottery wheel, a paint set, and all sorts of musical instruments. He was baffled as to why these things were there. Nobody in his generation had the slightest clue how to handle them. Why would these useless objects have been kept so long when there were modern day replacements? No paints or pottery supplies were needed with ARTT (artistic reconstruction through telekinesis), which transferred any image onto a canvas. There was no need to bother learning an instrument when anyone could just buy a MUSEC (modulating ultrasonic sound enhancing component) and access the sound of any instrument at any given time.

His curiosity began to fade. Arthur was too tired to wonder about the ancient artifacts. The only thing he could focus on was his hunger and fatigue. There was a small cot in the corner of the room. He stumbled toward it, falling into an easy sleep. A few hours later he woke to a tray of food on the table beside him. Arthur sat up just long enough to eat, then allowed himself to drift asleep once more.

## **Crash Test Dummy, *Continued***

For days, he roused only for his meals. Late one particular afternoon, he woke suddenly, his brain more alert than ever.

Rising from the bed, Arthur observed what was around him, taking in the objects that he'd seen only in holo-images. This time when he looked at them, he saw something more than impractical toys. They were precious items requiring examination. A violin of dark, smooth Ebony sat on its stand in the corner. It called to Arthur, yearning to be played. His hands, as if they had thoughts of their own, picked up the instrument and its bow, and started to play. He created unique melodies even MUSECs couldn't replicate. Inside him there was a knowledge that allowed him to play like nobody had before. Arthur played the rest of that day and through the night, comforted by the soothing sounds.

As the days passed, he experimented with other items in the room. There was a particularly fascinating book of languages. He played with a paint set, but continually went back to the violin. The instrument was built to fit his arm, and his fingers curled around the bow perfectly. Days, weeks, and months passed. Arthur played constantly. He played for the nurses who came to do blood tests or check his vitals. He played for his observers who watched him from behind a glass wall. He played for anyone who would listen. The violin became his fifth limb.

### **Subject Analysis 1**

**May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2066**

Subject Arthur Griffin is holding up very well. He has undeniable skills with stringed instruments such as viola, violin, and cello. Subject's skills grow daily without teaching or direction of any kind. Subject describes his talents as the equivalent to "a MUSEC in his body." Subject appears to enjoy foreign languages, but records show he has been using Translating Automatically Linguistic Keys(TALK) for several months and shows no extraordinary progress in this area. These enhanced skills have been reported in multiple other cases. A majority of patients in various cities show similar results with skills in mathematical aptitude, combative strategy, and artistic value. In a few months, we will be ready to start injecting more subjects. We currently have approximately 250 men, women, and children in the program, and hope to gain another 500 by the end of next year. LATCH is proving to be extremely successful, bringing high hopes for a brighter future, where humans can reach their fullest potential.

Signed,

Dr. Catherine James

Sixteen months after being injected with LATCH, Arthur began to lose his hearing. At first it was hardly noticeable. But after a week or two, he complained that everything sounded as if it were underwater. Each day his hearing grew worse. When he played his violin, the music was so quiet in his ears he strained to hear it. Desperately, he worked through this decline for three more months. It didn't stop there. He soon lost control of his arms, and his condition worsened every day. Within a few months, Arthur became paralyzed from the neck down. With no way of playing his violin, Arthur became the empty shell of a man who had lost his meaning in life. He didn't want food, he didn't want rest, and he didn't want to see or hear an instrument ever again. One day, a distressed young nurse approached Arthur in hopes of reviving his nearly lifeless soul.

"Arthur," she stammered, "you did the most incredible things with those instruments. Though you can't play anymore, you can live knowing that what you had was something wonderful. Come back to us, Arthur."

## Crash Test Dummy, *Continued*

“But why?” Arthur asked her. “Why should I cling to a life that I can no longer live? If what I love most in the world hurts me, it is not worth my love. I would rather never have known music and not be forced to live in sorrow the rest of my life. Playing was a part of me. It was me. If I can’t play, how can I be the person I was intended to be? My love for music has turned into a mourning that will keep me from ever being truly happy.”

### Subject Analysis 2

**February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2068**

Subject Arthur Griffin’s new brain usage caused an unpredicted reaction. His brain cannot tolerate using the newly awakened cells every day. In response, other areas of the brain began to shut down. Subject Arthur Griffin developed musical talents beyond the abilities of modern day MUSECs. After approximately 16 months, he started to lose his hearing and muscle control. After 20 months, subject went nearly deaf and continued to lose control of his body. He now refuses to come near any instrument.

Nearly 85% of LATCH subjects show similar results. The evidence demonstrates that the human brain will only permit the usage nature intended. Humans have a set course for development that should not be altered with science. We have developed naturally until this point and should be allowed to continue to do so. I request the LATCH project be shut down immediately. Instead of enhancing human potential, we’ve destroyed 250 valuable individuals in our desire to defy nature. Given the time, humans will naturally gain potential greater than any we could artificially create. The answer to enhancing human potential lies not in microscopic technology or chemical substances, but in learning from mistakes and finding permanent solutions to our struggles.

Signed,

Dr. Catherine James

*I have 99 problems but  
the future isn't one.*

## **First Place Junior Division**

**Justin Esdale**

**Larson Middle School**

**Coach: Carol Rexer**

### **The Death Fog**

#### ***In The Republic:***

“Mr. Edwards, just sign here surrendering your country to the countries of the Allied Conference and the Republic.” This country was the last of the 23 countries that had opposed the two superpowers fighting to take over the world. The world at the beginning of the war had over 100 billion people. After the war, the world was left with half that many people. Even so, the two powers pressed on with the war and finished off all of the other countries within seven terrifying years.

After the war that started in 2300, and ended in 2307, the two countries divided the world equally. The rich areas of oil on the West went to the Republic, and the fertile land and the areas full of precious metals to the Allied Conference in the East.

#### ***Somewhere in the Republic:***

“State your name and why you are here.” The intercom said to the Rechier family.

“Operation 3071.52” Mr. Rechier said in a hushed voice. “Good. Enter.”

“So! How are you doing. Ethan is it?” Dr. Glucop stated.

“Yes.” “Right this way. You, young sir are about to become the smartest boy in the world!” Ethan, who was only two years old, didn’t understand what was going on, but soon would.

After running a few tests, the Dr. stuck the needle into his arm. Instantly, his head grew over 50% larger! That was his brain getting bigger. “Amazing” Dr. Glucop mumbled as he typed the amazing results.

\*\*\*

Years passed. By age six he was competing with the smartest scientists in the world. By age 17, he had won every science competition. He was the smartest person in the world. He could solve math problems as fast as a computer. However, at age 28, He bought a lab and lived a solitary life. He was like a vampire. During the day, people only saw smoke coming out of the chimney. Some people claimed to see him on dark nights in alleys buying items.

#### ***In Mehon***

In the capital of the Allied Conference, the leaders were making a decision. Spies had learned about Ethan’s abilities and his time spent in his lab. They knew from the science competitions, that if a brain like his was used for war purposes, it could be catastrophic. They had to make a decision they had been dreading for years. Do they invade the Republic before they use Ethan to attack them with advanced technology, or do they sit back and risk being attacked?

## The Death Fog, continued

### *In Pearlest*

The sun started to rise on a normal morning in Pearlest. There was something different though. The smoke wasn't coming out of Ethan's house, and he was walking down the street. He was dressed in a sleek black suit. Like a shadow with a mind of its own. People stopped and stared. Astonished that they were seeing a man that hadn't been seen in ten years. What they didn't know was that Ethan was carrying something. A jar of what seemed to be harmless white fog. However, it was memory erasing fog,

He walked up the street towards the capitol building and deactivated the alarm. He opened the doors with a thunderous boom and was in. Immediately, guards that heard him jumped at him, but when they saw who it was, they didn't move. He walked past them as if he was an old pal. He stormed into the president's office, nobody saw what happened after that. However, when he came out, all of the military generals were called to the capitol building. There was a long and private meeting.

Inside the room, everyone was getting tense. They too, were deciding if they should go to war. Some generals argued that the Allied Conference would win because they had many oil fields. However, Ethan kept telling them that this was going to be a different war. If all went well, very few lives on both sides would be lost. What he had created was a memory erasing serum. After everyone lost their memories, we could make them think we had always ruled over them. Apparently, everyone agreed. That night there was breaking news: **WAR!!!**

Since he was the creator of the fog, Ethan became the commander of the country. Even over the president. That, however, was the decision that ended the world. The next day, the fog was mass produced for combat. The Republic's Z-247 jet-bomber planes flew over the country dropping the serum everywhere.

### **Allied Conference:**

"MOVE!" Screamed the president. It was war, and they were being invaded. He sent troops to all of the big cities, and they waited until planes came over. They were expecting bombs, or worse, but all that came was canisters of white smoke. What were they doing? The soldiers approached the serums. Then, suddenly, it seemed that the whole nation was tongue-tied. As the soldiers got close, they began to lose their memories! They all soon realized that this was a different war. This was going to be the first war where no men made contact.

### **Republic:**

"Success" Ethan said at the meeting. It looked like the majority of the army had lost it's memory and those that didn't had no idea what to do. The whole nation was in chaos. Later that night, Ethan was watching the news. After 12 hours of no memory, the people started dying. Normally, Ethan would have stopped the tant aerial attacks on the cities, but at this point he was a scientist going mad over power, and he pressed on with the attacks. Nobody had the power to stop him.

## The Death Fog, continued

A month passed. Over 1 billion of the 70 billion people that lived in the country had already died. However, on the news, they said that the Allied Conference had created machines that sucked up the fog and turned it into oxygen. There was one machine in every big city. They were extremely expensive and getting the materials was difficult. The Republic continued to attack. However, it was getting harder to avoid the fog.

### **Allied Conference:**

“Mr. President, if this works, you will be immune to the fog for up to seven hours.” Said the doctor. “Thank you.” The president drank the red blood colored serum, and it worked! The country made only enough for the top officials. It cost almost as much as the machines. Just then, riots could be heard. People in gas masks could be seen in the big cities rioting at the capitol buildings. How had the word seeped out about the serums? The president opened his drapes. **“We want to be saved! WE WANT THE SERUMS!!”** They were screaming and throwing rocks.

“Don’t worry Mr. President, those gas masks only last up to five minutes, and they know it. See? They are already leaving. Just stay calm.”

### **Republic:**

“Finally! I figured out how to control the fog!” The mad scientist cried. At this point he had made sure nobody was going to interfere with his plans. “Launch more planes! Drop the new fogs! Now the Allied Conference will see why we will always rule over them!”

### **The Allied Conference:**

After the new fog landed, it immediately went towards all of the machines to overload them. However, right when the fog was about to go into the city, the Allies were ready, and they had a new invention. shields. The fog can’t go through these. All over the nation, shields were going in big cities. They finally would be safe. However, it may have been too late. Only 76 million people were still left in the nation. However, deep inside the president’s house, they had made a mini shield and captured some fog. The nation’s best scientists had been studying the fog, and now they knew how to make it. “YES! We did it! Now it’s time to bring this war to their front,” the scientists said. Within one day, the Allies had the fog landing over the enemies.

### **Republic:**

“NO! How did they use our own weapon against us? We must create shields like they did! All of my plans are going wrong!” Although they got shields in half the time the Allies did, they lost just as many lives. The world that had once had 200 billion people, now had only 50 million. It seemed like nobody was going to win.

Now with everyone grounded to the cities, no more attacks were taking place. For some reason, the fog was developing by itself. It was multiplying, and becoming more thick by the day. The shields had not been designed for this much fog.

The president was pacing and talking to his generals. “What are we going to d-” Then suddenly, a sound came that sounded like millions of glasses breaking at once! Everyone’s worst nightmare. In both countries, the shields had broke. With the fog so thick, it killed immediately. Within one hour, everyone on the planet was dead. The president never finished his sentence.

**Second Place Junior Division**  
**Madison Groulx**  
**Armstrong Middle School**  
**Coach: Kim Duffy**

**Life Before My Eyes**

2528 hours

Before I was born the doctor had told my parents that I was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa. Retinitis pigmentosa is an inherited disease that causes slow but progressive vision loss due to a gradual loss of the light-sensitive retinal cells called rods and cones (at least that's what Dr. Echo said). I'm now seven and still have retinitis pigmentosa. My dad had left my family when he found out that I would be born without my eye sight, he didn't want to deal with such an inconvenience in his life. However, my mom Cecilia, is a cosmetic surgeon, she's been working on bionic eyes for approximately six years now. She hopes to have the bionic eyes completed by my graduation, which is in ten years. Dr. Echo, our family doctor, says that I have the possibility of getting surgery done before the planned time, but I shouldn't get my hopes up. All I want to do is see my mom!

3742 hours

My mom took me to the hospital today, she had said just for a check-up. I'm almost certain that she has completed her project, I mean there were clues. First; she woke me up with breakfast in bed. Next; she has been in a good mood all day (oddly enough). Now; we are waiting in an almost too quiet of a room.

3758 hours

I can't get over how long we have been waiting for the nurse; I mean come on there could be a person dying in here.

3855 hours

Dr. Echo pulled my mom out of the room to have a private conversation about my check-up and what he had found. I hear the creaking of the door opening, the sobs coming from my mom and I feel the tugging of my mom's hand giving me the hint as if it is time to leave. She never told me what was wrong.

3925 hours

I walked into the kitchen and all I could hear were deep breaths coming from my mom. She had been like this all the way home, that obviously means that something didn't go as planned. I had been sitting on the couch for a while now; I didn't really know how to react to this whole mishap.

7555 hours

It has been a few days since I went to the hospital to get my check-up. Well today I'm going back to get my surgery done! This is certainly the most exciting thing that has happened to me in my entire life. I have been waiting for this moment forever and it's finally going to happen!

7852 hours

At this very moment I am being wheeled into the operating room, which is quite weird. It smells like hand sanitizer and is quiet, other than the mumbles of the nurses and doctors around me. I feel the vibrations of the hospital bed, I felt like I was being jolted all around.

7932 hours

The surgery has been going on for about an hour now and I can't feel anything because the doctor gave me a pill that takes away pain and decreases body movement, I don't know what it's called. So I'm practically just lying on a bed while people are working on my eye sockets and I can't move or speak or hear, that just gives me a funny image in my head.

## Life Before My Eyes, *continued*

8245 hours

The surgery has been completed but I am not able to actually check out my new eyes yet because they need to have time to heal. I am still lying in my hospital bed, and my mom is in the room watching me just lie there.

"Triton," I hear my mom say in shock.

"Cecelia I came here to see Vega" (that's me by the way).

Triton is my father, who I solemnly despise.

"How did you find out about this surgery?" my mom interrogated.

"Dr. Echo contacted me about it," he strikes back.

I could tell by my mom's tone that she wasn't very thrilled about the presence of Triton either. My mom and Triton were having a conversation in the room so I could hear everything that they were saying.

"Triton this is unacceptable, you can't leave for seven years and then come back, try to help, and think everything will be okay. You've already messed up and I'm not going to give you that chance for you to mess up again," my mom shouted.

"I'm not here to start things Cecelia, but I am Vega's father, and I demand to play a part in her life."

"I'm not saying that you can't be in her life, but I am saying that you aren't a father figure anymore. Don't you remember leaving this family? She certainly remembers not having a dad to count on. Triton you can't just pick and choose when you want to have a daughter or a family," my mom exclaimed.

The room sat silent for a long time; nothing was said after that just a lot of deep breaths.

8431 hours

There are many sobs coming from the room but I wasn't really sure who it was coming from. I was anxious to open my eyes to find out who was crying. Slowly lifting my eye lids, I see but it was all just a blur and really dark. To the left of me there is a big, dark person sitting on the chair in the hospital room.

"Mom?" I called out.

The person slowly looked up and was staring at me; I was confused and pretty sure that it wasn't my mom.

Whoever it was slowly moved closer to my bed and grabbed my hand.

"Sweetheart, it's me! Are you okay?" uttered the man, who sounded a lot like the man my mom was talking to earlier.

"I'm fine but if you don't mind me asking who are you? And where is my mom?" I wondered.

"Cecilia!" He shouted.

"Triton what's wrong?"

"It's Vega..."

"Oh no! What's wrong?" My mom interrupted

"Nothing, nothing's wrong! She was just asking for you, she seemed very concerned," Triton explained.

"Oh honey, how're you feeling? Are you doing okay?" My mom worriedly asked me.

"I'm doing okay, just a little tired."

8540 hours

"I can't see any colors mom, I think that's a problem," I explained.

"Dr. Echo!" my mom shouted in confusion.

The doctor came in and was looking at everything; he had pulled up a chart on the wall it was projected from his watch.

"Retinal defects stem from the malfunctioning of the retina, which is caused by a pigmentation reduction in its photoreceptor cells- rods and cones, that's why she can't see colors," Dr. Echo told my parents.

## Life Before My Eyes, *continued*

I'm thankful that I have the ability to see, just bummed that I might never know what colors look like. On the plus side Dr. Echo whispered to me that I have the ability to see in 3-D format, which seems pretty cool! As of right now I can't really see much of anything, everything is still sort of bleary, but I'm sure in a few hours everything should subside.

8727 hours

I have gotten used to my eyes by now, my vision isn't blurry anymore. My mom and Triton have been talking for a little while now; I think they have been talking about letting him spend more time with me. I'm not really sure how I feel about that, I don't want to get to know the person that left our family.

10159 hours

It has been two days since I have been in the hospital and I've spent one day with my mom and one day with my dad. My dad's actually a really cool guy, I found out we share a lot of interests, it's weird but it's true! He took me to the park today and I looked up at the sun and it was in 3-D. I'm not really that sad anymore because even though I can't see color I traded it in for 3-D.

10256 hours

My dad took me home after the park and when we got there my mom had news for us. We all sat down on the couch and she looked kind of gloomy.

"So Dr. Echo called today and he told me that you inherited retinitis pigmentosa from your grandfather on your dad's side," my mom told us.

"Is that why you left?" I asked my dad.

He nodded with despair; I got up and ran in my room. The thoughts running through my head all went with one word: why? It upset me because all I needed was a dad and he left just because his dad couldn't do everything with him.

10439 hours

Later that day I went out in the kitchen my parents were in there talking I made one of those clear my throat bits to get their attention they looked up and all I said was...

"Why?"

**Michigan Future Problem Solvers:  
We are already six steps  
Ahead of you!**

**Third Place Junior Division**  
**Alec Dimovski**  
**Holy Family Regional School**  
**Coach: Mary Nowak**

**My Best Friend**

“Wake up, Lacey!” I heard my master shout. My master woke me up with his loud voice. I opened my eyes, got out of bed and stretched my body. I started barking with joy and wagging my tail to thank him for waking me. It felt like I was asleep for a long time. I then hurried to the back door and started whimpering, because I really had to go to the bathroom. The door opened and I went outside. When I finished my business, I ran back to the door, it opened up, I ran back inside, and the door closed shut behind me.

“Do you want to play with your squeaky toy, Mr. Kitty?” my master asked me. I started jumping up and down and turning in circles when he mentioned “Mr. Kitty,” that’s because Mr. Kitty is my favorite squeaky toy. I started looking around the house for Mr. Kitty, but I couldn’t find him. Then my master said, “Mr. Kitty is in ...,” I heard the tapping of a computer keyboard. It seemed to take forever for the home’s object locator app to find Mr. Kitty because of his unusual shape, but finally my master said, “... the foyer.” I ran to the foyer and I found him. I thanked my master with a couple of quick barks, then I finished the chewing game I started with Mr. Kitty the day before.

While I was gnawing on Mr. Kitty’s head, my master said to me, “According to my iPhone 23c, it is going to be 72°F today, back home where you are. Maybe later we can go for a walk or play fetch.” There are only two things I like more than my Mr. Kitty; the first thing is when my master is actually here in our home with me, but the other is playing fetch. That is the most exciting game a dog can play with their master. I was so excited when he mentioned playing fetch with me, that I spit out Mr. Kitty from my mouth, and ran as fast as I could to the back door. I ran so fast that I almost didn’t stop in time for the door to open; but the door did open, just as it always does. I stood on my spot, waiting for that magical word; then it came. I heard “Fetch!” and a ball came flying towards me. I grabbed the ball in my mouth before it even bounced off the ground and then I ran back towards my spot. Then I heard the yell again, “Fetch!” Another ball came flying at me. I missed this one, but ran after it as quickly as I could. This went on for about 3 hours, and I only stopped playing because the ball throwing machine had to be recharged.

I walked up the steps to the back door, it opened, I went inside, and the door was closed tightly behind me. I then heard the sound of water being poured into my water bowl. I was happy to hear that sound, because I was really thirsty. I went and slurped up all the water, and a second water bowl was poured. “Wow, you must be very thirsty from playing all that fetch!” exclaimed my master. “I’m going to be finishing up with my marketing blog for now, but I will be monitoring you on my dual screen, so just let me know when you are ready for that walk.”

## **My Best Friend, *continued***

After I drank a little more water, I went to my food bowl for a couple of bites. Then I ran to get my leash, and stood in front of the front door, waiting for my master to appear. I waited, and waited, and waited. Then I started getting very sleepy, my eyes got very tired, I closed them and began to doze off a little bit. I was suddenly asleep, and began to dream of my old granddog, who died about 10 years ago, in the year 2035.

\* \* \* \* \*

“I remember the good-old days, Lace,” said my granddog. “I remember when I was just a young puppy in the year 2015. Back then, my master would actually live at home with me every day. He would feed me by actually using his hands to pour my food and water into my bowls.

My master would hold me with his warm arms and use his hands to pet my head. He would be here to open doors and play fetch with me. Instead of using machines to throw balls out for me to catch, my master would throw the balls with his long arms. He would even tickle my tummy sometimes. But best of all, I got to sleep next to him in his warm bed every night,” explained my granddog. Those days are long gone, now that it’s the year 2045, I thought to myself. “Someday, dogs like you will keep in touch with masters in other ways. I think you will keep in touch using things like computers, and programs that are supposed to be used to bring everyone together in a virtual world, rather than in person,” predicted my granddog.

\* \* \* \* \*

A short time later, I woke up next to my leash, still laying in front of the door. I remembered my master was gone for work and in another country, and just like my granddog had predicted, my master and I are using computers, apps and social media to keep in touch. It is the new modern day culture that not everyone agrees with, but many are learning to accept.

I then remembered that if I wanted to go on a walk, I would have to step on a button to tell my master that I’m ready to do so. I went and stepped on the button, a big image of his face came up on the computer screen above the doorway. “Are you ready for that walk, Lace?” he asked. The door then opened and I walked outside and stood on my mark. The ground started to rumble and a treadmill came up and out of the ground. I jumped up on it and started walking. I wondered what it would be like if my master, and best friend, was actually walking here right beside me down the sidewalk. I wished it was the year 2015.

I started getting very bored and I missed my master. I wanted to see him. I then remembered the computer he always keeps turned on for me. The computer was connected to my master’s GoPro HERO38 camera that showed live, streaming video and audio feeds of him, and it didn’t matter where he was in the world. I jumped off the treadmill, it rumbled and disappeared under the ground. I ran to the door, it opened, I ran inside, and the door shut closed behind me. I ran to my master’s office and jumped in front of his computer. I bumped the mouse with my nose, and there was my master on the computer screen. He was getting into an airplane.

My master noticed I was watching him, and he whispered into his Bluetooth headset, “I should be home by tomorrow morning, Lace. I can’t wait to see you!” He then pulled out his cell phone and began to update his Facebook account. “Finally going home to spend some time with my Best Friend”, he typed. Then my master tweeted to his followers, #GoingHome and #BestFriend.

## Scenario Writing 2014-2015 Semi-Finalists

### ***Junior***

Jessica Bryson	Larson Middle School	Coach: Carol Rexer
Renee Elian	Larson Middle School	Coach: Carol Rexer
Genna Grbic	Holy Family Regional School	Coach: Mary Nowak
Lexa Jones	Armstrong Middle School	Coach: Kim Duffy
Alison Leineke	Armstrong Middle School	Coach: Kim Duffy
Mary Timko	Holy Family Regional School	Coach: Mary Nowak

### ***Middle***

Heather Burnum	Clarkston High School	Coach: Sue Banworth
Eloise Fromm	Shrine Academy	Coach: Mary Leonard
Shannon Higgins	Holy Family Regional School	Coach: Mary Nowak
Nadia Imam	Larson Middle School	Coach: Carol Rexer
Ava Kelsey	Armstrong Middle School	Coach: LeAnn Wartella
Kaylie Lukomski	Millennium Middle School	Coach: Doug Host
Kay'Leigh Olmstead	Armstron Middle School	Coach: LeAnn Wartella
Mariana Ortiz	Holy Family Regional School	Coach: Mary Nowak
Jolie Timm	Armstrong Middle School	Coach: LeAnn Wartella

### ***Senior***

Jillian Haas	Clarkston High School	Coach: Sue Banworth
Ella Holbert	Notre Dame Prep	Coach: Melissa Archer

*Congratulations to all our semi-finalists and  
all our entrants in the Scenario Writing Competition!*

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