

Selections from *Visions of the Future*

Jessica Coyne

“A Life to Live For”

Theme

Depleting natural resources will cause economic hardships and force people to develop their own energy solutions.

Synopsis

Marie Lottie is a 13 year old girl whose father went missing and left her an orphan. She lives in a militaristic dystopian society where fossil fuels are scarce and nuclear energy is too expensive and dangerous. Only the military has a high standard of living and has access to free energy. Most people must resort to their own primitive means of generating electrical power, if they are to have any at all. After being kicked out of her upper class home, she ran into a street gang of homeless teenagers when one of the teens tried to steal her money. She learns what it's like having to live in poverty and hunger. While on the streets she realizes that most people aren't as privileged as she was. Because of depleted resources, schools in America have been using child labor to gather large springs of electricity to run the cities. The street gangs are allowed to live in abandoned buildings as long as they don't use more electricity than they create, and put some into the system for the people who pay for electric bills. Marie has to create energy for the gang she lives with, along with putting extra energy back into the grid by using something similar to a stationary bike. Her reality becomes a grim place full of lessons.

Connection to Fact

Scientists have estimated that in 300-500 years we will run out of most fossil fuels. This is due to the enormous consumption rates of modern industrial societies, like the U.S., and others like China, that have recently become industrial. Right now we use roughly 40,000 gallons of oil a second, and the need to use it is growing exponentially. Coal consumption in the U.S.A has doubled in the past three to six years. Population increase may be what's stressing the environment, but we know for sure that it's the habits of the upper class who use the most energy. People in poverty have next to nothing, maybe a radio and a landline or a single cell phone, a meal to eat on occasion, and a bag full of cloths. When you then look at the opposite, upper class people have one to two phones a person, expensive cars parked in million dollar houses, the best everything for living and luxury. The few upper class are using a hundred times more resources to live in luxury than the poverty stuck citizens.

Preview of Excerpt

The following excerpt is the when Marie Lottie finally realizes that she is all alone in the world and that she's going to have to depend on the new friends she made to survive.

Excerpt

She headed down to the bridge, the river was dried up, and the bridge itself was too unstable to actually use, but she felt safe there. When she arrived she sat on the wall of the bridge, getting comfortable to wait for life to continue. If she sat there long enough she'd wake up and everything would be better. She didn't notice the lone figure coming up to her side - had she, then maybe she would've had sense to hide her money.

The figure snatched away her money and shoved her off the bridge and onto the dirt, a yard and a half below. She squealed in surprise and jumped up. "Stop! Thief!" She rushed up the river bank and ran after the person. The figure ran like a male so she guessed it was a guy, and she ran as fast as she could and almost touched the hem of his jacket. He ran past old buildings and a few bystanders just watched.

"Come back with my money!" She yelled and jumped onto his back, toppling them both over. She smiled to herself since he absorbed the impact instead of her. She took her money, and stored it in her backpack. The guy groaned in pain and rolled over.

"What's your problem lady?" he growled at her, standing up. He dusted himself off and glared at her, as if the whole situation was her fault.

She raised her hand to slap him, but her hand was abruptly caught by someone. She turned quickly, and faced an almost full grown man. He stared into her eyes, his were brown, a deep but reflective brown. He was at least six feet tall, and long messy brown hair almost shadowed his face.

"Didn't your mommy teach you better than to slap a man?" he asked, his voice teasing and light. He smiled. "You must be a newbie, you're not dressed like one of us," he commented, twirling Marie by the hand that he still had a grip on. She pulled her hand back to her person and looked at him angrily.

"I'm an orphan," she told him, feeling a sadness. Her reality was no more, replaced by a world that cared for none, but all cared for the world. "Only today though," she added. The tough look she had was not as tough anymore.

Jack Davis
“Out of the Ashes”

Theme

The misuse of antibiotic and antiviral medicine will lead to the creation of a super pandemic and a dystopian future, though a utopia will eventually rise and take its place.

Synopsis

The story takes in present day Las Vegas, Nevada. The main character, Paul Richardson, works in Las Vegas’ largest hospital as the head of the emergency room. He is currently married to his wife, Sarah Richardson. As the weeks go by, news starts to emerge about a strange ‘new flu’ in Chicago. Nobody pays much attention to it. That is, until it is declared a pandemic and starts to spread worldwide. The deaths rise, and Paul and his wife must decide how to survive. On top of this, Paul must finally come to terms with something that has haunted him for 17 years. This is a story about death and disease, chaos and dystopia. But even more than these, the story is about undying hope and true happiness.

Connection to Fact

The foundation of my story and what drives its plot is the fact that a super virus could surface because of antibiotic and antiviral misuse. When we misuse these medicines, the bacteria/virus mutates and actually become immune to the medicine, rendering it ineffective. These mutated, resistant viruses and Bacteria's could turn into a deadly pandemic because we would have absolutely no protection against them.

Preview of Excerpt

This excerpt is taken from the very end of the story, after the main characters flee the city to escape the pandemic. This excerpt is from a part in the story shortly after the main characters find a small community in the middle of nowhere.

Excerpt

Paul and Sarah Richardson stayed. They decided to stay in the town. The town that at first seemed a dystopia, became their utopia. It was a perfect life, with no worries, and no sorrow. Yes, they worked, and they worked hard, but they were happy. Happier than they had ever been in their entire life.

They were soon told that the pandemic had killed hundreds of millions, and possibly billions of people around the world. The great United States of America was now just a memory in the minds of the older generations. The new generation would know only this new world, the “post-pandemic” world they all now lived in. The

population had been dramatically reduced. The big cities had been abandoned, probably for good, and the world now lived in small towns and communities. The comforts of modern science and technology were gone. The great 21st century was gone. It was no longer the 21st century, and it wasn't the 20th or the 22nd either. Time itself had been restarted.

The world had been faced with the greatest disaster that was ever, and will ever, be known. It plunged the world into death, chaos and dystopia. But out of the ashes of this great disaster, rose something that the world had never before seen— utopia. Out of the ashes, came utopia.

Erica Delgadillo
“Skyline”

Theme

The growth of mass connectivity will make us more susceptible to being manipulated and victimized by cyber warfare.

Synopsis

The story is set in a historically alternate period in which technology in certain countries is highly advanced, whereas in other countries it is obsolete. Detlev Fruehauf is an aristocrat of the latter type of country, Derulich. After learning about the adverse effects of Internet technology, such as its potential use as a method of war, he decides to impose regulations and obliterate the qualities of net neutrality. Net neutrality is the idea that everyone should have free and equal access to the Internet. Detlev is against net neutrality as a precautionary measure against uncontrolled growth on the Internet. Detlev feels apprehensive about the Internet because he fears it will make his people more vulnerable to an attack of cyber warfare. His country's common people, who have begun to see the Internet as a place to help them prosper in society, are opposed to this arrangement. They start developing their own seditious efforts to retaliate against Detlev and the aristocracy.

Connection to Fact

Cyber warfare is the method of using computers to attack other computers or networks. Since networks are so widespread, the threat of cyber warfare has become a problem for all of society and are more susceptible to exploitation and espionage. For example, in 2001, China revealed that it had access to the communications of the United States after they were able to take control of a U.S. plane. There was also a case where a

murderer hacked into a hospital network so that the staff nearly administered a lethal dosage to an eyewitness of his crime.

Preview of Excerpt

Detlev discusses with Desi, another guest at a social event, how cyber warfare affected his country.

Excerpt

The buzz of the crowd at the gathering became nothing but a mere ringing in Detlev's ears. He ignored such distractions so that he could listen to Desi, whose eyes were narrowing in preparation of his tale. Detlev took another gander at his drink, and then set it back down on the tablecloth. He noticed a stain, for it screamed red against the delicately embroidered white fabric. Detlev set aside the irksome prodding in his head to tend to the stain, and instead looked back at Desi who was still clutching his own drink - so tightly, in fact, that his knuckles turned white and Detlev couldn't help but think of red splattered across the pallid skin that stretched so thinly over the bones like the cloth.

"Why do you think they were able to bring us down so swiftly and devastated beyond belief?" Desi stared at Detlev and took another sip of his drink. When Detlev didn't respond, Desi answered, "I'll tell you why. Because of the Internet ... because of all the software installed onto our computers, all our technology that is connected through there. Our mass connectivity, it made us an easy target since we weren't advanced like them. We never considered that we should have developed our own network infrastructure to protect ourselves." Desi brought the drink to his lips and sipped hastily. Some of the liquid had escaped down his chin, but he swabbed at it with his hand before it could roll onto his clothes.

Desi licked his lips and started again, "So, the online population of our little peninsula grew, and it grew way out of the government's control. Any attempts to try to set up more precautionary safety would be tedious and it would take ages. Then, as you put it, that blasted anarchist country decided they wanted to take us down. They gained access to our computers easily, our public networking systems, everything. They adjusted medical information on hospital networks so that practically everybody in there was dying because of false information. They had our own military crafts destroying each other, it was... it was chaos."

Rebeka Henry
“Silver Arrow”

Theme

People will deny that global warming is man made and CO2 levels will make the earth uninhabitable

Synopsis

Mayumi, the main character, embarks on a quest to raise awareness about global warming in the city of Hiroshima, as well as other cities in Japan. She time travels using a device known as the Silver Arrow of Time. Throughout her quest, she receives help from Kazuki, a boy she encountered in the beginning of her travels. Kazuki lived during the year 1858, a time when foreigners demanded to make treaties with the Japanese. During their quest to raise awareness about global warming, they reach the conclusion that global warming is human induced. Their attempts to raise awareness, however, come to no avail because the citizens of Hiroshima in the future are far too ignorant. The government makes the citizens believe that their world is perfect. In the end, Mayumi gives up her quest not only because of the citizens' ignorance, but also because Kazuki is killed.

Connection to Fact

This story is based on the current issue of global warming. Today, many scientists like the marine biologist Mark Erdmann, claim that global warming is man made. A recent survey taken worldwide found that 3,416 earth scientists have similar beliefs as Erdmann. The main cause to global warming is the use of fossil fuels such as oil, coal, and natural gas. Fossil fuels are used to power cars, buses, planes and many other technologies. These technologies increase the rate of global warming by increasing carbon emissions by 400% globally. At the present rate of global warming, there is an increase of 0.23 degrees Fahrenheit every decade.

Preview Excerpt

The following excerpt introduces the idea that global warming might destroy the planet. It concludes with the results of Mayumi and Kazuki's attempts to raise awareness.

Excerpt

Mayumi and Kazuki once again plunged through time. Instead of going to Mayumi's time, they found themselves in a world engulfed in flame and water. The sky bled flames while the earth bled water. The raging fire was like a flourishing field of daylilies.

The water was like a gushing wound, split from its center. This was a sign, a sign of the fall of a great kingdom.

“Impossible,” Kazuki mutters as he sees the fate of the Earth.

“Only if you believe it.” replies Mayumi in a hushed tone.

“Then it is true. We cannot change the fate set to us by the gods,” says Kazuki as he gazes towards the fires. Meteors shower the skies in an almost stunning way.

“This fate is not set by the gods, it is set by Man,” acknowledged Mayumi, “but we can change this.”

“Change can only occur in one’s heart” Kazuki contemplated, “a change of heart is all we need.”

“This might be difficult to attain. There are many who will stop at nothing to alter our quest.” said Mayumi, her features darkened as she remembered the previous journeys they had taken. She remembered the humanoids that were sent by Orochi, the enemy who murdered her grandmother and ordered her mother’s execution mercilessly without a single thought.

They start to take the process of change into action by traveling to different cities all over Japan. They faced many obstacles as they were distracted by the humanoids.

Although the humanoids become a problem, something more powerful was thrown their way, the result of a human genome experiment by Orochi. Regardless, they ignored these threats and continued to pursue their goal. They traveled from city to city, yet their pursuits came to nothing.

Kathleen Silverstein

“Taha Nishika”

Theme

Water depletion and contamination will promote overpopulation and force people to relocate.

Synopsis

The story takes place in Madurai, India in 2030 during a time of extreme overpopulation. It follows the main character, Taha Nishika, a teenage boy in desperate search for help. His young mother has contracted Typhus, which has led her to become extremely anemic and weak. On his way to find a doctor, Taha comes across one of the privatized water wells where he meets an elderly man named Kautik, whose wife turns out to be an expert in herbal healing. Katik’s wife agrees to try and heal Taha’s mother, but unfortunately they do not arrive in time and his mother dies from the waterborne disease. This story is ultimately about how water depletion will eventually lead to dystopia.

Connection to Fact

This story takes facts about water contamination, hunger and poverty, and transforms them into a fictional story. Typhus is contracted by eating food or drinking water that has been contaminated with the feces of an infected person. The disease can be easily avoided if using the correct sanitary precautions. In the case of the mother, she contracted it through drinking untreated water. Worldwide, 844 million people lack access to safe water supplies. Every 20 seconds a child dies from a waterborne disease. Although water depletion *is* a major issue, an even larger struggle is waterborne diseases. Disease and water contamination are two of the most common causes of death in countries that suffer from lack of sanitation and water. According to the last survey taken by World Health Organization in 1999, 21% of India's diseases are waterborne.

Preview of Excerpt

The following excerpt shows Taha spending time with his ill mother for the last time. She is experiencing symptoms from the typhus.

Excerpt

The boy was accustomed to noticing these images all around the house and town. However, this time he felt as though the eyes of Shiva and Vishnu followed him and haunted him wherever he went. His mother's illness was now his primary concern. Her fragile body lay hopeless as the disease took over her body and immune system. Her emaciated arms clenched at her abdomen in pain and anguish. Watching carefully where he placed his feet, the boy carefully made his way next to his mother. He knelt besides his mother's mattress and slowly reached over her feeble body, taking her tender hand in his.

The innocent pair of brown eyes began to show agony and discomfort as the boy knelt there, watching hopelessly as his mother suffered violent chills, loss of appetite, and decrease in her pulse rate. Her hand began to tremor in his and all he could do was stare at her fragile fingers showing only youth and the strength she had within her to fight off this horrible infection. The boy turned to look back at his grandmother whom was dipping a cloth into the hot water. She strained the cloth so that all that was left was a soothing hot pad. She handed the warm cloth to the boy where he gently placed it over his mother's forehead, without releasing his mother's hand.

"Mām," the boy whispered in her ear. With his free hand, he softly brushed away the strands of hair that had managed to bond to her face by the tiny droplets of sweat omitted from her pores. He repositioned the cloth so that it covered her eyes and rested subtly on top of her nose. "Mair̄m vādā karatā hūm̄ āpa kō caṅgā karanē kē li'ē," *I promise to heal you.* "Mair̄m ēka rāstā mila jā'ēgā," *I will find a way.* Her body did not move nor shift and no words were muttered from her mouth, however he felt her fragile fingers give a gentle squeeze to his. With that, he kissed his mother's forehead

and whispered, “Mair̄m̄ tumasē pyāra karatā hūm̄.” *I love you.*

Zoe Underhill
“Versions”

Theme

In order for society to function in the future, we will need to rely more on face to face interaction and less on the Internet.

Synopsis

This story take place in an unknown time in the future. There are three main characters: a boy, a man, and an old woman who narrates most of the story. The society they live in is completely reliant on the Internet for everything they do, like their jobs and school. The boy is the most reliant, he never leaves his house for anything. He has never really talked to anyone in person. The man is a bit less reclusive. He still lives most his life on the Internet, but he is skeptical and unhappy. The old woman tries not to use the Internet, instead she watches people and recalls stories of what the world used to be like. Towards the middle of the week when this story takes place, the Internet shuts down and creates confusion in this already dystopian society.

Connection to Fact

This story is based on studies that have been conducted to show the adverse affects of the Internet. For example, the boys extreme inability to talk to people stems from various studies. These studies showed that people that spend a lot of time on the Internet spend less time with their family and friends, and eventually become dependent on it, almost as if it were a drug. For example, one study that was done in 2005 by the Stanford Institute for Quantitative Study of Society found that people who use the Internet often spend 70 minutes less interacting with family, 25 minutes less sleeping, and 30 minutes less watching television.

Preview of Excerpt

This part of the story describies what a day looks like for someone living in this society. It is told from the old woman's perspective and she is talking about her neighbor, one of the other main characters.

Excerpt

Every morning starts the same way for the man across the street. He has no one to talk to, not even the computer screen he hasn't upgraded in a long time. First, he wakes up and paces around his room, sometimes for almost an hour. Although I have never seen him close enough to really know for sure, he seems tired and lonely with droopy eyes and slouched shoulders. He is old enough to know that the world was once different, that in the mornings his parents probably didn't pace the floor, but instead drank a cup of coffee and read the morning newspaper. He knows that his father used to kiss his mother goodbye and would then leave the house to go work outside in the sunshine. But he is also young enough to know that he has never done any of these things, and he never will.

After he paces the floor, he sits at his much smaller computer screen, he opens up his Internet browser and prepares himself for a day of sitting still. He checks his online bulletin that tells him how to do his job everyday. Most "workers" these days don't leave the house either, their bosses will tell them through the Internet what their job for the day is and how to accomplish it. Most of the time he gathers information about current technological developments and determines how we can improve them. There aren't any real jobs anymore - it's hard to be an architect when you don't leave your house and it's hard to be a teacher when there aren't any students.