

Xavier Satterfield - Dystopian Allegory

Above the Oceans

The dawn of winter break is here. Thanks to my parents, my room has been planted with lights and ornaments already. There's a little plastic flower pot on my nightstand, with a note labeled "*Merry Christmas 2622!*" It takes me around ten minutes to finally get out of my bed, but I'm drawn to the window as soon as I do.

The scenery is beautiful. The clear ocean outside covers my room, with seaweed growing on the floor. Schools of fish are chasing each other around, and the sun is shimmering above the sea. For whatever reason, humans are one of the only animals that can't breathe in water. Therefore, by law, we aren't allowed to leave for a swim. It's not like there's anything up there anyway. I heard that it's way too humid for anyone to enjoy doing anything outside. I'm lucky though. Most people don't live with glass windows where they can look at the ocean above them.

I can't believe humanity used to live on the surface. Was the sea level *that* low back then?

"Ho ho ho!" my dad says once I walk down to our living room. "Merry Christmas, Cameron!"

"Hi," I respond. The entirety of the living room is covered in lights and sparkles as well. The curtains to the glass are red and green, which don't blend well with all of the stains on the steel wall. "Do we have to waste so much money on this stuff every year?" I ask my dad. "We're gonna throw these decorations out in a week."

"Well," my dad hesitates, "we're *able* to. Doesn't it look nice?"

"It doesn't look nice," I tell him.

“Oh,” my dad frowns. “Hm. Anyways, come and sit on the sofa. You didn’t wake up to just whine about the decorations, did you?”

My mom enters from the dining room. “Is Cameron awake- oh,” she asks before she finishes looking around the living room.

“Yep!”

“Yeah.”

My mom is carrying this awful grin, and I immediately realize that she signed me up for some kind of program again. I can’t ever have *any* free time, even though I’ll be an adult soon. I wish I was in control sometimes.

“Hey,” she starts. “I know there’s usually nothing to do during these school breaks, and it can be quite boring around me and your father, but-” Hm? She’s noticed my ultimate facial expression of disapproval. It took her a while to notice. “We signed you up for a cooking internship,” mom finally admits.

“And your first day starts in a convenient 30 minutes!” my dad adds on. “We have all of your clothes ready, see?” he adds on again. He’s not helping.

After preparing with hygiene and clothes, I leave my family's bunker. Tons of people are echoing up and down the steel halls outside, walking along the hundreds of vents and coolers to the floor. They stretch out all the way to the horizon. There would be faster ways to travel, but the halls are so thin. Any machine would just take up more space than a person themselves. There are multiple layers of these hallways, at least. The cooking internship that I’m going to is right below me.

I hate cooking.

Once I walk into the right bunker for the internship, a dozen kids and adults look over at me. The entire room is just a very wide and bright kitchen. There are two sinks, twelve stoves, several cabinets, and a countertop that runs along the wall.

“Hello hello!” one kid in the back says. I don’t see who it is.

“You’re with me. You’re late,” a larger guy with a chef hat tells me. I was a minute late. I already dislike this place immensely. The chef and I walk over to an unoccupied stove, and he pulls out a few ingredients. I haven’t done anything yet.

“What do we do here, Mr.- uh-”

“Call me Mr. Ignorock. We’ll be making fish patties to give away today. For the holidays.”

Mr. Ignorock dumps about five patties onto a pan, and then settles it onto the stove. He strokes his beard.

It looked like this chef was twisting the stove knobs a *little* too much. He swats me away after I try to question him, so I figure he knows what he’s doing. As soon as I turn to look at something else though, I feel a burst of warm air on the side of my neck. The food is in flames, with smoke already floating along the ceiling. Mr. Ignorock starts to curse me out, to my surprise. Or maybe not to my surprise.

“See! You try to distract me and then *this* happens!” he yells. I probably shouldn’t have, but I tell him that he’s the one that was heating up the food WAY too much. The chef’s face turns a bright and angry red. The fire roars behind him. It’s as if he’s controlling it. Well, I wish he could tell that fire of his to calm down. It’s starting to devour all of the food in the room. And the room. “Just- wait here! There’s a fire extinguisher in one of the bunkers,” Mr. Ignorock yells as he dashes out of the kitchen. Hm, he’s in a hurry.

Actually, where did everyone *else* go? No one is left in the room except for me. Did everyone just casually run away?

“Oh my goodness!” A muffled voice screams beyond the bunker door. “Fire! Fire!”

“Could you help me?” I ask them. The door opens, and not just one, but a large group of people peek into the room from every angle. They all stand there very curiously. And very annoyingly.

“Ooh, a fire!”

“Yeah, we can help spread this around!”

What?

“Finally. I’m glad someone had the courage to start one of these.”

One of what?

“What’s your name, man?” a tall woman in the middle of the crowd steps forward and asks me.

“Cameron Cents,” I answered. “Um. Could you please help me put out this fire?”

The woman closes her eyes and smiles. “Young boy,” She starts. Her tone has become completely sincere, nothing like it was before. “I understand your anger. You want to leave this—this claustrophobic nightmare of a place don’t you?”

“...No-”

“Shh. It’s alright, you don’t have to apologize for starting the fire. You’re just a kid, after all,” The woman whispers. I start to wonder if the crowd has listened to anything I said. We all stepped out of the kitchen bunker, as no one decided to stop the bunker from burning. Ignorrock hasn’t returned. “The truth is that nobody has liked this place, for generations. We just want to breathe fresh air for once.” The woman turns away from me and to the crowd.

“What are you *talking* about?” I finally ask.

“Fellow citizens, my name is Narcy. We need to solve this issue of being trapped in these dirty hallways. Haven’t you ever wondered what’s above us?” she says, completely dodging my question. The fire is still burning behind me. No Ignorock yet. “Today, this brave child named Cameron has had enough courage to declare a riot. He will finally lead humanity outside, after centuries of coping with the underground bunkers,” Narcy says, slowly ascending her whispers into yelling. She’s losing it entirely. Is this normal? Does this happen to people? Either way, she’s making a fool of herself. I snicker to myself, and start to back away. If Mr. Ignorock isn’t coming, I’m sure a fire department is walking over here already.

“I’m with you!”

“Yeah, me too!”

Huh? There’s no way that *all* of you are buying into this, right?

“So, Cameron,” Narcy asks. “What should our first act be?”

I’m too stunned to say anything. I’m stuck in my mind, trying to figure out if this is some sick joke or not. I hope it is, but what does hope give you?

“I think we should burn the rest of the bunkers in this area. Let’s do that!” Narcy yells. The crowd cheers on, walking past and behind me. Somehow, despite being volunteered to be a leader of something I wanted nothing to do with, I still feel like I don’t have any control over anything.

I start to follow the crowd of people up a large staircase. This is my fault anyway.

“Narcy?” I call out, “I don’t think burning everything is going to help you with your goal.”

“Why not?” she quickly shoots out.

“You’re just causing more inconveniences for yourself. Is fire the way to go here? Don’t you ever fear prison- have you been to prison before?”

A smirk wipes off of Narcy’s face. She squints at me. “I’m not going to be stopped. A crowd is stronger in numbers, after all,” she says. “Imagine all of the wonderful things overground. Above the oceans! If I need to grab attention to get out of this place, then so what?”

“Didn’t you say that I was the leader of all of this-”

Narcy clears her throat to alert her crowd. I can’t tell if it was an accident, or if she successfully cut me off. “Here’s our first bunker, citizens!” she says. I’ve already grown to hate the way she talks.

She pulls out a lighter from one of her pockets as I try to dig my way through the crowd of people. I never noticed how she got away from me so quickly. Once I do get in front of everyone, I see the bunker door in flames. For something made out of metal, these walls are really flammable.

“What is wrong with you all?!” I scream.

“Aren’t you the leader?” a voice in the crowd asks. “I haven’t seen you suggest a single thing.”

True. Exactly. I take a deep breath. “Hm. We walked to the top floor, didn’t we? As your leader, I command you to find an opening, and travel out to the ocean. You’ll finally be free.”

The crowd looks at me with excitement. They all start walking by me, staring at the ceiling as they do so. Soon enough, they’re out of sight.

“Come on, citizens!” Narcy exclaims.

The door to my right is still on fire. I haven’t seen Ignorock yet. But when I focus a little bit past the cackles of the fire, I notice something else.

“Oh my goodness!” A muffled voice screams beyond the bunker door. “Fire! Fire!”

The End