

Sustainable?

My entire life has been ruled by the need to survive. For my mother, for me. Ever since Rick had left- I grimaced, then continued thinking about the timeline of my life. Since I was little, I knew to spend every bit of my energy scavenging and trying to find food. I gulped and continued thinking, walking, counting my steps. One, two. One, two. After my father had died, she spent four years grieving him. He was hard-working, and I never put together how she fell for rich, lazy Rick. Now she spent every day in bed, mourning over herself, Rick, her choices. Rick had left us when conditions turned bad, and now we were left in a run-down house in the middle of an abandoned city, having to scavenge for food and water. I would leave the house to go into the vacant city and look for food and clean water. Supplies were running out, and soon, I knew that we would have to move out for new resources. Mother was sick, so I tried delaying it and feeding her the best of the food until she could get better. But, even if I told myself and her that she was getting better every day, I knew I would be alone soon.

The water crisis was more important than everyone thought. They'd wasted the water, used it until there was barely any left. Then the drought struck. People fled, and the living style here became horrible. There was no clean water, and eventually, people stopped coming altogether.

One heat-blasted day, I got up early to try to get as much time in before the sun started to beat upon my back. Before I left, I checked on Mother. Her breathing had slowed, and her skin was cool to the touch. I pulled the blankets further over her, tucked them in tightly, then planted a kiss on her forehead. Her eyes fluttered open briefly, then went back to sleep. I absentmindedly stumbled towards the door, grabbed my bag, and left the house. The contents of my rucksack included plastic bottles, a small canvas sack, and fish-spears. The plastic bottles were hardly bottles anymore, I couldn't keep track of how many times I used them for carrying the precious water that Mother and I needed for survival. I grasped the fish spears that I had removed from my bag and remembered how my father gave them to me but never got the chance to teach me how to use them. My acorn-sized stomach growled, and I remembered that I had forgotten to eat something before leaving the house. Well, there was no chance of going back, I realized. There wouldn't be much food anyways. Besides, the rule was that I couldn't go back for food before bringing something to eat. Just then, there was a rustling beneath a pile of rubble. I closed my eyes, telling myself that the chip planted inside my brain at birth was finally taking its toll. Even if it wasn't, I hadn't eaten anything either. Even so, I decided to look and see what it was. It could be live food- a luxury I could only enjoy once in a while. I advanced slowly, holding the fish spears as if ready to strike, ready to get fresh meat for my frail mother. Before I could reach the pile, a shiny chrome head

popped out. I jumped back, thinking I was the enemy's AI spies. Then, I realized they weren't wearing hats. As the rest of the chrome popped out, I realized that it didn't look like a human at all. It looked like the robots that many dreamed of during the 20-21st centuries. Still, I didn't trust it. There was something wrong, and I didn't seem to have been here before. Where did it come from, and how did it get here? The robot took one glance at me and stopped working. Since it seemed to be dead, I went towards the pile of rubble and picked up the robot.

I stood in the city square and placed the robot onto a rusty metal bench, making a note to come back here later to check on it. I found an old wire and tied it to the bench, so if the robot woke up, it wouldn't run away. Then I set off to find food to eat. I went into the bakery and found some traces of stale bread. This was the last left, and I would have to move on soon. I ate a corner of croissant and a messed up Christmas cookie in the oven. I had never noticed it before, but the light under the stove was on. There was still hope. Then, it flickered off. I groaned trudging out of the shop and trying the city's water system. The water system was a good 5-minute walk from the bakery, and so I decided to find the Blenda Juice and Drinks store across the street. I charged across but was stopped by a peculiar light shining in front of me. I stopped to look at it.

A robot stared at me from the light. "Don't be frightened by my presence." the robot stated mechanically.

I screamed.

The robot continued, "I am not in front of you. It is only a hologram and I am currently sitting in the City Square, tied up on a bench. I am RoboBot from Google Planet. I have been told that you were the only hope of saving the population of humans from the extreme water drought and pollution that you have caused."

I flinched as the RoboBot mentioned this. My father died trying to help humans understand what they have caused, but it was for nothing.

"I am here to restore Earth's beauty and population. I have been told you are the only one who truly understands the meaning of protecting our planet, and loss because of the instability of water."

I looked at the robot unbelievably. "No-that's not possible! I've never known the Earth's natural beauty!"

I ran. From my past, my present, and even my future. I, who faced the hardships of hunger, starvation, exploitation, and poverty, could not face even attempting to save the world. I, who was strong and could make me and my mother survive, could not survive with the fact that I had been chosen. Suddenly, I came to many sidewalks, with each of them leading somewhere. I kept running, and somehow came to City Square again, and saw the robot. I ran in the other direction and saw RoboBot again. By then, I

was exhausted and collapsed into the closest seat. I took no notice of the robot beside me and fell into a fitful sleep.

When I woke up, I found the RoboBot standing in front of me. The wires had been untied.

The RoboBot whirred, "You must accept your destiny," and held up a glass of fresh water and a sandwich.

I never ate anything so good, ever, and swallowed it before actually tasting it. If my destiny meant this, and all day long for everyone, then I could accept it readily.

"All right," I said eventually. "I'll do it. But only for humanity."

The robot instantly transferred me to a place of lush plants and busy but clean cities. "I knew you would be more ready to accept your destiny than most people. We are still in the same spot, but it is currently the 21st century. " I drew in a clean breath of air but was instantly teleported back to the current situation. "Let's start with the buildings. The main cause of pollution is poverty, and not using resources wisely" The RoboBot started rebuilding the buildings with powerful telekinesis, while I told it what to do.

"We need to set a water limit for every person, otherwise our plan may short circuit." I fretted over my decisions. The Google Planet may not choose to help the human beings again, so this was my only chance. I could not fail now. "All right, now let's install the water pumps for clean drinking water from underground, and take all of the trash out by making filters with small amounts of chlorine to make it cleaner. We can also use galvanized pipes for long-term sustainability." I utilized all that my father had taught me.

In a couple of weeks, we were done. There was only one thing missing- greenery. "We need plants to purify the air because it is also a sustainable source of water," I reasoned. RoboBot installed that. "We can now make advertisements for people to move here, and make all cities like this. We can also encourage people to use fewer resources if they don't have to, and make reusable materials so that trash will not pollute the oceans." RoboBot did that too, but my thoughts had moved on. All I was thinking about was how my mother would finally get the care she needed.