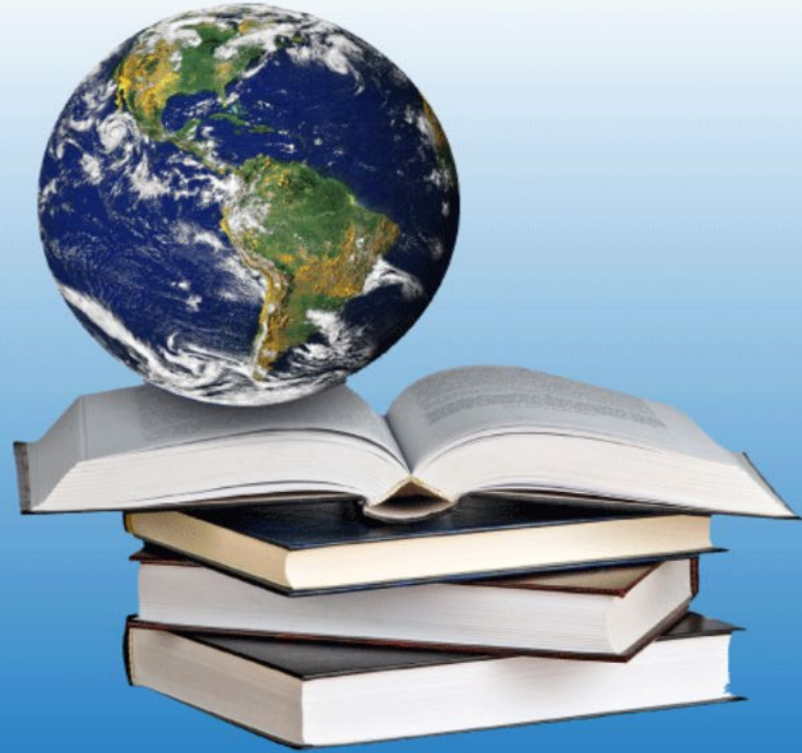


Climate Future Fiction 2023

A Citizen Science project at SDU



Best stories in class

Authors: Written by high school students from Middelfart Gymnasium, Mulernes Legatskole, Odense Katedralskole, Sct. Knuds Gymnasium og Svendborg Gymnasium. Students have consented to their short stories being shared. Some of them wanted to be featured as authors, others did not.

About the project: In 2023 six high school classes participated in the citizen science project *Climate Future Fiction*, as a part of their English course. Each student participated in a flash fiction exercise and expanded afterwards this to a short story. The focus was to develop fictional stories about how, in 2063, climate change will have impacted the lives of people. Here is a collection of the best short stories from each class.

[See more about the project here](#)

Contact: For questions regarding the project, please contact Line Laursen Corydon, (linel@bib.sdu.dk)

If you use any of the stories or extracts from the stories, we expect you to acknowledge the project and the researchers (Patricia Wolf, Bryan Yazell and Karl Michael Attard). If you publish any research related to the stories, please inform the researchers (pawo@sam.sdu.dk; yazell@sdu.dk and karl.attard@biology.sdu.dk).

Short stories

Probably 2064

Nadiya, the river

Silent Storm

The Last Oasis

The Taste of the Year 2063

[Untitled]

Probably 2064

By Mathias Sørby

Don cannot remember the year or the date. Not that he would be any the wiser if he could. It would just be one of many things on the long string of ignorance that made up Don's world. The string of hard-to-swallow truths which had to be swallowed. Don was not bothered by not remembering the day or date or anything else for that matter.

Don would spend most of his days with the same expression on his face. The expression where wrinkles would be filled with dust if he had not lived in such a squeaky-clean apartment. He finds that sort of expression the most suitable. Then he would not get into any trouble, for rebellion is not looked fondly upon.

Don does his morning gymnastics. Being in great shape is important a voice said inside Don's head. He caught himself in that moment. Was that even true? Not that the truth was of any importance any longer. He felt a tremendous guilt over even doubting what he knew. Everyone knew exercise was healthy. He was at once his perpetrator and victim. He is snatched out of the moment by the loudspeaker. "You caaan do it, Don!" Don has a panel in his apartment that reads: "Ignorance is strength!" Don could not remember the year or date when the poster became mandatory. Not that he would be any wiser if he could. It also was not like Don had much of a choice. He did not have control over the panels in his apartment. Like with most things it would be best to fall in line and abide by the rules. That had been decided by corporate some time ago.

Don walks into his living room and is greeted by the same voice over the loudspeaker. "Good morning, Don! Rise and shine! And remember every day is a great day to do your best." Don did not answer even though he should. That was written in the code of conduct, which Don knew by heart now.

Don did remember he used to be able to have black coffee each morning. He does however not mention that to anyone because all mention of coffee has been removed from everywhere. Don cannot remember why it happened. He thinks that it just disappeared sometime a couple of years ago. Now all mention of coffee has been completely removed from history. This was an initiative by the *Department of*

Information. The department is responsible for countering misinformation and providing free education in the areas they deem appropriate for their citizens.

Don eats his breakfast while he reads *Truth News*, the only paper available. Don had lived in his apartment for a long time. He could not remember how long. He had checked all the sources available to him, but there was no mention of living in any other way. Don would, however, sometimes dream of another life where he would be in a garden. A garden with the most delicious of fruit. A garden where Don felt no shame or guilt. In the garden, the colors of the leaves would always be vibrant, and the morning dew was always still on the fruits making them taste just right.

Don finishes his breakfast, and he is now free to do whatever he chooses. Don always has a hard time deciding what to do. He feels the options pile up way over his head. Then he feels the options in a gigantic stack would take their turns falling and crushing him with the unbearable burden of complete freedom. He could either watch a movie, watch a series, or read a book. Don lays down on the floor and thinks. Rhythmically Don feels his thoughts changing in a rhythmic pattern matching the inoffensive and sterile music played over the loudspeaker. Don feels his thoughts change and change once every second. Twice every second. Three times, four times every second. Don slips in and out of consciousness. Out. In. Out. In. Out. Don is now in a garden. His parent's garden. He runs around barefoot on the grass, which is still slightly wet from the morning dew. Don is playing catch with his sister. Don had long missed his sister. He felt a tremendous pull towards Candace, which is the name she had been bestowed. Don feels himself make a stride and touch Candace's back. "I got you!" Don exclaimed loudly. He felt himself gasp and wake up still on the floor, but everything was different. Now he could see. He could remember what life was like before the cooperation took over and stole everyone's thoughts. He frantically ran around his apartment and tried to regain his consciousness. A symphony of catharsis happened as Don realized why he was where he was. He realized why his furniture was bolted to the floor, and why his apartment did not have any stairs. He realized why his shoes, which he did not use because he was never allowed outside (not that he, previously, wanted to anyway), had no shoelaces. He realized why his food came preserved on a tray, and why his kitchen did not have knives. He realized why he had chosen to live like this. "Is everything all right, Don?" Said the female voice over the speaker system in the most calming way possible. "Yes, yes I am just getting in some steps," Don said. Don started feeling around the panels that made up the box, which Don had been living

in for a long time. Don cannot live with his reality. He wants to escape. He started rhythmically hitting the giant poster which read "*Ignorance is strength!*". Don started to hit harder. "Don please stop. This will not end well." Said the female voice. Don only started hitting harder and harder. Don hits harder and harder. Sharp pain fills his hands. The sound of valves opening along the wall accompany people in hazmat suits quickly sweeping in and taking Don.

Don wakes up in a completely white room. He is completely fixated and unable to hear anything other than the crushing silence of nothingness. Don screams, but the words will not register anywhere and quickly disappear.

Don is woken up by the sound of valves and a tall man in a black suit greeting him. The man has thick eyebrows, which look like two slugs, and slick back hair. His skin was completely without any sign of aging, so it was not possible to determine his age. The light was also very bright on the eyes therefore Don had to squint to be able to look at the figure in front of him. "Good morning, Don. It seems like you have gotten a wrong perception of the world. Let me explain what is going on even though you will not remember this tomorrow morning when you wake up in your apartment and go about your day as if nothing had happened. When humanity realized what it had done to nature many people found themselves incapable of living with that fact. Therefore, there were years of very high suicide rates and famine eradicating a major part of humanity — the deadliest event in human history. I am a businessman, so I decided to create a solution where we would delude people, so they could live with themselves. You signed a contract to live in blissful ignorance at all costs, and we intend to honor that contract, so you will not remember any of this tomorrow. You mustn't forget you are one of the lucky ones. The others did not make it."

Nadiya, the river

By Josefine Møllegaard

It was hot. Very hot. Mama was sweating a lot while she screamed. Little droplets of water ran down her forehead. I asked what I should do, because I knew it was soon. She said I couldn't do anything. Mama's screams came more often, with less time in between. I said I wish papa was here. She said she did too, and that he would come home again soon. She said he had to work for the rich people, so we could get money. She has told us that many times. Me and my brother. Rich people come here often. They want to see our country. Bathe in our blue water and see our jungle. I want to see blue water too. Here water is brown. Sometimes green. Sometimes yellow. Sometimes other colors. Tonight, maybe the river will be red.

I ran for the doctor. The moon was out. The village whispered tales of changing skies. They had warned us. In the windy night, I ran to the doctor. I ran as fast as I could. He could help. Mama always said the river is what gives our people life. Soon two screams filled the air. Mama was tired. She said her name should be Nadiya. Means river. I held her tight. Promised her a world of colors beyond our river's. Mama's eyes were wet. Tired. So tired. But doctor said she must stay awake. His face was serious. Mama laid there, looking at Nadiya. The doctor moved quickly, talking to himself, mumbling about medicine while praying to the river gods. The river rumbled in the distance, and the spirits talked through the winds. Mama looked at the sky. The stars were clear, and the clouds were moving fast. She gave a slight smile as I brushed her hair. Her hair was wet but soft. Mama always had beautiful hair. Her eyes locked onto mine as her smile faded. An unspoken understanding of what is now to come, passed from her to me. I looked at the doctor. The doctor stiffened. My eyes wet.

Forced upon me was nothing but maturity marking my now responsibility. And merely the doctor bore witness to it all. The doctor called down men to take care of the body. I

felt the weight of impending loneliness and helplessness settling on my shoulders, as I left the scene with Nadiya in my arms.

The unforgettable nights terror wandered on repeat in my mind. A figure in the distant talking to one of the locals caught my eye. A familiar silhouette. Papa had returned. The worry etched on his face mirrored the burden carried by my heart. His eyes met mine an expression of worry yet understanding. Nadiya, cradled in my arms, seemed to sense the somber atmosphere, her innocent eyes reflecting the weight of the recent loss. My eyes teared up as I slanted towards him. I couldn't breathe for a short moment when his face became more recognisable. The weight on my shoulders was immediately lifted. Hyperventilating, exhausted and confused, I cried aloud while villagers became my audience. Papa ran towards me. He grabbed me as my feet started to tremble. Seated in front of the big oak nourished by the river was Anwar. I couldn't help but think none of this would have been my responsibility if only I wasn't the firstborn. If only I wasn't a girl. If only we were like the people Papa works for.

As the sun raised high, casting a warm glow on the small sunspot, I sat down. The village, nestled against the river's embrace, carried on with its routine, seemingly unaware of the profound shift in my world. The soothing rhythm of the flowing water still filled the air as we sat. A drop hit me in the face, as I looked up. One drop turned into two, turned into a few, which eventually turned into rain. People gathered around, some went inside, and some started dancing. It has been a long time since our last rain. A refreshing feeling seemed to be enjoyed by many, including myself. It was as if last night's incidents were flushed away in a sudden cloudburst. I would not have imagined the slightest smile on anyone's faces this morning, nor on myself. A growing anxiety formed inside my chest as I felt an eerie sensation through my body. It was as if the drops penetrated my skin and gave me some sort of warning. The rain increased and led us to evacuate. Papa held Nadiya close as we all walked with haste to our house. The water flushed through the streets, and we started running to get to shelter. The dry soil started changing into mud. The roads were becoming slippery. We reached our home, but it was no longer in use as a shelter. Half the roof was blown off and we stood in water up to our ankles. The look on papa's eyes was anything but reassuring. I knew that face. It was the same face he made when he was told he had to work full time at the resort. He looked at me as if I knew what to do. The panic consumed me.

The tales of the never-ending flood were upon us. With urgency in our steps, we joined the villagers in the frantic efforts to reinforce our homes against the approaching flood. But we were unprepared. Anwar stood still, as the only person to realize our doom. Villagers ran around making efforts to hopelessly establish some sort of reinforcement. Rain poured and did not stop. I looked at my family and for a short while, my world stood still. People's panic became distant, silenced white noise as I admired my papa and siblings. The screams of the villagers echoed through the night, drowned out by the roaring river that devoured the once well- thriving community. The remnants of their shattered lives floated down the relentless current. Anwar's tear-streaked face reflected the desolation of a world that had forsaken us. I couldn't help but smile by the thought of our little helpless family. So, innocent. Merely a victim of poverty in a world where people forgot their hearts. It all went black. A big wave of debris and destroyed homes hit me in the back of my head. We became mere whispers in the wind, carried away to an uncertain fate in a world that had turned its back on its most vulnerable inhabitants, as the river whispered the sad tale of a young girl and her family, carried away by the tears of a planet that forgot to love.

Mama gone. Papa gone. Nadiya and Anwar gone. Whole village gone.

Silent Storm

By Sarah Uglebjerg

A flash of light beams through my curtains. My eyes flick open and the sound of people shouting is getting louder and louder. I look around my room; nothing out of place but my phone is beaming on the nightstand. My bedding is surrounding me like a warm hug and everything in me is screaming for me to stay, but I know that I should check. With arms and legs still heavy from sleeping and my whole body glued to the flower-patterned sheets, I somehow manage to reach out and grab my phone.

3:24 am and no Wi-fi. Weird... but who is outside shouting at 3:24 like some menace? Curfew still lasts for another 3 hours at least. I let out a small groan in annoyance as my legs leave the bed. Numerous lights now shine through my curtain putting together a small lightshow. I reach out to flick the light switch on the wall, but nothing happens. The electricity must have gone out from the storm last night. I find my way through the dimly lit room trying my hardest not to step on anything. As I pull the curtains apart, I'm immediately met by a sight one may describe as pure chaos. Countless people with small bags and flashlights in their hands are frantically making their way down the street, meanwhile men in military-looking vehicles are struggling to keep order. I watch as a small group of men in uniform shine their flashlights through my neighbor's window while they are shouting some words that I can't quite make out. I now realize that the lights that came through my own window just a few moments ago were in fact not just a little lightshow. My heart sinks and a wave of urgency now finally hits me. I stand there for a bit longer, watching the mass of people moving by like some awfully distressing parade as I let the realization sink in. I have to get moving. I'm still in a state of confusion, but I can tell that this is serious. The last time my rather secluded coast town looked something like this was 6 years ago back in 2046 when the massive tornado, Wanda, hit but I just don't recall it being this acute. I'm certain that the military wasn't here. I glance at the picture of my parents on the nightstand, and without hesitation I slip it into the pocket of my pajamas. I quickly make my way down the stairs. With my phone still in my hand, I throw on my warmest coat and my trainers and

I find myself right before the front door. My house feels darker and emptier than usual but still way more pleasant than whatever dangers are lurking outside. I open the door. All the sounds of chaos that before were shielded by my window are now ringing in my ears. My legs take me from the safety of my porch to the rather crowded street. The thought of not knowing what's going on is killing me. I need to know. I scan my surroundings and merge myself with the crowd. No familiar faces. Suddenly a panicked woman bumps into me as she's sprinting by, causing me to lose my balance and nosedive right onto the asphalt.

In frustration I yell out: "can someone please tell me what's going on?", but not a single person even as much as glances at me. That's when a hand reaches down for me like an angel sent from God and pulls me back on my feet. It's my neighbor, Mrs. Ancher. In her other hand she's holding the hand of her young daughter. Presumably around the age of four. Mrs. Ancher smiles at me, but it never reaches her eyes. There's a look of defeat on her face. "We have to keep moving. There's not much time", she says as she proceeds walking. I stumble behind her. Unable to get any words out, I give her a confused look, insinuating her to tell me more.

She sighs. "They say there's a wave coming"

"a wave?!". My brain stops. A second later, a whole slideshow of images from countless natural disasters from tv flashes through my head.

"Like.... a tsunami?" I say quietly.

She gives me a knowing look and my blood runs cold.

"What? Why didn't they tell us anything?" I complain, completely baffled with my newfound knowledge. I don't understand. They always warn us when these things happen. The government I mean. They always send out warning-notifications on our phones. Like with the floodings two months ago, the hail last week and the thunderstorm last night. But today; nothing.

Mrs. Ancher lets out another deep sigh.

"I'm not supposed to tell anyone this, but here's what my husband told me... the storm last night

completely wrecked the electricity in the whole state. Even the internet. And well apparently, they need internet to send out the warnings. Stupid, I know", she says as she shakes her head in disapproval.

Her husband is an admiral in the navy, so I guess that's why she knows all this. It all makes sense now. Why the lights wouldn't turn on, why I had no Wi-fi, why the streets

are filled with military and panicked people. Suddenly, my thoughts are interrupted by screaming and commotion in the distance. I turn my head to look behind me and I see people running, all their faces filled with terror. Without thinking twice, I start sprinting. Mrs. Ancher and her daughter right behind me. Her daughter's tiny legs are slowing them down severely, but I can't find it in my heart to leave them, so I slow down a bit for them to be able to keep up. Out of nowhere, Mrs. Ancher stops. I turn around in confusion.

"What are you doing? We have to run!", I scream.

"I can't go any longer. Please take her." she begs as she looks at me with her eyes red and glossy.

"Listen to me, there's a helicopter waiting on the hill by the Creekside Manor. Go there, my husband will take care of you both". Unable to get any words out, I just shake my head in utter shock and disbelief. "Go! JUST GO!" she cries out as she rushes into the nearest building. I now finally spot the wave coming up in the distance, consuming everything on its way. The sight of it sends a chill down my spine and I waste no more time. I pick up Mrs. Ancher's daughter and sprint like I've never sprinted before.

Overtaking women with children in their arms, elderly men and women, and children weeping for their parents. I try my hardest not to let my thoughts linger on them, but deep down I know the outcome of their tragic fate. I know I can't do anything for them despite my heart aching to help.

I just run.

Finally, I spot the Creekside Manor and, sure enough there on the hill is a small helicopter. Hesitantly, I approach the vehicle. A man in uniform encounters me. My neighbor. He takes his daughter from my arms and asks me: "my wife? Where's my wife?" I look down, now struggling to hold back tears. His face drops as he gives a small nod, letting me in. Soon after the helicopter lifts itself from the ground, slowly allowing me to see the full extent of the disaster. A tear silently rolls down my cheek.

All those innocent people with dreams and plans. People like you and me.

Somehow, I spot what's now left of my house. All my memories buried in water and agony. My house, my town, my city. Gone.

I just can't help but wonder if people from the past would have done things differently if they could see all of this. If they could see what their mindless consumption has led to.

The Last Oasis

The island of Aeroe was a jewel amid the vast expanse of the rising oceans. Its towering cliffs stood defiantly against the encroaching tides, while its lush forests and vibrant ecosystems thrived under the watchful gaze of the sun. Nestled in this paradise, a community of resilient souls had forged a life, adapting to the changing world around them.

Lis, a young botanist, had grown up on the island, learning its secrets and the delicate balance of its flora. She spent her days tending to the last remaining gardens, a sanctuary of greenery amidst the encroaching saline waters. The island had become a sanctuary for a multitude of species as habitats around the world vanished under the weight of climate change.

Aeroe's residents were resourceful, devising ingenious ways to harness the elements for survival. Solar panels adorned rooftops, capturing the sun's energy, while intricate systems collected and purified rainwater. They lived in harmony with nature, understanding the fragility of their existence.

One day, while tending to the gardens, Lis noticed an anomaly. The plants, once vibrant and resilient, showed signs of distress. Leaves wilted, and flowers struggled to bloom. Fear clenched her heart as she realized that even their island paradise wasn't immune to the global upheaval.

Rumours whispered among the islander's tales of other settlements swallowed by the relentless ocean. The sea levels continued their remorseless climb, threatening to reclaim Aeroe.

Determined to save her home, Lis delved into her research, scouring ancient texts and modern studies for a solution. She stumbled upon forgotten knowledge—a seed vault, a treasure trove of biodiversity from a time when the world hadn't yet succumbed to the throes of climate change.

With hope flickering like a flame in the wind, Lis sought the aid of her fellow islanders. Together, they embarked on a daring quest, sailing through perilous waters to reach the distant shores rumoured to house this sanctuary of seeds.

Their journey was fraught with challenges—a tempest tested their resolve, and encounters with remnants of a world lost to the waters reminded them of the urgency of their quest. Yet, fuelled by their determination to preserve life, they pressed on. After weeks of treacherous travel, they reached their destination—a desolate land now submerged, save for a solitary structure rising above the waves. Guided by ancient maps, they discovered the vault, a testament to humanity's foresight in the face of impending catastrophe.

With trembling hands, Lis accessed the vault, awestruck by rows upon rows of seeds carefully preserved for generations yet to come. Each seed held the promise of life, a beacon of hope in a world teetering on the brink of desolation.

They gathered what they could carry, a precious cargo that held the key to rejuvenating their dying gardens. As they sailed back to Aeroe, the weight of responsibility and the glimmer of possibility hung in the air. Returning to their island home, Lis and her companions planted the seeds with reverence. Days turned into weeks, and a miracle unfolded before their eyes—the once-faltering gardens revived, bursting with vitality and colour. The island of Aeroe stood as a testament to resilience, a sanctuary amidst a world grappling with the consequences of neglect.

The Taste of the Year 2063

By Smilla Rosford Bjerge

Greg works meticulously in the kitchen garden, while Stormpaw, his faithful cat, potters aimlessly about the garden. A gentle breeze brushes through his silver-gray hair, and the sun casts warm rays over the hilltop. It is one of those rare days when everything seems in harmony, and Greg enjoys every moment. Greg, an old man at the age of 72, dwells isolated in a dark oak wooden hut on what used to be a hilltop, now surrounded by water. Barely a few meters above sea level. For almost all his life, he has dwelled at the hilltop. Greg does not like interacting with people, so over time, he has developed a self-sufficient lifestyle to be alone. His kitchen garden is bursting with vigorous vegetables, and all kinds of legumes and root vegetables. A grass field at the back of his hut is loaded with several kinds of huge fruit trees, which surround a medium-sized chicken yard occupied by three feathery chickens. As Greg works in his garden, he notices something odd happening in the nature around him. Normally, the birds, insects, and other animals near his hilltop are part of a harmonious scene. But on this day, things are different. The birds, which normally soar gracefully through the sky, are now flying in unpredictable patterns, almost like a chaotic dance. Their usual synchronized movements are replaced by a disordered fluttering that catches Greg's attention. Similarly, the insects, like bees and ants, are behaving strangely. Bees seem to be buzzing around with a sense of urgency. Ants, usually marching in organized lines, dashes around in a way that looks like confusion. Even the butterflies, known for their vibrant and graceful flight, are now fluttering around restlessly and erratically. The whole insect world, which is mostly lively and synchronized, now feels disorganized and out of tune. He pauses in his gardening, looking around at this strange behavior. It feels like nature itself tries to communicate that something is amiss.

With a blank look in his eyes, Greg stares at his basket filled with tomato cuttings. Out of a sudden, he starts to hear a splashing sound from the sea. He turns towards the sea and a stranger arrives at his small aisle in a tiny boat. Greg immediately stops his work while standing completely still. The direction of his gaze is directed towards the stranger. By narrowing his eyes and slightly leaning forward, he tries to settle who this

stranger is. A man with a great gray beard and a scruffy fishing hat sits in the boat rocking by the waves. "Hello there! Sorry if I interrupt you. I was just out fishing nearby when I noticed your little peaceful place. I must warn you. My high tec boat forecasts a severe gale all over the country. It will be horrible. Come with me to the mainland. You are not safe here.", the man says. "No thank you. Safe is all that I am", Greg answers, continuing his work without even looking at him. He is from that mainland, Greg thought with disgust. He thinks what is happening outside him and his hilltop is unimportant. He is not interested in what is going on around the world, however, once he by mistake received a newspaper. On the front page, in capital letters, it says, "*TECHNOLOGY TAKES OVER*," followed by lowercase letters: "*Technology is our future. However, this statement no longer holds true, as we find ourselves currently in the hands of technology*". The rumble technology has vandalized the mainland, which made him furious and not wanting to ever set foot on it.

The stranger sighs, recognizing the stubbornness in Greg's eyes. "Look, I understand your attachment to this place, but this storm is different. It's a consequence of the very technology you despise on the mainland. I can get you to safety." Greg tightens his grip on the shovel, his knuckles turning white. "I've seen what that technology did to the world. I won't be a part of it."

Quickly he turns around. He wants nothing to do with this stranger and exceptionally not the mainland. When it begins to cloud up for rain, the stranger hesitates for a moment longer before realizing he can't change Greg's mind. "If you change your mind, I'll be nearby. Take care of yourself". Greg hears the sound of the battery-powered boat being vaguer. He turns towards the man, who is already on his way to the mainland. Something else he notices is the dark clouds gathering all over the horizon. A nervous shiver runs through Greg, realizing the idyllic begins to fade away. He quickly starts to gather his tools and covers his precious plants as the first raindrop appears on the tip of his nose and another one on his lower lip. There is a sharp taste of the waterdrop. A bitter taste he immediately dislikes. Greg sighs and gazes over to his cottage where his cat, Stormpaw, already has begun to seek shelter. The way to the shelter is short, but this time it feels like an eternity as the rain starts to intensify. In a hurry, he runs against the heavy drops of rain. The force of the drops transfers the weight to Greg. His clothes become soaking wet, making it nearly impossible for him to keep upright. It almost feels like he is carrying the whole world on his back.

Greg stared out of the window at the rushing river of water, threatening to wash away his small garden. "The man said it would happen. It's the year 2063, Stormpaw. Now comes what we all have feared", Greg mumbles with his forehead leaning against the cold surface of the window, which becomes steamy from the hot and cold meeting each other. Stormpaw hisses and hides under a table as the rain whips around them. The hilltop, once a sanctuary to Greg, is now at risk from the encroaching sea, threatening the way he used to live. Greg turns away from the window and slogs heavily through his dim living room and over to the bedroom. Opening the wardrobe, he grabs some dry clothes. With a sigh, Greg changes into dry clothes, but his eyes remain fixed on the window, where the rain pelts against the window glass. Just as he starts changing, something catches his eye through the window. A faint light flicker in the distance, contrasting with the stormy darkness outside. Greg pauses in the middle of changing, his attention drawn to the unexpected glow on the horizon. Immediately he walks fast towards the window. As he comes closer, he starts to notice another boat. Maybe it is just someone who is lost, Greg thinks and decides to keep surveilling it. When it comes closer, and closer, and closer, he starts to get worried, while considering going outside to make sure it will leave again. However, the water level has risen significantly in a short time, so it probably wouldn't be safe to go outside. Yet Greg chooses to go out despite the stormy weather and wild waters.

"Who's there?", says Greg in a loud voice and blinking eyes. The sharp light from the boat keeps flickering and blinding him.

"Have you completely lost your mind, sir? What on earth are you doing out here? Are you aware that this island will soon be underwater?", a deep voice answers. Ignoring the question, Greg responds, "I'm not leaving. This is my home, always has been."

The stranger sighs, frustration in his voice. "This is not like any storm you've faced. The sea is rising fast. You won't be able to stay here much longer. It's a matter of life and death."

Greg hesitates for a moment. It's a matter of life and death. A sentence that keeps playing over and over inside his mind. The reality of the situation begins to sink in.

"What do you propose, then? Abandon everything I've built?"

"Sometimes letting go is the only way to survive. Your home is more than a place. It's the memories you carry.", the stranger answers with firmness in his tone. "Come on before it's too late". The stranger reaches his hand toward Greg, expecting him to grab it. Greg looks around. Only chaos is left. He must let go. With a determined movement,

Greg grasps the stranger's hand and steps aboard the boat. The rain continues to pour, washing away the traces of his life. As they slowly sail further away from the aisle, he observes everything being flooded. Barely the top of the cottage is the only thing visible. A warm sensation caresses his cheek and down to his mouth, while the thought of his loss passes through his mind. A salty taste of a new beginning.

[Untitled]

The doorbell rang at the usual hour, precisely 6 pm. Taylor got up from her bed, walked the four steps it took to reach the door and opened it. The delivery man was already hurrying away, he usually did not greet people at the door. 'He probably has a whole lot more to deliver' was what Taylor thought each time she saw his back moving further away. Taylor bent down and picked up the meal box, on Wednesdays it always contained fried fish and mashed potatoes. Not exactly thrilling.

"Hey!" Axel, Taylor's neighbor said. He did not even have to raise his voice for Taylor to hear him. He stood but two steps away, in his own doorframe. He was naturally also picking up his food.

"Hi." Taylor replied, "looking forward to mashed potatoes?"

"Always" was his answer. Axel scuffed jokingly, returning to his living unit, closing the door behind him. Taylor did the same. Her unit consisted of two rooms only. One bigger room containing her bed, a desk, a dresser, those kinds of essentials, however not a kitchen, the government took care of the food. The bathroom was situated in the smallest of rooms. The entire house, every piece of furniture and every wall was white and sterile, identical to the home next to it. If Taylor had a say, she would have chosen a bigger unit, but of course, it was not her choice. She had been put here when she turned 21, in the southwestern part of the country formerly known as Norway, she had been told. It was a rather nice place to live, compared to what she could read other living quarters of the world were like, and the climate remained rather stable here. 'Always remember to be grateful' Taylor thought to herself. She had learned and repeated that phrase since childhood.

Taylor sat down at her small table, opening the meal box. She barely thought about what she was stuffing in her mouth, rather she looked at her phone, keeping up with the latest news. The situation in the southwestern part of Europe, formerly known as France, was more dire than ever. The government were evacuating people with much haste, that was what the news article said at least. Taylor did not exactly buy that. She

knew for a fact that those politicians were more concerned with saving their fields and tractors. As they always were. In the last decades, but especially in recent years, it seemed to Taylor that humans truly were second rank to crops. That was, in Taylor's mind, also why the government situated people like this, living so closely together, in such small spaces.

Taylor had grown up learning that the rapidly rising water levels were the cause of this. More and more land got swallowed by the sea. So, the government decided to take matters into their own hands. Taking initiatives such as moving people to suited living areas and leaving as much land as possible for agriculture. In truth this infuriated Taylor. In her opinion they should try to save the climate, instead of making hasty and short-term solutions. The climate changes had been known for decades, but still in 2063 politicians turned a blind eye.

"Again" Taylor stated aloud. "This anger leads nowhere." She often caught herself getting angry with the state of the world. But there really was not much she could do, so she usually just tried thinking about something else. Such as her work. She loved her job, working as a diver retrieving valuable things back up from the bottom of the sea. The quiet blue of the ocean always succeeded in easing her mind, so Taylor spent most of her time at the job. Despite the close sense of community in her living area, she did not really have any deeply important relationships here. Her parents lived far away, and they were the only ones Taylor was truly close to. With a feeling of slight sadness Taylor went to sleep.

Taylor awoke to the harsh sound of hammering on metal. It sounded like a mass of people were screaming and shouting. Taylor could not make out the words in the mess. However, it did not make sense that people should be shouting. Things usually ran smoothly around here, everything was optimized, why were people mad? Tired, Taylor forced herself out of bed. She dressed and went for the door, to retrieve her breakfast.

But, when she opened the door, she did not see any box with food, instead she saw a crowd right in front of her. They were all looking at the gates, which were situated just about fifty meters left of Taylor's door. Taylor went outside, joining the crowd, trying to understand what they were looking and shouting at.

What she saw was not pleasant. Outside the closed iron bar gates, which were usually open, there was a huge crowd of what looked like refugees, like the ones Taylor had been seeing on the news. Their clothes were worn down, and even at this great distance, Taylor could smell that they had some strange stench to them. There were people of all ages, children as well. This was where the hammering sound originated from, the refugees repeatedly slammed the gates.

“Please let us in!!” one man shouted. He spoke English as everyone did nowadays, but he had a strange accent. “We were told we would be welcomed!!”

“I do not know who told you this, but we have received no notice of it!” A guard shouted in return. Taylor could hear the panic in his voice, he did not know what to do. Should he let them in?

‘Always the government at fault’ Taylor thought to herself. They were at fault for this. They sent refugees but failed to inform the receivers properly. And those braindead guards obviously did not dare to act on their own accords. Taylor was infuriated, but her mind was blanking. What could she even do in a situation like this? Was it even her responsibility to do anything?

Bang A shot sounded. A tall woman outside the gate fell to the floor. Taylor dropped to her knees, her vision blurring and slowly turning black.