

# Remembering the Bleak Times

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## **Diary Entry: Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> 2093**

I'm so glad to be home from the Learning Centre today! We had to learn about The Bleak Times (2019-2023) and as part of the module we had to complete an exam simulation. I hate simulations! I don't know if I passed or not but I hope so – definitely don't want to do it again (repeat simulations are awfully hard) and I want to get into Level 4. We had to remember the historical information so that we could navigate within the replication of the past. Even though it's in living memory for my grandparents and parents, the war lasted almost five years and it's hard to remember all of the contextual detail. Just because they know doesn't make it easier for us!

They had cars then and all the different materials for clothing. The replica environment feels so weird and it's scary because you are virtually there and can experience it just like you were *really* there. The simulator takes a whole day to process the results so I have to wait 72 hours – fingers crossed I got through!

It was so embarrassing last night. I brought Lotz home for dinner and grandma asked, 'Are you a boy or a girl?' She knows Lotz is gender-neutral! Mom said that it is difficult for the older generation to accept the gender-non-aligned, or 'nons' as

they're called now, but I think she's narrow-minded. To make it worse, Mom didn't buy the flavour of FibreSource that Lotz likes. She got the same one as we get at LC. Lotz pretended not to mind but I was mortified. Lotz' family are very wealthy, from Zone1, and they have *all* the flavours. Zone1 is an EH (enclosed habitation), where the trees are grown. The air is really clean there so the trees don't die. Lotz' mother said most people move there because it doesn't feel so hot and dry inside and her asthma isn't so bad because of the phytoremediation. Everyone there is filthy rich, mostly CEOs of FibreSource (like Lotz' dad) or other big corporations. Then grandma, as if she hadn't made things bad enough already, said FibreSource is a subsistence foodstuff and that we should be thankful that we have it, flavoured or not and went on about how it has eliminated world hunger and how I'm lucky I wasn't born during the Transition, Blah, Blah...

At LC Level 2 we learned that the precincts within our confine used to be called the 'developing world' or 'Third World'. Not everyone knows this, because we don't do an in-depth study of every Zone (just Earth History), but our confine fared better than the rest of Earth after the war. Fluid1 was being tested in the introductory programmes and thousands died before the hydro-scientists got the formula right. When the Transition happened, Fluid1 and FibreSource kept those in our precincts alive when famine ravaged the rest of the world. When plants and animals died off, there was no artificial food resource apart from FibreSource and the water was contaminated with toxic waste. Eventually, the water disappeared altogether. I often wonder if water tasted of anything, but I doubt it did! I don't believe the stories old people tell about it!

Imitation water was only devised by hydro-scientists in early 2025, though conspiracy theorists say proto-Fluid1 was available to the rich as early as the end of

the war. I can't imagine how horrible it must have been with two thirds of the world's population starving and dehydrated. I've never tasted organic food but I heard it makes you sick if your digestive tract isn't accustomed to it, so I wouldn't try it! At the LC, our philosophy instructor says it's morally wrong to eat organics, even if you could afford to.

I met up with Kelva today. Mom would freak out if she knew I made friends with an Ori-descendent. It's not that she's prejudiced against Originals – Mom isn't like that – it's just she worries about the crime on the encampments. Kelva said the delinquents are only trying to raise money to get gene processing done before their babies are born. Dad said LifeCare programme doesn't even accept full-blood Originals anymore, so I don't know if Kelva is lying or not. There used to be all different races of Originals – Caucasian, Black, Latino, Asian, Hispanic – and I might be forgetting some because we did that way back in Level 1. Us Generics look more or less the same feature-wise, we're told, because so many DNA-codes were destroyed during the war. Body modification became big business in the last decade because Generics wanted to individualize themselves. All my friends have tattoos and reconfigurations – Lotz has pointed ears but since so many have that now, he wants his ears morphed again. I don't yet know what mods I will get.

I think Ori-descendents look so attractive, so unique! I feel bad for them though because nobody will employ them. They are sickly because their bodies can't absorb or synthesise the nutrients in FibreSource. You notice them straight away, even in a crowd, because they look pale, sickly. They have a permanent IV drip embedded in their arm so they can get Fluid1 directly into their bloodstream; it is something to do with the enzymes they have. Dad says it only stigmatizes them further that they have to wear the drip. Before the law changed, they would opt out of

wearing it to try to get a job but now it's compulsory and there's a DNA-scanner in many public buildings; they get arrested if they pretend to be Generics. They aren't allowed into LC; not because they aren't intelligent but because most of them have Brain Fog Disorder and can't concentrate because they are malnourished. Nearly all of them have skin disease because their immune systems never adapted to the dry, hot weather and the air toxins.

I had better go to bed. I need to be up early because Lotz will bring me to see a tree before we go to LC. I can't wait to see a tree up close! There is protocol in Zone 1 though and security everywhere in case anyone tries to touch a tree. I don't mind that – I just want to see one. I hope I can get to sleep – so worried about the simulation results tomorrow!