

## The Farm

The time had come. The man who was my whole life took the stage. There of course was no microphone, he didn't need it. Dad began to address his audience. 'I deeply thank you all for being able to make it today, especially on such short notice.' He cleared his throat. 'To start with a Question and Answer?' I have never understood why he asks questions in such an odd way. Because we are so different. But bonded nonetheless. While he awaited an answer, I silently but purposely knocked over one of the heated sticks of wax. The flames grew higher and higher. I ran. Smile spreading across my sorrowful face. It was over.

I awoke. I was still in an unscorched barn. Still me. Still Xanthe, daughter of the Solution. Their beloved symbol still scarred across my skin. The cross a symbol of depletion, the circle one of depression. To most they mean peace and wellbeing but to me they mean much more than that. I stood up slowly so as not to wake anyone else. I sleepily fumbled my way out of the barn and headed for the sacred field. Needing to talk to the Monument. It had been in that field of corn for all millennia, so Dad said. I made my way through the field of tall stalks and low hopes, until I reached it. I hate it. It triggers something deep inside of me, unlocking a memory shrouded in dark clouds of foul smelling smoke. I don't have the key. Only it is allowed. I hated that, and still do. But somehow at the same time it comforts me, in a way nothing else can. It's shattered glassy eyes and decrepit broken body soothe my soul more than anything. It is a burnt out shell. And so am I. I began to orate.

It started a long time before I was born, so I'm told. Dad started becoming interested and intrigued by strange symbols and strange ways of living. It was like an itch he had waited his whole life to scratch. One day when I was seven he drove out to a seminar being presented by a man whom my Dad said was the solution to all of life's problems. He took me with him that day. But that's all I've been told. We live on a farm with a few 100 Equations. That's what you are called unless you get on his bad side. Then he would just say that you were another one of his problems that needed solving. But he always knew that you weren't completely and utterly lost unless you began to float down the Canal Of Despair. We have always had stragglers at certain points but with enough life rings thrown in to support a trunked beast from the north, you could always be saved by his never ending charisma. He was so busy trying to keep everyone safe, he didn't notice his own daughter floating face down.

Around a year ago I spent another lonely afternoon talking to you. If you remember? Of course you can't. You're a machine! Anyway that afternoon I found a piece of paper lying underneath one of your rubbery circular things. It was a picture of my Dad and who I supposed was me. But something was strange about this too accurate picture. In the background was you, Monument. But you looked healthy and strong, not sickly and weak like you do now. So I cautiously picked it up and went and asked my Dad about it.

'Dad?'

'Yes?' He replied. 'What do you need, I'm very busy, *as always*.' He looked preoccupied. His eyes would not shift from the wooden desk in front of him. He uses the whole farm house as his personal office. Everyone else is forced to live in the barn. Even me. So I waited and

waited and waited. Until today. I think now is the time. But still I am unsure. That is why I am talking to you once again.

I stood up and slowly started back to the barn. As I reached the edge of the field however I paused. Somehow I knew that this picture would change everything but procrastinating never helps. As I made my way through the grass and back to the barn I noticed that some of the equations were staring at me, as if trying to warn me. Their faces screaming a thousand words without ever opening their mouths. I had been in the Canal for too long now, longer than anyone had been before. They all somehow knew of my prolonged drowning. And that now my final breaths were escaping me.

Dad was preparing his thoughts for the first of the daily meetings. I stood right in front of him. He didn't even acknowledge my existence. Some things never change. 'Dad?' I asked hesitantly.

'Xanthe!' He yelled out of pure shock. 'I am...'

'*Very busy*, yes I know Dad.'

'To ask your purpose?'

'I found something that I thought you needed to see.' I took the folded utopia desecrator out of my pocket and handed it to him. He tentatively took it from me. His hands were shaking. He took one glance at it and then one glance back at me. A drop of water could be seen sliding down his worn face. The roof leaks when it rains. It wasn't raining.

That day was the day he explained everything to me. I could see it all so clearly now. But he still couldn't. Something had to be done. The man who used to be my whole life took the stage. There of course was no microphone, he didn't need it. No-one was there to listen. Dad began to address his audience. I had to do it. Nothing else would break his delusion. Everything had to go. I silently but purposely knocked over one of the heated sticks of wax. The flames grew higher and higher. I ran. Smile spreading across my sorrowful face. It was over.

by Callum Jarvis (Year 9)

Inspiration: 'Givenchy' by Georgina Davy (image only)



