



Tomorrow's World 2010

Introduction

The eight stories that make up this collection were written by fifteen-year-old EFL students of Lycée Chateaubriand in Rome. They were first selected by their English teachers. Finally, four of these stories were singled out (the first three prizes and an honourable mention) by an external jury made up of specialists in their respective fields. Professor Elizabeth Geoghegan and Professor Carlos Dews, both teaching literature and creative writing at John Cabot University in Rome reviewed the works for their literary and creative merit while Mr. Mohamed Manssouri of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) examined the stories for their scientific merit.

The writing contest which resulted in this collection was organized jointly by the French Lycée Chateaubriand and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Over the past three years, it has been part of a larger project called *Tomorrow's World*, which also includes a debate tournament between older students from the French schools in Italy. In both cases, the students need to understand today's world to better imagine tomorrow's world. The whole project was awarded the European label for languages in 2008.

In the writing contest, the students were requested to write an ecological sci-fi short story of 600 to 1000 words, describing tomorrow's world and dealing with environmental issues such as water, food, or climate change. To achieve this goal, the students were trained by their English teachers but they were also given a lot of precious information and advice by their Geography and Science teachers. All in all, it has been a complete, fulfilling experience for both students and teachers.

Student Henry Farmer won first prize for his story "Battling on the Bay." Alessandro Riches second prize for "Project EP2," and Cyril Glerum third prize for "Answers." An Honorable Mention was awarded to Martina Policastro for "The Final Countdown." During the awards ceremony, the four award-winning students each read an extract from their prize-winning stories. The next four students were congratulated for their works: Maria Vittoria Bonanni for "Till the Last Breath," Félix Gagnon for "Paris: Eternal Blizzard," Jacopo Martini for "Faul Island," and Marcello Sternini for "The Purity Project."

According to the eminent jurors, the result is convincing. The stories are quite readable, being well written in good English. There may be a few errors here and there but few of these are of a distracting kind so that the reader can fully concentrate on the story and on the writing. Despite a few clumsy parts, one cannot help falling for our young writers' fresh style and insight. The pleasure that binds these writers to their readers amply justifies the whole enterprise.

June 17th 2010

Stéphane Ravera

Coordinator of the project

Lycée Chateaubriand de Rome

TILL THE LAST BREATH

By Maria Vittoria Bonanni

Lycée Chateaubriand de Rome

At first I didn't know what was happening, I was kissing passionately on the beach, then suddenly the earth shook terribly: waves started getting higher and higher, the wind blew harder and harder, blowing trees into the ocean. I looked up, and immediately wished I'd never done it, an opening was building up in the sky and through that opening you could see the sun, our star coming closer. I turned around fast enough to see my best friend being swallowed up by the crack in the sky. Then, the same way everything came, it vanished. But unluckily it was a short pause, just enough time for a guy to turn on his portable radio and understand what the hell was happening: a meteorite had hit the earth in the Indian ocean, it smashed in the central part of the world and enhanced greatly its gravity force, this reaction made it so that the sun was being attracted to our planet, and probably the moon was about to crash upon a little village on the outskirts of Sydney. He turned off the radio, as it turned out this guy was a geologist, so he told us that this enhancing of the earth's magnetism would make it spin with three times the normal rapidity. So that caused the wind and the aspiration of all those people into the sky. There was a moment of silence then everybody started running in every direction, screaming and yelling they're heads off.

Apparently there was no way to get out of town since the cars were all destroyed. Santa Monica wasn't nice all broken apart. Then it started pouring rain, and lightning and thunder. The geologist turned the radio back on, the president was giving a speech, he said we should stay in open spaces, as far away as possible from trees and the ocean. So basically 'em cowboys in Tennessee would be safe and sound...

So Charlie, the geologist, with his girlfriend Claire started an expedition towards inland, as far away from the deep blue sea as possible, at least before the crack in the sky came back...

As we went people told jokes, some were funny some weren't funny at all but at least they got the morale up a bit. So little by little people started forgetting about what had just happened to them, we helped each other. Obviously that was when it came back, but I knew what to do: we had to get down to the ground and put all we had on top of us, it was our only chance, luckily enough it

worked. This time it was longer so people started making up incredible possibilities as to what could happen to us, meanwhile I told everyone that we should get as far as possible until the next opening came upon us.

In the meanwhile I started talking to the geologist, he told me that there was a place where he could stop this cataclysm; but there was a problem: it was very high in the mountains, and not everybody could go with him so we agreed that first we should take everybody someplace safe, then we would organize a group that would go up in the mountains with the two of us. I noticed that he was coughing in a tissue paper, and each time he folded it very carefully and he put it in his back pocket. We walked silently next to one another.

He was a couple years older than me, had pale skin and long curly hair. His t-shirt was ripped in two or three parts but you could still see Harvard's stem on his chest.

It was getting darker so set camp for the night, just before sunset there was another of the openings, some guy started calling them flash forwards. I guessed he was a no-lifer in front of TV shows, but then everyone started calling them like that.

I woke up in the middle of the night; someone was sneaking through our stuff. I went behind him very slowly and then suddenly I jumped on him and threw him to the ground. It was Charlie, the geologist. I was so surprised I let go of him and took a couple of paces back. I expected him to say something as "I can explain everything" or "You don't understand", but no, he lowered his head started putting his pack down, very slowly, then suddenly jerked backwards and ran off. I ran after him but he was really fast, after a while I realized that we had gotten quite far from camp, so I decided to lie down next to a tree and start sleeping.

When I woke up the sun was really close, from behind me came a very bad smell, so I spun around and I saw Charlie hanging by the neck. He was dead.

In his back pocket I found a note that said "The earth, humanity, and all living creatures will find an end tomorrow around noon. It is our fault and we must pay the consequences of our pollution. Goodbye my friend, enjoy your last moments."

I checked the time: it was eleven twenty three. I ran back to camp, found my girlfriend, and kissed as never before. She looked at me with a curious expression on her face. I whispered in her hear: "Don't worry, it's gonna be alright."

Battling on the Bay

By Henry Farmer

Lycée Chateaubriand de Rome
First Prize

Today, in 2030, violence and corruption are essential to survive. Truth never wins. But that was a fact that my family didn't understand and that I learned the hard way. They fought against crime but they lost. My parents died when I was 15 years old. I found myself alone with my older brother. He was just as naive as they. That's why four days after the death of my parents, he went to visit the most powerful boss in the city.

Although I was born in Europe, when I was a baby we moved to San Francisco, in the center of the city atop of the highest hill. To the west we could see the wide Pacific Ocean and the top of the Golden Gate Bridge; to the east we could see all the skyscrapers going down to the majestic San Francisco Bay. We had an old Victorian house, right on Alamo Square, painted green with white and gold trim – one of the 'painted ladies' as these historic 19th century houses were called. My room was right in the attic, in an old turret, all round with a 360° view over the whole city!

My parents told us that our neighborhood was named after the great battle in 1836 when cowboys in Texas beat back a Mexican invasion. Now I felt that we had to conquer a new invader who wanted to take over our Alamo. Even though we lost everything, my parents never gave up. They believed in fairness, sharing and in honor. But they underestimated the enemy.

How did we get here?

It all started in 2015 when global warming really hit the world. Few people believed that it could strike so hard – but it did. One of the biggest problems was the growing lack of water – as the earth got hotter, water got scarcer. All around the globe deserts increased while there was less farmland to produce food. Governments, politicians and armies couldn't contain this situation as gangs and mercenary groups took control.

My parents were part of a campaign for peace which my father led. His role was key as he was in

charge of making sure that everyone had enough water. The mayor was our uncle, my mother's oldest brother. The city's water sources were controlled by him – all three main reservoirs. They were supplied by melting snows, rainwater and were covered by condensation domes. He invented these when he lived in Europe. In fact, his expertise as a water manager is what brought us to America.

By 2018, most of the lowlands around the city were slowly flooded and uninhabitable by the rising seas from the effects of global warming. For a while the people of San Francisco lived in harmony with the newly-arrived climate change refugees. But as time went by, global warming impacts increased along with the population while food and water kept decreasing. People kept pouring into San Francisco; there were recurring fights and soon the city was at war.

My father was attacked several times as warring gangs tried to get the keys to the reservoirs – water had become the new gold, controlling water supplies meant controlling the city. It became dangerous for us – we had to have guards at our house and at his office.

Even though my father did his best, he seemed to grow older before our eyes. His once jet black hair went gray and his towering frame seemed to slump. My brother and I were tall and strong, I blond and blue-eyed like our mother; my brother dark like father. We wanted to help them as much as possible. We went to town meetings and helped find food for the family and neighbors. We were also lucky to have a roof garden to grow fruit and vegetables, collecting rainwater and using mini-condensation vaults to water it. Sometimes we went fishing by the bay.

One day we were returning home with a prized halibut when we noticed that the front door was wide open and the guard wasn't there. I had a terrible feeling something horrible had happened. We walked in and could smell the terror. The guard was in the front hall, his throat slit clean from side to side. Frightened, we slowly continued through the living room up to father's study. It was completely upside down, all the computer equipment shattered, glass and metal everywhere. And there they were – our parents had been assassinated. They were still holding hands. We screamed, shocked, and ran out. Who had done this? And why? It didn't take long to figure it out. Our father's arch-enemy, Raoul Saber, had left his signature – a saber slashing a raincloud. We heard news over the city transmitters that the Saber warriors had taken over control of the reservoirs ... and the city.

But we knew what no one else did. When the attacks had begun, our father had told us that if anything should happen to him, we must immediately contact our uncle the mayor, the only person he trusted. And he showed us how to ultimately control the water supplies through a special computer system he had installed. And it was all in my room, up in the tower! He had rigged up total overriding access to the reservoirs there, under my bed, safe in the highest point.

We contacted our uncle. Four days later, he and my brother went to face down Saber; I was petrified they wouldn't return but Saber and his men were killed in an ambush. Meanwhile, I managed to regain control of all the water points. The city had been saved from a catastrophic situation and our parents' honor and vision saved. And still, to this day, no one knows that I handle all the distribution of San Francisco's water right from my bedroom!

The End

ANSWERS

By Cyril Glerum

Lycée Chateaubriand
Third Prize

Tom is frowning. This summer is especially freezing, and as a matter of fact, summers are, strangely, always cold. Tom is named Head of File Departure. It is so strange to be in a dead man's office, especially when this dead man had been his best friend, Ralph Collins.

A voice calls on the megaphone: "Mr Tom Stubbins is required at level 6 for the beginning of OPERATION SECRET FILES ", a message the electronic device repeats a few times before going silent again.

Within minutes he is on the place. He had never been to this part of the GSO-Global Security Organisation-, so he feels a bit disorientated at the beginning. After a while a robot hostess comes and brings him to Vault 9, the most secure vault of the GSO, where he has to begin his work.

Suddenly a microphone rushes through the air and stops inches from Tom's face:

"Voice requested for accessing the vault, please speak distinctly" says the cool female voice of the microphone. Taken aback, Tom mumbles an indistinct: "Eem" which is accepted.

The panel pushes aside to let him pass.

The first file contains a metal coloured envelop which reads *2022 p.A. (post apocalypse)* that he opens immediately. It says:

"President Curtis of the GSO,

Global Warming can be used. With our supremacy with technology and materials in the world, we can provide resources to everybody after the climatic disasters that will occur, but we must be ready for some terrible *disasters* in the Confederation of States. That's why no one will accuse us. We have some Uranium plants ready to blow all over the world and coal enterprises ready to sacrifice themselves in extracting much more coal before burning it.

We will never be accused of the melting of the Poles, and I know it's disgusting, but our Confederation needs a lot of CS Dinars these times, so you'll agree it'll be for a good cause...

But this must be made in our greatest good, that's why we'll get organized so that not many people will perish in the Confederation of States, that's why we had to eliminate Harry K. Wesley

and his compromising theories about global warming.

These “horrificing” events will take place exactly on the 21/12/2022, ten years after the date of the *Apocalypse*, as everybody will have forgotten, it will be a major surprise for everyone.”

Goodbye President,

Mike Halleluiaah, GSO advisor

Tom feels so sick that he does not open the other files. After a few seconds, he bursts into tears. All of a sudden he hears voices speaking indistinctly claiming for answers...The audience cheers and applauds Ralph Collins who was clearing his throat ...

“Thanks to the ideas of Tom Stubbins, we now know how to heal what has been given to us and mistreated by those who did not have a heart. Today, we are March the 3rd 2022 A.C. which means that we have time to cure our Mother Earth. Let’s be the heroes, the average citizens, the simple mortals, the women, the men and the kids who will rebuild a balance between nature and technology. Together, we’ll write another constitution, giving new rights and duties, like the duty to help other countries, to help your neighbour, the duty to participate to the rebuilding of this world, but also the right to be together, the right to live together.

With the help of Mr Stephens accurate researches on genetics, we now know that it is possible to recreate the species that had been extinguished, and with it, new sorts of animals that had once disappeared like the Dodo, exterminated by colonialists.

Also, after 3 years of studies on magnetic fields, we have created a system that allows to prevent earthquakes, lowering their magnitude and their possible damages, human damages as well as animal and materials damages.

As we all know, in 2010 an alarming fact came from a lab in Africa, located in Accra, the capital of Ghana. More than 1 billion people do not have access to sane water, and some said, if we were 100 in the world, 22 of us would lack primary food (22%), 876 million adults are analphabetic, 448 million kids suffer over weight and malnutrition problems and finally, 30 000 kids die each day because of diseases that could have been avoided.

That’s why in a private scientist laboratory, some people found with the help of the UNO specialists that a protein, mixed up with the sun radiations and genetically modified atoms, could artificially recreate these primary resources, firstly water and then bread and so on.

In fact, one of these machines will be placed in each village that needs it, all paid by the UNO.

Secondly, the GEDGPO (the lab which found the antidote against AIDS) has revealed to us that they had found and elaborated a mixture that was capable of annihilating every single bacteria or disease existing on this planet.

Thirdly, we created a special education squad (SES) active in every developing country, such as Southern Africa and all Asia, providing education to underserved kids in difficult areas.

Another problem is settled. In Tibet, some scientists found a plant capable of destroying CO2 particles that are in excess and to restore a balance in the environment (the ozone hole will be avoided) and I must say they are quite pretty.

Then a new ecological source has been found. In some places, a man added some particles of aluminium and steel to his solar panels. The result was that he had a 200% increase in electricity.

Our Light Researchers found that the moonlight could be used as a source of illumination. As the sun illuminates the moon it would give it a white light exploited for the street lights.

Well, I think this is all, thanks for listening!”

As the audience stands up and frantically applauds, Ralph Collins makes his way back to his seat

next to his friend Tom and with a twinkle in his eye:
“Hey, enjoyed your little nap? Had any bad dream?”

Paris: Eternal Blizzard

By Félix Gagnon

Lycée Chateaubriand

Rod woke up in bad shape. He didn't have a very good night. Well, any of the nights he had been through weren't really "good", he thought. Since It was there, no one in this part of the globe could really do anything without watching out. Rod jumped out of his floating bed and, as always, prepared himself to get out of his house. His home wasn't huge, but still, he was comfortable in it. It was made of metal and the color was grayish. It had two floors, but there were no windows. He couldn't let It come in. This rule had been established by the Confederation when they noticed that It could come from anywhere, even a small hole. The only possible hole in his house was the door, which was solidly closed. He took a shower, brushed his teeth, and then, he started dressing up. When he was finished with the basic wears, he put his large coat, took his scarf, put on his helmet, his glasses, and his gloves. Finally, he took his flashlight and his gun. He was ready. He pressed the button on the side of the door, inserted the code and got into the "halfway" room. The door to his home closed behind him, so It couldn't get it in, and then the door in front of him opened, which gave access to the world outside. Now, It was there. He stepped out of his house and it was white everywhere. The blizzard, the snow, the cold. It had been like this now for almost seventeen years. It: the eternal snow storm, the bitter cold. Because of the human pollution and the careless attitude of the population, the world had fallen in this nightmare. The first victims were the Americans. Then, it had expanded on the entire world. He ran to his snowmobile and started it. He headed to his job. With the constant blizzard, you couldn't see anything. You had to be careful in Paris, nowadays, with this temperature. Like if the rebellion wasn't enough. Fortunately, he was protected by the Confederation. Being a functionary of the URW (United Regions of the World), he had access to full protection by the special URW's corps. He worked for the FEPO (Food and Environment Protection Organization), an organ of the URW. He arrived to work and entered his building. The FEPO building had six floors and at least two thousand people worked there. He worked on the fourth floor, in the section B4. He took the flying shuttle and got to his floor. He walked into his section and undressed. He saw Albert, his boss, and waved at him. Albert was French, from Lyon. He spoke bad English.

"-Bonjour, Rod, said Albert.

-Good morning, captain.

-So, how are you today? Because if you're doing well, I can assure you I'll find something for you to do today.

-I'm doing pretty good, thank you. What do you have for me?

-Well, we lost a convoy of nuts, and you know how nuts are valuable with this cold. They help your bones to be reinforced.

-Where did we lose it?

-Near Notre-Dame de Paris.

-On the Island?

-Yes.

-I'm on it.

-Okay.''

Rod, a few seconds later, was in the FEPO's army truck. It was a big armored vehicle. Its wheels were resistant enough to endure the snow, and its headlamps illuminated really far.

He was with another FEPO agent, Lars, a Norwegian. He was used to cold weather, so he was never cold, even when the temperature went down to -40 °C. The first time he noticed it, Rod was astonished. Now, a bit less. In the truck, Rod thought of his wife. She had died seventeen years ago. Since then, the Confederation had declared that marriage, engagement and children were forbidden. It was all digital now. They got to the island twenty minutes later. The river had frozen years ago, and the idea of breaking through the ice of the Seine had vanished. Still, some people tried. Often, the ones he caught doing it were the Unfortunates. Rod understood them. They were so desperate. The Unfortunates were the ones who, when, seventeen years ago, the eternal snow had struck on Eastern Europe, couldn't do anything to save themselves from the cold, for many reasons. The Confederation had declared they could not be helped, and only people like Rod or Lars could be helped. Why? Rod never knew. Money maybe. Or brain. They crossed the bridge and got to the island. Both of them jumped out of the truck and grabbed their guns. They started looking for the lost convoy. Suddenly, Rod saw something moving near the huge church of Notre-Dame de Paris. He told Lars and they rushed to the entry of the holy monument. The church had been abandoned a long time ago, and was no longer used as a sanctuary. The door had been stoned, so they got in. Rod was astonished: what they told was true. The church had been completely ruined, but, anyway, it was impressive. The distance between the ceiling and the ground was incredibly big. The temperature was cold and Rod started having problems to breathe. They ran to the altar, but they found nothing. They searched all of the church, but found nothing. They even checked the crypts, but nothing. Later, Rod thought of something: the roof! They had forgotten to check the roof! Quickly, they climbed on the roof, by the stairs near the door. When they got to the roof, what they couldn't believe what they were seeing. The Unfortunates, those creatures, were there. They had used the last convoy to create a huge machine: cables connected, hundreds of joysticks and thousands of push-buttons. When they saw Rod and Lars they activated the strange machine. A bothering noise started coming from the machine, and on all the machine's screens you could see numbers getting smaller every second: 53, 52, 51... They had one minute before... Before what? They didn't know. He started shooting, but he was so nervous he couldn't understand or see anything. The last thing he saw was the Eiffel tower, over there, in the blizzard. Then, the explosion.

Rod woke up in a hospital. He saw something that looked like a doctor... He was laughing. Strange. You didn't really laugh, these days. The doctor said something:

''-Thanks Rod, thanks!

-What?

-You saved us all! Remember that machine? Lars told us everything. It seems like you pushed a button when it was going to explode, and it produced a heat wave instead of huge bomb. The world is no longer frozen. Thanks, Rod!''

He looked at the window, and, for the first time in seventeen years, he saw the sun, in the blue sky.

Faul Island

By Jacopo Martini

Lycée Chateaubriand de Rome

North pole, 2035, Colonel Tom Fitzgerald, was sent by the United States of America Navy, in a mission to monitor the health conditions of white bears in the North Pole. It was the widest colony on planet earth.

This is Colonel Fitzgerald's mission report:

January 9th 2035, 5:34 AM

We are approaching, Faul Island. The sky is grey; outside temperature is 28°F. Doctor Robert has already started collecting ice samples, in order to estimate melting time. Major Tom, the captain, says we will arrive under normal conditions, on Faul Island in nearly 1 hour and 50 minutes.

January 9th 2035, 7:20 AM

Faul island in sight. It is covered by a white mist. Wind: from N to S, 50m/h. The island looks different from the satellite views that were collected by the Environment State Department. In fact we have all noticed that Faul Island is no longer attached by the ice cap to main land. The island is moving. Allyson Rita, the representative of "WWF", evaluates that the ice melting process has started 30 years earlier than due. This fact is linked to the acceleration of global warming.

January 9th 2035, 8:12 AM.

We have just landed on Faul Island. We haven't spotted any bear yet.

January 9th 2035, 8:42 AM.

We have been walking for 30 minutes, we can now see a clan of approximately 500 white bears. Michael Thompson, a Discovery Channel reporter, suggests 300 of those are males, 150 female and 50 babies. They seem hungry.

Miss Rita, is approaching the bears.

January 9th 2035, 8:56 AM.

Something terrible has happened: Miss Rita has gone too far, she was eaten by a bear. We have tried all our best to save her life, no way.

January 9th 2035, 10:08 AM.

I have called the Polar Mission Ground Control, in Phoenix, AZ. I have informed them of the above. They said satellite pictures show that the island has moved in 12 days, 189 miles from the coast line. I have also informed them of the fact that the Island is moving towards South, at a speed of 223m/day. This abnormal process has never been recorded before. But the most worrying part is the constant increasing speed of the island.

January 12th 2035, 13:40 AM.

We have been watching the bears for about 3 days, and we have noticed that they are slowly gathering up, on the south part of the island. We have lost our boat, which was initially attached to the island. Michael Thompson says the white bears are getting hungrier, because of the continuous speed of the island the bears can no longer dive, get food and hop back on the island.

January 13th 2035, 10:57 AM.

The Polar Mission Ground Control has just informed me that Faul Island is heading towards Europe.

CHAPTER 2:

France, 2035, Father McEnzie, the parish of Mont Saint Michel's church.

Every morning Father McEnzie before the holy mass, used to climb up to the highest tower of Mont Saint Michel. From up there he would praise the beauty of nature, the masterpiece of God. But that day, while looking at the skyline, something drew his attention, it was nothing but a little spot, he was certain he had never seen it before. But that spot was getting bigger and bigger. It couldn't have been a boat, the Father knew that boats didn't approach the Mont Saint Michel. What was it? Father McEnzie had noticed some strange shapes on this odd surface. Hard to believe those were white bears on what seemed to be a moving island. It was getting closer and closer. The Father stunned by this bizarre situation, at first, remained silent. Then decided to warn his fellow citizens. He ran up the spiral staircase in order to reach the bells. Once there he pulled on the rope with strength, but looking down he noticed that the tourists and the local population seemed unconcerned about the warning he was sending them. He had to do something! With no hesitation, he went down the stairs, shouting: "Mes Freres, mes Freres! Danger"

It was too late, death came suddenly. At the end of the staircase, Father McEnzie, found himself in front of a starving white bear. The bear was staring at him, with his glowing eyes, and immediately jumped on the Father, bringing him down to the floor, and eating him alive.

Believe it or not, the bears were invading the Mont Saint Michel.

CHAPTER 3:

Washington D.C., February the fourth 2035. The White House. The President of the United States of America, John B. W. Bush, delivers a speech at the state of the Union.

"Fellow citizens, humanity needs our help. We are facing an ultimate challenge. You have all been informed of the landing of Faul Island on The Mont Saint Michel, in France. This problem is due to global warming. This is not a problem that can be solved by a single person, no this problem needs the cooperation of all nations.

We have seen our French friends and tourists left stunned and desperate searching for loved ones, and looking for meaning in a tragedy that seems so blind and random. But this tragedy is not random. We have created this disaster with our own hands.

These days of sorrow and outrage have also been marked by acts of courage. Coast Guard and

other personnel have rescued tens of thousands of people from the enraged animals.

What can America do to help our European friends and to reduce Global Warming? Well you American citizens, you can start by bringing down electric consumption. And to reduce any kind of energy waste. Otherwise the white bear habitat must be reconstructed artificially.

In the task of recovery, some of the hardest work is still ahead and it will require the creative skill and generosity of a united country and a united world.

We will be sending rescue troops to France as well as Special Teams in order to gather up the wild animals and to dispatch them back to their normal habitat.

Thank you, and may God bless America."

The whit bears ended up being moved back to the north pole. The citizens all around the world took in consideration what the American president had said and had taken the problem seriously.

The Final Countdown

By Martina Policastro

Lycée Chateaubriand
Honourable Mention

30... A loud voice was heard in the room announcing the start of the countdown. The machines in the engine room did not stop their clickety-clack noise.

29... Emmanuel glanced the screens. An enormous rocket was on the screen. Everything seemed so peaceful. But Emmanuel knew that it wasn't so quiet inside the rocket.

28... Screams, tears, a permanent hubbub reigned in the leading-edge rocket. Some people were searching for a place. Others were comforting their families.

27... Emmanuel smiled thinking that he would save this people's life.

26... Since this virus had infiltrated in the ground atmosphere, crossing the almost totally damaged ozone layer without any problems, life on the blue planet was impossible.

25... They had tried everything, in vain. All this technology, all this progress was useless. There were robots serving humans, there were flying cars, man could go to the Moon for holidays. But it was impossible to destroy this virus.

24... It was the panic all round. What are we going to become? What are we going to do? We must leave! And the renowned scientists of what remained of the Earth met to build this shuttle.

23... All their hopes laid in this group. They were the only ones who could save them. A rocket capable of bringing them away from the Earth, to start from scratch on a new planet.

22... It had taken several years to get there with experiments. Some months before, in 3278, it had been announced that the rocket was ready.

21... But it took more than a year to get organized. And then, finally, men could get into the rocket. There was a place for everybody. Except for one.

20... Somebody had to stay behind to trigger the space shuttle. Somebody had to verify that everything was in order during the departure. Somebody had to sacrifice himself for the world's sake.

19... Nobody wanted to stay. Emmanuel volunteered. He didn't have a family any longer. They were all dead because of this virus. He didn't want a new life without them.

18... And so a party was organized to thank this young man. A hero! The rocket was named after him.

17... Emmanuel got up and took a bottle of Kuryp, his favorite drink. A house had been built for him, for its next life on the Earth.

16... But Emmanuel had decided otherwise. He would have ended his life a few hours after the departure of the rocket. He wouldn't have been able to live alone on this big planet.

15... He sat down and observed the buttons. There were probably around a hundred and he would have liked to play with them. But he didn't do that. He had been explained that he should not touch anything.

14... Apart from the big red button, which he was supposed to press when the countdown would end.

13... He spun round on his chair just like when he was a child. And then he counted. He counted at the same time as the countdown.

12... He stopped when he heard a deaf noise. He looked on the right, on the left. Nothing. He perceived that a pen had fallen on the ground. And he cooled down.

11... Few moments were left, and then he should have pressed the button. Emmanuel had promised to himself that he would turn music on very loud and that he would join his family on the notes of a rhythmical music.

10 ... He threw a glance on the screen which showed the inside of the rocket. Everything was very quiet. Everybody sat in their place. Even the youngest ones.

9... He was easily able to read the countdown on the lips of these people, that he didn't know.

8... He heard another deaf noise. He got up and looked around him. This time it wasn't a pen. He was sure.

7... Emmanuel was alone. Who made this noise? Or what? Emmanuel verified screens. Everything was well.

6... His heart beat hardly. And its rhythm kept accelerating. He was the only human being on the whole planet. Was this a dream, or a hallucination?

5... He sat down again when the noise stopped. And he thought that his brain had just played a bad trick on him.

4... Smiles displayed little by little on the face of the people in the rocket. They were all holding hands. No discrimination nor racism. They were going to save themselves.

3... The door behind Emmanuel opened suddenly.

2... An arm squeezed up around his throat. Metal. Emmanuel caught the arm and tried to loosen from what was preventing him from breathing. He had to save all these people who counted on him. His hand got closer to the red button.

1... A strong hand blocked him and twisted his wrist. And a robot approached the control panel. It was in front of the other button. The black one. The one not to be touched. The one which would have blown the rocket up.

0... The robot's hand fell on the black button. Emmanuel shouted with the little strength remaining. His eyes riveted on the screens. All he could see was an enormous explosion. Tears flowed on his face while one of the robots pierced his stomach. He fell on the ground and the last thing which he saw was a band of robots screaming : < < finally we have got rid of these tyrants! > >. Emmanuel closed his eyes and never re-opened them.

VII

PROJECT EP2

By Alessandro Riches

Lycée Chateaubriand
Second Prize

14th of November, 2116: Yesterday I found this old diary in the basement of an abandoned house, near San Francisco, and starting from today, I'm going to write what's happening in the world.

I don't know why, maybe I'm losing my time, but if someone in the future will ever find this book, I would like him to go through it and read it.

So here I start... Nowadays there are very big problems with pollution and everybody is wearing a mask because the air is unbreathable. NASA estimates that the atmosphere will be completely destroyed in less than 20 years because of global warming. Without atmosphere, the temperatures will be too high and no one will be able to survive.

Last night I overheard my father, who was talking to someone about a secret project which could save humanity called EP2 (Emergency Protocol 2).

I heard that EP2 consists in producing a lot of special spacecrafts but I was not able to listen until the end of the conversation, but his words were well impressed into my mind.

23rd of November, 2125, 9 years later:

I understand everything now about EP2!

I don't have much time to go through the whole project, but here is a brief description:

The world's population would live on spacecrafts, which would be refueled inflight by huge tankers, until NASA specialists discovered another planet where to live.

The pilots, off course, would need to fly at very high speeds, keeping the spacecrafts in the dark, in order to avoid solar reflection, which would destroy them. The autonomy of the spacecrafts and the tankers would not exceed six months, non-stop flying.

The big question mark would be: What if NASA wasn't able to find a suitable planet for humanity within the six months of the spacecrafts autonomy?

4th of July, 2136: Breathing is becoming extremely difficult

even with masks.

30th of July, 2136: Average temperature exceeds 42 °C, 107, 6 °F. Unbearable !

5th of August, 2136: Some animals like cows and horses started dying in the fields.

10th of August, 2136: The US President calls for an extraordinary meeting in New York, at the United Nations headquarters and finally discloses EP2 project to all the nations' leaders. He tells the leaders of all the nations that an exceptional economic growth in the US, allowed the country to build enough spacecrafts to accommodate the whole humanity, and therefore tells them that a sufficient number of spacecrafts would be sent to each nation.

20th of August, 2136: Following to the initiatives of the US President, each nation is provided with the spacecrafts, with pilots on stand-by.

3rd of September, 2136: NASA orders for simultaneous take off of all the spacecrafts to take place on the 6th of September at 02.00GMT (Greenwich Mean Time)

5th of September, 2136, 10 hours before takeoff:

I feel sad that I'll leave this beautiful and once hospitable planet forever and I can hardly hold my tears.

7 hours before takeoff: I go around my house and my garden for the last time.

6 hours before takeoff: A truck comes to pick up my horse and my dog in order to transfer them on the special spacecrafts, which will accommodate all the animals which have survived the high temperatures.

5 hours before takeoff: Another truck comes to pick up a selection of plants and flowers, which will be also carried on spacecrafts, together with sufficient quantities of water.

4 hours before takeoff: A bus comes to pick me up. I'm only allowed one piece of baggage.

3 hours before takeoff: The bus arrives on the space field where thousands of shiny and enormous spacecrafts are waiting for us. Embarkation starts in an orderly way as population had been alerted in time.

For the first time in the recent history of humanity, no passports are needed and no customs controls are made.

3 hours before takeoff: In the rest of the world embarkation takes place as well.

1 hour before takeoff: Drinks are served on board together with a light snack.

20 minutes before takeoff: A simultaneous message of the US president is delivered to all the US population onboard the spacecrafts and the other nation's leaders do the same.

15 minutes before takeoff: Spacecrafts gates are locked and secured.

10 minutes before takeoff: Each Captain asks the passengers to fasten the seat belts and wishes

good luck to all humanity.

5 minutes before takeoff: The ten engines of each spacecrafts, all over the world are started at the same time.

30 seconds before takeoff: A huge engine noise is heard in each space field, as gradually all spacecrafts align themselves on the huge runways for takeoff.

10 seconds before takeoff: The whole humanity is onboard the spacecrafts praying in their respective religions, a common prayer for the salvation of mankind.

02.00GMT: The whole planet earth trembles by the vibrations caused by the simultaneous take off of over 200.000 spacecrafts and 50.000 tankers.

2 minutes after takeoff: Flying altitude: 4.000ft. Passengers sitting near the windows give a last glance at their beloved planet.

10 minutes after takeoff: Planet Earth is not visible anymore, and there is no way to look or go backwards.

Humanity then realizes, that apart from the small suitcase they took onboard, they have nothing else left.

Suddenly however, every single person onboard the spacecrafts understands that there is one more precious, invaluable, but not tangible thing left to them: Hope.

Tom Riches

The Purity Project

By Marcello Sternini

Lycée Chateaubriand de Rome

My name is Robert Neville and I am a scientist. I work for a company known worldwide: the Aesyr Corporation. My job is to prevent any type of virus and create a cure before it spreads. We have always found a cure for all types of viruses, we have never failed. Everything was going for the better, no illness or viruses in circulation, until one day we discovered that we had failed in an attempt to kill a virus known as VEF. We tried to find a cure as soon as possible but the virus was already widespread: many people were infected, other hid themselves in their own homes, unfortunately there was nothing to do.

Today is the 2157. There is still a panic in the whole town maybe throughout America. I'm afraid to leave the company's building, my house has already been occupied by delinquents. Here I am comfortable, we have food, warm and comfortable beds, and we can meanwhile try to find a solution. I leave the laboratory only at night to collect and analyze the infected items such as dead animals, food, plants etc ... In town there is a war, people kill for some food and a safe place to stay. I've collected some samples in the sewers but I'm waiting for the analysis. 14 March 2157: "I am doctor Robert Neville. I've finally received the long awaited analysis. Apparently the dead rat I picked up in sewers has in the blood a bluish serum, immune to the virus, which I've called Triptocaine. It's possible that it arises from a mutation of bacteria present in sewage. I injected that serum in the blood of a rat, infected from five days. Now we can only wait and hope". The next day I noticed that while other rats seemed to have become aggressive, only one seemed calm. I analyzed it and I was shocked by the results. The virus was gone. Then I took the recorder. 15 March 2157: "I am Dr. Robert Neville. The subject 5004 does not seem to want to do no harm. The Triptocaine that I injected the other day has paid off, the virus VEF has disappeared. We have found the cure!". I exposed then the discovery to the Director and the chief scientist in order to try to give the cure to the survivors but they were scared to face infected people. 21 March 2157: "Today I have decided to leave the company's building and give the cure to Mr. Charles Kramer, a man who is hosting a lot of people in his villa. Seems to have a laboratory and I intend to go there and produce large amounts of Triptocaine. He will then distribute the cure to people." As soon as I found myself outside I fell on my knees and wept. The city was completely destroyed. There were no trees, there was no vegetation. The blue sky was no longer as before. I couldn't go back and then went to the South. While I was walking a person came up to me and when he approached

I shouted for fear. He looked like a monster. I asked him what it was. He said his name was Gob. Gob asked me who I was and what I was doing there. I said I had found a cure to save our breed. He looked at me bewildered and asked me to follow him. After three hours of walking we reached a kind of neighborhood built with the remains of the pre-existing city. Gob introduced me to the Sheriff of the city named Megaton. I told him I wanted to reach M. Kramer's villa, but he said that it had been reduced in ashes by bands of criminals. I was shocked, I told him about the cure but he said the problem was in the water. He told me I could immunize the Washington residents but the water would remain contaminated. I therefore understood the reason of the appearance of Gob. His face was devoured and he was losing his skin. The Sheriff informed me that some scientists in the Lincoln Memorial had built a machine capable of purifying water. I asked him how I could reach it. He said it was surrounded by contaminated water and the only entrance was the Presidential Underground.

I entered the subway at night. There was a horrible stench of corpse and each way out was blocked by rubble. I saw the entrance of the Presidential Underground and ran towards it. . After a tortuous path I arrived at Presidential subway car. I put it in motion and reached the Lincoln Memorial. I abandoned the train and headed toward it. I was finally at the door that led to the Purity Project Room but it was sealed. Next to it there was a pipe and I decided to enter. Crawling inside the pipe I finally arrived in the Room of the Purity Project. I immediately tried to turn the machine on but I found that it was necessary to enter a code. I entered one at random but it was wrong and caused the release of a poisonous gas. I had a little time left and entered, as a code, 1809, Lincoln's birthday year. The machine switched on but I fell to the ground unconscious.

I woke up in the bedroom of the Sheriff of Megaton. Luckily Gob had followed me surreptitiously and had brought me back. I asked him about the cause of the virus. He told me that during the war between Americans and Chinese at Anchorage, Alaska, the Chinese had an atomic weapon they were willing to use. During a secret mission, Americans had tried to seize of the weapon. But something went wrong and the Chinese used it. The chemical which fueled the weapon was released in water. The story made me sad but I was happy to have solved everything. I looked out the window, there was heavy rain but at least it was clean rain.