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The Bubble

By: Kyla Berman

I am sitting here, December 2, 2100 on one of the many scorching metal bleacher steps, looking out at the empty track. Its artificial red rubber worn away from many years. The arrows and lines all faded to a dole sort of dreary color. The tulle fog sitting perfectly over the turf field, like the leftover milk from your cereal at the bottom of your bowl. I turn the air conditioning up and feel the cold air wash over my face. I breathe a sigh of satisfaction.

The stadium is dead silently and dead empty. I hear my own heartbeat and feel the blood pumping through my veins. The only sound, the clack clack clack of my fingers on the keyboard slowly typing, echoing. The sounds so faint and if it wasn't for the fact I didn't have enough money to buy a new computer so I had my mom's old one I don't think you would have been able to hear it, the keys were so old.

It's a shame, the hundred thousands of dollars spent on the nice field all a waste. People would much rather play the virtual reality version or sports, or watch the latest shows while scrolling through their phone. No one ever runs. It's illegal. "Do not leave your hovercraft in any circumstance" was the number one rule. Why would you? The only time I have ever gotten off was when they had to update it. Outside of the protective bubble of the hovercraft the air was scorching hot and is increasingly getting hotter. I had thought a lot about it. Overall I came to

the conclusion that humans were just too lazy to deal with global warming. So instead we just kept making inventions to make life easier and ignoring the fact that we are killing the earth. Oh well, no one really cares no one wants to go through all the effort of trying to fix the problems we caused.

People you used to walk, even run. I've seen old pictures of races, a lot of people running to a certain line. It seemed pointless, but the track looked inviting in a way. A pathway leading nowhere. An endless loop. I need to think less, that's what my teachers always told me. "Stop questioning everything it's annoying" is what my mom told me. I stopped talking when I was seven, no one even listens anyways. I am always labeled as the odd child. The teachers told my mother I was too quiet and needed more friends. She was always disappointed, she wanted me to fit in. I think it was because she never did and she was reminded of it every day by the long thin scars running down her face. She never talks about them but I overheard her say something about them once.

I slowly stood and rolled down to the track. I bent down almost as if I could touch the track but of course, the extra protective hard glass-plastic bubble protecting me from the world stopped me. The bubble was so clear that sometimes you almost forgot about it. I tried to wedge my pale skinny fingers through the filter that took the pollution out of the air. Crack. The filter pushed out of place. Panic filled my body. The hot air filled the bubble beads of sweat dripped down my face and neck. The alarm was blaring. I couldn't think.

I climbed out the small hole of my now disabled hovercraft. All I wanted to do is escape the loud piercing alarm. My head was throbbing. I was standing on

the track. I looked down the white painted line. I wanted to walk it, I needed to. I knew how to walk of course from the training everyone took when they were one. My stick like pale legs wobbled and I held my arms out for balance. I picked up my head and came to my senses. The air burned in my lungs the fog was more of smog than fog. I looked down the white line, guiding me. I started to run.

My heart pounded through my whole body. My eyes stung from the toxic air. I lost my balance. My knee shredded against the polyurethane track. The pain was something I had never experienced before. No words could describe it. I couldn't give in. Only did it really sting once I had started running again. The blood dripped down my shin making lines across my leg as I ran. I wiped the tears in my eyes away. I heard the siren of the police coming, the alarm of the hovercraft most have notified them. The siren got louder.

The white line was a blur. My lungs burned. I gasped for air but couldn't suck in enough. I choked. I was drowning. My head kept throbbing. I shake unstable, drenched in sweat. I fell past the line marking my one lap. The world spun, faces looked down at me, the sirens blared, and everything went quiet.

My eyes fluttered open. The instant smell of hand sanitizer and bleach filled my nose. I was in a big bubble room, the hospital. Everything rushed back to me in an instant. It still felt as though needles were piercing through my head. I heard a familiar voice. My mother rolled through the door on her hovercraft. The airtight door made a loud whoosh as it sealed again.

"Annabelle! What the hell!?" my mom screeches a look of distaste on her face.

“I’m...I’m sorry,” I whisper my voice shaky.

“You have a rock for a brain. You have always been odd but. But THIS?!” the disappointment and rage clear in her voice.

“I didn’t mean...” I start but Mother cuts me off.

“Stop. Don’t waste your breath,” she snaps at me.

She turns, glances at the nurse and nods. I blink the nurse is standing over me the needle glimmering in the light.

* * *

Bright. So bright. I squint against the sun. I am laying in a meadow. My mom leans over me.

“Ah, honey you’re awake, come join the picnic.”

I sit up. There bees and butterflies all around the vibrant flowers. People are scattered across the meadow sitting on patched blankets eating. A small river flows through the meadow and kids are splashing in the water. The sound of laughter fills my ears. The sky is blue speckled with white cumulus clouds. The air smells of sweet perform. A slight wind blows rustling the grass. My mom offers me her hand.

“Come.”

I take it.

* * *

“I think the virtual reality is really helping her,” the nurse says glancing down at Annabelle’s flushed face.

“..Yeah, I just hope it keeps her alive.”