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## Feeding the Contrasting World

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# Feeding the Contrasting World

by Phoenix Culbertson

In *Feed*, M. T. Anderson conveys emotions and imagery exceedingly well, reflecting the magical moments in life people can experience. Anderson tells a story full of impactful moments in a strange yet familiar world. The world of *Feed* is flawed, and the characters aren't much better. Despite the world's flaws, besides the cruelty and neglectfulness of the characters, there are hidden gems, beautiful, magical shards of this life where beauty blossoms into a grand wondrous experience.

One way Anderson makes scenes so impactful is how these moments contrast with the rest of the passive, vacant, dystopian world in the novel. It mirrors how it can feel living in our world. Life can feel stale, or uninspiring. You can feel lost, but you can also find those moments in life where you feel the catalyst of individuality and see the world through a different lens, life with a new palette. These moments reveal concepts about the characters and our world. The main contrast is between the normal displeasing and cruel part of their world and the unexpected glorifying beauty of it.

Anderson introduces us to the more utopian, intimate relationship sparking between our two main characters, Titus and Violet. *The Garden* opens up with the protagonists in a hospital where Violet leaves the group to talk to a doctor. Titus analyzes the group, realizing how lonely he is without Violet and how some new relationships are blossoming within his circle. Then Violet returns, clearly troubled. Concerned for his friend, Titus asks Violet what's troubling her, and she responds by telling him she wants to show him something. They both then escape the group and walk a ways through some travel tubes until Violet finds what she wanted to show Titus.

"She took me up to a huge window. We stood in front of it. outside the window, there had been a garden, like, I guess you could call it a courtyard or terrarium? but a long time ago the glass ceiling over the terrarium had cracked, and so everything was dead, and there was moondust all over everything out there. Everything was Gray. also, something was leaking air and heat out in the garden, lots of waste air, and the air was rocketing off into space through the hole, so all of the Dead vines in the garden was standing straight up, slapping back and forth, pulled toward the crack in the ceiling where we could see the stars. " whoa, " I said. " isn't it beautiful ?" It's like. . ., " I said. "It's like a squid in love with the sky."(61)

It's in this moment when Titus and Violet truly connect; she tells him, "You're the only one of them that uses metaphor." It's mesmerizing for Titus and the reader. His use of metaphor sets

him apart from the rest of his friends; it's what makes him special, at least to Violet. Either his friends' feeds don't allow them to use metaphor, or they're too stupid to create them. Either way, it's what makes Titus remarkable in such a dread filled world.

It's these moments, when despite the cracked terrarium, despite the dead vines and dehydrated flora, despite the shattered glass, despite our own guilt and selfishness, we can see the squid in love with the sky. We can see those beautiful stars, with every shimmer holding another dream waiting to happen; we can still see the beauty encapsulating us in a moment in time. Yes, only a small moment, but a moment that is truly beautiful.

Here's another instrument of this narrative: "She was staring at me, and I was staring at her, and I moved towards her, and we kissed. The Vines beat against each other out in the gray, Dead garden, they were all writhing against the spine of the Milky Way on its edge, and for the first time, I feel her spine, too, each knuckle of it, with my fingers, or the air leaked and the plants whacked each other near the silent stars." (62). We all seek to be someone to someone. Sometimes all it takes is a small moment with someone you love to cut the blinds from your eyes and reveal the true unexpected beauty of the world which we've been so starved of. Even though you may be in a dead garden, with little life, you've just gotta hold on to the life you've got and the people you choose to experience it with.

Violet dies at the end of Feed. Anderson uses the percentages of the Feed activity to describe her decline. One chapter is titled 87.1, showing how as the feed dies, slowly Violet does as well. The characters are alive with the feed. The feed shows them what they want to see; it shows them an escape, a world of wonder, infinite possibilities and fun. But Violet didn't fall for this.

She was the least affected by the feed, the most down to earth because she had the feed installed later than the rest of the kids, and she constantly made an effort to appreciate things that were real, like Titus. In the book, the characters have the Feed to escape the world, to try and cover it up with things that don't matter, just to keep themselves distracted because of fear. Despite all that, Anderson creates these beautiful hidden gems, these moments which make it worth reading. It's beautiful because we get to share its existence, experience the beauty it brings to such a dark dystopian world. Life's not perfect. We make mistakes, we lose, and we deal with the consequences of our actions. Feed powerfully reflects a part of humanity which isn't talked about enough, and that is our ability and choice to ignore how messed up the world is and occupy our minds with something else. Try and forget about the struggle until we stop caring. In the book, the characters have the Feed to escape the world, to try and cover it up with things that don't matter, just to keep themselves distracted because they're scared. It reflects us in the real world so perfectly, and that's what makes the book such a powerful and worthwhile read