

Hello Ms. Hamilton's English 10 Students,

First, I hope that you are all staying safe and staying home whenever possible. Just like you, I have been at home with my boyfriend, John, and my two cats, Sweet Pea and Mudge. They are all really great company. With all of my spare time I have been reading, writing short stories, watching movies, crafting, and exercising, but I have to say, quarantine is tough. I miss being your teacher. I miss being at Central every day. I miss creating lessons and guiding you through the learning process. I miss all of you. I can't wait to see you again, and hope that can happen soon.

I also hope that you are keeping your minds and bodies active. To aid in that process, I have created an extension activity for you. Below this letter you will find a Dystopian Fiction Unit. I have included an article and three amazing short stories for you to read, as well as activities that will challenge you academically, creatively, and personally. I LOVE dystopian fiction, and I'm really grateful to have this opportunity to share some great work with all of you.

Remember, these assignments are not mandatory, but I would really like for you to give them a try. Read at least one of the short stories, watch a film and critique it, or create a dystopian soundtrack. Also, journal about your experience being at home during this time. I really want to know how you feel.

I am checking my email daily, so if you have a question about one of the activities email at hamiltonar@scsk12.org and I will get back to you as soon as possible. If you do complete the activities, please send them my way, especially your short stories and storyboards! I will read and review anything you send me and provide comments. Also, if you just need to talk, we can do that too. Email me your questions, comments, and concerns.

This is a trying time for all of us, but we will get through it together. Again, I miss you and I wish nothing but safety for you and your family.

Best,

Ms. Hamilton

What is a dystopia?

Dystopia: A futuristic, imagined universe in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through corporate, bureaucratic, technological, moral, or totalitarian control. Dystopias, through an exaggerated worst-case scenario, make a criticism about a current trend, societal norm, or political system.

Characteristics of a Dystopian Society

- Propaganda is used to control the citizens of society.
- Information, independent thought, and freedom are restricted.
- A figurehead or concept is worshipped by the citizens of the society.
- Citizens are perceived to be under constant surveillance.
- Citizens have a fear of the outside world.
- Citizens live in a dehumanized state.
- The natural world is banished and distrusted.
- Citizens conform to uniform expectations. Individuality and dissent are bad.
- The society is an illusion of a perfect utopian world.

Types of Dystopian Controls

Most dystopian works present a world in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through one or more of the following types of controls:

- Corporate control: One or more large corporations control society through products, advertising, and/or the media. Examples include *Minority Report* and *Running Man*.
- Bureaucratic control: Society is controlled by a mindless bureaucracy through a tangle of red tape, relentless regulations, and incompetent government officials. Examples in film include *Brazil*.
- Technological control: Society is controlled by technology—through computers, robots, and/or scientific means. Examples include *The Matrix*, *The Terminator*, and *I, Robot*.
- Philosophical/religious control: Society is controlled by philosophical or religious ideology often enforced through a dictatorship or theocratic government.

The Dystopian Protagonist

- often feels trapped and is struggling to escape.
- questions the existing social and political systems.
- believes or feels that something is terribly wrong with the society in which he or she lives.
- helps the audience recognize the negative aspects of the dystopian world through his or her perspective.

Utopia: A place, state, or condition that is ideally perfect in respect of politics, laws, customs, and conditions.

Activity 1: Read through the article below. As you do, answer the text dependent questions. Finally, answer the multiple choice questions at the end of the text.

WHY TEENS FIND THE END OF THE WORLD SO APPEALING

by Elissa Nadworny 2017

Dystopian fiction has become an extremely popular genre amongst teenagers. This genre usually focuses on a world where life is unpleasant or bad because of certain social or political structures. **As you read, take notes on what teenagers like about dystopian fiction.**



[1]The plots of dystopian novels can be amazing. A group of teens in Holland, Mich., tells me about some of their favorites:

In *Delirium* by Lauren Oliver, Love is considered a disease. Characters get a vaccine for it. In Marissa Meyer's *Renegades*, the collapse of society has left only a small group of humans with extraordinary abilities. They work to establish justice and peace in their new world.

Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* is on everyone's favorite list. The plot goes like this: Everyone wants to be pretty. And on their 16th birthday, they can be surgically altered to be a "pretty." During the surgery, however, lesions are put on their brains. These can cause illness, or hinder your thinking. If characters get an important enough job later on, they get those lesions removed.

Text Dependent Question 1: Based paragraphs two and three, what are some of the characteristics of dystopian fiction?

The teens explaining these books are sitting around a table at the public library in the idyllic west Michigan town. Tonight the book club is meeting to talk about *House of The Scorpion* by Nancy Farmer — the gathering is part of the library's young adult programming.

[5] Even though the flyer advertises this book as dystopian, there's some dissent around that (at a dystopian book club, this distrust of "the adults and their flyers" is no surprise.)

After a brief plot description (there's a drug lord, clones and, of course, a rebellion against the status quo),⁴ Taylor Gort, 17, starts things off: "It's a question of how many ethics rules are you willing to break," she says, referring to the book's main character, El Patrón. Amanda Heideman, the librarian leading the discussion, nods her head, "I mean, is making a clone ethical?"

There are a few beats of silence before Will Anderson shakes his head: "No, I don't think it is."

The conversation goes on for nearly an hour — flowing from clones, to whether or not manipulation is evil, to how screwed up adults are (can you believe they think this book is dystopian? It's not.).

That last one — how messed up grownups are — it's a hallmark of dystopia, especially in the young adult genre. When I ask the group why they think these types of books are so popular with teens, they tell me it has a lot to do with relatability.

[10] "There tends to be a common teen-angst thing, like: 'Oh the whole world is against me, the whole world is so screwed up,'" Will explains.

Teenagers are cynical, adds Aaron Yost, 16. And they should be: "To be fair, they were born into a world that their parents kind of really messed up."

Everyone here agrees: The plots in dystopia feel super familiar. That's kind of what makes the books scary — and really good.

Think of it like this: Teen readers themselves are characters in a strange land. Rules don't make sense. School doesn't always make sense. And they don't have a ton of power.

"Their parents impose curfews, and no one lets them drive unless they are ready or not," says Jon Ostenson, who studies young adult dystopian literature at Brigham Young University in Utah. He published a paper on the subject in 2013, for which he spent months reading YA dystopia. "I had to take a break for quite a while — unfortunately there's not a lot of utopian fiction to balance that out."

[15] In dystopia, he says, "Teenagers see echoes of a world that they know."

Text Dependent Question 2: Why are the teens in the book club drawn to dystopian fiction? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.

These books don't always have a happy ending, and they're all about choices and consequences.

"The hallmark of moving from childhood to adulthood is that you start to recognize that things aren't black and white," says Ostenson, "and there's a whole bunch of ethical grey area out there."

"Which makes dystopian fiction perfect for the developing adolescent brain," says Laurence Steinberg, a psychologist at Temple University.

“Their brains are very responsive to emotionally arousing stimuli,” he explains. During this time, there are so many new emotions and they are much stronger than those kids experienced when they were younger.

[20]“When teenagers feel sad, what they often do is put themselves in situations where they feel even sadder,” Steinberg says. They listen to sad music — think emo! — they watch melodramatic TV shows. So dystopian novels fit right in, they have all that sadness plus big, emotional ideas: justice, fairness, loyalty and mortality.

This time in a kid’s life is often defined by acting out, but, Steinberg says, that’s a misguided interpretation of what’s happening. “It isn’t so much rebellion, but it is questioning.”

Text Dependent Question 3: According to Laurence Steinberg, why is “dystopian fiction perfect for the developing adolescent brain?” Answer with at least two facts.

As the brain develops, so does executive functioning. Teens start to understand argument, logical reasoning and hypotheticals.

“Kids are going through a stage in development when they are trying on different identities,” he says, “flexing a muscle that they now have that wasn’t very strong before.”

The fact that these books offer a safety net, a place where kids can “flirt with those questions without getting into trouble,” that’s reason enough to keep teachers and parents buying them off the shelf.

Footnotes

1. a wounded region in an organ or tissue
2. **Idyllic** (adjective): extremely happy, peaceful, or appearing perfect
3. **Dissent** (noun): differing opinions or disagreement
4. the current state of things
5. **Cynical** (adjective): believing that people are generally selfish and dishonest
6. **Melodramatic** (adjective): extremely dramatic or emotional

1.PART A: Which statement best expresses the central idea of the text? (RI.KID.2)

A.Dystopian novels offer teenagers a fictional world that they can relate to, and they prompt strong emotional responses.

B. Teenagers who read dystopian novels are more likely to have unhappy and distrustful relationships with others.

C.Adults are not the intended audience of dystopian novels, as they usually occupy villainous roles in the genre.

D. The ideas explored in dystopian novels often mislead teenagers to view the world in a more negative light.

2. PART B: Which TWO details from the text best support the answer to Part A?

(RI.KID.1)

A. “Even though the flyer advertises this book as dystopian, there’s some dissent around that” (Paragraph 5)

B. “Teenagers are cynical, adds Aaron Yost, 16. And they should be: ‘To be fair, they were born into a world that their parents kind of really messed up.’” (Paragraph 11)

C. “Teen readers themselves are characters in a strange land. Rules don’t make sense. School doesn’t always make sense. And they don’t have a ton of power.” (Paragraph 13)

D. ““The hallmark of moving from childhood to adulthood is that you start to recognize that things aren’t black and white”” (Paragraph 17)

E. “So dystopian novels fit right in, they have all that sadness plus big, emotional ideas: justice, fairness, loyalty and mortality.” (Paragraph 20)

F. “As the brain develops, so does executive functioning. Teens start to understand argument, logical reasoning and hypotheticals.” (Paragraph 22)

3) What is the author’s main purpose in the article? (RI.CS.6)

A. to encourage teenagers to read dystopian fiction

B. to explore why dystopian fiction interests teenagers

C. to discuss how dystopian fiction could be harming teenagers

D. to explain why adults don’t enjoy dystopian fiction

4) How do paragraphs 1-3 contribute to the development of ideas in the text?(RI.CS.5)

A. They provide examples of dystopian fiction in which parents are the villains.

B. They show readers what teenagers relate to in dystopian fiction.

C. They emphasize the variety of real-world problems that dystopian fiction explores.

D. They help readers understand dystopian fiction through plot examples.

5) What connection does the author create between the plots of dystopian novels and the realities of teenagers? (RI.KID.3)-Short answer

Activity 2-Dystopian Fiction

Directions: Read through each of the short stories below. As you read complete the Cold Read Questions for each text. Then write an objective summary of the text.

Cold Read Questions

Answer these questions when you read a text for the first time. They will be especially helpful during a testing situation because they reach to help you understand what is happening on both the surface and underneath the text.

Tier One Questions

1) Monitor: What events happen in the text?

How to do this: Stop every page or so to analyze what is happening.

2) Visualize: Who is the main character?

How to do this: Determine his or her name, appearance, and traits.

3) What does the main character want? What is stopping him or her from getting it?

How to do this: Observe the character's actions and interactions with other characters.

4) Why did the author write the text?

figure out why the author wants you to know it.

5) What is the central idea of the text?

6) Figure out what you did not understand and reread that part of the text.

Tier Two Questions

1) Determine three to five important words or phrases in the text.

How to do this: These are the words and phrases that let you know what the author's purpose was, or what you were supposed to learn. Hint: you may have to define these using context clues.

2) Determine the mood and tone of the text.

How to do this: The mood is how you feel as you read the text and the tone is how the author feels about the subject matter.

3) Infer: In the Tier One questions, you were asked to determine what is happening in the text, now determine what is happening underneath the surface.

How to do this: Figure out what each of the character's is motivated by and then determine how this affects their actions and ultimately the plot. You can also look for themes here.

4) Question the text.

How to do this: Determine what you find interesting about the text, what you want to know more about, or what confuses you, and form a question about it.

Story 1-There Will Come Soft Rains by Ray Bradbury

There Will Come Soft Rains

By Ray Bradbury

In the living room the voice-clock sang, Tick-tock, seven o'clock, time to get up, time to get up, seven o'clock! as if it were afraid that nobody would. The morning house lay empty. The clock ticked on, repeating and repeating its sounds into the emptiness. Seven-nine, breakfast time, seven-nine!

In the kitchen the breakfast stove gave a hissing sigh and ejected from its warm interior eight pieces of perfectly browned toast, eight eggs sunny side up, sixteen slices of bacon, two coffees, and two cool glasses of milk.

"Today is August 4, 2026," said a second voice from the kitchen ceiling, "in the city of Allendale, California." It repeated the date three times for memory's sake. "Today is Mr. Featherstone's birthday. Today is the anniversary of Tilita's marriage. Insurance is payable, as are the water, gas, and light bills."

Somewhere in the walls, relays clicked, memory tapes glided under electric eyes.

Eight-one, tick-tock, eight-one o'clock, off to school, off to work, run, run, eight-one! But no doors slammed, no carpets took the soft tread of rubber heels. It was raining outside. The weather box on the front door sang quietly: "Rain, rain, go away; umbrellas, raincoats for today. .." And the rain tapped on the empty house, echoing.

Outside, the garage chimed and lifted its door to reveal the waiting car. After a long wait the door swung down again.

At eight-thirty the eggs were shrivelled and the toast was like stone. An aluminium wedge scraped them into the sink, where hot water whirled them down a metal throat which digested and flushed them away to the distant sea. The dirty dishes were dropped into a hot washer and emerged twinkling dry.

Nine-fifteen, sang the clock, time to clean.

Out of warrens in the wall, tiny robot mice darted. The rooms were a crawl with the small cleaning animals, all rubber and metal. They thudded against chairs, whirling their moustached runners, kneading the rug nap, sucking gently at hidden dust. Then, like mysterious invaders, they popped into their burrows. Their pink electric eyes faded. The house was clean.

Ten o'clock. The sun came out from behind the rain. The house stood alone in a city of rubble and ashes. This was the one house left standing. At night the ruined city gave off a radioactive glow which could be seen for miles.

Ten-fifteen. The garden sprinklers whirled up in golden founts, filling the soft morning air with scatterings of brightness. The water pelted window panes, running down the charred west side where the house had been burned, evenly free of its white paint. The entire west face of the house was black, save for five places. Here the silhouette in paint of a man mowing a lawn. Here, as in a photograph, a woman bent to pick flowers. Still farther over, their images burned on wood in one titanic instant, a small boy, hands flung into the air; higher up, the image of a thrown ball, and opposite him a girl, hands raised to catch a ball which never came down.

The five spots of paint - the man, the woman, the children, the ball - remained. The rest was a thin charcoaled layer.

The gentle sprinkler rain filled the garden with falling light.

Until this day, how well the house had kept its peace. How carefully it had inquired, "Who goes there? What's the password?" and, getting no answer from lonely foxes and whining cats, it had shut up its windows and drawn shades in an old-maidenly preoccupation with self-protection which bordered on a mechanical paranoia.

It quivered at each sound, the house did. If a sparrow brushed a window, the shade snapped up. The bird, startled, flew off! No, not even a bird must touch the house!

Twelve noon.

A dog whined, shivering, on the front porch.

The front door recognized the dog voice and opened. The dog, once huge and fleshy, but now gone to bone and covered with sores, moved in and through the house, tracking mud. Behind it whirled angry mice, angry at having to pick up mud, angry at inconvenience.

For not a leaf fragment blew under the door but what the wall panels flipped open and the copper scrap rats flashed swiftly out. The offending dust, hair, or paper, seized in miniature steel jaws, was raced back to the burrows. There, down tubes which fed into the cellar, it was dropped into the sighing vent of an incinerator which sat like evil Baal in a dark corner.

The dog ran upstairs, hysterically yelping to each door, at last realizing, as the house realized, that only silence was here.

It sniffed the air and scratched the kitchen door. Behind the door, the stove was making pancakes which filled the house with a rich baked odour and the scent of maple syrup.

The dog frothed at the mouth, lying at the door, sniffing, its eyes turned to fire. It ran wildly in circles, biting at its tail, spun in a frenzy, and died. It lay in the parlor for an hour.

Two o'clock, sang a voice.

Delicately sensing decay at last, the regiments of mice hummed out as softly as blown gray leaves in an electrical wind.

Two-fifteen.

The dog was gone.

In the cellar, the incinerator glowed suddenly and a whirl of sparks leaped up the chimney.

Two thirty-five.

Bridge tables sprouted from patio walls. Playing cards fluttered onto pads in a shower of pips. Martinis manifested on an oaken bench with egg-salad sandwiches. Music played.

But the tables were silent and the cards untouched.

At four o'clock the tables folded like great butterflies back through the paneled walls . Four-thirty.

The nursery walls glowed.

Animals took shape: yellow giraffes, blue lions, pink antelopes, lilac panthers cavorting in crystal substance. The walls were glass. They looked out upon color and fantasy. Hidden films clocked through well-oiled sprockets, and the walls lived. The nursery floor was woven to resemble a crisp, cereal meadow. Over this ran aluminum roaches and iron crickets, and in the hot still air butterflies of delicate red tissue wavered among the sharp aroma of animal spoors! There was the sound like a great matted yellow hive of bees within a dark bellows, the lazy bumble of a purring lion. And there was the patter of okapi feet and the murmur of a fresh jungle rain, like other hoofs, falling upon the summer-starched grass. Now the walls dissolved into distances of parched grass, mile on mile, and warm endless sky. The animals drew away into thorn brakes and water holes. It was the children's hour.

Five o'clock. The bath filled with clear hot water.

Six, seven, eight o'clock. The dinner dishes manipulated like magic tricks, and in the study a click. In the metal stand opposite the hearth where a fire now blazed up warmly, a cigar popped out, half an inch of soft gray ash on it, smoking, waiting.

Nine o'clock. The beds warmed their hidden circuits, for nights were cool here.

Nine-five. A voice spoke from the study ceiling: "Mrs. McClellan, which poem would you like this evening?" The house was silent.

The voice said at last, "Since you express no preference, I shall select a poem at random." Quiet music rose to back the voice. "Sara Teasdale. As I recall, your favourite...

There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground, And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;

And frogs in the pools singing at night, And wild plum trees in tremulous white;

Robins will wear their feathery fire,

Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;

And not one will know of the war, not one Will care at last when it is done.

Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree, If mankind perished utterly;

And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn Would scarcely know that we were gone."

The fire burned on the stone hearth and the cigar fell away into a mound of quiet ash on its tray.
The empty chairs faced each other between the silent walls, and the music played.

At ten o'clock the house began to die.

The wind blew. A falling tree bough crashed through the kitchen window. Cleaning solvent,
bottled, shattered over the stove. The room was ablaze in an instant!

" Fire!" screamed a voice. The house lights flashed, water pumps shot water from the ceilings.
But the solvent spread on the linoleum, licking, eating, under the kitchen door, while the voices
took it up in chorus: "Fire, fire, fire!"

The house tried to save itself. Doors sprang tightly shut, but the windows were broken by the
heat and the wind blew and sucked upon the fire.

The house gave ground as the fire in ten billion angry sparks moved with flaming ease from
room to room and then up the stairs. While scurrying water rats squeaked from the walls,
pistolled their water, and ran for more. And the wall sprays let down showers of mechanical rain.

But too late. Somewhere, sighing, a pump shrugged to a stop. The quenching rain ceased. The
reserve water supply which had filled baths and washed dishes for many quiet days was gone.

The fire crackled up the stairs. It fed upon Picassos and Matisses in the upper halls, like
delicacies, baking off the oily flesh, tenderly crisping the canvases into black shavings.

Now the fire lay in beds, stood in windows, changed the colors of drapes!

And then, reinforcements. From attic trapdoors, blind robot faces peered down with faucet
mouths gushing green chemical.

The fire backed off, as even an elephant must at the sight of a dead snake.

Now there were twenty snakes whipping over the floor, killing the fire with a clear cold venom
of green froth.

But the fire was clever. It had sent flame outside the house, up through the attic to the pumps there. An explosion! The attic brain which directed the pumps was shattered into bronze shrapnel on the beams.

The fire rushed back into every closet and felt of the clothes hung there.

The house shuddered, oak bone on bone, its bared skeleton cringing from the heat, its wire, its nerves revealed as if a surgeon had torn the skin off to let the red veins and capillaries quiver in the scalded air. Help, help! Fire! Run, run! Heat snapped mirrors like the first brittle winter ice. And the voices wailed. Fire, fire, run, run, like a tragic nursery rhyme, a dozen voices, high, low, like children dying in a forest, alone, alone. And the voices fading as the wires popped their sheathings like hot chestnuts. One, two, three, four, five voices died.

In the nursery the jungle burned. Blue lions roared, purple giraffes bounded off. The panthers ran in circles, changing color, and ten million animals, running before the fire, vanished off toward a distant steaming river.... Ten more voices died.

In the last instant under the fire avalanche, other choruses, oblivious, could be heard announcing the time, cutting the lawn by remote-control mower, or setting an umbrella frantically out and in, the slamming and opening front door, a thousand things happening, like a clock shop when each clock strikes the hour insanely before or after the other, a scene of maniac confusion, yet unity; singing, screaming, a few last cleaning mice darting bravely out to carry the horrid ashes away! And one voice, with sublime disregard for the situation, read poetry aloud in the fiery study, until all the film spools burned, until all the wires withered and the circuits cracked.

The fire burst the house and let it slam flat down, puffing out skirts of spark and smoke.

In the kitchen, an instant before the rain of fire and timber, the stove could be seen making breakfasts at a psychopathic rate, ten dozen eggs, six loaves of toast, twenty dozen bacon strips, which, eaten by fire, started the stove working again, hysterically hissing!

The crash. The attic smashing into kitchen and parlour. The parlour into cellar, cellar into sub-cellar. Deep freeze, armchair, film tapes, circuits, beds, and all like skeletons thrown in a cluttered mound deep under.

Smoke and silence. A great quantity of smoke.

Dawn showed faintly in the east. Among the ruins, one wall stood alone. Within the wall, a last voice said, over and over again and again, even as the sun rose to shine upon the heaped rubble and steam:

"Today is August 5, 2026, today is August 5, 2026, today is..."

Tier One Questions

- 1) **Monitor:** What events happen in the text?
- 2) **Visualize:** Who is the main character?
- 3) What does the main character want? What is stopping him or her from getting it?
- 4) Why did the author write the text?
- 5) What is the central idea of the text?
- 6) Figure out what you did not understand and reread that part of the text.

Tier Two Questions

- 7) **Determine** three to five important words or phrases in the text.
- 8) **Determine** the mood and tone of the text.
- 9) **Infer:** In the Tier One questions, you were asked to determine what is happening in the text, now determine what is happening underneath the surface.
- 10) **Question** the text.

Objective Summary for *There Will Come Soft Rains*

Remember, an objective summary should be five sentences long. The first sentence should include the title, author, and main idea of the text. Sentences 2 through 5 should contain the four most important details from the text.

BLOODCHILD

Octavia E. Butler

My last night of childhood began with a visit home. T'Gatoi's sisters had given us two sterile eggs. T'Gatoi gave one to my mother, brother, and sisters. She insisted that I eat the other one alone. It didn't matter. There was still enough to leave everyone feeling good. Almost everyone. My mother wouldn't take any. She sat, watching everyone drifting and dreaming without her. Most of the time she watched me.

I lay against T'Gatoi's long, velvet underside, sipping from my egg now and then, wondering why my mother denied herself such a harmless pleasure. Less of her hair would be gray if she indulged now and then. The eggs prolonged life, prolonged vigor. My father, who had never refused one in his life, had lived more than twice as long as he should have. And toward the end of his life, when he should have been slowing down, he had married my mother and fathered four children.

But my mother seemed content to age before she had to. I saw her turn away as several of T'Gatoi's limbs secured me closer. T'Gatoi liked our body heat, and took advantage of it whenever she could. When I was little and at home more, my mother used to try to tell me how to behave with T'Gatoi—how to be respectful and always obedient because T'Gatoi was the Tlic government official in charge of the Preserve, and thus the most important of her kind to deal directly with Terrans. It was an honor, my mother said, that such a person had chosen to come into the family. My mother was at her most formal and severe when she was lying.

I had no idea why she was lying, or even what she was lying about. It was an honor to have T'Gatoi in the family, but it was hardly a novelty. T'Gatoi and my mother had been friends all my mother's life, and T'Gatoi was not interested in being honored in the house she considered her second home. She simply came in, climbed onto one of her special couches and called me over to keep her warm. It was impossible to be formal with her while lying against her and hearing her complain as usual that I was too skinny.

"You're better," she said this time, probing me with six or seven of her limbs. "You're gaining weight finally. Thinness is dangerous." The probing changed subtly, became a series of caresses.

"He's still too thin," my mother said sharply.

T'Gatoi lifted her head and perhaps a meter of her body off the couch as though she were sitting up. She looked at my mother and my mother, her face lined and old-looking, turned away.

"Lien, I would like you to have what's left of Gan's egg."

"The eggs are for the children," my mother said.

"They are for the family. Please take it."

Unwillingly obedient, my mother took it from me and put it to her mouth. There were only a few drops left in the now-shrunk, elastic shell, but she squeezed them out, swallowed them, and after a few moments some of the lines of tension began to smooth from her face.

"It's good," she whispered. "Sometimes I forget how good it is."

"You should take more," T'Gatoi said. "Why are you in ituch a hurry to be old?"

My mother said nothing.

"I like being able to come here," T'Gatoi said. "This place is a refuge because of you, yet you won't take care of yourself."

T'Gatoi was hounded on the outside. Her people wanted more of us made available. Only she and her political faction stood between us and the hordes who did not understand why there was a Preserve—why any Terran could not be courted, paid, drafted, in some way made available to them. Or they did understand, but in their desperation, they did not care. She parceled us out to the desperate and sold us to the rich and powerful for their political support. Thus, we were necessities, status symbols, and an independent people. She oversaw the joining of families, putting an end to the final remnants of the earlier system of breaking up Terran families to suit impatient Tlic. I had lived outside with her. I had seen the desperate eagerness in the way some people looked at me. It was a little frightening to know that only she stood between us and that desperation that could so easily swallow us. My mother would look at her sometimes and say to me, "Take care of her." And I would remember that she too had been outside, had seen.

Now T'Gatoi used four of her limbs to push me away from her onto the floor. "Go on, Gan," she said. "Sit down there with your sisters and enjoy not being sober. You had most of the egg. Lien, come warm me."

My mother hesitated for no reason that I could see. One of my earliest memories is of my mother stretched alongside T'Gatoi, talking about things I could not understand, picking me up from the floor and laughing as she sat me on one of T'Gatoi's segments. She ate her share of eggs then. I wondered when she had stopped, and why.

She lay down now against T'Gatoi, and the whole left row of T'Gatoi's limbs closed around her, holding her loosely, but securely. I had always found it comfortable to lie that way but, except for my older sister, no one else in the family liked it. They said it made them feel caged.

T'Gatoi meant to cage my mother. Once she had, she moved her tail slightly, then spoke. "Not enough egg, Lien. You should have taken it when it was passed to you. You need it badly now."

T'Gatoi's tail moved once more, its whip motion so swift I wouldn't have seen it if I hadn't been watching for it. Her sting drew only a single drop of blood from my mother's bare leg.

My mother cried out—probably in surprise. Being stung doesn't hurt. Then she sighed and I could see her body relax. She moved languidly into a more comfortable position within the cage of T'Gatoi's limbs. "Why did you do that?" she asked, sounding half asleep.

"I could not watch you sitting and suffering any longer."

My mother managed to move her shoulders in a small shrug. "Tomorrow," she said.

"Yes. Tomorrow you will resume your suffering—if you must. But for now, just for now, lie here and warm me and let me ease your way a little."

"He's still mine, you know," my mother said suddenly. "Nothing can buy him from me." Sober, she wouldn't have permitted herself to refer to such things.

"Nothing," T'Gatoi agreed, humoring her.

"Did you think I would sell him for eggs? For long life? My son?"

"Not for anything," T'Gatoi said stroking my mother's shoulders, toying with her long, graying hair.

I would like to have touched my mother, shared that moment with her. She would take my hand if I touched her now. Freed by the egg and the sting, she would smile and perhaps say things long held in. But tomorrow, she would remember all this as a humiliation. I did not want to be part of a remembered humiliation. Best just to be still and know she loved me under all the duty and pride and pain.

"Xuan Hoa, take off her shoes," T'Gatoi said. "In a little while I'll sting her again and she can sleep."

My older sister obeyed, swaying drunkenly as she stood up. When she had finished, she sat down beside me and took my hand. We had always been a unit, she and I.

My mother put the back of her head against T'Gatoi's underside and tried from that impossible angle to look up into the broad, round face. "You're going to sting me again?"

"Yes, Lien."

"I'll sleep until tomorrow noon."

"Good. You need it. When did you sleep last?"

My mother made a wordless sound of annoyance. "I should have stepped on you when you were small enough," she muttered.

It was an old joke between them. They had grown up together, sort of, though T'Gatoi had not, in my mother's lifetime, been small enough for any Terran to step on. She was nearly three times my mother's present age, yet would still be young when my mother died of age. But T'Gatoi and my mother had met as T'Gatoi was coming into a period of rapid development—a kind of Tlic adolescence. My mother was only a child, but for a while they developed at the same rate and had no better friends than each other.

T'Gatoi had even introduced my mother to the man who became my father. My parents, pleased with each other in spite of their very different ages, married as T'Gatoi was going into her family's business—politics. She and my mother saw each other less. But sometime before my older sister was born, my mother promised T'Gatoi one of her children. She would have to give one of us to someone, and she preferred T'Gatoi to some stranger.

Years passed. T'Gatoi traveled and increased her influence. The Preserve was hers by the time she came back to my mother to collect what she probably saw as her just reward for her hard work. My older sister took an instant liking to her and wanted to be chosen, but my mother was just coming to term with me and T'Gatoi liked the idea of choosing an infant and watching and taking part in all the phases of development. I'm told I was first caged within T'Gatoi's many limbs only three minutes after my birth. A few days later, I was given my first taste of egg. I tell Terrans that when they ask whether I was ever afraid of her. And I tell it to Tlic when T'Gatoi suggests a young Terran child for them and they, anxious and ignorant, demand an adolescent. Even my brother who had somehow grown up to fear and distrust the Tlic could probably have gone smoothly into one of their families if he had been adopted early enough. Sometimes, I think for his sake he should have been. I looked at him, stretched out on the floor across the room, his eyes open, but glazed as he dreamed his egg dream. No matter what he felt toward the Tlic, he always demanded his share of egg.

"Lien, can you stand up?" T'Gatoi asked suddenly.

"Stand?" my mother said. "I thought I was going to sleep."

"Later. Something sounds wrong outside." The cage was abruptly gone.

"What?"

"Up, Lien!"

My mother recognized her tone and got up just in time to avoid being dumped on the floor. T'Gatoi whipped her three meters of body off her couch, toward the door, and out at full speed. She had bones—ribs, a long spine, a skull, four sets of limb bones per segment. But when she moved that way, twisting, hurling herself into controlled falls, landing running, she seemed not only boneless, but aquatic—something swimming through the air as though it were water. I loved watching her move.

I left my sister and started to follow her out the door, though I wasn't very steady on my own feet. It would have been better to sit and dream, better yet to find a girl and share a waking dream with her. Back when the Tlic saw us as not much more than convenient big warm-blooded animals, they would pen several of us together, male and female, and feed us only eggs. That way they could be sure of getting another generation of us no matter how we tried to hold out. We were lucky that didn't go on long. A few generations of it and we would have been little more than convenient big animals.

"Hold the door open, Gan," T'Gatoi said. "And tell the family to stay back."

"What is it?" I asked.

"N'Tlic."

I shrank back against the door. "Here? Alone?"

"He was trying to reach a call box, I suppose." She carried the man past me, unconscious, folded like a coat over some of her limbs. He looked young—my brother's age perhaps—and he was thinner than he should have been. What T'Gatoi would have called dangerously thin.

"Gan, go to the call box," she said. She put the man on the floor and began stripping off his clothing.

I did not move.

After a moment, she looked up at me, her sudden stillness a sign of deep impatience.

"Send Qui," I told her. "I'll stay here. Maybe I can help."

She let her limbs begin to move again, lifting the man and pulling his shirt over his head. "You don't want to see this," she said. "It will be hard. I can't help this man the way his Tlic could."

"I know. But send Qui. He won't want to be of any help here. I'm at least willing to try."

She looked at my brother—older, bigger, stronger, certainly more able to help her here. He was sitting up now, braced against the wall, staring at the man on the floor with undisguised fear and revulsion. Even she could see that he would be useless.

"Qui, go!" she said.

He didn't argue. He stood up, swayed briefly, then steadied, frightened sober.

"This man's name is Bram Lomas," she told him, reading from the man's arm band. I fingered my own arm band in sympathy. "He needs T'Khotgif Teh. Do you hear?"

"Bram Lomas, T'Khotgif Teh," my brother said. "I'm going." He edged around Lomas and ran out the door.

Lomas began to regain consciousness. He only moaned at first and clutched spasmodically at a pair of T'Gatoi's limbs. My younger sister, finally awake from her egg dream, came close to look at him, until my mother pulled her back.

T'Gatoi removed the man's shoes, then his pants, all the while leaving him two of her limbs to grip. Except for the final few, all her limbs were equally dexterous. "I want no argument from you this time, Gan," she said.

I straightened. "What shall I do?"

"Go out and slaughter an animal that is at least half your size."

"Slaughter? But I've never—"

She knocked me across the room. Her tail was an efficient weapon whether she exposed the sting or not.

I got up, feeling stupid for having ignored her warning, and went into the kitchen. Maybe I could kill something with a knife or an ax. My mother raised a few Terran animals for the table and several thousand local ones for their fur. T'Gatoi would probably prefer something local. An achti, perhaps. Some of those were the right size, though they had about three times as many teeth as I did and a real love of using them. My mother, Hoa, and Qui could kill them with knives. I had never killed one at all, had never slaughtered any animal. I had spent most of my time with T'Gatoi while my brother and sisters were learning the family business. T'Gatoi had been right. I should have been the one to go to the call box. At least I could do that.

I went to the corner cabinet where my mother kept her larger house and garden tools. At the back of the cabinet there was a pipe that carried off waste water from the kitchen—except that it didn't any more. My father had rerouted the waste water before I was born. Now the pipe could be turned so that one half slid around the other and a rifle could be stored inside. This wasn't our only gun, but it was our most easily accessible one. I would have to use it to shoot one of the biggest of the achti. Then T'Gatoi would probably confiscate it. Firearms were illegal in the Preserve. There had been incidents right after the Preserve was established—Terrans shooting Tlic, shooting N'Tlic. This was before the joining of families began, before everyone had a personal stake in keeping the peace. No one had shot a Tlic in my lifetime or my mother's, but the law still stood—for our protection, we were told. There were stories of whole Terran families wiped out in reprisal back during the assassinations.

I went out to the cages and shot the biggest achti I could find. It was a handsome breeding male and my mother would not be pleased to see me bring it in. But it was the right size, and I was in a hurry.

I put the achti's long, warm body over my shoulder—glad that some of the weight I'd gained was muscle—and took it to the kitchen. There, I put the gun back in its hiding place. If T'Gatoi noticed the achti's wounds and demanded the gun, I would give it to her. Otherwise, let it stay where my father wanted it.

I turned to take the achti to her, then hesitated. For several seconds, I stood in front of the closed door wondering why I was suddenly afraid. I knew what was going to happen. I hadn't seen it before but T'Gatoi had shown me diagrams, and drawings. She had made sure I knew the truth as soon as I was old enough to understand it.

Yet I did not want to go into that room. I wasted a little time choosing a knife from the carved, wooden box in which my mother kept them. T'Gatoi might want one, I told myself, for the tough, heavily furred hide of the achti.

"Gan!" T'Gatoi called, her voice harsh with urgency.

I swallowed. I had not imagined a simple moving of the feet could be so difficult. I realized I was trembling and that shamed me. Shame impelled me through the door.

I put the achti down near T'Gatoi and saw that Lomas was unconscious again. She, Lomas, and I were alone in the room, my mother and sisters probably sent out so they would not have to watch. I envied them.

But my mother came back into the room as T'Gatoi seized the achti. Ignoring the knife I offered her, she extended claws from several of her limbs and slit the achti from throat to anus. She looked at me, her yellow eyes intent. "Hold this man's shoulders, Gan."

I stared at Lomas in panic, realizing that I did not want to touch him, let alone hold him. This would not be like shooting an animal. Not as quick, not as merciful, and, I hoped, not as final, but there was nothing I wanted less than to be part of it.

My mother came forward. "Gan, you hold his right side," she said. "I'll hold his left." And if he came to, he would throw her off without realizing he had done it. She was a tiny woman. She often wondered aloud how she had produced, as she said, such "huge" children.

"Never mind," I told her, taking the man's shoulders. "I'll do it."

She hovered nearby.

"Don't worry," I said. "I won't shame you. You don't have to stay and watch."

She looked at me uncertainly, then touched my face in a rare caress. Finally, she went back to her bedroom.

T'Gatoi lowered her head in relief. "Thank you, Gan," she said with courtesy more Terran than Tlic. "That one . . . she is always finding new ways for me to make her suffer."

Lomas began to groan and make choked sounds. I had hoped he would stay unconscious. T'Gatoi put her face near his so that he focused on her.

"I've stung you as much as I dare for now," she told him. "When this is over, I'll sting you to sleep and you won't hurt any more."

"Please," the man begged. "Wait . . ."

"There's no more time, Bram. I'll sting you as soon as it's over. When T'Khotgif arrives she'll give you eggs to help you heal. It will be over soon."

"T'Khotgif!" the man shouted, straining against my hands.

"Soon, Bram." T'Gatoi glanced at me, then placed a claw against his abdomen slightly to the right of the middle, just below the last rib. There was movement on the right side—tiny, seemingly random pulsations moving his brown flesh, creating a concavity here, a convexity there, over and over until I could see the rhythm of it and knew where the next pulse would be.

Lomas's entire body stiffened under T'Gatoi's claw, though she merely rested it against him as she wound the rear section of her body around her legs. He might break my grip, but he would not break hers. He wept helplessly as she used his pants to tie his hands, then pushed his hands above his head so that I could kneel on the cloth between them and pin them in place. She rolled up his shirt and gave it to him to bite down on.

And she opened him.

His body convulsed with the first cut. He almost tore himself away from me. The sounds he made . . . I had never heard such sounds come from anything human. T'Gatoi seemed to pay no attention as she lengthened and deepened the cut, now and then pausing to lick away blood. His blood vessels contracted, reacting to the chemistry of her saliva, and the bleeding slowed.

I felt as though I were helping her torture him, helping her consume him. I knew I would vomit soon, didn't know why I hadn't already. I couldn't possibly last until she was finished.

She found the first grub. It was fat and deep red with his blood—both inside and out. It had already eaten its own egg case, but apparently had not yet begun to eat its host. At this stage, it would eat any flesh except its mother's. Let alone, it would have gone on excreting the poisons that had both sickened and alerted Lomas. Eventually it would have begun to eat. By the time it ate its way out of Lomas's flesh, Lomas would be dead or dying—and unable to take revenge on

the thing that was killing him. There was always a grace period between the time the host sickened and the time the grubs began to eat him.

T'Gatoi picked up the writhing grub carefully, and looked at it, somehow ignoring the terrible groans of the man.

Abruptly, the man lost consciousness.

"Good," T'Gatoi looked down at him. "I wish you Terrans could do that at will." She felt nothing. And the thing she held . . .

It was limbless and boneless at this stage, perhaps fifteen centimeters long and two thick, blind and slimy with blood. It was like a large worm. T'Gatoi put it into the belly of the achti, and it began at once to burrow. It would stay there and eat as long as there was anything to eat.

Probing through Lomas' flesh, she found two more, one of them smaller and more vigorous. "A male!" she said happily. He would be dead before I would. He would be through his metamorphosis and screwing everything that would hold still before his sisters even had limbs. He was the only one to make a serious effort to bite T'Gatoi as she placed him in the achti.

Paler worms oozed to visibility in Lomas's flesh. I closed my eyes. It was worse than finding something dead, rotting, and filled with tiny animal grubs. And it was far worse than any drawing or diagram.

"Ah, there are more," T'Gatoi said, plucking out two long, thick grubs. "You may have to kill another animal, Gan. Everything lives inside you Terrans."

I had been told all my life that this was a good and necessary thing Tlic and Terran did together—a kind of birth. I had believed it until now. I knew birth was painful and bloody, no matter what. But this was something else, something worse. And I wasn't ready to see it. Maybe I never would be. Yet I couldn't not see it. Closing my eyes didn't help.

T'Gatoi found a grub still eating its egg case. The remains of the case were still wired into a blood vessel by their own little tube or hook or whatever. That was the way the grubs were anchored and the way they fed. They took only blood until they were ready to emerge. Then they ate their stretched, elastic egg cases. Then they ate their hosts.

T'Gatoi bit away the egg case, licked away the blood. Did she like the taste? Did childhood habits die hard—or not die at all?

The whole procedure was wrong, alien. I wouldn't have thought anything about her could seem alien to me.

"One more, I think," she said. "Perhaps two. A good family. In a host animal these days, we would be happy to find one or two alive." She glanced at me. "Go outside, Gan, and empty your stomach. Go now while the man is unconscious."

I staggered out, barely made it. Beneath the tree just beyond the front door, I vomited until there was nothing left to bring up. Finally, I stood shaking, tears streaming down my face. I did not know why I was crying, but I could not stop. I went farther from the house to avoid being seen. Every time I closed my eyes I saw red worms crawling over redder human flesh.

There was a car coming toward the house. Since Terrans were forbidden motorized vehicles except for certain farm equipment, I knew this must be Lomas's Tlic with Qui and perhaps a Terran doctor. I wiped my face on my shirt, struggled for control.

"Gan," Qui called as the car stopped. "What happened?" He crawled out of the low, round, Tlic-convenient car door. Another Terran crawled out the other side and went into the house without speaking to me. The doctor. With his help and a few eggs, Lomas might make it.

"T'Khotgif Teh?" I said.

The Tlic driver surged out of her car, reared up half her length before me. She was paler and smaller than T'Gatoi—probably born from the body of an animal. Tlic from Terran bodies were always larger as well as more numerous.

"Six young," I told her. "Maybe seven alive. At least one male."

"Lomas?" she said harshly. I liked her for the question and the concern in her voice when she asked it. The last coherent thing he had said was her name.

"He's alive," I said.

She surged away to the house without another word.

"She's been sick," my brother said, watching her go. "When I called, I could hear people telling her she wasn't well enough to go out even for this."

I said nothing. I had extended courtesy to the Tlic. Now I didn't want to talk to anyone. I hoped he would go in—out of curiosity if nothing else.

"Finally found out more than you wanted to know, eh?"

I looked at him.

"Don't give me one of her looks," he said. "You're not her. You're just her property."

One of her looks. Had I picked up even an ability to imitate her expressions?

"What'd you do, puke?" He sniffed the air. "So now you know what you're in for."

I walked away from him. He and I had been close when we were kids. He would let me follow him around when I was home and sometimes T'Gatoi would let me bring him along when she took me into the city. But something had happened when he reached adolescence. I never knew what. He began keeping out of T'Gatoi's way. Then he began running away—until he realized there was no "away." Not in the Preserve. Certainly not outside. After that he concentrated on getting his share of every egg that came into the house, and on looking out for me in a way that made me all but hate him—a way that clearly said, as long as I was all right, he was safe from the Tlic.

"How was it, really?" he demanded, following me.

"I killed an achti. The young ate it."

"You didn't run out of the house and puke because they ate an achti."

"I had . . . never seen a person cut open before." That was true, and enough for him to know. I couldn't talk about the other. Not with him.

"Oh," he said. He glanced at me as though he wanted to say more, but he kept quiet.

We walked, not really headed anywhere. Toward the back, toward the cages, toward the fields.

"Did he say anything?" Qui asked. "Lomas, I mean."

Who else would he mean? "He said, 'T'Khotgif.'"

Qui shuddered. "If she had done that to me, she'd be the last person I'd call for."

"You'd call for her. Her sting would ease your pain without killing the grubs in you."

"You think I'd care if they died?"

No. Of course he wouldn't. Would I?

"Shit!" He drew a deep breath. "I've seen what they do. You think this thing with Lomas was bad? It was nothing."

I didn't argue. He didn't know what he was talking about.

"I saw them eat a man," he said.

I turned to face him. "You're lying!"

"*I saw them eat a man.*" He paused. "It was when I was little. I had been to the Hartmund house and I was on my way home. Halfway here, I saw a man and a Tlic and the man was N'Tlic. The ground was hilly. I was able to hide from them and watch. The Tlic wouldn't open the man because she had nothing to feed the grubs. The man couldn't go any farther and there were no houses around. He was in so much pain he told her to kill him. He begged her to kill him. Finally, she did. She cut his throat. One swipe of one claw. I saw the grubs eat their way out, then burrow in again, still eating."

His words made me see Lomas's flesh again, parasitized, crawling. "Why didn't you tell me that?" I whispered.

He looked startled, as though he'd forgotten I was listening. "I don't know."

"You started to run away not long after that, didn't you?"

"Yeah. Stupid. Running inside the Preserve. Running in a cage."

I shook my head, said what I should have said to him long ago. "She wouldn't take you, Qui. You don't have to worry."

"She would . . . if anything happened to you."

"No. She'd take Xuan Hoa. Hoa . . . wants it." She wouldn't if she had stayed to watch Lomas.

"They don't take women," he said with contempt.

"They do sometimes." I glanced at him. "Actually, they prefer women. You should be around them when they talk among themselves. They say women have more body fat to protect the grubs. But they usually take men to leave the women free to bear their own young."

"To provide the next generation of host animals," he said, switching from contempt to bitterness.

"It's more than that!" I countered. Was it?

"If it were going to happen to me, I'd want to believe it was more, too."

"It *is* more!" I felt like a kid. Stupid argument.

"Did you think so while T'Gatoi was picking worms out of that guy's guts?"

"It's not supposed to happen that way."

"Sure it is. You weren't supposed to see it, that's all. And his Tlic was supposed to do it. She could sting him unconscious and the operation wouldn't have been as painful. But she'd still open him, pick out the grubs, and if she missed even one, it would poison him and eat him from the inside out."

There was actually a time when my mother told me to show respect for Qui because he was my older brother. I walked away, hating him. In his way, he was gloating. He was safe and I wasn't. I could have hit him, but I didn't think I would be able to stand it when he refused to hit back, when he looked at me with contempt and pity.

He wouldn't let me get away. Longer-legged, he swung ahead of me and made me feel as though I were following him.

"I'm sorry," he said.

I strode on, sick and furious.

"Look, it probably won't be that bad with you. T'Gatoi likes you. She'll be careful."

I turned back toward the house, almost running from him.

"Has she done it to you yet?" he asked, keeping up easily. "I mean, you're about the right age for implantation. Has she—"

I hit him. I didn't know I was going to do it, but I think I meant to kill him. If he hadn't been bigger and stronger, I think I would have.

He tried to hold me off, but in the end, had to defend himself. He only hit me a couple of times. That was plenty. I don't remember going down, but when I came to, he was gone. It was worth the pain to be rid of him.

I got up and walked slowly toward the house. The back was dark. No one was in the kitchen. My mother and sisters were sleeping in their bedrooms—or pretending to.

Once I was in the kitchen, I could hear voices—Tlic and Terran from the next room. I couldn't make out what they were saying—didn't want to make it out.

I sat down at my mother's table, waiting for quiet. The table was smooth and worn, heavy and well-crafted. My father had made it for her just before he died. I remembered hanging around underfoot when he built it. He didn't mind. Now I sat leaning on it, missing him. I could have talked to him. He had done it three times in his long life. Three clutches of eggs, three times being opened and sewed up. How had he done it? How did anyone do it?

I got up, took the rifle from its hiding place, and sat down again with it. It needed cleaning, oiling.

All I did was load it.

"Gan?"

She made a lot of little clicking sounds when she walked on bare floor, each limb clicking in succession as it touched down. Waves of little clicks.

She came to the table, raised the front half of her body above it, and surged onto it. Sometimes she moved so smoothly she seemed to flow like water itself. She coiled herself into a small hill in the middle of the table and looked at me.

"That was bad," she said softly. "You should not have seen it. It need not be that way."

"I know."

"T'Khotgif—Ch'Khotgif now—she will die of her disease. She will not live to raise her children. But her sister will provide for them, and for Bram Lomas." Sterile sister. One fertile female in every lot. One to keep the family going. That sister owed Lomas more than she could ever repay.

"He'll live then?"

"Yes."

"I wonder if he would do it again."

"No one would ask him to do that again."

I looked into the yellow eyes, wondering how much I saw and understood there, and how much I only imagined. "No one ever asks us," I said. "You never asked me."

She moved her head slightly. "What's the matter with your face?"

"Nothing. Nothing important." Human eyes probably wouldn't have noticed the swelling in the darkness. The only light was from one of the moons, shining through a window across the room.

"Did you use the rifle to shoot the ahti?"

"Yes."

"And do you mean to use it to shoot me?"

I stared at her, outlined in moonlight—coiled, graceful body. "What does Terran blood taste like to you?"

She said nothing.

"What are you?" I whispered. "What are we to you?"

She lay still, rested her head on her topmost coil. "You know me as no other does," she said softly. "You must decide."

"That's what happened to my face," I told her.

"What?" "Qui goaded me into deciding to do something. It didn't turn out very well." I moved the gun slightly, brought the barrel up diagonally under my own chin. "At least it was a decision I made."

"As this will be."

"Ask me, Gatoi."

"For my children's lives?"

She would say something like that. She knew how to manipulate people, Terran and Tlic. But not this time.

"I don't want to be a host animal," I said. "Not even yours."

It took her a long time to answer. "We use almost no host animals these days," she said. "You know that."

"You use us."

"We do. We wait long years for you and teach you and join our families to yours." She moved restlessly. "You know you aren't animals to us."

I stared at her, saying nothing.

"The animals we once used began killing most of our eggs after implantation long before your ancestors arrived," she said softly. "You know these things, Gan. Because your people arrived, we are relearning what it means to be a healthy, thriving people. And your ancestors, fleeing from their homeworld, from their own kind who would have killed or enslaved them—they survived because of us. We saw them as people and gave them the Preserve when they still tried to kill us as worms."

At the word "Worms" I jumped. I couldn't help it, and she couldn't help noticing it.

"I see," she said quietly. "Would you really rather die than bear my young, Gan?"

I didn't answer.

"Shall I go to Xuan Hoa?"

"Yes!" Hoa wanted it. Let her have it. She hadn't had to watch Lomas. She'd be proud . . . Not terrified.

T'Gatoi flowed off the table onto the floor, startling me almost too much.

"I'll sleep in Hoa's room tonight," she said. "And sometime tonight or in the morning, I'll tell her."

This was going too fast. My sister. Hoa had had almost as much to do with raising me as my mother. I was still close to her—not like Qui. She could want T'Gatoi and still love me.

"Wait! Gatoi!"

She looked back, then raised nearly half her length off the floor and turned it to face me. "These are adult things, Gan. This is my life, my family!"

"But she's . . . my sister."

"I have done what you demanded. I have asked you!"

"But—"

"It will be easier for Hoa. She has always expected to carry other lives inside her."

Human lives. Human young who would someday drink at her breasts, not at her veins.

I shook my head. "Don't do it to her, Gatoi." I was not Qui. It seemed I could become him, though, with no effort at all. I could make Xuan Hoa my shield. Would it be easier to know that red worms were growing in her flesh instead of mine?

"Don't do it to Hoa," I repeated.

She stared at me, utterly still.

I looked away, then back at her. "Do it to me."

I lowered the gun from my throat and she leaned forward to take it.

"No," I told her.

"It's the law," she said.

"Leave it for the family. One of them might use it to save my life someday."

She grasped the rifle barrel, but I wouldn't let go. I was pulled into a standing position over her.

"Leave it here!" I repeated. "If we're not your animals, if these are adult things, accept the risk. There is risk, Gatoi, in dealing with a partner."

It was clearly hard for her to let go of the rifle. A shudder went through her and she made a hissing sound of distress. It occurred to me that she was afraid. She was old enough to have seen what guns could do to people. Now her young and this gun would be together in the same house. She did not know about our other guns. In this dispute, they did not matter.

"I will implant the first egg tonight," she said as I put the gun away. "Do you hear, Gan?"

Why else had I been given a whole egg to eat while the rest of the family was left to share one? Why else had my mother kept looking at me as though I were going away from her, going where she could not follow? Did T'Gatoi imagine I hadn't known?

"I hear."

"Now!" I let her push me out of the kitchen, then walked ahead of her toward my bedroom. The sudden urgency in her voice sounded real. "You would have done it to Hoa tonight!" I accused.

"I must do it to someone tonight."

I stopped in spite of her urgency and stood in her way. "Don't you care who?"

She flowed around me and into my bedroom. I found her waiting on the couch we shared. There was nothing in Hoa's room that she could have used. She would have done it to Hoa on the floor. The thought of her doing it to Hoa at all disturbed me in a different way now, and I was suddenly angry.

Yet I undressed and lay down beside her. I knew what to do, what to expect. I had been told all my life. I felt the familiar sting, narcotic, mildly pleasant. Then the blind probing of her ovipositor. The puncture was painless, easy. So easy going in. She undulated slowly against me, her muscles forcing the egg from her body into mine. I held on to a pair of her limbs until I remembered Lomas holding her that way. Then I let go, moved inadvertently, and hurt her. She gave a low cry of pain and I expected to be caged at once within her limbs. When I wasn't, I held on to her again, feeling oddly ashamed.

"I'm sorry," I whispered.

She rubbed my shoulders with four of her limbs.

"Do you care?" I asked. "Do you care that it's me?"

She did not answer for some time. Finally, "You were the one making choices tonight, Gan. I made mine long ago."

"Would you have gone to Hoa?"

"Yes. How could I put my children into the care of one who hates them?"

"It wasn't . . . hate."

"I know what it was."

"I was afraid."

Silence.

"I still am." I could admit it to her here, now.

"But you came to me . . . to save Hoa."

"Yes." I leaned my forehead against her. She was cool velvet, deceptively soft. "And to keep you for myself," I said. It was so. I didn't understand it, but it was so.

She made a soft hum of contentment. "I couldn't believe I had made such a mistake with you," she said. "I chose you. I believed you had grown to choose me."

"I had, but . . ."

"Lomas."

"Yes."

"I have never known a Terran to see a birth and take it well. Qui has seen one, hasn't he?"

"Yes."

"Terrans should be protected from seeing."

I didn't like the sound of that—and I doubted that it was possible. "Not protected," I said. "Shown. Shown when we're young kids, and shown more than once. Gatoi, no Terran ever sees a birth that goes right. All we see is N'Tlic—pain and terror and maybe death."

She looked down at me. "It is a private thing. It has always been a private thing."

Her tone kept me from insisting—that and the knowledge that if she changed her mind, I might be the first public example. But I had planted the thought in her mind. Chances were it would grow, and eventually she would experiment.

"You won't see it again," she said. "I don't want you thinking any more about shooting me."

The small amount of fluid that came into me with her egg relaxed me as completely as a sterile egg would have, so that I could remember the rifle in my hands and my feelings of fear and revulsion, anger and despair. I could remember the feelings without reviving them. I could talk about them.

"I wouldn't have shot you," I said. "Not you." She had been taken from my father's flesh when he was my age.

"You could have," she insisted.

"Not you." She stood between us and her own people, protecting, interweaving.

"Would you have destroyed yourself?"

I moved carefully, uncomfortably. "I could have done that. I nearly did. That's Qui's 'away.' I wonder if he knows."

"What?"

I did not answer.

"You will live now."

"Yes." *Take care of her*, my mother used to say. Yes.

"I'm healthy and young," she said. "I won't leave you Lomas was left—alone, N'Tlic. I'll take care of you."

Tier One Questions

- 1) **Monitor:** What events happen in the text?
- 2) **Visualize:** Who is the main character?
- 3) **What does the main character want? What is stopping him or her from getting it?**
- 4) **Why did the author write the text?**
- 5) **What is the central idea of the text?**
- 6) **Figure out what you did not understand and reread that part of the text.**

Tier Two Questions

- 7) **Determine three to five important words or phrases in the text.**
- 8) **Determine the mood and tone of the text.**
- 9) **Infer:** In the Tier One questions, you were asked to determine what is happening in the text, now determine what is happening underneath the surface.

10) Question the text.

Objective Summary for *Bloodchild*

Story 3-Skin Matters by Troy L. Wiggins

Skin Matters

by Troy L. Wiggins

This work originally appeared in the June, 2014 issue of The Hoggspot Online Journal of Fantasy and Science Fiction

One day, Mama came back from town and told Jack that she had brought him new olfaction receptors. Jack nearly overheated. He reached out to touch her, to express his excitement in the only way that he knew.

“Don’t you fret, son. I know you wanna go outside,” she said while lifting up his faceplate to install the receptors. Her voice was heavy, but calm. “You’ll get outta this stuffy old house real soon. Yep. Real soon.”

After Mama installed the new receptors, it took Jack a while to get used to the ocean of scents that he found himself adrift in: heavy smells of throbbing flesh and rotting wood and thick, pungent black iron. Mama turned down the olfaction receptors for him most days. He was grateful. On days that she wasn’t around to do it for him, or forgot to, he felt like his head would explode.

Nothing in Mama’s house made Jack happier than watching television. Sometime after Jack had learned to walk, she had taken the large brown box up the attic steps to hide it away. Jack wondered about the box for a long while before daring to climb into the attic to retrieve it. He worked in secret to decipher the buttons and switches, caught in a vortex of contrasting thrill at his discovery and guilt, because he had found a thing that she had hidden from him. There was no official decree from Mama that he ought not be watching Television, but if Television didn’t tell, there was no way Mama would know.

Mama would often give Jack books in her absence. Pamphlets printed with photos of people on the front of them, people with impossibly round bushes of black hair and dark skin and hard, angry eyes. They were nice books, but Jack always tired of reading about freedom from bondage and the Ma’afa and ten-point plans.

Television never disappointed. Whenever Mama would take her green Chevrolet down the long hill road to town on business, she would tell Jack with her most stern face to “be a good boy and stay hidden, ‘cuz hidden is safe.” Jack would agree with all of his oil-pumping, steam powered heart, and as soon as he couldn’t hear the car’s clatter, he’d sneak up into the attic where Television lived and hoist it down the shaky iron steps, balancing carefully on the rungs so that he didn’t crush them with his weight.

Jack didn’t have speech modules, or he probably would have told her that he actually didn’t mind staying in the house sometimes, hidden away from the world behind thick wool curtain-blankets. But if he did, she would narrow her eyes and ask why, and then he knew that he would have to tell her about Television, and so he was glad that he didn’t have speech modules.

Jack enjoyed the tinny, mechanical language of Television as much as he loved the Technicolor moving pictures that flowered from deep inside the machine. But nothing, not one thing, was as great as Hoss Cartwright.

Hoss the Strong.

Hoss, the Frontier Avenger of Good.

Hoss the Warrior King, meting out justice with his club fists and his ten-gallon chin. Jack knew by heart when Hoss would appear on the television, right after the oily-haired lawyer whose show played the music that made Jack’s heart clunk. Then, the familiar twang-a-lang of the guitar, and the beautiful, colorful images of a big-sky Nevada frontier life that sent a glow from his cranial plate down to his toes. He imagined himself, ruddy-skinned, sunburnt, and covered in Ponderosa-dirt, riding horses alongside Hoss (and Little Joe, even though Jack thought that Little Joe was a stupid, careless boy) into Virginia City to talk business with Sheriff Coffee, and then have adventures. Jack’s joints would squeal as he slammed his hands together in excitement, the resultant clatter sounding like an avalanche of cast iron skilletts. And then he’d hear Mama’s car come popping back up the hill from a way off, and Jack would drag the Television back to the attic. Mama never knew.

One day, after leaving right behind the sun, Mama came back home like a whirlwind and shushed Jack up with a finger, turning his audio receivers down so low that he felt like he was stuffed inside a thick black box with walls made of cotton. She pushed him into his bedroom, closed the door, and locked it from the outside. Jack’s heart thumped and steam poured from his servos. Had she discovered his affairs with Television? That was the only reason why Mama would lock him in a room, alone. The light outside the blue blanket that covered the window went from cerulean, to turquoise, to pitch, and Jack shivered.

That night, still stranded in the dark bedroom and huddled in a corner far from the door, Jack swore off Television—and, though it pained him to the core, he swore that he would never see Hoss Cartwright again.

Then Mama threw open the door. Only her slender silhouette was visible in the glare of light from outside of the room. Jack leapt to his feet then fell with a clatter, wishing that he actually had could speak for the moment so that he could apologize for disobeying her. He could see the heat pouring off her as she approached and her hands shook as she readjusted his audio receivers—too high, the screeching feedback made him flinch.

“—says I oughta give you a choice, that you gotta be autonomous,” came Mama’s coffee-colored voice. “Well, I’ve trained you up in the way that you should go, and I believe you won’t stray from it.”

Jack opened and closed his mouth.

“You’re a smart boy, Jack. Real smart. And it just don’t do for you to be cooped up in this house like some sick and shut in. I been trying my best to get you ready to go out in the world, to see and experience thangs that I wouldn’t, or can’t.”

Jack tilted his head like a curious puppy. Mama paced the square of light that bled into the room from outside. She never once stepped into the darkness.

“God has his reasons for everything. When I got old enough to know that I couldn’t make children of my own, I cried for a minute, and I blamed Him. But then, when I stopped fightin’ I realized that He, in His mighty wisdom, had given me a great mind. And I ran with that. When I stopped running, I had you.”

Something told Jack to reach out and clasp Mama’s hand, so he did. Mama caressed his face and even though he couldn’t feel her touch, he nuzzled into her palm.

“You my pride and joy, Jack. And now, I think you ready to come up out this house. I want things to be as easy for you as possible, but I can’t decide everything for you. Naw, I gotta give you the ability to make your own choices. And that’s what I’mma do. Come on here, son. Stay close.”

Mama led him out of the room, into the soft red light of the rest of the house.

“My choices ain’t always been the best, Jack. Sometimes, folks frown on what you decide to do, even if it’s for the greater good. But I’m not gonna deny you the opportunity to make your own choices. Nope. Never let it be said that I didn’t let you choose for yaself.”

They sped through the house, Mama pulling Jack along by his arm. Her clodhoppers clumped against the wooden floor, underscored by Jack’s clattering as he followed. She threw the back door open, and yanked him along outside. The night was a swirling, heavy thing that settled on his shoulders. Jack could hear the fat leaves in Mama’s garden whispered in the darkness. Somewhere down the road, a pack of dogs snarling and tore at some unfortunate creature. Its death screams echoed inside his head.

They stopped in front of Mama’s shed. Jack remembered seeing the inside of the shed a few times before, when she’d given him shovels or picks or rakes to work in the garden. But never at night.

Mama threw the doors open, and they clattered in protest. Everything was as Jack remembered: Shovels, spades, rakes all neatly hung from the walls, a wheelbarrow propped up along the back, and a ladder, legs thrown wide, straddled the floor. But here was a new thing: a big white box pushed up against the back wall that smoldered cold white smoke into the night. Mama released Jack’s hand, and crept up on the white box, as if she was afraid that it would run off. Jack thought of the dogs.

“This is it, son,” Mama whispered. She dipped her hand into the smoke and Jack leapt forward in fear that whatever was in the box would strip Mama’s flesh from her bones. Mama snapped her head up, a hiss on her lips, the granite in her eyes stilling him mid leap and softening his fists, which he had tightened into clubs.

She pulled her hand from the box, clutching a patch of what looked like soft leather. It was glossy, pale pink, and wrinkled. She reached in again, and pulled out another patch. This one was a glistening brown, close in color to Mama’s skin but more earthy, with undertones of sunlight that weren’t affected by the simmering dark that surrounded them. Mama held both of the patches in front of Jack’s face, and exhaled a trembling breath.

“I have a friend who’s sympathetic to me and you. He convinced me to give you a choice of what you wanted to be, and, I damned him for it at first. But my love for you is deeper than my love for my own self. Do you know what this is, Jack?”

Jack shook his head. The springs in his neck creaked.

“This is the key that opens the world up for you. Before you even get to talk to folks, they’re gonna decide who and what you are. I want you to have to power to choose that what they think.” Mama’s breathing was labored. Jack could hear each ragged curl of air as it flipped in her lungs, trickled from her nose and mouth. “But you gotta choose quick, son. We ain’t long for this place.”

And he knew, then. He knew what she meant, and he knew what she wanted.

Mama had begun to tremble. Jack stretched out his arm, his servos whirring. He pointed at one of the patches that Mama held, and her fingers tightened on it.

And as his hand fell, Jack heard something deep inside Mama's chest crack, just a little bit, like a tiny hammer striking the most beautiful piece of glass that he'd ever known.

Tier One Questions

- 1) Monitor: What events happen in the text?**

- 2) Visualize: Who is the main character?**

- 3) What does the main character want? What is stopping him or her from getting it?**

- 4) Why did the author write the text?**

- 5) What is the central idea of the text?**

- 6) Figure out what you did not understand and reread that part of the text.**

Tier Two Questions

- 7) Determine three to five important words or phrases in the text.**

- 8) Determine the mood and tone of the text.**

- 9) Infer: In the Tier One questions, you were asked to determine what is happening in the text, now determine what is happening underneath the surface.**

10) Question the text.

Objective Summary for *Skin Matters*

Activity 3-Film Critique

Directions: Dystopian worlds don't only exist on the page, but also on the screen. Choose a dystopian film, watch it, then write a critique of the movie using the Film Critique Guidelines. Below are three lists of Dystopian movies for you to look through. You may pick any movie from the compilation below or choose one that does not appear here.

The 50 Best Dystopian Movies of All Time from Paste Magazine:

<https://www.pastemagazine.com/movies/dystopian-movies/best-dystopian-movies-of-all-time-1/-1-blade-runner>

The Best Dystopian Films Released Between *Blade Runner* and *Blade Runner 2049* from Vulture

<https://www.vulture.com/2017/08/best-dystopian-post-apocalyptic-movies.html>

From *Hunger Games* to *Ender's Game*: The Teen Dystopia Boom, Ranked from Vanity Fair

<https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2016/03/young-adult-dystopia-movies-ranking>

Film Critique Guidelines	
Paragraph 1	Offer your overall impression of the film while mentioning the movie's title, director, and key actors. <i>[Note: this info can be found at www.imdb.com]</i>
Paragraph 2	<i>Briefly</i> summarize the plot of the film
Paragraph 3	Positive things you thought about the film, what did you like? Why? Use descriptive words to discuss the plot, setting, techniques and effects used, music, etc.
Paragraph 4	Negative things you thought about the film, what didn't you like? Why? Comment on the same type of things that you mentioned in paragraph 4.
Paragraph 5	Ending paragraph--your last opportunity to guide the reader. Summarize and strongly restate your opinions.

Commonly used words and phrases

spectacular visual effects, excessive violence, breathtaking, evocative, mood, atmosphere, poorly, unsuccessful, detail, scenery, irresistible, perfect, moments, plot, this movie has been compared to ____ because, wonderful, hilarious, momentum, unexpected plot twists, unbelievable, phenomenal, hype, suspense, disappointing, confusion/confused, fake, imitation, genre, unoriginal, typical, thrilled, was a very moving portrayal, quality of the film, I was impressed by, credible, cliché, a mixture of, classic, captivating

Questions to ask yourself when writing your critique

BACKGROUND

Who is the writer of the film? Has the screenplay been adapted from another work?

Who is the director?

When was the film made?

STRUCTURE / FORM

What does the title mean in relation to the film as a whole?

How are the opening credits presented? Do they relate to meaning?

Why does the film start in the way that it does?

Are there any motifs (scenes, images, dialogue) that are repeated? What purpose do they serve?

What three or four sequences are most important in the film? Why?

Is sound used in any vivid ways to enhance the film? (i.e. Enhance drama, heighten tension, disorient the viewer, etc.)

How does the film use color or light/dark to suggest tone and mood in different scenes?

Are there any striking uses of perspective (seeing through a character's eyes, camera angle, etc.)

How does this relate to the meaning of the scene?

How and when are scenes cut? Are there any patterns in the way the cuts function?

What specific scene constitutes the film's climax? How does this scene resolve the central issue of the film?

Does the film leave any disunities (loose ends) at the end? If so, what does it suggest?

Why does the film conclude on this particular image?

THEME

How does this film relate to the issues and questions evoked by your topic?

Does the film present a clear point-of-view on your topic? How?

Are there any aspects of theme that are left ambiguous at the end? Why?

How does this film relate to the other literary texts you have read on your topic (or in class this year or on your own)?

General Terms

Shot: continuous, unedited piece of film of any length

Scene: a series of shots that together form a complete episode or unit of the narrative

Storyboard: Drawn up when designing a production. Plans AV text and shows how each shot relates to sound track. (Think comic strip with directions - like a rough draft or outline for a film.)

Montage: The editing together of a large number of shots with no intention of creating a continuous reality. A montage is often used to compress time, and montage shots are linked through a unified sound - either a voiceover or a piece of music.

Parallel action: narrative strategy that crosscuts between two or more separate actions to create the illusion that they are occurring simultaneously

Shots

Long Shot: Overall view from a distance of whole scene often used as an establishing shot - to set scene. Person - will show whole body.

Medium or Mid Shot: Middle distance shot - can give background information while still focusing on subject. Person - usually shows waist to head.

Close Up: Focuses on detail / expression / reaction. Person - shows either head or head and shoulders.

Tracking shot: single continuous shot made with a camera moving along the ground

Reverse shot: shot taken at a 180 degree angle from the preceding shot (reverse-shot editing is commonly used during dialogue, angle is often 120 to 160 degrees)

Subjective Shot (P.O.V. Shot): Framed from a particular character's point of view. Audience sees what character sees.

Camera Movement

Pan: Camera moves from side to side from a stationary position

Tilt: Movement up or down from a stationary position

Tracking: The camera moves to follow a moving object or person

Camera Angles

Low Angle Camera: shoots up at subject. Used to increase size, power, status of subject

High Angle Camera: shoots down at subject. Used to increase vulnerability, powerlessness, decrease size

Editing (the way shots are put together)

Cut: The ending of a shot. If the cut seems inconsistent with the next shot, it is called a jump cut.

Fade in or out: The image appears or disappears gradually. Often used as a division between scenes.

Dissolve: One image fades in while another fades out so that for a few seconds, the two are superimposed.

Sound

Soundtrack: Consists of dialogue, sound effects and music. Should reveal something about the scene that visual images don't.

Score: musical soundtrack

Sound effects: all sounds that are neither dialogue nor music

Voice-over: spoken words laid over the other tracks in sound mix to comment upon the narrative or to narrate

Activity 4-Final Project

Directions: Complete at least one assignment from Group A, Group B, and Group C.

Group A

Option 1: Write a four paragraph essay that compares and contrast two of the dystopian stories you read. Be sure to have a thesis statement and include at least two pieces of evidence. Apply what you know about essay writing.

Option 2: This should to 200 to 300 words

A: Choose one of the dystopian stories you read and rewrite the ending so that it has a more utopian ending.

or

B: Rewrite the story from a different character's perspective.

Option 3: Create your own questions for one of the dystopian stories you read. You must have four text dependent questions and four multiple choice questions. Try to make these questions challenging. They can focus on vocabulary or grammar, the story's main idea or the author's purpose, or the character's actions and motivation. Remember *All of the Above* is not an answer.

Group B

Option 1: Write your own dystopian story. Be sure you review the characteristics of dystopian fiction on page one of this packet and try to include those in your story. Beyond that, there are no rules. Be creative and write about whatever you want.

Option 2: Create the soundtrack for a dystopian story. You may use one of the stories you read or create your own premise. The songs should reflect both the story and the characteristics of dystopian fiction defined on page one of this packet.

Option 3: Use the website *Storyboard That* to create your own dystopian comic strip. Just like in a regular comic or graphic novel, I should be able to understand the story based on the visuals you present. Make sure you review the characteristics of dystopian fiction on page one of this packet. The link to the website is below.

<https://www.storyboardthat.com/storyboard-creator>

Group C

Option 1: Covid-19 has affected our daily lives. One could say that we are currently undergoing our own dystopian reality. For the next seven days keep a journal about your own experiences as we are quarantined. What is your daily routine? What is happening with your family? Are you staying at home or venturing out into the world? There is no right or wrong answers here. This is

about your feelings and your experience. It is a way to process what is happening to you in this moment. Try to make each entry at least 100 words. You may type this or handwrite it.