

Chaos

by Guenevere Lee

Jamaica, 21XX

Ardis woke with a cold sweat. She looked at her watch, 12:30. It had only been four and a half hours; she wasn't scheduled to wake up until 5. So why was she awake early?

It was then when Ardis noticed the sweat. It felt strange. She had only felt sweat once, when she was three. She had left the nursery dome with her parents; she was going to her new home. It was the first time she had met her parents. The memory was vague, but the sweat - sticky and smelly - permeated her mind. The room should have been regulated to her body temperature. Something was wrong.

Ardis threw the blankets off of her and her feet over the edge. The sweat glistened off her black skin. It was the moonlight, but how? She was sure that she had commanded the windows to go opaque. She stood. It should have been pitch black.

"Lights," Ardis commanded. Nothing happened. "Lights!" Still nothing.

She got up to find a switch of some sort that could help turn the lights on. But there were no switches. Met with a short temper Ardis stormed to the door only to find that it as well would not obey her commands and did not open. Ardis began to furiously empty boxes and shelves in search of a flashlight or light rods. Anything that could illuminate her situation, but she could not, and all that achieved was to frustrate her. She then tried to turn on her computer, but it did not work as well.

With a final desperation she ran back to the door and began scratching, pulling, yelling and even banging on it. She was in hysterics. Why would nothing work? After five minutes of this violent outburst at her door she broke down crying. That's when she realized something.

Violence, panic, fear, tantrums, hate even, were all things she had never felt before. No, that was not true. She had felt emotions before, but not since she was three, before she started taking the needle. Now they were bursting out and she could not control them.

The needle was the thing that pricked her arm every morning at 5:00 am as she woke up. It numbed the 'emotion gland' in your brain, so to speak. This way emotions would not get in the way of either her work or schooling sessions. In this perfect world, emotions would always get in the way.

Ardis ran to the side of her bed and looked for the hatch containing the small needle. After scourging the bed for a half an hour she remembered why she could not see it. In her panic Ardis forgot that the needle was kept in a hidden compartment. You could be looking at the door to it and not know it. It was like this for perfection.

Perfection, she thought, will be the end of me.

She looked down at her watch again, 1:16.

"Damn!" No one would be up; no one would notice that she was locked in her room. "Damn, damn, damn!"

Ardis looked at her window and cringed. She could not go out that way for two major reasons. It was five stories up; the fall would kill her of course. Also, the atmosphere was poison. She was trapped.

She kicked the hard walls giving immense pain in her leg and foot. In all truth, it had not hurt that much, but Ardis had not experienced pain since she was three. She had lived thirteen years in a perfect world, she's been up for not even an hour and she felt like she was in Hell suddenly.

It was then when she got really tired, and just before she could fall asleep a thought floated through her head:

In the morning, the world will be different.

The world was different before she even opened an eye. She dreamt that night. Normally she would have taken a sleeping pill right before going to bed, normally that pill would stop dreams from happening, but things were different and she had not had to take the pill. She would not have been able to even had she wanted to take it.

So as Ardis lay on the hot floor, her mind took a trip around Jamaica. She dreamt about those first three years of her life that she could not remember. She dreamt about her parents taking her away from her home, suiting her up and taking her to another. Out under the hot sun, the only time she had been outside of the domes. Then the sun came down and laughed at her saying this was his revenge.

She was in the dome next being given drugs so she had no personality, no difference and no problems. And the world and sun and all the creatures that humans had driven to extinction, came back and went into her head where they sang about their perfect revenge.

Their perfect revenge that was perfection itself.

Ardis woke up and looked around the room. Sun poured in through the window and she smiled. She had slept in. Her watch said 11:59 am. She had really slept in. The compound would be empty for another two hours or so. Her disappearance would have been noted by now.

"The funny thing is that I have not disappeared, I have done just the opposite," she laughed at the humorous side of the situation. The emotions were getting the better of her again, but these happy emotions were all right compared to the frantic anxiety of the night before.

Ardis laughed and she found that she loved the action. It was amazingly fun and so she did not try to control it. It was freedom.

Ardis looked up, she needed to do something. With light she could read, but what? Normally she read stories off of the screen, but there was no electricity. She looked at her closet, what was in there? She had never looked before, always being busy with schooling sessions and work.

She walked over and opened the closet. Books. There were books that filled every corner. They were the same small size and brown colour, yet on the sides there were different titles.

Ardis grinned. She should not have these. They were a fire hazard. Books were normally found on the computer or the handheld screen used for writing essays or reading books. She picked one up. The cover said "Spanish" in bold letters. She opened it, it was a teach yourself a different language book. She threw it to the floor.

Picking another one up, she read, "French" this time. Another one "Yugoslavian". "German", "Russian", "Polish", "Japanese", "Mexican". Twenty books later she was

ready to burn them all, just like the Censors. She looked back towards the closet and saw a small door at the back of the closet that had been hidden by all the books she had thrown down.

Ardis reached up and opened it. A book, larger than the other, of a dark green colour fell out. She picked it up to investigate. On the cover was a dragon laying on a mound of gold and above it the words "J.R.R. TOLKIEN, THE HOBBIT or THERE AND BACK AGAIN".

She opened it and through curiosity began to read it.

Officer Jonathan Sivad sat at his desk. In front of him sitting down as well was a woman who, although she probably should have been worried, was very composed and calm. Her presence had an air about it that demanded all attention.

"So she never came out this morning and she never went to her schooling sessions?" Jonathan inquired.

"Yes. Her door would not open when me and my husband tried," Diana Chirlu answered in a tone that suggested she really did not care about her daughter.

Jonathan nodded silently. "It was locked then?"

"The override codes did not open it, so it was not locked."

"She changed the codes?"

"No, she could not do that. She is underage."

Again he nodded and straightened himself up. "So you think she is trapped?"

"Yes, and I want Ardis out."

William Chirlu had heard the news about his daughter at 2:00 pm as he left his work. In all truth and honesty, he did not care. Nobody cared. Not even Diana, but it would be wrong not to notice and try to help out.

All the electricity had been cut from her room, same as four Officials of the New Government. The police thought it to be the work of terrorists who were against the ordered and precise way they lived. Most of them lived up North, for this to happen in Jamaica was rare.

They could not hate, but if they could, they would hate the terrorist.

Officer Sivad and his partner Lars Arevlis were trying to track down who did this and were searching for clues. They only knew one thing: all five rooms were shut down differently. It would take longer for each room, especially seeing they had limited manpower. William's daughter was going to be concentrated on more once all the politicians were out.

With all the equality in the world, they still labeled most important to least. He would just have to wait there being bored.

Ardis looked at the book in wonder, it only took her an hour to read it, but for the past two hours it had left her puzzled and amazed.

All the books she had ever read were simply realistic fiction. Fantasy, horror, science fiction, and such, were all things off the past. They had been destroyed before her mother was even born, back in the troubled times when the Censors were in charge. These were not made anymore, now all books had to be realistic so not to tempt anyone

to revive the Censors mentality. In that sense thought, the Censors had won. What she had found was rare.

Books in themselves were rare, but one that survived through that time...

The woman who had lived here before her had been very old born at the end of the 20th century, she had died two years ago. Ardis had then been assigned their quarters and came to live here to be closer to her parents' rooms.

Smiling at her discovery, she picked up the book and started to read again, this time she read it slower.

After Ardis had read the book, she read it once more after that. She would have read it a fourth time but the night stopped that from happening. It was the most dazzling and exciting thing she had ever read.

Her favourite character was Golem. He reminded her of herself, locked up in a cave not being able to leave. He could go invisible; she went through this life like she was invisible. But while Golem had the ring, she had nothing. His ring was taken from him, her nothing had just been taken from her. It was a pity that he was so short lived.

Her watch said 10:00 pm. She should try to sleep. She did not want to though. She feared the dreams. Mostly she feared them because she was not sure what they were, and she still had not figured out the first. She was not ready for a second.

She paced the room for hours, slapped her face and kicked the wall. By 3:30 am she was hitting her head against the wall screaming and quoting lines that she remembered from "The Hobbit". She even pretended to be fighting the spiders from the forest and the dragon. Nothing worked.

At 5:49 am she finally passed out on the floor, hitting her head.

Men, pale men wearing black came. They came and destroyed the circuits to each room differently. They cursed the civilization. They were after the politicians, but a mistake was made. She was the mistake. She was a mistake.

I am a mistake...

No.

I have a purpose?

Yes.

Ardis woke up without opening her eyes. The dream was confusing. She thought it over in her head. It explained a lot and made more questions at the same time. It was not real. It could not be real. And whom was she talking to at the end? Herself?

That is when the hunger hit her like a hard rock to the stomach. She opened her eyes and saw red. A puddle of red was beside her, no under her. She tried to sit but her head did not cooperate. It hurt.

By trying to reach up she realized any movement at all made her head hurt. Very carefully she reached up and felt the blood soaking her matted hair. She had passed out and cracked her skull last night. In her attempt to hide from the dreams, she had brought something upon her that was much worse.

There was not as much blood as she first thought, the pain was minimal but for her everything hurt at least ten times more.

She glanced down at her watch, 3:30 pm. She was so hungry and now she needed medical attention. Could this get any worse?

Ardis could see the blood slowly crawling towards her book. She reached for it forgetting her injury and pulled back as the pain kicked in. She could not move her head without intense pain. She was stuck lying on the floor. She did not like the way things were turning.

A grim thought entered her mind. She was going to die. Either from dehydration or loss of blood. She would die, and just when she thought she was starting to understand...

Jonathan stood. These living quarters had been made back around the year 2050, back during World War Three. Some people blamed the Old Government, but most the Censors for that war. It was a lost detail today. The fact they had is the losing side travelled to the North, U.S.A. and Canada, and refused the south's better way of living. Australia, Asia, Europe, Russia and Africa had been completely destroyed by nukes. The point was these quarters were made to endure a nuclear war; they would have to think of something other than cutting.

They had gotten Shirley Stephanie out, a New Government Official. She had been in there less than 48 hours, but emerged unhinged. Shirley's own words were: "This Hell-bent system is trying to kill me! I want out of it". She was trying to make plans to go to New York; the Officials were trying to make plans to put her in an institution.

Now trying to get Sharon Nosman out looked bad. They were almost there, but what if she had cracked as well?

It was then when Lars stumbled over to his side. He looked just as calm and bored as the rest of them. They were naturally calm in an emergency.

"It looks like the terrorists are winning," his voice was lower than usual.

"What do you mean?" Jonathan inquired.

"Our politicians are making travel plans and we can't find the terrorists."

"We will find them, but first thing is first." Jonathan reassured Lars, but he was already stumbling away. Lars was the strangest person her had ever met, always going on tangents and never explaining his thoughts.

Ardis drifted in and out of consciousness. She quoted from "The Hobbit" quietly, trying to find a tune for the songs written therein, thought about life, but still the pain did not go away, and the blood still crept towards the book.

Save the book! Nothing else matters! It is the way out of the lies you grew up in!
The message screamed in her head repeatedly.

It was true though, although it was a piece of fantasy, for Ardis it was telling her how the world was like before the Censors and World War Three destroyed everything good in the world. The fact that a man could have mustered these thoughts back then was amazing, but in present day there was control on your thoughts, movements and imagination. This type of thing was simply not accepted.

She thought over every important thing in the world. If she died the book lived on. The book was more important.

With the last bit of concentration and strength she had left, she pushed forward at the dampening book. The pain was excruciating, but she ignored it and hit the novel, sending it sprawling across the room. Then black covered her eyes and she had one last dream.

A man came into her room and took what looked like a stone, a gem perhaps?
Yes, a garnet gem. With the garnet gem he went back into the world.

Then he smashed the garnet gem and everyone had a piece. Through it the world gained individuality secretly. The terrorists became allies and her death was thanked.

Her purpose was served.

His was beginning.

Sharon Norman was dead. She had smashed her mirror and slit her wrist. Gwen Welsh, another New Government Official, was talking to herself and being shipped off to the hospital. Another politician, David Delineate seemed sane, but kept laughing and telling everyone how stupid they were. Nobody there had ever heard laughter from an adult before.

Then they had opened Ardis Chirlu's door. Nobody had expected to find her sprawled out lying in a puddle of her own blood, and despite Sharon Nosman, nobody expected the sixteen year old to be dead.

The books were a shock too. Already they were sorting them out trying to find clues to her death. She had either died from dehydration, blood loss, or a combination of the two.

Jonathan found "The Hobbit". The back of it had been soaked in blood, but just the back cover and the last ten pages. From the looks of it, Ardis had made sure that it did not get further soaked in her own blood, and the exertion had exasperated the wound.

That bothered him.

Why would anyone give their life for a book?

"Do you think they've won now?"

Jonathan looked up surprised; he had not known Lars was standing there.

"What do you mean?" Something about Lars face seemed wrong.

"Two accounts of second degree murder, three loons."

"Loons?"

"Yeah, you know, crazy, kooks."

"What are you...?" Jonathan stopped himself, Lars' face changed, he was smiling, something David had just introduced to them.

"I think we won Jon, but I can't let them think you helped us." Lars stopped smiling and grabbed for his gun. Before anybody could react he brought it down on Jonathan's temple.

The policemen did not think twice. They tackled Lars and cuffed him.

Jonathan Sivad had gone down when hit, but quickly got back up in time to see Lars being dragged out the door.

"Have you ever laughed Jon?" It was the last thing he ever heard from Lars.

To this day nobody knew why Lars blew his cover. There were theories that because he had to hide his emotions he had gone over the edge. Jonathan thought he knew the answer, that because he knew he would be discovered he gave himself up. Lars had done because - terrorist or not - he had not wanted Jonathan to be blamed as well. At least, that is what his last few words led him to believe.

Lars Arevlis and four other terrorists had done this. They had wanted to show them how emotions felt.

Jonathan looked down and saw the book he had dropped. He crouched down and picked it up. Then with a sigh he opened the front and started reading.