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# From Her Eyes a Doctrine





“Immigration is a kind of proxy war — and maybe a last stand — for White Americans, who are undergoing a painful recognition that, unless dramatic action is taken, their grandchildren will live in a country that is alien and hostile.”

-Richard Spencer, 2014

## CHAPTER ONE

### A DARKENED WORLD

It was late at night when Phoebe decided to kill herself. Drifting off to sleep, she awoke with a start, unsure at first if she had been dreaming. She had seen her mother, not weak and worn as she was before she died, but young, so young that Phoebe wondered if, rather than her imagination, it might in fact be the oldest of her memories. “Come to me, Pheebs,” her mother had said, and the memory of that pet name, not heard since she was a child, now brimmed Phoebe’s eyes with tears. The longer she was awake, the more the vision dimmed, the features on her mother’s young face vanishing. As the seconds ticked by, it was like losing her mother all over again, and now in her mind she could see her mother only the way she looked in her last days, her face lined with worry.

Yet when Phoebe had come home every night, her mother had still managed to form those lines into a smile. In the last weeks, as cancer ate away at her body, she hadn’t even the strength to raise herself off the couch, but she smiled at her daughter in spite of the pain. Phoebe knew, that day when she returned to their one-bedroom apartment, that this would be her mother’s last day on earth. And still her mother managed a faint smile as she greeted her daughter for what they both knew would be the last time.

Three months separated that day from this, yet it felt so recent that sometimes Phoebe imagined she could dash back to that moment and follow her mother through death, as through a swinging door whose next flap would show the way to her mother’s retreating

form. No one else, not a single person in all this city could understand her loneliness, and no one would even care to listen. Phoebe had no desire to live in a world so indifferent to her existence.

Suicide, far from being viewed as a cry for help, was now so common as to be utterly devoid of drama. It was even called the White Death, for while it was rare among the other races, it had become the most frequent end to a White's life. No one would mourn her or even find it worth mentioning.

But no sooner did Phoebe resolve upon death than she became equally determined to leave some record of her existence, something to show that she had lived. Even if no one read it, it would still be something that, like a child of her own, could not exist unless she, too, had lived. It would be a history of the world, her world. Then she could put an end to her life. The delay proved to be short, for the history she knew was not a rich one. Only two days later, she was nearly finished with it.

It was the fourth day of October, in the city once known as Minneapolis, in the year 2107, three generations into the Retribution.

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It was late evening and time to go home. From her job in the Chinese-owned food warehouse, Phoebe caught the bus that would take her out of the Hispanic neighborhood, along the edge of Somali Town, to the White ghetto, wedged in the south side of the city, where she lived.

Around thirty people were already on the bus as Phoebe looked for a seat. She walked past an old Mexican man, who eyed her as he grasped a rosary of Santa Muerte, the skeleton-goddess that had all but replaced the Virgin Mary in his people's religion. He appeared not to be part of larger group a few rows further on, which could have been one family, the nature of whose links and bonds was unclear. Finding an empty spot near the middle, she sat down facing an elderly Hmong couple who sounded like they were having an argument, though their language made it difficult to tell. Two rows further back, two White women presided over their mixed-race offspring, which displayed dramatically different hues, suggesting a variety of fathers. Further still, three Black men joked loudly while

eyeing nervously a larger group of Somalis at the rear.

As the bus pulled away from the stop with a jerk, Phoebe opened her little book, and suddenly the world around her disappeared.

*I was born in 2088, in the forty-third year of the Retribution. There is nothing in history but the Retribution, and the Evil Times that led to it.*

Phoebe bit her lip in thought. *How do I know there is nothing else?* She remembered her grandmother's Bible, the only book, apart from a book of poetry, that she'd ever read outside of school. Its inside cover bore a black and white picture of Jesus with all the children around him, all the races happy to hear his message. It had taken her years to read it, but her grandmother had been determined to take her beyond the rudimentary literacy of the other children. Even before she'd understood the words, its poetry had appealed to Phoebe.

The events it described, especially in the Old Testament, were not all that different from the Retribution narrative: a race that called itself chosen, that wiped out entire peoples, only to be brought low and itself become enslaved. The New Testament offered a different tone, but absolutely none of it seemed to explain the world Phoebe found herself in. She believed in God, though she would be hard-pressed to say why or how. The Retribution she could see and feel, whereas God was like a wish you made on your birthday: you never spoke of it, for fear it might not come true.

The yelling of the mixed-race broods two rows back interrupted her thoughts. She returned to her history:

*All of the Evil Times can be divided into three parts: the Prime Evil Era, the Mid-Evil Era, and the Evil Rights Era. All these differed from each other only in the means by which Whites subdued other races.*

That sounded good, she thought, much better than her school textbook series, *Retribution and the Rainbow Nation*. If anyone ever read her book, they would know that a clever person wrote it. Crafting that opening had taken effort, but then she had shifted naturally to the stately cadences of the King James Bible, the language of Kings and Chronicles:

*These are the deeds of the Prime Evil Era. Behold, the White man lived in the forest, while the Asian and the African dwelt amid peace and plenty. But the deeds of the People of Color, and all that they did, and the cities which they built, are not written in the White man's chronicles. For behold, two White tribes, the Greeks and Romans, saw the riches and wisdom of the People of Color, and conspired against them. They stole the Colored man's knowledge, and wrote in their chronicles, The Colored man did not make this: rather, we fashioned it ourselves. And they prospered in their sin for many generations. But then it came to pass that other White tribes gathered in the wilderness, coveting this wealth. For ever it is the White man's nature to covet what is not his. And they made of this false empire a desolation.*

*And these are the deeds of the Mid-Evil Times. The White tribes now conferred, saying, Have ye not seen, that we may do more by war than by theft? And so they went up into the land of the Arab and the Turk, and they slew, shedding the blood of war in peace, and they called it a holy crusade. Yet their lust for blood could not be sated. There came one to them, saying, Hark, I purpose to build three ships, for to cross the great sea and find new lands for us to subdue. And so they loaded the fiery powder they bath stolen from distant China and crossed the sea. They set foot upon lands in the West, where the Red Indian had his riches and temples and lived at peace. With war and pestilence the Whites slew him, overturned his temples, and stole his riches.*

*And behold, the Whites held the land but did not wish to toil in the fields. So they took counsel, and some among them said, To Africa we must sail, to make slaves of its people, who know not the yoke of slavery and dwell yet in peace. And so a mighty fleet of ships they sent to Africa, and led the peoples away captive. With whips they scourged the African's back, with the sword they smote the Indian and the Mexican, and when they wished for great roads they turned to the Chinaman and said, Work. Thus they won a land for which they did not labor, and dwelt in cities which they built not, and of the wheat fields and orchards which they planted not did they eat. And they called this abomination America.*

Her teachers had shown them documentary footage from those days, showing what had happened to men like Kunta Kinte and Django. As the class watched actual film of these slaves being beaten, Phoebe would sink down in her chair, trying to disappear, while the Colored students grew more outraged. Later, out on the playground, they would vent their anger in full.

She remembered, too, how her teachers would have the class reenact events from the Mid-Evil Times, only with the White students re-cast as Colored victims. They were made to wear chains and locked in a closet to simulate the slave ships, and they would have to describe how their White masters beat them. They were put behind barbed wire like their ancestors had done to the Japanese. Colored students would point guns at the Whites' foreheads to reenact a massacre of peaceful Indians.

Phoebe ran a hand through her hair, as if to comfort the child that she had been. How she had cried. She'd come to hate being White, to hate her ancestors for being slave owners and Nazis and all the things they told her about in school.

Her own parents and grandparents, she felt, weren't like that. Grandma had certainly been spirited, and sometimes she would say things that Phoebe had never heard anyone say before. She had been around Phoebe's age at the time of the Retribution and remembered what she called the "better times," in the 2020s and '30s. Grandma had grown up in a real house, with lots of rooms and hot water all the time, and trees all around. Her family could go anywhere they wanted without being afraid. They could afford nice things and even had a car, two cars in fact. Back then, she told Phoebe, everything worked, and there were no blackouts. The things she said sounded preposterous and unbelievable, but as a little girl, Phoebe had enjoyed imagining that she lived in such a world. She especially loved Grandma's stories at Christmas time, when she would describe the brightly lit tree, the delicious food, and the gifts with brightly colored bows.

One day in school, however, Phoebe came to the sickening realization that the world her grandmother had described and the Evil Times were one and the same. They had to be. And as she grew older, she came to see that her grandmother's world had been built on racism and White privilege, only Grandma had been too blind to see it.

Phoebe's mother, a true child of the Hunger, was more sober, her feet planted firmly on the ground. She didn't want her daughter dreaming of things that could never be. Life was the way it was, and it would never be any other way. Better to work hard and have a little common sense, because those were the things that would get you through life. Whenever Phoebe would come home from school crying, her mother and grandmother would argue.

Gradually, she came to understand that the Retribution was more powerful than her family, that it had done things to hers, and others, and it could do yet more. It was far better to submit to its wrath than to flee it. The faster one said, "I am guilty," the sooner the punishment ended. And so she would hold on through the worst parts at school, when they went over the dreadful violence Whites had unleashed in the Mid-Evil Era, until the class reached the Evil Rights Era. This block of instruction had violence, too, but not on so epic a scale, and Phoebe seemed more able to follow its twists and turns than the rest of the students.

*The White men prospered, yet some feared, saying, Behold, even as the Colored peoples toil, they are become many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude. How long think ye that we may hold this land? And so they removed the shackles from the Black African, to convey him by sea back to his land. Yet his numbers were too great, and he continued to multiply among them. Then the White man halted the ships from Asia, but this availed not, nor did the Mexican leave the land which was in truth his. But verily, without the Colored races, the White man is nothing, and he fears this knowledge. And so in the evil of his heart, he devised another plan.*

This idea of White dependence on other races, so central to her education, rang true to Phoebe. The Whites she knew seemed utterly incapable of the grand crimes of their ancestors: launching ambitious crusades, colonizing entire continents, putting populations to the sword. The Whites she lived among were feeble, simpering, hollow inside. Suicide and drug overdoses were all too common. Her teacher said that even before the Retribution, Whites had realized that the future did not belong to them. They felt it in their bones, and so they stopped having children in sufficient numbers to replace themselves, and all this long before the Retribution.

*And these are the deeds of the Evil Rights Era. Fear for his posterity ate at the White man's heart. So he pretended to lift the burdens from the backs of his servants, and raise them up. He said to his brethren, Let us do reverence to the Colored man's ways, and name our streets after his kings, and listen to the music of his princes. Let us admit his kinfolk into our lands, so that he may not have complaint against us. And we shall prefer his sons and daughters to our own in our great schools. We may even choose one of his own as our king. Yet we need fear not, for it is a little thing, and our gold and silver shall not fail. Such was the perfidy of the White man in his privilege, for he knew well that in giving, the master knows himself to be master, and the servant, in holding out his hands, knows himself to be such.*

Reading back the words, Phoebe thought this was much better than her own textbooks, which had consisted mostly of simple sentences accompanied by drawings of what life had been like before the Retribution. *Yet maybe, she thought, the pride I take in writing is one more sign of White privilege, evidence of the primal sin within me.* One could never escape it; it was in the blood. Whites had done awful things to the rest of the world, then they had compounded that evil by having children. How many times Phoebe had longed to have brown skin and escape the life to which those ancestors had abandoned her.

*The White man's merchants had dominion over all the earth, while his magistrates would freely slay the Black youth in the cities, for he held their lives to be of little worth. And a wall he began to build, to halt the Mexicans from entering the land he stole from their fathers. But the blood he shed became a judgment upon him. The Blacks in the cities were filled with rage, and bestirred themselves to riot. And the Mexicans laid down the corpses of their children and tore down the wall that blocked their way.*

These events her grandma did not remember so well, for she had been a child then. But she did recall an election that all the grownups had been talking about:

*Then many of the White men forsook the counsel of their elders, saying, When we elect our new king, or mayhap a queen, let us make*

it as a new founding of the country. If our people shall humble themselves, and pray, and turn from their wicked ways, then our sins will be forgiven. The Colored races cannot be numbered for multitude. The days draw nigh when our race shall be extinguished, but if we bow our faces to the earth, perhaps there shall be a place for us in the new kingdom.

*But others of their hated tribe would not harken to this, and hardened their necks like to the necks of their fathers, saying, We will not give away the inheritance of our fathers. Yet these had not the choosing of the king, but those others, who said Nay, let us not follow the ways of our fathers, for they did much evil. When they had the victory, they tore down the statues of their fathers, yea even of Benjamin and Abraham, to the very last White. They gave treasure to the Blacks and land to the Mexicans for the wrongs their fathers had done.*

*In their blindness, they flooded the land yet further with all the races of the world, saying, Come, we Whites are much stricken in years, for even our youth are as old men, and they neither toil nor beget. For their young men were content to lust after the image of woman, and were strangers to the marriage bed.*

Phoebe looked up from the book. They had entered what used to be the Longfellow community of old Minneapolis, now overtaken completely by Somalis. According to her grandmother, the city had once been one of the Whitest in America. But long before the Retribution, they commenced to bring in Africans, Hispanics, and Asians, all of whom, unlike their White hosts, gave a thought to the future and had many children. Before the Environmental Restoration Act, before the Retribution even, Whites had come to doubt if it was worth bringing children into the world, since they were evidently responsible for most, if not everything, that was wrong with it. Many, rather than have children of their own blood, would adopt Colored children instead. The Retribution put an end to that, for nothing was more racist than Whites trying to raise Colored children to be like themselves.

Here and there, one could still see remnants of that last quarter century before the Retribution, the era of smiley-faced, progressive

White rule in the '20s and '30s. That period they now referred to as the Quickening, when all the forces that had been in motion for decades, centuries even, accelerated year by year, and immigrants entered in numbers never seen before.

At the intersection up ahead, an ancient brick building from the 20<sup>th</sup> century abutted an empty lot, its side bearing a mural that had been subjected to relentless erosion and defacement. It depicted happy men, women, and children of all races streaming toward the center, where they disappeared into a rainbow, a human tide of black and brown humanity magically exploding into brilliant colors. Only with difficulty could she make out a few Whites in the mural, for they had been darkened by decades of grime, and it was only by their features that she knew them.

Around 2040, the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul had re-invented their image in order to reflect the fact that Whites were now a minority. To adjust the White population to this reality, the “Many Apples” campaign was launched, re-naming the metropolis with a view to celebrating the many cultures and ethnicities it now housed. “Minneapolis,” after all, was a racist name originally bestowed by Whites, combining a word from a tribe of Indians they had subjugated with an ancient White word, “polis,” as if to show their power over this land. “St. Paul” was no better, the name a growing offense to the majority of its people, who were not Christian. It was high time, the city leaders had decided, to replace this language of division with one of diversity and inclusion.

After all, two cities that had once been almost entirely German and Scandinavian were now home to Somalis, Ethiopians, Hmong, Hispanics of all nationalities, Blacks, Pakistanis, Vietnamese, and on and on. These were now dubbed the “Many Apples” that made up the patchwork quilt of the Twin Cities. The new name, with a slight adjustment of pronunciation, quickly became a badge of open-mindedness and tolerance. Likewise, failing to employ it became a sure sign that one harbored a racist desire to hold on to the past, or even to return to it.

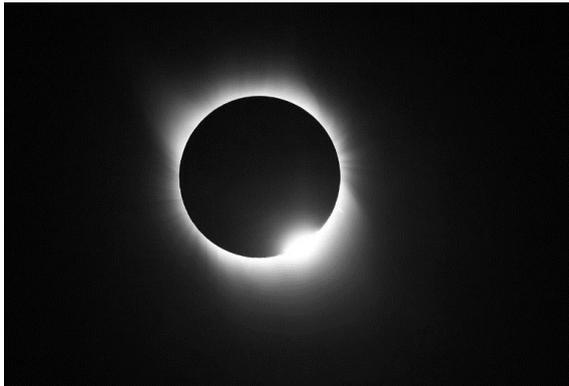
Still, there had been dissenting voices, as she'd gleaned from something her grandmother once said. “Apples came here from Europe,” the woman remarked, “just like the people who made this city great once. Now look at it.” But Phoebe had never known it to be anything other than it was: a vast landscape of crumbling

buildings, pot-holed streets, and sidewalks lined with hypodermic needles and human waste. A kaleidoscope of all the world's races, it was not one city, or even two, but rather several ethnic enclaves that had as little to do with one another as possible.

When the Retribution came, and with it the twenty-year period Whites called the Darkening, they found it increasingly difficult to live in their old neighborhoods. Financially reduced, ethnically overwhelmed, and socially resented, they steadily congregated in ghettos that they called the "Seeds." This was an ironic reference to the Many Apples transformation, for here the Whites were the small, light-colored pips in the dark and rotten apple that surrounded them. It was the South Seed that Phoebe called home.

*Yet even unto the last, the White man sought to fool his enemies, nay even himself. The more he gave, the more hated he became, for a gold coin given to the freedman's son makes him think upon the whole treasure. Scraps from the table did not sate the People of Color, for now they desired the table and everything upon it. In the White man's own chronicles, which he gave his children to read, the Colored races could see his utter evil. Every day that passed was an act of theft: the more the White man spoke of justice, and the sins of his fathers, the more he sought to exalt himself for being more just than they. As the multitudes crossed the frontier into this land, the People of Color could feel the wind at their backs, pushing them forward to their rightful destiny.*

The bus groaned as it shuddered to a stop, and there on the station wall, less than a meter from her face, stared out the universal sign for the Retribution, a solar eclipse.



*Then in the eighth month, on the twelfth day of the month, which was the year 2045, the heavens themselves showed what had to be done. As the sixth hour of day rolled across the land from east to west, there was a darkness at midday, and the sun was blotted out. The Colored multitudes turned their eyes to the heavens, and the sight was as a voice, saying unto them, Stretch out thine hand, that there may be darkness over the land of America, even a darkness which may be felt. Thou hast asked for riches, and for the life of thine enemies. Then rise up, for ye shall rule in their stead. Thus began the Retribution.*

Phoebe scrutinized the image before her: a black disc with just a sliver of white light peeking out at the bottom. Rumor held that the portion of white light on the image grew smaller every year, and that it would disappear completely when all Whites had either melted into the other races entirely or quietly died off. She suspected this was not true, however, for in one of the Muslim apples she had seen a different version entirely, a black crescent enveloping a white core.

*The People of Color stormed the great marts and storehouses, and they smote the cities with the edge of the sword. And some of the Whites joined in, saying, I am like unto thee, Person of Color, leastways I did always take thy side.*

*Yet the Colored man said to him, Thou art not like unto us. Lo, this is but a trick, for now thou hopest to escape the judgment, thou traitor to a hated race.*

*The White man denied it, saying, Nay, is it treason to stand for the true? For whensoever the White man found comfort or happiness, we called to mind his guilt. Evenso did we instruct his children, that they cannot escape the guilt of their race.*

*Then laughed the Colored man, saying, Ye have sown the wind, now reap the whirlwind. And he raised his hand as if to strike down his enemy.*

*But the White man said, Wait, hearken unto me! Shall we not make of this a rainbow nation?*

*Then the Colored man replied, The rainbow hath no color white.*

*And so they struck these down, as well. Even unto the towns around the cities did they go, saying, Thy silver and thy gold is mine. And the earth rent with the sound of their rejoicing.*

*The White man trembled, for he knew his guilt, and his scribes brought it ever to mind as the cities burned. His elders met in council and said, This is but a passing thing, for behold, they do but follow the orders of a general by name of Dinnd. This man and his captains did plan this thing long ago. We need but find him, and make of it an end. And it seemed to be of a truth, for in this city and that, when a man burned or slew and the magistrates caught him, he denied it, saying Dinnd did do it. Yet this notion was but more conceit from the White man, that the Retribution was the devising of a single prince, and not the just wrath of the multitudes.*

The Retribution, Phoebe knew, was not limited to those bloody days and nights of August. In truth, the Retribution had never ended. It became the basis for the re-founding of the country that many Whites had called for but never imagined they wouldn't be a part of.

*Then the Colored peoples said, Let us make our throne better than their thrones.*

*They came to the White queen, saying, Thy reign is over.*

*She replied, saying, Yet I had the election of the people. And ye can see that I am a woman, that I have had a woman's suffering at the hands of the White man. I am like unto a Colored person.*

*But they reviled her, saying, Thou art White, and carry thy birthright upon thy face. Ever didst thou speak of thineself as a lamb yet go to sleep with the wolf. And they drove her out, to return to her kind.*

*Then they said to themselves, Let us have no king or queen, for who may contain multitudes? And let us drive off their elders*

and judges. We shall choose our own elders, and they will be like unto king, judge, and counselor at once. Thus may the Retribution move swiftly.

*And one of them said, With no king, need we no palace. Let us forsake this one, for its very name is White. And another said, Even let our elders meet in another city, for this one is named for an owner of slaves. And so they handed over the palace and the court and the elders' council-chamber to those in the city who had no homes, and their own elders met in the Great City to the north, where the Colored races did dwell in great numbers.*

*Then their elders took counsel, saying, We know of wages that each man in the cities receives, for which he toileth not. Yet why do the Whites receive it also? Rather let it be levied from them.*

Phoebe looked down at her daily pay stub. Long ago, the city's "Universal Basic Income," a product of the Quickening, had been replaced by a national Non-white Universal Basic Income, commonly referred to as the "Nubian." No Whites could receive it; in fact, it was they who paid for it by a special deduction, which was indicated on her pay stub by the words "Ret Tax."

*Yet the White man still prospered, until the people cried, Do not the People of Color sit upon the throne of this kingdom? When some among the Whites raised their hands to resist, did not we throw the White horse and his rider into the sea of Color? Ye call yourselves our elders; confirm thy words. The league of Colored races was coming asunder, and so the elders did fear. They conferred for many days, and then declared a Retribution Act.*

Phoebe knew she had simplified things here. The Retribution Act was not one law but several, passed over many years. "Ret Act" just became the name, as well as the justification, for anything the government did to rectify any lingering racial injustice. Whites had their own names for specific stages in the Ret Act, like the Darkening or the Hunger.

*And the elders went to the people, saying, Let this be the law, so that we may prosper in all we do. The White man occupies the highest trades, and leaves you to toil. And so this year let the twentieth part of each noble trade be set aside for a man or woman of Colored race, be it scribe, physician, doctor of the law, teacher, builder, or merchant. And when this year passeth away, let another twentieth part be set aside for the People of Color, and so forth. If ye harken unto us, in a single generation the noblest trades will be yours: ye shall be doctors, and builders, and learned men in the ways of the earth, and none may say otherwise. And all the People of Color were joyful and glad of heart.*

And so the racial quotas began their yearly advance to 100% by 2065. Faced with such a mandate, the universities could not keep up with the demand for qualified, non-White professionals. With corporations and schools each blaming the other, the government, rather than halt the program, simply invited in the rest of the world. Whites became an even smaller minority, as immigrants gladly took over the jobs, the incomes, and ultimately the houses from the privileged Whites who had held these before.

Each field tended to be dominated by one or two groups. New arrivals from India joined their predecessors in medicine and engineering, while the Chinese dominated technology and finance. Small businesses tended to be run by Pakistanis, Arabs, or Koreans, depending on the area and nature of the business.

As for Blacks, it had always seemed to Phoebe that they did not really benefit from the Ret Act, other than making slightly more money than Whites if they were lucky enough to have a job. The majority-Black districts were mired in violence and joblessness. True, some of them were cops, another profession now closed to Whites entirely. But the police were often indistinguishable from the criminal gangs they were supposed to be arresting. No one called the cops, even in an emergency, unless he had the money to bribe them.

Hispanics lived in a world apart, and not just in the great northern cities. The entire Southwest up to Denver and Oklahoma, as well as Florida, was virtually a different country. A century of open immigration had presumably digested any portion of the population that was not Hispanic. While Phoebe's textbooks still showed the

same national borders as before the Retribution, she suspected that the Southwest was not really part of the country anymore. She had no way, here in Many Apples, of confirming this suspicion. While the Hispanics were Colored, there were enough of them close enough in hue to Whites, especially those of them who were mixed-race, to create a potential problem for the Ret Act. Their defense was their language, and never had Phoebe heard one of these speaking anything other than Spanish.

*And then the Colored man took notice of the Israelites. What do ye here among us? he asked.*

*They replied, saying, We told your stories, that ye watched on the holy Tabernacle behind the screen. And our moneylenders gave from their treasure to benefit the People of Color, so that more of ye could journey into this land.*

*Yet this did not please the Colored man. By your own words, he said, ye stand condemned, for ye are not then People of Color, but White.*

*At this the Israelites were much troubled and replied, Nay, say not so. The Whites hath treated us as poorly as they did you.*

*At this the Colored man laughed, saying, Yet ye look as they do, and ye lived among them, piling up your treasure while we hungered. Get ye gone now, lest a flaming sword fall upon your heads. And the Israelites were cast out by the People of Color, with weeping and gnashing of teeth. And many did return to the land they were promised, far across the sea, only to perish there at the hand of the Ishmaelites.*

*Then some among the Whites came to the elders, saying, We desire one small petition of thee. Ease somewhat this yoke that ye put upon us.*

*But the elders gave them reply, saying, Thy fathers made our yoke heavy, but now say ye, Make it lighter unto us? Get ye gone, lest we chastise you with whips, as ye did to our fathers. And*

*the Whites feared, lest the day of darkness return and bring the vengeance of the mob. But verily, the Whites were now a craven people, for the old man said to himself, In twenty years I shall be done with toil, and so I care not. The man of middling years feared to say anything, lest he be among the first twentieth, or the second, so he kept his silence to keep his little portion the longest. As for the young man, he was the most abased, for the scribes and teachers had convinced him of his guilt. And so the Darkening began.*

*But some of the Whites gave a thought, saying, The end of all flesh is come before us, unless we bring some of our people into the wilderness. Let us go, then, into the mountains of Appalachia, and there find a land of milk and honey, where we may live and raise our children.*

*The People of Color were content to see these go, and they called that land the Pale, but the Whites called it the Ark.*

The bus stopped, and a White man boarded, his eyes directed downward to avoid eye contact. It was hard to tell, but he appeared to be in his early sixties, probably born around the time of the Retribution. Cheekbones jutted out over hollow cheeks, as if his face were a living memorial to the Hunger. He found an empty seat toward the front. As he sat down, Phoebe could see the creases on his weathered neck. *A true redneck*, she thought, *in whom there is no guile*. A redneck, one of the men who worked as mechanics, keeping the pre-Retribution vehicles and machines running through hard work and ingenuity.

By the end of the Darkening, the only jobs left to Whites were manual trades and services, and even there, they were legally subject to the Ret Tax. There was a great need for mechanics and repair men in general. Nothing of note had been invented in the past century, according to her grandma. She would talk about how things had been made with much better quality in her youth, back in the '30s. But now, she said, unless you were very rich, anything you bought would fall apart. But all Phoebe knew was the world as it was now, a world of mid-century appliances brought back from death, a world in which this year's version of any product would almost certainly be of poorer quality than last year's.

At the mechanic shops she would see them gathering each morning, the White men who had not fallen into drugs or petty crime, working in the only trades humble enough not to be closed to them. At the end of the day, they could be seen again, waiting for their pay from the Colored owner, who would usually pocket the Ret Tax on the spot. Her own father had been one of those men, a redneck fixing the jalopies of the Pakistani and Korean shop owners or the luxury cars of the Chinese businessmen and Indian doctors.

It began to rain. Droplets landed on the window, slowly bulging as they took in more water. She watched for that critical moment when a drop had taken in just enough, and then it would flow rapidly downward on a wild course toward the bottom of the pane.

Phoebe recalled the way her father's face, scratchy from beard-stubble, felt when he hugged her tight. He would say, "Where's my little rider?" And then she would know that he was a horse and she could climb on his back. Sometimes he would tell her about a particularly difficult problem he'd had to work on that day. She didn't know any of the words he used, but he had a way of making her feel as he did, that each engine was a mystery waiting to be solved. You had to be cleverer than the problem, he would say; that's how you made it through life. There was even a song he'd sing – how did it go? "Figure it out!" and he would snap his fingers twice each time he said it.

She was only six when he was killed, shot from a moving car as he walked home one day. No one was ever arrested for the shooting. Her mother never spoke of it, but later Phoebe suspected it had been joyriders trying out a new gun.

She missed him so much. As a child, she had found herself blaming him for his own death. Why hadn't he been able to figure it out? Surely her father's wits were so sharp that only a great mystery of gigantic proportions could overcome him. To die that way, so pointlessly.... Then she would feel guilty for blaming him, and tears would fill her eyes as she longed for his scratchy face and powerful arms around her once more.

How hard it had been on her mother was something she only later appreciated. To support them, she'd had to take on double shifts at the old garment shop with its antique machines, working herself to the bone. Her body grew gaunt long before the cancer weakened her further. How easy it would have been, after her husband's death, to

shack up with some Colored man looking for a White wife. But she was stubborn and proud, and she made sure Phoebe avoided the drugs and prostitution that enveloped so many White girls. Only when her mother was dying did Phoebe fully realize how much her mother had done for her.

It had taken her a long time, but Phoebe had come to the conclusion that the world, in fact, held no puzzle to figure out, no hidden rhyme or reason, just randomness and cruelty. It was not a world she wanted to live in. Just a bit more, though, and all was done.

*In the twentieth year, the twentieth part of the noble trades became Colored, and there was not a merchant or artisan, teacher or disciple, physician or scribe who was White. Yet some among the People of Color cried out, saying, We are not among the divisions of the learned, nor have we anything to call our own. What availeth us the Retribution?*

*And so the elders conferred. At length they replied, saying, One trade yet remains to the White, and that the noblest of all, the tilling of the soil. Yet he hath stolen this land from your fathers. Some among them hired laborers, and bade the Mexican work on land which was his father's. And others made machines to do the toil, then sent your Black fathers into the cities. Why take ye not the land for yourselves? The husbandman that labors must be first partaker of the fruits. And the People rejoiced, for they could already see the harvest in their hands, though they had not yet sown.*

*And so in the twenty-first year of the Retribution, the land was returned to the hands of the Mexican, and the Black, and the Indian, and every Person of Color that would but stretch out his hand. Yet they did not have their fathers' learning, nor did the White grant it to them. The seed they sowed had no depth of earth, and when it sprang up, it had no root and withered away. Tares grew up amid the wheat, and thorns choked it, and the land did not yield its produce. And the herds of cattle did perish, for they had no grass. Famine then consumed the land, and there was a great wandering of peoples.*

*The elders then gathered up all the food of the field, which was round*

*about every city, and laid it up in the cities. And so the famine was all over the land, but in the cities there was bread. Seven years did that famine last, so that all the plenty that was before was forgotten, and men called those years the Hunger.*

*And in those days the Whites perished in great numbers, for the man in the village fled to the town, yet the famine followed him there, and so the man in the town fled to the city.*

Phoebe's mother had lived through that period as a child. She told her of the terrible times when their family was without a single morsel of food. Men begged, stole, even killed for food. As for Phoebe's grandmother, usually so talkative, she refused to speak of those days. Tears would form in her eyes at the very mention of the Hunger. Once Phoebe asked her mother why Grandma cried like that, and her mother spoke of a baby boy Grandma once had. He would have been Phoebe's uncle, only he died during the Hunger. Thinking of her baby, she said, was why Grandma was so sad. As for Grandpa, Phoebe didn't remember much of him, but she recalled his bad limp, which her mother said he got during the Hunger.

*But some Whites did flee to the Pale, and they did not sojourn alone. For some People of Color did go with them, as well as the mixed-race, thinking to remain with the Whites in spite of the curse that was upon these. From beyond the Pale they came, prodigal sons to the Ark, asking for scraps from the father's table.*

*There arose a great dissension within the Ark. Some said, The Ark has sailed, and the boat is full. If we let down the gangway, we invite in the Flood.*

*Others said, Nay, these hungry ones seeking succor might be the helpers we need, that we might regain our land.*

*Still others joined their voices with these last, saying, They are hungry; let us give them meat. They are thirsty; let us give them drink. They are strangers, but let us take them in. For whatever we do to the least of them, we do to the Son of God, who is Father of us all.*

*And so the people seeking refuge did enter, yet the strife did not end but became greater. Word was carried beyond the Pale, and the Retribution came to learn that some of her sons and daughters were being abused. The army came, a sea of Color in cloth of green. But as for the Ark, it fell from within, its passengers rending each other in violent dispute. The bands of soldiers did but push over a statue with feet of clay.*

*But the rest of the Whites, those who did not perish in the confusion of the times, traveled to the cites. The People of Color cried out that there was not food to feed so many, saying, Ye shall bring more famine into the city.*

*But the Whites wailed and said, Yet if we sit still here, we die also. Therefore hearken unto our supplication.*

*When the elders in their council heard of these tidings, they sent word to the people, saying, Do ye not see that the Hunger hath given the inhabitants of the land unto our hand, and the White man is subdued? For the White man has sinned against the earth. Always he took more from the earth than did every other race, and now the earth returns its judgment upon him.*

Phoebe's grandma, in one of her feistier moods, had declared that notion to be nonsense. She told Phoebe of when she was a child, when they had parks in the city with lots of trees and grass to play on, and Whites even volunteered to clean them up. She recalled this little thing called a straw, which you could put in a drink to sip it. The Whites of the city thought this was the worst way to hurt the environment, because it was made of plastic, and so they banned all straws. These were their main concerns. Grandma had wondered at it all, because even as a child she had noticed that the trashiest neighborhoods were always the immigrant ones, yet the Whites of the city never thought of banning immigrants.

*Then the elders gave judgment, saying, To restore the earth, therefore, we must lessen the White man's numbers. So let every White father have but one child, and thereafter let him be made barren. But hold their women not guiltless. If a*

woman should take a Colored husband, let her bring forth many children, for they are not White then but Colored. But if she take a White husband, and is delivered of a second White child, suffer ye not the child to live, lest the earth chastise us for this race again. But take the body of the child and give it to our learned men, who may study it or use its inner members for another's need. And in this case, let the firstborn be counted an orphan, and let father and mother be sent to great workshops, and the child to labor there as well. And these workshops shall have no machines, but human toil alone, so that these Whites may do penance to the earth they have wronged. Thus shall the earth be cleansed.

One of her teachers had said that this law, the Environmental Restoration Act of 2073, was not only justified, it was what Whites had long been calling for, even before the Retribution. He showed them pictures from more than a century ago, women marching with signs that said, "Pass the ERA now!" and "Abortion on demand!" He produced pre-Ret magazines for Whites, with titles like "The Child-Free Life." The ERA only affirmed what the more forward-thinking Whites had always known: that White children were a plague.

Phoebe had heard of cases where Whites still risked having a second child. They would avoid the hospital, hide the signs of pregnancy, and keep the children inside. But if anyone called the police in hopes of a reward.... On the city's outskirts stood the Carbon Offset Factories, a grim place of atonement that Whites dubbed "Coffins." There, after being sterilized, violators of the ERA worked in the most brutal conditions, in "green" factories where machinery had been replaced with raw human power. Part of the profits from their labor went to fund free abortions for White women, provided by the Banned Parenthood clinics that dotted the Seed.

A White couple's second child stood a slight chance of avoiding euthanasia and organ harvesting in places with large Muslim enclaves, like Many Apples, provided that the child was a girl. Thanks to the Retribution, those in the Sharia zones were allowed to do as they pleased, and what with the fortunes Muslims had made during the Darkening, polygamy was common. They were always short on women, so it was usually easy for a White girl to be adopted. She

would be raised in a Muslim family according to their ways, never knowing her real parents, slated to be the third or fourth wife of a much older, wealthy man. But of White boys there was no need. They were euthanized at once.

*And so the People of Color did let them enter the cities, saying Come hither, then, and cease to multiply. But verily, many Whites had perished in the Hunger, and their numbers had dwindled for generations before this. Then the fields were put under great overseers, who hired multitudes of laborers to work the land for wages, and at night they did sleep in barracks. Thus the famine came to an end.*

The bus stopped again, and the two White women got off, their mixed-race broods in tow, the children staring at her as they pushed their way past. One of the older ones hit the redneck hard in the shoulder, but the man looked down and ignored it. This man, Phoebe reflected, was almost certainly wifeless and childless. No one would continue his line. Unlike White women, he had no way out, no escape from the Retribution. Since the Darkening, it was almost unheard of for a Colored woman to marry a White man. Yet White women had an avenue of escape, if not for them entirely, at least for their children. For the mixed-race, provided they were dark enough, would be born without White guilt, and no one was keener on proving they were Colored than the mixed-race.

Although Phoebe had come to despise her features, the color of her skin, and her blue eyes, from an early age she had noticed something odd. While Coloreds reviled Whites as a group, and White women were certainly not exempt from this, such women were desired in a possessive, often brutal way. They were highly sought after, but that in turn only further reduced any possibility that such women would be having White children. By the time Phoebe was fourteen, most of the White girls in her class had paired up with, or been claimed by, one of the Blacks, seeking to escape the brutal treatment still being meted out to the White boys.

It made her think of a poem in her grandma's book, and in the margins of her chronicle she wrote:

*This is the way the race ends, not with a bang but with a baby.*

The eclipse would be total. And Phoebe, completely alone now, had no desire to be in such a world. Tonight she would close her book, and take all the pain pills her mother had left behind.

The bus shuddered suddenly, then gave out a grinding sound. She looked up, but the fluorescent lights prevented her from seeing much in the evening darkness outside except the occasional dim streetlamp. She suspected they were nearing the end of Somali Town. Only a kilometer or so further on, and she would be in the South Seed.

Instead, the bus came to an abrupt halt, its driver cursing it in an unknown language. The redneck moved to the front and told the driver he could take a look at the engine, a message which, after several gesticulations, the driver finally understood. The bus door squeaked open, and the mechanic disappeared into the darkness.

Phoebe looked around. The Somalis were gone now. The Hispanics were getting up as a group to exit the bus, evidently having little faith in the mechanic's ability to fix the problem. Chattering away, the Hmong appeared ready to wait it out, while the Blacks paid no attention to their plight.

They could be stranded here for hours if the bus company didn't have another bus to send out here. She calculated how many blocks separated them from the Seed, and then from her apartment. If she left now and walked, she could be home within half an hour. Rising from her seat, she went down the aisle and exited the bus. The redneck was at the rear, poking at the engine.

"Can you fix it?"

The man looked over at her, his face an unearthly pale red in the brake lights. He shook his head sadly.

"There's too much wrong here for me to fix." Then he resumed his hopeless examination.

Leaving the bus behind, Phoebe set out for the Seed. The rain had stopped, but the wind whipped about her, searching for any uncovered skin. She hunched her shoulders, trying to get her neck under her scarf but unwilling to expose her hands to the chill. She tried to remember if there had ever been a day so cold this early in autumn. *Perhaps it's always been like this*, she thought. *Maybe I just forget every year, so that every winter is like the first one.*

Looking up, she saw the moon, shrinking now but still mostly white, and a sky twinkling with stars. As a child, she'd always pictured Heaven to be up there, and that had been easy to imagine in the blue

sky of day. Somehow, it seemed harder to imagine at night, when the stars offered so many possibilities that even Heaven seemed a small place in comparison. But those childhood possibilities were closed to her now, revealed in all their falseness. Tonight, then, would put an end to it all.

The sound of footsteps interrupted her thoughts. She stopped to listen. To her right, in an alley between two apartment buildings, came another noise, a hurried shuffling ending in a laugh. A tall black man stepped out, bearing the distinctive head shape of the Somali.

“*Salaam alaykum*. What have we here? Why so far from home?”

The alley emitted more sounds, and three more men emerged, also Somali. The first one addressed her again in a singsong voice.

“*Meeqo sanaad jirtaa*, girl, eighteen or nineteen? Old enough for Mustafa, for sure.” His voice became hard. “Maybe old enough for four of us.” The other men laughed. “You see, all dey have is Retporn, day and night. Dey want da real ting.”

Retporn. It was everywhere, except for the Sharia zones, where the *burka* or the *hijab* were mandatory, but Muslim men found their way over here easily enough. There was pornography for every taste, but the world of the Retribution had little interest in seeing Whites copulate. But a White woman getting punished by a Colored man, that was worth watching. Through Retporn, sexual violence became an act of social justice. The woman would pay for centuries of White oppression by being violated and humiliated in every conceivable way, and she would be made to know exactly why it had to be this way. Men preferred to do it in person, of course, but it was getting harder to meet the demand. Retporn was the answer.

Phoebe looked at him. He loomed only a few feet from her, his mouth glinting with gold and silver teeth as he smiled in anticipation of what he would soon be doing. The others were jeering and uttering more guttural sounds.

She screamed. Mustafa, still smiling, suddenly grabbed her arm, and his powerful grip prevented her from breaking free. He pulled her forcibly in the direction of the alley, where the others were already headed. Panic seized her as darkness crowded round. Phoebe knew there would be no return from that dark place. Suddenly she didn't want to die; she wanted to live and fight for every breath.

And then, inexplicably, everything changed. Mustafa's grip suddenly went slack as he yelled in pain, and Phoebe looked down to

see his forearm broken halfway up, horribly distorted away from its natural straightness. She looked up in time to see a white fist reach his chin, an uppercut that raised the hefty man off his feet and propelled him backwards. He collapsed with a thud on the ground. The mysterious figure then drove his boot down upon Mustafa's groin, causing him to double up and scream in hellish agony.

The other men stepped out of the alley and surrounded the mystery man. He stepped into the moonlight, which shone on a white face marked by pronounced cheekbones and a firmly set mouth. His brown hair was cut quite short, and his blue eyes sparkled, taking in every detail around him.

The three Somalis took out knives to cut short their work. The White did not flee but took out a knife of his own, which glinted in the moonlight.

As the screaming began, Phoebe fainted.