"Taking Sides"

Her vision was finally obstructed. She felt her throat choke and a sharp pain attacked her chest. The hot tears sliding down her smooth olive skin were accompanied by a cold throbbing that rippled from her centre to the very tips of her fingers. She didn’t dare look out the window, but she couldn’t resist, catching a glimpse of the chaotic atmosphere, she knew she’d managed to aggravate the mental distress she was already in.

Without any warning, she’d pushed herself right up against the glass and began frantically searching for her family who were somewhere in the midst of a huge rebellious crowd, protesting and trying to climb over the barriers drawn between the main road and the station. An automated voice announced that the aircraft would be taking off within the next five minutes. This was the final straw, she took off her belt and barged out the door. Caroline manoeuvred her way around the space station, being careful not to run into any guards. Just as Caroline reached an exit, two men appeared. One was wearing a lab coat while the other was wearing a business suit. Caroline hid behind a rack that stood parallel to the exit. The man in the coat began “We’re just about ready to take-off, although one passenger seems to have not boarded the aircraft”, the other man calmly replied “Yes. The dentist. He just wouldn’t come quietly, so we silenced him”. A cold shiver travelled down Caroline’s spine, causing the hairs on the back of her neck to stand and a scared cough escape from her throat. As Caroline tried to conceal herself with coats hanging on the rack, she noticed a label above an opening in the wall ‘Contaminated Specimens Chute’. Without thinking she lowered herself into the small hole without any warning she was pulled down. Splash.

She’d landed in the dirty river that separated the city from the ruins of an old town. Caroline swam to bank and lay half immersed in the water coughing, trying desperately to catch her breath. She looked up to smell the smoky scent of gunpowder and to see the point of a rifle staring her in the face. A young man with dark, chocolate coloured hair and stubble covering his fair skin appeared from behind the weapon.

He asked “Who are you? What do you want?”,

Caroline tried not to stutter but managed to answer

"I'm Caroline, I escaped from the launch".

The man offered his hand and Caroline hesitantly took it.

He said “Follow me”, and Caroline silently trailed behind him like a shadow for an hour until a vast building came into sight.

The man opened the door and Caroline’s’ senses were immediately assaulted. The smell of smoky gunpowder invaded her nose, yet again and a metallic taste engulfed her tongue. The room however was an average living room. People of a wide range of ages and races sat in the room, their eyes fixed on the television; through the cracked screen the monthly rocket launch was being broadcasted. The same rocket that Caroline was supposed to be aboard. The monthly launches were organised by Xenon; a space research and technology organisation. They were
the people responsible for the discovery of the ‘Freezing Point Theory’. The theory that had changed the future of the Earth, caused mayhem in all streets of the world, and left Caroline without a family. Every month Xenon would select citizens who had specific occupations and take them to Bravo 1905; a planetary form that would support life. However, these people didn’t have the option to stay on Earth. If they refused, they were taken forcibly. Caroline manoeuvred her way through the crowd and tried to make herself scarce in a solitary corner of the room.

“You new?” a strong, husky voice questioned.

This voice had come from an elderly man who had noticed her effort to hide. Caroline responded with a confused nod. The man reached for his walking stick, picked up his cigar, handed her a booklet that lay on the table and limped away. Caroline sat on the floor and brought the booklet close to her face. It was titled in bold, black letters ‘The Cold Resistance’.

The Cold Resistance was a protest group made up of people who had had less than amicable encounters with Xenon. The Cold Resistance was based in the ruins of the old town that lied on the outer border of the city. The Cold Resistances’ numbers were higher than they had ever been. The booklet instilled fear into Caroline, and the more she read, the more she questioned her decision to turn against Xenon.

A siren blared and everyone in the room got to their feet and formed multiple uniform lines from the front of the room. The dead silence that filled the room was deafening, but it was broken by the swinging open of the door on the other side of the room that was labelled ‘No Entry’. Caroline didn’t think it was possible but she was hit with another wave of smoke that completely restricted her breathing for a short moment. The silhouette of a large, broad man stood in the doorway and somehow his breathing was natural and fluid. His foot moved out of the darkness and everyone looked to the ground. Caroline instinctively look to the ground to try to not draw any attention to herself, but her curiosity wanted her to take a peek. The man walked to the middle of the front of the room and stopped. His steps were precise and even and his arms rested behind his back. He simply spoke the words “Tomorrow, we fight!”. Suddenly, everyone looked up and saluted. The man nodded and made his way back to the room. The moment the door shut, the air had a worried vibe. The casual mood that once was, was now one of complete panic and despair. Caroline thought to herself, what had she got herself into? What was she expected to do? But the question that Caroline couldn’t find an answer to was, whose side was she on?