

Credo

By Genavieve Myson, grade 9

“Get in line all of you!” the sergeant barked, his voice convulsing the ground.

An instant line is formed, not by height, not by size, only by number. I was 18. I was only known as 18. They said keeping our names was inefficient, so they numbered us off into divisions, then assigned us a number based on our arrival. He stomps around us, guiding his gun across our chests, the green light staining my eyes. The grim dust brushes and sticks against my bright orange suit, mocking me as if it wanted me to look more unprofessional.

I look straight ahead, daring my eyes to look towards him, just to test his patience. He passes by 2, 6, 9, 10, 13, 14, and then me. His face painted with scars, his one bloodshot eye, looking as if the bleeding never really stopped. I feel my body tighten as his lethal stare strikes my eyes. I can feel my knees getting weak, about to surrender as if they didn't want to make me look as big as I am. His gun binds me back, as I try to stand strong. The thing attached to his arm could be the thing that ends me, and he shows it off like a toy, our death wish within his hands. It was old and rusted, with black and gray tinges of storm clouds, just as violent and terrifying.

Three green bulbs blinked at the top, swallowing up all meaning to life. One hit and you would be paralyzed, two hits you were dead, and three hits your body would be nothing but the dust we breathe in. The inside was a glowing red, the tips a light green, that all collided together to create a living monster inside of a machine.

I feel a nudge suddenly rustling against my sleeve.

“You alright,” 23 whispers. I keep my mouth shut as my breaths would only come out shaky, showing the weakness inside of me. He can tell I’m nervous as hell, he always knew. I mean we’ve known each other for years. I remember how we both cried for our mothers the day we arrived, how we battled until our knuckles bled, rushing out like our tears. But the funny thing is that we can’t stand the sight of each other. I guess when you’re near death, you make some allies. I can sense he wants to add on, but I nod my head in an awkward direction, avoiding his comment completely.

“You nuisances better be ready!” the monstrous voice arises from his stomach as it recoils off the walls back into our ears. He paces through us once again, watching every breath come in and out of our bodies.

“Did you hear me!” All our hands forcefully shoot up to our heads. My hairbrushes against the dessert I call my skin. It was blonde like everyone else’s, all of us looked the same, almost impossible to tell us apart. We were just clones of each other but that was our normal, looking at your face every day doesn’t make you feel any more confident about what’s to come. We all are at each other’s throats wishing that this dreaded nightmare would be over soon.

“Now,” he begins, “you all know that our final decisions for Vexcorpe are coming up soon, meaning that today you better make it seem like you’re trying. It may be your last chance to get out of here,” he laughs out the last few words, his throat croaking with it. “Or you will face the consequences.”

That sickening smile twisted my stomach every time. It makes everything spin. Blood rushes to your head, making your last meal want to revisit you. It was mocking us in ways you would never imagine.

Vexcorpe is where I need to go. I need to meet him.

Titus Vexcorpe, the brown hair, brown eyed man with the manipulative power for mindset and structure who took over everything within a second. In 2087 he was elected to government and revealed to the world how his ideas could change it forever. That's why I need to leave this place. To finally pursue the reason, I was spared. To alter everything and be a benefit to Vexcorpe. My mind flashes as all I can see is a gun to my head and tears streaming down my cheeks. Sobbing horrifically that I missed my mom, and I was going to be killed from that weakness. A blonde girl with green eyes didn't fit into society, not after Vexcorpe insisted that difference is what divided us. Brown hair and brown eyes. The most common combination. He showed the world how our deviation was our downfall. Jealousy and anger consumed each being slowly and they soon limited the other genetic types, each one that didn't make the standards were killed. But in the end Vexcorpe decided to sacrifice our lives to the armies. Giving us this. This was our only purpose. They couldn't give a damn about us, all we are are defects and with that we can't live normal lives because of everyone else's feelings.

"23 and 18! You're up first!" he screams, snapping myself out of my rage. He points his gun right up to my head. I try to sustain my flinch. My eyes relax, trying to show no fear, but I can feel them weakening. He stares intensely into them.

"Easy," I laugh.

I have faced 23, 1024 times exactly. I know him as I know each and every one of my deranged cellmates. He may not know it but he is my puppet. I could throw him around if I wanted to. Maybe I will.

We both walk forward, and he opens the door out of the cell we call home. There he places us out in the hallway, an old bridge hung by black chains and old wire. We were surrounded by the banging sounds of metal walls ringing in our ears. The screeches of pain and excitement fill the hall echoing back towards us. The hall stretches on for what seemed like forever, a black abyss with only bright green bulbs to light the way. This walkway connects all together. It is long and wavy with only a few metallic pillars connecting it to the solid ground with many levels below us.

23 enters first, then me, the sergeant pushing me in with such force I almost trip over my own feet.

Another guard blocks off the exit as the sergeant presses a small button on his wrist. The solid walls that were once trapping us inside become as clear as a tear. Its glass-like figure just reminds me of how much I needed to get to Vexcorpe. The one place where you could be something more than just a slave to the rest of the world. The doubtful faces mock me, and my fists only tense up more than before.

“Division F! State your number!” he announces.

“Don’t you already know?” I snicker. He smirks and flashes out his gun towards my head. “Anything else missy?” he smiles as I could feel the vile and grim stench emitting from him.

“FIN- 23041,” 23 shouts with such a suck up tone in his voice. He bows, and stands up, his legs still crossed.

“FAY-18475,” my throat roars out the words, mockingly bowing just like him. His green eyes line up with mine, as well as the purple cloud crowding his upper eye.

Something 24, 28, and 31 must have given him. I only had a small scratch on the arch of my chin, that was the worst someone has done to me.

“Soldiers at the ready!” the other guard raises up his hand high in the air. I didn’t even need the signal. I was ready to strike at any moment. I can already smell victory.

His hand slices through the dense air, beginning our battle and the chants of shadows. He glanced at me and charged. I stayed put. His feet clanking against the metal, only making the noises die down. My eyes follow him like a missile to its target, still dashing towards me my feet stay still. He jumps up and flies a kick towards my face. I duck and he glides over me as if he was light as a feather.

I turn around, his head darting back. His foot smashes against the ground, only giving him an extra spin pushing him back up to his full stance. He charges again. My feet slide back as I wait for the right moment. He throws a punch. My head only misses it by a little. I grab his arm and throw him over my shoulder. He catches himself, aiming his next punch to my head. I grab his other arm, squeezing it as if my fingers were razors. He cries out, grunting instead of letting the tears show. I could feel his heartbeat in his veins. His pulse racing, pounding, wanting to leave his body behind and run for its life. I grasp onto him one more time and throw him to the ground. His body thrashing against the chilled, stained metal, the small dents filled with sprinkles of blood that lingered after the takedown. He restrains in pain, holding his head elbows almost touching the ceiling.

Shoot. My body warms with guilt pinching me to feel sympathy. I bend down. “Are you okay?” I whisper through my teeth. I brace my hands if he was faking. He grunts once more, no words leave his mouth. He doesn’t even move for a moment, as his body shakes. His eyes shut by the glue of agony; one peaks open.

“You know I always am,” He throws his hand up and I feel his fist collide with my cheek. The pressure burst through my skin, ripping off piece by piece until there was none left. Meaning the blood would come pouring out. I could feel the drips slowly stride down my cheek, shooting pain throughout my face as I smiled.

“Nice one,”

I gasp for air and so does he holding his arm. “But it wasn’t good enough for this,” I swiped my leg under his, knocking his feet out from under him once more. He lands back on his head, as more blood spreads out from the first blow. I grab on to his shirt, jumping on to his arms. He struggles in pain to just stabilize his arms, my kneecaps dig into his bones, I could feel the squeaky bend of muscles and blood collide.

“That’s how you do it,” I whisper in his ear. He grunts some more, not for fun but as if this unknown anger inside of him was spilling out.

“Round over! FAY-18475 is the winner!” The cells around us started chanting even louder. They howled as they looked down at me, a little lady, powerful enough to defeat someone two times my size. Blood from his head splattered on the ground as it became just another sign of how defeat always lingered. This friend I never got the chance to know. The other stains were purple or light pinks, an execrable mural washed away by years of agony and sweat.

“Get off of me!” 23 screams, wincing once more. I slowly began to release him from my grip as he could pounce on me just like I did to him. He watches me, his eyebrows almost sticking to his dead shot stare. His eyes look wet, his face turning pink, with embarrassment. No, fear.

Why would he be panicking? I stared blankly as more blood dripped from his forehead, and on to his suit. He touched it and tore his fingers away, almost as if the pain was burning his fingerprints off by the second. The guards come marching in one by one, pulling 23 onto his feet, even though winded. They force him to walk, placing a gun behind his back, making him look like a perched bird. They then grab me by the arms and drag me forward.

“I can do it myself,” I say in disgust. I shake my arm hard as it frees from the tight twisting grip. I walk forward, as the guards follow me from behind, like the little ducklings they are. They lead me back to the cell. But drag 23 slowly down the hall.

“What are they doing?”

I feel my throat tighten and get dry, as I swallow it only surges the now burning pain.

“Consequences of losing the battle,” He chuckles, tossing the sickening sound around in his mouth.

“What do you mean? Why isn’t he coming back with us? He lost a battle yesterday and he wasn’t taken away! Why is he being taken away!” I scream.

My worry enlightens him. He smiles.

“This is for Vexcorpe now sweetheart. They don’t care if he had won a million fights in his lifetime. He didn’t win this one. The freak is worthless if he can’t win, especially against a weakling,”

He pushes his hand hard against my chest.

“Vexcorpe only wants the best of the best. He couldn’t do that. That’s how life works,”

My fingernails dig into my palm. All of them were juggling me, throwing me up in the air feeling as though when I was caught, I would be safe on the ground. Until I would be shot up again. I look back, 23 tried to scream but his mouth was covered by a metal mask with a large black screen that made him look even more monstrous. Suddenly my eyes catch a glance of bright red letters reading it out to everyone with one word. 'Defeated'. Tears streamed down his cheeks, as he struggled to move. What looked like thousands of green emitting chains clasped his body, he strangled and pushed out muffled words, but nothing was going to stop them from taking him. I felt my body sting, my eyes widened as those same tears I felt filled to the brim years ago were back. The guards pull him along the dark trail into the abyss of the cells. For once the screams had stopped.

"23." I gasp, not even realizing what I'm doing anymore. I've known him since we were beginners. He was my brother, he was my ally, he was my rival. He was meant to be something.

But because he wasn't what Vexcorpe accepted, a young man is going to die! All the lies they snuck into the heads of citizens are killing innocent people!

I bang my fist against the wall, the sound echoing throughout the cell. The guard darted back only to leer with delight.

"What's wrong missy? Are you gonna cry?" My body starts to shake as I force the tears back into my eyes. "No," I begin, "This just means there's less competition."