

## *History doesn't see us*

by Jana Rubel

### Part I

#### Records

First thing in the morning, I swallow my high-tech pill, which controls all my vital parameters, my microbiome, and the millisieverts I have been exposed to over the last 24 hours. The results are sent directly to my phone and my physician, and are stored in a fancy grey digital notebook.

When I arrive at work at the world's largest nuclear power plant, I have to stand in a huge glass cylinder that rays me from top to bottom. Beep. Beep. Beeeeeeeeeeeep. The glass cylinder turns fire red. But I stay calm. This happens – every – single – day. Something is always not ideal. One day it is my golden belt, then it is my silver watch, and after that, I have too many germs on my skin. This means that every day a fire-red column is added to the fancy grey digital notebook they use to keep track of my imperfect results, so I could tell you what was wrong with me 373 days ago or five years ago or last week.

My job is exchanging the used fuel rods with new ones and depositing the old ones in the lake nearby. It is a really boring and repetitive process, and honestly, I don't care about the purpose of it. I just want to exchange exactly 33 fuel rods a day, no more, no less, just the bare minimum. And I must not do something that would catch the supervisor's attention. Of course, they record every single one of my actions in the fancy grey digital notebook, and if one action is not as perfectly acceptable as it is supposed to be, they will make me exchange 66 fuel rods the next day. Beep. Beep. Beeeeeeeeeeeep. Oh no! Did I carry the fuel rod with my left instead of my right hand? Yes, I did. Oh no! That means exchanging 66 rods tomorrow. Plus, it will look bad on my record and add another fire-red column to the fancy grey digital notebook.

That evening, I am watching TV to distract myself from the gazillions of fire-red columns they have recorded in the fancy grey digital notebook. *Oh, what might the next level of punishment be?* Then suddenly, I feel excruciating pain as if I were being poked from the inside of my stomach. I immediately know it is my high-tech pill. It feels like something is dragging it out of me in the direction of my bedroom. Eventually, it just pulls me over to my nightstand with the fancy grey digital notebook. But, wait, it is not grey anymore! It is glowing fire red like the columns they add when my performance is not ideal, and it reads in bold capital letters: **"I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOU NOT FULFILLING THE EXPECTATIONS FOR BEING IDEAL. WHAT I DO CARE ABOUT IS THAT YOU CARE ABOUT ME. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE BEHIND FOR YOUR KIDS AND HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE REMEMBERED?"** Then the notebook explodes in a huge red fireball and I black out.

### Part II

#### Selfish

*Why are they underestimating me so much? Don't they know who I really am? All they care about is so – extremely – unbelievably – minor. 0.011 millisievert instead of 0.01? A golden belt that might interrupt their hypersensitive wireless cloud storage for a fraction of a second? Uugh, who cares? Their entire species has been around for a minute and 13 seconds if the 4.5 billion years the Earth has existed were 24 hours. They are no more than one tiny nucleus in their stupid nuclear power plants. Yet they treat all their data like their most precious possession and store it in their shimmery grey digital notebooks with at least 10 backup copies. But what about their radioactive leftovers? They have no control at all over that. They don't care about what*

*traces they leave behind, though that's what matters the most. Their notebook shall not shimmer anymore. They shall realize what their presence truly is: Nothing more than a single nucleus among trillions, easily forgotten, easily changed.*

Fiery red from anger, I sneak into their existence and manipulate what they care about the most – their data storage. My pure existence is enough to soak the notebook red and cause a fire, making the content indecipherable. Of course, that's the breaking news story of the day. "World's data storage exploded in a huge fireball – all punishment records lost," it reads on the screen integrated into the brick of the nuclear power plant. I can see at least 1,000 humans solicitously buzzing around the nuclear power plant, unsuccessfully trying to find backup copies of their fancy digital notebooks, because obviously, I destroyed them all. I can hear their desperate prayers, "Oh Lord, please make all our data come back, Amen." *Hahaha, as if that would fix their problem...*

What goes by the board in the mess is a natural disaster I did not cause, but of course, humans don't care about that. They don't even notice the enormous jet fire turning the lake near their nuclear power plant into a temporary supernova. They don't notice how every plant and every animal living within 20 kilometers of the lake dies immediately and how a fiery mushroom cloud blasts over their jungle, killing every living thing that's in the way. But how would they notice? They don't have a control system in place for their environment, and they are too distracted by their minor data problem. They don't use fancy grey digital notebooks to record how many plants and animals populate their jungle and lake. They don't measure the millisieverts that plants and animals are exposed to, so they don't know that their careless, selfish behaviour has caused a disaster that will last. Last long enough to stay in my mind, in the spirit of history. Last way longer than them. Longer than their children. Maybe longer than humanity. Because when they continue to behave that way, they will be gone and forgotten before they realize it is too late.

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Jana Rubel  
Grade 11  
Lakefield College School