

THE EMERGING ENTREPRISE: THREE FICTIONAL CORPORATIONS OF THE FUTURE

Imagined during the November 4
and November 19, 2020 workshops



In
collaboration
with:



As part of the ‘Emerging Enterprise’ research project, 25 people from various backgrounds (large corporations, independent networks, consulting, public agencies) imagined three companies from the future (2035-2040): *R’Health*, *Drive to Thrive* and *Equal!*. Each group was assigned a writer to aid their efforts: Sophie Coiffier, Catherine Dufour and Ketty Steward. Fiction was posited as a means for participants to not only think out of the box, but also avoid the register typically used to talk about corporations.

This document provides a descriptive summary of each fictitious corporation, followed by selected fragment of the writings by each group, and in conclusion, a text written by each author freely inspired by the results of each group’s work.

R'Health

fragments and narratives

R'Health: from occupational health insurance to working in space

R'Health offers restorative care on land, at sea and in space, mostly to the elderly and very elderly. A variety of transport operators—including space transport—are the backbone of its infrastructure. Its services combine care and work for, and by, sick and elderly people.

R'Health's health passengers receive care in transit or at remote clinics by a highly qualified team of humans and bots.

The company was founded in 2025 by Rosine, after the Coronavirus pandemic and its mutations caused the collapse of the nation's health institutions (retirement homes, hospitals, etc.).

Before *R'Health* came to be, Rémini's company 'Train-Health' had been providing life support and emergency care on old recycled trains scattered throughout France's departmental regions.

Renamed '*R'Health*' in 2029, the company's spectacular success and fast-growing international reputation enabled it to secure a number of grants and loans that contributed to its further expansion.

Now, in 2040, *R'Health* is a profitable international company that has considerable medical expertise and expertise in the field of artificial intelligence-assisted community and remote care on Earth and in space.

It enjoys a leadership position in the care market for elderly people who want to enjoy top quality health services and safe, healthy activity until the end of their life.

Its economic model is under pressure, brought on by long-term working conditions on board its space shuttles and discrepancies in way it treats its human and bot workforce, in terms of remuneration and compensation for hardship.

R'Health, guided by 'Care' and 'Benevolence,' the basic values imparted by its founder, must change its governance model and transform its approach to prevent the dream of well-being promised by the company from being undermined by the increasing alienation of its employees and contributors.

A sudden return to the social order of 20th century companies?

The Author:
Ketty Steward



Ketty Steward is the author of nearly thirty science fiction short stories and a few other texts (short stories and poems) in other genres.

Her writings reveal her obsession with time: past, present, and future. An obsession which interferes with her other activities as a clinical psychologist. She leads creative writing workshops and has edited two editions of the journal *Galaxies* devoted to Africa and science fiction. She chairs the Plurality University network.

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The Mimosa explosion

Ketty Stewart

“Tragic news, just in! We have verified that the space capsule Mimosa, an R'HEALTH capsule with eighty elderly residents in orbit, exploded early this morning. Fortunately, the most dangerous parts of the capsule fell into the Pacific Ocean without causing further damage.”

Most readers are familiar with R'HEALTH, an international firm born in France as R-Santé. R'HEALTH has altered the medical landscape permanently by providing healthcare ‘on-the-move,’ rather than in fixed locations. Its capsules are part of the firm’s flagship offering; they make it possible for senior citizens — too vulnerable to live on Earth — to visit space and remain alive (and economically active) for longer.

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R'HEALTH

Weekly Newsletter
02/2032

Today, we wish to object publicly to the way R'HEALTH treats the oldest among us.

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Nothing else to report, for the moment.

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Internal Conflict Mediation Unit: Memo

Visit space, become an R'Health collaborator!

Visit Space, become an R'Health collaborator!



CAREER OPPORTUNITY: CONVOY LEADER

Offer available on JobApp, and by clicking links posted to mobile and Twittagram; advertisement notice also uploaded to urban digital billboards and embedded screens across transport providers.

- Date of first publication: November 19, 2034.

R'Health, market leader in the 'Chosen Mobility' healthcare sector, is currently recruiting for the position of ***Convoy manager***

- ✓ The 'Convoy Manager' role is open to any person — or bot acting on behalf of a physical person — whose chief qualities are benevolence, empathy and attentiveness.
- ✓ Disabled persons or bots are eligible for this job. Appropriate positions and travel opportunities will be proposed with care and sensitivity.
- ✓ The job entails organizing the transport of care convoys of people aged sixty and over who have purchased a subscription to the Care/Relaxation Assistance policy, within a time frame defined by R'Health.
- ✓ Services can be carried out on land, at sea or in space, for time periods appropriate to the patient's subscription plan:

On land, 1 day minimum; On the sea, 3 days minimum; In space, 8 days minimum.

Bot candidates must be certified for these different modes of travel.

Skills required

- ✓ Fluency in English and sign language
- ✓ Ability to manage and facilitate the efforts of health care professionals and auxiliaries, and facilitate communication between candidate and current policyholders, formerly called patients or subscribers.
- ✓ Fully autonomous capacity to organize transport convoys; capacity to communicate with the navigators and interpret their requests.
- ✓ Level 5 agility in human-AI/computer interaction, or R'Space level 3 certification.
- ✓ Experience living in a community is desirable.

Employment contract covers 10 convoys; renewable.

Salary: negotiable — 2000 Sh to 2500 Sh depending on experience.

Each successfully completed convoy and 4* rating by candidate and current policyholders entitles the successful applicant to two hours of primary care services or the equivalent in care maintenance services.

Submit your candidature via R'Health approved application platforms.

Letter from a child to his father on Earth august 2038

Hello Daddy,

I'm writing to you from my space trip with Mom. I'm a little bored up here. It's been like two or three weeks since I've been able to go outside... I miss running in the park with Rene. I didn't think our vacation was going to be like this. Luckily, there is a little vegetable garden. 😎

It's weird—they put this chemical water on a little pill, and it grows into a huge lettuce in like three minutes! I'm going to pick them for dinner tonight with the rest of the vegetables.



The food here is really good. Sometimes they even give us the meals made for the rich people that are left over, which is so cool.

Everything else is fine. I discovered a lot of things here. Sometimes I work with mom, when I'm not playing with her robot-guardian.

She's still a little tired after the birth three weeks ago, but she's fine. I hope my new little sister is doing well at home with you.

I've done a lot of fun things. I made some chemical mixtures that made a lot of smoke in the operating room. I got yelled at, but it was funny—you couldn't see anything in the room at all! 🤪🤪🤪

I was also allowed to operate a robot stitching up a heart. Supposedly, if I failed, it was no big deal—the doctors said the robot was smart enough to correct any mistakes I made by itself.

Sometimes I call my friends from space, but they are not always available with the time difference. We played World of Munster, and I beat Mauricio's 3 monsters. He was pretty mad. 🤪🤪🤪

In the evening, I sleep with mom in her capsule. It's a bit small, but we got the one with the open sky option, so I can count the stars before I fall asleep.

I can't wait for the vacation to end and to come back down to earth to see you and my little sister. Is she walking yet?

I really hope this virtual letter gets transmitted properly to the Versace glasses mom and I gave you before leaving. 😎

Clasbaretta

✓ read monday 12:34



Weekly Newsletter

Hello EVERYBODY!

First of all, we sincerely apologize for certain statements recently leaked to the press. Rosine Remini's words were taken out of context — 'those old broccoli' did not refer to our brave clientele, but to a meal for her 2 little ones forgotten in the fridge.

Certainly you remember her children: the laughter shared by little Hope (4 years old) in last year's R'HEALTH video, or little Survi (5 years old) saying 'I love you' to his doting grandmother in last summer's blockbuster ad. All of this made us think, and finally we decided to act. Today, we unveil our new identity!

We have called upon an international branding firm to bring a little freshness to our logo and our communication approach. Don't be surprised to see the phrase YOUNG AGAIN accompanying R'HEALTH as a way of bringing all of our health transport services together: R'HEALTH YOUNG AGAIN!

We have also decided to change our colors to add some extra 'pop,' recommended by the American firm REDOIS4YOU (highly recommended!). Our trademark blue will change to apple green.

Travelers will now be able to perfume the journeys included in our 'care to care' services from a palette of 5 fragrances. Scents including cotton candy, strawberry, mango, caramel, and popcorn will also be available in the space transport vehicles, for the comfort of all.

The R'HEALTH team



Offer to premium clients

To our ++Customers and their families, we are delighted to offer lifelong access to our ships and trains.

The whole family will also enjoy the added benefit of health risk alert insurance.

Everyone will be granted privileged access to seats on pharmaceutical trains, and are assured a spot should they wish to participate in any of our groundbreaking clinical pharmaceutical trials.

An added bonus is the great privilege of access to our 'youth restoration' package—our progress in the elderly in-orbit care sector has made it possible for us to delay the aging process of up to 80% of the body's cells.

The ++ package ensures that you will not have to go into final orbit, simply because your aging process, and the aging processes of your entire family, will be considerably delayed.

The R'HEALTH team

Elderly Defense Forum: Statement may 2039

We, the members of the Association for InterGenerational Solidarity (AIGS), do hereby express our indignation at the power the organization known as R'HEALTH exerts over our countries.

Not content with monopolizing public financial aid and awards destined for struggling entrepreneurs, this company also receives government subsidies, despite a total lack of transparency, to carry out activities that are reprehensible, to say the very least.

Everyone is well aware of the ethical problems associated with the company's quasi-monopolistic management of our health data. Many have also decried the lack of information it provides about the algorithms driving its health care bots.

Today, we wish to object publicly to the way R'HEALTH treats the oldest among us.

Under the pretext of protecting them from the diseases to which they are allegedly vulnerable, the aging and elderly are excluded from the company of younger generations, including their own children and grandchildren.

When they turn 60, the right to belong to a family is simply denied them, for no valid reason.

Why not devote our public funds to combatting those infamous diseases threatening the aging and elderly?

Instead, we prefer to exclude the elderly (under false pretexts) from participating in intergenerational coexistence — but not from contributing to the economy. Never!

Until their death, until their last breath, the elderly are restored, revived and put back to work serving the economic imperatives that continue to rule over us.

• R'HEALTH ●

During the company's annual convention in the Siberian-Sichuan zone, a group of 3 individuals from the Railway Car branch took on their space shuttle colleagues, who were giving an account of the very positive results they had recently achieved – results that please us as much as they do the Ministry (increase in the social ties between healthy people and caregivers in the Europe-Ural and North-South America zones, increase in “good deaths”, satisfaction expressed by family caregivers remaining on Earth, climate improvements tied to shuttle emissions, management of epidemics and reduction in their duration, etc.).

The shuttle branch colleagues were booed and pushed around by their railway car colleagues. Although the shuttle workers attempted to return the blows like for like, the railway car group had a definite physical advantage thanks to their everyday existence in the gravity-world. Species survival agents had to intervene and deliver the shuttle associates to safety.

You will note that, once again, humans are the source of the unrest. But humans' GAV (Green Added Value) ensures that, once again, their concerns win the day. Reducing the bots' emissions and energy supply will do nothing to redress this imbalance, given that it exists by virtue of these troublemakers' status as humans. The Mediation Office recommends the pink “irony in service of sustainability” module to those who would be troubled by this last remark. Nothing else to report, for the moment.

The Communication team
Shuttle B643

The Mimosa explosion

Ketty
Steward

“Tragic news, just in! We have very recently learned that the space capsule Mimosa, an R'HEALTH unit housing eighty elderly residents in orbit, exploded earlier this morning. Fortunately, the most dangerous parts of the capsule wreckage fell into the Pacific Ocean without causing further damage.

Most readers are familiar with R'HEALTH, an international firm born in France as R-Santé. R'HEALTH has altered the medical landscape permanently by providing healthcare ‘on-the-move,’ rather than in fixed locations. Its capsules are part of the firm’s flagship offering; they make it possible for senior citizens — too vulnerable to live on Earth — to visit space and remain alive (and economically active) for longer.

Given the ethical controversy currently swirling around this type of activity, terrorism has not been ruled out.

We await further bulletins from the authorities, and from our special correspondent, dispatched to R'HEALTH's headquarters. A statement from the CEO is expected shortly.

★

The capsule that exploded yesterday was named Mimosa.

They choose to give these technological jewels the names of flowers, as they used to do, not so long ago, with old people's homes.

When my grandmother wrote us from there, she would put "Les Mimosas" at the top of her letter, then the date.

The news of the explosion has rekindled our guilt, which still gnaws at us after five long years.

Grandma hadn't been in that capsule for two weeks — at least not alive.

We had been informed of her death by a very dignified video message, which is when we confirmed our decision not to repatriate her body.

Where do you bury people when there is nowhere to build anything anywhere?

The transfer for incineration was far too expensive, so we opted to receive a compact urn, ASAP.

That *as soon as possible* meant not before about twenty days, when a space on the Earth-Mimosa shuttle would become available.

My companion and I had to readjust our anxiolytic dosages during this transaction; both of us had been raised to treat aging and death far less impersonally.

At the time, we had no choice — but we have lived to regret that decision.

It was similar to when we finally admitted that we couldn't keep Grandma Yvonne in our home after her health deteriorated so radically. Truly heartbreaking.

Her reaction didn't help. At the time, her job was to identify objects in old photographs for the Social Science Automated Integrators.

The job served a dual purpose: it was also a cognitive test.

Around 2031, when her output fell to the level of a common algorithm, her income plummeted to a point where she was barely able to pay her rent and health care costs.

Her condition deteriorated very quickly at that point. Limited performance, unpaid sick leave, rising healthcare costs — we just didn't have the means.

That's when R'HEALTH made us an offer we couldn't refuse.

They were using humane and gentle words, but Jill and I were not fooled.

They were offering to get rid of the burden of Yvonne and repair her as many times as necessary to keep her useful and profitable to the end.

Their arguments to convince Yvonne were perfectly ridiculous.

At home, she already had access to a greenery park with animals and fruit trees. She was interacting with neighbors of all ages and had never wanted to make friends from her generation to reminisce about the good old days.

We all reluctantly accepted their proposal for one simple reason, the same one that had motivated her, the one that dictated most of our decisions: economics.

We hated it, but there was no way to change it.

So, at 82, Grandma Yvonne left us for her life capsule for the elderly. She wrote to us from there for the next two years, double-sided pages that only fueled our guilt.

By year three, the letters — drafted on computers and sent as electronic files, supposedly for ecological reasons — were clearly not being written by her. Even though all her favorite expressions were there, the writer lacked Yvonne’s characteristic spice and quirky humor.

The news was carefully reassuring, all the while preparing us for the approach of her death.

★

I was stunned when R'HEALTH wrote and asked me to join the investigation after the explosion. Where was Yvonne’s body? Still on site?

“Like you, we crave the truth,” the message stated.

I assumed that an analysis of their massive array of internal software had detected an unpredictable mechanical failure or some such hazard. This was not the case at all: they were asking for financial donations from every resident’s relatives, living and dead, to pay for the investigation.

There would be no perceptible cost to us, as all we had to do is agree that the interest generated by the micro-commissions generated by our household financial management would be preferentially donated to the investigation.

I agreed.

It was a way to gain access to the proceedings behind the scenes; families were to receive an account of the elements collected and would be able to follow the experts' activities live, via their cameras.

At first, they weren't able to locate much.

Independent programs had investigated the system's coding without finding any errors.

Then they moved on to examining the profiles of dissatisfied customers. They were few in number, and most of them had accepted substantial financial compensation.

None of them was still angry enough to commit mass murder. Plus, they all had verifiable alibis for the thirty-six hours preceding the incident.

This was also true of the company's most virulent political opponents.

The reports on the capsule's automatic maintenance equipment, drafted by two separate groups of researchers, revealed nothing conclusive. A team was tasked to examine the debris as soon as it was recovered.

There was still the more likely possibility of human error. Exploring this eventuality would take time.

I realized that participating in the investigation was enabling me to learn more about the company I had handed the last years of my grandmother's life over to, and helped me make peace with the feeling of having abandoned her.

I made the rounds with the investigators, visiting with each of the care operators who flew the elderly mobility assistance devices from the ground. "It was as if I was actually holding my hand out to them," said one of them.

These employees did not have access to anything that could cause a capsule to explode. No more than the tele-surgeons, tele-physiotherapists, tele-ergonomists, or tele-psychologists in the unit did... Each worked with functional extensions of their limbs and sensory organs, but were not free to operate them as they pleased.

Surface disinfection was taken care of, for the most part, by purpose-designed automatons that had no ties to Earth whatsoever. They were programmed for a single purpose, and rendered completely harmless.

R'HEALTH had been collaborating with a number of different subcontractors; the company requested that we vote to invest some of the interest generated by our micropayments to finance a shift in the investigation in their direction.

Our assent was massive and decisive.

There were dozens of actors who devoted a (sometimes minuscule) portion of their working time to R'Health, and the rest to other companies.

Among them was the man who was widely believed to be

responsible for the explosion. According to a number of simultaneously saved records, the final operation performed by the individual for Mimosa, number 112 113 519, was only two seconds before the explosion.

What was his job?

112 113 519 intervened only once every two months to monitor, via console, the automatic waste emptying bots. This was what was known as a “complementary” task, which meant that it was not indispensable. It only existed because there was the need to occupy a person with special needs. A convalescing citizen? A chronically disabled person?

After a few simple requests, we discovered, with amazement, that this was the very last task performed by 112 113 519, who went by the name Héliot.

112 113 519 was an elderly worker who himself lived in the Mimosa capsule.

One could see that, every time he performed his designated operation, he had needlessly engaged his console’s manual mode. This allowed him to remotely open valves, collect used oil and fuel, and store it all in his desired place.

Everything had gone smoothly the last 151 times.

What happened that final time?

Did he accidentally or deliberately spill a combustible fluid on a sensitive component that was already too hot? The material findings would eventually confirm this.

According to his medical file, Héliot 112 113 519, had

been meant to receive a complete cognitive evaluation. While waiting for his results, all of his 20% part-time work tasks should have been suspended.

How could anyone have forgotten to take this task away from him? How could the system have been allowed to drift so far out of control so that a R'HEALTH client-employee could exterminate himself and 79 of his peers besides, in the blink of an eye?

So many questions!

R'HEALTH suggested that a focus group could attempt to account for and prevent a similar tragedy from happening again.

Jill and I asked to participate. It may be our last opportunity to try to make this world a better place.

Drive to Thrive

fragments and narratives

Drive to Thrive: from NGO to the commercial organisation

Drive to Thrive is an altruistic coalition born of a shared outlook and diverse goals bringing together several collectives/communities of actors. It has a strong collective conscience, and it helps other companies and public actors make the transition towards greater collective cooperation.

The company is the brainchild of several parent companies, but it is autonomous. All the companies in the coalition have expertise in climate science and environmental matters, regardless of industry. The organization brings together actors from the food industry and the mobility and banking sectors, plus several insurance companies.

Drive to Thrive contributes its jointly created consulting services to projects seeking to have a positive environmental impact.

The coalition is temporary and mobile. Its members meet and gather to carry out temporary missions (to which they dedicate 24/7 for several weeks or months) across the globe. Its 'headquarters' is mobile and local. Mobile cooperation is an integral part of the project.

After several years in operation, most of the parent companies have decided to withdraw from the collaboration. Novel economic models that can ensure the survival of the company are being imagined.

Among them are:

- A social credit system that would invite individuals to finance or perform activities aimed at improving the common good;
- New markets for activities that generate these credits, such as 'restoring the environment', 'reducing inequality', 'human development', etc.;
- Payment in alternative currencies (Bitcoin, for example) to purchase consumer goods labeled Sustainable...

... Until they met Hector, an opponent intent on stopping *Drive to Thrive's* activities for not being radical enough to combat climate change effectively.

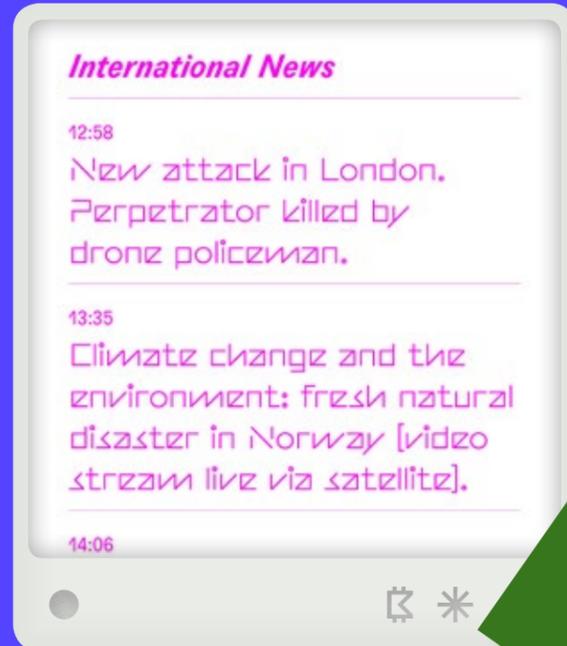
The Author: Sophie Coiffier



Sophie Coiffier has a doctorate in plastic arts and taught for several years at the University of Paris 1. She went on to direct end-of-study dissertations and lead writing workshops at the École Nationale Supérieure de Création Industrielle (ENSCI) and the University of Rennes 2. Today she is a freelance writer and researcher involved in several exhibition and publication projects.

She has published *Le Paradoxe de l'instant* (2007), *Les Ciel*s (2010), *Me and My Dog* (2012), *Paysage zéro* (2017) and *Le poète du futur* (2020).

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International News

12:58

New attack in London. Perpetrator killed by drone policeman.

13:35

Climate change and the environment: fresh natural disaster in Norway [video stream live via satellite].

14:06

Social Inclusion: Gates Foundation program launched to vaccinate vulnerable populations against the new Covid-40.

14:22

Total reinjects over 10t of CO2 into the Earth's crust.

14:42

New eco-terrorist cyberattack hits information systems of



Innovation

10:12

The iPhone 15 can be implanted directly into your wrist, enabling you to connect to any screen, anywhere, and get online or make a call. Detractors fear ever greater levels of citizen surveillance.

14:12

The French colony on Mars has finally elected its university director. After a battle lasting several Martian days, Jonathan Rappaport has finally been appointed the new director of UM. The colony is going through a turbulent period specifically due to the increase in imported foodstuffs – a non-synthetic steak currently costs the



In rural areas and degrowth communities, residents connect only occasionally — many prefer to receive only regional news, sometimes three days after the facts:

Monday

Regional elections: new voting system undergoes first round testing in Mediterranean region.

Tuesday

Town halls for the renovation of the Muselette district begin.

Wednesday

The former La Canebière post office becomes center for contemporary art, and a retirement home.

Thursday

Wheat shortage: still no accessible production for 2040. Farmers irate.

**DRIVE
TO
THRIVE**



DRIVE TO THRIVE

While the countryside roasts, we're driven
To work together for the common good
And give the long term a new chance
Drive and Thrive, in tune
With the planet. Understanding
Association and disassociation,
making reconnection possible

Drive to Thrive is the coalition
That will alleviate the perdition
Of multi-skilled employees,
To reconnect with Life
And an inclusive, eco-friendly society

When companies close their doors, we move
Working on everyday changes
For a more serene future
On a path of adjustment
To the upheavals of a discordant world

Drive to Thrive is a set of solutions
To create the reconversions
Born of our improved understanding
Of newly-dominant imperatives,
Organizations more resilient
When faced with looming disorders

A white bus with purple interior lighting is parked in a snowy, mountainous landscape at dusk. The bus is the central focus, with its headlights on and its interior lights glowing. The background shows snow-covered mountains under a twilight sky. The ground is dark with patches of snow.

She gets on the **DRIVE TO THRIVE** bus at central station. This bus is on loan from Mobility Asap Service, one of the coalition partners. Its main subsidiary, RockN'Route — such an old-fashioned name! — is a tour vehicle supplier for music groups and theater troupes. Despite the mildly disturbing incongruity of its name, the bus is quite comfortable and friendly — a modern, hydrogen-powered electric with an old-style rock vibe, bad taste and all — purple everywhere, so twentieth century! She can't wait to wallow in the velvet and satin cushions, and more than anything, she can't wait to chat with her new partners. The mission ahead reads as pretty run of the mill, but gets trickier upon closer inspection with her hunter-gatherer's eyes.

Barcelona mayor Rodrigo Valls, whom everyone has already met virtually, has just confirmed that several international organizations enthusiastically responded to his call to experiment with a new form of urban economic space development. The idea is to revolutionize the soil-to-table circuit to make it safer, more secure and more sober from the environmental and health perspective.

Lucette and Sasha march 2039

Lucette sees herself as committed to the environment. Her recent association with **DRIVE TO THRIVE** attests to this: it's a skills transfer network that sends groups of employees from partner corporations on collaborative environmental missions worldwide.

Sacha, however, has a different outlook. For him, society is not transforming fast enough — which is why he joined a rural degrowth community some 15 years ago (five years after Lucette and him met). Even if **DRIVE TO THRIVE** is taking the long view (or so it says), supporting companies ready to move towards environmental awareness and the spatial and temporal reorganization that goes with that, Lucette's ex has always advocated an even more radical slowing down in their lifestyle.



The news that the partner companies were jumping ship hit the audience like a flock of drones that ran out of battery in midair. After having asked the driver to mute the speakers, the discussions begins in earnest — everyone looking for a solution to save the project they're working on, at the very least, which Lucette appreciates.

Paul takes the floor first.

- Could the Drive To Thrive model evolve, and offer full-time employment? If we increase demand, there would be enough missions to sustain each of us individually. We should create a foresight group to identify tomorrow's problems, and bring in donors/contributors once we have identified feasible approaches to those problems.

Rey has another point of view.

- This is actually great news! Patronage is so yesterday! The future is impact investing: inspiring investors to finance impact projects like ours. Imagine it: a participative finance version of MyMajorCompany, open to the public. At the end of the day, it's such a neat concept: don't restrict access to the platform to only member companies, allow any citizen to join in and participate. I have the skills to build such a system!

Julia is adamant — a company capable of this kind of thing no longer meets her expectations. She even feels capable of contributing some personal CarboPoints to keep the project going. But she can't help worrying,

- Who's going to feed the kids?

Hannah adds

- By setting up a few simple apps, we could measure our social impact exhaustively, reliably, and sell Credits on one of the social impact markets! Could that be enough to finance us? Drive To Thrive could sell the CarboCredits for its project in Barcelona on the energy transition market, couldn't it!?

This is where we are in the discussion — Lucette can't help thinking that history repeats itself, and that defiance of the CarboPoints system is precisely the reason citizens can still be asked to invest their personal Points in the planet's preservation — a (more or less) forced charity, rather than a solution.

3 – 9

Sophie Coiffier

The elevator ceiling diffuses a subdued light, designed to enable a gradual transition to the world of work. Sinking in. Elevators don't actually go up much anymore — they carry us away or, somehow, uplift us. The metallic voice sounds as soon as we enter, “Today the weather will be nice and warm; temperatures may reach 47 degrees Celsius, remember to hydrate yourself!” Jacky and I are here even earlier than usual, to escape the heatwave. The doors are closing. Once the camera recognizes us, the elevator begins its comfortable descent to the thirty-ninth floor, aka 3-9 (‘three dash nine’ we say at home, it’s less scary).

To liven up the descent, the audio program kicks in. It’s annoying at times; we would rather chat quietly or snooze. But since the 2020s, these voices have not stopped. In trains, at the supermarket, everywhere — words in the air, everywhere, words in place of thoughts, words in place of air, words in place. After the weather report, the charming voice launches into a presentation of one of the companies in the building. This week... yes, it’s us, the ‘Ragmen of the West.’ It sounds like the title of a comic book; it’s popular,

dialed in. The colorful logo shows some guys smiling in front of a textile mountain. *'The Ragmen of the West, 3 dash 9, they breathe new life into your old materials... stuffing, bottles, furniture — you name it, they can reinvent it. When their technical skill is given free rein, they can make a carpet from your cardigan, or your old jeans might become stuffing, or cleaning rags, or insulation to help you save on heating costs. Don't forget the chutes on each floor: use them to send your old textiles on to healthier, brighter futures. And do something good for the planet too!'* Finally we arrive. The cellar opens itself to us. In the past, people used to grow mushrooms here — oyster mushrooms, chanterelles, button mushrooms. There are still some who do, but they moved higher up, to 2-7.

At 3-9, the doors open onto a vast warehouse illuminated by white neon lights. First come the stalls for each type of fiber, then for each stage of the recycling process. Workers fill in gaps here and there, because much of the process is automated. We are present at both ends of the line: to sort the textiles before the process starts, at the inception of each stage of material modification, then at the packaging stage (especially for insulation). There is also an R&D office that is constantly designing new products, and a science department that studies ways to make fibers stronger.

Because globalization has nearly come to a halt — initially due to the 2020 pandemic, and later as countries repatriated their production processes — the national textile industry operates very differently. Now, everything — or almost everything — happens locally, and new textiles are more expensive. As a result, reuse and recycling are essential, and so our industry is booming. For marketing

purposes, we collect the old clothes of those who work in our building, but the vast majority of our material is recovered in city centers and already presorted. People call these centers ‘the Valleys’ — who knows why! Probably because of the mountains of stuff... You can find poetry everywhere...

Jacky is telling me something about the basket of vegetables he has to pick up on 2-5. I am not listening; the prospect of spending one more day in this nameless underground night oppresses me. I work in R&D, Jacky works in scientific studies. He finally found a way to balance his cutting-edge skills and his passion for what is left of nature. Me? I truck with uncertainty. My sketches are informed by whatever inspiration I can glean from the ACCOMPLISH platform. This is what we’ve come to. Since standards for upholstery textiles, clothing textiles, etc. are stringent in our field, and the industry is eternally fond of finding tricks to lower costs without harming quality — we all end up drinking from the same well. Are you listening to me? Jacky shakes me by the arm. He tells me I seem distant; I think I am too present, sometimes. SORRY MAN, I had to raise my voice because the grinder had started a little further on. I was thinking about what I was going to do today! So? he asks me, only half interested, but kindly. I just stand there. What do I say? Not so long ago, the STYL State-poration, owner of ‘the Ragmen of the West’, had actively considered closing down R&D and just using algorithms taken straight from the catalog. At first, I was flabbergasted that the State could envisage such a thing, that it had finally come to this, creativity at the lowest, sorry, the minus-thirty-ninth level... But now I don’t know;

I almost wish it would happen — I'm so exhausted from struggling to find ways to fend off the uniformity.

We I walk past several production lines one after the other to reach the office. Today's new forms of industry have perfectly, insidiously, reproduced the old divisions, regardless of production type. We've been streamlined to death. Everything. Food and clothing production chains are now concentrated in or around cities. Granted, one result is that the runaway real estate development has stopped and we can preserve what little productive farmlands we have left. But we have crammed ourselves together like the mushrooms on 2-7 in their growing boxes. When others left for the countryside, I chose to stay. I wanted to go on believing that I could create, be useful, all that. I should have understood that the equation determining what is useful and what is useless had changed a long time before. ACCOMPLISH is there to remind me of that. I'm going to spend another morning water coloring sketches fresh from the printer, which I have practically no right to alter. I wanted so much more! And every day that passes sees me trying to trick the machine into giving me a creative space that, it seems, I will probably never find.

As I turn the corner and head to the office, Jacky points to the percolator to signal that he wants coffee before heading back to his unit. I bid him farewell and rush out into the hallway. Step by step, I move away from the noise; soon, there will only be this boom boom, eerily similar to a heart-beat.

I used to share the office with two other 'creatives': Penny, a clothing stylist, and Mathys who did furniture. Since

the crisis in 2038, which sparked the development of the ACCOMPLISH platform, I've been alone. Creatives now follow rules: enter the specs, and dedicated algorithms generate the model. This is what our field has become. That transformation began much earlier in other fields such as cinema and television, with NotFlex for example. In the beginning, many saw ACCOMPLISH as a way to speed things up, or reach more clients or different markets. But, little by little, we began to perceive the more perverse effects. Basing ourselves on 'what people like', which basically means algorithmic survey results. Of course, lobbies quickly rushed into the breach, if they weren't there from the beginning. So supply adapted to demand... increasingly targeted demand. In short, now all I do is put color, others recite the words in the scenarios (the synthetic voices are really not bad, I must say), still others order the products or consume them. We live like moles. We think like moles. But do we really know what moles think?

Since then, I've either been running all over the place, or just sitting there, turned to stone, like a desperate animal trapped in its burrow. The voice of the ACCOMPLISH software speaks to guide my choices. If I deviate by one millimeter, if I propose a model too much this or not enough that, whatever the system rejects will not appear on the screen. I feel as though I am also being erased, and I dream of making a wonderful dress:

At the hemline, a wet-looking panel, worked and color graded to resemble our ravaged shorelines; above, the shadow of the rocks, pearl gray darkening to heavy gray, then to black; that panel would give way to one featuring a sky without clouds, in a gauzy texture to reveal the texture of the naked skin beneath;

for the bustier, barely-there nuances of yellow and pink with embroidery to bring everything together. From a distance, the fabric would appear to be printed with silvery ornaments, but from close up, subtle images of machines, fragile insects would be visible—all the things that float in the sky so they can watch over us better. I would embellish the dress with a brooch made of recovered materials—perhaps the pebbles from a path, some escape path... or perhaps a small nest? A delicately woven miniature would do very nicely!

I was still absorbed in my dreams when the machine spoke again. It asked me what I was thinking about. That's when I had an idea, probably the best I'd had in ages; an idea that might even spell deliverance. I answered: About an old verse, which became a fairy tale, and then a film and even a dress the color of time.

- Tell me about it?

Equal!

fragments and narratives

Equal!: the market for (in)equality

Equal! is defined as a ‘dismantler of inequalities’. Its job is to detect inequalities inside an organisation, make them known, raise them for debate and find solutions to them, and then apply these solutions. The company uses a set of internal indicators, the eQuality score, validated by law, and it has the right to require companies to host its consultants until the organization reaches a low threshold score.

The company was founded by Miranda Priceless, a mythical, invisible person—so phantom-like that some wonder if she has been replaced by AI. *Equal!* is not an example of participatory management. It employs ‘hunter-gatherers of inequality’, ‘haranguers’, ‘equity traders’—all strong personalities.

The *Equal!* business model does depend on certain kinds of markets. In each, companies that are well-ranked according to certain criteria can exchange ‘Rights to Exploit’ (RTEs) with others that score better on other criteria. *Equal!* can also transfer people from one company to another to improve its scores on parity, diversity, etc.

This model creates a conflict of interest at the heart of a business: the bottom line is that *Equal!* is benefiting from the inequalities that it is supposed to address. In the face of internal and external challenges, *Equal!* repositions itself and articulates its mission: ‘To make this market disappear.’

The Author: Catherine Dufour



Catherine Dufour is a computer engineer, a columnist for *Le Monde Diplomatique*, and a lecturer at Sciences Po Paris. She published her first work in 2001.

In 2020 she released *Au bal des absents* as part of le Seuil publishing company’s *Cadre noir series*, and *L’arithmétique terrible de la misère*, a collection of science fiction short stories published by le Béliat.

Since 2016, she has been part of an inclusive discussion about tomorrow’s societies called “De-incarcerate the Future” with other members of the *Zanzibar science fiction authors collective*. Her book *Danse avec les lutins* (Ed. L’Atalante) has just been awarded the 2020 Grand Prix des Imaginales as well as the Bob Morane prize.

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Looking for a female, male or gender-neutral individual to join a fierce and determined team of professional 'haranguers'.

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A Classified Ad

The Disappearing Company

Catherine Dufour

OK, on Earth, the weather was rotten. It was fifty degrees Celsius in Berlin during summer, Baghdad was vitrified, New Delhi was literally boiling, Siberia had turned into a huge muddy field, the sea was disintegrating the cliffs like sugar cubes in hot coffee and rising all the way to Rouen. Only Norway and the St. Lawrence River could take delight in the summer's mildness. The poor human race, rejected by the inland, now either arid or as pleasant to swim in as a cauldron, was trying to retreat to the collapsing

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equal

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Press Release

equal



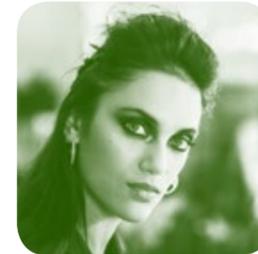
MIRANDA PRICELESS
the mythical personage responsible for changing the world by creating Equal!. No one dares criticize her or question her authority, but she hasn't been since for a while. She can only be reached via message; nobody knows whether she is alive or a (particularly gifted) AI has replaced her.



STEAMERIC
visual imaginer



JEROME HERRING
haranger



ODILE
podiumist



KAT'AIR'INE
5-way quality consultant, especially good as a taster



CAMPBELL
inequality hunter-gatherer



TITOUAN
pro-inequality activist who cannot be fired because he is the son of the boss (he has the official title of Chief Covid Officer, except that there is no more Covid)



MODOFF
equitrader (exploitation rights trader)



LAO SHE
equality-by-design trainer

The Equitrader

Among the companies that I follow, Inequal is rated -7 for Disability, -6 for M/F/X, -4 for Diversity, but +4 for Equal Pay, while Franchisette is rated +3, +1, 0, and -6 respectively. Either they pay penalties to the State or hand over their Rights to Exploit (RTEs) to us, and we get 10% of the exchange value.

I have a slight handicap to overcome: we are also the ones generating the rankings, so some customers wonder if they're not being poked at just so that I can sell them RTEs. My job is a bit like running a (legal) 'protection racket', but in the end, I guess people still have jobs, inequalities are being reduced, so everything is fine.

Sometimes, when the situation is serious, I will request an outplacement: moving a person from one company to another. It pays a ton, but it's a one-shot deal.

So, anyway, equal earns recurring revenue every payday, entirely independent from what the consultants bring in: a dream business model. I suppose I'm the one who brings home the bacon for everyone...

The Solution june 2037

Fortunately, Miranda eventually puts out an effective press release essentially arguing that:

Equal! was 'the first to be concerned about inequality; we continue to learn every day, we can and must do better

Management develops a strategy that they immediately implement: redefine the company's goal, draft it as a founding document or constitution (and hire the leaders of Extinction Rebellion as advisors). The profits earned from RTEs will henceforth be capped and immediately and integrally reinvested in a common fund dedicated to projects with social impact. Profits will be earned exclusively from this new activity. This will enable equal to be proactive (projects) and not reactive (reducing inequality).

At the structural level, equal becomes a Limited-Profit Organization. That is to say: beyond 10%, its profits will be redistributed to the community. equal's slogan, like its constitution, will also change:

Our goal: to make our industry disappear

equal Looking for a female,
male or gender-
neutral individual

to join a fierce and determined team of professional 'haranguers'. The candidate must have proven experience as an "inequality dismantler" in various types of organizations. The position consists in haranguing company executives, either solemnly one on one, or during larger gatherings, by publicly denouncing internal inequalities. Lecturers and moralizers welcome.

Requisite skills: a spirit of observation and chicanery, and a capacity for high speech and low blows.

Languages: waffle or doublespeak.

Position: to be filled yesterday.

Salary: based on results.

equal

According to our 5 criteria, Equal! is rated:

- + 5 in the fight against inequalities related to disability
- + 5 for M/F/X equality
- + 4 for diversity
- + 4 for equal pay

These ratings exist because Equal! is a carbon-neutral organization with a strong positive impact and negative inequality rating. Every Equal! employee benefits from a pleasant sensory environment. This is why we have developed our sixth sense: detecting inequalities in your organization!



Equal! has established a proven inequality scale, the Key Painful Inequality Scale (TM) ©®, approved by the UN, WHO and WWF.

Equal! is entitled to award the Equality label, recognized by Governments and approved by many NGOs, and by the main ethical rating agencies. Equal! is also an approved trainer of non-equality-native companies Seeking to make progress in this area.

The Equality Roadmap

In line with the 5Rs of the circular economy, Equal! will teach you to:

- Reject inequality from the start (our goal: for you not to need us!)
- Reuse skills from other companies who have volunteered for exchange
- Reduce inequality, if it has taken hold
- Renewal: what does it mean? It's the latest lever for progress
- Reuse the skills left aside in your quest for greater equality

Equal can help you manage your RTEs.

Exchanging them may not be enough to improve your ranking among rating agencies, but it might help your organization survive a delicate legal and fiscal situation while your inequality reduction plan matures.

Our Flagship Organization

The perfect example of a company coached by Equal!

After one year, TFC (The French Cars) was ranked
+ 1 in the fight against inequalities linked to disability
+ 4 for M/F/X equality
+ 1 for diversity
+ 4 for equal pay

The Disappearing Company

Catherine
Dufour

OK, on Earth, the weather was rotten. It was fifty degrees Celsius in Berlin during summer, Baghdad was vitrified, New Delhi was literally boiling, Siberia had turned into a huge muddy field, the sea was disintegrating the cliffs like sugar cubes in hot coffee and rising all the way to Rouen. Only Norway and the St. Lawrence River could take delight in the summer's mildness. The poor human race, rejected by the inland, now either arid or as pleasant to live in as a cauldron, was trying to retreat to the collapsing

coasts. Waves of disoriented populations were breaking against each other, and the foam was bloody.

But, eventually, people got used to it. Humans can get used to everything, even living on a volcano. Water cuts, gas cuts, power cuts, network cuts, road, railroad and supply cuts; people got used to them. Personally, I always had my little waterproof, unsinkable bundle ready under the bed. We had all become part-time workers and part-time lovers of life. This worked well with the RDV, the new Right to Digital Vacation, even if, at times, exercising that right felt more like a chore than a privilege.

Even if I was taking it well, not everyone else was. Some didn't care. 'Let the deluge come after me', they said. But objectively, it was more like, 'The deluge is there and so am I'. Others were fleeing to the NVT, the New Viable Territories, at least the ones that hadn't been privatized by the rich. A ton of people dreamed of escaping to some planet B. The moon, Mars... It had never been a dream of mine. I never should have made it one.

I don't know what came over me. Perhaps the exponential rise in misery, the inequalities disproportionately larger and larger in the name of never ending growth. Perhaps the fatigue brought on by our fragmented life, disjointed across multiple projects, multiple places to live and survive, multiple workplaces, always on the move, always changing... And wages following the same bloody sinusoidal path... It's difficult to plan for one's future under these conditions, without a doubt, even if, admittedly, the Universal Income often got me out of any hole I was in. add to

that ecological terrorism, as if we needed more on top of everything else.

There I was, like everyone else, switching between all-tech and no-tech, sometimes in a building, sometimes my feet in the ocean, one day tweetching in a plane, and the next day sculling on a raft singing at the top of my lungs to fill the terrible silence of the waters. It was a bad time, but it was a good time. Because, then, we still had a lot of ideas in our heads.

My faculty colleagues and I started to think about the kind of jobs we really wanted. Many jobs were disappearing; it was the right time to invent new ones. We saw ourselves as breezemakers for a world in desperate need of freshness. We thought of cooling suits before we realized that others had already come up with the idea. We thought of going into exile in Siberia and specializing in mud architecture, becoming owners of boats that were mud-ready, even mud hovercrafts, but it was too far from home and too far beyond our skillsets. We thought about developing teleworking zones. We thought about individual agriculture, especially how to coordinate crop distribution. We saw ourselves as immersive designers, tinkering with nomadic capsules, bubbles that would provide experiences that could stimulate all five senses, to make changes of scenery possible without resorting to polluting modes of transport. And also, we got nostalgic: why not create a travel agency that would take tourists to countries deserted for climatic reasons? We even started to design the suits, a bit like the Chernobyl tourism model. Of course, given the intermittent nature of employment, not to say the extreme variability of living conditions, we thought about

temporary accommodation, survival tools for fishing in times of flooding, workspaces that could be easily dismantled. The enlightened Steameric absolutely wanted us to be the ‘watchmakers of the future’. In a world where human beings and machines are hard to tell apart, and where a lifetime can be utterly desynchronized by climatic events, he saw the watchmaker as a neo-psychologist that could help people find their internal compass, their own internal clock. Modoff, strangely enough, saw himself as a trade unionist dedicated to ecological initiatives. The kind of nag that strongly encourages his colleagues to ride their bikes to produce their own electricity or become vegans. What a guy.

In the end, we came up with the idea of being ‘inequality dismantlers’. By ‘we’ I mean ‘Miranda’: she had the idea, and she was the one who got the ad hoc legislation passed. Detecting inequalities inside organizations was a profession we could get behind. We called ourselves equal. As for Miranda, once the concept was launched, she vanished. She left us with her cumbersome son, Titouan, whom we were forced to hire. All in all, he was not such a burden to us, little Titouan. He mostly talked to the coffee machine. We gave him the title of Chief Covid Officer. Since there was no more Covid, we figured Titouan couldn’t do much harm. But in terms of noise, what a blowhard!

Fortunately, and with the exception of Titouan, we managed to recruit some pretty original characters. In addition to Steameric, who became a visual image-maker; and Lao She, who took charge of training in equality-by-design; and of course Modoff, our equitrader; we recruited Jerome Herring, aptly named since he took

on the position of haranguer; Campbell, a hunter-gatherer of inequalities; and Odile, our podiumist. We also hired a Social Justice Warrior to hunt down inequalities that no one had yet spotted, a verbalizer to take care of the hard part of the job, a matchmaker, and two swarmers.

It was a colorful team. And everything worked well at the beginning... at least from my perspective. I had a flying desk, which I loved. Through the window I could see a different landscape every day. Sometimes I'd dock on top of a Parisian building overlooking the Tuileries Garden or Parc Emile Zola, or perch atop one of the towers at La Défense, depending on my schedule. But most often, I cling to a tree trunk in the Fontainebleau forest, or I settle in a clearing in the Pays d'Auge, or in a Burgundian cemetery, with a view of the tombs and cows. Obviously, this all depended on the weather and thermals. Every so often, I'd find myself floating on the Ourcq canal when I had planned to go see the truffles in the Ferrière forest. I drifted as far as Calais one stormy day. The scenery changes allowed me to recharge my senses of smell, taste, sight, and hearing—even my sense of touch, refreshed by passing my hands through the grass. Unfortunately, the *No Work Zone* laws made it harder and harder to work from some of these places. I found myself more and more often on a sad parkofflot, side by side with other autonomous offices. Maybe that's why I figured 'Mars, why not'? There couldn't be a sadder workplace than the parkofflot in Levallois-Sud. Pure misery...

Financially, we survived thanks to Modoff's shenanigans, but we didn't find that out until after. He reminded us often enough, *after*. After what? After that Extinction Rebellion

broke in to our General Assembly meeting and drenched us with fake blood, all the while calling us names! This schemer Modoff had been careful not to warn us that the business plan's profitability relied almost exclusively on the Rights to Exploit! Miranda responded to the crisis with a totally delirious press release to complicate matters, a litany of randomness: '#Liberation, #sorority, maternity, all for one!'

Basically, after the Extinction Rebellion event and our mea culpa, I think we became a little fragile, psychologically. A little destabilized. A little permeable to stupid ideas, to tell the truth. In short, when the State came down on us by proposing, shall we say quite firmly, that we go to Mars to oversee the E-quality certification of future Martian companies, we couldn't say no.

My personal opinion.

The deal proposed by the State was simple: we had six months to pack our bags. The term was three years. We would leave with the first 10,000 settlers to ensure that any companies that started there would be equality-natives.

Reactions were mixed: Titouan was in, naturally — he's an opportunist. Modoff found the prospect interesting, of course; anything underhanded... Herring was also happy. Steameric saw the measure as negotiable, like everything else. Mathilde and Lao She asked for time to think it over. Odile was less enthusiastic, and Campbell resigned outright.

I won't lie: the trip was horrific. The takeoff broke two of my ribs. I screamed as much as humanly possible; I really

thought I was going to die. Weightlessness is hilarious, of course, but when you're stuck in a suppository shooting towards the icy void, the opportunities to laugh are minimal — especially with broken ribs. And believe me, the landscape was sorely lacking in variety. Seven months of black with stars, more stars, and black, always black. To keep ourselves busy, we were flat out with work — checking X, machining Y, solving this problem, memorizing that list, playing chess with what's-his-name, a whole battery of psycho-behavioral tests, and then physical exercise, of course. Do you know what it's like to exercise in an enclosed space that you can never ventilate? And let me remind you that I had two broken ribs...

Living on Mars: meh. It's about as exciting as living in a parking lot. It is a parking lot. Blocks of Martian concrete buried deep in Martian soil because of the ionizing rays and the damn abrasive dust. I feel like a fish caught and scaled, tucked away in an insulated box at the bottom of a fridge. I, Kat'Air'Ine, a sensory quality consultant, an outstanding taster — here I am, stuck in the basement of this weed killer of a planet (because that's what Martian dust is: perchlorates). The food is notoriously bad. Everything that doesn't smell like sweat smells like rotten eggs since there's H₂S everywhere, the whirring of the recyclers will drive me around the bend one of these days, and my horizon is limited to a parking lot. So I dream of branches, birds, and moonlight, and when I'm not sleeping, I talk about e-quality with my *wami* — my personal AI. The only one who's interested. Because I might as well tell you: it's still a bit early for e-quality in this place. We're mostly concerned about survival since the Great Equalizer waits

for us at every turn — every leak, every crack, every mistake, every badly closed airlock — so really, it's a bit too early. Or too late. In any case, let me be the first to tell you: there is definitely no planet B.



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