

## Ten Years To Waste

### Excerpt of Jean-Londau Handari of his father's last words:

*Listen to your body. What do you hear? The faint cranking of joints, tightened and tired from your working? The ache of your spine? When I lost my baby teeth, I thought my body was decaying and my soul dying. But then I ate softer foods and waited. I remember, sitting in the kitchen and noticing my mom had bags under her eyes. She was waking up early to boil my carrots. I could've done it.*

*Handari Rights -- Section: 4, The Organic Bodies. Projections 23-45 seconds.*

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Huima's shoulders ached from ropes strapped around her back. Her wood-laden sled silently glided along the snow, and her boots sank ankle-deep into the powder. The warm air of her lungs displaced the calm snowfall.

After trudging through the valley, she reached her and Damien's cabin, where they honeymooned. The wood was stacked up against the outside of the structure, with Huima taking a couple of split logs inside for the furnace. The sweat of the journey caused her clothes to stick to her back, and her frayed, nearly matted, blond hair swung over toward her chest. After placing the logs in the furnace, Huima calmly and intentionally sat by a mix of wires and boxes that resembled a radio receiver. She slowly turned a dial till she heard a familiar static. Her left hand held a pencil. Its lead was perfectly perched over a lined paper in anticipation. After hours hoping, a voice fuzzily projected out of one of the boxes, and she began transcribing:

*H,*

*I've been on Mossan for one week now. My transmitter was damaged by the landing, but I've managed to repair it. I miss you. I know it sounds cliché, but you stand closer to me than ever before. I've never needed your presence more than this past week. The locals here are only human in appearance. Their practices are the most crude and basic representations of culture. I came here to document, but now my only hope here is that I come back to you as myself. I wish I wasn't here, but I never would have had the opportunity or courage if not for you. You already know that. It means a lot to me. Thank you. I'm sorry, I'm not good at messages. I'm safe. They are ruthless, but are intentional in where they direct their violence. I couldn't tell you nothing, but I don't want you to be scared. I'm safe and I'll see you when it's over. I love you.*

Damien ceremoniously brought the projector away from his mouth, placing it on the table of his living quarters. It was a tight space, no more than ten feet in width and fifteen in length. The shelter was of a bright purple material with the fibrous nature of untreated wood but the smoothness of marble. He grabbed one of the projectors off the austere table and laid on his cot, holding the metallic prism against his chest. Wanting to get a few more

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minutes of rest, he closed his eyes. The rising Mossan sun peered through the fibrous planks in straight lines and gave his white pajamas the impression of stripes. Damien's skin felt the warm lines of light compress into slivers as the hut swelled from the heavy morning moisture. He found comfort in the predictability.

When the room returned to pre-dawn darkness, Damien forced himself to rise. Chatter and clanking began outside in the common. With a depressing atomicity, Damien circled the outer ring of the common, placing projectors every ten feet. People poured out of the ornate apartment blocks and sat in a large ring that resembled semi-separate picnics. Once everyone was seated, two lines of people erected out of the crowd. Young children stood east, the sun illuminating their excitable features. Pairs of men and women formed ranks opposite their kin. Damien pressed a button hung along his necklace, and prisms shot into the sky. Poles extended from the prismatic projectors, and sounds of metal sliding against itself drew unwanted attention to the foreigner's post aside the ceremony. The prisms twinkled like daytime constellations, shuttering in irregular blinks of exposure as they recorded the scene. Damien, uneasy at the lured eyes, sank into the edge of the crowd. He thought of the projections traveling back to the computer in his hut: *Maybe this will be the one for the exhibition.*

When the rising sun illuminated the last of the giddy children, the surrounding chatter petered out. A figure rose from the picnics. The graceful movement of their body barely broke the silent backdrop of the crowd. Damien looked toward the scene with nothing but depressing boredom. A naked elderly woman walked toward the center of the circular common, her stalky legs lifted themselves high to avoid stepping on breakfasts and blankets. Her entire body was painted in a scattered frenzy of color. There was no cohesive design to be made out in the flurry that coated the seemingly raceless woman. A patch of her wrinkled, fatty, stomach sheened against the morning light. It was a clear oil that formed a perfect rectangle, only distorted by her aged body. She held nothing but a knife of simple make in her right hand. There was a childish innocence to her as she smiled apologetically to those she had to step over. When she reached the center of the common, she gestured for the first child to approach her. Noting this, a pair of adults approached from the opposite side. Sprinkles of light chatter and laughter rose from the impatient viewers until the first child was bestowed with a knife, beckoning anticipation. The old woman smiled at the child, charmed by her failed attempt to control her excitement. The child stood firmly, clutching the knife and gleaming toward her parents across from her. The naked woman warmly spoke, "Good morning, everyone, and thank you."

The crowd replied in a tired and awkward scatteredness, "Good morning."

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“Today we have forty-seven initiations to get through and then I’ll set you all free!” Slight laughter erupted around the common.

“I’m only joking. Let’s make sure we properly celebrate our new additions to adulthood. For those who are older, I ask that you remember the excitement you felt as you scratched off the days in your calendar. How slow the days felt! For those that are younger, just remember you will be in this line one day, although I may be long gone by then. I will now read a passage from the *Handari-Rights*.” She paused for effect, pretending to search her memory.

*“The second colony landed on the yellow grass plains 900 miles west of the first settlement. The first colony, by all appearances, is thriving. They are lost. They thought they came here as the most civilized of us all. ‘The next steps in our species’ progression,’ they said. They’ve trapped themselves in the linearities abundance brings. I estimate in 200 years (three of their generations), standard time, they’ll be extinct, their cities sanctuaries for the ostracized animals. They’ve failed to blend their identity with the brutal beauty this place has. Old men and women stumble around like weeds for the playing children to fall on. But, in their future failure is a lesson. This planet is ours. To us, it’s young. Our identity, our energy, must not be wasted, no matter how much of either we have.*

*With love and hope,*

*Farque-Michael Handari*

*Vice-Chair of Horticulture and Development.*

As usual, there will be a celebratory recycling feast here at dusk for anyone who would like to watch. The soon-to-be woman standing next to me is Poifer-Julie. She won the raffle and, unsurprisingly, wanted to be first in line. Thanks again.”

With this, the woman cheerfully waved toward Julie. The young girl started with her joyful father, stabbing him ten times at the intersection of two pieces of black tape, forming an X on the center of his heart. She stabbed him with automatic and mechanical repetitiveness. Her face froze in glee as her arm glided back and forth. On the tenth stab, Julie’s arm shot back to her waist side with impressive efficiency. The tip of the knife dripped blood between the toes of her right foot, seeping into the red-stained grass. The old woman extended her hand toward Julie and waited for the knife to be returned. She slid each side of the bloodied blade along her bare, oiled stomach, returning it to its grey dullness before offering it back to the girl. As Julie’s hand felt the weight of the cleaned knife, she stepped toward her crying mother.

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“I’m so proud of you,” said her mother, struggling to fit the words between her euphoric trembling.

Ten stabs were applied to the X on her chest. Julie gave the knife back to the nude ceremonial leader. Mild but consistent applause surrounded her. She made her way toward a blanket in the crowd with a mix between an embarrassed shuffle and happy skip. Her path along the yellow grass was scattered with blood, half-dried to her feet.

Smiling children stepped forward one by one, and the applause rose and fell. Damien leaned against a pole that erected one of the prisms as its shadow swayed with the wind. His eyes glazed over the environment while he thought whether Huima would believe such a scene before the official gallery on Earth was opened.

There were eight children left when one girl approached the naked woman. Damien noticed the girl, sending him into careful observation. Her bright blond hair curved around her oval face, a pale yellow only possible with youth. She moved painfully, like her body was devoid of joints and sharpened bones churned and halted against themselves with no buffer. Her limbs twisted and contorted as if to find a painless space. Her facial features were still and horizontal as she craned her neck toward the yellow grass. The woman gave her the knife.

She killed her mother first. Each stab seemed to flower a fresh emotion. First, something resembling happiness. Something of sorrow, lightness, delusion. Never horror. On the tenth stab, she thrust and twisted the blade in every direction, like she was trying to touch every cell in her mother’s heart. While doing this, an airy breath escaped through the gaps in her teeth with exhausting relief. Her eyes closed, but it was obvious they were still moving under her lids in smooth, random motion. As she pulled the knife out of her mother, her unusually large Adam’s apple shifted upwards as she swallowed nothing. She politely handed the knife to the woman, who couldn’t help but recoil from the girl. Reluctantly, she shakily swiped the knife across her stomach and placed it clean back in the child’s hand.

The girl took her right hand and pulled her father’s hair toward the sun. The latening morning’s heat intensified, and his pupils constricted into the rising light. His final look into the sky above, this time, perhaps a prayer. Her eyes ceased blinking, and her mind seemed transfixed with precision. She slid the blade along the strip of tape, feeling the blunted knife become caught between each rib while her father screamed in pain and joy. Upon reaching the center of the tape, she slowly slid the knife into his heart and tilted her head in curiosity, eyes widened. It wasn’t a cold stare. There was innocence in the expression — the type that a child has when they learn to the world around them. She stabbed him nine more times, but it was with the least amount of interest one could imagine. It was less than ceremonial,

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closer to a silent hate for anything that didn't serve a clear purpose. She placed the knife in the trembling hand of the colorful woman and immediately walked toward the exit of the common in even strides. Scattered claps were drowned out by whispers and a couple weeping children.

Damien irregularly pressed the button hung along his neck. The prism closest to him shot down from the air. He picked up the prism and began following the girl from a safe distance. She sauntered into a dense patch of forest that unusually resembled Earth. In Mossan's early days, all the plant species brought over by colonists failed without hesitation except for one: A hybrid between a birch tree and a Japanese cherry, so over-engineered that only its distinctive pink petals remained. Damien activated the shutters of the prism, holding it chest height while peering through the familiar pedaled rain. The girl sat down on a fallen trunk and held a branch. She spread the blood on her hands along the tip of the branch and watched insects crawl toward the metallic scent. Damien approached, and the girl sadly glanced toward him before re-focusing her attention on the sandy dirt and bugs.

"Is it okay if I sit down with you?" Damien took the girl's lack of reaction as a yes.

"You wanna know something? I'm not from around here."

The girl remained focused on the stick. She sucked bloodied insects into her mouth. Impressed with herself for tricking the creatures, a smile sneaked out of the corners of her mouth.

Unable to understand the girl, Damien said what only seemed natural, "I'm sorry you had to do that."

"I'm not," the girl replied.

"Why not?" Damien said, thinking more about the prism than her.

"It's what you do when you're ten. I liked my mom. My dad was okay. But I'm ten."

Still licking up insects, the girl replied to herself, "I'm Samlo-Leah, so Leah."

"Damien."

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H,

*I know you are doing well, but I hope I'm right. What I would do to hear your voice. It's been too lonely here. If only we could've afforded a transmitter for you. When I applied for the assignment, I thought the colony would resemble Earth. It resembles Earth in the things*

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*that don't matter, and is opposite where it does... I met someone. A small girl so horrid that even the locals shudder from her presence. I don't know the right word, but her soul is porous. One second, it's filled with the most dramatic representations of life, and then devoid of anything resembling humanity. I find her so disturbing it shakes me from my depression. She'll dominate the hearts and minds of everyone when I get the projections home. I'll be famous and we'll have enough money to buy a thousand transmitters. I hate it here. I don't mean to put it on you, but it makes me realize how much I miss you and love you. I love you.*

Damien rose from a feverish sleep. He couldn't tell if his thoughts of Leah were keeping him awake or part of his deepest sleep. *That girl...* he said inside himself, wondering if he'd ever consciously see her again after weeks of searching. As the sun began beaming through the gaps in the hut, an object appeared near his transmitter. Damien's body rammed itself against the wall next to his cot, trying to escape. When his mind caught up to his eyes, his fear was validated. A child was placed on Damien's desk. Its body resembled the shape of a crab, with the feet and hands firmly supporting the whole thing, and the hips thrust upward. Its neck craned toward the ground, and long blond hair rested atop the table in a swirled bundle. The breathing was subtle but consistent and deep. Only the bottom third of their irises could be seen, the rest rolled back toward the skull. Not a muscle moved besides those around the lungs. Its abstract beauty was suppressed under overwhelming wrongness. The mouth suddenly moved.

"Damien, you're awake."

"Leah?"

"You seemed interested," she said. Damien looked toward the single door but had the feeling that she possessed an ability to block the path. His fingers stuck out of the shrinking gaps of the hut, instinctively trying to free himself. He surrendered himself to the situation.

"Leah?" Damien said while subtly activating the projector he held under his linens.

"Yes?"

"Are you okay?"

"Yes, why?"

"I can't help but worry for you. It's not right..."

"Don't. The more you worry, the more faults you'll find. It makes me insecure," she said plainly. The statement carried an imperfect innocence that seemed paradoxical.

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Damien began speaking, his words more for the projector than Leah, “What good Earth would do for you, love. I can tell it’s your true home. I’ve been here for some time, and the other colonies; most belong in the never-ending cycles of development and destruction that define their worlds. They wouldn’t know what to do with themselves if their progress actually led anywhere.”

Finally, Leah unflexed from her pose and sat down on the table. She spoke calmly while the tips of her fingers rapidly touched her thumb in a sort of automatic exercise.

“What’s so different about Earth?”

Damien continued in overly dramatic prose, “Most of its landscape isn’t unique or really that pretty. The cities and towns are ugly, with countless millennia of materials atop the crust, one generation bulldozing the other. But the people... they hold the heart of humanity! They’ve reached the optimal point between tribalism and humanitarianism. You’re like us.”

Leah sat up and scurried out of the room. Damien checked the signal to his computer and thought to himself, *How they’ll love these back home!*

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Fruits and candy lay sprawled across a blanket on a grassy knoll behind the hut. Damien found himself ashamed that he was more interested in them than Leah was. She spent the beginning of their meeting trying to press the matching toes of her feet together. Projectors were nestled, hidden around the scene.

“What do you want?” she said, straightforwardly, but with pure intention, still focused on her toes.

“I just, well, I just wanted to talk about—”

Leah interrupted him, “I thought streams of consciousness are what your prisms are for.”

“My projectors are off.”

In a jaded sigh, she asked, “Why are you here?” Damien hesitated to answer. For some reason, it seemed like she was asking herself.

“I’m here to learn,” he replied.

“I thought things were good at your home.”

“People on my home tend to learn stuff just for the sake of it. The interesting stuff.”

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“There’s not much interesting around here,” she said, finally giving him partial attention.

“You’re interesting.”

Leah lost focus, deciding to rub the dirt against her skin.

In a sharpened sense, Damien asked, “Why did you run away earlier?”

Her whole body stiffened in his direction. “Don’t you fucking test me. Don’t make your journey here a waste of time. You’re still alive, and you look old, which means you don’t have kids. Once I have kids, you’ll lose the only thing you seem to care about. Then you’ll have nothing.”

With his hand in his pocket, Damien switched off his projectors and approached her. He spat on her face and grabbed her angelic blond hair. With his other hand, he grabbed her neck.

“I told you my projectors are off.” Leah’s eyes looked at nothing as she calmly waited for Damien to loosen his grip. He could feel her calmness and had never felt more vulnerable. His thoughts dug into his ego: *What does she see? What does she possess?*

A group of three blocky boys walking past spotted the interaction and approached. Damien quickly unclutched his grip. Leah sat there, watching them approach with subdued giddiness. Damien’s face cowed in apology toward the teenagers as he stepped back from Leah. When they neared closer, his body froze, except for his hand, flicking on the projectors in the hope that the scene would be too good to let him die.

One of the boys gripped Damien’s arm, and his circulation was cut off. The boy’s other hand squeezed Damien’s neck. He was basking in his strength and could snap the airway when he pleased. The others noted the spit on Leah’s forehead. The boy gazed back at Leah, past his shoulders, and then looked at Damien’s closed eyes. He dreamed there was a group on Earth who would’ve paid for a server to directly receive and store his projections. Then he thought of Huima.

Ignoring Damien’s closed eyes, the boy gave him a smirk. He jolted Damien back towards Leah. The four of them stood surrounding Leah. The three boys began repeatedly spitting on her. Damien’s eyes widened from surprise, but his face wrinkled itself from wrongness. It wasn’t the spit, or even the act itself, that moved him; It was the situation as a whole. With threatening and confusing stares at Damien, the adolescents gestured toward Leah.

“Spit on me if you want to live,” Leah said.

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The whole encounter continued for ten long, silent minutes until the boys abruptly left and returned to their past chatter. Leah sat there in jubilation for a minute and then got up to leave.

“Leah!”

She turned back, waiting.

“Come here.” She approached.

“Why did you save me?”

“They would’ve made you start spitting even if I didn’t tell you. A boy can’t leave the selection process once he participates, especially one who starts it.”

“Selection process?” Damien said in offense.

Leah sighed impatiently as she walked off: “Don’t worry, I won’t be selecting you.”

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*Lately, I've been having these weird dreams where I'm going about my business, but then I realize I'm in a diorama. But I don't stop what I'm doing because of it. I feel like I can, but I just don't want to. I remember I shrugged and thought I might as well enjoy the difference before I wake up. Don't read too much into it. I just wanted to talk like I was making conversation with you. I'm tired of talking at you instead. Bye.*

Placing the projector with the rest, Damien sat slumped in the swollen darkness of his room. He stared blankly at the silent metal box encasing his computer. He thought about whether he should delete the projection from last week. *If only I could remove myself from the scene. Then it would make the perfect museum piece, he thought. The perfect piece.*

He stepped out into the light to bask in the sun. From a distance, he saw Leah walking toward the densely flowered forest. He quickened his pace, unsure of what he would do when he got to her. Halfway toward her, he realized his projectors sat under his cot. He froze in shy distress among the grassy meadow, unwilling to leave without at least one, but not wanting to lose her in the forest. As he watched her skip into the tree line, his body forced him toward her.

Absent-minded, he clung to the child’s thick and loose dress. Her face turned in its unusual calmness. There was a cracking dryness overlaying her youthful complexion. Damien looked through the aging substance at her. He felt more outrage than he could

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translate into useful thought: *It's the spit!* He pinned her down on the dirt and began vigorously rubbing her plump face with his hand.

She screamed, more in disgust than fear, "Stop!"

"Shut up."

His dry rubbing did nothing to clean her face. Without stopping, he quickly spat in his hand and lubricated her face with his calloused hands. Leah looked past his long and wispy black hair. She looked past his wrinkled forehead and smile lines. She looked into the sky. She saw a blue but felt grey. She still saw the flowers falling from the trees even though they'd long melted into the dirt.

Her tears crept under his nails. Disgusted by her sympathy, she told him, "They'll kill you when they find out."

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Leah laid out on the grass. She let the cold morning dew dampen her body. It felt relieving after her long walk to Damien's hideout. She could hear Damien hastily unwrapping the grain she brought. Leah saw his increasingly crazed demeanor as sad but weirdly endearing. She broke a chuckling smile at the picture her ears built of that man fixated on his grain. As Leah entered the room, she saw the grain untouched. Damien's nails ran between the cracks of a fake wooden prism, methodically cleaning out absent dirt. When he saw Leah enter, he hurriedly went towards the grain and began soaking it to boil. She sat there silently but noted how Damien kept glancing toward her, nervous that she'd leave before the grain was cooked. On his fifth glance, he spoke, "I can put bird in it."

"Don't make me strand you. You only eat meat once, at the recycling feast."

"You mean your parents?" Damien said scoffingly.

"Their energy will not be wasted on this conversation."

Not wanting to test her, Damien nervously scooped up a watery pile of half-cooked food from the pot and brought it towards Leah's mouth. She opened her lips and let it burn the roof of her mouth. Leah folded her blond hair behind her ears as she smiled with overly widened eyes.

"Is, is it good?" he desperately asked.

"It's okay," she replied.

There was a silence until she quietly stated, "Thanks."

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Damien nodded in affirmed excitement as she left.

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*It's like she helps me to amuse herself. I think she cares but that doesn't matter. I wonder what you'd think of her. Probably that she means well. I hope you find these one day. I'm okay and safe. I still love you.*

Damien imagined turning off a projector. In complete darkness, he stared at nothing. He sat up and left his hovel. *I need you*, he thought. Walking through the night, he made his way to the thick purple structure where the locals housed him before his abscond. The roof had fallen in on itself, but the metal encasing his computer was intact. Damien gently caressed it through the dust. Voices could be heard whispering around the structure. Damien dropped to the floor as he looked for the prisms, blindly waving his hand under the cot. His fingers bled from the broken, tiny shards of glass that could only be from a projector. Men entered as he thrust his body toward the bits of glass. His bloodied hand gripped a mass as the men grabbed Damien.

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Against the rising sun, they dragged his half-limp body toward the center of the common. The only muscles that were used were the ones holding the projector. Blood dripped onto the stained grass of the common, forming a small pool. The morning light illuminated the scene: three men surrounded him on three sides, leaving the side facing east exposed. They still looked years away from full development but carried an aura of refined masculinity. Damien slid the cracked projector under his body as if they cared he had it.

“When is it happening?” he asked the guards collectively.

“Soon enough.”

Seeing them look at the projector, his eyes widened. He spoke frantically and held up the prism like it was a religious offering. “Please, please, just put this over in the tree line. You just need to place the dark side on the ground and apply downward pressure.”

Sweat caked his ugly hair between his wrinkles, wrapping around his eyes. The guards looked at each other until one of them smirked and went to grab the prism. The man walked towards the tree line. The other two shyly smiled at Damien in empathic embarrassment. When he saw the projector delicately perched atop the pole, his white teeth sheened in exaltation. His neck craned back toward the sky while he pictured someone like him coming to retrieve his projections.

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One of the guards spoke, “She’ll be here soon.”

“She?”

“Your daughter.”

“She’s not my daughter! I’ve never had a daughter! I thought this was about the spit!” The guard remained silent.

His true situation settling in, Damien cried, “She was taking care of me, it doesn’t count!”

“There was a non-sexual reliance,” the other guard said coldly but caring.

The third guard added, “Were you friends?”

“I don’t know,” Damien said in a cracking voice.

“Then what else would you call it?”

One of the guards quoted Handari: “There are only two kinds of punishment for the old. Ones of regrets, and ones of waiting to die. Some say enough of the former causes the latter.” He sighed and broke off, speaking to Damien himself, “This is not a punishment. You did good. Your will was well spent but is no longer a good. Every thought you now have could be going toward the future. It’s not about her being an adult; it’s about our spirit and hope staying young. I’ll join you soon.”

Leah appeared from the east, her face next to the oiled belly of the women. Her hand loosely held the bleak knife. She walked directly up to Damien but refused to look him in the eye. Leah gazed at the scene she found herself in. She shouted toward it all, “He’s not my dad!”

Dull silence met her echoing squeak. They thought they were waiting for her brain to catch up. With no other choice in her head, she looked at Damien. He looked back. Their eyes connected more than their personalities or dispositions ever did, and in doing so, formed their own defiant significance. It wrestled in them, like a mad dog and sad worm.

“I won’t do it,” she said.

“You have to. It’s okay, it’s what you do when you’re ten.”

“You think you can connect with me by quoting me? Fuck off. Have you thought I might have my own reasons for not wanting to stab you beyond yourself?”

Damien replied tauntingly, “I don’t think I can connect, I know I did! You’re trembling. You even fed me after I wiped off the spit! You think you pity me, but you don’t

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know what pity is. You don't pity someone because they can't feed themselves. You pity someone when they throw up their meal even though they're hungry."

He continued, "This was the only way it was going to end. We both knew that. Now do something for yourself for a change."

Tears swelled her brown eyes. The creeping sun began casting Leah's shadow across Damien's body.

One of the guards spoke, "It's okay. You're not hurting anyone here."

Leah stood there, silently wishing her will never existed.

"You really won't do it?" Damien said.

"You wouldn't be saying any of this to me if you didn't care," she said, her body shivering in sadness.

"To you? You're a zoo animal. I was never talking to you! Look toward the trees. Are your eyes too filled with tears to see the prism? It's all for the projection. Even in the prism-less hovel, I was talking for this — not to you."

"Stop trying to make me hate you. It'll never work. Never."

"I'm not. Even now, my projection is being transmitted live to Earth. The colonial girl killing her Terran pseudo-father is my magnum opus. This is what I do. My life's work is complete. That's why I want to die."

Her affection tried to find a place to crawl out of her, but her body kept it wrapped. She wept. She wept as she approached Damien. Her shadow darkened him wholly. The knife vibrated in her hand and began randomly poking Damien's shirt. He placed his bloody hands over hers, steadying them. As they guided the blade into his chest, he leaned forward to whisper into her ear: "I love you."

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### **A Conversation of Passage\***

**Speaker: Man.**

**Subject: Women, old.**

**Passage Word: Disgust.**

\*Written word only, no projection available.

**Q:** When she approached you, was she young?

**A:** She was ten but was younger. I later deemed her — eccentricities as simple surplus energy. This is what we foster; we can't be surprised when we succeed.

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**Q:** The Terran, was he a man?

**A:** He said he was an invalid, but some of the boys said they heard him masturbating in the hut.

**Q:** And you chose not to report this?

**A:** Sometimes, when I'm standing there naked and oiled, I get lonely knowing no one wants me. I look around the common, life everywhere, but none for me. I forget why I cursed myself with old age. But then I see the people look at me, disgusted, and I rest my anguish. They looked at the Terran the same way. In their disgust, I see a drive. A drive to give twice as much as I with half the energy.

**Q:** Do you love her?

**A:** I love all my children.

**Q:** Do you love me?

**A:** I love all my children.

**Q:** What do you think he was trying to capture?

**A:** You're not a real authority; you must remember this. Don't ask questions we don't need answered. Go against the Handari. Light their fires. When they kill you, you'll die knowing you serve them.