

Sacrificed for a World of Immersive Utopia

Year 2053, planet TOI-700 e

“Good morning, everyone! It is the start of a new day!” The AI Home Assistant chirped happily, automatically opening the curtain blinds in my room to motivate me to get out of bed. Before I could cover my eyes with my blanket, it was swiped away by my bed’s “arms”. Having everything digitised for me meant that everything was a cycle. Unfortunately, that also meant following a fixed routine with no delays whatsoever.

By the time I got myself washed up in my Automatically Activated Shower and changed into my school uniform with the assistance of my Digital Closet, the rest of my family was already settled in the kitchen. As usual, my father read his news articles from his Projector Watch while my mother scrolled through her shopping sites with tempting discounts appearing once in a while. I looked around for my grandma, who was usually in the living room. She made a habit to watch the outside world from her window daily. Everywhere outside, people were traveling on their Levitating Riding Board with their set destinations in place while sky towering buildings were displaying screens with real time traffic alerts and news reports. No one seemed to be paying attention to their surroundings except for their immersive Projector Watches, showing them what they actually wanted to see and engage with.

Out of my family, Grandma was the only one who did not appreciate the technology of our current society and always rejected the technological lessons we tried providing her with to keep up with the times. She only used technology when they were forcefully imposed on her.

“Grandma, have you eaten your breakfast yet?”

“You know I have, my dear. Our AI Home Assistant would not let me off with an empty stomach. It just kept producing a red wall whenever I attempted to enter the living room.” She grumbled. “I just cannot bear to stay in the kitchen where your parents keep using their stupid projector watches. No interaction with each other at all.”

“I never bothered to ask you this question, Grandma. But I really want to know why you are resistant towards technology, especially since our family company invents electronics. They are really helpful and convenient.”

“You do not understand, my dear. In my time, technology was very great and convenient. However, as time passed, climate dangers increased too. I was part of an Elite society on another planet, called Earth.”

My head turned fuzzy as I comprehend what she was sharing with me. “Earth? From my Science lessons, Earth is just another planet full of water with no lands. We are on the planet TOI-700 e now.”

“As I mentioned, my dear, you will not understand my apprehension towards technology here.” My grandma sighed dejectedly, shaking her head.

“No, Grandma, I would love to understand what you are saying and your past. I have no tuition going on after school. Would you mind sharing about this other planet with me then?” I asked eagerly, hoping that my puppy-eyes would work on her. She chuckled at my attempt to convince her before nodding in agreement.

By the time school ended, I was mentally drained to be thinking of my schoolwork. Luckily, Grandma was at home. I increased the speed of my Levitating Riding Board, eager with excitement to reach home and know more about the planet she mentioned: Earth.

“So, Grandma, why did you mention Earth?”

“In my time, before your father was born, I was the heiress of our family’s electronic technological company: Ummine. When Earth’s World Health Organisation (WHO) made an announcement about Earth dying, in the year 2023, they were working with Earth’s National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) on the ideology of planet migration. Unfortunately, what most did not know at the time of the announcement was that this planet migration was only for 3% of the world population. Only the 3% were considered filthy rich in their own respective countries and were considered as an Elite for the migration.”

“What?! Then what about the 97%?”

“They were cruelly left to die on Earth. Countless hours of research and developments went underway for eight years. When everything was completed, the ugly truth was also revealed: only the Elites could migrate to TOI-700 e. Subsequently, around the planet, the 97% went on staged protests that were ignored. Governments chose to abandon their citizens to come here to this planet, TOI-700 e. My own father, your great-grandfather, was the Founder and CEO of Ummine. Due to his contribution towards part of the digital advancement pertaining to TOI-700 e before the migration, my family was invited here. We were part of the 3%. Yet, when I came here with them in my late twenties, I could not help the sorrowful pity and sadness that was developed by the pleas and cries of the 97%. I vowed never to forgive my own father, who although gave our family another chance to continue thriving, he had heartlessly stood at the sidelines of the planet migration works. To the world, I was his heiress. And yet, he gave me no power of authority at all in Ummine. He only gave up the company after two years of marriage with your grandpa and your father was born.”

“I... I did not learn of such an event occurring in my History lessons...”

“Of course you did not, neither did your parents. When the migration was completed, the 3% came to an agreement to eradicate the past. It seemed that they were aware of their heartless acts,

yet they turned a blind eye. Earth did not just face rising sea levels, but also global warming and an increase of natural disasters. It took less than three years for Earth's ozone layer to shatter, causing the 97% to get sick and die. Eventually, the rising sea levels on Earth had consumed the lands, drowning both living and dead beings alike into the ocean. It would be a wonder to discover any survivors now."

When my grandma finished her story, I was near to throwing up. Her story on the 97% of Earth's population being abandoned made the hairs on my skin stand. I was having quick flashes of images in my head of her story that I did not realise I had stopped eating my lunch until she brought a fork to my lip.

"I know my story has a lot to take in. However, I hope you now understand my rejection of technology. To you, your parents and the other citizens of this immersive utopia planet, technology is definitely considered a crucial part of society. To me, however, it only makes me guilty that I get to enjoy such luxuries while previously being powerless to help those 97% on Earth. It always felt like they sacrificed themselves for an impossible dream. Part of the cause of their madness is the desperation to come here and survive from the foreboding doom on Earth."

"I am sorry, Grandma. I will try to convince Father and Mother to stop pestering you with technology."

She patted my hands in comfort. "You do not have to do that, my dear. I was just sharing my apprehension with you like you wanted."

"Beep, beep" My Projector Watch lit up in front of my hand on display. I pressed on the notification. *"Incoming message from Mother: 'Zara, your father and I will be making a last minute detour to Veilian for a business meeting. We will be back tomorrow night for dinner. Whatever you and your grandma want to eat, just select it with the help of our AI Home Assistant like usual and your food will be freshly made and appear on the dining table. Your grandma does not have a Projector Watch, so remember to remind her to take her pills on time! Catch you later!'"*

I took a glance at my grandma, whose eyes were filled with a sad faraway look. It seemed that her sharing made me reflect on how rarely I actually communicated face-to-face with my family unless necessary. *We all have a Projector Watch to send voice and text messages, why the need for face-to-face?*

There were certainly downsides to technology usages.

***TOI-700 e: actually is a planet found by NASA, although there is not much research other than its similarity to Earth's size, shape and star's habitable zone.**