I t was the first time they had faced the Dictator since third schooling. Becz nudged Jono to stop him making bunny ears behind her head. “This is serious.” Jono gave her supercilious smile. “I know.” The Dictator appeared on the wall, perfectly groomed as always. [32 WELCOMING NEUTRAL WITH A SLIGHT SMILE] “Good morning. How can I help?”

Becz forced herself not to smile back. She knew the Dictator was faking it. “We are unhappy.”

The smile gave way to a serious, concerned look. [1 LISTENING NEUTRAL] “That’s good. Acquiring knowledge is an important part of being human.”

“Okay,” said Becz quickly, too quickly, but she wanted to get her argument out before the Dictator could interrupt and shatter her chain of thought. “So when we looked at history we found that dictatorships inevitably crush opportunities for intellectual curiosity and exploration, and that is only through democracy that people can truly be free. You claim this is a perfect dictatorship, that you enable us all to live wonderful lives. Yet that clearly isn’t true because we’re not satisfied. We want democracy. We want our say and that’s because you control the media.”

“A quick shake of the head. “Of course not. Leave the world, is all I meant. As a perfect dictator I have found it useful to have a country that would have father and son presidents. It was an argument of its time. No dictator back then could have been perfect. Democracy was the best system until it willingly gave itself over to a perfect dictatorship, because it was the right thing to do. Even then there were dissenters. You know what they called me back then?”

“Big Brother,” whispered Becz. [419 RECALLING A FOND MEMORY WITH AN IMPORTANT LESSON ATTACHED] “Big Brother. Yet it didn’t stick. How could it? I’m not male. I’m not anything that Orwell could imagine. The only computers in 1948 when his book was written were adding machines. Don’t feel sad. At this very moment I am talking to 1.2 million individuals who all feel roughly the same as you. A few will stay on the Island, but most come back. And everyone who does is happy here. Why would they possibly not be?”

Becz sat silently as Jono went and got himself a drink. It was right of course, the Dictator. There was, and could be, nothing better. But it wasn’t fair.

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