



'A Letter from the New World'

By Kayla Bosire, Senior Winner aged 16 from Nairobi, Kenya

It was a beautiful day to die.

While the rest of me withered away into nothingness, a field of forget-me-nots blossomed before my aching feet, mocking my suffering. Their rich hues matched the periwinkle sky that clothed the heavens above. A quiet peace filled the lands. A peace that stretched beyond the seven seas - a peace so strong that neither disease nor pestilence could stand against its power.

And I, the very same one who had torn the world apart those thirty years ago stood weakened, unable to do anything but accept the fate laid bare before me. And who am I, you ask? Who I am is no secret to any man. They called me by many names, the humans, but you will identify me best if I introduce myself as COVID-19. I was once powerful, I was once feared. Now I am nothing. Nothing because mankind decided to fight back. And when united, they are much greater than I.

Kingdoms, states, and provinces, people of every nation and tongue came together - united by the very thing that had driven them apart. And there was no lion and lamb - none greater than the other - for all were in harmony. It mattered not the color of your skin, nor the gender you identified by. It mattered not your religious beliefs, nor your name or your father's name, for there were no barriers differentiating one man from another.

No longer was the long shadow of inequity cast across the world's poor. The beggar's hands turned into praying, rejoicing hands. Equity hummed in the air, promising more fruitfulness in the years to come. And the Commonwealth nations, together with the rest of the world held hands, holding on to that beautiful moment, on that beautiful day. And I knelt among the forget-me-nots, watching as the world slowly pieced itself back together.

Watching as the sun shone down on my sins, and the oceans washed them away. Watching as the very last of my power was taken away from me, stolen by the advances the men and women armed with syringes and white gloves made. Watching as more people recovered from my deadly sting. Watching, because all I could do was watch and wait.

So in my sunset hours, I took a final stroll across the New World. My travels began in the south, walking through the coconut plantations of the Pacific. From the vibrant tech cities of Guam to the tranquil white palm beaches of French Polynesia, a pulse of joy filled the air as the islands came together, forming the Pacific Union. Despite their remoteness, a flourishing trade and

logistics network connected their fertile agricultural islands to the rest of the New World. Together they were invincible. Together they were able to face any challenge hurtling their way. Together, they made a difference that stretched beyond their sandy borders.

Across the Indian ocean, my voyage continued as my feet landed on the 'Mother Continent.' Africa, they called her. 'Mama Africa' had nearly been bled dry, her jewels robbed of her hundreds of years earlier. But now she is healing. Once scorned, she has risen to power. The world came together to help 'Mama Africa.' They extended their right hand, and she took it, and together they rebuilt a broken land. Within the African community, tribes merged together, no longer separated by language, religion, or ancestry. No longer divided - ever one community. One people. And that unity pushed them forward, as more cities sprouted from villages, and people came together to help fuel the change. From the motherland to the rest of the world, strength and peace rang out, and the faint singing of these words could be heard: "Umoja ni nguvu; utengano ni udhaifu." (Unity is strength; division is weakness).

Further north, past the vast Sahara and the sandy Sahel, my journey continued. I landed in the largest of the seven great continents, Asia, where cities full of life and laughter, teemed with people. With an ever-growing population, air pollution was a constant issue. To mitigate the situation, cities had gone green, planting more trees and greenery, limiting carbon emissions, and using technology to help promote the purification of air. There was something rich in the silence found within its cool forests which, thanks to the people, had been conserved to this day. Inhaling, I could smell everything - hear everything - in those forests. The people had fought for a greener home, thus sparking a revolution that spread to the rest of the world.

Revolutions like this, however, weren't uncommon. War had an iron grip in the Middle East. For far too long had the people of Syria and Afghanistan been torn apart, resources wasted on ammunition and weaponry. The world demanded peace, and peace it received - with some difficulty and some time, but peace nonetheless. Nations, once shells of themselves, were slowly recovering. Blood was no longer shed. Peace was blooming, peace was blossoming, and it would bear fruit as long as the people worked together. As long as they continued to see past the mistakes of their ancestors. A wise man once said: "the only way out of the labyrinth of suffering is to forgive."

Forgiveness didn't come easy. It had taken thirty years to rid the world of the chaos I had caused, and the confusion and uncertainty even the most powerful of nations had felt during that period. That uncertainty had forced the world to put aside their differences and come together to fight an invisible foe. People were falling dead like flies from the skies, and a fear greater than any fear I had witnessed swept from continent to continent. There was uproar and chaos and anger. So much anger and so much pain. Pain that was channeled into power. Power that was channeled into healing. True power. The kind that came from within - the kind that made people fight for something greater than themselves. That kind of power had been absent since the dawn of time. And to think that I, the one that divides, was the one that merged them together - was the very thing that forced different worlds into one.

No it was not perfect; the New World did have its flaws, but for the first time in hundreds of years, a significant change had come. And as the world changed, things changed for me too. I was dying - my power was ebbing away, unable to keep up with the changing times. My life on this earth was quickly running out as I proceeded with my exploration of the New World. So much had changed in the Americas. From the samba filled streets of Sao Paulo, to the quiet desert ranches in the North, there was a strange calm. In the North, advancements in space exploration allowed for greater access to the rest of the universe. And in Europe, as I sat and observed the land of the midnight sun, I saw that they too had various developments regarding education, security and social needs, which granted children more access to learning systems, and provided a secure environment for all citizens.

Togetherness was an unspoken rule in the New World. All were working in harmony to keep the world in order. Those who cried out for justice, were heard. No one turned a blind eye to their neighbours suffering, nor did pleas for justice fall on deaf ears. For the first time in a long time, mankind understood that you did not have to be the same to have a common goal.

The Commonwealth, among other associations, had one goal: peace and security. And when they tossed their differences aside and joined hands - when they looked past one's beliefs or the color of their skin - they achieved it. Together. They advanced and progressed together. And when that finally occurred, groundbreaking discoveries were made in science and medicine, better solutions to Old World problems such as global warming and climate change were unearthed, when the freedom of speech prevailed.

And just as my travels came to an end, I stood at the top of the world and looked around. This world, tainted as it is, continued to redeem itself day by day, hour by hour, as the people learned to forgive. My voyage concludes in the quietude of the evening, as I return and lay down in the sea of forget me nots. And in the serendipity of silence, my breath is stolen from me as the painted sun sets.

It was a beautiful day to die.