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## Q1 Dystopian Allegory Project

Mark carefully stepped over the rubble of a rowhouse that had been demolished long ago. He was walking through the ruins of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on his way to the northern border of his city. He had his blue t-shirt, black cargo pants, an old pair of Timberland boots he found in a storage container from the year 2047, and his mask to filter out all of the dust, decay, and disease from the outside air. He was close to the barrier now, passing through a wealthier, residential area. Forest and weeds had mainly overgrown the place, but he could see the large, metal fence surrounding the border to the city up ahead, as well as the watchtowers guarding it. He felt nervous about the towers, though he couldn't place why. The barrier loomed ahead in front of him, and for some reason, he didn't think he'd be able to leave.

“Turn back around immediately,” said the guard, glaring down at Mark from the tower.

“Can I pass through?” Mark called up to the tower, confused as to why he was being told off.

“Nobody is allowed to exit the city,” the guard yelled back down.

Mark was confused why he couldn't leave. “Why not?” He asked. “Isn't the wall for keeping disease out?”

The guard gave him a strange look, then said “The cities are the diseased area. We are required to quarantine all residents to stop further spread of the virus.”

Mark was again confused, then frustrated. “I've never even been sick! I ain't never even had any viral symptoms and I've been in the city since the day I was born!”

The guard eyed him suspiciously, then said “don’t come here to waste my time again.”

Mark was shocked. “Wait, sir! Sir! Please! Please, I need to get out!” but the guard never looked back over, and Mark was left standing in the middle of the field, tired, frustrated, and feeling defeated.

Mark walked along the edge of the fence for a long time, looking for any way to sneak over the wall. The fence looked to be about fifteen feet high with curling barbed wire at the top. There were guard towers placed about every half mile or so, all with large metal doors that disrupted the endless steel links. He was scoping out for any imperfections in the fence or anything high enough on this side for him to jump over. He had seen a couple of trees, but none of them were close enough. He was coming up on another guard tower now. He passed directly under it, making it difficult for anyone to see him. Inspecting the iron door, Mark could see one large keyhole by the knob. Through the small window he saw another door on the far side, as well as stairs that most likely led up to the lookout area. He didn’t see any guards. He tried the knob. Locked. Sighing, he kept walking along the fence.

He was beginning to get frustrated. The fence seemed very well maintained and he couldn’t find any imperfections anywhere. He was walking through a thickly forested area and his slow progress was getting to him. He had tripped and slipped on multiple logs, rocks, and roots. He could feel a bruise forming on his butt from his last fall. These were not the best hiking boots. His stomach protested at him loudly, but he had no more food in his bag. What little he could gather back in the city was now gone, and he was losing motivation and energy by the minute.

Up ahead, the trees abruptly stopped and he found himself about a hundred yards from the next tower. Then Mark realized something. The guard towers stuck out over the fence in

order to have a better line of site without the fence in between them. There was a small gap between the fence and the edge of the tower on the far side, but he could probably reach out and grab it. His biggest issues would be the guard and the barbed wire, but he decided to ignore the wire for now and just worry about the guard. He slowly walked along the fence, pressing himself against it as much as he could to avoid being seen. He walked up to the door and peered inside. Empty. Based on what he had seen so far, Mark assumed that there was only one guard stationed per tower. If there were more, he'd be in trouble. He decided he would worry about that if it happened, but for now, he had a plan. He took a deep breath and slammed his fist on the door as hard as he could.

*Bang, Bang, Bang.* He heard the guard stand up.

“Who’s there!” Yelled the guard. Mark didn’t respond. Instead, he braced himself and knocked on the door again. *Bang, Bang, Bang.* “Hey!” He yelled angrily. Mark heard him start to move and leapt on his chance. He ran over to the fence and started to climb as fast and as quietly as possible. He was used to climbing old buildings in the city, so this wasn’t difficult for him. Heart pounding, he began to scamper up the fence. The guard was going down the stairs while Mark was going up. He got to the top, leaned back, and reached out and grabbed the edge of the tower railing. He jumped the fence, vaulting onto the patio of the tower. He slowed and thought about his options. He couldn’t go downstairs because that’s where the guard was, but he had to get to the ground without the guard knowing he was there. He made a quick decision. Without thinking too much about it, he leapt over the railing and dropped to the ground fifteen feet below.

Mark took off his mask and took a big breath of fresh air. He had gotten past the fence, past the guard in the tower, and now finally felt like he could take a moment to rest. He was bleeding from a cut from the barbed wire and his ankle was bothering him from when he jumped

out of the tower, but it wouldn't discourage him. He was going to find what he was looking for- a doctor. All of his life he had lived in a diseased area and had never been sick. Not once. He wanted to help, to offer his services to find out what was special about his situation. Now all he had to do was find what he was looking for.

He could see the front doors of the medical center clearly now. They were big and made completely of glass. The entire place was, actually. Every side of the building was made completely from glass. He walked up to the door and opened it.

The entire entry room was filled with newspapers, TV's, and other methods of displaying current events. All of the things in this room were focused on one thing. Covid-19. A disease that ran rampant for the first time over fifty years ago and since has all but destroyed the world as Mark knew it. As soon as he walked in, the nurse at the front desk eyed him with disgust. It was like she was looking at a rat that had just entered her kitchen. Mark felt immediately out of place. He was suddenly aware of how white the floors were and how muddy his boots had become. How everyone in the room was wearing the same white uniform with the same government-issued mask. He stuck out like a sore thumb in his clothes. The nurse glanced around nervously and then asked him to follow her.

Mark was led down a series of bends and turns, past the same white doors and walls over and over again. Everything was so bland and the building felt like a never ending maze to someone who had never been in a place like this before. Eventually they stopped at a certain door and the nurse opened it for him. Inside there was all kinds of equipment. Scanning devices, syringes, and other large machines that looked more like mideival torture devices than medical or scientific instruments. Inside sat a short, older woman, probably around five feet tall. She sat in a high rolling chair looking over some papers. She looked up at Mark, startled, then horrified. She

looked quickly at the nurse.

“What is that?” asked the doctor.

“I don’t know. It walked in the hospital and I figured it would be best to bring it to you,” the nurse said. The doctor raised her eyebrows, the nurse nodded, and then the doctor looked back at Mark and addressed him for the first time.

“What are you doing here?” asked the doctor.

Mark was offended. He was being treated like some sort of pest, an object that had to be dealt with but nobody wanted to deal with. “I wanna find out something about my body and how it relates to the disease,” he said. The doctor looked at him and laughed. It was more of a cackle really.

“Oh my poor dear,” she said while still laughing. “You cannot hope to accomplish anything here. Good luck wherever you end up though.” Just then, the door burst open again. Three big security officers came into the room and grabbed Mark. The nurse and the doctor quickly walked out of the room.

“Hey- hey!” Mark was protesting, but one of the guards took a gag and placed it in his mouth.

“You are under arrest for trespassing, endangerment of real citizens, and purposeful disease exposure. Good luck kid. You’re gonna need it.”