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## **Unfortunate Tragedy**

I believe most of us have heard about the term “survival of the fittest,” where the most robust remains and weaker beings face death in the wild world. Now, imagine our human society like the wild world. Only the rich with great luck can survive. This is what happened in the 25th century. Because of human’s unending greed, our world has become a lifeless planet.

Many factories had accelerated global warming. Stocks became popularized and led to the 2nd stock market crash in the United States. This had sent the majority of the wealthy into poverty. Besides, our planet has been affected by a series of natural disasters for the past few years. We now lack in the number of resources, and people are struggling to live through their lives every day. Because of their struggles, people have called themselves “The Last Generation.”

As a solution to our struggle, the government has suggested a selection program that randomly draws out a number of people every month and kills them for population control. They added that this would not only help balance the population with the number of resources but also lessen people’s desire for money and wealth. However, people have tried to be exempt from the draw illegally. Many of the citizens in the lower class have complained about the issue, but it was continuously rejected by the government.

Logan lived in a rich household with a cold and distant father and a heart-warming mother. He just became a freshman in VA High School. He enjoyed watching Bear Grylls’s survival program. He also loved coding on his computer. His brain was brilliant in handling technologies. People would call him a nerd.

His father made a huge amount of money for his family, but Logan never seemed to know about his job. He was always in his room, “working” on something according to his father. He barely speaks to Logan, which makes him wonder what his real job is. He never went to his workplace nor went outside for a walk. Logan thought his father was working every day and night.

It has been 6 months since the government started drawing people out. So far, none of Logan’s friends were drawn out to be executed by the government. He turned the tv on and prayed that none of his friends or family would be drawn out. “Good morning citizens”, said the reporter. “I believe you know the rules by now. If your name is drawn out from this box, we expect you to come to our office within one week. If you are not seen by midnight that day, then we’ll have to send our soldiers to bring you here, dead or alive. No exception whatsoever. We will now begin the draw.” An hour later, the government drew out the last name. “And our last, unfortunate draw goes to... Logan Bucky!”

Silence. He thought he was dreaming for a minute. Before he could think of anything else, he went to his room to get prepared. He didn’t want to end his life like this. He decided to run away from the world. He ran up to his room and started packing his survival equipment, which included snacks, water, a pocket knife, a lighter, a medkit, and his sleeping bag. With his belongings, he ran downstairs, grabbed his shoe, and headed out toward the back door. He jumped over the fence and started running before the cops came to arrest him. ‘If I was going to die, either way, I’d rather starve to death than be killed, he thought. He first had to hide before the cops or soldiers caught him. He decided to run into the forest to find a good hiding spot. He ran into the dark, humid wood.

Logan went deeper and deeper into the wood. The place seemed so dark that he was not able to tell sunrise and sunset. He was exhausted from what happened earlier that day. He chose a flat surface and settled down to fall asleep. He found some dry leaves to work as a soft carpet. He opened his sleeping bag and went back to sleep. A few hours later, Logan woke up with burning pain in his back. He jumped out and took his shirt off. He was surprised by the hundreds of ants that were on the back of his shirt. He tried to shake the ants off, bang his back on a tree trunk, smashes his shirt with a stick in order to get the pants off.

His back was still sore from the ant bites. He grabbed a bottle of water from his bag and poured it on his back. He had to throw all the snacks away due to the ant attack. He started seeking any resources nearby. After an hour

of searching, Logan could smell the scent of water nearby. He immediately ran toward the water and found a river flowing. He bent down and leaned toward the water to clear his thirst. After getting a sip of water and filling his water bottle, he stood up and found a group of people staring at him on the other side of the river.

The group seemed like a small community. They wore clothes made out of leaves and branches. Most of them looked dirty and skinny. They were either bald or had really long hair. All people from ages 5 to 70 seem to be included in the group. "Oh my, we have another runner here today!" said one of the men. People started celebrating. "Calm down now. We can't let the cops know that we're hiding in here." He was a tall, skinny bearded man with a stick on one of his hands. "Come over young man," he said as he was pointing at the bridge made out of stones.

As he crossed over, he slowly examined the crowd. They all seem like homeless people who haven't been to their houses for several months. He walked up to the tall man as he spoke. "Hello there, My name is Matt.", said Matt. "I'm assuming you are one of us." "What do you mean by one of us?", Logan questioned. "We call ourselves the runners.", he responded. "We were selected to be murdered by the government. However, we decided to run away from the society that abandoned us and lives our own life." Still shocked at the surprising encounter, Logan bumped into Matt as he stopped walking. "Welcome to our base camp."

He looked around. He noticed a group of tents built on one side of the camp. Fire lit up in the middle of the groups of tents. People gathered around the fireplace and cooked fish. Their clothes had leaves stuck to them in order to cover the holes. On the other side of the camp was a cave lit by a small dim of light. The cavern wall contained scratches, which seemed to count the number of days they've spent in the base camp. Logan couldn't imagine such a place to coexist with a busy lifestyle from the city. They looked like the native Indian tribes from the earlier century.

Matt provided Logan with some berries, fish, and old clothing. Then, he led him to one of the small tents. "You can settle here from now on. I'm not sure for how long though." As soon as Matt left, Logan devoured his fish and berries. He was so exhausted and hungry from last night, and he was so relieved to taste something. Logan then slowly began to feel homesick. He could be eating warm fish food from his mother in a warm house. Everything felt so unfair to him.

The next day, Logan woke up from the incessant sound nearby. Logan looked up and down to seek any source of food nearby. He kept walking until saw a footprint, which seemed to belong to an animal. He then traced back a few steps and started to work. He used some of the stems to function as a string. He curved the branches into a circle. He tied one end of the string to the circle and the other end to the tree trunk. He then tied the woods nearby in complicated steps and made himself an animal trap. When the animal passed by the string, the branches would tighten near their ankle and send them upward. He returned to the base camp.

Near the sunset, Logan returned to check his trap. He could sense a silhouette from a distance. The creature seemed very tall and humanlike, which was a problem. He was very surprised when he noticed a grown man hanging upside down in his animal trap. He quickly cut the strings and helped him free. "I'm sorry. I did not know that someone else would be here." Logan replied as he bent down to meet the man's eyes. He seemed very familiar.

It took him a few seconds to realize such a familiar face. It was a face he saw on 9 P.M. news. His name filled the morning news headlines for the past few months. His nicknames vary from "savior" to "cruel killer." His name was Roy Rock, a creator of the killer system in order to control the population. His hand started to shake. He was the reason why Logan was in this situation. He had so many questions to ask, which started turning into anger.

"Why are you here!" Logan shouted and grabbed him by his collar. "You took everything away from me!" "I don't even know you.", Roy replied. "It's not my fault that the system was hacked." "Why would the system be hacked? Explain!" Logan reached for the nearest rock and was about to kill him. "It was because of your father." He dropped the rock right next to Roy and let him go. "What do you mean?", he was shocked and became speechless. "If you let me free, I'll explain it to you."

Logan carried him to his tent. "Now, tell me what happened.", Logan shouted. "How do you know my father, and how is he involved in this situation?" "Your father... he used to be my partner. We worked under the president until he betrayed us. He's now our enemy, and he somehow managed to get into our system." Roy reached for his pocket and handed him his phone. "Check out the video on that phone." Logan turned the screen on and viewed the first video in the gallery. It was regular news that announced the draw. The video announced the unfortunate winners from the draw. By the end of the video, the reporter called his last name, "Roy Rock.." Then, everything was chaotic until the screen went black.

"It doesn't make any sense. If you are the one who created this system, you must have coded not to draw your name out."

"Your father hacked our system." Luke thought for a second. "I don't know why he tried to turn his back against us, but he was a real pain in the neck."

"So, my father somehow hacked into your program and decided to draw your name out of the box?" He nodded.

"Our security teams are currently tracking him. We'll have to restore our program and find him for our team." Then,

he began to walk away.

Logan's brain was about to explode with a vast amount of new information. It was a different life since he ran away to this base camp. Now, he had a father who worked under the government and now is going against these important people in their society. It took him a while to break from his thoughts. When he realized that Roy was gone, he began to follow his footprints. Just as he was about to lose track, he heard a loud gunshot. He walked towards the sound and found Roy with a bullet stuck on the back of his head.

As Logan found the dead body, his leg just gave out. This was too much for him to handle. He learned so many things in such a short amount of time, and things were different when it involved death. Just then, he heard footsteps coming toward his way. He quickly hid behind the nearest tree and watched the man walk toward Roy. The man seemed familiar to Logan. A tall man in a suit approached the body. "That was a real pain in the neck." It was his father.

Logan was now close to fainting from a heart attack. "What kind of drama is this?" He swore to himself, frustrated for being in such an unfortunate event. As his father was about to leave the crime scene, Logan stepped up in front of him. Before his father could speak, Logan shouted. "What are you doing here! Why am I in this situation? Talk to me!"

With a huge surprise, his father started to talk. "Logan, this world can not run like this. Their system must end." "Then tell me about your story."

"It was the government's fault," his father said. They began walking out as his father continued. "It's their fault that everyone's under this situation. Whenever a problem about climate change rose to the surface, our president would provide a solution that would cause the least amount of money. He valued money over people's lives.

When they arrived home, his dad immediately turned the news on. As he expected, the news reported about the missing man in charge of the drawing system. He was waiting for the news reporter to announce the abolition of the system. The news continued for a few hours. Nothing significant. Logan and his father almost fell asleep on their living room couch when the breaking news came on with a blast of sound from the television.

"Breaking News today. The dead body of Roy was just found in the nearest forest. The security team is tracing the killer's footsteps. We would try to announce our new member to be responsible for our Selection program as soon as possible. Please report any suspicious action to the government immediately."

His father immediately ran up the stairs back to his room. Logan followed him to his room. His father reached for his laptop and started entering some complicated codes. After inserting more codes in, a message popped up on his screen. "Would you like to enable virus-EG in this program?" He clicked "yes," and the file started to load.

"I am ejecting a huge virus into their system. This would completely rip apart their system."

"Why couldn't you have done this before if you had a code that could bring the whole system down?"

"I had to wait for the right timing," he replied. "And this is probably the time where their defense is the weakest."

When the download was almost completed, they both heard a loud noise downstairs. "Search for them right now. They're in the house!" The security team had found them.

"Quick, lock the door. Block the entrance with everything we have in this room." The code was 70% completed: with a remaining time of 3 minutes. Logan brought a chair, books, pillows, and other things he could get to block the doorway. 80% completed, 2 minutes remaining. He could hear the security teams coming up the stairs. "Search all of the rooms."

90% completed, they were in a minute countdown. "The door's locked. Someone bring the hammer." 98, 99... only a few seconds remaining until the completion. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Access denied. Please check your codes again.

Logan's father closed the computer and handed it to Logan. "Go hide in the closet and finish the job while I try to distract them."

"I don't even know what to do."

"Logan, I believe in you. Just revise the red error codes. Remember who you are, my son. I know you can do this."

The door broke, and the teams rushed in. His father quickly pushed Logan aside and faced the security team. They immediately arrested him and took him outside. Logan, who was still inside the closet, opened his father's computer and started to check his mistake. He only had a few coding lessons in his school, which wasn't so difficult for him. But this was really advanced coding. He couldn't understand anything that was on the screen. They all just looked like random letters and symbols to him.

He took a deep breath and closely examined the red codes. He could see a similar pattern within each line. He arranged the orders and fixed some of the typos. He used muscle memories and his knowledge to do everything he could. He wasn't sure what he was doing, but it felt like he was born for this job. It was just as if his father was there, helping him complete the process. After a few minutes later, he pressed enter and waited for the codes to download. 70%, 80%, 90%... 100% completed. He sat back down and relaxed as the message popped up on his screen. "Access Code Approved."

A few years passed after this incident. Logan joined the hacker's team; his dad was in with his new technological

skills. He published a book in remembrance of his father and had many interviews with reporters about the previous selection system issues. He was a full-grown adult now. The world has become more industrious than ever before. Advanced technologies helped improve the food surpluses and population increase. Society became stable under the new system.

One day, Logan turned the television on to check the news. The news reporter said, "Our government will draw out names to fund for our space traveling this following week. So keep your heads up for our weekend's news."

"Oh God, please give me a break.", he said to himself. "Why are they doing something stupid again." He opened his old computer and started typing his codes. "Here we go again."