



Crochet Critical

by Saffron Swansborough

The next attack is in 24 minutes when the Sun drops so I'll tell you what it's like here while I row us to a safe space. The last strike was so brutal we had to adapt the fabrics we are using to cover the earth. We're ready this time.

My name is Ariati. I live with my sisters and aunts in an underground cave beside a giant crater filled with water. This might be the last conversation I have. I'll tell you more about that in a moment.

I'm a junior weaver in the crochet section. We're working on an operation called Crochet Critical, creating a spread big enough to cover this part of our province, then we will interlock it with our neighbours' quilt. Our mission is to cover the ground to protect it from sunbeam radiation.

When I'm not working on crucial missions, I weave fishing nets with my aunt. She hums tunes and I make up words. She cried once when I sang about trees and in the mud she wrote MAMMA and pointed her muddy finger at me.

Things are bad on the surface but the trauma goes deeper than that. I'm waiting for my mouth to be sewn up because I am 13 tomorrow. Women mustn't be noisy below ground. For the pretty boys, it's worse. When they start puberty the tops of their thighs are stitched together. My aunts have silver snail trails where their lips used to be and my older sisters have zigzaggy threads which bleed while they're getting used to it.

When I'm crocheting I have one eye on the pattern and the other on the hook and I go into complete concentration. This really helps me when my big sisters are being taken. If I look up I see their lips tearing as they try to fight off the men.

Look, the lamps are being lit along the rim of the lake, we must hurry.