

Glorious

by Janie Reynolds

Our pollution and destruction of the planet had spread as far as the moon and the sun. Just as light is reflected on Earth by the moon, so the Earth's stench and fumes had contaminated the near planets and was rebounding at us within their rays. The older and frail were struggling to breathe, yet we had not ceased in our churning out of more black smoke from our factories and malls and homes.

Viruses had now become the dominant species. Mankind was sick with infections all the time. Viruses that kill, viruses that rot you slowly, viruses that spread in the air like a mid-summer forest fire.

Our blessed, most beloved mentor, and a great, great Earth activist, known around the world as quite an angelic being, and who will no doubt one day be made a saint, looked me in the eyes, one day, and asked me to fly into the sun.

"For a decade now," she said, with her fervent, compassionate eyes, "all our politicians and leaders have refused to put words into action, but if this horrific cycle isn't broken, we only have months to live.

"We have marched, we have shouted, we have peacefully protested and we have been ignored. Only a human death can shift the zeitgeist. We need a sacrifice. The green revolution is overripe and needs to explode. Someone to go up to the sun in protest and be seen to be taking on this darkness, this *doom*, head on, is what we need."

Being charged with this task was a great honour, of course. And word fast got around that I was going to do this; that I was going to die to save the world. As I walked around, people crossed the road to greet me and even stroke my hair. They wanted to look me in the eyes, and as they did their faces lifted, lineless. I could see their pleasure as they absorbed what they thought was the martyr's selfless light within me. I felt glorious!

But, the truth was, I didn't want to be sacrificed. I didn't want to die yet, a martyr's death nor any other death, even if it was for all humanity. But, by now, a crowd of well-wishers with dotting eyes had gathered round. They asked me questions like, 'Did I have any last wishes?' or 'How did it feel to be about to go down in history?'. I tried to say something back to them but was overwhelmed with panic and despair. Cold sweat broke out and my heart jumped in my chest like a bouncing tennis ball.

"Listen," I said.

"Our revered mentor has picked me to fly to the sun to save humankind, but I love my children too deeply to leave them and, at this black time, I need to protect my parents too. So I am not going to do it.

"And anyway. It's too late. We all know the harm we've done is irreversible. And what's life like now, if not a miserable, sickening experience? What do we want to stay alive for? It's just an instinct."

I thought that they would heckle and jeer. But they didn't. They just listened and some even seemed to be nodding.

"So, I am going home to play with my dog, show my beautiful family how much I love them, tend to my garden, the flowers, the lawn, relax in the sun loungers with matching parasols, then cook a BBQ, with a selection of pork ribs, filet steaks and chicken wings. And I'll wash it all down with a crisp sauvignon blanc.... Hmm, sorry... Fact is, I'm not going to fly into the sun."

On my walk home, I saw that the crowd was following me, popping in to shops along the way.

"Why are you following me home?" I asked.

"Because we agree with you," someone shouted.

"You are right, we're not worth saving," said another.

"We don't deserve the Earth, leave it for someone else," called a third.

"OK!" I smiled. "But what of our mentor? She will be angry and disappointed."

"No," piped up a man in the crowd. "She has no darkness within her to feel those things. She is from the old world. When they thought we were worth saving. And when there was still hope. But we all realise these are the last days on Earth and that nothing can be done about it."

Holding up packets of sausages, burgers and chicken that they had picked up in shops along the way, the crowd shouted to me, "Come on. Let's light the barby, and make hay while the sun shines!"