



Countenance

By Amelie Delamare, 12 years old, Tuart Hill Primary School

The gunshots cracked loudly and there were shouts of, "Get them out," echoing through the empty streets. The entire place was in lockdown, and there were sounds of running feet clumping down the street. My name is Ivy Green. When I was born the earth started coming to an end. My mother always said that while she was giving birth to me, people were doing bad things. Namely unloading nuclear bombs onto defenceless countries as a show of dominance and power. My younger sister, Bess, often commented that I remind her of a Christmas ornament, with my green eyes and long, curly red hair. My mother and father said I was unforgettable. Sadly, they are gone now, killed by the rebel alliance. Bess and I live with our aunt, Nadine, whom we call Naddi. She and Bess look alike with porcelain skin and long black hair. We live on the fault line, outside the city, the poorer part of the district. I am wearing what I wear every day, an old army shirt, speckled with dirt. Well worn, scuffed sneakers, and faded jeans, holed at the knees. All bought from the op-shop. Because of the shortage of food, every week we are given rations. I took the only money we had left, and went to pick up our rations. As I walked to the town hall, I passed the bakery. I gazed longingly at the cakes through the shop window, and wished I could buy one to take home to Bess. Bess was four years younger than me, but she sometimes acts as if she was five years old. I forced myself to keep moving, when I reached the city square, I lined up to receive our rations of potatoes, tomatoes, flour, rice, salt and mince. Eventually I reached the front of the queue, where the gruff, grumpy man doling out the rations was. "Name!" "Ivy Green," I answered. "Here you are." He shoved the package at me, and ticked my name off the list, and shouted. "Next!" "On my way home, walking through the endless streets of dirty grey houses, I noticed a sliver of light coming from one of the many overflowing rubbish bags filling the streets. I stepped forward to take a look, I heard a click and was thrown violently off my feet towards some dirty white doors. A flash of light, and I was blinded. The boom rang in my ears. I picked myself up, and hurried towards home. I was partially deaf from the blast, and what was why I didn't hear the click of the gun as a person snuck up behind me, the gun was raised to my temple. "Freeze. If you move, I will shoot!" Panic swept through my body. "Turn around, now!" I turned around slowly. He was dressed all in black. Jeans, a sweater frayed at the edges, and dirty sneakers. His accessory, the shiny metallic gun, was being held to my head. Without warning he grabbed my arm and dragged me into the nearest house. Our footsteps sounded loud as we stomped through the house to what must have been the living room. "Get in the fireplace!" I did as I was told without hesitation. He blew the dust off a hook and pulled it down. I assumed it was for hanging a candle on. But then I heard a whir and everything went pitch black. The fireplace seemed to be travelling down, deep into the earth. When it stopped, a deep, slow voice instructed me to get out. I got out, soot billowed around me, covering my face. Suddenly, a blinding white light was turned on, I winced as my eyes adjusted to it, and a vision passed b

efore me. I made out two figures, one sitting the other standing. The one sitting was an old man, with a white beard, he was wearing a grey coat. The standing one was a girl, a petite, redhead looking extremely nervous as I walked towards them. I was ready to run, posed on the balls of my feet. "Who are you? What do you want?" My voice had risen with panic. "We are not your enemies. We have to warn you." The bearded man said, in a gravelly voice. It was the same low voice that had told me to get out of the fireplace. "Warn me about what?" They shot a nervous look at each other. Then the girl spoke, she explained that they were the rebel alliance, and that my parents had belonged to the alliance, and how unfortunate and sad it was that they had died on a mission. She went on to say that my aunt is a rebel and working with them. "I know this may come as a shock to you, but you have to believe us. You must flee the city. Go to the country!" "Why do I have to go to the country?" I replied. I was utterly confused, I didn't know what to believe. "Sixteen years ago," the old man explained, "the President bombed the city trying to stop the rebels from overpowering the government. Now it is going to happen again, the President plans to drop bombs tomorrow." He told me that they had promised my mother and father that they would take care of me. I looked at them coldly. "So it's true?" "Yes all of it," he answered. The old man searched my face, he seemed to be looking for some sort of emotion. I asked him if my aunt knew about this. He said she did. All at once there was a bang. I heard a far away shouting. "They've found us!" The old man said, fear flickering in his eyes. "Go now!" yelled the redhead. "What about you?" I asked. "Don't worry about us, just go. There is a back door, use that." As I raced down the stairs, I looked back trying to see them. As quick as they had appeared, they disappeared. Then I heard the third bang, something gave way above me. I quickly burst through the back door. Blinded by the sudden sunlight and gulping in polluted air, I remembered the old man's words about leaving. I took off down the road, forcing my tired legs to move. I sprinted home in record time, rushing through the front door, yelling and screaming at Bess and Aunt Nadine to pack. They were already stuffing things into suitcases. I raced to my room and gathered a pile of my dirty, old clothes. I grabbed a suitcase and started to feverishly pack. Bess looking small and lonely in one of my old cast off tracksuits was suddenly standing at my door. "Ivy, where are we going?" It was best that Bess didn't know the truth, so I told her that we were going on a holiday. She hoped that it was to be the seaside. I explained that we were going to the country. With all the packing finished, that night we made our way to the station and boarded the bullet train. Bess slept, her head on my shoulder, as we sped along the train tracks towards our new life in the country, the sound of bombs fading away behind us.