

Wind of Earth,
Wind of Tau Ceti

Advance Praise for Wind of Earth, Wind of Tau Ceti

“Can you call a science fiction novel ‘realistic’? This book may take place in a future that includes space colonization, but Wind and her family members, both born and found, are the kind of people you and I might know, living in the margins of a despoiled Earth and leaving it to build a new world on Tau Ceti, 12 light years away. On Earth, people get by any way they can; on Tau Ceti they cope with issues ranging from poorly designed systems to radiation to bureaucracy that cares little for them. This is a story that spans generations – from Wind’s childhood with her grandmother on Earth to her relationship with her own granddaughter on Tau Ceti – but unlike all too many of such tales that set out the rise and fall of some powerful family, this one deals with real people and how they survive. Given the current brologarch fantasies of humans living among the stars, *Wind of Earth, Wind of Tau Ceti* is the kind of science fiction we need right now.”

—Nancy Jane Moore, author of *The Weave* and
For the Good of the Realm

“Joe McDermott masterfully shows the human impact of technology and space colonization from all angles, giving voice to those often silenced or forgotten by the magnificent scope of history across generations—and the universe. Five (Tau Ceti) stars!”

—Eric Bosarge, author of *The Time Train* and *Sky is Over*

“A naturalistic, well-observed mosaic novel telling the story of a space colonist and the lives that intersect with hers, *Wind of Earth, Wind of Tau Ceti* is a quietly brilliant book. Through over a dozen overlapping vignettes from multiple perspectives, we're given a vivid pointillist picture of the future on a decaying Earth, in a city on the moon, and on a colony orbiting the titular Tau Ceti. It resembles nothing so much as a lost novel from the great Maureen McHugh; the sort of ground-level, matter of fact SF that has been sadly uncommon in recent years. But McDermott is dealing in far more than pastiche or tribute here: his spare but evocative prose elevates the narrative above the humdrum atmosphere 'mundane' SF can tend towards and instead gives us a narrative that foregrounds the very personal joys and traumas inherent in living a life—the one hand in hand with the other.

—Eddie Clark, contributor, *nerds of a feather, flock together*,
<http://www.nerds-feather.com/>;
judge for the 2006 Crawford Fantasy Award

Wind of Earth, Wind of Tau Ceti

by
Joe M. McDermott

Aqueduct Press
Seattle, WA



Aqueduct Press
PO Box 95787
Seattle, Washington 98145-2787
www.aqueductpress.com

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Acknowledgments

Art does not happen in isolation. When the person who makes things steps into their studio alone, the world that supports them continues.

This book took form over many years, some of them very difficult. Without the right support and encouragement, it doesn't exist. Without my parents, who watch my son when I am working, I don't get to be a writer. Eric Bosarge, as well, has been a true friend and ally, and I cannot thank him enough for his time and encouragement. The pieces of this work that have appeared previously as short stories in literary magazines carry the echo of the many editors who have weighed in on the bits and pieces. Trevor Quachri and Emily Hockaday, perhaps more than the rest: *Analog Science Fiction and Fact* published "Finnegan, Bring the Pain," "Astroboy and Wind," "Keep the Line Tight but Not Too Tight, or Esteban and the Moon," "Long Day Lake," "We're All in Trouble," and "Wind Gets Her Own Place" in various issues of their fine publication. *3-Lobed Burning Eye* published "Salt Gator Girl," and Andrew S. Fuller has long been an underrecognized and important editor in the field of a fantastic, little magazine. He is long overdue for some awards recognition for his decades of excellent work.

My name is on the cover, and it is my work, but no one works alone. And, without readers, there are no books, at all. I thank you, as well, fair reader, and hope you enjoy the journey to come.

*To Andrew S. Fuller, Emily Hockaday, Trevor Quachri,
Gavin Grant, Sheila Williams, and Michael J. Deluca*

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Part I: Long Day Lake



Windy Abeyu Garcia missed her mother so much she couldn't bear to talk about it. Her father and she had moved out to this new posting suddenly, in an old agricultural dome where there were more plants and animals than she had ever seen before. The house sat just beside a lake. And the home she had had with her mother was gone under some other dome, a place she'd never see again.

She liked the lake. It was the biggest the little girl had ever seen, and it had already been stocked with fish and toads and cattails and all sorts of wonderful things. It was a project in the works for many years, as part of this dome's air quality and fresh water supply, and it had all come together in a few short weeks just before they arrived. Windy was certain nothing better had ever happened on the whole planet, Tau Ceti F. In this new house, Windy could spend every day trying to catch fish in the clear water and every night listening to toads singing. The pebble beaches crunched satisfyingly when she went barefoot. The clear water tickled her toes, and she was certain that someday the fish would come right up and nibble on her toenails.

After Windy's mother's death, everyone agreed that the best thing for the family was for her grandmother to come and live with them. She was a tall, dark, strong woman, nothing like Abeyu, the girl's father. He had been adopted, is why. She wasn't at all like a proper grandma. She didn't tell stories or bake. She didn't bring gifts. She simply walked up the lane with her bag and sat on the porch until someone came to let her in. She had been living in the capitol dome, in one of the tiny little flats with one window, high up among the old buildings, where she could ride an elevator up and down a few floors, and Windy thought it was probably all new for her out here among the agricultural domes. Windy could not even imagine that her grandmother's life had begun on Earth, where lakes and grass and fish were common things.

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Her grandmother's name was Wind. She had no last name because after her own parents divorced, they couldn't agree, and no one bothered to set one later, and it was so long in the past that it didn't really matter. When she'd arrived, Wind waited patiently, looking around, for someone to come home. These domes were not built with as much redundancy as the domes in major cities. There were only three or four panes of glass above. She could look through the glass, counting the corner joints in the geodesic ripples. She had been part of the crew that built one of the dome's shells. She was surprised it was still the old design, out here, and not the modern, smooth, flexing curve of the big city domes. The inner dome was probably older than Wind, who was very old now. She wondered when this one was slated for redesign.

Windy walked home from a bus stop nearly half a mile away; she liked walking through the pines and flowers, down the gentle hill to the new lake.

When Windy started down the hill, she saw the shadow standing on her porch in the lazy afternoon light. She picked up her tablet and called Wind.

—Grandma, we left the door open for you. Just go in.

—I'll wait for you. Thank you, dear.

Windy said it again.

—Grandma, I told you the door is open. You don't have to wait outside. You can go inside.

—Yes, thank you. When you get here, I will go in with you.

—Grandma.

—Yes, Windy.

—Go inside. We left it open. For you.

—I will wait. I am old enough; I get to do what I like.

It was a lovely day, lake breezes washing muddy wonderful smells around. The new birds weren't out much, but there were a few exploring the upper rafters, gazing and chirping mystified

at the mirror lake that had arrived before an egg could even hatch. No bird had seen a lake before this one on Tau Ceti.

Windy realized in a flash that her grandmother was a strange and singular woman, and nothing would be the same, anymore. Her lazy afternoons swimming in the shallows or playing games instead of homework were probably over. Grandmother would have her own plans for the girl, and she would be stubborn. Nothing would move her but maybe Windy's father, or her grandfather who was far away, living with his new husband back at the main dome.

Grandmother, of course, knew everything that was happening in her granddaughter's little head. She watched the pale brown child walking down the footpath to the little house on the edge of the lake where they would all live together. Things were going to change; of course they would. The girl was too young and this place too isolated to permit her to be alone until her father came home. Either the girl must move back to the city with her grandfather and his husband, or her restless grandmother must settle here until things got easier. Abeyu would probably not be all right if he lost both his wife and his daughter, so everyone agreed Wind should live with them. She was happy to do it.

Seeing her grandmother standing on the porch between her and the lake, Windy worried that she would never get to swim in the lake again.

When Windy neared her grandmother, she paused and the two sized each other up. Wind was tall and rail thin, with the rippling shoulders of someone who had once been very strong. She wore men's clothes casually with an indifference to styles of dress, while Windy spent half an hour every morning just trying to get her big, frizzy red hair just right and wore her clothes sharp-pressed with clean lines in all her uniform skirts. As much as she loved the lake, she had to change out of her school clothes and wipe the dust off her shoes before she could

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even think about appreciating it in full. She wasn't even sure she wanted to give her grandmother a hug, given all the dust and wear in her grandmother's heavy shirt and pants.

Her grandmother smiled and opened her arms for a hug.

–Welcome home, Windy.

–Grandma...

Windy hesitated but sighed and stepped into the older woman's embrace.

–What is it, Windy?

–Nothing. It's good to see you.

–You certainly have excellent housing. I don't remember the last time I saw a lake. Earth, maybe. Even there, I don't remember when. I saw the gulf a few times, but it's different.

–I know, Grandma.

Windy went inside and dropped her school tablet onto the charging table. She didn't look back as she went into her room to change.

Wind picked up her suitcase and walked in after her granddaughter. She looked around. Idly, she picked up her granddaughter's tablet and checked on the girl's homework and grades. Wind was definitely not a top student in her class.

Windy came out from her room in denim overalls and a shirt stained with beet juice that looked like blood. She said she was going to go fishing.

–Dear, I just got here. Why don't you show me where I'll be staying and help me with my bag.

Windy sighed. There were three rooms, two obviously occupied. The bathroom door was currently wide open. How hard could it be? The girl rolled her grandmother's suitcase into the empty bedroom. It was currently more of a storage room than a bedroom, but Abeyu had cleared out enough space for someone to walk in, open the dresser, and sleep spread out on an old, lumpy bed. There wasn't enough room for the suitcase. Wind laid it out on the bed and looked around at the clutter, mostly

tools and equipment that had come with the house—hammers and screwdrivers and drills and saws, all in clear plastic cases. Old computer parts were mixed up in a big bin under the bed, with planks of planed wood for home repairs and some old fishing lines that needed to be detangled. There was also some emergency gear in case the dome cracked, and some old paint. All wonderful things, really, and it felt like a good place to sleep—like resting in the middle of a construction job and everything ready close at hand. She pulled some of the fishing line out and carried it with her out onto the porch where she once again stopped her granddaughter.

—This line is a mess. You can't go fishing with this. Why don't you work on untangling this while I get you a snack?

—I can just use a new fishing line, Grandma. I've got lots.

—In the morning, we will fish. And we will use this tangled fishing line, Windy. Get to work and be gentle with it. It's traveled a long way to be here, and we need to take care of all of our useful things.

The girl sighed but took up the knotted and stiff old fishing line. It was slow work. When she looked up, her grandmother had managed to find the frozen blueberries and to warm them with oolong tea and some jujube sugar into a kind of bittersweet slurry. Windy put down the fishing tackle and ate the fruit and tea with a spoon.

—You're still not a very good cook, are you, Grandma?

—No. I'm an excellent welder. How good are you at cooking?

—I know how to gut a fish.

—And do they taste good when you cook them?

—Sometimes. Most of the fish aren't very good to eat.

—We'll have to ask my grandmother what to do with them, then. She knows what to do with fish.

Windy didn't say anything for a moment. Her grandmother's grandmother would have been back on Earth when Wind left for Tau Ceti, and the time spent in a hibernation tank

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during transit meant that at least eighty or ninety years passed before Wind even woke up on Tau Ceti. Plus, the ansible was little more than a handful of electrons, for now, that could move data slower than even one of the first modems. Talking to this Earth-bound old woman about fish seemed unlikely.

–I brought her with me.

–Like, a picture and a recipe file?

–Something like that, but no. I'll ask her about cooking fish when I have a chance to plug her in. How are you doing on the fishing tackle?

–It's taking forever.

–Well, take a break and do your homework. I'd like to see it before dinner.

Windy decided she had had quite enough of this supervision. She picked up the tablet and walked out to the front porch where she could watch the lake's reflection rippling where the fish and water bugs disturbed it all. She opened her tablet and pretended to work, but she was just sulking until her father came home.

Back in the house, dinner was almost done, but it didn't seem much like what Windy's father would make. Wind seemed to put a lot of vegetables in a broth with some beans and let them simmer a long time. It wasn't cooking so much as waiting for things to cook themselves. She called it stir fry, but there was no oil, and the heat wasn't high enough. Windy texted her grandfather and asked him why he couldn't come stay a while, because he was a much better cook and he was a lot more fun. He texted back that she could visit him and her Step-pop Ken in the capital city dome any time, but her father would miss her very much, and it was very nice of Wind to go out and stay and help so she could stay with Abeyu.

Wind was cooking when Astroboy, Wind's ex-husband, called.

–You settling in?

—How do you cook tofu so it isn't slimy?

—You have to dry it out first. Put it between towels and get some weight on it for a few minutes, then dust it with some kind of starch.

—Too late.

—Well, I'm sure it will be fine.

—She wants to fish. I've never cooked a fish in my entire life.

—Not even fish sticks when you were a kid?

—Probably not. Maybe. I don't remember fish sticks. Fish was too expensive in Texas, and the fish in the gulf and the salt marshes around the old oil wells and factories weren't safe to eat. We weren't even supposed to swim in them, but we did, anyway. Hell, I don't want to kill something if I can't use it right.

—Watch for bones. Some of that stuff they're growing out there isn't fit for anything but fish stock.

—I don't know what that is, Astroboy. How's Ken?

—Fine. He's at work. Windy texted me. Are you abusing our grandchild?

—Only if my cooking counts. She needs structure. Especially now.

—Well, take her tablet away. If she's texting me, she's not doing her homework.

—Eh. I'll figure something out later.

—Take care, Wind!

—Bye!

They had been married for over thirty years, but they had never been more than very good friends. Astroboy and Wind were both gay but had found more stability in their friendship than in their dating life. Back in the early days of colony housing, they couldn't be roommates unless they were married. They were good friends who lived together and adopted a child together. They both hated living alone, and when they got married, there weren't even ten thousand people in all of Tau Ceti with whom they could find love, anyway. It worked well enough that they

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kept at their marriage until their adopted son was all grown up, always agreeing that if one of them fell in love, it would be fine to split, then. Astroboy divorced Wind because he had finally found love in the arms of a younger man. Wind was surprised by how much it hurt to lose Astroboy and live alone again. Ken and Astroboy were already working on the process for a second child, so it was impossible for either one of them to leave the city for this beautiful, distant dome. It really was for the best that Wind was here, slightly burning the bottom of the rice and making a lumpy and wet stir fry in an unfamiliar kitchen.

She called to her granddaughter to come set the table.

The girl had not done her homework, of course.

When Abeyu came home, everything was ready. He hugged his mother. He smirked at the food and thanked Wind for it. His mother could burn tea, and it was comforting to know that nothing had changed.

He had spent his day monitoring the genome spread of a variety of sedge along the outside of the dome. It was slow work peeling away the radiation in the atmosphere, but it was being done by the systems of the world, with prolific gene-modded grasses that could soak up the radiation. They had to be watched for mutations, always, just in case.

He asked to see Windy's homework.

Windy went and got it, but she hadn't done any of it. She showed her assignments to her father and expected him to berate her for not finishing. She sighed and rolled her eyes and waited for it to come.

—I see you haven't done your homework again.

—I started it, but then Grandma made me set the table.

—Oh, really? Well, why don't you help your grandmother by doing the dishes for her. She can supervise you.

—What?

–Wash them all. Get the trash out. And make sure the floor is swept. There are too many tiny creatures loose in this dome to be lazy about the floors.

Windy sulked, but she obeyed.

Her father went off to bed, and her grandmother sat at the table, working on some old computer parts she had pulled out of her baggage. She attached the parts to an old tablet she had scrounged from one of the storage bins.

–I’m not going to make you do your homework tonight, Windy.

–What?

–You keep looking over, and I want you to know that I don’t really care that you didn’t finish your homework. That’s between you and your teacher. You had a set time to work on it, and you chose not to. It’s your future. I’ll be dead, so I don’t have to deal with it. Fail if you want to be a failure. The dome needs janitors more than it needs another engineer.

–I’m not going to be a janitor. I’m going to work with the birds and fishes. What are you working on?

–This is what’s left of my grandmother. If we’re going fishing in the morning, we’ll need someone to tell us how to cook them. She’s probably cooked fish before. It seems like something she would know.

–Grandpa would know.

–Well, he hasn’t cooked fish since he left Japan, so it’s hard to say if he really knows how, anymore. You know how lucky you are to be stationed in a house where you can go fishing?

–I know how to clean a fish and gut it. Mr. Watkins showed me when he helped us move in. He showed me how to bait a line and everything. I’ve been practicing.

–On fish?

–No. With cucumbers. First you cut them in half and scrape out anything squishy and gross. Then, you scrape the scales off them. He showed me.

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–Did he show you how to cook them?

–No. He just took the fish we caught with him. He fried one of them, but he didn't really show me how to do it. It was good, though.

–We're going to wake up with your father tomorrow morning so we can fish before school. We'll have fish for breakfast, if we're lucky.

–I'm going to bed, Grandma. Are you coming, too?

–No, I'm not on your day/night cycle, yet. I need to finish this, anyway. Leave the kitchen light on for me, please.

–Okay.

–Kiss goodnight?

–Okay.

They pressed their cheeks together, briefly.

By the time Wind finally got the old computer booted up and running on a monitor, Windy had long since gone to bed without doing any homework, and Abeyu was already up for the day. He packed their lunches and sipped warm water, without interrupting his mother. It was cold outside the agricultural dome. It stayed in his bones a while, he said. He asked if Wind needed help with the old computer. She said it was like getting a typewriter to run on a tablet, these old and beat-up computer parts that formed the core of Wind's grandmother's stored algorithmic iterations of self. The relics of earth were a hundred years behind the technology when the colonists first arrived on Tau Ceti, and it had been decades since they had been running at all.

When she did finally get her grandmother powered up and attached to a keyboard, she asked the computer algorithm that remembered her grandmother what it took to be a grandmother to a little girl.

Just be yourself and pay attention. She will tell you what she needs you to be. Being there for her is most of the job.

Then Wind asked her how to cook a fish. Her grandmother's instructions amounted to a list of things she couldn't do: dredging the fish in milk and egg and flour and frying it in corn oil. None of these ingredients existed on Tau Ceti at a cabin in a distant dome, on the other side of the world from the thriving capital. It didn't help ease Wind's anxiety about gutting a living thing, to know that she wasn't really sure how to cook it.

Wind took up the cause of untangling the fishing line that evening. She wasn't the kind of grandmother who cooked. She was the kind that welded, built domes, and cut foundations and pipelines into the earth with huge earth movers. She knew more about how houses were built than about how to live inside them. Keeping her hands busy helped her feel like a better grandmother.

When rosy dawn stretched across the glass at the edge of the layers of dome, Wind was sitting alone beside the fishing poles, the untangled fishing line already installed. She wasn't tired yet. She had reached an age where she slept very little. She would sleep once the girl was off at school. Morning came, and Abeyu sat Windy down and forced her to try and finish her homework before breakfast.

They ate amaranth porridge, and Wind said she'd do the washing up. It was strange, being in a house where people had to hurry. She hadn't had any rush in her mornings in a long time. It was exhausting. When they left, she was alone with the dishes and her restless night. She took the fishing pole down to the water, attached a small piece of dried fruit to the end, and practiced tossing the line out. She didn't know what she was doing, but it felt like she was doing something. The sun rose beyond the glass dome, and the ventilation fans hummed in the far distance, stirring the air so that it felt like a breeze coming from across the lake.

Wind went back inside and fell into bed, restless but tired enough to sleep. Windy came home while her grandmother

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was still sleeping, and she was still asleep when Abeyu came home. She dreamed of Earth and of times long turned to dust, of playing basketball in the long summer days in the old neighborhood, where the falling houses were a playground for kids whose parents were working and who were alone for hours at a time, in streets that were all falling empty, falling apart, falling and falling.

She woke alone in the dark. She dragged out treated timber with some of the other tools and supplies and got to work in the starlight with a flashlight and designed plans for the family automat, which was in Abeyu's room at the back of the house. By the time her granddaughter was awake, Wind was already floating on the water. Windy stepped out onto the porch, confused by the porchlights, in her pajamas, and saw her grandmother out on the water.

—Grandma!

—Do you like it?

—Where did you get a boat?

—I built it last night. Want to go for a ride?

—Yes!

—Come on. I'll get close to the shore.

It was a simple enough design, like a canoe. Four cords of repair wood were ripped into thin planks and drilled into plastic joiners from the printer. The outside was covered with spray-on emergency insulation, which was waterproof, and, it should also be noted, radiation-proof. A couple of old buckets had been repurposed into two makeshift seats. Paddles were made of printed hard plastics, hollow and light. She had designed and built the whole thing in only a few hours with materials on hand and had been on the water testing it by paddling out to the center of the lake and back.

Windy, delighted, ran barefoot into the reeds and mud. The bottom of her pajamas was soaked. Her grandmother, not both-

ered by the mess, paddled the canoe to the shore, and pulled Windy in.

When Abeyu came out of the house with his tea, he couldn't really see his mother, whose dark skin made her hard to distinguish on the dark water, but saw his daughter riding a new vessel and a big, white oar lifting and sinking into the water. As he sipped his tea, he saw the construction debris and tools in the yard. He had woken up briefly when his mother started printing something and then rolled over to get his eyes out of the light and fallen back asleep. He knew his mother would do what she liked, no matter what he said, and clean up after herself, but he didn't want to wait for her to do it. He got all the debris in and sorted it back into storage. Quickly he packed lunches for his daughter and himself, just raw fruits and vegetables and energy bars, all he had time for.

On his way out, he looked out across the water and saw them paddling back. He shouted for them to hurry. Windy would be late for school.

Of course she wanted to go to school now. She wanted to tell everyone that last night her grandmother had built a little boat, a kind of canoe, and this morning they had paddled out into the water in their pajamas like their ancestors back on Earth. She was so excited that she wanted to tell everyone. They wouldn't believe it, but they would have to hear it anyway.

Wind saw that her son had cleaned up after her, and it left a pit in her stomach that lingered, but neither of them said anything about it. They just waved goodbye, and she said she'd get the girl off right away.

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Abeyu decided that his daughter needed to grow a garden. It would boost their calorie ration and teach her valuable skills.

Windy said that fishing would do that, too.

—Have you caught a fish by yourself?

—No, but...

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—Have you ever grown a seed by yourself?

—Yes. We grew sugar snap beans and potatoes in school...

—Well, there you go. The school should have a seed bank, yes?

—Yes, but...

—Well, there you go.

—Okay. Boo. Okay.

—Your grandmother never learned any gardening. You can show her how to do it.

The girl turned to her grandmother.

—*You don't know gardening?* I thought everyone on Earth knew gardening. That's where they invented it. Everyone did it. They teach it in school and everything.

Wind shrugged.

—My father was a recycler, and my mother was far away, not on Earth. I lived on crackers and vitamin drinks for fifteen years; it's why I'm so skinny.

—In school, they make us grow a bean patch every year. We're graded on the number of beans we get.

—Did you get high marks this year?

—Yes. I mean, I can do it. I just don't like gardening. I want to catch fish.

—We all have to do things we don't want to, sometimes, because surviving on this planet is never going to be easy.

—Well, can I just go back to Earth, then?

—No.

Wind, in her wisdom, touched her granddaughter's hand.

—Windy, you don't want that. You just don't want to make a garden. And if you were on Earth, you would only find new chores not to like. Then you'd want to come back here. Might as well just stay. We'll work together. I can teach you how to design seed flats in the automat, and you can teach me how to grow seeds.

—I'm not allowed to use the automat. I'm locked out. Dad says I'm too young and irresponsible.

—Well, fortunately I am very old and very irresponsible. You still need to learn how to use it properly, even if you only get to use it with me.

—I know how to use an automat. I'm just not allowed to use it. That's why dad keeps it in his room in the back.

—Well, you can show me what you know.



That afternoon it was hot. Flies hung in the air above the reeds, and even waterbugs seemed to slow down in their graceful sweeps. There was no wind. It was so hot, kids in the school thought something was broken. It was just high summer time for the living things of the dome. It was the worst time of year to start a garden, Wind thought, but Windy said it was always a good time to start a garden if they knew what to plant. She had brought okra, cherry tomatoes, basil, and cowpeas.

Her grandmother had already started on the garden. She had dragged some hoses out of storage and cleaned them out.

Windy gave her the seeds and told her grandma to pull up the program in the automat for seed-start trays. Windy directed her grandmother in which kind of material to load into the feeder tube, and which to save for later.

—Oh, you're in charge, now?

—That's right, Grandma. I know how to do this.

—Okay. I have homework. It will beep when it's done, and then we can go out and start some seeds.

—Where will we put the seeds when they are ready?

—The ground.

—But where? Aren't we supposed to prepare a place for them?

—Oh. Yeah, but we don't have to do that now. They aren't ready yet.

—It's going to take time to dig up all the grass. Why don't we go out and pick a spot and get some stakes with string? That way we can mark where we need to set up barriers before we dig them.

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–I thought you never gardened before?

–I’ve built things. A lot of things. This is how you would build anything on the ground. If there’s time to wait for one step, there’s time to get ahead on the next step. Your homework can wait until we run out of light.

Wind believed it was far more important to teach her granddaughter how to finish jobs than to let her use her homework as an excuse to sit around and pretend to work. Also, Wind was too old to want to swing a hoe by herself. Her back hurt enough when she woke up. There was no need to make it worse.

Windy said they were going to have to find a spot near the lake so that the water could be pumped up across the rows and then flow back to the lake. She picked a spot near the pier. She said fish were full of nitrogen and had been used for fertilizer by the people of Earth since forever. But cowpeas work, too, because they have inoculant.

–We have to dig up the sod before we can bother putting fish down. Let’s mark the spots out. I have a hammer and a stake. Pick a corner, Windy.

Windy sighed and walked over near the edge of the pier and planted her foot down. Wind walked over with the aluminum stake and her rubber mallet and took one hard swing.

The ground trembled below her hammer.

–What the...

The trembling rushed and roared, and for a few long seconds, both Wind and Windy were thrown to the ground beside the lake.

Windy cried out and clutched at the ground.

The ground kept moving and moving, angrier and angrier. The ground was screaming out loud. The metal and glass dome was screaming.

Wind was on her back, feeling everything move, everything shake, feeling her old bones burn from the jostling rumble. She

watched the glass above them in the old structures, with their archaic design, start to crack. Wind held her breath, then moved.

Wind rolled over on top of her granddaughter and realized it wasn't enough, so she pulled her, screaming, into the water and under the little boat. Wind had to yank hard to flip the boat over, which pulled a muscle in her back, but pain wasn't important right then. She and her granddaughter could squat beneath the boat in shallow water. To protect them both from the boat's side-to-side jostling, Wind pressed her hands against the sides. Windy curled up with her hands over her ears. Tiny pebbles of glass sputtered across the bottom of the boat. A few heavy thuds and thumps startled them, and Wind wondered what would happen if something really heavy came down on them—a beam, a whole panel. Large things crashed during the quake. Whatever fell landed hard. Wind took a breath and tried to think. Think. Her granddaughter was screaming. Wind had used spray-on emergency insulation because it was on hand. The radiation in the natural atmosphere that came in through the cracks in all the dome shells might just blow over the top of the homemade canoe for a time.

The rumbling had finished slow, winding down and down in a long decrescendo.

The glass continued tinkling down a bit longer, but then that stopped, too.

—Quiet down, now Windy. Everything's fine.

—Grandma!

—It's okay, Windy! It's okay! It's just an earthquake! It's okay! They happen!

—Grandma, I'm scared!

—You have nothing to be afraid of, now. It's over.

—But Grandma...

—If you want to scream, scream, but it's over now. We're fine. Everything's fine. Take a deep breath. Tell me, are you hurt any-

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where? Windy, this is important. Focus. Take a deep breath and tell me if you're hurt.

The little girl was pale and frightened. Her grandmother was holding her tight. She looked around the little boat, amazed her grandmother had been able to flip it over on top of them in the water. She was wet and cold and scared. She had water and mud inside her socks and pants, but she was not hurt. She was not bleeding.

It had been a big earthquake. A really big one. It was the first earthquake they had ever known, so of course it was the biggest earthquake. It had damaged the dome shells. There weren't supposed to be earthquakes, but there they were, and the shells had been damaged.

Wind surprised herself with her calm. Her little canoe's hull had been pelted with heavy thuds of jagged glass and possibly bits of loose steel. It had held. She waited and counted to one hundred in case the ground moved again, but nothing happened. She had her tablet in her pocket, but the network was down. That was a bad sign. It ran along the dome. If lines were cut badly enough to knock out the lines, the structure, itself, was likely at risk. The glass was a bad sign. The huge boom they'd heard, suggesting the crash of something heavy, was a bad sign. They needed to get under cover that could shield them from a steel beam dropping twenty kilometers, or get out of the dome entirely, which meant they needed to get their emergency kit out of the house and put their suits on asap. They didn't have transportation to get all the way to the edge of the dome, though, and with the network down, no one would know they were here. Suits first. Cover first. The canoe was okay for now, but if anything blew into the lake, it could come up from below...

—Windy, do you know where we can find a really good basement?

—Grandma, I'm scared. My tablet's not working.

—Listen, mine isn't working, either, but it's temporary. They'll come back online once the other domes get a satellite positioned to carry the network. Windy, where is a basement? Do you know? A really good, deep one. A big underground place where we can go and look for supplies.

—I don't know, Grandma. My tablet's not working. Where's Dad? We need to call my dad!

—Once the tablets are back on, we'll call him. He's outside the dome, Windy. He works outside the dome. He's safe, wherever he is. Listen, girl.

Wind held her granddaughter's face firmly and looked hard into her eyes.

—Your father works outside the dome. He wears heavy-duty safety gear. Maybe he got knocked over a bit like we did, but he's fine. The tablets will come back online, and we'll call him and tell him we're fine. Now focus on me. I need your help right now. We need to find a basement—a good one. So take a breath and think about it.

—Grandma...

—It's okay, girl. Just think about the basement. Your father is fine. Nothing bad happens in full safety gear.

Finding a basement wasn't the only problem. There was a lot of radiation in the atmosphere outside the domes. Terraforming, Abeyu's department, was working on cleaning it up, but it was going to take a century even after they finished building a magnetic wall to block stellar radiation in the atmosphere. They have to gather the ambient radiation already in the air and ground in modified bio-accumulator sedge grasses and mow it and bury deep underground in lead-lined bunkers and toss it up and out into space. If the domes were cracked...

She ducked down and around and got her head out from under the canoe long enough to survey the damage. The house had been hit with a steel beam, which had caused the collapse of most of the house, including the front hall closet where their

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emergency suits had been kept. Craning her neck, she looked up and saw the hole in the sky. The fallen beam had come from the top dome shell and fallen straight through. The radiation must already be blowing in. She pulled her head back under the shelter of the canoe.

–Windy, I need to go up to the house. I want you to stay here and make sure you're under the water and out of the fresh air. I'm going to the house to get something for you.

–Grandma, I'm scared.

–The earthquake is over. It's going to be okay now. We just have to start cleaning up the mess. First, I need to go to the house and make a new emergency kit. There's a crack in the dome, so we have to wear suits. You remember about that from school, right? That's how things are, just now, girl. So, I need you to stay here, undercover where you're safer from everything bad. I will get you an emergency suit. Do you understand?

–No. Please, don't leave me, Grandma.

Wind stroked her granddaughter's hair and tried her best to project all the calm she could find in every corner inside of her where it was hiding.

–It's going to be fine now, Windy. The bad part's over. I want you to count to a thousand, and I'll be back before you get there.

–Grandma...

–Start counting, Windy. Everything's going to be fine now. I know exactly what to do, okay? We're going to be fine. It's like spilling your tea. It happened. There's no point in crying about it, and now we have to clean it up. Start counting for me, Windy.

The girl was crying, but she closed her eyes and started counting.

–One...Two...

Wind was wet and miserable, and there were bits of glass and plastic and insulation all over the ground. She ran up to the house as fast as she could. She picked her way through the rubble where the door had been and found nothing. The automat

dinged, and it startled her. It had finished printing the supplies for the garden that was now never going to be built—the seed trays and bed lining, in the back of the house where Abeyu's room was mostly fine. The automat had a battery backup in case of an outage, so it could keep running if there were power fluctuations or emergencies.

Wind climbed through the hole in the wall to the automat room and cleared debris from her path. She grabbed a hunk of raw lead and hefted it up into the loading tray and shoved the plastic that had just been printed back into the bin, to be recycled. She plugged in the plans for an emergency suit, and realized it would take too long and that she was missing raw materials that needed to be sewn in. The battery would die on something that complex. She changed the plans, then, to make it faster: A clear plastic face with a full hood, a large bubble body that wasn't fitted with feet only—no hands. All of it was lined with lead to keep the radiation out. Air would run through a particle filter hanging from the neck. That was the part that was going to take the longest—the air filter. After it started printing, she dug through the storage supplies for anything that could help get her power to the automat. She shouted down to the girl under the canoe.

—Everything's fine, Windy! It's going to take me a minute longer than I thought, but I need you to stay where you are! Stay there! I'm just printing you a new suit in the automat!

She snagged an intact solar panel from the broken roof and reworked it through a voltage kit into the automat's emergency energy input. It wasn't much energy, but it was enough to keep it charging when it wasn't in use, a little. Everything helped.

Soon, Wind had one good safety suit that would fit like weird balloon pajamas. Next she set the machine up to run one more, a bit larger. It was going to take time and might not finish.

She took the safety suit to her granddaughter, who had calmed down a little.

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—Will I run out of air in here? The girl was whimpering.

—No. I need you to put this on quickly. It's okay if there's water inside of it. We'll get rid of that later.

—Why?

—The dome is cracked. The safety suits are under rubble. This will protect you from the radiation in the atmosphere outside until we can get you a new emergency suit.

—Are we running out of air?

—No, Windy, we are not running out of air. There's lots and lots of air. That's not the problem. Outside the dome, there's more than just air, and that's the problem.

—But the dome is cracked?

—So we will wear safety gear. You learned this in school. There were drills.

—This isn't the right suit.

—Your suit was damaged. I made you a new one that will work for now. This is what we have; this is what we will wear. When we can find another one, you'll wear that one. For now, you wear this.

—Where's yours?

—Printing. Quickly, put yours on. Now.

—Help me.

Wind worked fast in the reflected light from the pond. It was dark, and she flipped her otherwise useless tablet on to get more light to work with. It worked as a floating flashlight, if nothing else. Soon, her granddaughter was strapped into the awkward bubble suit with no hands. Wind stood and hefted the boat off of them, then. It pinched that same bad place in her back, and she winced and clenched and had to stand still for a minute until the nerve unclenched. Windy didn't even notice—she was looking at her house. Of course she was upset about it. Just before they moved into this house, her mother had died. Nothing was stable in her world; everything she loved was being destroyed.