

The Shaws by Charlie Stathis

What happen if the greeds, the prejudice and the audism became a disease? What would happen to the world? Now imagine the Earth, what once was a peaceful world now overridden by the disease. And imagine a bustling town, protected by barrier dome. The place called Keller Valley, the home of the Shaws and the Allies.

“And one by one, they all turned against us, even the governments.” The lady’s hand was moving around in the air gracefully as she told us the story, the one I’ve heard thousands time before. “It looked like it was the end of us, but The Elder saved us, bringing us to this place. But we couldn’t save them.” Her eyes drifted toward the border, filled with sadness. Beyond the borders, all that is left is the world, left to decay and burn. Only thing that accommodates the dead world is the Ringers. Those who once was our families, friends, and peers. But the disease took over them.

“Alright, it’s lunch time, go out.” The lady waved us away with a smile as all the children’s scrambled, fighting each other to reach the food station first. I was left behind as I took a different path. It had been my routine for as long as I could remember. I brushed my hand by the bushes, walking down the track that led to our hideout. When I saw my friend with her back turned, I immediately started to walk quietly, sneaking up to her. “Seriously? Your breathing is so loud I can hear you.” Ellie’s hands started to sign as she turned around to look at me. “How many time have you tried? A million?” she added as I pushed her shoulder softly, scowling because I kept failing to beat her super hearing. I sat down next to her on the swing, swaying back and forth slightly as I stared at the metallic wall in front of us. “what’s up?” she tapped my shoulder first before asking me, worried by my lack of chatting. I lifted my hand from my lap, “nothing, it’s just that June told us the story again.” She watched me sign and rolled her eyes, “seriously? This again? We can’t go out there, they turned against us, and we are safe here, okay?” her hands were moving quickly, showing her tone was annoyed or angry. I couldn’t help but to look away from her and to the wall in front of us.

Her hand suddenly appeared in front of my face, waving to grab my attention, I jumped and glared at her. I was about to say something but the lights above us shone brightly red, we both looked up and to each other with our eyes wide in shock. She got a head start cause the sound came first before the light. We both raced up the track, toward the central. Bunch of peoples was already there, their hands was waving around like crazy, discussing what’s the matter and exchanging rumors and gossips. I snaked in the crowd to the front of the stage to get better look of the lady on top of it. The lady, one of our Elder named Nola, scanned the crowd with her steady eyes and warming smile. She raised her hand to silence our chatting, gathering all our attentions. “Thank you for coming so quickly.” The Elders and I are pleased to announce that the Valley had hit an important milestone. I turned my head to the left, seeing all the elders on the side of the stage, they all seem so happy, “30 years ago today we had to take refugee from the dangers of the world and here, our home was born.” And at that, everyone in the area raised their hands in the air and twisted it back and forth, our version of handclaps. We all cheered and turned to each other with smiles.

That night, everyone didn’t go to bed until the dawn. We all partied all night, stuffing our stomach full of foods and our heart full of warmth. The children were playing tags in middle of the central and all the adults was chatting, some sharing their old stories and other sharing gossips and secrets. I was perched on the balcony on one of the buildings, overlooking the central. Ellie sat own by me and handed me a plate of foods as we watched our families. I’ve lived here my whole life; I have never

been to outside of the border and I don't want to ever leave. A hand tapped on my shoulder, and I peeked at Ellie, "Gosh I'm exhausted, why can't they all shut up and go to bed?! It's like 2am or something" she signed and shook her head looking at people below us. It had always been our Shaw's thing.

The long goodbyes.

The Shaws, the deaf peoples, are named after Dot Shaw.

The Keller Valley is named after Helen Keller, one of the most important people in our history.

The Elder, Nola. When I was thinking up the characters, I couldn't help but to add one of the most valuable people in my life, Nola Colefax, she played a huge part in deaf community and in the theatre.

The Allies are the hearing peoples who is part of the community, such as interpreters, Auslan students, CODA, or even our families and friends who knows sign language or wants to learn.

The Ringers are the hearing people who cannot see the world in our perspective, the one that looks down on us and discriminate against us.

The red lights are a refer to our deaf culture, to grab people's attention we turn off the light and back on, and at my old primary school, Thomas Pattison School, we would have bells that indicates end of recess or lunches or the classes, the bell is flashing lights at every corner of the school instead of sound bells that most schools use.

The long goodbyes, at deaf events I have always noticed that when we say "bye, I have to go now!" but they would remembered something they wanted to talk about and have that conversation, then repeat the whole process until someone leaves. It's hilarious and very common!