

Tutto

(Everything)

By Jaslyn Mackenzie

8TH October 2036

BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEP! BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEP! I press the buzzer as hard as I can.
BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEP! (Why are nurses so slow?) BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEP!

"What is it this time Antonie?" Nurse Patricia sighs in her crisp British accent as she walks through the big metal doors, "You can't possibly be finished that book yet."

But I have.

"Oh my God, Antonie Carlo Bonaventura!" she cries, "When are you going to stop reading so fast? You know your Mother disapproves of you reading all these English books!" she says as she glances around my lavishly decorated room. My Mamma has made it her mission to make me love Italy. There are posters of the Colosseum and the Roman emperors stuck up all over my walls. There are *musicisti* and pasta, maps and gelato. I hate it. But Mamma insists that culture and belief is everything. I disagree, and I want to prove her wrong. That is why my goal is to be the smartest person on earth on the day I die. And I must say, I'm pretty close. But, I guess I'll never know for sure, it's not like someone walks around the Muscular Decompression Ward and checks who's the smartest.

That's what I have, Muscular Decompression. It basically means that my muscles decompressed (hence the name) when I was born. I can't walk properly so I'm constantly bed-ridden. I have never seen my Italiano home turf, or any of the rest of the world for that matter, except through my 13th storey window and in books. But that doesn't count. My condition also means I am terminal. My body can't hold itself together without my muscles. But I don't like to think about that.

"There's nothing else to do but read!" I whine, "and, on the subject of books, I believe there's an encyclopedia of Earth's insects down in the library, and I'd like to brush up on my Monarch Butterfly migration knowledge, so would you mind very much popping down and getting it for me?"

Patricia rolls her eyes but heads for the door. "You're lucky you have me as your nurse, Antonie, you remember that."

And she's gone.

I let out a breath I didn't even know I was holding in and I grin. I'm so close to my goal. I can feel it. I'm going to be the smartest person in the world. But, obviously, I haven't done it alone. I'd like to thank Nurse Patricia. She always delivers new books to me whenever I need them. She's supported my mission when my own Mamma wouldn't.

Oh, speaking of Nurse Patricia, here she is, gotta go.

15th October 2036

I've done it. I've read every book in the world and I know everything there is to know about everything. You name it, I know it.

What does Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis mean? Well, it refers to a lung disease contracted from the inhalation of very fine silica particles, specifically from a volcano.

When did Neil Armstrong land on the moon? On July 21 at 02:56:15 Universal Time Coordinated.

Oxford, Harvard, the International Library, I've read them all and it feels great! But, Mamma will NOT like this. She is ashamed of my disregard for culture.

Oh, here she is,

Maybe I just won't tell her-

wait.

Why is she crying?

"Mamma?" I say.

"It'll be alright *figlio*," she says.

Then I realise that my bed is moving. Hey, why are they pushing me into the Surgical Wing? Why is there a needle in my arm? Why is, why is, why is...as I fade out of consciousness, all I can think, is that I did it...

20th May 2037

I stand proud and strong on the steps of the hospital. It took the doctors years to find a cure for my condition, but they did it. It took me months to learn to walk, but I did it. Today is the day I leave my home. It might be massive, and intimidating, and white, but it's home. Mum's booked us seats on the first flight to Roma.

We're here. Today, as I flew over my homeland, I could not believe the things I saw. I've lived in this world, but I've never really seen it.

At 7:00am on the 20th of May 2037, I thought I knew everything. But by dinnertime, I had already learned a billion new things. What it feels like to fly, how small I really am, and how knowledge *DISCOVERS*, but culture, belief, and hope, *HEAL*.

Non potrò mai sapere tutto, ma continuerò ad imparare.

I will never know everything, but I will continue to learn.