

**Poster Competition  
Runner Up**

**Class 6c/sk**

Tilstskole

Tilst, Denmark



**My Vision of How to Make a Better 2020**

Portia hugged little Ezra to her limp withered breast. He lolled listless in her arms as she leant over him to protect him from the harsh African sun. There was worry etched in her every movement. When she rose unsteadily to her feet, her hipbones protruded – bumps against the top of her grimy brown skirt. She could barely stand for the pangs of hunger that opened up like cracks inside her, rising from the pit of her stomach, making her throat and her chest ache. She ignored them. She'd grown accustomed. All her concern was focused on the emaciated child that she held in her arms. He was eight years old but his short skinny limbs and his swollen belly gave him the appearance of a four-year-old. The tight black knots of hair on his head had long turned to a rusty brown. Portia had never heard of the word "kwashiorkor" before, but she'd seen many other infants around the squalid Nigerian refugee camp with the same grotesque cartoon appearance and she'd witnessed enough to know that every smile she bestowed on her flickering infant may well be a final salute. Yet the tenderness in the steadfast gaze she trained on him spoke volumes. It was clear. When Chinua Achebe had written the poem "Refugee Mother and Child" it had been a tribute to this woman.

*From its lair, more than a million dimensions away yet as close as a whisper, the creature admired the starvation and suffering in the eyes of the mother and child in much the same way as an artist surveys a masterpiece. It smiled. Two impeccably even rows of pointy teeth blinked in the pale light. The ends gleamed. They glistened. The only word you could use to describe a smile like that was radiant. However it was only radiant in the sense that it put you in mind of radiation. Nuclear radiation for instance. You felt a need to shield yourself from it for fear that its malice and its sadistic delight would sink beneath your own skin and corrupt your cells. That something that emanated such evil could even exist was bad enough, that it could smile was unthinkable...*

About a thousand miles northwest of the pathetic African scene a shrill bell sounds. Jade Rosenberg steps wearily into the long cafeteria line which snakes from the huge swinging doors all the way to the shiny silver counter where the cafeteria food is piled in its notoriously unappealing style. She doesn't even register the splat of gravy covered meatloaf hitting her tray. Her mind is on other matters. University applications, the impending doom of the Biology test after lunch, the dread of having to make the most out of the six short months that lay ahead. Months that would determine her future. Doom laden cliches swam before her mind's eye. Sink or swim. Make it or break it. Maybe that's why she didn't remember the step at the end of the counter line. Perhaps this accounted for her losing her footing and launching her tray – food and all – over the heads of her startled peers. Whatever the reason the shiny Frisbee full of gravy and meatloaf was away. The laws of the universe are clear on the outcome of a situation such as this. When food takes flight in a crowded room it will without exception land on the head of the most aggressive person in the room. This will be followed by a dead silence before years of American movies and sitcoms (all written by people who've never paid attention during "Feed the children" commercials) immediately took over. Someone yelled "Food fight!"

It wasn't long before the air was thick with mashed potatoes and you could barely see through the haze of ketchup and orange juice.

*The creature was beside himself with glee as he admired his handiwork. The image of emaciated Ezra superimposed itself on that of the flying food. Food on the ceiling, food underfoot, food matted in hair... food, food everywhere while a child dies of starvation. You just had to love the tragic irony of the situation. It delighted him no end. He'd created a reality so off-balance that it had no right to exist.*

But there is always a balance. Hold that thought, let it sink into your mind, immerse your gray matter in it.

**Essay Competition  
Grand Prize Winner**

**Thrishni Subramoney**

17 years old

Durban, South Africa

Everything in the world has balance. The darkest night is followed by the brightest of days. The coldest winter arrives on the heels of the most scorching of summers. The food chain, the circle of life... it's essential for survival. But the wonderful thing about scales is that if they can be tipped one way they can also be tipped the other. Even in a world gone wrong, when it seems as if all of creation has gone and lost its senses and life stretches ahead resembling a minefield more than a box of chocolates, there is no such thing as complete darkness. It is said that the Creator sees every sparrow that falls. This is true. Being a firm advocate of free will, She doesn't always intervene obviously. But like every competent parent, even Mother Nature knows when a little intervention is needed to push things back onto the right track.

*Picture the flattest, plainest stretch of grassy landscape you can imagine. Expansive and ruffled by only the slightest of breezes. Let it stretch unobstructed to the very horizon of your mind's eye. This scenery is so unremarkable that the words "No comment" would automatically spring into your mind if you were asked to describe it.*

*Under this place, at the very heart of the earth is where the controls exist. The sensitive controls that maintain the balance. Mother Nature's automatic workshop, if you will. When the creature smiled something here awoke.*

*From the core of the earth a point of light traveled up towards the surface. It rose out of the earth, growing in brightness. It throbbed with growing intensity. If you were able to look at it you'd be able to see that it wasn't just white light, but a mixture of colors that danced on its surface and radiated from its core. Just when it seemed that it couldn't get any brighter it burst. The light streamed out, cutting through the air around it, reaching over the dull landscape, encompassing the world in a protective net of light. Of course, you'd only see the full effect of it if you were sitting on the moon. From your lunar seat you'd see a network of light stretch over the earth like*

*a web until it seemed like the entire blue and green planet was caged under a radiating fish net. It seemed to lance through the stratosphere, beautiful beams cutting into the cold darkness of space. And then, just when it seemed as if it could get no brighter, it gently fell around the planet like a cocoon, so close and warm that eventually it seemed to become absorbed into the seas and continents until the earth itself seemed to glow with an inner light. Sometimes it takes no more than a mother's hug to heal all wounds.*

Sometimes history is made in a single moment. Destinies are forged in a fateful second. Just as the web had reached its brightest point a UN journalist covering some African war walked past a Nigerian refugee camp on his way to his hotel. He was looking to finish off his roll of film, one picture to go. As he passed the rows of the grubby makeshift tents he spied a mother cradling a child. It seemed to him that the child was reaching the final fatal stages of kwashiorkor and the mother was almost dead with exhaustion, but for some reason the ghost of a smile on her lips as she spoke softly to her child held a unique beauty. Without really thinking about it he snapped the picture, capturing the rusty haired child and the tender gaunt mother on the end of the roll of film. The next day he put the developed photographs into an envelope barely looking at the final picture and sent them off to an American newspaper. The pictures were for a political story, all of them featuring smiling politicians and historical handshakes, all except the last one...

*As the web covered the earth, the creature's smile froze. He sensed the change in the air in the same way that an antelope can sense a leopard hiding in the long grass. For a moment his scaly brow furrowed in confusion. Then he looked again at the image of starving people and wasted food and he relaxed. The die was cast, it was irreversible... wasn't it?*

The first sign of change came in the newspapers. It wasn't exactly a phenomenon, it had happened before. For

the death of Mahatma Gandhi, J.F.K, Princess Diana, and this story that occupied the front page of every newspaper in every country was to a great extent about death...

Yet, even though no one could pinpoint the exact point of contention, it definitely was strange that every newspaper, whether with perfect picture clarity, a grainy blur of black and white, featured on its front page a picture of a starving Nigerian mother and child. But no one noticed the world was abuzz with indignant voices. "Something must be done!" shouted one headline. "There are No Winners," yelled another. For once the burning issue that had captured the world's attention was truly scorching and for once the snowball effect that followed was a good thing.

When the issue reached its peak everyone from your average joe-on-the-street to the to major world leaders had been touched by it. It's amazing how much power the media wields. A cause championed by the media is a cause that can spark world interest, world comment, and world support.

It started at the lowest level. Schools around the world started holding monthly drives. They kept it simple so those parents wouldn't feel burdened. Each child just brought in one can of tinned food every month. It was simple and effective. This food went to the starving people in their districts and neighborhoods. Charity begins at home. Then big companies started taking an interest. Their ideas were both simple and innovative. They offered to send a fixed amount of food to one starving village or camp overseas in return for a fixed amount of empty tins and food wrappers returned to them. It was a two-fold solution that encouraged both recycling and charity. Even movie stars and popstars began jumping onto this worthy bandwagon. Each chose charities that championed the war against starvation. They auctioned off autographed clothes and CD's donating all the proceeds to their chosen organizations. It was a lengthy process but it paid off. Food was flying again,

but this time it was reaching worthy lips.

*The creature had long ceased his smiling by now. The knot of apprehension in his reptilian gut was growing with time. In desperation it surveyed this wave of change and then it blinked. It couldn't last, it realized. With a sense of growing hope, it revised the situation. So far this scheme was relying on human compassion for steam. It was working now but this was temporary. It had to be. People are inherently selfish. This was the monster's view. When they realized that they were giving so much in return for so little they'd come to their senses. They'd get back to the ol' rat-race track. They had to...*

*He should've given them more credit than that; humans for all their natural flaws have the ability to learn from their mistakes. Not all their mistakes. History is testament to that fun fact. But history is also littered with great people who've been able to turn around a bad play and maintain the momentum. There is always a balance and when the Creator reasserts it, it tends to have staying power.*

And so it was that world leaders met and they lent their major powers to the cause that their people were championing so fervently. It seemed that for once the politicians were more concerned about human issues than military ones. The conference buildings echoed with calls for economic assistance for third world countries, for developing the world markets towards supporting these countries through importing, while at the same time helping them by allowing them to pay less tax. Most importantly it was decided that greater attention would be paid to dealing with wars through mediation because refugees of war torn countries made up the greatest part of the world's hungry. These suggestions had all been made before but this time people were actually listening and taking them seriously. The reality of the situation had sunk in. World hunger affected every single country. It upset the balance. ■

*The main problem that developing nations are facing is that they are not using their money to the benefit of the poor people of their nation.*

**Rifat Jabbar**  
Grade 10  
Addis Ababa,  
Ethiopia

**Poster Competition  
Runner Up**

**Class 2a**

*Hørup Centralskole  
Sydals, Denmark*

*It is most surprising  
how much money is wasted  
on weapons—instruments of  
destruction—even when over  
30 percent of the world's  
population live in abject  
poverty (hunger). Why can't  
we invest the money  
for weapons in food  
production? Must we  
live in the world thinking of  
how to destroy one another?*

**Gadagbui Marshal**  
*Nkwatia-Kwahu, Ghana*

