

“Waterborne”

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12C

“The pH measures are good, and concentration levels are stabilizing.”

Welcome to late 19th century Europe. In the small village of Sarabie. The factories are bustling, horse carriages are roaming the cobblestone streets, and inventions are being introduced left and right. In a small house, one inventor is studying a chemical as she holds her flask.

“And now to add the finishing touch.” She adds a drop of liquid into the water and—

BOOOOM!!!

The entire block shakes as the chemical mixture explodes. Children outside could see smoke rapidly exiting through the windows, and people stop what they are doing to look at the house.

Then they shake their heads and continue what they were doing as if nothing had happened.

The average citizen would panic, maybe call the police too. But to the people of Sarabie, it was just the “Crazy Inventor” going about her daily experiments again. While they still respect many great inventors like Alexander Graham Bell, this particular inventor is just in her twenties, and she destroys more machines than she creates them. This said inventor is currently coughing the smoke out of her lungs.

“Well, that’ll be the last time I play with chlorine.” She coughs even more as the door opens.

“Nora... Oh my word, what is that awful smell?” A grown woman exclaims before being taken aback by the smoke.

“Let me guess,” the older woman coughs before continuing, “Another failed experiment, isn’t it?”

“Oh gee, you think?” Nora manages to cough out sarcasm as the older woman walks to the windows to open them.

Nora runs to her experiments again and examines the empty vials.

“Great,” Nora complains “Now I have to collect another batch of sterilized dihydrogen monoxide.”

“Dihydro...?”

“A clean batch of water, mother.”

“Why not just take some water from the pipes, or the river?”

“I told you,” Nora turns to face her mother “The pipes are dirty and the river is incredibly polluted. If this keeps going, a clean river would be quite rare by the 21st century,” she sarcastically remarks before turning away to tidy up her workshop.

Her mother casts her eyes downward since her daughter seems to show more interest in her work than spending time with her. It’s not to say Nora doesn’t love her mother, as the former appreciates being allowed to stay, and not being given to a man to be taken away.

Nora’s hobbies have taken her attention more than she could give to her mother. She began taking up science when she was six years old! While kids at that age go outside, pickpocket for gangs, or play games of Pub, she would be more interested investigating why salts dissolve in water.

“Well...” her mother briefly pauses before gesturing to the door “How about some breakfast?”

“Yeah, sure. You can leave it at the front desk.” She responds without even looking at her. Instead, she prepares for another experiment. With that, her mother sighs and walks downstairs to bring her some food.

Nora closes the doors and pulls out some dusty old books containing various formulas and chemical combinations. All Nora could think about is getting this one experiment to work.

“Just one! Is that too much to ask?” She exclaims.

She rubs her head after another explosion. It’s already afternoon and there’s still a bit of food on her plate. Frustrated with her work, Nora grabs a glass of water to take a sip, but she notices the vials shaking violently.

*They’ve never done that before.*

Curiously, Nora pours some of her water onto the vials, and the water begins to boil much more quickly than normal. As if finding another breakthrough, she grabs a pen and notebook and jots down her findings.

*This is it!* She thought. With this breakthrough, she could finally get rid of the title “Crazy Inventor.” She could get her mother out of the slums and into a decent lifestyle. With great joy, she ran downstairs to share this with the only person who supported her.

“Mother! Mother! I’ve done it! I’ve actually done it!”

Nora ran downstairs to the dining room and couldn't find her.

She checks the living room, but it is empty. Mother is not in the bedroom either.

“Mother?”

*Maybe she went out. Maybe she went to the market. But she would've told me...*

It was then that her thoughts are interrupted by a loud thud outside the house. She runs to investigate, and to her horror, her mother was on the floor looking very much in pain.

“Mother!” She ran to her side. Panicking would be an understatement, as Nora tries to help her up her feet.

“C-Come on, i-it's alright!” Nora shouts in worry, more to herself than to her mother. “W-what happened!?” She asks desperately, but the weakened woman could only groan.

“Help! Somebody! Anybody! Help!” Nora began to panic, but told herself that she must remain calm for the situation.

Out of options, she goes around town asking for help, but she finds that many others have been affected as well. She passes by a young mother tending to her children. They look as sick as Nora's own mother, with bloodshot eyes, bruises, and ghastly blisters on their skins. She visits the local doctor, who looks as puzzled as ever.

“How could this have happened?” Nora asks.

The doctor examines a sample of water coming from the tap. It was murky and smelled awful. There was visible discoloration and particulates were floating within it.

“This water comes directly from the water facility. It’s coming from the main city!”

Thanks to her previous experiments, Nora was well aware of the issues concerning the water in Sarabie. She had already figured it out as she straddles to the city hall, hoping to get the local governor to provide support in dealing with the situation. Local citizens gather around the front door as the governor walks out to address them.

“Calm down everyone!” he says with calm professionalism. “The sewage system is being constructed, and once it is complete, no waste will ever be sent to the river!”

“This is a load of baloney!”

“My children are gravely ill!”

Nora tries to talk to the governor about the plague ravaging her village, but he rebukes her.

“But sir! My people need you, a plague is killing innocents, my mother, and we need your support-”

“I’ve got other concerns right now, woman, more urgent than those of the likes of you. Go home.”

She leaves the building distraught, moving through the crowd until she hears a few loud shots. A gunshot, not too far away, echoes through the streets. Some of the locals scramble, while the others, along with Nora, stay and turn their heads toward the direction of the sound.

It came from a man holding his gun up high. The police try to apprehend the suspect, but two more masked men move behind him and point their guns at the police, stopping them in their tracks.

“Soon, you shall see that all of this is worth nothing!” Shouted one of the gang members.

“This is the dawn of a new era! And you shall all bear witness to it!”

After they had given their announcement, the men escape, with the police giving chase.

“Oh no, not them again.” One of the locals within Nora’s earshot whispered

“Who are they?” She asked with curiosity

“That’s them Fallenbow gang.” The local shivered, “and the one who’s spoutin’ about is their leader.”

“What’s his name?”

“No one knows his real name, but people call him Reegan, a ruthless yet intelligent individual. Doesn’t matter, I ain’t gonna stay here to find out what happens next.” Nora watches as the stranger scurries away through the crowd.

That night, she decides to investigate the problem herself. Back inside her workshop, she moves all of her dusty old books and equipment and takes out a crude, but working, microscope that she had built herself. She takes a look at the water and is shocked by what she sees: tiny microbes violently moving around the container. Test tubes, beakers, flasks, and burners fill the room and many complex calculations are made by the young woman.

“I’ll find a way to fix this. I promise.”

For days, she experiments and tests the water while taking care of her gravely ill mother at the same time. In a eureka moment, the young girl discovers a solution to the problem: a formula that could purify the water and cure the disease.

“I’ve done it! I can save them! I can save mother!”

Nora hurriedly runs off to her mother, desperate to save her with this new treatment. She pours the potion into a glass of the contaminated water and waits for it to eliminate the contaminants. Though she did have some doubts she steeled herself to believe it will work, After the water had become clear, she lets her mother drink it. After watching over her for a few hours, the old woman finally begins to speak.

“Nora? What happened? I... I feel better now.”

“Mother, I’ve found the cure to the disease.”

She finally goes to sleep peacefully, excited to bring the good news to the village. The next day, she heads to the local doctor at the hospital.

“Doctor! I’ve done it!” Exclaimed Nora.

“I’ve managed to find a way to eliminate those pesky microbes!”

“What? But how?” The doctor said in confusion.



“It turns out that these microbes are susceptible to a certain formula that I’ve developed in my laboratory. I was able to cure my mother with it, and I hope we could do the same for the rest of the town.”

“Let’s take a look at it.”

Together, they conduct experiments, validate it, and confirm that it is safe for consumption.

“Nora, young lass! You’ve saved us all!”

The doctor immediately announces that there is a cure for the disease and the local hospital promptly gets to work on distributing it to the people.

A few weeks pass, and soon the village is back on its feet. Back at the city hall, the governor once again addresses a large crowd. Nora and a large group of people gather around the front door as the governor makes his announcement.

“Despite our efforts of introducing the cure to the water supply, the water remains contaminated. We will run an investigation as to why this is happening shortly.”

Nora ponders on the thought. “If the cure is working, then why is the water still contaminated? It seems that somebody is tampering with the supply! But who could possibly have a motive to hurt these people?” Suddenly, she remembers the day the Fallenbow gang made their appearance in front of the city hall. She found it strange that the moment they appeared the water started affecting the people.

“A new era? All of this is worth nothing? Something’s not right.”

Over the week, she asks around and finds clues on the whereabouts of the Fallenbow gang. One of her contacts informs her that they would be having a meeting at the water facility. She then starts preparing for a stake out.

The next night, she sneaks out and investigates the water facility. She sneaks up behind large machinery and looks over as she sees shadowy men in the distance. As she had suspected, the Fallenbow are meeting up to discuss their plans. The large group of men are chattering, but immediately stop as Reagan steps up the stage. He pulls a large cloth that reveals several drums of hazardous waste stashed behind him, and he begins to speak.

“These people may have found a cure for the plague, but they have only stopped us temporarily! They cannot prevent the inevitable! Change is coming to this town, and we are its catalyst!”

“Hoorah!”

Seven men then walk up on stage and dump the metal drums into the water supply chamber, contaminating the supply once more. Shocked, Nora runs off and alerts police of the situation. Sirens are heard across town and people look out of their windows as they see police running toward the water facility. As they arrive at the scene, a large firefight occurs.

Bystanders watch in awe as sparks fly and loud, explosive sounds rock the streets. The police demand that the Fallenbow surrender, but latter continue to open fire. Several men from both sides fall silent.

After an hour of intense fighting, the noise begins to dissipate. Reagan has been hit and is gravely wounded. The remaining gang members are in shock, and they surrender. The police carefully approach the suspects and confiscate their weapons, arresting them. The local doctor arrives at the scene and examines the contents of the metal drums.

“These are full of harmful chemicals and is likely the source of the plague.” says one of the scientists. The contaminated water in the supply facility is exposed to the cure, and the water is finally cleansed.

As the situation subsides, Nora sits down at a bench as she watches the police pull the remaining Fallenbow gang members into jail carts. The local governor arrives at the scene and approaches her.

“My sincere apologies for my attitude towards you previously. Please accept my token of gratitude for saving the people.”

“It was no problem, sir. I’m just trying to help out, that is all.”

“I’ve heard of the situation you’re in with your mother. I could arrange something to make it a little easier for your folk.”

He hands her a card, and she looks up at him, visibly shocked and excited.

“I look forward to seeing you, Nora.”

A few days later, she arrives at the local hospital and walks toward a room. A sign on the door says “Research and Development.” She enters and happily begins her work alongside the doctors, creating new advancements to improve the lives of the people of Sarabie.