



# Memories of a Future Past



*“The past has been there all along, reminding us: This time - maybe, hopefully, against all odds, we will get it right.”*  
— Leslie T. Chang

Rimjhim Relan

## **6th April 2150**

I still hadn't figured out what was the box of old sleek cylinders we found when A॒ wanted to clear the old bunker behind the garden. I had taken it to the laser library and they

had said they will look into it. Today, XÆ, the young boi at the server center, called to explain it was a hologram 🕒 💊; commonly used a hundred years ago as a backup to store data. He helped me transfer it to a 🎮. The 💊 turned out to be my grandmother's and the first one was from when she was a student in Edinburgh Futures Institute, which 📍 shows to be in the Gaelic land.

I saw a curious video of her speaking at an event where she is talking about how learning can take place anytime and anywhere (I remember my school before the grid cut out!), more accessible learning technology (ofc we know how that turned out), and the value of history and heritage.

The 💊 had photos from what looks like a wedding, perhaps a friend's, where they all seem to have this dark brown tattoo on their hands. It seemed familiar but I can't remember what it's called. The tattoo does not show in all photos so I wonder if it was temporary?

## 8th April 2150

I told Wyn and Astra about 💊 and we spent the last two days recalling our days before and during the Cut. Every time we have a throwback, I notice more differences between life today and before the Cut. The 'technologically - advanced' world of 2070s, the planet's last decade as it was and my first. 🤖 for work people didn't 'want' to do (pretty sure they just thought watering the plants was beneath them), intelligence for those who didn't want to think, and ice halls for those who didn't want to die (or live since they never got out). A᳚ had put on a recently discovered 🎮, 'Wall-E', for dinner a couple weeks ago and they

really headed straight for the utopia/dystopia that was depicted. I don't remember a day where I wasn't in the virtual and then the grid Cut off. Those were dark couple of decades. Even with resources my family had managed to preserve, we didn't have any skills to survive without ⚡. It took a while for the powers that be to isolate the smaller boards and supply them. By then, there had been so much death, famine, and isolation that society had become unrecognisable. As the smaller groups of people came together and humans finally recognised there is a hard limit on the load we can put on finite resources, we built what exists today - our sustainable progress map. The over-capitalisation of the world and extreme demands for hyper progress are learnt evils we stay away from. Although we are plugged in (hard to completely turn away from it when we were born with so much technology around us!), we don't 'over-rely' on technology today and I enjoy my life as it is. I know I write about it a lot, but throwbacks are needed from the Final Generation, to make sure the world doesn't end up becoming the same again.

## 10th April 2150

I've been researching the tattoos and it is *mehndi*! The word was so familiar that it triggered a memory from just before the Cut and I found an old 📷 of me in 2078 when I got it done at a wedding. Can't believe I remembered it so vividly even though I was only 8 then! Turns out that Wyn actually has a henna plant in her garden since they are native but did not know how to use the extract. We are going to try to figure out how to make the paste - there has to be an old 📖 somewhere right?



# 12th April 2150

I found several old 📄! The paste is looking good and it's in the fridge for when we can use it. I have been looking through the 📁 again and came across a debate on the 'fetishisation of skills'. It is an interesting idea. I notice that now when we talk about the **lost skills** that we can't access after the grid Cut rather than 'obsolete skills'. But I wonder, is there something that I could do as a young girl that is no longer used? (Or needed?)

# 13th April 2150

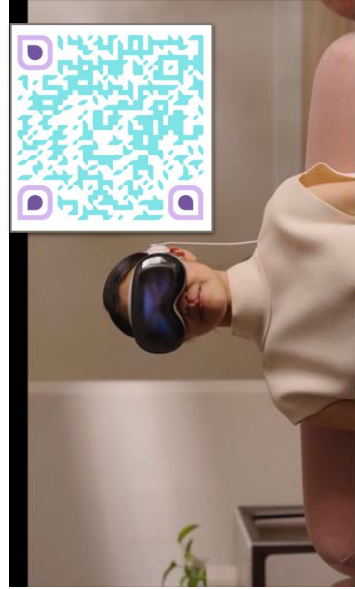
I've got it! Again, in the 📁, I found photos of some handwritten notes and drawings! How rare! Can you imagine how cheap and common paper was then? If I remember correctly, ink used to be chemical as well - not the plant extracts we use.

I knew how to write but I haven't had to do it in so long that I have almost forgotten! Now, that's going to be a lost skill. When I was daydreaming around the house, I found the kinetic sand A᳚ used to model with when she was a child. It was the perfect tool to practice my writing in! I used my finger and it was awkward at first but then muscle memory kicked in. Managed to look pretty smooth towards the end~



# 15th April 2150

I took the sand to the laser library today to show Wyn and Astra after movie club. The VR can be disorienting sometimes (I refuse to be too old for it!) so it is nice to sit in the garden outside before 🍵. They enjoyed using the sand and we decided to practice writing together! Some of the other members from the club joined us too and everyone liked getting their hands dirty. What a lucky find! 🍀



# 17th April 2150

A᳚ saw Wyn, Astra, and I hunched over our kinetic sand and *mehndi* cones today and was very surprised at what we were doing! Of course she had never tried to write! She had hardly used her hands to imitate anything, now that I think about it. Paper is so expensive now and all non-digital art is on walls (they use brushes and tools for that anyway). She had a curious look about her face but tried it when we encouraged her! Oh, the joy on her face as she drew a jagged 'a'!

She had come to announce her friend YØ's wedding in a month. That got me thinking about my research that said *mehndi* was an important part of the tradition. Now that's another skill that is truly lost if we don't revive it soon.

The cones were ready but we were with *mehndi* like A᳚ was with the kinetic sand - all jagged lines and no smoothness. Astra had picked some big clean leaves on her way that we were trying to draw on. We had wasted a few cones last time determining the right size of cut at the tip, so at least we got that correct this time and could actually use them!



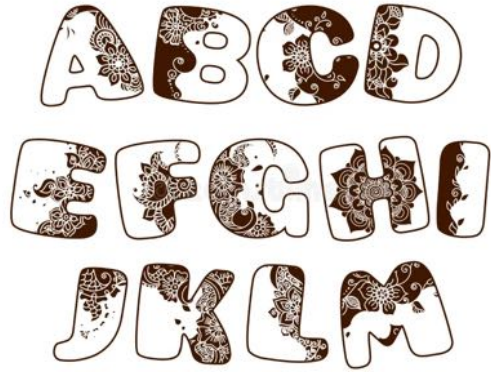
## 23rd April 2150

A᳚ has joined us for all three of our practice sessions so far! Her progress is slow ofc, but she is surprisingly motivated. Although I suspect that also has to do with the *mehndi*. We have made slow but sure progress on our skills and have been looking at henna designs. We are using AI to generate designs and editing them for ease. A᳚ has been so curious to be a part of our discussions about symbolism and representation. The meanings behind the peacocks, the circles, to lotus - just a bag of questions, that one! It makes me happy to see her being so invested in her heritage and learning about the past practices. It's fun to be learning something you were familiar with from the past and passing it on to someone who is totally unfamiliar with it! I just hope she continues to stay interested and who knows, maybe she will pick up *mehndi* too!



# 26th April 2150

I woke up with an idea today morning! Why not combine both? Henna and handwriting? I found some designs that can use both and I can't wait to show everyone! I practiced on leaves fallen in my garden and it looks pretty cute if I saw so myself!



# 27th April 2150

Wyn and Astra were over the moon but Aज़ was hesitant. She wasn't sure how it would fit her aesthetic to be wearing alphabets but she was tempted. I knew the designs I found were too obvious and needed amendment so I suggested that we fit them in one of her *mehndi* tattoo designs. Only once we had reassured her that it would come off before YØ's wedding, she let us help plan the design. She practiced on all our hands before finally doing her own. It was a long afternoon but it was so fulfilling to see her find the joy in learning.

I am also planning to try it myself on the other side of my hand... perhaps with a quote or some calligraphy? 💡





# 29th April 2150

A᳚'s group of friends joined us today! They saw the *mehndi* on her hand and were fascinated by the concept. Wyn wanted them to try drawing some alphabets in sand first but there wasn't enough for all five of them so we jumped straight into henna. Luckily we had extra cones. They started on leaves but were very shaky and clearly unfamiliar with the grip (very different than a paint brush!). Unfortunately we ran out of leaves, but all of them (except YØ ofc) were willing to try a chosen alphabet on a corner of their hand or arm.

They all chose their own motif near the letter, A᳚ chose a swan, and asked us to write the symbolic meaning in neat letters as a part of the design. The experience made me so nostalgic of a youth I didn't have but am so glad that my granddaughter does.

# 5th May 2150


Today was one of the first practice sessions without A᳚ in a long time. Although her friends hadn't returned, she says they are excited to join when they are free.

We were enjoying 🍵 when Wyn suggested teaching young people to write using *mehndi*!! I haven't been so excited for a project in a long time! Now that we have remastered the art of writing ourselves and continue to learn a new one with *mehndi*, why not share the knowledge? Spread the joy that A᳚ and her friends displayed last week?

We will meet again to plan as we agreed we can start this after YØ's wedding, especially since we want to make sure to have that group back in our 'classroom' again!

# 11th May 2150

We have a working plan in place now:

- Start with A᳚ and her friends
- Once a week
- Alternate  between my garden and the garden outside laser library
- Alphabets on leaves before a small pattern on skin, similar to last time
- Slowly move to words, and then quotes
- 4 - 6 weeks per cycle depending on skillset
- Completely flexible and dependant on the learner

We will pitch it to A᳚ next week and hope she is as excited as we are!

# 20th May 2150

YØ's wedding was stunning! Yesterday, A᳚ came over to get *mehndi* for the wedding. We did it on her hand together - she drew her initials and I drew some traditional patterns. It turned out to well! Today, her friends complimented it well and quite a few people asked if we could teach them too!

We have more to discuss ofc but perhaps we can open the day at the laser library to whoever may want to join?

Oh I am almost giddy with the possibilities of what this may become!

# 1st June 2150

We had our first session today starting with A᳚'s friends. The past week involved many preparations and discussions about expectations and what not.

I am glad to say it went well! Although we ran out of leaves again (we seriously miscalculated) but luckily all our hands were clean so they could use us as their canvas before putting it on themselves.

Many of them also wanted us to share about the symbolism present in the traditional *mehndi* designs as they had drawn some links between symbols the modern language uses and the work on designs I had pulled from an old reference book online.

# 7th June 2150

Today's session was more chaotic than expected. More people turned up (10!) than we expected but luckily we had prepared extra cones and leaves (learnt our lesson!).

It was definitely more difficult for the five new people to learn the movement of writing without the kinetic sand. We may have had more time with A᳚'s friends that first time than we realised. Nonetheless, everyone left with a letter on their hands and a spark in their eyes.

Predictably, only a few cared about the symbolism in *mehndi*, and most wanted to instead incorporate symbols from the modern language! They taught us some slang as they were practiced!

YØ had a remarkable idea of reaching communities online. I was so lost in my discovery that I didn't think to connect with a whole host of people out there. It was a lost skill for us, but perhaps in some communities they somehow maintained it?

There is a lot to be learnt from today and much to improve still and I can't wait to deep dive into it! 😊

**The End**