

The Struggle: An Energy Story

By Candace Abercrombie

It's been 43 years since they started phasing out the use of gas and coal for energy. The big gas corporations aren't happy and have been fighting the government's decision, trying to insert moles into the system to try and shut it down. Companies have lost millions from the loss of tax money, but they're still trying to squeeze what they can from what's left of the old taxes. The men who were once tycoons of the fossil fuel industry have been reduced to poverty, a stark contrast to the life they once had. Many people have lost their lives in the struggle to become greener, most being the leaders of the green movement, assassinated by corporations fearing the loss of dependency on their product.

I adjusted the solar panel strapped to the roof of my car, there were clouds in the sky and the sun was struggling to peek through. Hopefully there's enough sun to power the car, I thought. The air was a bit chilly this morning, and I shivered while getting my keys from my pocket. I paused before opening the door and looked at my car, my old 3090 black Honda didn't have a fancy solar panel like the brand new 3120 models, but I didn't care. The car was only 5 years older than me and had once run on gas, but my parents had switched it over as soon as they bought it as gas was becoming hard to find. I unlocked the driver's door and sat down, the grey seat made a slight creaking sound as I put my weight on it. I put the key in the ignition, flicking the switch on the roof to turn on the solar panel, and turned the key. The car struggled to turn on.

"Come on baby, you can do it," I encouraged, willing the Honda to start.

The engine whined and coughed, but still wouldn't turn on.

"Please don't do this now," I pleaded, "not today."

The car fell silent and I gave up trying to start it. I sat in the silence for a few minutes and began reliving old memories; it was cloudy days like this that made me miss my parents. They'd been a big part of the green movement, and had been killed by one of the gas companies' hired guns when I was just 16. I looked in the rear-view mirror at the back seat, reminiscing of when I would sit back there on road trips with my parents. There were so many memories made within the grey interior of this car. I could almost see myself sitting back there; singing along to whatever song was popular at the time. I looked down at the steering wheel, running my hand along the smooth leather which my dad used to spend so much time cleaning and caring for. The car still had the subtle "new car" scent from the car fresheners my dad used to stash all over the old Honda, he would pretend to be scared that the car would catch my "sticky little kid" smell.

While I was lost in my thoughts there was a sharp tap on my window, making me jump and bringing me back to the present.

"Car troubles?"

It was my best friend Felix. He lived next door to me and we often carpooled to work at the solar factory. We worked together assembling solar panels for the country. They established the factory in my hometown, Kitimat, B.C., in 3050, because there was a lot of space to expand and build new

factories. The government, in an effort to make everyone become green, forced people to work for the solar companies from the moment they graduated high school.

"Felix, you almost gave me a heart attack!" I exclaimed.

I leaned over and unlocked the passenger door, allowing Felix to climb in the car.

"You'd better hurry up Charlotte. We're going to be late for our shift," Felix said, "and you know what they do to people who are late."

I shuddered, thinking of the horror stories of what happened to those who were late in the past.

"I know, but the car won't start. Would you mind taking a look under the hood for me?" I asked.

"Sure no problem," Felix said, opening the door and getting back out.

He hit the hood twice, signaling for me to pop the hood for him. As he was looking at the engine I became lost in my memories again. I looked out at the yard, seeing myself at age 6, running in the sun and grass, kicking a soccer ball with my dad. He loved sports, especially soccer, and always encouraged me to play them. I stayed in the past for a few more moments before thinking about my future. Where would I be in 20 years? Will the fighting be over? Will we become dependent on gas again? Will I still be working at the factory? Would I have a family? There were so many questions that I didn't yet have the answers to. I heard the passenger door slam and looked over at Felix.

"Try it now," he said, getting comfortable and fastening his seatbelt.

I tried turning the key once again and the engine roared to life.

"Thank you so much," I thanked Felix.

"No problem. It was an easy fix."

I glanced at the clock, it was 10:45, and we have 15 minutes to get down to the plant. I put the car in reverse and backed out of my driveway. We turned down the street and headed down the main road to the factory. Only 10 more hours until I can go home, I thought, 10 more hours until I'm free again.