

Past & Present Future

2050: *An Andrews odyssey*

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7:50 a.m.

Good morning, Ms. Adamson. It is 7:50 a.m. on Thursday, Feb. 20. You have 20 minutes before your first group session.

The year: 2050. The place: Andrews University. More specifically: the residence of Ellie Adamson—233 Lamson Hall II.

First, one eye opens, then the other. Monday mornings are hard. Reality sets in and with it, a sudden rush of adrenaline. Her feet swing over to find the floor. *Terra firma* is found. Her attention is called to a computer pod sitting on a coffee table in the middle of the room. This is the origin of her morning commentary which is being broadcast through speakers planted all over her apartment.

Your first class is ENGL306, Group Research Methods. Current temperature is 41 degrees Fahrenheit. Cafeteria service began at 7:00 a.m. The time is now 7:52 a.m. No e-mail waiting.

Ellie heads for the shower as the voice begins reading the news.

In today's top stories: Actor Tom Cruise has been admitted to a Los Angeles hospital for observation and treatment of complications following elective plastic surgery earlier this week. Authorities report progress on the electromagnetic barrier field being raised to repair the hole in the ozone layer. Jamaica takes gold in downhill skiing at the World Championships. President Kimberly Campbell begins her summit with Russian leader Nikla Bershkov. . . .

The shower does wonders to wake

Ellie. She dresses quickly. The light flicks off as she steps through the doorway and meanders into the living room on her way to get her boots.

She surveys the room.

Her on-campus apartment is modestly furnished. A couch with an array of throw-pillows sits in one corner of a fair-sized room. Two Lazy-Boy recliners accompany it. On the opposite side of the room, her roommate's Flat Panel Screen Web TV hangs at an awkward angle on the wall.

"Jill," Ellie mutters to herself, "I told you to wait until I got home last night to hang up the TV! Oh man, I'm going to be late. That will have to wait till this afternoon."

She shakes off her irritation as a bell sounds from within her computer.

Ellie walks to the screen that now declares, VISITOR WAITING.

Underneath the message are two buttons: ACCEPT or REJECT. Ellie pushes the ACCEPT button. The visage of a smiling middle-aged woman appears on the monitor. It is Dr. Wright, her English teacher.

"Good morning, Ellie," Dr. Wright's voice is cheery and full of life.

"Hi, Dr. Wright! I should have left by now, but I'm on my way." Ellie struggles with her boots as she tries to maintain her head level in front of the video-phone camera mounted on top of the computer.

"Actually I'm glad I caught you, Ellie. I will not be at class today, and I would like you to lead the group

session." Pause. "What do you think?"

Ellie can hardly contain her excitement. "Really? Me?"

The older woman smiles. "I think you are ready for the task. Your group has been working on the 'History of Andrews University' project for some time now, and that is what I want you to continue to do for today's class period. If you have any problems, I can be reached by VidCom."

"Okay," Ellie responds enthusiastically.

"Thank you, Ellie." Dr. Wright fades off the screen and is replaced by the reflection of Ellie's smile.

"Yes!" Laughter. Giggles.

9:30 a.m. Nethery Hall, Gray Room, 4th floor

Ellie shifts from one foot to the other as her eyes study the individuals sitting in ergonomic chairs that have been arranged in a makeshift circle. Each chair has an adjoining computer station. They have been browsing Heritage and History records on the Internet for twenty minutes, and Ellie decides it's time to call the group session back to order.

"Well, Carlos," she addresses the Latino sitting directly in the middle of the circle, "what did you find out about the Andrews II project circa 1997?"

The young man's deep brown eyes light up as he speaks. "If you will look at your monitors," Carlos types in a few instructions, and a collective shift of bodies is followed by the electronic hum of computers coming to life, "you will see the architecture plans that were designed for additions made to Nethery Hall and the Seminary buildings." Carlos continues, "The purpose for those additions was to renovate the aging buildings and update the departments. Hence, the focus of the Campaign for Andrews II was to help raise money for these projects."

"Question," Dawn says. Her dark skin conveys her African-American origins, while her porcelain features bear a whisper of her Asian roots. "From my research, I understand that there was an Andrews I campaign. According to the information I gathered, it was successful. So why was there a need for an Andrews II

campaign?"

"That's a good question," Ellie acknowledges. "Anybody have an answer?"

"Well," Erik, a quiet Norwegian offers, "the earlier campaign—Andrews I—was successful in raising money, but the money was used for scholarships. Let's see if I can get a figure." The young man touches his screen, maneuvering it to the right information. "Ah, here we go. Six million dollars for scholarships."

"That's all? That's not very much," Dawn snorts.

"But in those days, it was a lot of money," Erik quickly adds.

"Man!" Dawn exclaims, "That's what I make working at the laptop service center! I wish it was still a lot of money!"

"Anyway," Carlos jumps in, "they raised all this money for scholarships, but they needed more for the planned building renovations; thus, Andrews II."

A red light comes on, and a soft buzzer sounds on each of the computers. Class is over.

"Hey! Don't forget! Study session at the library tonight, people!" Ellie shouts above the confusion as the students rush to shut down their computer terminals. They stumble over each other to exit the classroom.

10:10 a.m. Pioneer Memorial Church, Chapel

"Hey," Carlos makes a poor attempt at whispering.

Ellie fights the urge to scold him for bothering her while she is making a valiant effort to focus her attention on the speaker for chapel. She turns around to look at the young man who sits in the pew directly behind her. "What?!"

He gestures to his electronic message pad and motions for her to turn hers on.

"Not now! I'm trying to listen," she hisses.

"It was an awesome experience communicating with them using our newly-acquired Virtual Translator," the speaker exclaims. "It showed me that God can and will use every avenue—including technology—to reach His children, and they were blessed by the story of Christ and His plan of redemption."



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Ellie listens raptly as the speaker relates his experience of living among a remote tribe in the heart of an obscure Filipino community—a tribe whose language is far too complicated for even a competent linguist to decipher. With the aid of computer technology, however, the barrier is slowly being breached.

The speaker continues, “And so the mission that Andrews University set out to accomplish over a century ago continues today. Within the Global Village, we are breaking down barriers, yes; but there are still people who have not tangibly experienced the message of salvation. And those people are not necessarily abroad, but at home. The number of poverty-stricken individuals in our own inner cities grows daily. Violence is at an all-time high. And a media devoid of moral values dictates the flux of society.”

The speaker looks out at the sea of faces.

“As long as those things still exist in the world,” he continues, “Andrews will always maintain its unique mission: to prepare individuals for what awaits them in the world, to foster an awareness of the needs of all people and the skills to meet those needs, and most important of all, to impart to them a knowledge of our living Lord so they will want to seek Him and share His love with others.”

Silence.

“May God bless you as He fulfills His will in your life.”

9:45 p.m. James White Library Cafe Extension

“That guy must have gotten to you in chapel today,” Carlos studies Ellie from across the cafe table where they are enjoying mugs of hot chocolate. There is a blank look on her face.

“Ellie, this is Houston. Anyone there? Do you copy?”

Ellie looks at him and grins. “Copy that, Houston. I’m just wondering how it must have been back then.”

“What do you mean?”

“You know, life at Andrews circa 1998.”

“It must have been . . .” the young man gulps down more of the warm liquid while he thinks, “. . . difficult.

Imagine unsalted roads and sidewalks during the winter. Imagine having to go to the computer lab instead of using your room computer. Imagine required chapels!”

“Ooh, I didn’t think about that one. Imagine a traditional church service!” Ellie laughs.

“With just a piano and organ, too!” Carlos adds.

“Yeah. They used to have curfews, too!” Ellie says with disdain.

“Especially in the girls’ dorm.”

“And, hey,” Carlos says, “the cafeteria food was probably worse than it is now.”

They look at each other.

“Nah . . .”

Laughter. “I guess we have come a long way,” Ellie says, “I like the community-based living system. I also like the fact that we don’t spend as much time listening to a teacher lecture us.”

“Yeah, the group learning system is great,” Carlos adds.

They are lost in their thoughts for a moment. “But,” Ellie breaks the silence, “I like the fact that the speaker for today’s chapel said that certain things have remained the same.”

“Like the food?” Carlos quips.

“No,” Ellie chides, “I mean our mission—it hasn’t changed. And Nethery Hall is still here. And PMC traditions like the ‘Passing of the Garland.’ Things like that.”

“Well,” Carlos adds thoughtfully, “the way I see it, change is good. But if something is already good, why change it?”

11:30 p.m. Lamson II, Room 233

Ellie yawns as she shuts her leather Bible and slowly crawls into bed. As she fades away into sleep, her thoughts are of her successful class session, the chapel speaker’s words, and her conversation with Carlos. An eventful day has ended and with it, a realization of the importance of the past in the context of the bright future ahead. Both for Ellie and Andrews University.



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