

We Know Not What We May Be ...

Hafsa Khan

Voltaire stared at the world around her. Tall, flashy buildings stood everywhere, perilously close to each other; their heads in the clouds which offered magnificent views to the wealthy bosses who occupied the topmost luxurious offices. Sleek cars wound their way around congested cities, dodging humans, Wanderers and robots alike.

Voltaire watched as a red sports car zoomed past her and headed straight for an old lady. The poor excuse for a human behind the wheel hooted the horn and laughed with his friend as the old woman turned around and stared at the car with wide, listless eyes. She was no normal human lady; but a Wanderer. Her pale, transparent form told them so. She blinked once before the car drove straight through her and on to its desired destination.

There it was. The death of another Wanderer. Voltaire stared as the old woman's form became a fine red mist and vanished, leaving no trace of the life and story that she had lived. Who would know her name or whether she had a family? Who would even care? Voltaire sighed. The Wanderers were lost human souls, plagued by indecision and worthlessness. They wandered through life; humans who had not discovered what they stood for or what they could become. Becoming a Wanderer was what every human feared. From the day they were born, humans were taught to fixate themselves

upon a certain walk of life. They were told never to stray from that path or to think about any other way of life lest they become victims to the worthless realms of Wandering.

Unfortunately, not all humans possessed the narrowness of mind to devote themselves to a chosen path. Some were thinkers, visionaries and offered the beauty of imagination; and it was these human beings who ultimately fell into the shadows and became Wanderers. Voltaire thought of all the intelligent Wanderers who had shaped the world that she now lived in. Leonardo Da Vinci, Galileo, William Shakespeare and Albert Einstein were just a few of these who had been wiped from the history books; their discoveries shamelessly exploited while they themselves were condemned to nothing but a mere existence, and given no recognition for their work.

It was sad when a loved one became a Wanderer; sad when their solid human flesh took on a ghost-like transparency; sad when the rest of the world no longer paid attention to the soft, thread-like voice of a true talent, purely because they were no longer human and thus no longer important.

Voltaire shook her head angrily. Even the robots took precedence over Wanderers! She failed to see how the automotive, programmed voice of a man-made, metallic object could be more important than the voice of a Wanderer, who nevertheless possessed a human soul. It may have been because humans envied the robots. Despite the fact that the robots were created by humans — for humans, they had no ability to think. A robot simply did what it was made to do. It didn't fear becoming a Wanderer like the humans did. It was most likely this guarantee that made the robots a more valuable being than the lost Wanderers.

Voltaire sighed deeply. When humans became Wanderers, they ceased to display the everyday characteristics of being a human as well. Slowly they lost interest in simple human pleasures like talking, meeting friends and playing sport. They stopped eating because their transparent form could no longer digest the solidity of food. Gradually they became listless

entities, their withdrawal from society making them a mere form of matter that took up space.

Voltaire looked around her and breathed in the fresh, slightly sour air. A Wanderer had vanished here; she could smell it. Ignoring the disturbing thought, she took in her surroundings. She mourned for the Wanderers because they did not take in the beauty of life. She saw a young flower stretching out to meet the world. The soft, purple petals seemed eager to mature and provide beauty for those who passed it. A ray of sunlight that cascaded upon the flower made it seem magical; almost unreal. The flower was beautiful, because it had discovered what the purpose of its life was. If only the Wanderers could do the same. Then they would be human; happy, content and most of all recognised. They would not roam the world passive and unfulfilled, but with a purpose.

Voltaire sighed again. She stared down at her hands, mourning for their new-found transparency. A tear slid down her face and fell to the ground where it became a red mist. She didn't know where to go from here and knew not what she must discover to become human again. She truly dreaded becoming nothing but an empty life form. How long would it be before her mind lost its hunger for knowledge and disintegrated into a sluggish state of neglect? How long before the youthful vigour of her body melted away, leaving yet another nonentity for the rest of humanity to disregard? Voltaire sobbed and felt her trickle of tears become a torrent of fear and despair. She'd become a Wanderer — a human soul that would eventually roam the world without a purpose.



Hafsa Khan wrote this essay in 2007 when she was in Year 12 at Runcorn State School, Runcorn, Queensland.