

THE TIME SURFER by Owen Simister (7S)

Our story begins here, in a land of no freedom.

We are under constant surveillance, all day every day.

Ever since the uprising.

40 years ago, our country was a peaceful and successful one. We had a caring Leader who looked after the nation like it was his child. Then he died of a mystery illness, and a new leader came to power.

The new leader was simply known as The Supreme Ruler. He put a new government in place, and slowly but surely financially ruined the nation. Its GDP soared to new lows, and the people had had enough. They started a revolt, but failed to overthrow The Supreme Ruler. Now, in the year 2199, we are still paying the price.

I head to work as usual, working in a munitions factory. As I hop on a CMT-4 wheeled commuter transport, I can't help but notice the eyeless glare of a nearby SV-32 public surveillance camera, trained on the area, watching for any disturbances. Stepping off the train, I am about to head off in the direction of the factory when a hooded figure taps me on the shoulder. I turn around, and they usher me into a side alley. I follow him, obscured from the cameras by the crowd of commuters.

Once I am in the alley, the figure hands me a box. It looks like an old game console that I used to own as a child before The Supreme Ruler banned them and other devices because of "Too much communication with possibly rebellious contacts". The figure takes off their hood, revealing their identity as an old man. He speaks to me in a withered, raspy voice, as if the words themselves are as old as their speaker, "This is a Timebox. It will enable you, a Time Surfer, to travel back into the past, and undo the mistakes that led to our country being in this state. You must hurry and try to prevent the mystery illness that killed our old leader. Good luck." We exchange farewells, and the man leaves the alley.

Suddenly, he is tackled from behind by two heavily armoured policemen. The man attempts for a split second to flee to freedom, but one of the policemen grabs him in a headlock. I think of trying to save him, but I would be attacked the moment I attempt a rescue. Realising the same as me, the old man gestures for me to use the Timebox before the other policeman raises a gun to his head.

I recoil and turn on the Timebox, which starts spinning, and through a tremendous whistling in my ears, I can just make out the sound of a single, fading gunshot, before becoming disoriented.

There's still ringing in my ears, and I regain balance. I open my eyes, blink twice, then look around. No cameras in sight. No police. I sigh. For a second I was scared that it wouldn't work. "No time to waste," I think, "I'm here for a reason."

I walk around a bit. I seem to be in a park. There aren't many other people, except for a pair of small children playing and a man reading a

newspaper. I walk up to the man, and glance at the newspaper. The date is 14th March 2159. I've done it! I've travelled 40 years into the past. I glance at the paper again. There seem to be actual news stories on there, whereas in my time there is only government propaganda. The main story is 'NATION'S LEADER SET TO MAKE PUBLIC SPEECH'. I skim the article, finding out the speech is set to be at 1 pm, in front of the government building. I know where that is, as the same one is still used 40 years ahead, with a different leader occupying it. I check the time on a nearby clock, and it's 12:28. I start heading towards the building.

By 12:47, I'm there. There's a mob of reporters brandishing microphones, making the most of the opportunity. It suddenly strikes me that if I am to prevent this accident, I need to get inside the building. Looking around, I find a side door and head in. I stick to the walls, and all that can be seen of me is my silhouette, inching down the corridor with me. I eventually find what I'm looking for: the current Leader, clutching some confidential-looking documents. There are no signs that he's sick in any way, but there's one other person in the room. I'm startled to realise that it seems to be The Supreme Ruler's younger self. There's a bulge in his coat that looks suspiciously like a gun. He draws it out, and, realising what he's about to do, why I was taken here, I dive out of my hiding place near the door and crash into his legs just as the gun fires. A deafening explosion, a scream, and I fear that I have failed. I look up.

The current Leader is flat on the floor.... Unharmed. Next to him are the documents he was holding a second ago, charred and ripped apart. I touch them with my foot, and they disintegrate almost instantly. I turn around and there's the future Supreme Ruler. He aims his gun again, and just before he can shoot, he's tackled to the floor by a bodyguard. He's led away, pleading for a trial, but even if he's that lucky I would be surprised if he could get away with attempted murder. Suddenly, the Timebox starts spinning again, and it all fades to black.

I wake up surrounded by people. I'm in the year 2199 again. My head aches, and the ringing in my ears is back. I see no surveillance material whatsoever. I did it. An old man pokes me on the shoulder, and the last thing I hear before passing out again is "Well done, Time Surfer. You did it."