

The polluted Earth
by Tin Thai, age 13, Portland

The outside heat was painful for Thomas to deal with. The year was 2100. Pollution had gotten so bad that you couldn't go outside for too long or else you'd die of heat or suffocation. Black smog, orange skies, and run down buildings was the state that the world had been left in. Even with those obstacles, Thomas' curiosity got the best of him. He persevered through it all and began walking. He was walking around town when he saw a group of people outside, some of them passed out. Thomas immediately ran over to try to help the people struggling. He could not help them all by himself. He desperately called out for help, but to no avail. The people in the houses near him just stood by their windows and watched. A deep feeling of despair instantly washed over Thomas. He was all alone and no one was willing to help him. He then suddenly began to start coughing and gasping for air. He was suffocating. He shouted out one more time for people to help him and collapsed.

Thomas woke up in his bedroom dizzy and confused. "*How did I get back here?*" Thomas thought. He went down stairs for a glass of water. He heard his mom and dad arguing in the living room. They stopped when they saw him. They rushed towards Thomas holding him in their arms tightly.

"Don't ever do that again!. You scared us half to death!" said Thomas's mother. His dad, glad that Thomas was safe, hugged him even tighter. It was getting hard to breathe for Thomas now. He squirmed around in his father's arms to get out of this hug.

His mom said, "Thomas, you should go to bed early. Your body hasn't recovered from all the smog that you've inhaled."

Thomas decided to listen to his parents. He grabbed his cup of water and headed upstairs to sleep.

The next day Thomas's parents sat down and had a talk with Thomas. Thomas's dad said, "We should not have sheltered you this much from the harsh reality of the outside; so we realized that it was finally time to tell you. Due to the generations before us polluting the earth like gen x, millennials and gen z. They polluted the earth to the point beyond recovery. We were forced to take shelter indoors."

Thomas was enraged and said, "Why?! Why would they do something so horrible?! Did they not see the damage that they were doing to the earth?"

His father responded with, "I don't know why they did not listen to the scientists that told them that this was gonna happen if they kept polluting the earth this much. But since they did not want to listen. We have to pay the price."

After that explanation Thomas had an idea. Why couldn't he just try to make a filter that would be powerful enough to make his whole city livable again. He went on his family's computer and did lots of research on things that could turn carbon into oxygen. He stumbled upon something that he had never seen before. What he saw was so beautiful that he could not believe his eyes. What he saw was trees, plants, and flowers. The towering trees created a huge forest which was an ecosystem for many animals in the past. Plants that provided food for people for thousands of years. Flowers that were vibrant and beautiful. But most importantly he found that these things take out carbon from the air and make it into oxygen by the process of photosynthesis. Thomas also found out that photosynthesis provides food for the plants and as

a by-product of that process it releases oxygen. Bingo! Thomas had found his filter to make the whole city livable again! Plants!

But there was just one problem with his idea. He had no ideas on how to grow these plants or how to find them in the first place. He went to ask his parents how he could find these things. Their response was concerning. They said that all the trees and plants were deemed extinct since they couldn't grow any more in these conditions. It was too hot. But Thomas did not give up; he went back on the computer and found out that trees and plants can be grown by seeds. He went to his family's stash of dried fruits and picked up a mango. He ate the mango and left only the seed. With this seed he decided that he'd grow a mango tree. He went back to the computer again and looked up on how to grow a mango tree from a seed. He followed those instructions and the seed sprouted! This was a big moment for Thomas.

Thomas put the sprouted mango seed inside a pot and waited and waited. He repeated these steps for all the other fruit that his family had and after a couple of years they'd grown to little trees that were ready to go outside. Now Thomas is 15 years old. He asked his dad if he could go outside to plant the trees. Thomas has an idea to build a lot of compact greenhouses that could fit inside your palm, but with a press of a button it turned into a big greenhouse capable of withstanding the harsh conditions of the outside. He spread the news of his ideas online around the world. People started spreading his story and he gained mass amounts of support. They set up a charity for him to be able to get the supplies so that he could build green houses. After a while the charity that people set up for Thomas reached over 1 billion dollars!

Thomas had enough money to be able to buy all the materials he needed to construct loads of these greenhouses. He was finally preparing to go outside again. This is a huge milestone for Thomas.

His dad said, "You can go down to the basement to grab my hazmat suit so that you won't collapse out there like last time." Thomas hurriedly agreed and put on his father's suit and went outside. He started putting up the green houses and then planted each individual tree in each one. After a while he was finished. Proud and tired from his work, he went back inside.

He watched and cared for the trees for years. As the years went by Thomas didn't see any real changes at all. He was starting to lose hope. He urged everyone online to try to do the same thing he was doing: trying to change the world for good. Thomas was now 21. He decided to give it a little bit more time.

Three more years had passed and the trees were fully grown. The trees bore fruits. Thomas was over the moon about this. He decided to not give up yet and kept taking care of his plants.

Ten more years had passed. Thomas was in his 30s. He had finally noticed a change when he stepped outside: the black smog was gone and the deadly heat was also gone. Finally he had achieved his dreams. He took his suit off and celebrated. "I DID IT!" he shouted. He was glad that he hadn't given up. He said to himself, "Guess there was a light at the end of the tunnel."