

The World According to K

Shannon Elizabeth Lewis

“Yes, that’s me.”

There were officials at the door. The one with the big nose handed K several stapled pieces of paper.

“Wait... isn’t this that literature survey thing?”

K recognized the loopy handwriting. Big Nose nodded.

“We had hundreds of thousands of applicants. You won.”

K leaned against the doorframe.

“No shit.”

Lettuce-Between-Teeth cowered, reverent.

“So, what did I win?”

“Hello! Welcome to Phase 6 of the Utopia Creation Project. We have spent years compiling questions on topics ranging from religion to artistry. It’s now your job to sift through them. All answers must be given in “yes” or “no” format. Once an answer is recorded, it will become *the* answer. All 207 localities of the UCP are in agreement. Do you understand?”

K tapped the desk.

“You mean, whatever *I* answer is the be-all-end-all answer for eternity? And everyone’s just gonna believe it?”

The suits turned to look at Dry Skin.

“Yes. Note how I have given an answer in a “yes” or “no” format.”

“What if I don’t know?”

There was silence.

“We must give answers in a “yes” or “no” format.”

“Thought that was *my* job.”

Huge Pores whispered to Dry Skin.

“We are leading by example.”

“Why me?”

Dry Skin pulled out another index card.

“This organization was founded on the basis that all governmental, ideological, and otherwise dogmatic systems have failed. Conflict, war, terror. The UCP thinks it possible to abolish these. We had our experts compile questions about the most important literary and artistic pieces regarding radical structures- *1984*, *Brave New World*, *The Time of the Hero*, Banksy- and sent out a survey. Only citizens well-versed in these monumental works made the final selection. Then we randomly chose one individual from that list. You. Now...ready to begin?”

K leaned back.

“Yes.”

“Good. Easy ones first, then specifics. Government?”

Penpoints hovered, the potential for a thousand happy years waiting in their ink.

“Yes.”

Scribblings of the future filled the air.

“Crime?”

“No.”

“God?”

“Excuse me?”

“If the question is unclear, I can rephrase it. Is there a God?”

“H-how am I supposed to know that?”

“Please phrase your question in a-”

“Yes...yes...I know.”

K sat forward.

“I guess...I was raised Jewish...but I never went for all that fire-and-brimstone stuff, you know? Then, I can't say definitely no. I don't know that. There must be a reason so many people believe. What if I say yes?”

Dry Skin gestured at a sizeable pile of papers.

“We go into specifics later.”

“All that just about God?”

“Yes...well, encompassing all known and practiced religions.”

“Oh...what if I don't subscribe to any of those?”

“Perfectly acceptable.” Dry Skin pointed to a pile of papers twice the size of the previous, “We've accounted for that.”

“Well shit...this isn't gonna be an in-and-out activity, is it? What if I say no?”

“We move on to a question about economics.”

K stared at the papers. There must be at least fifty pages in the smallest pile. The print was miniscule. Eyebrow flipped through a couple pages in the larger pile. They were double-sided.

“No. I’m gonna go with no.”

There was a pause. For the first time, the suits felt the power of K. K’s glory. Dry Skin and Eyebrow shared a look.

“The free market?”

The Process was undertaken over what is now called Glorious Week. K was provided with all necessities. They wanted K to be comfortable, in peak condition. Lunch included a side dish of spinach and a chocolate bar.

The results were fed into the Great Computer. K was transported to New Capital, an island on the Equator. The Week of Greater Glory ensued. Peace settled where UCP stood. Twelve new locations enlisted. K ruled with unprecedented grace.

Then the week ended. Unsavory characters of incorrect opinion began popping up. The UCP had expected this. What ultimately surprised them were the opinions. People were not initially disgruntled about politics nor non-God. The first official group of deviants bonded over K’s decision to ban disco. They were sent off in UCP-brand-ABBA-and-Beegees-bearing rocket ships. Truth belongs here; deviants can roam the galaxy in search of their future.

Next went the communists, disappointed their ideals had not come to fruition. They spent weeks working around K’s commandments, but truth comes with no compromise. They were shot into the stars in a bright red rocket. Holocaust apologists, corrupt city planners, gynecologists with cold hands, they all found themselves in rockets over the ensuing months. K was at every takeoff, wishing farewells and congratulations.

The expulsions were peaceful, aside from one group of gun-lovers who broke into a UCP office and demanded the right to weaponize. There were twenty people there at the time. Terrified, they phoned K, who appeared immediately. K entered alone, shining. All twenty survived, and the gun nuts emerged in such a state of rapture that they willingly burnt their weapons before boarding rockets. K gave a speech that day. I learned every word.

Daily, deviants undertook their noble exile. Criminals, neo-Nazis, art critics. We were free, finally, of their poison. I burned for New Capital. Soon, I was prepared for the move. It was around then my own parents had to go. They were cat people, though K had been clear on this being a dog-loving paradise. I forgave them--K commands forgiveness--and watched them disappear into the clouds.

I have been in New Capital for a year. It is like nothing I could have dreamed of. Near K, few survive more than six months before they sow the seeds of deviancy. The streets lie empty. Three weeks ago, K found me. I have not left K’s since. It is a holy place.

It is just me and K here. The prodigious offspring of the UCP. K tells me stories about the past, about horror and fear, about the present and peace. My heart races. K is beautiful. I am beautiful. This world according to K, purged of its aches and pains, it is heart-wrenchingly beautiful.