

NO GREATER LOVE

By Julian Matthews

The day of reckoning had come. She got off her favourite red couch, for the last time, and headed out to the driveway to await her robocar.

For a 103-year-old, she was still spry. Her searing blue eyes that cut through many spineless men's egos, were now a shade paler, but no less intense. She walked deliberately, having opted not to have any bionic augmentation for her aging body. Ganymede's gravity would be kinder, she thought.

It is April 17th, in the year 2106.

Already 1,500 other Elon starships had taken off for the seven moons of Saturn, Jupiter and Neptune over the course of the last 15 years.

It was a sentimental choice. She chose Ganymede, because the early terraformers had found success growing rare blue tulips which she fondly remembered admiring as a child in the glasshouses at Rosendals in Stockholm.

Up the driveway, she bade a final farewell to the purple hydrangeas in her garden as if whispering goodbye to children.

Soon, all the hydrangeas, every flower, every tree, every bee, every insect, all the animals, every living thing that came before Man, would reclaim the Earth for itself. They would finally be rid of us.

The most cruel, petty, wasteful inhabitants of earth would finally be gone. For what right had we to call ourselves Mankind, when we were so unkind to each other on this pale blue dot in space?

The robocar arrived and they sped to the launchpad.

On arrival, she saw the crew and passengers in orange suits had formed two lines outside the gangplank of Starship No 1501. As soon as she stepped out, they began to cheer.

She was humbled, even embarrassed. Her once long, blond mane, now mostly silvery white, flitted in the wind, as the loud crescendo peaked. She was suited up and escorted to her seat by the pilot himself.

For the passengers, it was an honour to be among the last to leave, along with the woman who had made it all possible.

The countdown began, and they were off.

She spied through the porthole just as the ship was about to reach escape velocity.

There down on the surface, the Undergrounders, those obstinate few who chose to remain, had left a rock formation seen from 400km above the earth. It spelled the words: HOW DARE YOU!

And she teared up, remembering everything -- her United Nations address, when she was only 16, the floods that came as predicted, the millions who drowned despite the foreknowledge of those in power, and the heat -- the searing heat of hell -- that scorched the planet for decades.

She was among those who sought refuge, with others, in underground bunkers, until the floods receded, and worked tirelessly on the terraforming technology that would make the moons of the outer planets habitable.

Today is the culmination, the last ship making its final turn, set for a course for Ganymede and leaving her beautiful Earth behind forever.

(First published in [Wingless Dreamer's Writers of Tomorrow anthology](#))