

A facilitator at my writer's group sent me the link. She suggested i submit something.  
Thank you.

George Barnes

## Prologue

Aldous Snelgrave is an 80 year old Native farm labourer in rural Alberta in the year 2140. Canada is now an all white country with a population of twenty million. No ethnic groups other than Caucasian are allowed to live or be born in Canada except Natives who are required by law to live on reserves again. The Native population is allowed to marry naturally reproduce in exchange for being used as a labour source. A Native child can be purchased once they have reached seven years old. A delicate balance between three groups of rulers governs this society. One must belong to a family with a history of being military, government or a wealthy corporation. No food can be grown, eaten or owned which is not a patented product of chemical or pharmaceutical companies.

## Snelgrave's strawberries

Aldous walked light and swiftly for an eighty year old. A lifetime of never going more than a few days without some sort of physical labour will do that for a man. The gene therapy helped maintain his muscle mass and bone density. It had been a lavish gift from an outgoing boss. The reason for today's meeting was to meet the new boss. The meeting was set for ten in the morning in the main house. He wondered if the new boss was aware of his age and ethnic background. This brief meeting would set the tone for the next five years of his life. Aldous left a few minutes earlier than required to get to the house. He would take the long way to the farm's main house. He wanted to get a quick look at the outcome of the driveway's new landscape.

The new trees along the winding driveway turned out to be a nice touch. His eight decades made him the oldest thing on the farm, even the trees. The trees looked centuries old but were really not more than twenty. Like so many other things in this world, they were genetically modified, enhanced or upgraded. Sixty trees planted in two days was the result of his skillful plan. A well planned landscape plan gave the illusion of trees that had grown there over a few centuries but in reality had been placed there just days earlier. The trees had been the reason for such a rushed few days.

The wife of this latest CEO for the large commercial farm had insisted on changing the landscape. The new prison as she called it was an opulent home with a full staff and large maintenance budget. She would not walk around her new home that had been designed by some other woman. There was always a hurried few weeks after a new wife occupied the large cottage. It was something he had noticed when ever there was a new CEO. The wives never liked that another woman had chosen the motif for

the home. Each thought her tastes were superior to the last woman who occupied the home. Aldous had always been treated well by the wives because they were property just like him. A wife could be replaced almost as easily as farm equipment.

Aldous met a new CEO of the farm every five years. It was a post for junior managers in the company on their way to the upper ranks of the company. The meeting of the two men would be a feeling out of each other's attitudes. Mr. Stombough had been on the farm for a week but had chosen to meet the labourers one at a time once he got settled in. Aldous figured that a good sign, it gave the impression that he cared for the people he would probably see only a few times in a year. It was also a positive that the meeting would take place in his home rather than the office.

A junior house attendant directed him to wait in the hallway for their new boss Mr. Stombough. The attendant was a young Native woman with a very stiff demeanor. Aldous thought that she must have just completed her mandatory course in house protocol. The young ones were always so stiff for a few months after graduation. She was quite pretty, maybe a fluke but probably a direct request. Somehow the pretty Native girls ended up being house attendants for a wealthy manager or high ranking military member. He wanted to ask what reserve she was from but could tell she was too young and nervous to engage in small talk. He knew she would loosen up after a few months.

Aldous was met in the hall by a tall young man in a tailored suit. Aldous smiled and nodded but did not shake hands, the labour class did shake hands with management. "Snelgrave?", said the young manager smiling with the ease of a man who knew he was on the road to an easy and affluent life. "That's right sir, Aldous Snelgrave." "Come on in and grab a seat, I'm Stombough." Aldous was directed to a comfortable leather chair in front of a

large desk chosen to show power and elegance. Stombough retrieved a large file, Aldous noted the fresh tabs attached to the color coded sections of his thick file. He was well aware of the sections highlighted by the tabs, he had seen these files in hard copy or electronic form for over seven decades. The next hour would be spent discussing both reprimands and the lengthy list of commendations and service awards. Mr.

Stombough closed with a quick rundown of his personal management style and expectations during his tenure. “Snelgrave, how about a snack?” Aldous perused the dessert items which were far more extensive than his labour class menu. He responded after a few moments “ a bowl of ice cream sounds great, it is a restricted item for me.” “Great, I will put an order in for two bowls of vanilla ice cream.” He was about to press send when he suddenly snapped his fingers and said “toppings! Can't have ice cream without some sort of topping.” He gave Aldous a deliberate stare and asked “what's your poison?” This was the moment that both danced around with small talk.

Aldous waited a moment and then made sure to return the same look, “what do you think of strawberries Mr. Stombough?” “My wife loves them, she is pregnant and insists on unmodified fruits and vegetables, but they are a restricted food, even for me.”

Aldous smiled, “what a coincidence Mr. Stombough!” He leaned in slightly towards Mr. Stombough and lowered his voice slightly. “A few years ago I happened to stumble upon a small patch of Heritage strawberries, completely natural. I understand that a small jar of unmodified strawberries can move heaven and earth in some circles. A girlfriend or wife would love to be able to brag that her significant other has the power to procure such a prized and valued food.”

“Yes, you are quite right Snelgrave. I am sure that my wife would love to throw a party for our friends and be able to serve such a strictly controlled food. I suppose a man could ask quite a big favor if he were able to get his hands on a few jars of unmodified strawberries.” Aldous relaxed his demeanor now that both men came to an unspoken agreement. “It is quite a hike to this small patch I speak of, and i would be involved in a highly illegal enterprise of course Mr. Stombough.” “As I mentioned Snelgrave, my father is very high up in the company and has connections with many people in the government. You speak of the long distance involved in reaching the strawberries, perhaps a two week holiday back to your reserve would recharge your batteries. The company would of course pay for the trip.” Aldous feigned hesitation and then responded “that sounds more than fair Mr. Stombough.”