

## ***The Application***

Zefflora is a large city in the Continental United States, founded in the 37<sup>th</sup> century bordered by a 500 foot tall, 100 foot depth concrete wall topped with electrical barbed wires. There is no crime, there is no violence, and no drug usage. Globalization has already taken place for several millennia, and race is practically non-distinguishable at this time, thus no longer an identifier. The economy is thriving as people are very productive in their work. Zefflora is seen as having is an egalitarian economy because everyone's role is seen as necessary for the success of the whole. People live a minimalist way of life as a result of having eradicated classism. Zefflora is a perfect Utopia, all thanks to the governing force known as The Committee, who regulates everything in the city to maintain optimal productivity and success. They are known to be able to observe everything happening around town through an extensive, advanced surveillance camera system called The Watchful Eyes.

The Watchful Eyes supervise everything that happens in Zefflora. Any and all misconduct is swiftly taken care of. With urgency, The Committee Enforcers will come in and take care of any unlawful situation by detaining their target and any witnesses that do anything but look the other way. There are urban legends about what happens to detainees. Unbeknownst to the people, The Watchful Eyes cannot really see or hear anything, but instead they gauge levels of fear. When they detect that people fear less, Committee Enforcers are dispatched to wreak some kind of havoc to provoke fear. It is how they control the people. Zefflora is not a loving society, but a fearful one.

In Zefflora, love is anything but arbitrary. It is carefully organized and strictly orchestrated through a series of Application processes. At the age of 25, a woman is

permitted to create and submit her Application to The Committee, where it is archived. If a man likes woman, he fills out her application, and The Committee runs an analytical check that defines how good a match he is for her. If passed by The Committee, the two may begin the dating process.

If the relationship fares well for 3 years, the couple can submit their Application to the Committee for marriage. The Committee will review the couple's application and if they've had minimal infractions they will be accepted. In Zefflora, men and women are expected to adhere to strict gendered scripts. Zefflora is not exactly categorized as being a patriarchal society, because the scripts are accepted as being inherent and natural where men have more privileges than women especially in the realm of relationships. Women are courted, they do not court. Men and women never develop sexuality. They know that it takes one man and one woman to have a child, but as they know it, the process is a married couple filling out an application to be approved for artificial insemination. This is the extent to which relationships have been institutionalized.

Indigo is a special girl. She is one of the Gifted. The Gifted are a group of divinely picked individuals who carry with them a dark energy field that appeared like a faint mist only they could see. The Mist does not like the nature of The Committee and the ways they subjugate their people despite how they've seemingly created the perfect society. The Mist emits fear, and it shields those who carry it so that they can freely feel the full spectrum of their emotions without being detected by The Watchful Eyes. The Mist cannot talk, but it communicates to its hosts in their dreams. Through dreams, The Mist is able to enlighten its hosts of various truths. She's always had this reoccurring dream

where she sees a plethora of bright lights. Suddenly there is an explosion in the distance, followed by darkness. She wakes up before she can ever see anything else. It had no meaning to her, but she's had it that same dream dozens of times.

Out in the world, despite how The Watchful Eyes cannot detect Indigo's fearlessness, she still navigates adhering to the norms of those around her so not to stand out. She keeps to herself, but she's always made note of how fear controls others. She only has to appear as such because The Committee Enforcers frequently parole public spaces. She often documents her experiences, and feels sorrow for those whose eyes have been forced shut for so long. She's longed to do something about it, but it's impossible to retaliate. She does not want to end up like others who have been detained. She's heard the urban legends, and does enjoy living her comfortable life.

A few nights ago, The Mist gave her visions in her dreams and told her that she would come in contact with someone, but she didn't know why. Every night since, the dreams have gotten stronger—the image more clear. She saw herself at the market, and from across the fruit displays she made eye contact with a man, and she woke up. That day, she visited the market, nervous because she didn't know who the man was or why she pictured him. Indigo took two apples in her hands and was observing them for soft spots when she looked up.

Then it happened. He was already looking at her, and he had a mist of his own. She couldn't believe her eyes, she'd never seen anyone else with the gift. Startled, she looked away and drew her eyes back to the apples in her hands. She thought to herself, *I wonder if he'll come this way.* There were Committee Enforcers at their posts, and Indigo knew her place. She knew she couldn't approach him so she continued

observing the apples. He made his way over to her, cautious because he too was anxious and confused.

Now next to her, he quietly said, "Hello," and when she met his gaze he continued, "my name is Umber, and I couldn't help but notice you standing there". Indigo raised her head and looked around. She could feel her mist and his surround the both of them, and that's when she realized he was Gifted too. Aware that they were both shielded from The Watchful Eyes, she said, "My name is Indigo, pleased to meet you." They shook hands. "Would you like to take a walk?" Umber asked, and she nodded, so they left the market and headed to a nearby park. It was drizzling out. Umber opened up his umbrella and held it over the both of them as they walked. They found a dry bench beneath a large oak tree and took a seat. That is where their love story began.

They sat about 3 feet apart. Indigo was observing him: the shape of his face, the length of his hair, the color of his eyes. He took a deep sigh and began to speak. "I know this is going to sound weird, but I've been seeing you in my dreams." He paused to see her reaction. "I've been seeing you, too. What does it mean?" Indigo responded.

"I don't know, but that's not all. I've been getting visions about a power outage—" Indigo stopped him abruptly,

"A power outage?" At that moment she finally knew what to make of her recurring dream.

"Yes," Umber continued, "I think that's why we were brought together. I think that is our mission, to take The Committee Down".