

# The Monday Friday War

By Remy Welch

The Monday Friday war can be traced back, like all wars can, to someone's good intentions. To provide order to the 'hybrid work week', someone had the innovative idea to give their employees a choice of when to come into the office: Monday to Wednesday, or Wednesday to Friday. Google was the first to implement this rule, followed closely by Amazon, and they immediately saw a reduction in planning overhead and an increase in productivity. More companies joined the movement, further innovating by allowing senior managers to pick a side of the week for their subordinates.

There was synergistic peace for many years. In 2046, JPMorgan Chase had the innovative idea to become an entirely Wednesday-Friday company and lease their office space to Goldman Sachs Monday-Tuesday.

Then the government got involved. The Department of Transportation declared that in order to reduce the untenable traffic on the roads, all companies had to make their employees stay home from either Monday-Tuesday, or Wednesday-Friday. Overnight, every major corporation in the United States announced their side. They all knew it was coming, somehow.

Getting rid of Wednesday, the overlap day, was a relief to many. The Monday workers and the Friday workers had been at odds over everything from meeting rooms to coffee preferences. Most experts on the news claimed the separation would bring an end to the tension. They were right about many things — the roads became less congested, buses and trains were no longer crowded, the air was cleaner. The homeless encampments that plagued every city were cleared as the poor inhabitants were 'rehomed' in the vacant office buildings.

But there were rumors, and they spread to fill the distance between the two weekday camps. The Fridays felt like the Mondays were taking advantage of them by working fewer hours in the office. The Mondays feared the Fridays were going to take over their businesses, so they started poaching employees for their side. In retaliation, Friday companies began boycotting Monday products and services.

Then Walmart, a Monday Corporation, had another innovative idea; they opened a line of restaurants to capitalize on the anti-Friday sentiment. Bars and cafes and other weekend establishments could no longer stay out of the fight, and everyone was forced to pick a side.

Sora Smith was a Wednesday-Friday, like her parents and their parents before them. She had a great aunt who had worked at a Monday-Tuesday company for a few years, but such a thing was practically unheard of now. Such a thing was never spoken of in her mother's home.

Like many enlightened twenty-somethings, Sora didn't feel as strongly against the other side as her parent's generation did. College had given her the opportunity to think differently, and join in protests against the Weekday segregation of local private schools. She had nearly minored in Protesting, but so did all of her friends, so she concluded that minoring in History was a more righteous form of dissent. She thought it paired well with her Interpersonal Communications major, like the spicy kimchi in a sweet fried rice.

Now out of college and back in her hometown of San Francisco, Sora took a slightly different route to work from one day to the next, but never failed to pass by a group of angry protesters chanting about the Mondays, or the Fridays, or the need to coexist peacefully.

On the fourth Wednesday in November, Sora encountered a small group of anti-Monday activists, all dressed in bright blue leisure-ware, in front of the Tobiko-Chase building across from her office. They were relatively quiet, until a man dressed in a slim gray suit exited the building. Sora could tell he was a Monday because he'd forgotten to take off the bright red ID badge that hung from his obviously expensive trousers. The protesters saw the badge too, and began screaming at him.

"Whose job are you trying to steal, coming to work on a Wednesday?"

"You have no business here, Mondass!"

"Stay away from our day, greedy scum!"

Sora would have paid little mind to the confrontation if not for the man's distractingly handsome face. She stopped in front of her building's entrance and watched him speed-walk down the sidewalk, fleeing from the protesters. He knew as well as she did that he had no right to be there. Not today anyways.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> floor of the Nvidia-Astoria building, Sora sat down at her desk and pulled her work tablet from her thin backpack. She placed it in the dock and the wide screen in front of her illuminated, displaying the 136 complaints she needed to route to the correct HR analyst. A powerful thirst overcame her, reminding her she couldn't start the day without a can of sparkling water to wet her whistle. She left her screen and made a beeline through the cubicles to the micro-kitchen. As her hand closed around a cold, dewy can of Pomelo La Croix, she heard a familiar voice behind her.

"Morning Sora!"

It was Jarv, a purple-haired data analyst. He was one of her closest work friends at Astoria Incorporated, despite the fact she sometimes caught him staring at her breasts. It didn't bother her too much; she'd made the decision to get implants when her mother gifted them to her on her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The rest of her was all natural, from her long, dark hair to her furry shins.

She greeted him with a soft smile. "How's your day going, Jarv?"

“It started terribly,” he said, slumping his shoulders forward. “I was attacked by a rehomed guy right outside of my building! He had no pants on and he got right into my face and yelled like a crazed hyena!”

“Oh my god, really?” Sora replied. “Where were the Enforcers?”

“Scan me, I don’t know! Maybe they were all busy at the big protest happening on Market Street.”

“What big protest?” She had noticed the streets seemed a little quieter than usual.

“You didn’t hear? Brix International was acquitted of the fraud charges against Positry LLC. There’s angry Fridays on every block. Honestly, I didn’t have so much fooking work I’d probably go join them.”

Sora swallowed, and the dryness of her throat reminded her how thirsty she was. She cracked open the lid of the can and took a large gulp, enjoying the sting of the bubbles in her throat.

“You should really move out to the burbs,” she said. “It’s much calmer there.”

“Like I can afford it. The Mondasses that own all the houses out there would charge me an arm and leg in rent.”

Sora took another sip of her LaCroix as she searched for something positive to say. “There’s plenty of Fridays where I live in the peninsula.”

“You got lucky with your place.”

She knew he was right. After the government got rid of the shared Wednesday and repurposed the office buildings, house and rent prices took a major dip due to the increased supply. It only took a few years for the prices to skyrocket back up, but rent-controlled buildings like the one Sora lived in were forced to keep their rents at the lower rates.

“Anyways,” Jarv said, letting the word out with a sigh. His eyes flicked down to her chest for a second before returning to her face. “Are you coming to the happy hour later?”

“I’ve got dinner plans with my mom,” Sora said, not proud of the dread in her voice. “I’m meeting the new ‘flavor of the week’.”

“Oh. Fun,” Jarv said, already distracted by a text on his watch.

The sun had fallen below the tops of the skyscrapers when Sora exited the Nvidia-Astoria building at 6pm. Her mother lived only five blocks away, in one of the nicer converted office buildings downtown. She felt a tinge of anxiety as she looked up at the looming 30-story tower, waiting for the crosswalk light to change. She loved her mother, but sometimes she wondered if that was because her mother demanded it, or despite it. Her father had been unable to keep up with his family’s demands and left when Sora was still too young to remember him. Her mother had made damn sure her daughter wouldn’t be so weak and changeable.

Her thoughts were interrupted by a man dressed in a gray suit. He came to stand next to her at the curb, and she immediately recognized him as the go-getter who’d been confronted by the protesters that morning. He was even more attractive up close, with a strong jaw and thick brown hair that was kept firmly in place by perhaps too much gel.

He turned slightly, flashing his deep amber eyes at her. Sora took a sharp inhale, realizing she'd been staring. Her mouth started moving before she could stop it. "I saw you earlier, this morning, with the protesters."

He sucked his lips into his mouth and smirked. "You're wondering why I'm back for more?"

She shook her head, embarrassment warming her cheeks. "No no, I'm sure you're here for other reasons." She looked down at his waistline. "I see you took off your badge."

"Safer to be badge-less than hanging red on this block today. People still assume I'm a Monday even without the badge, but most of them are too unsure to say anything about it."

She saw his eyes look down at her blue badge, then slowly crawl up her body, lingering on her breasts before returning to her face.

"So do you come here on your off days a lot?" Sora asked.

"If my task demands it. Sometimes it's just more efficient to get things done in person."

"What do you do?"

"I'm an Executive for Tobiko," he said, like he was a proud mother who had birthed the role for himself. "I know I look too young to be an Exec, but it's true."

He glanced up at the intersection just in time to see the 'walk' sign change to 'stop'.

"Damn, we missed the light." He shoved his hands into his pockets.

Sora smiled inwardly. Just like a Monday to get so bothered over needing to wait another 30 seconds.

"Guess you have more important work to do?" she asked.

"Of course."

They waited the remaining 25 seconds in silence. When the light changed again, he took off without saying a word.

Meena Smith opened the door with a wide swing and embraced her daughter in a bone crushing hug, the scent of her lavender perfume assaulting Sora's nose.

"My flower," she said, as she pulled her daughter into the apartment, "I'm so happy to introduce you to Valerie."

Sora was prepared to meet her mother's new girlfriend, but was nevertheless shocked to see that she was a relatively normal looking woman, roughly the same age as her mom. Meena's usual type was young, and if not beautiful, at the very least extremely trim and manicured. This woman looked like she exercised at most twice a week, and had a large collection of very warm sweaters.

"It's so nice to finally meet you," Valerie said, bowing demurely.

"Likewise," Sora replied, letting a flash of confusion cross her face as she bowed.

"Meena tells me you work at Astoria Incorporated. That's a wonderful company. They've been Wednesday-Friday from the very beginning, isn't that right?"

Sora nodded. She watched, dumbfounded, as Valerie went to check the Hicook to make sure the dinner casserole Meena had purchased was finished rising.

When Valerie brought the steaming dish to the table, Meena placed a tender kiss on her girlfriend's cheek. "Thank you darling," she said as Valerie set the casserole between two thick beige candles.

Sora's stomach rumbled so loudly her chair shook. She dug into the dish, ignoring her mother's disapproving looks as she shoveled the salty green beans and tender, lab-grown beef into her mouth.

"Did you see the big protest today?" Meena asked her daughter with almost aggressive politeness.

Sora set down her fork and took a sip from her glass of sweet white wine.

"No, but I heard about it. Did you go?" she asked, knowing the answer would be no.

"You could see it from here," Meena said, gesturing to wide, spotless windows behind her. "You know, someone was stabbed to death in the chaos!"

Valerie wrapped her knuckles against the table. "I can't believe that we're seeing such intolerance here in this great city, of all places."

Sora resisted the urge to chime in with a bit of history. While there were certainly dayist people all over the country, the contention between Mondays and Fridays had always been strongest in the Bay Area. The Weekday movement had actually started in San Francisco, where there hadn't been enough space for the techies and unhomed that poured into the small city in equal droves.

"It's terrible, yes," said Meena, "but I understand why people are so angry. It's a travesty what the system is doing to Fridays, really. Where are our payouts? The Corning Willetson case was settled over forty years ago!"

She was referring to a landmark court case in which Corning Industries, a Monday company, was proven to have engaged in criminal antitrust practices in order to drive Willetson Industries out of business. Willetson Executives were given \$75 billion in damages, and Friday's everywhere celebrated what they believed was the beginning of a wave of financial restitution for the oppression they'd endured.

"Most of the employees at Willetson never saw a dime, so I wouldn't get your hopes up that any of the rest of us will ever get what we deserve," Sora said as she took a big bite of beef. She hoped that Willetson never got the full payout, because the alternative was that the Executives kept the money for themselves.

"We need more representation in the courts," Valerie said. "With only 30% of judges being Fridays, I don't know why we would expect more fair outcomes."

"Sora, *kheruvim*, didn't you want to become a lawyer?" her mother asked sweetly.

Meena believed using Russian-Yiddish words made her more persuasive, like they held some magical power from the old country. The words had survived through five generations of being spoken by American tongues, so perhaps there was a hint of truth to it.

"I'm interested in advocacy," Sora said, gulping down the last of her wine to dislodge the chunk of meat that felt stuck in her throat. "I get to advocate for the employees and customers of Astoria Inc pretty much every day."

“Oh, but you could be doing so much more,” Meena said as she lunged her hand across the table and clamped down onto her daughter’s fingers. “Our people need intelligent kids like you to climb the ladder and kick out the Mondays that feel so comfortable up there.”

“Maybe she has other ambitions, darling,” Valerie said, giving a kind look to Meena. Next, she slid her honey-colored eyes to Sora.

“Do you want to have a family?”

Sora coughed, feeling another chunk of casserole in her throat despite not having taken another bite. She was beginning to see why the two of them got along so well.

“I do, definitely.”

“This one’s a hopeless romantic,” said her mother. “She got engaged when she was 18 to a boy she’d known for two weeks!”

Sora could see the questions filling Valerie’s head like popcorn kernels in a hot pot. Before they could spill out, she put a lid on the topic.

“It was a very short relationship that was years ago and I’ve moved on.”

“They would never have worked out, he was way too short for her,” Meena said.

A drop of wax slid down the side of the long candle in front of Sora. She watched it fall, praying the pair would move on if she stayed out of it.

“Looks aren’t everything, darling,” Valerie said. “A young woman has to try all sorts of partners before she can decide what really matters to her.”

She leaned over to Meena and they shared a passionate kiss. Sora looked directly at the flame of the candle, feeling it burn into her retinas as she tried her best to ignore the strange affection that was being shared on the other side of the table.

By the time the couple had pulled apart, any appetite that lingered in Sora’s stomach had hardened into a frozen block.

A sudden, alarming beep sounded on all three women’s watches. Sora held up her wrist to check what had caused it — at that instant, she felt a terrifying tremor pass from her legs to her head.

“Earthquake!” Meena shouted.

A fearful moment passed into stillness. Sora read the alert on her watch. “Just a minor tremor, no need to panic,” she explained.

“Thank Gaia for that,” said Valerie with her hand on her heart. “I haven’t had a fright like that for months!”

Even though the floor was no longer shaking, Sora legs continued to quiver.

“I’m sorry mom,” she said, “but I’m so exhausted, I should really go home and get a good night’s sleep.”

She picked up her plate of half-eaten casserole and began to stand, anticipating the protests from her mother.

The older woman sighed, but with a sing-songy overtone. “That’s perfectly fine, *kheruvim*, I know how hard you work.”

The plate slipped from Sora's fingers and crashed onto the wooden table. Her mother always asked her to stay the night, even if she had company, even if she knew Sora had work the next day. Certainly after an earthquake, as minor as it was!

Meena rushed around the table to her daughter's side and wiped up a green bean that had flung from the fallen plate. "Oh my days! Are you sure you're feeling alright? You were coughing earlier..."

"I'm fine," Sora insisted forcefully as childish, irrational anger began to flicker in her chest. "Just tired."

She left the table and grabbed her backpack, remembering her manners at the last moment.

"It was very nice to meet you Valerie," she said, going limp as mother squeezed her goodbye.

Back in her room, stuffed between a long silky pillow and a cylindrical velvet bolster, Sora could not sleep. There was no amount of pillows that could fill the emptiness she felt in her bed. The image of her mother locking lips with this ordinary woman she'd met only a few weeks ago, looking so content, so happy, played like a movie on the back of her eyelids. She pressed her fingers into her closed eyes, watching green and purple bursts of nerves and blood vessels push away her mother's smile.

She released her eyeballs, and the enigmatic face of the Monday she'd met that morning came into her mental aperture. He was right when he said he looked too young to be an Executive. There was something mysterious about him, from his presence in the financial district on his off-day, to the 'tasks' he spoke of to justify it.

She plucked her tablet from its charging station and opened LinkedIn. She searched for his employer, Tobiko International...unsurprisingly she had zero connections there. Feeling lucky, she opened Kambam — the Friday-friendly search engine — and typed in '*Tobiko executive young*'.

A picture of the same tan face she'd seen earlier that day popped up as the first result, next to an article about someone named Andreas Lilliana. The article was brief, and as fluffy as one of her pillows, but it told her that he had been promoted to Executive Level One last year at the age of 31, a feat so impressive to Mondays that one of them apparently took the time to write about it.

She opened Andreas' LinkedIn profile and scrolled through his lengthy list of accomplishments, from a high school internship with Americon to a recent award for "Excellence in Corporate Business". Her own LinkedIn profile looked like the barren Vegas desert compared to his gleaming metropolis of experience. Sora opened his list of followers and selected a woman that looked closer to her own age, with similar dark hair and fair skin. Unfortunately, her profile was equally full of impressive-sounding titles and endorsements.

"Shit-sniffing Mondasses!" she yelled as she threw her tablet against the wall. The safety buffer activated, softening the blow and allowing it to land unscathed on the floor. She didn't

know what she was angry at...the pompous Andreas, greedy Mondays, her crazy mother, her own mediocrity...

Sora grabbed her biggest pillow and screamed into it.

At noon the following day, Sora removed her tablet from the dock at her desk and went to find a secluded place to play a few rounds of Solitaire. She found an unoccupied couch that was tucked away behind a shelf filled with office books that had probably never been read. She was nearly finished with her first game when a notification popped up above the row of sorted cards — it was a LinkedIn message from Andreas Lilliana, Tobiko Executive Level One.

Sora sat up; suddenly the couch didn't feel secluded enough. She enabled her privacy screen and opened the message, pulling the tablet close to her face for good measure.

*I see you were snooping on my profile. Did you find anything impressive?*

A wave of chilling embarrassment crept up Sora's spine. She knew that LinkedIn allowed its users to see who had viewed their profile, but she didn't think that anyone actually checked. She should have known that a Monday like Andreas would. Her cheeks began to burn with a crimson blush that was visible from the other side of the office.

Sora fled from the couch into an empty nap room. She quickly shut the door behind her and sat on the large loveseat inside, not bothering to turn on the lights. In the dark, the blue-white glow of her tablet illuminating her nervous face, she typed out a response.

*It's definitely a very full profile. I can't say that anything in particular stood out, but then again, I'm impressed by a different kind of accomplishments.*

His reply came almost instantaneously.

*Like what?*

Sora pushed herself against the back of the plush loveseat and let out a frustrated breath. It was a question she didn't have a ready response for. Why was she even responding to him in the first place? She angled her tablet down towards her chest and stared into the black nothingness above her as she pondered what she found important in life. A vibration pulled her out of her reverie.

*Can't think of anything?*

Actually, now she could.

*The ability to be patient.*

Sora barely had time to admire her wit before he'd replied.

*I have to admit that's not one of my stronger skills. Maybe that's something I could learn from you.*

Sora's raised eyebrows cast long shadows across her furrowed forehead. Her ears heard whispers of caution from her ancestors. She'd been raised on stories of Mondays befriending Fridays only to take their business out from under them. If those stories were true, a Friday like her was nothing but a rung on a ladder he could climb to get to the top.

*I'm a little surprised you'd come to a Friday to learn anything.*

*The only kind of Fridays I don't like are the ones who yell at me. And hopefully it's not too bold to say, but you're very pretty.*

Sora felt her cheeks burning again, and was grateful for the dark, secluded room.

*That's very flattering, but I still don't understand why you're talking to me.*

She waited a full minute for a response, then two. She was beginning to think he must have been called away to another more important task, when he finally replied.

*My father passed away a few months ago. He was a tough, hard-working man, but also the type of person who could talk to anyone. And he was happy. When you spoke to me on that street corner, it reminded me of something my dad would do, and it made me curious if you're happy too.*

Empathy bubbled like sparkling water in her stomach, though her compassion was tempered by his existential query. It was another question she wasn't prepared to answer. She had moments of happiness all the time, but declaring herself a happy person felt like another title she hadn't yet earned.

*I'm sorry to hear about your father. If you want to talk about it, I'm here. But it's not like I'm going to reveal some magical Friday wisdom that will solve your problems.*

*Sounds good. I have to run to a meeting, but I'll message you again tonight.*

To her surprise, he did. They continued conversing over LinkedIn's private messenger, talking about their parents, about the civil unrest, about boring work drama. Sometimes he wouldn't respond for days at a time, typically Mondays and Tuesdays. But as the weeks went by, the gaps between messages shortened until they were never longer than a few hours.

They started to meet in person on the weekends at a weekday-neutral cafe in Haight-Ashbury. Then one Saturday morning, when the city was preoccupied with an activist bomb threat, they drove to a hotel two hours outside of San Francisco and made love for the first time.

Sora had only slept with one other man before, and she was worried about how Andreas would treat her. She expected him to be aggressive and domineering, but once they lay on the clean hotel sheets, he became as timid as a child. He explored the shape of her body first with the caress of a single finger, then with gentle kisses. When he finally entered her, he curled inwards and hid his head in the nape of her neck as though she was his protector. When he came, his voice broke, and her belly filled with a warmth that tip-toed through every vein in her body until she was full.

As they lay horizontally on the bed, limbs overlapping, their bodies taking up all of the full-sized mattress, Sora voiced that concern that had been growing in her chest.

"What are we going to do?"

"We'll figure it out, don't worry."

He spoke with a confidence that came from a deep, cavernous well in some exotic land that she had never been to.

“The conflict between the day camps is much less intense on the east coast,” she tried. “I’ve heard that in some of the middle states, there’s hardly any fighting at all.”

“That’s because there’s no opportunity to fight over there. Once I make it to the top of the chain here, we won’t have to worry about being from different days.”

Sora craned her neck up towards Andreas. “The people at the top are the most dayist of all!”

He shook his head, the hard, gelled tips of his curls crunching against the stiff bed sheets. “No, no, it’s the exact opposite. The elite don’t care what day camp you’re from, all they care about is power. If we have that, we can go anywhere and do anything we want.”

“That’s easy for a Monday to say.”

“What are you talking about? Our president is a Friday. Half of the richest people on earth are Fridays. It’s your people’s bitter mentality that keeps us separated.”

The engine of a large tractor-trailer rumbled in the distance, as Sora felt a tremor of anger rise in her chest. “It was your people who decided to stop going into the office on Wednesdays,” she said.

Andreas lifted his head, tendons bulging from his long neck. “It was mandated by the government! There weren’t enough resources for both camps to come into the office, so our forefathers made the call for the good of society. You think it didn’t hurt our companies to lose that extra day of collaboration?”

Sora untangled her arm from his and propped herself up so that she could look him in his amber eyes while he spoke such nonsense. “Please, you’re talking to a history major. It was your forefathers that pushed the DOT to make that mandate! Google, Walmart and Apple all lobbied for the removal of the shared day behind the scenes. They thought they were better, that they could get their work done in two days when it took us three!”

“We learned to be more efficient for the good of the earth,” Andreas retorted. “There weren’t enough resources to support every company coming into the office at the same time. And guess what, it worked! Climate projections are positive for the first time in centuries!”

“I guess it’s only right you get to own all of the property in the United States, then.”

Andreas wrapped his fingers gently around Sora’s hand. His arms were skinnier than she had imagined, the lean muscles visible as they contracted under his bronze skin. With his hair sticking out on all sides, he looked more like a teenager than a 32-year-old man.

He gazed longingly into Sora’s eyes. “There’s only one division that really exists in this world,” he said. “The line between people who have power, and people who do not. Those that have power want people like us to fight over days of the week, or skin color, or politics, because it keeps us occupied while they run the world.”

Sora stuck her fingers into his thick, wild curls, and he smiled. She whispered, “You don’t have to run the world to be happy.”

Two months later, a rehomed man brought a gun to a Monday convention and shot thirty people. Despite the fact that neither he, nor his parents, nor his grandparents had ever held a

corporate job, he claimed to be acting on behalf of Fridays everywhere. Riots broke out across the country.

On the fifth day of fighting, and the first Sunday of April, Sora found out she was pregnant. The result of a faulty IUD made by a medical corporation that was more concerned with profiting from anti-Monday customers than it was with preventing conception.

“We’ll figure it out,” Andreas said, wrapping her in his gentle arms.

For the first time, he didn’t sound like he was sure. That night, Columbia University was bombed by an anti-Friday terrorist group, and the army was deployed to secure other vulnerable establishments.

On the first Thursday of June, Sora lay on the secluded couch behind the bookshelf of unread books and stared at a row of virtual Solitaire cards. Uncertainty twisted her brain into knots, making her think the same circular thoughts. Her belly was starting to show. She had to escape. There was nowhere to escape to.

She dreamt of disappearing to a country like Madagascar, where corporations hadn’t penetrated deep enough to spread the poison of Weekday culture, but without corporations, there was no Andreas. Without Andreas, there was no happiness. They were racing furiously around a track, burning gas but never getting anywhere except back to the start again, and again, and again, so many times their wheels cut down into the earth, so deep that they were now circling hell.

A vibration knocked Sora off her tracks. She looked at the tablet screen in front of her face but saw no notification. Then she felt the vibration again.

Her watch unleashed an alarm so loud it stopped her heart. Long, slow sirens began to sound hauntingly in the distance, pulsing sickening fear through her veins.

Before she could stand, a shockwave threw her from the couch. The carpeted floor underneath her shifted violently back and forth, scratching her skin. Heavy books tumbled from the bookshelf, striking her in her head and back like angry birds. People began to scream.

Instinctively, she put her left arm over her stomach, and her right hand on the floor to balance her while she tried to stand. Unable to find footing, she crawled like an animal under a large coworking table. There was another girl under there, whose petrified face she did not recognize, and they held each other as the ceiling above them collapsed.

Sora squeezed her eyes shut, watching green and purple bursts of color while she felt the floor slide out from underneath them. They plummeted down and landed on rocks so hard her breath was pulled from her, and for a moment that stretched on like an hour, she could only hear; hundred foot waves crashing into concrete, grinding groaning metal, beasts at war in a subterranean lair where she was now trapped.

When she opened her eyes, there was nothing but black. She heard a terrible wheezing sound, then realized it came from her own lungs, sucking in dust. Her body convulsed, and then pain came. Her chest, her ankles, her knees all felt so broken that she did not think she would stay alive for more than a few seconds. Time passed, and was grounded by the sound of groans

coming from another human. After spitting a pound of bitter chemical dust from her mouth, Sora spoke.

“Are you ok?”

The response was a coughing fit that sounded unsurvivable. But then,

“I’m alive.”

Sora reached out towards the voice, wanting to feel the warmth of another human, but she felt only a cold slab of concrete. Surrounded by immovable, impenetrable material, she beat her hands against the walls until her strength gave out. She placed her bleeding hands on her stomach, and felt no life within her.

One day later, the girl on the other side of the wall stopped responding, and Sora knew she was alone.

One day after that, a mighty machine cut through the debris and she felt the sun.

Sora was taken to a makeshift clinic set up by the survivors of the earthquake; her broken legs were bound and her cuts were bandaged. A doctor examined her to the best of his ability and determined her child was still alive, though he could not definitively comment on his or her health. Instead of happiness, Sora felt fear. Fear she would be left alone again.

Unable to move, she spent every hour of every day listening to the clinic’s emergency radio for news of Andreas or her mother. On the third Monday of June, Meena’s body was found. Sora stopped listening to the radio, for fear that the next broadcast would leave her truly alone.

Her body became catatonic, her limbs like lead. For weeks she laid in her cot, unmoving, thinking of Andreas and the uncertain life inside of her. She longed for their touch, but could do nothing to bring them closer.

On the third Friday of July, she felt the baby move. She leapt out of bed, suddenly full of energy. Like a spout had been turned on deep inside of her, tears that she had been unable to cry poured from her body. When they finally stopped, she felt strong enough to lift a boulder. She was going to be a mother.

On the first Monday of August, Andreas Lilliana called the clinic. His right arm had been amputated after the earthquake, preventing him from making contact with her sooner, but he was alive.

On the second Wednesday of November, Sora Smith gave birth to her daughter.

As she watched Andreas hold her in his arm for the first time, she learned what true happiness was.

Over 800,000 people had been killed by the earthquake. Much of Silicon Valley was dumped into the earth, and Hollywood crumbled. Neither the Mondays nor the Fridays were to blame; it was an act of the earth, which no one could fight against. Figureheads tried to spin the catastrophe into a partisan issue they could profit from, but in the wake of such devastation, no one listened. It took decades to rebuild the homes and businesses that were lost, and by that time, most people had forgotten about the Monday Friday war.

