

## (THE UPTOWN GATE)

### A STORY OF NEW YORK BY TRINE MARQUARDSEN

*This was more than Caitlin had ever dreamed. The city was so big and amazing- she had never seen so much luxury and technology before.*

The alarm went off inside her head. Was she dreaming or was she awake? She turned over on her side trying to fight the sound of the alarm, but she knew it was only a matter of time before the noise became louder. She pressed once on her wrist to snooze and drifted back to sleep. 10 minutes later the alarm started again. She pressed the wrist twice and slowly opened her eyes. Her head was spinning from the night before; too much red wine had been consumed. She touched her wrist again and a clock appeared before her eyes. 8.11 AM, she swiped at her wrist and the clock went to the corner of her eye and Instagram appeared. She couldn't concentrate on the images flashing by before her eyes. The argument from yesterday bothered still nagged her. Why was her dad being so on edge in these days, and why did she have to babysit her old grandmother at 80 and her cousin. Even though they were born with only months apart she never met her cousin before. She and the grandmother both lived on the other side of the gate point, far away from the world Sophie knew. She closed the screen and went into her closet. The shipment from yesterday's shopping was still sitting in the corner, still in boxes. Why hadn't Consuela fixed that yet? She called her name, but no answer came. She screamed her name, but still no response. She was usually here before 7 AM so she didn't have to stand in line at the gate point. Each morning she came to their house from The Bronx. Sophie found an outfit she felt was appropriate for entertaining those lowers for the day. She dressed reluctantly and walked down the two flights of stairs there was from her floor to the kitchen. Her dad was nowhere to be found. He always became so mad when he heard her call them Lowers and give her the moral scolding about how they would be as them had been for her grandmother. He probably already left for work she concluded. There is no vacation in the business world, as he would always yell when she suggested a family trip to the outside world.

Sophie didn't care much for holidays in the city, especially not now when it was Easter; it was always filled with Lowers on visit. Some from the rest of the country other Highers came all the way from Europe. As she stepped outside on the sidewalk she could feel the April sun warming her face and smell the crisp morning air. The cars were rushing by her on the streets. She touched her wrist again and activated her GPS location and send a signal out to the caps of Manhattan. She looked into the streets and saw the many white busses filled with families staring back at her. They were probably all heading towards the Empire State. It was the one the tourist attractions most of the Lowers could afford. A little bell noise her went off and a taxi pulled up to curve. She entered the taxi slowly, and entered her destination on the screen in front of her. She entered the address of the gate point – why couldn't they just meet in the city? She couldn't remember the last time she had been there, but she remembered that the place always used to give her the creeps. She looked out the tainted window and glazed at the houses passing by one by one trying to pull herself together for the day she had in front of her. She knew that her grandmother Ada and her cousin Caitlin had tried to go to Manhattan for months but this was the first time that both of their applications had been approved and none of them had been sick for weeks. The taxi pulled over to side and she scanned her wrist at the door and the familiar sound of a bill being paid played in her head and she stepped out on the platform next to the bridge. On one half of the bridge long lines of white busses held in line and on the other side people were standing in lines. The place was just as she remembered it. The wind was blowing through her hair, as she stood waiting next to all the other Highers waiting for their guests. She couldn't she Ada or Caitlin, and she already felt annoyed with them. She observed the long lines of people and cars. Line number one, the shortest one, was for Highers already living in Manhattan, who had been to the outside. They just had to show

their documentation and then they could pass the guards. Line number two was for people working in Manhattan, they had to show their work license and swap a cotton tip in their mouth to make sure they didn't bring infections or disease to the island. The third and longest line was for the tourist and visitors, and Sophie had heard that they had to give a blood sample before entering. Ada and Caitlin have to be in that line she thought and sighed. She had seen her grandmother only twice before, but she had a pretty good idea about how she would look by now. She touched her wrist again and went thought the news that appeared before her eyes.

The two of them walked arm in arm towards Sophie. Sophie didn't notice them before they were only a few feet away from her. Sophie glared at them and sighed, they looked worse than she had expected. They both were their ID-cards in a keychain around the neck together with the temporary chip they had received at the checkpoint. She closed the news in front of her eyes and reached her hand out towards her grandmother. Ada instantly hugged her for a long time while she rambled on for a long time about how pretty she was and how long it had been since she had last seen her. After the long hug Sophie reached her hand towards Caitlin who took and gave her an awkward handshake. A quick glance at her and Sophie could instantly see that she was a Lower and that her close was worn and her model of iEye was at least five years old. They walked towards the cabs holding in line outside of the gate point. Ada and Caitlin were both talking excitedly about the sights that they were going to see that day. As they reached the cabs, Sophie saw their maid Consuela rushing from the gate point towards the employee busses. For the first time Sophie realized that Consuela had to go through that every day on her way back and forward to work and felt a moment of gratefulness to the life she was born into. Their first stop on the tour was as many others the Empire State Building, and the line was going from the building and out on sidewalk for almost a block. Thank God for the fact that I can get them around the line Sophie thought to herself.

Ada stared at Sophie on the way to the Empire State Building with awe. She couldn't believe the way she dressed, back when she used to live in Manhattan in her twenties she didn't have provoking outfits like that and she was even considered a rebel back then. She looked out thought the window of the cab and stared at the buildings passing by. Where was the Manhattan she had been forced to leave almost 60 years ago. The beating pulse of the city was gone with the people who had left the city. She remembered back to her youth where the city had been filled with diversity and people from all different types of origin. Ada looked over at Caitlin whose face was just an inch from the glass looking out in awe at the skyscrapers and fancy apartments as they rushed down 5th Avenue. Back when Ada was young she remembered the good times she had had in the city back then, going to underground clubs, crashing parties and going to gallery openings all around Manhattan. Back then she was young and without a care in the world. Even though it was so many years ago the images was clear in her memory even to this day. She remembered back to the day where she and boyfriend at that time was forced to move out of their adorable little studio apartment. They had both been studying at NYU at the time on scholarship. She was an orphan and he was an exchange student from Germany so none of them had the option of paying the \$500,000 per person that was required if they wished to stay in Manhattan. Ada sighed and looked out into the streets again, and saw a Manhattan staring back at her she didn't recognized. Ada was glad that she and Caitlin had finally been able to go and she was exited to show her the city she once loved so much. They had tried so many times to get their approval form the city but it wasn't easy to receive it. It had been until her son Richard had pulled some strings in the committee of approval that they had gotten some good news. The cab pulled up to the sidewalk and Sophie paid with her chip on the way. Ada was glad she paid. She had save dup for the trip for months but she knew she didn't have enough for the entire day. The prices were another thing that had changed since she had lived there. As she saw the line she was very pleased to have Sophie with them, since she had an all access card to Manhattan she could take the two of them anywhere without staying in line and most importantly without paying. Back when she was living in New York the price for going to the top of Empire was \$25, now it was \$200, and that was apparently one of the cheaper tourist attractions. She damned the city and their arrogant and greed, but

swallowed her pride and went after Sophie and Caitlin into the building and into the elevator. She had been in the city since Sophie was 5 and her mother had died, she couldn't believe how fast time was going and how much had happened in that period. She had grown up and had turned into a beautiful young woman. As she stood there in the elevator with her iEye beaming out into the air, she looked annoyed and important. Ada felled sorry for that young woman who had never seen the real world besides from the images appearing on her iEye. She looked at her watch 10.15 AM. They had to be at the gate point at 20 PM or they would be fined for outstaying their visit. They were meeting Richard back at their apartment at 17 PM for an early dinner. She hadn't seen her son in years and was worried sick about him. He had sounded s stressed and agitated the last times she had spoken to him. As they went out onto the platform at the top of the building her mood suddenly shifted. From up her Manhattan looked as it had done 60 years ago. From up there she couldn't see the dull streets and facades, but only the outline and the park that looked as it always had. As they stood back down on the streets they headed towards 5th avenue where Caitlin wanted to see the many stores she had only seen in magazines and she never could afford. This was the first time Sophie seems remotely interested in Caitlin and this day. Ada wondered if they would like each other if they hadn't grown up in different worlds. As they walked down 5th Ada looked back at her youth in Manhattan. How she used to spent all her had earned money in the stores back then. Back when money existed physically. Even though she had had chip in her for almost 30 years she still sometimes reached for her wallet when she had to pay for something today. As they wandered down 5th going through the stores filled with luxurious and glamorous clothes Ada couldn't help to wish that New York would return to the city it used to be, a big city of dreams and possibilities.

This was more than Caitlin had ever dreamed. The city was so big and amazing - she had never seen so much luxury and technology before. She had barely used any money since they started planning their trip months ago. She was so ready for this shopping spree, and even though she had heard rumours about the prices in Manhattan, but this was worse than she had feared. She had dreamed about buying dresses that would make everyone back home so jealous. But know she realised that there would only be enough money for a t-shirt. Her grandmother didn't understand the special thing about clothes in Manhattan. You could get close from everywhere else in the world delivered within a day, why would she want to buy then in Manhattan, she would always scold. Manhattan was filled with Highers and Sophie was no exception. Her clothes were so chick and Caitlin had done nothing but admire her life since they had arrived. They were on their home to Sophie and her dad's place, and Caitlin was excited to see their house. Caitlin hoped that with her new t-shirt she would be considered as a Higher when she returned home, she had worked very for that in the past years. She knew that it was the best shot to get into a decent college if she could appear as if she was a Higher. As the cab pulled up to the curb she looked in awe at the impressive building standing before her. They must be wealthy than her grandmother had led on. Even though she had met her uncle once before she couldn't really recall his face. Ada had told her that he had a bad temper and was stressed at the moment, so she didn't really look forward to the upcoming dinner. She had checked her iEye in the taxi and a lot of people had already liked her photos from today. She was very pleased with the trip so far. She was a bid sad that she and Sophie had gotten along better, but she was clearly not interested in getting to know Caitlin. Caitlin had hoped they would become friends so that she could visit New York more often. They all went in the house and Caitlin looked around amazed at the sight. The house was huge and luxurious, it was way more extravagant than she had imagined. Ada looked as if she was about to faint, it was clear she didn't expect this kind of luxury. Caitlin walked around the house following Sophie around like a puppy. She was left with a feeling of disappoint of her own life, why wasn't she born into this type of world?

Richard sat silently in the back of the town car driving him from the office to home. He had trouble keeping himself calm. How could they know he had fraud all that money? He had been so careful cowering his tracks. What was he going to do know, what would he say to Sophie? As if this day had been bad enough he had to face his mother in

10 minutes. He swiped his wrist and the business section appeared before his eyes. He looked at the clock in the corner, it was 5.30 PM, and he was late and would without a doubt hear for it from his mother. He decided to step out of the car and walk the rest of the way home. He needed some fresh air to clear his head and come up with a plan. The company had told him that he could avoid being dragged to court if he was to pay all the money back that he had embezzled in the past two years. He knew he didn't have that kind of money; he had invested most of it in a company that had gone bankrupt 2 months ago and what was left Sophie had wasted away. He wasn't pleased with the way she had turned out; she was arrogant and ungrateful for the life that was given to her. She didn't go to college even though she would easily get accepted to the best university in Manhattan. He knew all the right people in the city and he tried desperately to think of someone who could help him now, but he knew that there was nothing to do. He knew how important this community though integrity about money is. He knew that if he had killed a person he would know at least 10 people in the city that he could call right now who help him get out of trouble. This however was unforgivable, and there was nothing for him to do except for facing the consequences. He damned his greed, if he had only been satisfied with his monthly income, he would never had stood in this situation. He had one the highest pays in the company. He was getting closer to home and could feel his stomach turning, as he was about to face the consequences of letting Sophie know that they had no other option than to leave the city as soon as possible without being able to bring more than a few items each. He was hoping that his mother would invite them to stay with her until he could get back on track. Sophie would get so furious, he knew that. She loved all of her belongings and would beg him that they could stay and send in an application so that they could bring out more than 10 items from the city when they would have to leave. He knew that they couldn't afford the payment necessary to get such an approval stamp. He stood in front of the door and took him forever to move up the 7 steps. He turned the handle and walked inside the house.