

Booklet Code: SS-1243 Step 1 View all

STEP 1. 1000 words or less

Each writer's task is to write a Scenario in 1000 words or less that fits within the Future Scene's parameters - TIME, PLACE, and TOPIC.

Items to note as you write your Scenario:

- Your Scenario should have a title. This does not count toward the 1000-word limit.
- You will only be evaluated on the first 1000 words of your Scenario.
- Your name, Affiliate, school, location, etc., should not be in anywhere in the Scenario or its title.
- To download a PDF of the Future Scene, click "Toolbox" in the left menu, then click the link to download the Future Scene.

To save your work, click "Enter" at the bottom of the text box. If you exit without clicking Enter, your work will not be saved.

Smart, Not Stupid I take the first pill at 5:00. a.m. It's still dark outside, but my day has already begun. It's red like an apple, and tastes sweet, like candy. "MindBoost Smart Supplement," it says on the box. Free neurological enhancements for people like me, with poor cognitive performance. The doctor says I have low processing speed, and provided me with a glowing letter of endorsement. "Free access to the MYM's Cognitive Equity Program? Where do I sign," bellowed my dad, looking up from his card game. He could play a mean game of cards, but couldn't finish high school. I never understood why he cared.

It's fifteen more minutes before the effects settle in, my brain absorbing all the nutrients the supplement provides. Then, an instant brain boost. My entire body vibrates with energy as negative neurotransmitters are blocked, and positive synapses begin to fire. It feels like there are hundreds of tiny caterpillars tickling my bloodstream and filling my veins as they burst into colorful butterflies in my stomach.

My mind is completely empty. Like a pool of water waiting for a drop to create ripples. Slowly, my thoughts begin. They echo, bouncing around before they come right back with startling clarity. And, when they do, they're different. I process differently. The red flower outside my window sings a chorus with the green grass; I can hear color. I see goats running across a field when the neighbor's lawnmower starts; I can see sound. The words that spill out of my mouth leave me with a mixture of sweet, and savory; I can taste them. Sometimes I say words just for the fun of it, to eat them back up again. Opalescent, pomegranate, eclectic and prodigious. A fruit salad of vocabulary. There's a hum in my ears now. From the noise of the world. The cars on the freeway, five miles away. The ants crawling between the cracks in the sidewalk. The plants in my room stretching their leaves. I can feel everything around me. The air wet and heavy, the scorch of the burning sun.

I log into Ace, the most prestigious online academy in Kalgoorlie, where student avatars are present in classrooms, but you work from individual isolation pods. My brain is settled into work mode now. An efficient machine capable of optimal production at the highest level. Super string theory, chaos theory, abstract geometric formulas, Euler's method. I'm done with first period math in 10 minutes and stare out the window for the rest of class looking for fractals in the trees outside.

I take a second pill at noon, with the grilled cheese sandwich and chocolate pudding made by my personal HoloChef. It goes down harsher this time, and takes longer to take effect. You aren't supposed to take more than one per day. But, that's not going to be enough. With rising unemployment in Kalgoorlie, I am my family's ticket to success.

It's moments like these that I'm reminded of what waits for me behind these pills. The truth. That I'm an average, 100 IQ nobody, who's not worth anything without this supplement. That I haven't slept in a week and haven't showered properly in two. That I spend my days and nights studying, and far surpassed my daily prescription months ago. That without this supplement I am incomplete, unenhanced, deficient. I'm running on borrowed time. Because everything, everything hinges on my success. My acceptance to AMU, my academic scholarship. My future internship at Magnify Your Mind International, and career at the Australian Secret Intelligence Service. The Western Australian government assured our parents that those in the Cognitive Equity Program would succeed. So, I absolutely cannot fail.

Third period I have a test. Chemistry. That warrants a third pill, and a fourth halfway through for good measure. I take them in rapid succession, without water. They leave me with a bitter lump in my throat. Time seems to stop. I can pause it with my palm, and swipe it to continue, like the screen of a holographic iPad45, scrolling for something to catch my interest. A pretty blond in the fifth row. A girl sticking her gum under the table. I finish 25 problems in 5 minutes, and spend the rest of my time pondering the Fibonnaci effect on the asteraceae family of flowers. It's all worth it, I tell myself. It has to be.

The class rankings are posted daily at 4pm. I pull up the holoscreen on my desk and scroll up. A satisfied expression comes across my face when I find my name at the top, like always. My point score -- 539. But then, I look down and the satisfaction's gone. Second is a 5-way tie at 538. They're so close, just a little bit behind me, like soldiers lined up, ready to take my place. I don't want to take any risks. I want this, don't I? I need this. I don't want to be...average. I am awake, I am alive.

It takes a moment for me to realize that I'm panting heavily. Sweat beads on my forehead. I can hardly breathe. Too many pills, I think. Too many and yet never enough. For comfort, my hand wanders to the tiny bottle enclosed in the breast pocket of my uniform blazer, and I close my eyes. I swim through time. Scroll through the dimensions with my mind. I see my happy childhood, in the garden, playing under the apple tree. The bottle clicks when I open it and pull out another pill. I open my eyes and stare at it for just a moment before placing it on my tongue. It slithers down my throat this time, gone in seconds. It works. Then I click onto my browser once more. It's time for my next class.