TEXT

BUZZ! Alarm. swipe. I wave my hand to turn it off. BLING! Notifications pop up, "send email". click. reply. While I draft the email, I'll get a coffee started. swipe, swipe, select. I hear it brewing in the kitchen. scan fridge. Need groceries. I'll walk. check the weather. Hail. I didn't even hear it. Never-mind, I'll just place an order. purchase complete. I have a meeting soon. RING. Incoming call. accept. SHOOP. My coworkers appear through holograms. Wait. Deja vu. I've done this before. I've experienced this exact routine for so long. My life has become so mundane, automated, uninspiring. I need air, but all I'm surrounded by outside is rushing noise, hectic people, and blinding bright lights in an endless blue-grey landscape. I can't even breathe the air without my mask. I walk, but with no direction in mind. BLING. I'm overwhelmed by all the pop-ups. BLING, email received, BLING, reminder, BLING. Ugh, how do I turn this thing off? BLING. Enough! Wait, I see something odd. A patch of green with no pop-ups around it? Can that be right? I walk over and suddenly the sky is clear, the air crisp, and my network disconnected. I've never been disconnected from the server.

Where am I?

It feels as though I'm in a dream. I can see interaction and communion between individuals thriving off this disconnect. BZZ. CHIRP. I stop and give myself a moment to breathe. My feet sink into the grass. I can smell the soil underneath them, I can hear birds chirping, and the warmth of the sun tingling my skin. All of a sudden, I feel all corners of my body. At this very moment, I have never felt more alive. To my curiosity, I begin to take a stroll through the complex. The trees part, eventually opening up to a plaza filled with buzzing people. Finally, it feels refreshing to interact with people who aren't simply headed somewhere.

TSS. The smell of coffee and croissants is so pungent I can almost taste it. I treat myself to one. I then continue down a brightly coloured narrow alley where the greenery begins to sprawl up the wall, stretching farther and higher into the alley. WOAH. In front of me I see an alien-like structure. Looks 3D printed. As I approach it, I realize it is so much more than a Martian construction. It appears to be made up of a mix of 3D printed plastic and different materials that would normally be found in a landfill. OH MY!? You can walk on it?! As I get closer I start to realise how the structure begins to become the architecture of the building. At some point it turns into stairs, at another it's a table. Oh look, it's also a bridge! WAIT! People are taking materials out of it. What are they doing with them? My eye follows one man who reaches for a piece of string, then walks over to what appears to be a sculpture...

These people are using the materials for art. So cool! I approach a man who appears to be the teacher. He turns out to be a well-known designer who creates sculptures out of recyclable materials. Apparently he's here with a group of other artists to use the structure as a canvas and what others could consider garbage, as a paintbrush. He hands me a flyer that has more information about the place. That's so weird... Haven't seen paper in a very long time.

*'Come join us at La Escocesa, a world existing beyond the confines of the system, an unthinkable reality, where individuals can thrive off the disconnect from the city. This place, this escape, this community, coexists with the outside world, yet, on a different plane of existence. Come decorate it with your imagination...'*

As soon as I read it, I knew I had found my second home. I really needed an escape like this, I'm so tired of the mundane nature of the outside world. Finally, I make my way towards the exit and the space begins to widen, and I see the plaza in the distance. I take a deep breath, amazed by what I just saw. I head back to the trees, and my watch illuminates again. BLING. BLING. BLING. Ugh, back to reality.