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# A DAY DURING THE KHMER ROUGE

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**Written by Kyle Te, Year 9**

1975 - Cambodia.

A giant red fireball shone on a farm, causing the people working on the massive farm to sweat profusely. A man in full black clothing and a red-white scarf with a check pattern was overseeing the farmers. If you zoom out, you will also see many people wearing the same clothes and overlooking the farm.

Sarat was working in the middle of the farm with a few of his friends to avoid the constant surveillance of the Friends that the new regime had appointed to keep them in check. The new regime instructs people to call the people that wear the uniform friends, and if you didn't call them that, they would deem you a traitorous spy sent by the CIA.

Sarat had personally witnessed someone opposing the regime by speaking out about why the new regime was wrong, and he was escorted to the middle of the village. He was immediately deemed a traitor. He tried to beg for mercy, but the regime didn't give him any and shot him in the head, terrorizing everyone.

The dazzling sun slowly set, but there was no sign of stopping the activities on the farm. Sarat and his friends were working late into the night every day. There were numerous people who wanted to speak up and talk some sense into the regime's officials, but nobody actually dared to speak up; everyone feared pain and death. Sarat and his friends were really tired and exhausted, both physically and mentally. Just as Sarat's legs were about to give in, a young boy who was tattered in ripped and dirty clothing collapsed and fainted.

Thud.

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The quiet sound rippled through the silenced farm like a loudspeaker, and the sound immediately alerted the Friends, who came running and trampling on the farmers.

The man in the lead suddenly said, "There is no such thing as being exhausted and tired; it's a disease that was spread by the evil foreigner to slow down the development of our country." He continued to say, "As for this little friend right here, we are going to take him to the doctors and get him cured properly; the doctors will know what to do, so you do not have to worry."

After the man finished his speech, Sarat looked at the boy with sympathy. He knew what would happen to the individual that was taken to the doctor; he knew that the boy was going to get killed, and the regime would force the doctors to write a fake report about the death to tell the people about it to not raise any suspicion and to not let them question the regime.

It's about to be midnight, and Sarat and his friends were dismissed to go get dinner and sleep to prepare for tomorrow. Sarat and his friends made their way to the cafeteria. As he was approaching the cafeteria, he saw the friends having a delicious feast with meats and vegetables. On the way, he saw many of the friends announce that if anyone is capable of answering a difficult question that they asked, they can go to the capital city. Sarat sighed. He knew everyone thinks that the capital is a safe haven, but answering the questions correctly means you would be killed; it's all a trap. His stomach growled as he went and grabbed a wooden bowl from the counter and stood in the long line waiting for his ration of food. When it is

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finally his turn, he hands over the bowl to the friends, and they pour him some rice water with salt and a bit of grain. He made his way to a dimly lit and empty table far away, where he sat with his friends to share the food. The one who got the most grains would share with the others.

After he finished eating the food that barely made him full, he made his way to his father's house, where his father sat on the wooden floor with a tired face. When his father saw Sarat, he beamed him a shiny smile and told him to sit. Sarat asked about his little sister, and he said, "You know how it is, the regime is taking young children to school and teaching them about the regime; they are basically brainwashing the kids." He sighed as he continued, "Because of the brainwashing, your sister doesn't even recognize her father anymore. Alright, it's time to count the fruit and vegetables in the garden, and don't try to hide the fruits anymore; you know what happens to your mother, right?"

Sarat stared at the sky, looking for something, for a moment before his father patted his back and they went to sleep, preparing to start another difficult and laborious day. [...]