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2024-1-ES01-KA220-ADU-000255317

Technology Literacy

The Day I Shared
a Lie





My name is Marc and I have been a prison officer for 17 years. I'm 53 years old, and I could say I'm relearning how to live in a world that spins faster than one can imagine. I've spent years watching how truths become blurred and lies get dressed up with filters, headlines, and algorithms. I'm no expert in technology or media, but I've lived long enough to know that information—when not properly understood—can become a trap. And that trap makes no distinction between being inside walls or under an open sky.

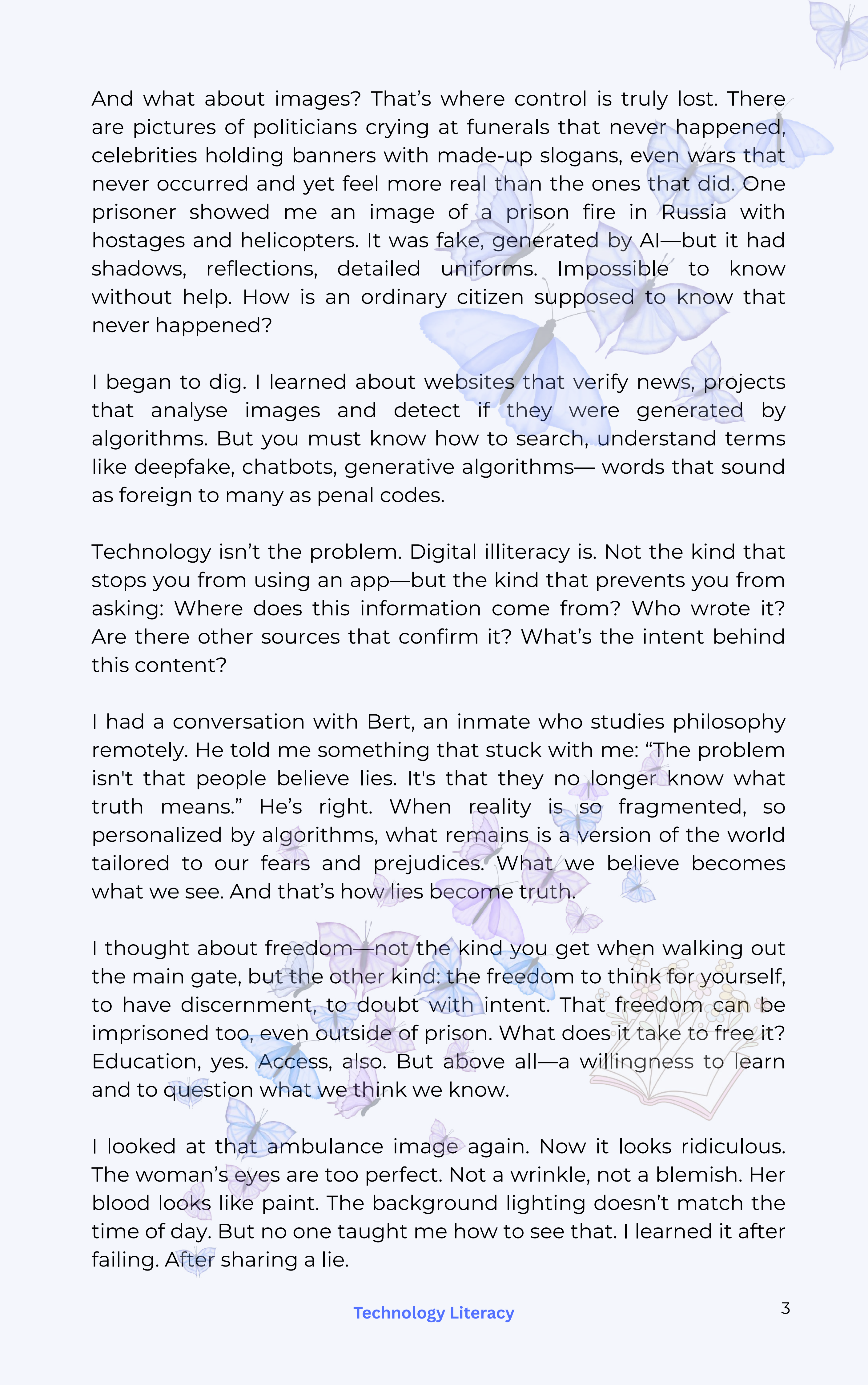
A few months ago, my sister sent me a news story via WhatsApp. The image was shocking: an ambulance surrounded by military personnel, a woman with a bloodied face, and a huge headline that read, “The government injects dangerous substances without consent in public hospitals.” I forwarded it immediately. I found it outrageous. How could I not? It felt like civic responsibility, right?

That was the day I shared a lie.

Two weeks later, my nephew—who studies computer science—told me that image had been generated by artificial intelligence. That the ambulance didn't even belong to the country where it supposedly took place, and the woman had the same features as other AI-generated faces: perfectly symmetrical eyes, poreless skin, an almost theatrical expression. The text had been written by a bot, and the entire message was designed to incite fear. I had fallen for it—completely.

I felt stupid. Not for sharing something false, but for lacking the tools to distinguish truth from fabrication. At what point did being a citizen stop meaning “to reason” and start meaning “to simply forward”? It got me thinking about something I was never taught: in the digital age, information is not just consumed—it's manipulated.

Since then, I began to observe. Every time someone in prison received news, it was through a shared phone that made its way inside through loopholes and favours. There's no context, only headlines. Outside prison, it's no different. Social media doesn't inform—it shapes indignation. News gets repeated from account to account as if the number of shares proves their truth.



And what about images? That's where control is truly lost. There are pictures of politicians crying at funerals that never happened, celebrities holding banners with made-up slogans, even wars that never occurred and yet feel more real than the ones that did. One prisoner showed me an image of a prison fire in Russia with hostages and helicopters. It was fake, generated by AI—but it had shadows, reflections, detailed uniforms. Impossible to know without help. How is an ordinary citizen supposed to know that never happened?

I began to dig. I learned about websites that verify news, projects that analyse images and detect if they were generated by algorithms. But you must know how to search, understand terms like deepfake, chatbots, generative algorithms— words that sound as foreign to many as penal codes.

Technology isn't the problem. Digital illiteracy is. Not the kind that stops you from using an app—but the kind that prevents you from asking: Where does this information come from? Who wrote it? Are there other sources that confirm it? What's the intent behind this content?

I had a conversation with Bert, an inmate who studies philosophy remotely. He told me something that stuck with me: "The problem isn't that people believe lies. It's that they no longer know what truth means." He's right. When reality is so fragmented, so personalized by algorithms, what remains is a version of the world tailored to our fears and prejudices. What we believe becomes what we see. And that's how lies become truth.

I thought about freedom—not the kind you get when walking out the main gate, but the other kind: the freedom to think for yourself, to have discernment, to doubt with intent. That freedom can be imprisoned too, even outside of prison. What does it take to free it? Education, yes. Access, also. But above all—a willingness to learn and to question what we think we know.

I looked at that ambulance image again. Now it looks ridiculous. The woman's eyes are too perfect. Not a wrinkle, not a blemish. Her blood looks like paint. The background lighting doesn't match the time of day. But no one taught me how to see that. I learned it after failing. After sharing a lie.

And it's not just a personal story. It's a global phenomenon. Dozens of inmates wonder why their families believe absurd rumours. Adults can't tell whether a video was filmed in their neighbourhood or generated by a machine. People distrust everything—except what confirms what they already think.

That's how disinformation works: it feeds what hurts us, what bothers us, what makes us angry. It makes us feel part of something—even if it's a mistake.

Today I know that every story, every image, every text on a screen deserves a pause. A breath. A question. Because the first step toward freedom—even in this digital age—is learning not to swallow everything whole.

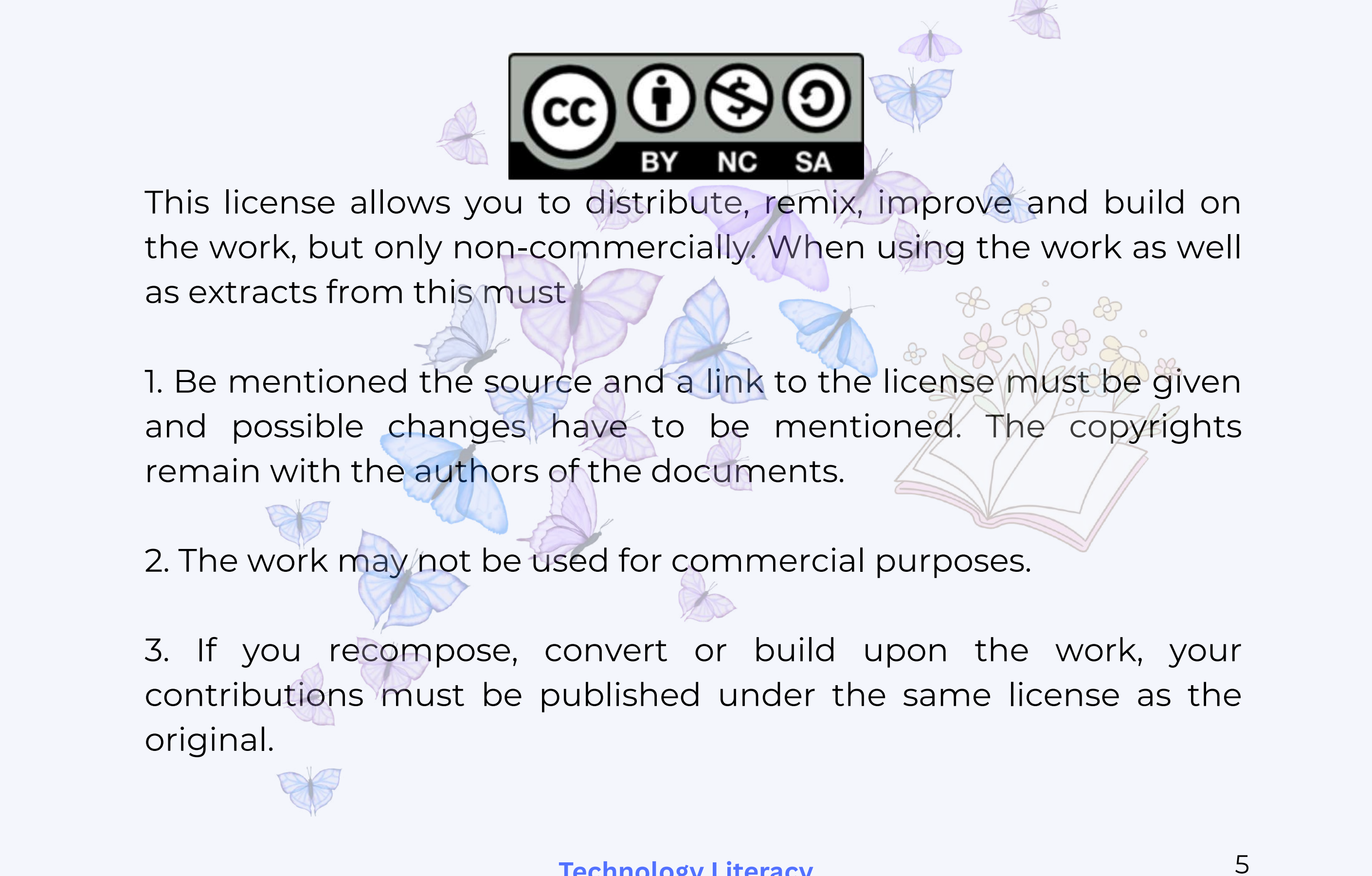
So, if you're reading this—in prison or outside—do yourself a favour: doubt. Not out of mistrust, but out of respect for yourself. Because no one else will protect your discernment. And the truth, even buried beneath a thousand shared lies, is worth searching for.





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