

THE ORIGINATION CHROMOSOMES

"We're both fools," she said, kicking off her shoes and making herself comfortable on his couch.

The faucet poured a red-colored liquid into an oddly shaped glass. "One more," the man said, and another glass appeared, and again the faucet filled it with the red liquid. The man grabbed the two glasses and brought them over to the woman. "Here you are," the man said.

"Thank you," the woman replied.

The man sat down next to her, and she cuddled up to him. "Why is that?" he asked.

"Why is what?" she replied after taking a sip of her beverage.

"Why are we fools?" he asked. He held his glass out while he brushed up against her face and kissed her neck.

"Out of all the things we could do, all the people we could be with on the last night, we decide to be with each other." She laughed as his kisses tickled her. "It feels so wrong."

"This is all so right," he replied. He slid his hand up her thigh and continued to kiss her neck, speaking in the brief moments between kisses. "This is what we used to do."

"We?"

"Humans. We used to touch each other like this. We used to kiss each other and love each other."

"We're contaminating each other," she said, laughing. She pushed him away to

take another sip from her glass. "We'd probably die from this kind of contact in forty-eight hours."

"That's all rubbish," the man replied. He removed her arm from around his neck. "I'm so sick of this sterile environment—the gloves, the clean suits, the masks we use to cover our hair and faces so we don't transmit any harmful biological organisms to one another. It's paranoia. It has been for twenty years."

"That disease wiped out nearly ten-thousand of us. We're five hundred people away from extinction. We had to take *some* precautions."

"Four-hundred and seventy-two," he said to correct her. "They should have never sent that team to the abyss. I don't even know what they hoped to accomplish with that one. They should have realized the ocean still has a large amount of biological organisms left. The simplest organisms always survive. Any one of those could have wiped us out completely. I was ten years old. Even I could have told them that then."

"They're only human."

"Which is not an excuse for making mistakes," the man replied.

"Our history is filled with an infinite number of mistakes," the woman said. "If it wasn't for the mutations caused by the countless wars over the past four millennia, we might have had the immunity to resist the diseases that killed so many of us."

The man looked at her and smiled. "If this is a mistake," he said coyly, "it'll all be erased by morning." He leaned into her again and kissed her neck.

"Stop," she said, laughing.

"What?"

"It feels... strange."

He put his hand up to her face and gently caressed her cheek. "At least you can feel, feel me. I love touching you."

She giggled. "Can you imagine people actually doing this to each other to begin the reproduction process?"

"Quiet," he said. "Let's forget for our last night what age this is."

"It's so messy."

"This is natural. Before we were grown, we actually came from one another. Can you imagine *that*? Can you imagine the connection two people felt when they brought someone new into this world? To be a father or a mother—it must have been otherworldly. I wish I could have been a father."

"Well, you might get your chance."

The man laughed, and said, "What? Tonight? Or tomorrow morning maybe?"

"No," she said, smiling. She gently slapped him on the shoulder. "You're not about to make me a mother. I meant in your next life."

The man rolled his eyes. "It's not going to work like that."

"It might. No one knows what's going to happen. Maybe I'll be in your arms tomorrow morning and our kids will wake us from tonight's sleep."

"The kids we never had?"

"We won't know the difference."

"No, tomorrow morning, we won't even wake up. We will have never existed. A change in time so long ago will erase everyone's existence. The chances of the

exact same sperm coming in contact with the exact same egg trillions of times are so miniscule they're not even worth mentioning, even if every animal we evolve from does have the perfect set of chromosomes."

"The perfect set of chromosomes," she replied. "See, that's what they were hoping to accomplish by sending that team to the abyss. They were trying to find something, anything to save us."

"They were real far off. The Origination Chromosomes were found in a grave under the ice shelves, below an old-world desert."

"They didn't know what they were looking for."

The man shrugged.

"But that discovery!" she said, suddenly becoming elated. "Think of how perfect the world will be. It'll be a utopia far beyond anything you and I could ever imagine. No disease, no war—perfect compatibility with everyone you come in contact with. And we can love each other," she said, kissing him on the lips as passionately as she possibly could, "however we want."

"If it works," he added.

"It has to work," she said and kissed him again.

The man looked at the woman in the eyes. He licked his lips. "I could tell you something," he said.

She kissed his neck. "What could you tell me?"

"Those perfect chromosomes they found, the Origination Chromosomes," he began. He nudged himself into her, and she slid down to the seat of the couch. He hung over her and kissed her a few more times.

"What about them?" she asked.

"I work in the lab where they kept them."

"I know that," she replied, and started to undress the man, still kissing him.

"The team is up there now, spinning in the cylinder. The generators are pouring what little energy we have left from the sun into the drums, and the drums will hit their critical threshold in the morning. The process cannot be stopped, because if it is, we'll never get another chance to change history."

"I know," she said. "They'll take the Origination Chromosomes back three million years, find the one creature that we all evolved from, and mutate its chromosomes so the human race can evolve into a more perfected species that won't kill itself off like we have. This is nothing I haven't heard a thousand times over at every meeting we've had to go to for the past year."

"We're sacrificing four millennia of our history, and no one will ever even know we existed."

"We can't dwell on that now."

"What I wanted to tell you was..."

She kissed him to stop him from speaking, so he pushed her away a little.

"No, I want to tell you this, because nothing's going to matter by tomorrow. I don't want to fade from existence with this secret."

She was concerned. "What is it?" she asked.

"The Origination Chromosomes—I replaced them with my own." He smiled a devious smile. "A few million years from when our team makes it to the past, humanity will have evolved, and when it does, it will be made of my sons and my daughters."

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