

Blind Date

“Are you going or not?” Kiran asked again.

“I don’t know, Kiran. Are you sure about this?” Andre was still apprehensive but Kiran’s resolve and his own interest were overwhelming his fear. “I want to go but I have heard a few things about the workers. I hear they can be less than friendly. I’m not into taking a beating even if they are as impressive as you say.”

“Andre, I’m telling you I have been talking with Alana for a week and she said this place is going to be beyond capacity. There will be so many women there, even you can’t fail. Its either that or stay here. How has that been working for you? It will be fun. We need some of that, with everybody out we have been killing ourselves here. Come on...” Kiran continued to prod him.

“You are telling me that you are ok going to some ridiculous clandestine club outside of the compound, well into the workers area. You think the workers are going to go for us?” Andre had asked him the same questions a dozen times before. “What about all of the alerts? They seem real.”

“Yes, Alana says she has a friend too. People get sick, as rare as it is, we can’t hide inside the lab for ever. They will release all of those warnings anyway, probably by tomorrow.” Kiran had been holding this bit of information back until he thought the timing was right. Andre wouldn’t be able to resist the chance that he might finally find someone. Kiran knew Andre best and knew that his friend’s work would suffer soon if he didn’t have some release of tension. Andre had always fallen into the stereotype of the shy intellectual timid around women. This was exacerbated by the fact that everyone they came into contact with was a colleague and worked

in the same office day in and day out. Andre would never be able to face the potential rejection of a coworker. This had drawn him even further into himself and Kiran was tired of seeing his friend lonely and depressed.

“Ok. I’m not staying long.” The promise of a potential connection won him over. “This better be safe.”

“They are not savages Andre. You really need to get out of the lab more often.” Kiran said playfully. “I thought you might give in. We need to go. We are meeting them in thirty minutes.”

“What? You, of course you did.” Andre knew he had been manipulated but he couldn’t argue and he really didn’t want to. He needed some fun.

They were logged out of the system and out of the lab within five minutes. There was no need to go by either of their residences as what they were wearing was nearly identical to everything else they owned. All that was left for them to do was to show up. The quick change from day to night happened on the first half of their journey to the experiment called O’Malleys. It was part of an underground initiative to bring in some aspects of Earth. None of their colleagues knew about it and if they did they never mentioned it. When Kiran first approached Andre about the idea it was till a month out and as best he could tell theoretical. The establishment was not sanctioned but it had never officially been approved either. From what he could tell, it was less of a secret than it was simply not talked about. The nature of it being off the grid and well into the workers settlement added to the mystique. Kiran acted as if he wasn’t nervous but Andre knew better. He had known him far too long. Kiran may not be as nervous as Andre felt but he was close.

The rest of the walk was filled with idle chatter. “Have you seen this friend?” Andre finally asked.

“No, but Alana talks about her a lot.” Kiran replied.

Andre was silent for a minute waiting for more. “That doesn’t tell me anything.”

“Andre, let me put it to you this way. She has the best looking woman you have talked to in a year.”

Andre wanted to argue but knew this was true by default. He hadn’t made any personal time with anyone outside of his office in at least a year. “Ok, you win and its too late to back out now anyway, I guess.” Andre pointed to a crowd of people gathered around a building that had been obviously altered to present a festive atmosphere. There were at least two dozen people outside milling around and looked to be at least three times that many on the inside.

Kiran held up his hand and called out to someone at the far end of the line. “Alana.”

Kiran made for the line and was greeted by a trim dark haired woman. Her hair was done to resemble the styles from Earth which was a stark contrast to the standard utilitarian way most wore them on planet. The difference was striking. Kiran had showed Andre her identification photo on two occasions prior and she looked completely different. The look was complemented by her attire which was completely non-standard. Andre wasn’t sure he had ever seen clothing similar, on Osage or on Earth. The clothing resembled some of the standard fashion from home but had a unique flare which was only partly due to it being obviously handmade. Andre jogged to keep up with Kiran not wanting to be left alone among a crowd which seemed comprised entirely of factory workers and

maintenance staff. As Andre approached, he got his first glimpse of Alana's friend. She didn't have the same obvious beauty as Alana but she was still far out of Andre's league. She was taller than both Kiran and Alana and was nearly as tall as Andre. She was also slender while still being shapely. Andre noted quickly that they did make a complementing physical match. He had despised his height when he was young yet grew to appreciate it as he entered his teens. Andre was purely an intellectual yet his early height allowed him to avoid many bullying situations that his peers faced. Later, as he began to mature into his height the false impression that he was athletic caused many not to focus on his extreme awkwardness around those of the opposite sex. Kiran, who had been his best friend for years, had often attempted match making only to witness spectacular failures. Now Kiran was at it again. This was not a random friend. The coincidence was too great. Kiran knew exactly what Andre's 'type' was if such a category could be gleaned from his many failures at a love connection. She was well above average height which would make him feel more at ease about his own insecurities. She was just as fit as everyone else on the planet yet still retained a curviness in the right areas. She could easily be described as pretty yet her looks were not so overpowering as to be immediately intimidating. Her azure eyes were framed by her intentionally styled blonde hair. She is exactly what Andre would hope for which is how he knew he had been set up, again.

If they were back on Earth and he hadn't been alone romantically for the past year he might have stormed away, angry for being deceived. He wasn't on Earth and the truth was that he was lonely. More to the point, she was attractive and he didn't want to leave. There was always the outside chance that he might not make an enormous fool of himself yet he doubted it.

"Hi. I'm Lily."

Her smile was was bright and her voice was friendly. She was perfect.
Andre knew immediately that the night would end in disaster.