

In Vitrolution

“It's disgusting, the way people play God.” Chris said, sounding rather exasperated. Ever since the catalyst clinic opened up in town a week ago he couldn't get his mind off of it. It just didn't seem right, people interfering with the evolution reaction. Whether they believed that it was started by physics on an atomic level like most people did nowadays or by some divine force like he was raised to believe was a completely different matter.

“God, God, God. I don't see what the big deal is, I mean, they're not killing them or anything, most parents get positive results,” replied Daryl. Chris wasn't surprised to hear him side with forced evolution, after all, Daryl was 'vitro-volved', the term kids usually used to describe those who had undergone such enhancements. He had used his abilities to get himself out of quite a few tight spots. However it couldn't be denied that those same abilities put him into those spots.

While the idea of a higher power was almost phased out of society in favor of the “Reaction Theory”, Chris' family was among those who still worshiped a God. His parents told him about how there were once hundreds of different groups who worshiped hundreds of various deities, even if the differences in them were in the little details. That wasn't really the case anymore, it really just broke down to two groups, the smallest being those who still believed in a deity despite scientific evidence, and those who accepted “The Reaction”. He was pretty sure that people just liked conflict, as even now people debated over the reaction, some people believing that we shouldn't interfere with it, and let it run its course naturally. While he didn't agree with their origin of reaction, he did agree it shouldn't be tampered with.

On the other hand the more liberal group believed that the reaction was just a simple chemical reaction, and that if they wanted to mess with it, they could. These were the same people who pushed

animal bioengineering straight through the FDA. His parents had been avid protesters of that movement, and while it was now just an accepted fact of life, cattle growing stationary in rows like sunflowers creeped him out big time. He always would hold a bit of a grudge against his parents for showing him how animals *used* to be raised. Chris always figured that, morals aside, at the end of the day it was just a more efficient way to grow meat, and no one could deny that forced evolution was a huge push to wiping out human starvation.

However, that was all in the past, his parents battle, which they lost. The big thing the past decade and a half was “invitrolution”, a process in which evolutionary catalyst was injected into the womb during the second trimester of pregnancy. This would result in babies being born with innate abilities that would manifest themselves at around puberty. While Chris wasn't sure that he'd consider those powers “positive results”, he couldn't deny that their powers seemed to be something straight from a comic book.

His biggest problem with this procedure wasn't even the interference, he was able to accept changes if they appeared to be for the greater good, like the animal bioengineering. However he just didn't like the idea of forcing people to shoulder these abilities on the whim of their parents. It wasn't common, but, there were cases of teenagers going crazy when their powers started to appear. Chris didn't think this was a side affect of the evolution, some people just didn't like the idea of being different. He still remembered one kid in from his school coming to school with his arms covered in bandages after tearing out the retractable blades in his arms.

Kids didn't even know what powers they'll have until they appeared. Chris had read into the process quite a bit as of late, and the uncertainty of it frightened him. Parents didn't pick exact powers, just what they'd enhance. For example, Daryl's parents had chosen 'muscle enhancement', now he could jump over a three story building. At the end of the day, he believed people should have a choice, and this process went against that entirely.

That's why today he was going to join the protest group organized at the school. "Alright man, I've gotta head this way," Chris suddenly said, pointing the opposite way of his true direction, "My mom needs me to pick up some stuff for dinner."

"Okay, I'll see you tomorrow then," Daryl answered, already five feet off the ground. Chris stood and watched him leap out of view, going from building to building as easily as Chris moved from one step to the other. As soon as Daryl was out of sight, Chris turned back around, heading towards the catalyst clinic. As he walked he pulled his dad's old "protest bandana" out of his bag. His dad insisted it had brought him luck at protests as a teenager, and even supposedly helped him meet his mom. While he felt rather stupid, tying it around his head, he also felt some pride for following in his dad's footsteps. Though, as he walked he couldn't help but remember that they lost their battle.

"Wow, what is that on your head?", laughed a voice Chris had never heard before as he arrived to his final destination. Turning towards the voice Chris met eyes with a girl he'd never seen before either, though he couldn't help but notice she was really cute. "Wh-what?", managed to almost cough back in surprise.

"What is that? Is that a bandana? I don't think I've seen anyone actually wear one to a protest before. Are you wearing it ironically or something? Do you come to many of these things? Is it, like, a gang symbol? Omigosh, are you in a gang?"

She spoke so fast Chris could barely keep up, "No, wait, yes? Hold on wait," he replied, still trying to break down everything she said, "okay, yes, it's a bandana, it's my dad's, he used to wear it to protests all the time," Chris suddenly started feeling rather silly about his explanation, "but no, I'm not in a gang, and I'm kind of new at these things. My name's Chris, by the way." He felt himself start to blush a little bit at his rambling.

"Oh, that's cool, my name's Sierra, yea, I come to these things all the time, I think it's terrible what they do here, how could they force children to basically be mutants? I don't know if my parents did that to me I think I'd just die."

Chris noticed that she managed to talk without breathing, secretly wondering if she somehow super-fast talking as an ability. As they walked towards the rest of the protesters he noticed that he was getting better at understanding what she was saying. “Yea, uh, its pretty messed up... so exactly what do we do here?”

“Well, this place is still new, so we haven't really gotten a chance to develop any really strong plans. For now, we basically heckle anyone who goes in...” she said, with a, in Chris' opinion, very pretty smile.

At first Chris had no idea what to say to people walking into the clinic, but after watching Sierra's example closely, he began to get the hang of it. By the time the clinic closed for the night, he was quite proud of his developed heckling skills and couldn't wait to try them out at a movie. Genius! he thought, changing gears quite abruptly he turned to Sierra, “Hey, how about after this we go see a movie? C'mon, we could practice our heckling!” He couldn't help but feel quite sly and charming at his invitation.

“I'd love to, but” Chris' hopes instantly fell, “we're meeting tonight to discuss some stronger organization for these protests, why don't you come too? It'll be around midnight at the school.” Chris' hopes picked back up, “Sure, that'd be great!”

Chris got home, feeling a bit on the giddy side, “Easy ol' boy,” he told himself, “its just a meeting, don't jump the gun.” Despite this, he ran upstairs to shower and get something nicer to wear. He was surprised to realize he was still wearing his dad's bandana, and mortified to see that wearing it for hours had left a red band around his head, even after showering. “Oh well,” he thought, tying it back on as he walked out the door, “maybe she thinks its charming.”

His fears of being unable to find where they were meeting in the school were unfounded, as soon as he walked into the building he could hear an argument that was rapidly becoming louder and louder. For the second time that day he felt himself blush, though this time it was at the instant silence when he opened the door, or maybe everyone turning towards him to have a look at 'the new guy', he

really wasn't sure.

“Uh, hello, my name's Chris,” he noticed Sierra sitting next to a some Asian goateed guy that Chris was positive was one of guys in the shouting match, “Sierra invited me here tonight.”

“Fufufufu... Herro Chris, wecome to da sorution...” goatee-guy said, twirling his goatee in a manner that Chris found infuriating. “my name is Koori, I'm dis group's 'reeda.” Chris could barely make heads or tails of his accent, apparently the others were used to it, as the huge guy sitting across from him jumped out of his chair shouting, “Leader my ass! There's no way some vitro-volved is going to be tellin' us how to stop his own damn kind! You shouldn't even be here!!”

Koori didn't immediately respond, still twirling his ridiculous goatee he finally answered, “Fufufufu... we both know I had no choice in da matta... more important than my origins are my ability to keep... a cool head...” As he finished his sentence Chris suddenly noticed that his Koori's beard, eyebrows, and hair had started to frost up, and his eyes were suddenly bright blue. “Maybe you should give it a try as well Jess?”

Suddenly the room's temperature dropped and Chris could see his breath. In a flash Koori struck Jess, who dropped to the ground shivering, now a slight blue color. This was the first time that Chris had ever seen anyone whose catalyst was in the elemental category. Their abilities were usually dangerous, so its use was pretty restricted.

“Jesus Christ man!” Chris was suddenly very sorry he had come to this meeting, “What did you do to him?” He figured this must have been a fairly common occurrence, as no one else seemed to really care, Sierra merely glanced at Jess' collapsed body, and rolled her eyes. Second only to Chris' surprise at the sudden attack, was his disgust at Koori's terrible pun.

“Prease do not be afraid, Chris,” Koori said, not taking his gaze off of Jess, “Unress you see it necessary to point out the curse my parents put on me, I have no intention of attacking you. Jess, you foo, you should know by now that this is precisery why I'm most fit to lead us. I have the most to gain,” he suddenly moved his gaze up to meet Chris', “and that is revenge! Now prease, take a seat.”

Chris quickly took the empty seat next to Sierra, too scared to feel anything about his proximity to anyone. Seeing that the blue in Koori's eyes faded, he managed to relax somewhat.

Sierra started everything back up so suddenly Chris jumped in his seat. "So, like we were saying before Chris joined us, tomorrow the clinic is putting on some sort of special deal event," Chris noticed that several people in the room shook their heads in disgust at those words, as though the clinic was committing murder. He couldn't help but wonder if he was hardcore enough for a group such as this yet. "with that in mind, I believe that tonight is the night we must strike."

"Can't argue with you there," agreed a voice from under the table, Chris suddenly realized that it was that Jess guy. He continued talking as he stood back up, looking completely recovered, "if we're gonna do this, its gonna have to be tonight. Tomorrow night security will be way too high with all the patients staying in. Tonight there'll only be a dozen or so stayin' the night."

Chris suddenly remembered something he read online, patients who underwent the catalyst application were required to stay the night for observation. It was very rare, but occasionally the fetus were overly sensitive to the procedure, reacting violently. While doctors are able to stop the reaction with evolutionary inhibitors, the exact opposite of catalysts, it had to be done immediately.

"Well then, I suppose we are agreed," Koori said, with a grin creeping onto his face, "Sierra, did you manage to procure what we need to go forward?"

"Yes." Chris wasn't sure, but he thought that there may have been some disdain amongst her words. "Everything is ready to go ahead as planned."

"Excellent!" Koori said, putting his fingers together in a way he'd never seen anyone do outside of movies, and even then, the people who did it were always villains. He regreted coming to this meeting even more. "We will all meet at the clinic in four hours. Sierra, Jess, Kane: please gather everything up and take it to the clinic. Chris, you will be coming with Erin," he indicated to a shy looking girl across the room, "and I to prep the area for their materials."

"What exactly are we doing?" Chris asked; at this point his regret was almost palpable, "I mean,

I'm not sure if I can go, I'm already out past my curfew really. Actually I really should head back home. Bye guys! Nice meetin-"

"Wrong Chris. You will not be returning 'home' just yet. We cannot have you accidentally speaking of our plans before we go through with 'em." Jess was suddenly behind him. He hadn't even seen him move. "We're gonna blow up that damned place, so it can't force children to take a destiny they don't want. You should know," Jess continued, grabbing Chris' shoulder. His grip felt like steel pincers, "Koori ain't the only one unhappy with the lot his parents drew for him."

Chris couldn't believe what he was hearing, he had expected to come out to the school and paint picket signs or write letters to congressmen, or discuss a carwash! Normal stuff! Sane stuff! He looked to Sierra desperately, "Sierra, wh-what's going on?" but she avoided his eyes, glancing around the room trying to feign a grin, "you guys are kidding right? I mean, its like, one of those hazing things, ri-GAAAAAH!!" Jess' grip on his shoulders tightened, lifting him slightly off the ground.

"Now look, you're an accomplice now. You ain't got a choice in the matter, but face it, we're only doing wrong to stop an even worse wrong. Not a parent in that damn place is worth savin'. Not after what they chose to do." Jess dropped him unceremoniously on the floor, Chris turned to see him looking grim. "You can either come with us, or you can spend the night a lot deader then you were hopin'."

He walked with Koori and Erin, still searching desperately for some indication that this whole thing was a joke. However deep down he knew it wasn't, if there was one thing that Koori kid emitted, besides ice of course, was a serious disposition. Before leaving he froze Chris' phone and pocket book to prevent any "unnecessary help from showin' up" as Jess had put it and loaded his arms with rope and wiring. Of course he didn't believe in interfering with the reaction, but he knew God's disapproval of killing was a pretty steadfast rule. As they continued to walk, he began to pray for help silently.

When they arrived Koori gave orders to Chris and Erin, only moving away from his diagrams to check their work. At every point he'd hope they'd be thwarted but he went disappointed. The locks and

guards were rendered useless after being frozen, and room where the mothers slept appeared to be sound-proofed. As soon as they were finished setting up wiring the other half of the group arrived carrying what appeared to be canvas duffel bags.

While the rest of the group carried in the bags to be set-up, Jess kept Chris in his iron grip. Chris began to plead, "Please, you can't do this, there are innocent people in there. Destroying a building is one thing, but murder is completely different!"

"Don't ya see? These people in there aren't innocent. They're slavers. They decided that they could make a decision that would force their kids to live their entire lives on someone else's terms. Not to mention interferin' with the life reaction for such a petty reason is blasphemous. Now, why don't ya just shutup and enjoy the show?"

Chris couldn't help it, he began to silently cry. He came here because he wanted to help humanity, and instead he was being forced to give it up.

The rest of the group came back out of the building. Looking at Sierra, he couldn't believe that just hours ago he'd be developing a crush on here. Those same eyes that looked so happy before now looked cold and distant. It may have just been his desperate hope, but he thought he may have seen remorse in her eyes. He continued to pray to himself feverishly.

"STOP RIGHT THERE CRIMINAL SCUM!!" a voice shouted from behind them catching everyone's attention. A trio of brightly colored people suddenly were zooming towards them. The largest, and brightest colored, of the group continued, "BREAK THE LAW ON MY WATCH, WILL YOU?!"

After what he had seen and heard, Chris had nearly forgotten that not everyone hated their powers. There were those who embraced them to help others, who wanted their evolutionary advancement to be an advancement to humanity.

"What? How did you find us?" Koori screamed, turning towards Chris he shouted, "YOU! You called them here! It was for the greater good! Sierra, finish this!" The blue shot back into his eyes,

“Jess, we'll hold them off!” and his hands frosted up. Jess threw Chris onto the ground roughly and ran to Koori's side, his muscle mass rapidly increasing.

Even with an epic battle waging behind him, Chris could think of nothing else but trying to stop Sierra, who was finishing the set-up. Chris ran towards her, trying to shout over the sounds of the introvolved fighting behind him. “Sierra! Please stop!! Don't do i-OOMPF!”

It was Erin, the same shy looking girl now had a fierce look in her eyes, “I'm sorry. I can't allow you to do that.” Instantly she was right behind him, where she struck him again on the side. “GAH!” Chris wasn't sure, but he thought that may have been where he kept his kidneys. He dropped to his knees, his eyes watering in pain. “Is every damn person here an invitroved?” he thought, as his vision blurred, Erin was instantly in front of him again. Before he knew it, he was lying on his back, “I think she just kicked me in the head, maybe.” he thought, feeling fuzzy throughout his body. As his vision faded, he heard an explosion.

“Thats it. They're dead. I couldn't stop them.” But the explosion kept going, sounding more like static from a loud TV. He opened his eyes, everything was bright yellow, the building must have been burning he figured. When he managed to get to his feet he saw that the clinic was still standing, but in front of it was a collapsed body, he was sure it was Erin. Standing over her was Sierra, glowing bright gold.

“S-Sierra... what happened? What did you do? You didn't destroy the clinic?” she turned around to face him, her eyes were also gold, “Leave. Now. Or you'll be taken out with the rest of us.”

“But, what happened to you? Are you an invitroved too?”

“GET OUT OF HERE!” She glowed brighter, she was terrifying. He stepped back, turned around and ran away. He had begun to cry again.

The next day at school all anyone talked about was the attempted terrorist attack on the clinic. Over the course of the day Chris had heard stories ranging from the Ji-Had attempting the attack to an insurance scam attempt. On the net, the story was that a group of invitroved had attempted to

destroy the clinic to get revenge. However they also wrote that an IV unit successfully stopped them, and had no mention of one of them turning against the rest.

Maybe he was wrong. Maybe he misunderstood the situation, but after a week the original attack was old news. Copy cats across the country made false bomb threats, sparking debates that went beyond the class reaction interference debate and into issue of forcing children to accept a destiny before they were even born. Even if it wasn't the way they wanted it, Sierra's group did manage to make a difference, as invitrolution was banned as further investigations continued. When the ban was announced he took his father's bandana back out from the bottom of his sock drawer. For the first time he really believed his dad, maybe it was good luck.