

Cosmic Tiger

Adam prowls the silver-smooth rounded contours of his habitation-unit. A quiet rage consumes him, gnawing at his stomach and mind, preventing him from sitting or lying down.

‘Shit. Life is shit! My life is shit! Shit. Shit. Shit.’ The word runs through his brain like an angry mantra.

‘For God’s sake Adam, eat something!’ His jailer’s voice comes over the intercom as a shiny metal tray is remotely delivered through the service hatch of his utilitarian home-space. It holds nutrients fashioned to resemble pre-collapse food. Adam picks up the tray and flings it at the protected camera lens in the ceiling. It’s a futile gesture that may bring punishment for waste and hunger pangs, but no relief from burning frustration.

He’s been so stupid, so fucking stupid! What was that need that ill-considered basic reflex-reaction humans still possess to ensure their survival? If Adam could end his life now he would do it in an instant; but this change of heart has bought about a change of circumstance, and he’s now confined to quarters, condemned to be a conservation resource rather than a free citizen of Inter-Stella One.

Adam yells at the gunk-covered camera, ‘We don’t deserve to exist! We should have died with our planet and the millions of other species we’ve destroyed! What’s so fucking special about us?’ It’s a rhetorical question worn thin by repetition – he knows the answer.

Humanities’ genes have always been destructively dominant, more important than any other species, and his bloody genes, his awesome DNA, is super-special. In Adam’s case it stands for ‘Does Not Age’. Within the curling strands of his DNA are unique levels of stamina that are not only,

unusually, non-radioactive, they do not degrade. Well they do, but not at the normal rate expected at this stage in human evolution.

Adam is the newly discovered missing-link – the specimen that has somehow skipped a few generations. He is a super-human, super-strain, super-bug. *I'm just super-stupid!* he keeps thinking, *for letting myself be trapped, contained, examined and exploited in this way!* He bangs his head against the stain-resistant self-cleaning wall. Adam has found some small measure of pleasure in discovering that this ultra-material cannot totally self-clean the viscous nature of his blood.

They had taken the metal cutlery off him the first time he had cut at his wrists, and when he had used the plastic replacements to try and drill small blood-bore-holes into his arms, they had confiscated them too. Adam is left to eat with his fingers and between meals he gnaws at his finger tips to draw forth blood which he daubs across the shiny self-clean walls. It is the only thing he can do that makes any sort of impression on his surroundings and it gives him some sort of limited, temporary peace. But if he tries to waste his precious semen he knows he will be placed in a restrainer. Adam has also tried to self-choke the miserable life from his over-valued body, so now he is denied clothing as well as dignity. He is fed and watered, but the water had been recycled millions of times and the food is not really food.

Like any animal pre-programmed for survival Adam had followed the advised precautions. He had sought the shelter, taken the meds and survived – but for what? Earth was in its death-throws and Adam now knew that he should have stayed behind to die with his planet; hindsight is such a useless ability. But no, his silent gene-machine-ego had pushed him forward for this experimental, last-chance flight into the unknown.

Seven years in and Adam wants out. He wants to die. He wants extinction. As a small boy he'd once seen a pre-collapse t-shirt on a school trip to an actual, rather than virtual, museum. Its flaking gold lettering had proclaimed that *Extinction is Forever*. Adam now craves this kind of forever

and the peace that extinction would bring. He no longer wants to merely survive, to exist in an oversized tin-can, spinning through space like some rubbish bin containing the rotting remnants of mankind; a mere echo of true humanity.

Because of this Adam's mind has been judged unbalanced and his super-duper genes are under protective custody . . . for the greater good. At regular intervals his semen is harvested. The process is both humiliating and painful and Adam has fought so hard in the past that it now takes three security personnel to catch and hold his writhing body still. On the last occasion, they'd tried lacing his nutrients with a sedative, and Adam had woken to find himself already strapped to the chair in the med-lab. But it had taken three hours for the sedation to wear off enough for the harvesting to begin.

As his tortured body was escorted back to his habitation-unit, his eyes had greedily scanned the crowded corridors for any sign of her. Eva had not visited for weeks and it appears she too has given up on him. He had been shocked by her willingness to share him with the other females of a breedable age on Inter-Stella One, where sex has become a numbers game.

Between harvestings Adam is left to cage-walk; padding up and down his tiny space-cell while the life-scientists play God and the last humans, like insidious parasites, continue their search for a new host planet.

Looking out into the inky nothingness of space, which eats through the porthole, the hull, the recycled metallic air, and seeps into what's left of his soul, Adam has no means to confound their unending quest for re-creation and re-colonisation. He'd once seen an ancient recording of a captured tiger in a concrete zoo. Its eyes held no spark and the same look of defeat now stares back at him from the porthole. He just wants to die, to become a cosmic memory, but knows he'll be forced to live as a reluctant gene-pool for man's continued, corrupted existence.

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