

Project Sixty-Two

Hope Sandlin

The two men walked in unison, their footsteps barely a whisper in the otherwise silent tunnel. “Are you saying that you’ve created these- these- in fact my friend, what is it that you are saying?” Asked the man on the left, his voice a hushed whisper. “My research, Dr. Rathaul, will save many lives. It is the science of joining our limited minds –as humans- with the technological world in which we live. Don’t you see? It is quite obvious that mere humans cannot stand up against these- threats we are seeing today. You know, with the Russians threatening a cyber war against Germany and all. It could be us next.” Dr. Rathaul stared into the eyes of the man on his right. “Dr. Patterson, tell me, how do we know this is not killing people? How do we know what we are doing?” At this, the man on the right stopped walking. Dr. Patterson reached back with his left arm and scratched the back of his head guiltily. “I assure you Peter; we know what we are doing. There is no way for this to go wrong, no option except success. Look here, it’s not like our test subjects will be missed. Most of them are orphans.” Peter Rathaul looked over at the esteemed Dr. Mark Patterson. “Wait a minute- you’re hybridizing *children*!?” The lesser man exclaimed, wearing a look of multiple emotions. Mark Patterson held his hands up in a surrender. “Oh, come now Peter. At least take a look at what we’ve done before you say no.” Peter Rathaul sighed as Mark led on, whipping out a keycard and inserting it into a slot in the wall, along with putting his fingerprint ID in. The door clicked open with a metallic scraping noise, allowing the two doctors to enter.

The door led to another hallway, this one, much larger. Peter Rathaul sighed as he made eye contact with the same familiar whitewashed walls. It made him feel rather uncomfortable. “What is that there?” Dr. Rathaul asked as they passed a metal door. “Oh, that? That’s a containment room in the case of a problem, but we haven’t had to use it.” Peter watched the shifty eyes of Dr. Patterson. He was hiding something; Peter was sure of that. The two doctors walked up to a blank wall. “What are we doing? Surely there is more to see.” Peter questioned. Turning slightly, Dr. Patterson gave him a look that made him shrivel back. A moment later, blue light raced down the wall and seemed to widen, forming a perfect square of light. Soon after, Peter noticed that the blue square was actually an image. “Holographic imaging” He knew it was called, but he was not familiar the technology associated with it, which was another thing that made him feel unwelcome. Peter looked for a moment from behind the esteemed scientist. “Is that- a map?” He questioned softly, almost afraid of the other doctor, almost. “Yes, it is. Come closer.” The doctor beckoned. Peter flinched at the doctor’s extreme change of tone. At first, he had seemed rather perturbed, but his voice had smoothed itself out. It was actually quite frightening when combined with the strange grin Dr. Patterson wore. Slowly, very slowly, he walked forwards, taking his first real look at the map. He could see the shape of the lab matched the shape of the holograph. “Wow, you’ve got the perfect square of a lab here, don’t you?” Peter joked. His eyes wandered, allowing him to notice two projectors that had pulled out from the wall above. “This is a very impressive facility Dr. Patterson and here I was thinking that this would be a waste of time.” He chuckled before noticing the rooms that lined the back hall. “What do you do in those rooms?” Peter asked, gazing profoundly into the eyes of the other doctor. “I couldn’t hope to explain it to you. However, it seems that you’re in luck. There is a test happening- err- now. If we hurry, we can make it. I think you’ll find the process very interesting.” Peter watched as Dr. Patterson placed his hand over the room labeled ‘Testing chamber Ten.’ A moment later, the sound of a highspeed machine could be heard above the constant rumble of the

generators in the background. A small tram turned the corner and Dr. Patterson urged him forward. They were rushed down the hall at a speed -Peter guessed- was greater than seventy miles per hour. After what felt like a single blur of a moment, they had arrived in front of a door with a sign that matched the name of the room on the map. The sign itself was made of glass with blue engravings that reminded Peter of the map he'd seen earlier. "Are you ready Dr. Rathaul? What you see here will change everything." Rathaul nodded in response and the two continued on.

The two doctors burst through the doors which led to the testing chamber, or at least, the viewing area. "Ah, Dr. Patterson. We were not expecting you here today." Dr. Patterson waved his hand. "Dr. Lewis -err Jim- there's no need for such formality here. How many times must I tell you?" The man named Jim cracked a smile. "Too many Dr. Patterson, too many. Who's your friend?" Jim Lewis muttered, his grin widening. "Yes, I need to introduce him." Mark muttered, grabbing the small phone. The message spoken would be broadcasted to everyone in the chamber. "My dear friends, I ask of you to join me in welcoming Dr. Peter Rathaul to the chamber here today to witness what it is we do. Now, seeing as we have been stable in creating hybrids for over two years now, why don't we give him a show?" Several of the scientists shot him confused glances. "What I mean, my loyal employees, is that we are going to proceed with Project Sixty-Two. Besides, Dr. Rathaul has agreed to fund us if this goes well and I will make sure to include a bonus in your next paychecks. Doesn't that sound nice? Now, who wants to do this?" There was a unanimous cheer in reply. Mark Patterson motioned for Peter to follow as they started warming up the machine. Meanwhile, Rathaul noticed, two men carried a small bundle to the platform in the center of the room. They placed the bundle upon it before bolting back in the direction they had come from. The machine started to spew out blue light. "Is that normal?" Peter asked, sounding horrified. "What's in the blankets Mark?" He questioned again. Mark Patterson did not answer. Peter could only watch as the machines in the corners began to smoke. "That doesn't look right! Mark!" He now yelled. The emissions turned dark as the machines began to smoke more. "Mark-!" Peter had started but was cut off by the sound of an explosion. He turned his head to his left and saw that both machines were going up in flames. "Peter!" Came the voice of Mark, barely heard over the roar of the fire. "Mark! What is happening?!" Peter yelled in reply. Both doctors were now standing in the middle of chaos. The glass shielding the control center had shattered, the shards killing two scientists. The others had probably fled already. "Mark. What is that?" Dr. Rathaul asked, now frightened, though he was doing his best not to look so. "My god!" Mark exclaimed as he turned to look at what the other doctor was pointing at. "Pull that lever, yes, the red one." Peter did as he was told. The wall opened up in the chamber and a foamy liquid was released, smothering the flaming machines and putting them out. "Grab that towel and follow me. I need to know if he's alive."