



8-15-2017

The Kevins (excerpt)

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Recommended Citation

Anderson, Lily (2017) "The Kevins (excerpt)," *HUMBUG*: Vol. 2017: Iss. 3, Article 3.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.dartmouth.edu/humbug/vol2017/iss3/3>

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Cover Page Footnote

*This is an excerpt of a longer piece, the full piece will appear in the 18S chapbook, which is the culminating issue of the year

The Kevins (excerpt)

Kevin kissed the top of his daughter's head and caught his wife's eye again before he stepped up to walk into the lab. Her hair was hot from the August sun and smelled like peaches. The crowd behind his young family and wife cheered as he waved goodbye one last time before walking into the hospital, with the exception of the protesters off to the side with sandwich boards and posters affixed to their bodies. Some extremely religious, most simply scared of the implications the project carried. His security detail ushered him up the stairs and he turned back to glance over the view of San Jose- possibly for the last time.

Inside the hospital, he knew the hallways well, having been preparing for this day for over 11 months. He walked up the stairs to the third floor and into a room to put his worldly possessions aside for now. He donned scrubs and placed his phone, wallet and watch on the bench. He looked at himself in the mirror as he felt the first twinge of fear. He inspected his face, wondering if he would be the same person in an hour. He took three deep breaths and tried out a calm smile before heading to the left to room 326. The large room was chaotic as the doctors, assistants and scientists made final preparations for the procedure. Kevin calmly entered the room as everyone stopped to look at him. One nurse started applauding, but it quickly died out. He knew the drill, walking back to the reclining chair in the secluded back room and laying down for his final body checks. 3 doctors, including the principal researcher Dr. Johnson took his pulse, blood pressure, blood sugar, and temperature. His body had been closely monitored for the past four months leading up to this day, and nothing was out of the ordinary. It was time.

Doctor Anthony Johnson was the pioneer of an entirely new science known as cellular copy transportation- more commonly called "teleportation" by the general public. Although it had been used successfully on single cell organisms, plants, insects, and birds, human tests had taken years to approve. Today was the day.

After the initial scans, all of the teams were ready to begin. The barely contained excitement and tension was palpable in the room. Dr. Johnson was standing with his hand on Kevin's shoulder and talking about the incredible scientific history about to be made, the environmental implications for human transportation, the money to be made in commodification of the technology, Kevin nodding tensely and thinking of his daughters. Would they see his body? Would it be gruesome? Kevin scanned the room for the anesthesiologist and mercifully saw him crossing towards the reclined chair. Just as the team had practiced, the mask went on, Kevin counted down from 100, and the world went dark.

Dr. Johnson motioned for his assistant Julie to help roll Kevin into the metal chamber in which the DNA transfer was possible. He watched Kevin's calm face in its dreamlike state, envying the man's lack of mental and emotional participation in the stage to come. As he backed out of the room, the doors swung shut and could be heard sealing themselves.

The entire process would take about 10 minutes, and everyone had an assigned screen to keep an eye on, watching some element of the process. The clock on the wall began counting down to the start- now at 8 minutes, now 4, now everyone chanting along with 10 seconds remaining.

As the clock hit 0, the monitors went black. Kevin Bleker's vital signs were burned into Dr. Johnson's eyes for a second as he comprehended what had just happened. The entire room was silent for a long time until suddenly...

...The heavy metal doors released to find Kevin reclined on the sofa just as he had been 14 minutes before. A collective sigh of relief went up as the crowd of scientists and doctors saw his chest rise and fall, his body calm and in one piece. The relief was almost instantly punctured by the realization that the test had failed. It was proven scientifically impossible to transport a human. Everyone in the room was busy at work on different computers, working to figure out what had happened and why the technology had failed.

The phone rang loudly in the corner. Dr. Johnson rushed over,

wondering which hell he would have to face first: the media, the Sacramento site, government officials, or even a member of one of the many anti-cellular copy transportation groups. The voice surprised him.

“San Jose, this is Sacramento. Dr. Mallory Dodd here confirming a success! Kevin is here, and appears to be in good health. We'll update you when he's awake. Tell his wife! Tell the press!”

The celebration at the receiving site was audible through the phone. Dr. Johnson felt his knees go out. He stuttered a response as his assistant Julie ran to help him off the floor.

“Kevin... is there? Doctor Dodd, there must be something wrong. Kevin is also here.”