

THE LAST MEDICAL MARVEL OF THE 21ST CENTURY

It's been 28,871 days since Lucy last opened her eyes.

At least, that's what they tell her—*she* certainly hasn't been counting. Since then, it's been day after day of physiotherapy and speech rehabilitation and being pricked by needles, until she's almost ready to say *please, just let me rest*. But she doesn't, too afraid that closing her eyes again might mean missing out on yet another century.

The nurses responsible for her care are flesh and blood and friendly, but they won't tell her anything. She gets the basic rundown—a car crash, a coma, the first truly successful cryogenic sleep, the story corroborated by pale scars on her torso and hands. Nothing about the world *now*; they don't want to upset her too much, overload her, overwhelm her.

After three weeks, they move her to a room with a window overlooking a lush green courtyard. Lucy watches other nurses walking with patients near the ponds and vibrant flowerbeds. She takes note of the unnatural paleness of one nurse, the mechanical fingertips of another.

She's relieved to see that there are birds. She hopes they're real.

Dr. Yun is close to Lucy's age and has great hair, a bright robin's breast red. She looks like the sort of person who would wear fashionable glasses, but she doesn't appear to need them. Lucy hasn't seen anybody that does.

"I'm ready to go outside," Lucy says.

Dr. Yun looks up from taking notes on her tablet. Lucy's pretty sure that Dr. Yun doesn't actually need to move her fingers to type, and that the gestures are mostly for Lucy's sake.

"Are you, now?" Dr. Yun asks. "I don't get a say in this, as your doctor?"

"Yeah, see, I think you've been getting *all* the say?" Lucy points out. "So I'd like to have some say. A small say."

Dr. Yun doesn't smile, but the corner of her lips twitches slightly. She regards Lucy seriously. "The world is very different from what you're used to."

"Thank *fuck*," Lucy says, fervently. "Do you know what it was *like* in 2020?"

Dr. Yun's eyes go very wide, and she quick covers her mouth with one hand. She doesn't laugh, but she coughs sharply, and gives Lucy's arm a brief squeeze.

"Right," she says. "I'll see what I can arrange."

They walk on the road, or what used to be one. Now, there's only a single remaining lane, smoothly paved. Pedestrians weave in and out of market stalls set up in front of storefronts that are reassuringly familiar to Lucy: small cafés and bistros, stores selling clothing and books.

"Huh," Lucy says, holding onto Dr. Yun's arm, walking slowly. "Did we finally kill cars?"

"In the cities, mostly. We still use electronic single-use vehicles in the suburbs, or for people that can't access transit easily."

"Good riddance." Lucy looks up to the sky, squinting slightly. It's a bright morning, but there's still a little bit of a haze in the air. The high condominiums and office buildings she remembers seem much less forbidding with foliage gushing out over every balcony, bright flowers swarming with fat bees.

Dr. Yun follows her gaze. "The air quality's fine today," she assures Lucy. "I checked before we went out. On bad days, cloudier ones, you might need a mask, but you can pick those up anywhere."

She says it like it's no big deal. Like, *better wear sunscreen*.

Lucy feels something well up in her chest, nameless, formless, tight. "And here I thought this was going to be some kind of utopia. With every problem solved. Perfect."

Dr. Yun glances at her sidelong. "As though we could ever get everyone to agree on what a perfect world would look like."

Seventy-two days later, Lucy stands in front of a door to an apartment complex. The door has no keyhole, just a smooth pad pulsing with a soft electronic light.

She runs her fingertips over her ID badge like it could somehow make it *hers*, and not just some keys she's swiped to a great wide world that still seems so foreign to her.

She almost lost her chance, though, last century. She's not going to let fear stop her from making the best of this one.

She taps her wrist lightly to the keypad. With a soft *beep*, the door opens, and she steps inside.