

Ali Farhadi

Finalist

2019 CFUW Writing Contest

### The Forever Genesis

The message was clear: the bus driver wouldn't have it. He'd have to wait. Frustrated, he sat back down. He'd missed his stop.

The rain's drunken waltz on the roof and a crying engine, a troubled mind's great lullaby to daydream nightmares. He was no exception. Too busy planning too many things, sometimes he forgot he had to get home first.

The rusty little thing was wounded by the ages. The walls discoloured, more brown than gray at that point, wounded with graffiti of many generations with familiar and alien scripts alike. As if anyone cared they were ever there. Fluorescent lamps, or the few still alive, playfully flickered to their rhythmic light show, too faintly spectral to bother any of the fellow passengers' sleep. There were seven in total; three nearly identical children in physique and fashion both, given they were apes, and an old, bearded, brawny fellow with hair as pale as fear to his right. To his left... oh.

Naked. Very much naked.

An unshaved brunet of a man on whose shoulder lay the head of an equally pasty-white fair-haired snoring woman, neither covered with more than a single leaf where it counted.

No. Eight. Standing in front of him was a boy, looking no older than ten, yawning.

"Finally awake? I was beginning to think I've gotten too old to get it right anymore."

"Hey there, kiddo," he replied half-heartedly. He was never good with children, never planned to be.

“It’s Doug, thank you. That’s what my friends would call me if they remembered.”

“I’m—”

“Adum, yes. I know it’s a bit weird. Sorry, never quite gotten the hang of this naming thing.”

“Yes... How—what?”

“Not very observant, eh? Guess I had to tone that down to fit the rest.”

Adum stood up to avoid further confrontation. Then he saw it out the window: What he could’ve sworn was a streetlamp a second ago was now a... galaxy?

Space. He was definitely floating in far space inside a rickety bus talking to what appeared to be the prepubescent source of creation.

“Now let’s have a chat,” exclaimed the boy, sporting a mischievous smile, “father to son.”

And he showed him. Adum always thought he was an ordinary man destined to no more than anyone else, certainly not to meet Him. He was right. He was painfully ordinary. Everywhere he looked were civilizations, species identical to himself and vastly different, planes congruent with his logic and those Doug didn’t even bother commenting on. Worlds far more advanced and those far less evolved. Those at constant war with sticks and those in which every member of the species had the power to cause total extinction.

“Why?” he would ask if he only remembered how to speak.

“Because I felt lonely, really,” Doug replied anyway, chuckling. “This used to be the only route around, y’know, back when I still used mud for everything, before this state of general disrepair made it impossible to keep a straight wrist.”

In an exhale, everything was black once more. No. Darker. No galaxies or stars to be seen, no life and no death, but something less. The jovial child suddenly went grim.

“And now that’s the case again.” For a second, he looked as old as he sounded.

“Everyone surpassed me long ago, and every time, in every timeline I begin anew, they just disappear. They’re smarter than me, with greater conviction and wisdom, but they always choose to die. Adum, I don’t want to be alone. I’m afraid to die.” He cried human tears then, mourned as a child who wasn’t in control. He wept for what felt like hours, millennia.

“I don’t wanna die,” Adum echoed, selfish, in sympathy. “I… I think I want to start again.”

Doug grinned the widest grin he’d ever seen. Adum noticed he was missing a canine.

“That’s the spirit, kiddo! I’ll drop you off somewhere nice. ‘Earth,’ they call it. The second one I ever made.”

In that moment, all Adum wanted to do was make that little kid happy. He didn’t care what he was before, his minuscule problems, life. He could leave it all and start right. In fact, he left it behind right then.

“Doug, I’ve one request. Before you let me get off, help me forget everything I was before.”

His smile disappeared. He did not move a muscle, but Adum already felt like entering the blank of sleep. “Funny,” Doug sniggered bitterly, “that’s what you asked last time.”