

## It's You

She appeared in a dream. Winsome, wholesome, ethereal.

She appeared in a dream, but I know she is real. My rational brain could never conjure a creature so lovely.

I must find her.

My family—How they laugh when I speak of her. ‘Son, for a man of science, your head is in the clouds,’ Father once said.

My colleagues at the Institute tease. ‘I suppose you’re hoping for a *chemical reaction* or an intense electrical *charge* when your eyes meet hers from across a smoky room? *Haha.*’

The joke’s on them. I wouldn’t be caught dead in a smoky room.

And my friends . . . . Who has time for friends?

Over the years, they’ve all tried to steer me towards others. Exceptional young women with charming smiles, maternal urges, and intellects to rival mine. Women who would make a fine wife. For another man.

She appeared in a dream. She is real. I will find her.

‘Will you be gracing us at the Christmas party this year, Professor?’ Rachel asks hopefully. She’s never given up. Not in the five years since she’s been my lab assistant. ‘It’s going to be a banger. Frank from Infectious Diseases is bringing his karaoke machine.’

I button up my coat and shake my head. The thought of Frank belting his rendition of *She Blinded Me with Science* or some other banal 80s number is enough to turn my stomach. Besides, everyone at the office will bring a date—life partners or flavours of the month. ‘Maybe next year,’ I say.

‘You say that every year,’ she says, pouting her thin lips.

‘Well, perhaps things will be different next year.’

The 6:24 train is more crowded than usual. I stand against the door, my face mere inches from the glass pane, a 1.2 meter-wide petri dish harbouring myriad germs of unknown origins. The train lurches when it crosses the Ara River overpass. I lose my footing and tumble forward; my forehead presses against the filthy glass. That’s when I see her. Gazing up at the stars from the river bus below.

I’m miles from home, but I must be there to meet her on the off chance she disembarks at the next terminus. I have to be there. I’ve searched for far too long.

When the doors hiss open, I push through the crowd on the platform, clamber up the narrow stairs, and sprint towards the gates. I turn on my heel to get my bearings out on the unfamiliar street. Shimmering lights reflect on ripples along the river downhill from where I stand. In the distance, I see the river bus pull up to the dock.

I run. Like I've never run before.

As I peruse the faces of her fellow passengers emerging from the bus, my mind races. What if I've missed her? What if I'm wrong?

An electric charge runs through me when my fingertips brush against another's.

I turn around.

Her eyes meet mine.

'It's you,' she says. 'It's you.'