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HOMO SAPIEN

Bailey Davis

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HOMO SAPIEN

By Bailey Davis

A gentle breeze picks up, kisses his skin and carries some loose strands of dirty blonde across his cheek. They catch in his beard. He slowly tucks the strays behind his ear, mindful not to move too quickly, and cranes his neck, allowing his eyes to follow the individual. They round the corner of the building and disappear from sight. *Were they carrying something?*

His stomach growls as he carefully settles back into the hiding spot he constructed. A stick from his backrest digs into him, uncomfortable, he shifts. His stomach demands attention; hunger is no stranger and the consequential pains, his constant companion, remind him that he is alive.

Who were these people he had been surveying for the entire moon cycle? They were a strange group – seemingly boundless in energy, never hungry, and in perfect health. Most interesting of all was their skin which seemed to be painted in various colours – red, brown, grey, green – each person slightly different, like himself.

Other than their routine breaks – where they would faithfully emerge in droves to bask in the warmth of the sun – they kept busy around their compound. *Doing what though?* Of that, he was not sure as he knew of very little outside the search for food.

In his community there had been gatherings, mostly to relay information and share resources. On occasion, they would have a large celebration with a magnificent fire; these events would, in their own way, extend far into the night – the monstrous flames licking away at the darkness and the gathering breaking the dawn. Celebrations were rare. Most of their time was preoccupied with gathering food – greens, nuts, and berries – and hunting; healthy animals were hard to find.

His thoughts return to the spear he had been sharpening prior to the emergence of the individual. He reaches for the sturdy stick and studies the point, satisfied with the sharp tip, he then examines the shaft; it was still wearing some blood from the rabbit he caught at half moon. He fell into good fortune with finding food here after being exiled from his community.

He was cursed. Or worse, infected with a sickness, people said, as an orange crust-like layer developed on his skin by his shoulder. Not knowing what this was, his community turned him away for fear that his sickness would spread and decimate them.

He glances at the orange crust, now engulfing his right shoulder in beautiful concentric circular patterns. Since last full moon, it spread further down his arm towards small islands of bright green leaf-like lobes developing on his hand. It reminds him of the growths found on trees and rocks, lichen was what his mother called it.

Longing for his attention, his stomach growls again. Louder this time. He acquiesces and emerges from his hideout. Crouching low, he makes his way to the climbing structure; it feels gritty and leaves reddish-brown specks on his palms as he makes his way down. He descends into the growth below where tall grasses and some young trees escape through breaks in the hard rock-like ground. He stops to survey his surroundings. Convinced of his solitude, he heads toward the strange lightning bolt and sun. This is where he had been lucky with his previous hunt.

“He must be hitting low energy. Yanaw turns from the mini-screen to face Vish. “It has been fifteen days since he last consumed protein matter and aside from a narrow selection of plant matter, Community has not observed consumption of anything else.”

Vish looks up thoughtfully, “Did Liyat save anything from the feeding?”

“No, it was entirely consumed. Liyat was observed working on their spear earlier. Community needs to decide if another *Sylvilagus floridanus* is to be prepared.”

“Honestly?! Consuming *Sylvilagus floridanus*? What an animal!” Yanaw and Vish turn, surprised, to find Lycho standing in the doorway to the small lab.

“Lycho!” Vish exclaims, “You’re back. How was the tour of Caregrounds QC5340CAN?”

“Never mind my tour right now. Why are we facilitating energy transfer to a *Homo sapien sapien*? To keep it alive? Has their species not been destructive enough? I thought our mandate was to not interfere and let their kind suffer with what they’ve created.”

Somewhere along the way, the *Homo sapien sapien* species, or Saps for short, lost their way. Propelled by greed, many populations fragmented and became disconnected; their domination created a world so ill it could no longer support their health. These Saps relied heavily on specific individuals called doctors – known as body mechanics in Community – for their wellness.

Yanaw enjoyed being a body mechanic. It was a straightforward job and they liked the hands-on aspect of repairing physical bodies – broken bones, lacerations, damaged organs, symbiont loss. There was a

certain satisfaction in being able to restore something physical to its near original condition. However, they also held great respect and reverence for the healing powers of Community energy workers and earth connection.

For an era, the majority of Saps ignored and turned away from these healing elements and they attempted to stamp out those who held tightly to this knowledge, to the peril of their species. They collapsed and it was of their own creation. They neglected to acknowledge the direct link between human health and the wellbeing of all relations – living and non-living. They were too disconnected to understand that caring for and protecting their environment is the foundation of healthcare. Humans are the environment; the environment is them.

Immediately before their downfall, there had been no way to avoid consuming environmental pollutants, the toxins were everywhere and in everything – glyphosate, fluoropolymers, phenols, parabens, phthalates, pharmaceuticals and their metabolites ... the list was endless. A vast majority of Saps became sterile and overrun with cancers. Their nervous systems ceased to function properly. Their intestines leaked and their immune systems crashed. The consumption of all the contaminated matter caused them intense physical pain and sickness with starvation being the only alternative.

This was when the *Homo sapien symbiosis* species, or Syms, flourished, as they had very little requirement for matter owing to their photobiont and mycobiont partners. Syms were able to obtain energy from the sun through their symbiotic relationship, which also provided them with nutrients. They were able to maintain near perfect health without having to ingest poisonous matter. They advanced and expanded upon the existing technologies at that time and they focused on environmental remediation, recognized by them to be healthcare, while the remaining Saps deteriorated, regressed, and quarreled amongst themselves. Yanaw and their species focused on caring for the great Mother, nursing her back to health, for her health was their health and she produced any medicine they could ever want for.

“But THIS Sap is interesting, Lycho. Read the report, I’ll put it up.” Yanaw quickly turns to the mini-screen and makes a gentle swiping motion across the glass surface with their hand. Beside them, a panel displaying a rich scene of Carolinian forest fades away to words.

Lycho closes their eyes. Anger, ignited by overhearing their conversation about the sacrifice, wells inside them. They draw in deep breaths allowing the feeling to pass. Once calmed, Lycho’s eyes open.

“Let’s see it then.”

**OBSERVATION REPORT NO.
ON9406CAN-887-05-2372**

Location:

43°35'50.2"N 79°47'22.1"W
(Caregrounds ON9406CAN)

Domain: Eukarya

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Primates

Family: Hominidae

Genus: Homo

Species: sapien

Subspecies: sapien

Energetics: Heterotroph*

OBSERVATION LOG

Entry 1:

Homo sapien sapien (Sap) observed hunting, with spear, on perimeter of Caregrounds ON9406CAN.

Appears to be disease-free and requiring nourishment.

Unaware of *Homo sapien symbiosis* (Sym) community. Hypothesized to be from tribe Sapien 9 (S9) located 43°43'07.8"N 79°57'25.2"W.

Entry 2: Sap subject migrated closer to Sym community. Stalking behaviour indicates a conscious awareness of Community.

Aggression assessment: low

Entry 3: Sap subject observed consuming leaves of *Malva sylvestris* and *Taraxacum officinale*.

Entry 4: Sap subject has been given the name Liyat. Liyat has started to construct a shelter on the roof of a nearby heritage construct called "Michaels". Continues to consume plant matter: *Malva sylvestris*, *Taraxacum officinale*, and *Trifolium spp.*

Entry 5: Liyat unknowingly came within close proximity to community member Hawluk. Hawluk observed that Liyat has typical foliose occurring on the hands and orange crustose on the upper right arm indicating symbiosis. Hypothesis is morphogenesis.

Team has discussed and further observation of Liyat is necessary.

Community to decide if a sacrifice of *Sylvilagus floridanus* is warranted for energy transfer to Liyat to ensure continued observation.

Entry 6: Liyat discovered the *Sylvilagus floridanus* on Caregrounds ON9406CAN. Sacrifice occurred. No form of gratitude expression performed by Liyat was observed.

Entry 7: ...

Lycho's eyes scan the report absorbing the events of the past month and they settle on Entry 5. Silence holds the lab until Lycho slowly starts, "Are you implying that this *Homo sapien sapien...*", their words trail off in thought.

"Liyat." Corrects Yanaw, picking up where Lycho faded. "Liyat appears to have a random mutation allowing symbiosis and possibly energetic metamorphosis."

"Well," – Vish jumps in – "this is our current hypothesis. Further observation is required. Entry 17 notes that the symbionts are spreading. Too bad extractive methods have been restricted otherwise we could run the genome."

"Is it?" Yanaw furrows their brow. "Is it too bad we decided against destroying and causing harm to our relations for selfish purposes?"

Vish looks to their shoes.

"The sun is peak, let's go, I need a refresh. We will discuss in Community." Yanaw stands and begins toward the door.

Vish cradles the soft body in the crook of their left arm as they make their way toward the retired commercial center through a central alley between two looming buildings donning matching suits of degradation. After a long discussion during regeneration, Community decided to provide another *Sylvilagus floridanus* to Liyat, but this time, it was to be one that just passed from natural causes.

Vish stops once they reach the open space, a parking lot in another era. Their eyes drink in the sight of reclamation – generations of trees of varying heights and species stand rooted amongst the busted asphalt, grasses sneak and weave their way through cracks, and vines snake along crumbling concrete walls and up rusted posts. They turn right, away from "Michaels" and make their way through the burgeoning forest, being careful not to trip on the jagged ground. Their eyes rest on the word *almart* laying on the ground, above them a giant side-ways *W* clings precariously to the face of the building; it is kept company by a small sun-like logo. A light breeze musters enough strength to pull a blue leaf of peeling paint from the building. It listlessly flutters to the ground. With a tree standing in the line of sight between them and Liyat, Vish places the small body on the ground. With a hand still on the soft fur, they pause to give gratitude before they stand and continue walking to the end of the building and around the corner.

Six moon cycles have passed since he first encountered the community. He decided to call them the Sun People. He also decided they were harmless, so he was less cautious with his movements; he freely explored his surroundings but always kept a respectable distance from them.



The Sun People have been leaving offerings for him, every fifteen suns. Recently, his desire for food is waning so the last offering will go untouched by him. Instead, it is given to the sun, the rain, and the wind. It is cherished by the small, black, six-legged creatures who scramble to carry pieces back to their colonies. It becomes a hub of life that the grasses dance around when the wind decides to pick up its music. Slowly, it becomes one with the earth again.

He kneels and leans over the ditch with cupped hands to scoop up some water to splash over his head. He feels the coolness of the liquid as it runs its course over his face and down his neck. He repeats the action, closes his eyes, and again appreciates each individual path the water decides to take to traverse his body. Opening his eyes, he moves closer for a drink and catches a glimpse of himself floating on the stillness of the puddle. He pauses. The growth has consumed his body. His skin is a patchwork of colour, concentric

gradients of orange randomly interrupted by bright greens.

Lichen.

He hears his mother's voice emerge from an old but pleasing memory. He closes his eyes, returns to his childhood, and watches her as she guides his small hand over the bright yellow skin covering the rock. She smiles at him.

It's beautiful.

Somewhere among the moon cycles his long-time companion, stomach pain, bid him farewell. He doesn't eat, yet he has never felt better in his life, full of energy, light and quick on his feet, ready for any task; the natural rhythms of his body bound tightly to the earth and the sun.

END

Bailey Davis

Population Medicine, University of Guelph, Canada

Contact:

bailey.helena.davis@gmail.com

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