

***Evolution***

1,393 Words

Laura tumbled out of bed at 5:30 AM to the clamor of the alarm clock and clock radio. Flipping both of them off quickly, before Davie awakened, she slipped downstairs to her half hour of exercise and quiet, a cup of coffee and hair out of curlers, if she was lucky.

“Mommeeee! Up!” Right on time. He rattled the gate that kept him in his room.

“Just a minute. Mommy’s coming.” Finish coffee, then run back upstairs. A wail. toddler’s impatience declared.

“Mommy’s here. Good morning. Up now?”

He raised his two-year-old chubby arms to her and when lifted, snuggled sleepily on her shoulder. A cuddle-bug doll-baby for the moment.

“Tea?”

“Nope.” Decisive.

“Toast?” A nod. He patted her arm.

“Dirty.”

“OK. Mommy fix.”

A fast change and then downstairs for breakfast. The school fed him but morning toast was essential for both their schedules. She dressed while he ate.

He sat up on the sink and played at tooth brushing while she put on her makeup. She dressed him and scurried them both into the car.

“School now Davie. You like school?”

“Uh uh.” That was yes. A lazy talker they said.

She needed gas and pulled in to the only station on the route. Where was the attendant? Talking. She waited to be noticed. Davie fussed.

“Just a minute. He’s finally moving.” Time was wasting. Why did he always walk so slowly?

“Fill it up. Unleaded please.” She passed the credit card out the window. Davie watched. She wondered how much linger they would even give this much service. She remembered windshield washing, air in tires checked with a fill-up. Soon it would be fill it up yourself.

“Card?” Davie declared it his.

“Patience, Davie. One of us should have some!”

She heard the splash of gas and got out to look.

“Will you wash it off please?” Impatience. It was always the same. When would they put in self-service pumps?

Back on the road, she headed for his school. Davie played with his seat belt.

“Pop! Pop!” He opened it, declaring so for her approval.

“No Pop!” She struggled to push it shut while turning onto the last street. “Not yet!”

He giggled. There was no seat belt made that he could not undo in seconds. She had experimented out of curiosity. Only her authority held him in check. She parked at the school.

“OK, pop it now.”

He complied and proceeded to work on the door. She ran around and caught a hand as he emerged. Door did not hold him either.

Inside, he ran to play after a smoochy goodbye. She turned to his teacher.

“How is he doing?” This was the second week at the school. She worried.

“Just fine. Loves everyone. All the mothers have to kiss him goodbye.”

Davie belted the seven year old who had tried to take the truck he had chosen.

“He does need a little control though. And, he is so bright for his age.”

She had heard that too often to let it register.

“Davie, say you’re sorry.” He was safely out of reach.

“Sorry.” Perfunctory. He hardly looked up.

“He’s too cute to punish.” The teacher seemed to think that was OK.

Damn! She had hoped that the school would help. He was precocious and dominant. A bit more than she liked, although he *always* responded to her requests. She’d have to work with him more at home.

She hurried out to work. Poor Davie! There would probably never be a school that suited him just as none had ever suited her. But the law said he had to go. And she suspected that he’d have a rougher time with his peer group. He already preferred, *preferred*, older kids.

Brake! Stupid fool! Pulled out right in front of her without looking. Good thing she was fast! A too-close near-miss.

Parked and into the office, to the secretary bay, a fast cup of coffee. Maintain the routine, boring, dull. But keep the routine, at all costs, keep the routine. A new class was scheduled soon. Just read data sheets, and check computations.

“Good morning” to the secretaries. Much chatter behind her. Sometimes she would indulge, make the effort, fit in. There was such a gap, her work put up such a barrier, or maybe she did. She discarded worrying about it.

To her desk, start organizing what appeared to be a dull day. She was responsible for seminars to teach customers how to use the LSI devices her company designed and the lull between seminars was always a bummer. She loved the excitement of the classroom. She worked better on deadline and thinking on her feet. Today, it was slow enough that she'd rather be home.

When she took this job it had been a challenge, totally unrelated to anything she had done before. It was what she sought on every job. And every one of them became too easy, too under stimulating. She just had to learn not to underestimate herself.

It had taken three months for this one to deteriorate – it was happening faster. She didn't know what she'd try next.

An old lecture from her professor flitted by as she sipped on the now cold coffee.

“The human brain grows in stages, ramp and plateau, ramp and plateau.” She must be “climbing another ramp” or something like that. She sipped the last of the coffee as she sorted her desk. Hallway chatter drifted in. She let her thoughts flow along with it as she worked.

“Drought----“ *Small wonder, they never planted after those fires.*

“The market’s up----“ *Speculators are at it again.*

“Flooding in ---“ *More weather problems, patterns shifting, but the ice age is still coming.*

“---new baby! He’s already got six!” *When will they learn their manhood is not defined by overpopulating the planet.*

“Pollution! Can’t even see the mountains----“ *Too many people living in the same place and driving too many cars.*

“----starving in----“ *They over-worked the land. Could solve it though ----*

And on and on. The day’s headlines served back up for discussion. She didn’t need to read the paper, it went by in the hall. Bits and pieces of the mess the world was in. *Too much narrow vision, too much self-serving interests, too many people.*

Homo sapiens were evolving, but would it be in time?

Ah well, build the space station! She was ready! Not a bad idea today.

Another lecture for her professor, another Einstein, but so far ahead that he hadn’t been recognized as such before his death. Maybe later. She had mastered his theorems and added to them. It was puzzles. She loved puzzles.

He told her that Homo Sapiens was evolving, splitting as Cro Magnum and Neanderthal had been assumed to have done before. There would be a war for dominance. Sometime in the next 200 years. Or maybe sooner.

*Assuming we last that long!* she thought to herself. Maybe then she’d get to go into space. When more intelligent people evolved and took over.

The fragmented conversations continued outside her door. It was taking them along time to settle down this morning. If she wasn't so bored, it wouldn't bother her. But today -----

She reached for an aspirin. Her head ached. Not a normal one either. It was a driving pain as if she'd been hit in the head with something. She wished the coffee clutch in the hall would shut up. She dimmed her lights.

They did. Shut up. It took a moment for the quiet to register.

She cautiously stepped into the hall. No one spoke. They just stood there.

No sound came out. They did not even blink. They were breathing, but nothing else.

She wished them to return to their desks.

As if pulled on marionette strings, they marched off in their various directions.

She dared not wish for anything else. Not yet. She panicked. What was happening?

The headache gave way to a buzzing, like a phone that was not properly connected. She concentrated on it, tried to determine the source.

A thought surfaced.

She "saw" the school. No child moved. They stood and stared, glassy eyed.

Davie!

She grabbed her purse and raced to her car, not yet sure what she would do. Just stop him somehow, regain control. And then? She would have to see.

She raced to the freeway, cars magically drifting out of her way.

"No pop! Not yet! Momma fix!"