

Untitled

Dan Argent

My full name is Marlowe-8210-K, but everyone calls me Karl. I live in an apartment with my brother Jay in one of the shabbier parts of the city. Our apartment is pretty small, just the two rooms and a shower cubby, but that's all we can afford these days. Our societal utility score is low, almost zero, and if things don't take a turn for the better soon, I'll be the last of our clone-line born into this world. Sure, the Machines designed our genotype to produce a long line of great artists, but after eleven generations all that the Marlowe-8210 line had to show for itself was a mildly fashionable decade back around brother Frank's day. It's almost funny sometimes—the Machines can calculate the folding of a protein to the nth degree of accuracy, but human biology is still stubbornly imperfect and messy. Most of the time they get what they want, but some clone-lines just don't live up to expectations.

I can hear Jay cursing in the next room. He's a lot older than me, at least three decades, and I think it depresses him living with a younger copy. Right now he's working on something, some kind of mood sculpture, but he finds it hard to concentrate. I suppose he feels responsible for it all, being the older sibling. I tell him not to worry, that when I've finished school I'll create something stupendous, some work of art that will go down in history. Most of the time that cheers him up, but sometimes he gets angry and can't bear to be around me. I don't dare tell him that according to my teacher I'm even worse an artist than he is. Anyway, I'm hiding this recording under the apartment floor with a photo of me and Jay plus a few micro-lithographs that we made together. I know it's stupid, but I just want to leave something, some small indication that once our family existed. Things don't seem so bad when I think that perhaps someday someone will view this.

Remember us,

Karl