

The Populaters

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Dina--March 10, 2140

It has been eleven years now, about eleven years since the Dawn of the Populaters. The United Population Control Force (UPCF) took over the peaceful world because of a rise in infertility. So it has been eleven years since Dina was extracted from her home in Abington, Massachusetts. And a short pesky eight months separates today from Dina's last pregnancy. Pregnancy is normal at Cambridge. The babies come one after another from the day a girl becomes a woman. That day is considered a woman's Brooding Day, and is one for memorable and lavish celebration. But many of the Cambridge women wouldn't explain it this way. Dina remembers her Brooding Day in great detail and considers it to be the worst day of her life, well besides The Dawn of the Populaters.

In a few hours Dina has an appointment with the Cambridge physician, Dr. Patton. Dina has learned to loathe Dr. Patton despite the great things the Populaters have to say about her. Dina knows visiting Dr. Patton's office means she will be inseminated soon. This infant will be Dina's fourth. Her fourth child before she could even turn 22 years old.

Dina is not like many of the women at Cambridge. She doesn't care for her elaborate wardrobe and the luxurious banquets. She prefers a simpler life, like the one at home in Abington. Not many of the women have taken a liking to her. Many think she is depressed making her own life miserable. Well besides Niara, a senior Populater, who believes there is

something exceptional about Dina's lack of absorption in Cambridge. In fact, at the moment Dina is lying in her cozy room daydreaming instead of joining the other women at a young Populaters Brooding celebration. Dina dreams of what her sister could be doing, imagining her on the beach or baking bread with mom like she used to. What Dina misses most right now is another vibrant season on the sandy shores of Abington. The Administration prohibits the Populaters from seeing anyone outside of the thick grey walls encircling Cambridge, which are lined with American flags and are under 24-hour surveillance. Dina's dream of escaping Cambridge is unthinkable, she wouldn't even be able to place a hand on the wall without being reprimanded by the Administration. Dina dozes off to sleep with the Cambridge anthem playing in the background.

“We the Populaters, Feed the generations.

We the faithful woman, live and laugh together.

We come from Cambridge, the finest home around.... ”

Alejandro--March 26 2140

Today is one of those beautiful days at the Veranda House Hotel. There's an elusive warmth in the air that is unusual for a late winter day in Abington. Today is beautiful for a number of reasons. Yes, the sun is reflecting off the ocean in ways Alejandro hasn't seen in what feels like months. And the fog was a little less dense this morning, so he could see the ferryboats against the horizon. But for Alejandro the real beauty of today lays in the fact that he has marvelous

news for his wife, Serena. News that is going to alter her world. She has wanted a child for years now and after three years of working down at the Veranda House, Alejandro has come up with the \$40,000 to purchase their first, and quite possibly only child. After work, he plans to complete the deal with the United Population Control Force. Alejandro has always been hopeful that they would adopt a child. He considers it is a great blessing from God, since he is one of the only people in his neighborhood who has earned enough money for a child since the Dawn of the Populaters. He and Serena will always think of the child as a staggering gift and answer to their prayers. The hours at work are ticking by slowly for Alejandro and he cannot seem to focus because of his exciting announcement.

Dina--March 26 2140

During her visit with Dr. Patton last week, Dina had to schedule the date for her next insemination. Today is her last check up with Dr. Patton before her insemination on April 12th. After her appointment, Dina is dispirited and returns alone to her home. She had to participate in several tests today including a health and fitness test, a pap smear and a physical examination. Dr. Patton told her, "You're in great condition to have another child! Congratulations Dina." Dina was hoping she wouldn't say that. Dina was about to jump in the shower after her appointment, when she heard a knock on her front door. She knew it must be Niara since nobody else would visit at this time of day, or visit at all. Niara knew that her appointment with Dr. Patton was this morning and knew that Dina would be in an awful mood. Niara always came on these mornings to try and cheer Dina up. The northeastern Cambridge winds are howling on this

spring day. Just as Dina cracks open the door, Niara comes barging in and exposes Dina whose standing inside the door naked.

Niara takes a seat on the deep velvet love seat in the living room and blurts out,

“Dina when’s the date?”

“April 12th,” Dina replies plainly.

Niara enthusiastically says, “That gives us just over two weeks! We must find something amusing to do for the next two weeks around Cambridge. Let’s spend a few days at the beach in town, go shopping at our Adorn Me, ride our bikes along the Allagan trail, drink fine wines and taste test those fancy cheeses at the Bistro” Niara slows down as she notices Dina’s empty stare, but she finishes saying, “or go see that new movie *The Haunting of Richmond* at the Populater’s theatre..”

Dina, trying not to be rude says, “Yes, Niara. We can do all of it.”

Niara demandingly replies, “Well get in the bath, we’re getting started today”

Niara slowly retreats into her bathroom and begins to cry.

Alejandro--March 26, 2140

Work seemed to drag on for hours for Alejandro and he was incredibly eager to get home to Serena. The United Population Control Force called him around noon today to tell him the news

about their adoption. The UPCF said the adoption should be complete by the end of the summer. Alejandro answered a series of questions during their phone call, mainly about preferred traits for their child. Alejandro requested a girl so they could name her Milagro. This was unusual considering most people wanted to adopt a male first to carry on the family name. But Alejandro knew that raising a boy in this world was one of the hardest things to do. The gang violence is unavoidable, especially for a young boy.

When his shift ended, Alejandro rushed home to Serena to share the good news. He bursted through the front door of their one-bedroom apartment and gave Serena a gentle kiss.

“Serena, I have some news for you” he said, trying to cover up his excitement.

“Yes, Alejandro what’s the good news?” Serena pleaded, as she moved closer to him.

Alejandro took a deep breath before he finally telling her the words he’s waited to share with her for years.

“Serena, my love. The Lord has answered our prayers. I have received a call from the United Population Control Force today, and they have finished the payment for our adoption. I didn’t want to tell you until it was certain, but we will be adopting our firstborn this year. I have been saving the money over the years and I wanted it to be... a surprise”

He didn’t finish the sentence because he couldn’t look past the disbelief and blissful tears in Serena’s eyes. Serena clutched onto him and placed both of their hands on Alejandro’s heart, the way she always did.

Serena finally broke through the silence and the tears and said, "I always dreamed of the day when I would have a child of my own and knew that it was unlikely. But Alejandro, you have made my dreams come true."

Her tears were growing heavier .

"I am beyond thankful for your gift. The greatest gift a woman can receive. The gift of a child. I love you, Alejandro."

Dina --March 29, 2140

Dina and Niara have spent the several days together. Dina is tired. She hasn't been so active in years. The only break Dina got was when Niara had to pick up her cadet, Nola. When a woman becomes barren at Cambridge, there's no celebration. It's much different from a woman's Brooding Day. But Dina couldn't wait to be barren and often dreamed of having a cadet. Cadets are the children of Cambridge, the fertile children, the sacred children. About one fourth of the children born at Cambridge are fertile, and about half of the fertile children are female. These children will never leave the Cambridge walls. Once a woman becomes barren she can be selected to mentor a Cadet. Here they call Niara a mentor, but Niara likes to refer to herself as a mother. The Administration doesn't like that word. They once heard Niara say it so she was taken in for an interrogation. The Administration doesn't like the Populators to say anything about the outside world. The Cadets attend the Cambridge School, where they learn to read and write, learn about Cambridge history, and about their human anatomy. But that's not all. The Cadet's main classes include: Home Economics, Cooking, Beauty, Sewing, Sports and Recreation, and

Etiquette. Even Dina admits she wishes she was a cadet again. Life is much easier as a cadet and is much easier as a senior also.

Niara's cadet Nola is a beautiful young girl. She has lustrous blonde curly hair that falls right at the small of her back. She has pure white skin and is paler than most of the women at Cambridge. Her bright blue eyes attract light from every angle. Many Cambridge women are jealous of Niara's gorgeous Cadet. Niara can't go anywhere with Nola without the Populaters staring.

When Dina got a break from Niara she spent her time walking the nature paths on the North side of town. She loved to do this. It reminded her of Abington. She would walk for hours on end and stopped at the garden to get produce from the community garden. The garden is the most northern spot at Cambridge and is nestled to the right of the North Gate. Dina loves the garden. She spends a lot of time here tending to the plants. It is early spring, which means Dina will soon help plant the new summer crops. This is about the only thing that excites her at Cambridge.

Alejandro—March 29, 2140

Serena has been extremely happy the past few days and it brings a smile to Alejandro's face to see her like this again. She hasn't been so happy since they got married a few years back. Soon they should hear more detail from the United Population Control Force about the impending birth. Alejandro and Serena have been matched with a Populater from Cambridge by the name of Dina Arbin. Cambridge is the United Population Control Force location for the state of Massachusetts. Since Alejandro and Serena live in Abington, they can only adopt a child from

Cambridge. The Administration likes to keep babies in the state where they were born. The United Population Control Force releases statistics each year about the different states and their total baby count for the year. Fertile children don't count. They know very little about their Populater, Dina. They know very little about the Populaters at all. But what they do know is that Populaters live a glorious lifestyle. Men and women who are Populaters are blessed by God. They are his chosen race.

Their child should arrive in the winter of 2141. Serena has been fervently praying for their child. She even spends time praying to the Holy Mother asking for her blessings on the soon to be family. It's quite ironic that most mothers are now 'virgin mothers'. The problem is sex doesn't mean much of anything anymore. Most married couples have open relationships. Serena and Alejandro have somehow stayed loyal to each other and intend to raise their child the traditional way.

Dina --April 12, 2140

Today is Dina's fourth insemination. It is particularly difficult for her to get out of bed this morning knowing it is her last day of freedom. Freedom from constant check ups, feeling like crap, and being forced to eat a strictly regimented diet. Niara wants to go with Dina to her appointment, and is coming by once she drops Nola off at Cambridge school. When Dina finally forces herself out of bed, she goes straight to the liquor cabinet and swallows mouthfuls of whiskey, throws on her most comfortable dress, and brushes her teeth so Niara won't be suspicious about the alcohol.

When Niara gets to Dina's she throws open the door and yells,

“Dina!! Let’s go, you’re going to be late for your insemination”

Dina doesn’t understand why Niara cares so much.

“Why does it matter if I’m on time?” she says.

The Administration will find Dina if she is even 10 minutes late. They know to keep a close eye on her because of her rebellious behavior over the past few years.

“Because you should be excited Dina. What if this child is fertile! What if we get to keep her here in Cambridge?” Niara explains.

Dina has learned to feel no connection to the children. The last three were all stripped away from her at the moment of birth. The first time this was hard, but now she is used to it.

“Niara the child won’t be able to stay. They never do.”

Niara tries to encourage her saying, “Dina come on now have a little hope!”

The walk to Dr. Patton’s office is silent. And Dina speaks as little as possible to Dr. Patton. The appointment only takes 20 minutes. Dina is a little sore after the procedure and Dr. Pattons gives her vitamins and an appointment schedule for the next 9 months.

Dina doesn’t want to talk. But Niara can’t resist the urge to comfort her. So she says,

“Dina, let’s go get lunch at the Bistro before I have to pick up Nola from school”

“I’m not hungry. But let me pick Nola up from school today. I want to take her to the garden with me this afternoon” she replies.

“She’s got a tea party to attend tonight. Just make sure you have her home by 6.”

Niara is a bit frustrated because Dina would rather spend time with Nola than her. But she knows that Dina loves Nola and spending time with her will likely cheer her up.

“Yes. She will be home by 6” Dina promises.

Nola was excited to go to the garden. She loved to be with Dina. Dina and Nola spent the whole 2 mile walk to the garden talking. Nola told Dina about the other cadets. Nola had only made a few friends in cadet school. Dina said it was because the rest of the girls were jealous of her. Nola didn’t really understand. Nola asked all sorts of questions about Dina’s insemination. She was particularly curious. She told Dina she couldn’t wait to be a brooder. She couldn’t wait to have children. Dina just laughed.

When they reached the garden, they got right to work. Dina and Nola began planting the beautiful purple and pale yellow pansies, red amaryllis, and golden daffodils that the Administration provided.

Dina suddenly heard a rustling in the forest outside of the North gate. She ran toward it and Nola followed. Dina yelled at Nola to be silent. They clearly saw a figure in the distance. Nola

frightened by the dark muscular creature, screamed as she ran away to the nature path. Dina was shocked and stood there frozen for a moment. Dina knew what she saw.

Alejandro--May 2, 2140

“Serena, we must start preparing a room for our child. She will be here in 8 months.” Alejandro said.

“Yes, Alejandro we do need to prepare. I am just afraid we will be unlucky. What if our populaters child is fertile? It happens you know, it happened to Marcia. She had to be matched with a different populater and start the process all over again.” she replied.

Alejandro was scared she might be thinking this. There is a very real possibility that this could happen to them. Happen to anyone. But Alejandro knew he had to act with confidence so he said, “Serena we’ve been praying for this child for the last month, and we will continue to pray for the child until it arrives. I am confident the Lord will deliver for us.”

“You have great faith” said Serena.

Dina--July 28th, 2140

Dina is almost 4 months pregnant. Ever since her insemination day Dina has been working at the garden nonstop. After the little incident with Nola, Niara doesn’t let Nola go to the garden. She knows if the Administration found out about what happened, Dina would face drastic consequences. They wouldn’t believe her. To be honest, Niara didn’t believe her either.

She had convinced Nola that the creature was just an Administrator who had cut her hair and grew large muscles and dark tanned skin from working in the fields. Nola didn't know what to believe.

Dina returned to the garden everyday in hopes of seeing the man again. That day at the garden, April 12, Dina was too afraid to shout something to get his attention. Instead she just watched him. Dina has always wanted more than the other women. Most of them are satisfied with the riches and glam provided for them at Cambridge. But Dina, she wanted something more. She wanted what her mother had. She wanted to know a man. The cadets don't even know about men, they don't even know they exist. When a male child is born at Cambridge they are taken away before you can even get a glimpse of them. Nola ran away, ran all the way home when she saw the man. She was afraid. Dina knows this isn't right. She knows the only way they can be inseminated is from the fertile men. But Dina is not allowed to talk about it, she is not allowed to think about it even. And for now all she can do is return to the garden in hopes of seeing him again.

Alejandro--September 12, 2140

Today marks 4 months for Alejandro and Serena. Four more months until their dream is finally reality. Four more months that the nursery lies empty. Four more months of being alone. Alejandro and Serena are ready for their child.

Dina--November 19, 2140

Although the harvest was pretty much finished, Dina continued to attend the garden. She hadn't given up hope about the man. Niara and her spent a lot of time during the summer cooking with the vegetables and fruits from the garden. They made all sorts of things from fruit salads to baked zucchini with tomatoes. Today Niara wants to accompany Dina to the garden for the last time this season. They will make a feast tonight to enjoy what is left of the garden. Dina and Niara meet at the park to drop off Nola. The park is a cadet's dream world, it's full of play sets and constantly has activities and crafts for the young girls. Nola is meeting school friends for an activity about crafting butterflies.

As soon as Niara sees Dina she runs over to hug her and feeling her stomach she says, "Dina, I haven't seen you in about a week. The baby is coming soon! You look wonderful."

"Thanks, only a month and a half until this is over" replied Dina.

"Are you going to be okay to walk to the garden with that big belly?" Niara asks.

"I have been going nearly everyday for the past four months Niara. I will be just fine" Dina says.

Once they reach the garden, Dina gets straight to work harvesting the final vegetables. They collected a lot of peas, some broccoli, a head of cabbage, and a few apples to bake a pie with.

Just as they were about to leave the garden, Dina heard a rustling and ran to check the gate. The man was back.

“Niara quick come here! The man! He’s back!” She shouted.

“Where? There’s no man out there Dina..” Niara said.

Dina saw him far away and decided to get his attention by yelling “Hello! Hello! Is anybody out there?”

Niara tried to stop her in fear that the Administration would come. Niara wanted to get away and tried her hardest to bring Dina with her.

The man looked up. When he saw Dina, he was afraid and began to run away.

But Dina said, “Come here! I won’t hurt you. I just want to talk to you”

The man wouldn’t come any closer. He dropped his basket and off into the distance.

“See Niara! You scared him off. I am not lying about the man. He takes walks through that forest.” Dina said this angrily.

She was so close to talking with a man.

“Dina, I believe you now. I do. But it’s too dangerous. If the man would’ve come any closer the Administration would have been here in seconds. And you don’t even want to know what they would’ve done to him. We cannot tell anyone about this Dina.”

“Why not? Niara, it’s not right that we aren’t allowed to know about them.” Dina said.

“Dina, this is the way it has to be.” She replied.

Alejandro--January 15, 2140

Serena was crying hysterically. Alejandro had just gotten off the phone with the United Population Control Force. The baby was the girl they had always wanted. The baby was fertile.

“The Lord hasn’t answered our prayers Alejandro” Serena cried. “The Lord doesn’t want us to have a child.”

“Serena calm down. Don’t lose hope. We will have to reapply, it’s the only choice we have. We must be patient in tribulation and constant and prayer. We will get the gift of child. Someday.”

Alejandro said this in hopes to calm Serena down. But he knew as well as she did that it would be at least another year before they could be matched with another Populater.

Dina--January 15, 2140

This morning Dina woke up at 4:30 A.M. Her stomach was in aching pain and she knew she had to get to Dr. Patton. Her first instinct was to call Niara. On her way to the doctor Dina could barely breathe. She couldn’t wait to get her epidural to relieve the pain she was having between contractions. When she got to Dr. Patton’s office, she was prepared to give birth. Dina knew when she had the child it would instantly be taken away from her. She was ready to move on, to have a break from pregnancy. Finally, the child was born. Something was different.

Something felt very different this time. But the child was taken by the Administration, as always.

Dina laid there hopeless, feeling horribly sick to her stomach. A half hour later, the Administration nurses returned. Dina didn't see it at first. As they moved closer she noticed something in nurse's arms. It was a child swaddled in a small pink blanket. Her baby was a girl. Her baby was fertile. Dina stretched out her arms and embraced her child. She held the child to her breast and gave her a kiss on her sweet fuzzy head.

"It's a miracle. A child of my own." Dina said staring into the eyes of her newborn Cadet.