

Biology Project

"Make a flower with 2 kinds of energy sources. The flower must have 5 different colours of petals and must have a means of reproducing within its life span. That's the assignment", said Orchid and looked up from the paper.

"A plant can only have 2 kinds of energy sources", said Galath. "Most, if not all plants are using light for energy production, absorbing carbon dioxide in the process. Some plants are also flesh eating, luring insects into traps, dissolving the protein for use as a carbon and energy source".

"There are at least two more types of energy sources that I know", said Orchid. "Some plants extract carbon hydrates through their roots. And there are plants that utilize the heat differential between roots and top in hot springs. You would of course have to know something about exobiology in order to know that".

"Looks like I partnered the wiz kid of the class", said Galath with a smile.

"Well, don't let that stop you from making an effort in this project", said Orchid. "Remember it is a 2 person project".

"I am better with animals", said Galath. "I kind of hoped it would be an animal project, but I will do my best. In fact I think I would be even more motivated if you would go out with me."

Galath had not planned this, it just came out of his mouth. Orchid starred at him for what he thought an eternity and then gave him a short and precise: "No."

That closed that conversation, and they started discussing the project and how to go about it.

In the next weeks they worked hard on formulating a direction and then got buried deep in biological and genetic theories. It soon became clear that they shared a common passion. In the breaks from the project they played with the idea of going to barren planets and terraform them. They imagined how to create oceans and atmosphere, they selected which plants should go first, and which insects and other animals should follow the plants. They speculated on the bacterial culture, and on how life would transform the planet. It did not compromise the project, on the contrary they felt revitalized and motivated after the break and ready to do their best.

Galath and Orchid were both very gifted, and although this was Orchids favourite subject, they both felt they were more playing around rather than working hard.

First they had to define the wanted result, i.e. what kind of flower they wanted to create, and then they had to look for the genes that would lead to the result. Then they put the genes through a computer to simulate the plant growth. Next would be an iterative process, where genes were modified for a new simulation and so forth. Finally they had to create a seed in the laboratory with the genes embedded and grow the seed to observe if reality fitted the computer simulations.

One day as they were working on the project Galath got bold enough to ask: "Would you care to tell me why you would not go out with me?"

"How old are you?" Orchid said.

"I am 22, why?" said Galath.

“I am way older than you”, said Orchid. Galath thought about asking how old she was but he knew better than to ask a woman about her age.

The day came when they had to show and tell about their flower. The professor was thrilled, and they walked out of the classroom with the highest grade possible.

“Given our success I will go out with you. But only one night and no promises”, Orchid told Galath.

“Fair enough”, Galath said.

It was a warm summer evening, and they found a nice restaurant on the beach. They started out with a glass of wine, and then another glass when the food came. They had ordered a whole grilled fish to split. It was slightly charred on one side, but still tasted great, and the conversation just added to it all. It was one of those magic evenings where even the little mistakes just added to the magic.

“Listen they have turned up the music and there is light on the dance floor”, said Galath. “Care to dance?”

“Yeah, why not”, said Orchid.

They got up and danced, and had a great time. Suddenly Orchid started to laugh.

“Why are you laughing?” Galath asked.

“Your parents will be accusing me for stealing you from the kinder garden”.

“Ok now you have to tell me how old you are”, said Galath.

“I count my age in the hundreds”, Orchid said.

“I don’t care”, Galath said. Orchid looked into his eyes and she knew this evening would not be their last.