

# Origin

By Naomi D'Cruze, grade 9

The radio rang out in static desperation, barely picking up on the signal that had finally reached it after years through the dead space.

*“Humanities' peak was space travel, exploring the cosmos for a new home after we left Earth in shambles. But now? Even the universe itself gave up on us...But we found a way to stay together, for our history to be remembered. Origin; carrying Voyagers golden legacy. Our chrono-technology for this project will solidify your existence permanently onto our state-of-the-art super computers, designed to withstand the test of time, even when we're long gone...”*

*Fzzt-\**

Radio silence returned as the Lab continued to drift along into the starless universe around them.

*Clap. Clap. Clap.*

A sound to break the monotony.

“Wowww, Emile. How long has it been since we've heard that advertisement? A decade now?”

Emile attempted to brush back his ebony curls of hair, only to be greeted by his receding hairline.

“Ha! It has been a while hasn't it?”

His gaze then fell on Isobel, the witty look in his eyes replaced with a burning passion.

“But I never gave up on that dream, Belle. Even after everything that's happened since...”

The cheery aura of the room was sucked away, like a black hole devouring a star.

Like when PS-01 swiped away Gaea, humanity's last white dwarf in this dying universe.

“The Incident... Oh! But Voice Of the Thousands is going splendidly. I’ll finish this project before our time is up. And save everything.”

Emile rested his hands on Belle’s: latte art like a smiley face, his milky colored fingers drawing on her coffee tinted skin. Belle laughed and playfully laced her fingers with Emile’s.

“Of course we will: *together*.”

However, something about the word “Together” threw off Emile’s demeanour. A hint of fear?

“...Give me a second, Belle. I’ve got to take care of something.”

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The crackling sound of electricity filled the air as the pair got to work on their prized android. Its metallic skin a mixture of alloys and synthetic fibers, painted pure white like a star. But the main attraction that accentuated it? A heart of gold treasured inside it, the heart that would hold the last memories of the human race.

Emile sighed with content at their invention.

“Looks like our work days should be nearing an end soon!” He exclaimed after welding down a piece that covered the speaker heart.

“We just need to make sure that nothing short circuits or burns out once we test it on some of the practice Origins... I’m sure it’ll be fine.”

Isobel noticed it again, that same look that displaced all the energy in the room. How odd, but she kept her positivity persistent.

“It will; we didn’t work so hard just to have this project fail near the end of the universe!”

She joked. No responding laugh.

Okay, something was definitely off. Emile gripped his tool tightly and turned to her.

“Belle... Do you think that-” A flinch ran down his body “I mean, we’ve done everything right, right? But what if something still happens? L-like what if our software glitches out and we lose all our Origins? Or maybe the heart it-itself. What if-”

“Hey, hey! Em! Calm down, sure the chances of perfection aren’t a 100 percent, sure. But we need to have hope that Voice Of the Thousands *will* succeed.”

His actions started to become frantic.

“Emile. This isn’t you.”

Isobel gripped his shaking hand and looked deep into his eyes. A deer in the headlights looked back.

“You don’t know that.”

*What the hell is this guy talking about?*

“We didn’t go this far just for you to have another mental breakdown. Where did all that positivity go?” Isobel retorted. She was starting to lose a bit of her calmness.

“Oh, right. Sorry for thinking about the possibilities and not just jumping straight into everything I do. Sorry that I inconvenience you every time something genuinely stresses me out!”

“Oh, so I’m the impulsive one?” She snided, her hands instead gripping the workbench behind her, littered with blueprints.

“You took on this Atlas sized task by yourself because you just *needed* to prove yourself again! I only joined so you wouldn’t destroy yourself with this project!”

“You know that’s not what-!”

His hands instinctively flailed upwards, slamming into one of the supercomputers that was plugged into the android.

The dark silver walls of the workspace were illuminated for a split second, white sparks caressing every inch of the room.

*K-THUD!*

Only one person to enjoy its tragic beauty.

“Em-Emile?”

The room started spinning. Belle’s breath getting faster and more uncoordinated.

*Oh my God oh my God*

*Oh. My. God?!*

“EMILE!”

Sobs racked through her body as she collapsed onto the floor. She barely could make out words as she attempted to process the events that just transpired.

“W-what am I going to do without y-you.”

She slammed her fist into the titanium floor. Physically it was in perfect shape, but mentally she tore a giant hole. Her emotions sinking lower and lower into despair.

“I-im sorry I shouldn’tve said that im sorry im sorry im sorry im sorry-”

“Hello? Is someone there? Where am I?”

“AH!”

She yelled! Isobel's misty vision could see a soft glow. Iridescent with its ever shifting colors, but all the hues staying a playful, vintage color. The android reached out a cold metal hand to Belle’s head. Looking up, she noticed the dent next to its golden heart, bleeding light.

“Isobel?”

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“...What the hell?!”

Feeling overwhelmed was an understatement for Belle. How on the almost forgotten Earth was this possible? She stared in awe and total confusion; finally hiccuping out a question.

“H-how do you know my name?”

**“My creator, Emile.”**

Its answers were on-point.

*Ah, I've got to ask my questions precisely then.*

Attempting to clear her face a bit, she queried:

“How did you turn on?”

**“Emile had set for me to turn on as soon as my heart was activated.”**

An answer quick as lightning. *Does this bot even think? How much did he even tell me about this?*

She had to pause time for a bit to mentally recap. What **had** he said about this project?

“...Why were you created?”

Isobel thought she muttered to herself.

*Click!*

The sound of a cassette tape playing? No, the android narrating an Origin.

***“The metal walls are engraved with beautiful precision in the H.O.P.E laboratory. The main foyer decorated with metal furniture and navy blue tapestries; steel and fabric. Written in giant letters along the wall was their mantra:***

*Ad astra! Let Humanities Outer space Preservation Engineers carve our path into the stars.*

*And the main event? The annual marking for when we assessed how close The End was: when PS-01 would arrive and swallow everything. Amidst all the discussion, a young man rushed forwards towards the stage. Blueprints flailed around as he carried them tightly.*

*“Ah! Our star inventor!”*

*The chief of the organization exclaimed, outstretching his caramel colored arms; tattooed with complex physics equations and constellations. But still retained his formalities with his combed blonde hair and navy uniform.*

*“Good day, Chief. I believe that Voice of The Thousands is ready to be announced. If you’d just let me-”*

*“Ah. No, no, no, Emile. Today is not presentation day. We have other matters to discuss today. You’ll get your chance at the next event.”*

*“Chief, you don’t understand. This idea can change everything. H-how we can live on-”*

*“EMILE. I said no. You do remember your punishment last time you pushed it, don’t you?”*

*“...Yes.”*

*“Stay in your place.”*

The Chief switched back to a more neutral look as he went back to address the crowd.

Emile stalked back towards his workshop.

*“I can’t keep waiting. There’s no more time. I need to save us, our race. I need to save Belle.”*

*Click.*

The Origin finished, leaving Belle awestruck. Partially for the fact that it was actually able to read an Origin, but also with the information she learned.

“He did this... For me?”

“Yes.”

She broke down again as the android attempted, without success, to comfort her.

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*Hummm-*

The sound of the engine was mind numbing as it kept the vital systems up and running.

But it was Belle’s anchor, what kept her mentally in the moment.

*He built this for... Me? I didn’t start helping him till after the incident however... Right? Argh, it was such a long time ago...*

She twisted around to face the android; laying dormant with a more soothing aura around it. It apparently carried her back to bed so she could recover. *Did it have empathy for her?*

Taking a swig of water, Belle staggered towards the android. Questions swarmed and swirled in her head, trying to coagulate into something comprehensible.

Finally, she stopped in front of the resting robot; it chirped in her presence. She left her mouth agape for a minute before starting:

“Did Emile give you his Origins?”

“Yes.”

*Oh, he never mentioned that. Hmm....*

“When did he start testing them on you?”

“Time is meaningless now.”

She slapped her arms against her sides and huffed with a smile.

*Okay! So it was prior to the Incident.*

“Do you have an Origin of when the incident happened?”

It started to play another Origin. This one filled Isobel with uncertainty however.

*...Don't start crying again. We've had enough of that yesterday.*

*Click!*

*"We can't stay here any longer; the black hole keeps getting closer day by day.*

*Humanity's sun is finally setting for good. But... We can still be remembered. With my project; Voice of The Thousands. An android that saves the voice memos of the last people amidst the stars. Essentially a glorified radio if you're feeling nasty. It's true purpose however.. Is a gift for my love,-*

Isobel felt a warm glow inside her.

*"-When I'm gone... When everyone is gone, she needs to be remembered. My soul couldn't rest without knowing that. The universe can't die till she's completely forgotten.*

*Click-*

*"Attention, employees of H.O.P.E, this is your last and final warning to prepare for your departure before the lab shuts down in a week, anyone who doesn't comply... Not much of a punishment I can give you, can I?" The voice chuckled.*

*Ad Astra, and thank you all for contributing to our survival. Signed, your Chief.*

*The announcement finished.*

*Knock, Knock, Knock!*

*"Emile? Hey. I hear you're leaving today."*

*"Isobel! Yes, you caught me at just the right time... I was just... Packing."*

*“Oh, okay! I’ll also get packing too...”*

*A pause.*

*“I heard about your project. I-uh. I-”*

*“Can I help you with it?”*

Past and present Belle said. Running her fingers through her matted, gold hair, thinking about the moment.

*“...You-Yes! Yes, you can!”*

*Okay, okay! Don’t get all teary eyed on me! C’mere-*

*We’ll make this project a reality. I promise.*

*Their lab later left H.O.P.E. Soaring off into the dead space. Keeping track of the months where Gaea was still shining. Two months later. She vanished into the void.”*

*We can grieve now, Belle. But we will be the next pioneers of our universe. Together.”*

*Click.*

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No tears this time. Just a sense of... Longing? Her mind was left starving for more information; but she couldn’t spend her whole day listening to Origin after Origin.

*Say, I helped Emile to program how these Origins worked. Maybe I could actually look into the android itself?*

Isobel went to their workshop. Memories of their argument paralyzing her normal train of thought. The android followed obediently. A chill cruised down her body as she saw the smashed supercomputer. Emile’s Ghost? Isobel wondered as she carefully connected a transfer cord to the android's bleeding heart.

“Hm...How do I turn on this piece of junk....”

*Aha!*

Hitting the side of the computer with her fist seemed to do the trick. It opened to a sunset, blazing red glory bathing the rocky beach foreground and tabs in its light. Isobel got to work.

*Tktktktktktktktktktktkt....Blip!*

- LOG 1
- LOG 2
- LOG 3
- LOG 4...
- LOG X

The screen switched to a black background, lines of files arranged neatly, each with the filename extension: ORIGIN.JSON.

*Log X?*

Belle’s cursor wondered while investigating; her curiosity seething with a *Click*.

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*Tomorrow will probably the best day of my life. Or the worst.*

*Our preparations for Voice Of the Thousands is almost complete, just got to weld a couple parts together!*

*Then set up its radio antenna to pick up even the most distant broadcasts in space, listen to the first Origin together... And...*

*They say that when we found our white dwarf, Gaea. She was heaven in a physical form. Something Isobel especially admired every time she would look outside.*

*"If only I could hold her... Admire her beauty on my body"*

*Heh, good thing I knew a very good jewelry maker.*

*I'll hide the box behind the workbench. Use the classic "Oh no I dropped something!" schtick.*

*Maybe we could spend our dying days in the universe knowing that... Our love had evolved to its peak?*

*We'll have to see.*

...NO TIME!

Isobel jumped out of her seat and ravaged the back of the table, finding a small navy box.

The opal shone like a star. Cyan blues swirling around the center, but warm iridescent colors still reflected off the jewel. All that magic sat atop a rose gold ring.

“This- The day we fought were you-! Oh, Emile...”

She glanced back at the android, realizing that in her grief she forgot to finish the radio antenna.

Picking up her welding tools, she got to work.

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She sat down patiently, waiting for the radio antenna she made a week prior to pick up a signal.

*Geez, how long was this going to t-!*

*CRaCKle...Bzzt-*

*An Origin! Oh yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes!* Isobel wiped tears from her face as she listened. *Could you feel nostalgia for a memory that never happened?* She wondered with a heartbroken smile.

“This Origin is for you to listen too, Emile...”

“Thank you, for everything you have done.”

Those thoughts would forever be engraved in her mind, as she kept on listening to Origin’s: a habit continuing until her last breath.