

DNA Smugglers

C. Argon

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DNA Smugglers is an emotional thriller in which a woman travels through time to right scientific wrongs.

In C. Argon's futuristic thriller *DNA Smugglers*, scientific interference obscures people's basic instincts, leading to losses.

Lilly belongs to a space-exploring generation in which people have been modified at the cellular level. Humans no longer feel urges toward reproduction and love; as such, attractions do not progress beyond flirtation. Such modifications were made to ensure smooth intergalactic travel. But Lilly wants to know more about those suppressed desires. Thus, she travels back to the Ice Age, hoping to smuggle unaltered DNA back from it.

Lilly's story is narrated via a continuous conversation with Futurism, an entity that plans to rescue her from her pain and help her recover her memories. Together, they explore the consequences of altering individuals on a fundamental level, and they also discuss the scientific processes by which human DNA is stored. Scientific concepts of dark matter, energy, and time are also vivified in these discussions, and each impacts Lilly's life in noticeable ways.

In service of these grandiose themes, Lilly is characterized as a woman of many talents: she is a Navy SEAL, she trained in medicine, and she has an exceptional talent for music. The latter quality helps her to connect to the places she travels to. Her outward strength contrasts with her vulnerable desire to live and love with freedom. In speech, she is both honest and pragmatic, recounting her heroic survival in the Ice Age in clear terms. At her opposite, Futurism is patient and functions almost as a therapist, helping Lilly to explore her layers.

But the narration is limited to its single conversation, in which the events of Lilly's travels are recalled and dissected. It pronounces themes like the importance of time; Lilly is encouraged to find the strength to cope, believing that time is on her side. Images are used to develop her intriguing ideas, but they are limited too.

The novel progresses at a slow pace, shifting between Lilly's Ice Age recollections and her present concerns in a stilted manner. But it also jumps between its ideas too quickly, transitioning to new themes before the previous ones have been resolved. The grand ideas that Lilly and Futurism trade have a limited impact as a result.

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MANIK CHATURMUTHA (September 14, 2022)

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