

# Chemistry

By

Max Cole-Takanikos

&

Katie Woodzick

*(A non-descript place—maybe some pieces of art hang or are strewn in the background. K sits on a stool or chair, M is painting or drawing behind an easel. There are several pieces of paper or canvas on it.)*

## scene one: introductions and a collage

**K:**

So, when Ann Druyan was falling in love with Carl Sagan, I mean *the* Carl Sagan, she went to a laboratory and recorded her brainwaves and heartbeat. And that data was turned into sound. And that sound was part of the data that was put on the Voyager Golden Record by Carl Sagan and shot out into space, that reads "the sounds of earth." Isn't that out there, even for Carl Sagan? To me, falling in love is one of the most unscientific things in human life. You can have "a feeling in your bones" or your gut, a lump in your throat, your heart can melt or be fluttering like a hummingbird outside your ribcage and the culmination of all these sensations is generally thought of as "chemistry"

between two people. But what causes it? I mean, what *really* makes two people fall in love? Or, perhaps more importantly, what makes one person fall in love while the object of their affections wants no part of it? Sounds like an unbalanced formula to me. Anyway, Carl Sagan launches this golden record out into space, and it's intended for aliens or future humans to discover. And possibly try to attempt communication with us. There are 55 languages, sounds like elephants, trains, laughter, music from around the world. And finally, Ann Druyan's brainwaves. The physiology of love. I can just picture the aliens listening to those brainwaves and scratching their heads. "What is *this*?" they'll say. And then set to work decoding, quantifying one of the greatest mysteries of human existence.

**M:**

Be still.

**K:**

I am being still.

**M:**

No, you're not.

**K:**

(*re: painting*)

How's it coming?

**M:**

Be still. (*Beat.*) Where did you hear that, anyway?

**K:**

(*Trying not to move too much*).

What?

**M:**

About Carl Sagan.

**K:**

(*Forgetting about being still.*) At a concert. A hipster concert. At least I *think* it was a hipster concert. There were a lot of mason jars instead of water bottles and ukuleles and vintage

clothes. And this guy hung a set of windchimes from the neck of his guitar. I kind of felt underqualified to be there. Or at least out of my element. But during a break, one of the bands was having this conversation about Carl Sagan.

**M:**

So you were hanging with the band?

**K:**

I was hanging *by* the band.

**M:**

Well, I think your proximity to the band qualified you to be there.

**K:**

You never told me how it was coming. *(beat)* The portrait.

**M:**

It's a collage.

**K:**

I thought it was a portrait.

**M:**

A portrait doesn't have to be a painting.

**K:**

What's the difference?

**M:**

Well, a painting, obviously, is any image that has been rendered in paint. A portrait would be any image rendered of a person. Or animal, I suppose. It wouldn't matter what the medium was.

**K:**

But aren't most portraits done in paint?

**M:**

I guess that's probably the easiest thing to work with to get it to look like the subject. But a statue of somebody, for instance, would also count as a portrait.

**K:**

*(beat)* What do you think Mona Lisa is smiling about? I mean, she's not really smiling but she

sort of is, it's a half smile at the very least--  
like she has a secret.

**M:**

Well, perhaps she was sleeping with Da Vinci.

**K:**

How famous was Da Vinci when he painted her? I mean did she know how big her portrait was going to become? Could that have been part of why she was smiling?

**M:**

Well, Da Vinci was famous by then, but you have to remember that an artist can take license with the expression of his subject. We can never be sure what her expression was exactly. An artist edits and extrapolates, just like an author. (Beat) Her name was Lisa Gheradini, and there's not a lot known about her. It's interesting to note that Da Vinci painted her right hand resting on her left to symbolize her virtue instead of showcasing her wedding ring. There's also a nude portrait called the Monna Vanna.

**K:**

Was it the same woman?

**M:**

It's hard to say for sure, but signs point to yes.

**K:**

So, maybe not so virtuous.

**M:**

Virtue and nudity are not mutually exclusive. (beat) Did you know that Da Vinci wasn't even his real last name? That just indicated where he was from. His real last name Di Ser Piero. And he lived to be 67, which was way beyond the typical lifespan for the time.

**K:**

Perhaps creating art lengthened his life. (Beat) My portrait, how's it coming? Are you editing

and extrapolating this conversation and recording  
it on paper?

**M:**

Be still.

**K**

You're clearly avoiding the question. (Beat) Does  
it look like me?

**M:**

Kind of. (Beat). It's like the collage in the  
Truman Show, where he is trying to recreate the  
perfect woman and it's a composite of magazine  
clippings and no matter how hard he tries he  
can't get the eyes just right.

*(A moment. Their eyes meet. He creates, she sits  
quietly. The finishing touches are put on the  
piece. He presents it to her, she regards it, he  
hangs it on the upstage wall. Another moment.  
He has the license, as he will throughout the  
course of the evening, to make modifications to  
his subject before starting the next piece.)*