



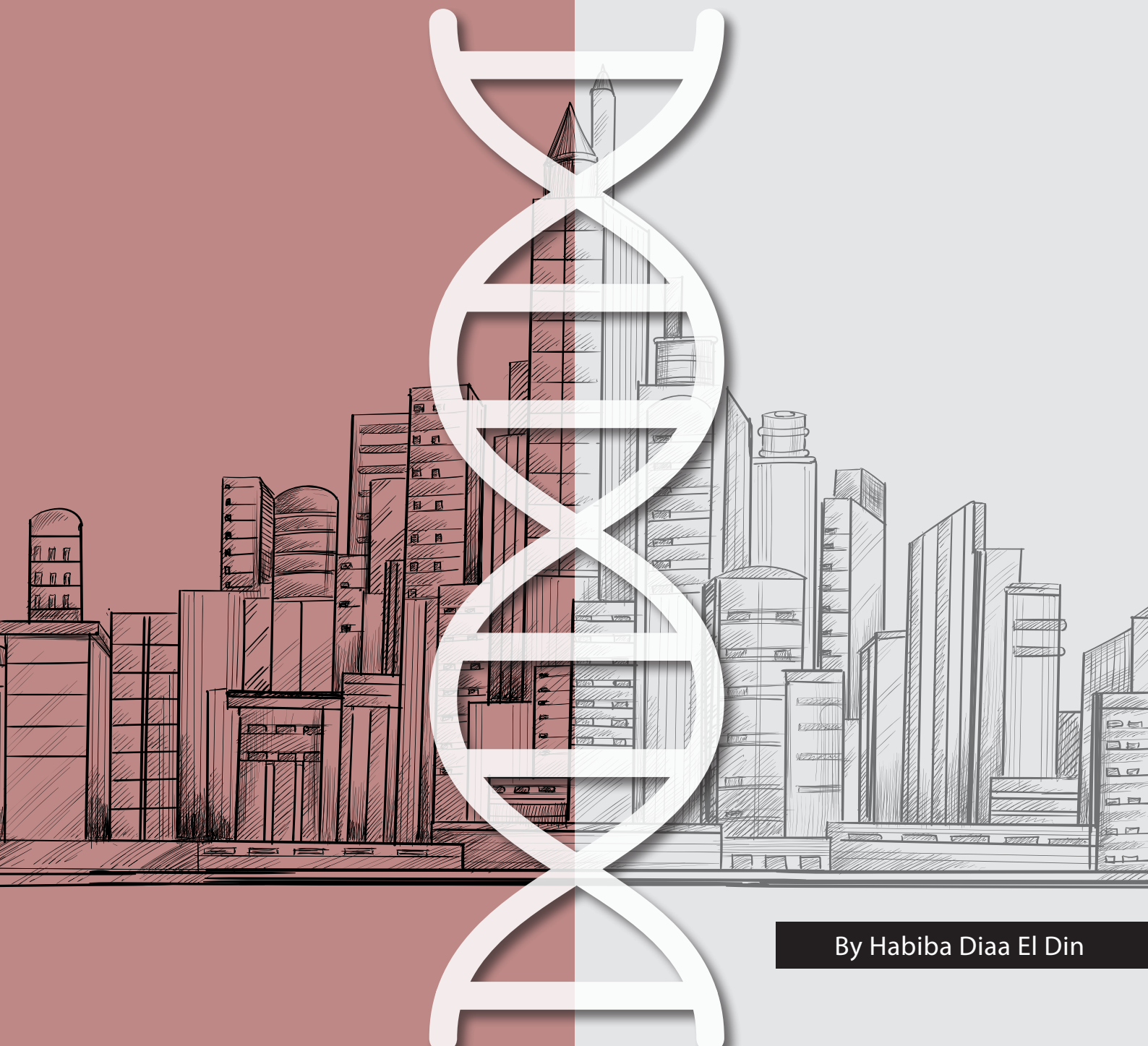
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The Gene Line

Synthetic Superiority as Border



By Habiba Diao El Din



“What should I do now?” Mumbled Farida, carrying her child on her shoulders.

By 2050, the world had become the model of genetic optimisation, a place where designer genes replaced natural variance, and illness had been nearly eradicated. But cities were split in two.

At one end, there was a gleaming area of gene-edited individuals whose genes had been tailored to maximise intelligence, physical endurance, and disease resistance. On the other end, a maze of crumbling infrastructure, where the unedited lived, those who had either refused or could not afford genetic intervention.

Once a nascent technology, today gene editing technology, known as “CRISPR”, is dominant. Cities are divided into two parts with two populations, and assimilation is prohibited. Segregation in this era is no longer based on ethnicity or social class; however, it is now based on genetic abilities. Those whose genes are modified are the fortunate ones living in the affluent part of the city, while the less fortunate ones with natural/ unmodified genes are left behind. It is the natural evolution of Plato’s “high quality parents” to eugenics and white supremacy, to the haves and the have-nots, and now, it is the mods and non-mods.

Farida lived in the unedited part.


Her son had fallen ill after consuming genetically edited food imported through black markets. His immune system, unprepared for the engineered substances, failed to function. Doctors shrugged helplessly. “We don’t have the tools,” one whispered. “There’s treatment on the other side. But it’s... impossible.”

Suddenly, an idea interrupted her trail of thought. I have a smuggler’s contact, Farida told herself. She met this smuggler in a protest several years ago, a muscular woman with a quiet conscience.

“This will cost you,” The smuggler said, her eyes scanning Farida’s face in the dim light. “But they won’t see you coming. You look clean, somehow.”

The crossing was silent, empty. They entered through tunnels beneath the city’s ring-fence, an invisible border where biometric scanners and drones never blinked.

Inside, the air smelled different, too sterile.



It is a monstrous city; people's faces look the same as if they were born from the same womb, in fact, genetic modifications were to blame.

An enormous, affluent, full, and pretty city. Yet, it is tiny, impoverished, empty, and ugly. It is a monstrous city; people's faces look the same as if they were born from the same womb, in fact, genetic modifications were to blame. Stark differences between the two sides of the city reminded Farida of what she used to read in history books about discrimination faced by African Americans and Hispanics. Yet, what she is witnessing is far more profound.

The son was taken to a private clinic, where the receptionist hesitated only briefly after scanning his blood. "Unauthorised genome detected," the display flashed red. But Farida pleaded. "He's a child."

A technician relented. "We'll help. But you must leave afterwards."

As doctors worked, Farida wandered the city. She saw children with symmetrical faces, stores filled with nutrient-engineered food, AI therapists, and glass parks where grass never died.

Yet everything felt... numb.


At a café, she overheard a conversation between two edited citizens.

"Did you hear about the variant?"

"They say it started in the other part. Of course."

"We should wall it off entirely. No more leaks."

Farida left before they could see her face. The cold air hit her as soon as she stepped outside. The city is a siren with an ability to swallow any warmth, any life that didn't conform. She thought of her son, his delicate, untouched genes, how they had been his only protection from the genetic upheaval of the world, and how, despite all the wealth and technology here, his condition had been dismissed as "the other side's problem."



“Was this truly progress?” Or was it just a new form of segregation, a future where only those with the right genes could access the luxuries of survival?

She walked through the city’s huge streets, her eyes scanning the sea of identical faces, the unsettling symmetry that made her feel, for the first time, that she might be the one out of place. This city wasn’t better, it was cleaner, shinier, faster. But it felt empty like a machine running without a soul.

She reached the gates of the clinic where her son had been treated, a high-tech fortress guarded by perfectly polished walls. For the first time since crossing the border, a thought gripped her with sharp clarity: “Was this truly progress?” Or was it just a new form of segregation, a future where only those with the right genes could access the luxuries of survival?

As they returned to their city, the son’s condition improved dramatically, but Farida felt no relief, only a gnawing sense of what had been lost. The divide wasn’t just genetic; it was a chasm between two very different worlds, one thriving in perfection, the other struggling with its humanity.

Years passed. The law was rewritten, and a new ethical framework for CRISPR technology was debated. The promise of gene editing still glimmered, a future where disease could be vanquished, human potential maximised. But Farida couldn’t shake the thought that it had come too soon. The technology had arrived without the systems in place to handle it responsibly.

The division between the two worlds deepened. And with it, the cracks within humanity.

Farida never stopped fighting for change, for a world where no one was left behind, whether by birth or by choice. But each day, she wondered if humanity would be ready to handle the vast power it had created.

And each day, she grew more certain that, perhaps, we weren’t yet.

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