

Aesthetic Value
A Sci-Fi Short Tale

written by

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Total dark, WE CAN HEAR some traffic noises, loud horns, distant footsteps, typical city's sound.

OVER BLACK we read it:

In a distant future, some people choose eternal life by uploading their memories and experiences in new physically and genetically modified humans.

Some of these humans and some of these memories have become valuable assets for specific traders in a side market financed by powerful figures and enterprises.

Most of these humans can't survive.

Now WE FADE IN:

INT. DOWNTOWN, OBBO'S MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Over a messy COFFEE TABLE filled with leftover food, ashes, papers, plastic thrown, A MAN (50s) suit, mustache, fat, hair licked back, fingers full of rings, eyes hidden by sunglasses, gangster boss type, we'll name him Boss, LIGHTS A CIGAR.

Boss smokes calmly as he checks the poorly lit room around him illuminated only by what we can now see be transparent tanks lined up full of water, seemingly human specimens with closed eyes floating inside with cables connected to the wrists, back and legs.

Boss checks the tanks once again, interested, observing A SPECIMEN IN QUESTION, slightly dark skin, hairless, juvenile facial features, no more than 20 years old, whose marked tank displays a digital sign with the code XIV675-PAM.

Boss clears his throat again before...

BOSS
How's her blood levels working?

From the darkness at one of the corners, OBBO (30s), bald, his body covered by a dark gray clothing, dark eyes with only white pupil implants, imposing, cold, the drug dealer, sniffs and creeps from his chair while observing the same tank as Boss.

OBBO
Exquisite. Is better than you'll ever dream in your entire royal life?

BOSS
 (chuckles)
 I'm no royal, you perfectly aware
 of that.

Obbo walks between the tanks watching each one, in amaze.

OBBO
 I know everything. And the most
 important of them is that big royal
 assholes such as you never stop
 being royalty.

Boss laughs LOUD.

OBBO (CONT'D)
 Where's the specter?

Boss just LIFT ONE FINGER, behind him, at the entrance, his
 ARMED security guards, suits too, approach, one of them
 carrying a black SUITCASE, discreet, placed sharply on the
 messy table.

Obbo sneaks in, Boss lets out big waves of smoke from his
 nostrils and mouth watching Obbo take a seat at the table.

BOSS
 (chuckles)
 Last time we met like this you got
 an unforgettable scar right through
 your good eye, you sick son of a
 bitch.

OBBO
 (exited)
 Ah yeah, a litte present from a
 little devil.

BOSS
 The harder they fell, that's my
 saying. You let her go, you get
 that.

One of the Guards opens the briefcase, a purple glow
 emanating from bags lined with small blue and purple stones
 illuminates Obbo's face that contemplates everything, glazed.

OBBO
 And who said I let her go?

Boss laughs acidly again.

Then Obbo lightly presses an imperceptible sensor on his
 neck:

OBBO (CONT'D)
 (to the sensor)
 Liv, send the drinks now.

Obbo eagerly tries to grab one of the specter bags, at just one second one of the Guards stops him.

Boss stares at Obbo coldly for a few seconds, the cigar smoke dancing between the two. Then Boss laughs again.

We hear a second entrance open and more steps, slow, contained, approaching.

Obbo understands the message and gets up quickly:

OBBO (CONT'D)
 Of course, gentlemen, where are my manners?

In this second, between the tanks, we see A FIGURE, A WOMAN, (25s), light brown hair, shy sweet eyes, lots of make-up to make her look like a sexy waitress, a tray full of drinks in her hands, shows up and stops behind Obbo, that's XIV665-PAM, her main code, shortened to only X. Obbo catches her sharply by the neck.

OBBO (CONT'D)
 (to X)
 What's the problem? You're embarrassing me in front of my guests.

X, still attached to her matrix code, obeys Obbo and approaches Boss, the tray with the drinks shaking as she walks trying to balance herself dressing high heels.

OBBO (CONT'D)
 (proudly)
 Stage 46 of development. Need some biological adjustments here and there. Her eyes are creepy as hell, but she's getting pretty good. Educated and all.

Boss, curious, watches X.

BOSS
 What about her memories, past life and whatever?

OBBO
 The past is the past. There is no such thing anymore.
 (MORE)

OBBO (CONT'D)

What type of memories do you think
a junkie like her would have worth
taking? You don't believe that,
neither do I.

X serves the drinks on the table, Boss still glazed in her.

OBBO (CONT'D)

(to Boss)

You wanna see something cool? Way
more than cool? Ask her for
something, anything.

Obbo unlocks the XIV675-PAM copy at her tank. Boss quickly
signals to the guards to get ready, THE WATER INSIDE THE TANK
IS DRAINED IN SECONDS, the cables are disconnected, XIV675-
PAM falls to the ground totally wet, naked, new. The guards,
with towels, approach and cover her.

BOSS

Let's see.

(to X)

What's your name, darling?

X, cordially smiling, simply looks at Boss and...

X

My name is Whatever-The-Fuck-You-
Want and I'm here to serve you as
you may please.

X keeps smiling. Boss laughs that acidly laugh so hard that
he COUGHS.

Obbo kneels over the fainted body of XIV675-PAM still wet. He
touches her face, feels her pulse starting to come back, her
skin getting warm, her veins starting to fill with blood.

OBBO

To Whatever-The-Fuck-You-Want and
everything else!

Boss recomposes, Obbo approaches, the two take the drinks and
TOAST.

Obbo starts counting the bags of specter in the suitcase, the
purple glow dancing under his eyes. Boss drinks and CARESSES
X's face. IN A SINGLE SECOND, X's eyes are captured by the
glow as WE SEE...

CLOSE UP SHOTS OF:

- SEVERAL particles of SPECTER, purple and blue, dancing,
almost mesmerizing, and sliding across the coffee table;

- The interior of a SYRINGE FILLED with a bluish purple liquid fills quickly and then empties even faster;
- X, eyes distant, mouth open, almost passed out, arms covered in NEEDLE STINKS, falls to the ground at Obbo's feet. X trembles, eyes distant, overdose. Obbo laughs;
- X BREAKS a glass and with a shard SLAWS Obbo in the face. Blood, Obbo screams in pain and rage;
- X, unconscious, dives into a tank of water, the cables connect to her skin. The holes, scars and blemishes all over her body disappear as she goes into hibernation;

BACK TO:

X HOLDS Boss' wrist FIRMLY, their eyes meet, then X, out of the main chain code, picks up a full glass of liquor, BREAKS in the table and HITS Boss in the cheek.

Quickly one of the Guards approaches, Boss screams holding the fresh hole in his face. X's eyes glaze over Specter's bags before she CUTS one of them open and compulsively SMELLS the contents, the blue and purple particles all over her face.

Obbo firmly tries to grab X by the arm, but she dodges holding A BAG of the drug and walks away. Another glowing specter bags fall to the ground.

OBBO (CONT'D)

(mumbles)

Once a junkie... always a stinking
little devil junkie.

Obbo groans in fury.

BOSS

You bitch!

Quickly, X ducks over XIV675-PAM, the shard of glass menacingly at the neck of the recent copy. X stands up, dragging the copy away.

Obbo takes a bag of specter and shows it to X:

OBBO

Is that what you want? It is,
isn't? Get away from her and I'll
give it all to you.

Furious, groaning and mumbling, Boss gets up abruptly towards X.

OBBO (CONT'D)

(shouts)

No!

Boss pushes X towards a glass table. X still holding the Copy fall on the table and slide across the floor towards an AIR DUCT. X's body violently breaks through the hatch and disappears into the darkness alongside XIV675-PAM.

INT. AIR DUCTS - CONTINUOUS

X and the Copy fall and slide in the dark, their bodies colliding with the metal wall of the ducts. X hits her head a few seconds before falling into a PILE of bodies and abandoned synthetic parts.

EXT. ALLEY / STREETS - CONTINUOUS

X stands up, staggering, dodging heads, arms, and other synthetic body parts. Her eyes catch a glimpse of XIV675-PAM, uncovered, unconscious among a pile of rubbish. X approaches, curious, fingers tight holding the BAG of specter.

At that instant, a Guard APPEARS from the duct. She quickly finds herself surrounded by other Guards that emerge from the other side of the alley. X quickly walks away, running, she squeezes and disappears into a small alley between some houses.

Guard #1 HOLDS XIV675-PAM firmly by the neck, the group gathers around her ready to capture her and back away from the PILE of garbage.

GUARD #1

(to sensor at his neck)

Yes, Boss, the One is here... The other ran away. It is not so far now.

GUARD #2

(to Guard #3)

We should check her data to track her.

GUARD #3

We should check the closest junkyard to track her. These Pams always get into trouble.

GUARD #1
 (to sensor at his neck)
 ...yes, Boss, we'll get back to it
 now.

BOSS (O.S.)
 Absolutely, you better. It has to
 be in the next shipment by sundown.

GUARD #1
 (to sensor at his neck)
 Yes, Boss.

The Other Guards look up suspiciously.

GUARD #3
 Let's get the hell out of here!

In a second, from one of the windows of the buildings that surround them, the glass BREAKS, what appears to be A FIRE BALL flies towards the group and crashes to the ground exploding in small shards of glass and spreading a flaming liquid that hits both Guards.

Guard #1 walks away, holding XIV675-PAM, he raises his weapon and FIRES repeatedly towards the empty dark window, no one is there anymore. The two Guards burn and scream in pain beside him, Guard #1 stops shooting, silence, only the sounds of the city not far away.

Then, like out of nowhere, a faint sound emerges...

COPY
 (waking up)
 H-Hello.

XIV675-PAM, the Copy, eyes open, stares at Guard #1 with insecurity and confusion. Then, her eyes finally find the sky and Copy smiles with something new as if for the first time.

COPY (CONT'D)
 Where am I?

Guard #1 looks around, startled, fast, but not fast enough to see X emerging from one of the alleys, A PIECE OF WOOD in hand. X HITS Guard #1 in the head, he staggers back, X grabs Copy by the arm and the two RUN down the alley towards the street dodging people.

We followed the two of them around corners and across streets as the city gets busier, loud people complaining about the movement, the taller buildings around them covered in lights.

X holds Copy by the arm until she stops, her eyes locked on the sky where we can now see TWO orange beautiful SUNS, far away, high in a purplish sky, shining between tall concrete masses, power cables, poles and floating cars and ships, Copy appreciates it for one second, until X pulls her again. It's getting dark.

X and Copy turns around, a crowd lies ahead, they enter the crowd, but X suddenly hears indistinct voices, more Guards, sneaky, big, tall, infiltrate the crowd as well at the other side in front of them.

Quickly, X backs off, but bumps into some people.

PERSON

Hey, watch out! Be careful!

X continues, more people complain, the Guards finally SIGHT HER, X starts running again pushing people in her path.

EXT. STREET / SECOND ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

The two cross the street, DODGING traffic and more people in a hurry.

In a new dark alley, the floor covered by large POOLS of water, sewage, high and gloomy walls, the two go to the end where PANELS of colored lights signal an ELEVATOR.

Guards, carrying weapons, right behind them:

GUARD #5

(shouts)

There! She's there!

The elevator goes down empty, some people prepare to go up, but X suddenly appears between them pushing everyone, she enters with Copy at her side.

Suddenly Guard #6 pulls Copy by the arm, people back away, X HITS him in the face, then Guard #6 SHOOTS towards X, the shot grazes Copy's waist and reverberates in the elevator, people scream, Copy complains about the pain.

GUARD #5 (CONT'D)

You idiot! Don't damage the goods!

Guard #5 approaches, Guard #6 enters the elevator, X hits him again in the face and kicks him in the legs, Guard #6 backs off, then X presses the button for the elevator go up, but Guard #6 grabs onto the door, X pushes him again, Guard #6 holds on, the doors don't close, X keeps slamming him until Guard #6 finally slips and disappears from the elevator. The elevator goes up.

X, breathing heavily, stares at the floor for a few seconds, then Copy crouching in the other corner catches her eye.

X
You're good?

Copy keeps silent watching the landscape change across the transparent walls of the elevator as they rapidly ascend.

X (CONT'D)
You shouldn't be worried. Your
fibers and tissue are strong enough
to repress these- these assholes.

COPY
I need to find water. Where can I
find water?

X
(confused)
You still have memories? How is
this possible?

COPY
I only get water...

X
L-Like a big mass of water, huh? L-
Like... The beach? The beach!
That's it?

COPY
It's water. I need to go back!

X looks around, worried.

X
Yeah, right, we need to go back.

INT. CORP BUILDING, OFFICE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The elevator stops at a floor surrounded by more huge wide transparent windows, the sunset purple sky out there, tables with piles of documents, computers, monitors, chairs, but all empty, like everyone was suddenly leaving. Lights on, everything on.

X looks around again.

X
(to herself)
Where is everyone?

The two walk between the tables, X takes a COAT from a chair and gives it to Copy:

X (CONT'D)
Cover yourself.

Looking for a way out, they cross the office. Then, a WARNING SIGNAL is triggered, the light is turned off, the whole floor is flooded with a frightening red light.

X takes Copy by the arm toward the hallway, but we hear MORE FOOTSTEPS, running, then:

OBBO (O.S.)
(loud, on speakers)
My love, my darling love, I know in
my deepest feelings you are not
causing all of this on purpose.

His voice reverberating through the walls. The two look around desperately.

OBBO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(loud, on speakers)
Look at this mess. Look at that!
You can't possibly be real on that!
You're making me very very angry,
very very nervous. And you know I
don't like that! Now, right in this
moment, you're in possession of
something that isn't yours, and
stuff like that makes me very very
very angry.

GUARD FOOTSTEPS get stronger, X breathes heavily:

OBBO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(loud, on speakers)
Think your next steps very
carefully.

X runs up the stairs, Copy right behind her, THE EXACT INSTANT the Guards burst down the hall firing.

INT. CORP BUILDING, STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

The two desperately climb the stairs, Copy trips but X helps her. Guards running close behind, gunfire.

INT. CORP BUILDING, PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

At the entrance, X quickly faces horizontal openings covered by large metal gates, their way out.

Then X and Copy race through lines of stylish expensive cars. X looks around trying to open them one by one. Shots fly toward her as she swerves between cars.

In one of the cars X manages to open it, she gets in, Copy also gets in soon after.

INT./EXT. CAR / PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

X struggles for a few seconds to get it to turn on, but finally succeeds. Guards come banging on windows, shots ricochet off the car. The dashboard lights come on, the windows show the surroundings of the parking lot.

The car floats away and heads towards one of the open gates at the edge of the parking lot.

GUARD #7
Shoot the engines!

Gunfire hits the car and INSIDE it X triggers the device that opens the gate.

Shots hit the car's engine, between the tires, THE CAR FAILS, sparks, crashes into the gate wall, but manages to get out.

The Guards, relentless, keep firing, the car lumbers away, low, releasing more sparks, the shots more and more frequent.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

We see The Car getting lower, dodging some buildings towards the sunset, it passes the train tracks, reaches street level, dodges other cars and light poles and continues flying low towards a bay, the sea.

The car skids disastrously along the ground hitting a few more poles destroying everything in its path.

Amidst wreckage of destroyed lights, sparks, fire and smoke, X gets out of the car from which Copy do the same, the two stagger out and run across a street of beach houses, X hears the sea, their feet start touching the sand, gray, dirty.

EXT. BEACH - CONTINUOUS

They keep running until they see an old house, abandoned in the middle of nowhere, the city, buildings, noise and lights, farther behind them, but there are still several cars furiously chasing them.

X faces the Sea at one side, far, and a Forest, an abandoned car crashed and more far warm lights between some trees, at the other side.

X

Wait!

Copy slows down.

X (CONT'D)

We gotta split up. We have to.

Copy doesn't seem to understand. X stops, catches her face and smiles for a while. Then, she touches a device at the back of her head, takes out a small CHIP and places it gently on the back of Copy's head.

X (CONT'D)

Now they're yours. I never liked them that much anyway.

Copy's eyes glow differently, the pupils white and glowing.

COPY

(sadly)

You're going to die without them.

X takes off Copy's coat, puts it on and pushes her towards the Sea.

X

I don't care.

Copy holds X's hand for seconds before X breaks free and staggers in the opposite direction, into the forest.

Then Copy obeys her and goes towards the Sea, she runs incessantly, her feet hitting the increasingly wet sand until the waves start washing her legs, higher and higher.

On the other side, X walks with difficulty, she starts to crawl, lies down on the sand, takes the bag of Specter, opens it and compulsively sniffs all the contents at once.

Soon X begins to overdose, her body fails, her functions fail and she stares at the sky until she finally stops breathing.

On the horizon, away from the city's chaos, the cars approach.