

REMNANT

an original short by

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One Week Challenge Draft
September 16th, 2011
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FADE IN:

INT. BASEMENT ROOM - NIGHT

The large dimly lit room features an eclectic assortment of boxes, electronic equipment and computers. Two long tables are placed in the middle of the room, almost like operating tables. Drapes cover a side of the room, hiding several small alcoves.

A burly man, ED, sits in a rocky chair between the two tables, reading something from an electronic reader device. He is the spitting image of someone you'd expect to find in a place like this or in a bar fight. He seems quite bored.

An elaborate series of knocks rouses Ed from his apathy and he goes to the bulky door. He opens a small peek hole and sees a mousy man on the other side.

The man in his early thirties, STEVE, is very weak and jumpy. He constantly checks his surroundings and seems to radiate nervous energy.

ED

What do you want?

STEVE

Umm, hi... Uh, I'm Steve. I need help and was told to come here.

ED

Not interested.

Steve stops Ed from closing the peek hole at the last second.

STEVE

No, wait! Pete told me to say that he sent me and that the password is turritopsis nutricula.

Ed relaxes a little.

ED

Is he with you?

STEVE

Uh, no.

ED

Not interested.

Once again, Steve has to stop Ed closing the peek hole.

STEVE

Please, don't! Don't shut me out,
not like this. You're my last hope.
I have the money.

ED

You have the money?

STEVE

Yes.

ED

Show me.

STEVE

Well, I don't have it with me. But
I can transfer it to you right away.
Hell, I'll let you do it if you want.

ED

How do I know you were really sent
by Pete?

STEVE

He told me to tell you that...
(strains to remember)
...the flowers are blooming in the
garden.

Ed looks at the man for a moment, considering hard.

ED

Ok.

He closes the peep hole and unbolts the various locks on the
door to let Steve in.

Steve is in a bad shape, physically weak. His bloodshot
eyes and slowness of his movements tell the tale of harsh
illness.

Ed closes and bolts the door again immediately.

ED (CONT'D)

What's the problem with you?

STEVE

I'm dying.

ED

Of course you're dying or you wouldn't
be here. What are you dying of?

STEVE

It's my heart. It's more clot than flow. They wouldn't even touch me at the phys center.

Ed grunts in acknowledgement.

ED

How long do you got?

STEVE

I need to do it now.

ED

Fine. Let's transfer the money.

STEVE

Hold on, I want to see what you have first.

ED

That's not how it works.

STEVE

What do you mean that's not how it works? I have to see what I'm buying before I pay.

Ed looks at Steve again, weighing the man.

STEVE (CONT'D)

How's it going to be? I might be dying, but I'm not stupid.

Surprisingly, Ed cracks a little smile.

ED

You're in luck. I have just what you need. It arrived just a while ago.

STEVE

Good. Let's see it.

They move to one of the alcoves. Ed pulls off the cover to reveal a human body, seemingly in a pristine condition but definitely dead. The body is upright and connected with tubes to hidden machinery.

Steve is a little shaken by the sight.

ED

He's a beaut. In pristine condition and comes with a certificate of no illness or disabilities.

STEVE

You didn't kill him, did you?

ED

Don't be an ass. Do I look like someone who goes around killing people?

Steve remains silent, does not want to answer.

ED (CONT'D)

Nah, he got fried in the monorail transit. But it's not a problem, we can jump start his heart after the transfer. You won't even notice anything.

STEVE

Can you do it right away?

ED

If that's the one you want, sure. But you'll need someone to get you out of here. You'll be lucky if you can walk before your synapses are properly adapted to the new body.

STEVE

I can't wait. I'll just call a cab or something.

ED

Not advisable. But hey, it's your rebirth. I'll have to charge you extra, though.

STEVE

I don't care. I can croak at any moment, so let's just get it over with. I'll take it.

ED

Sounds like we have ourselves a deal.

Steve manages a faint smile as well.

FADE TO:

MONTAGE:

-- Steve and the body are on the tables, Ed is attaching equipment to both of them.

-- Ed scans Steve's unconscious body with small handheld devices.

-- Ed works on a computer in full concentration, the graphic indicates that a transfer is being made.

-- Ed presumably starts the body's heart with a paddle-like device.

-- Ed tests the reflexes of the new body while it is still unconscious.

-- Ed disconnects the tubes from Steve's old, now lifeless body.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. BASEMENT ROOM - LATER

The other table is now vacant while Steve, in his new body, sits unsteadily on the other one. Ed is shining a light in his eyes and does other standard neurological examinations.

ED

You can feel your fingers and feet
alright?

Steve nods weakly.

ED (CONT'D)

Twirl them for me.

Steve raises his hands and shakes his fingers around for a moment.

ED (CONT'D)

Good.

Steve tries to say something, but no sound comes out.

ED (CONT'D)

No, don't even try to talk for about
a week. I gave you some stimulants
so you should be able to walk enough
to get home. But overall it'll take
you at least a couple of weeks before
your neurons adapt to the new body.

Steve nods again.

ED (CONT'D)

Ok, I called the cab for you. It
should be here any minute now, so
let's get you on your way.

Very carefully, Ed helps Steve off the table and gives him a lot of help as they slowly move to the door. Ed unbolts and opens it.

ED (CONT'D)

Now remember, if you get any complications, don't come back here. Go to the phys center and say that you were electrocuted. Forget you ever were here and don't ever send anyone our way. This did not happen and I do not exist. Understand?

Steve nods and manages to walk out the door on his own. Ed immediately closes and bolts the door behind him.

He takes a deep breath and moves back to the wobbly chair. The room is exactly like it was in the beginning. He settles in to read some more.

After just a few moments, the same elaborate pattern of knocks repeat. Ed gets up, goes to the door and opens the peep hole.

A distinguished older gentleman, GERALD, is at the other side. He is slightly overweight and is clearly used to a certain higher standard of living if not outright hedonism. He acts as casually as if he was visiting a relative.

ED (CONT'D)

What do you want?

GERALD

Turritopsis nutricula.

ED

Who sent you?

GERALD

Marion. She said to tell you that I'm a catch you definitely don't want to miss. I think her exact phrase was "blindingly epic".

Ed smiles at this.

ED

Ok.

He closes the peep hole and opens the door to let the distinguished gentleman in before closing the door yet again.

Gerald looks around curiously with mild amusement.

ED (CONT'D)

This isn't your first transfer, I take it.

GERALD

Good heavens, no. I've been through so many that it's getting hard to find people willing to do it anymore. You people do not like returning customers under any circumstances.

ED

No sir, we do not.

GERALD

That's why I've had to... lower my usual standards and come to you.

ED

Don't let the outward appearance fool you, I run a very reputable service. Well, as reputable as you can be in this line of business.

GERALD

Yes, I'm sure.

ED

So what's the cause?

GERALD

Cancer. It's not very advanced, but it is terminal and I don't see any reason to prolong getting a transfer.

ED

Smart man. I can see that you've come to expect the best. Se here's the deal, I've been saving this particular specimen for someone, but I think you're more than worthy of it.

GERALD

You have a certificate of no illnesses or physical disability?

ED

Naturally. He was strangled to death in a burglary. I've repaired the windpipe and he is in a pristine condition. It all checks out.

GERALD

Let's see it, then.

They move to the alcoves and Ed pulls the cover.

What is revealed is the now deserted old body of Steve,
cleaned up but recognizable.

Gerald examines him for a while, clearly enthralled.

GERALD (CONT'D)

I'll take it.

Ed cracks another smile.

FADE OUT.

THE END