

'SIMULACRES'

Written by
Robin Johnston

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RobinJohnston75@gmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. CONURBATION

An endless, abstract landscape of ivory blocks, high rise TOWERS, all clad in translucent white. They seem to stretch on forever towards a fading horizon.

These buildings are covered in lines of small WINDOWS, and one window in particular is just as featureless as all the rest, except-

Framed within it are GREEN LEAVES, illuminated by bright beams of SUNLIGHT.

INT. MAIN ROOM - DAY

The leaves are from a BONSAI TREE, sitting in ornate porcelain on the brightly-lit windowsill.

Extravagantly manicured female FINGERS caress the leaves carefully, perfect dark red nail-polish on every digit.

MARIE, a tall, slim, dark haired and almost ageless woman is tending the Bonsai, clipping its branches with an intense focus. Her skin is perfect, as pale as the porcelain.

Behind her is an expansive, featureless, MAIN ROOM, no decorations or pictures on its empty white walls.

A quite STERILE SPACE to inhabit.

As Marie looks down at the tree a single DROP OF WATER hits one of its vibrant green leaves, splashing.

She stares blankly at a TEAR that has dropped from her pale cheek.

The water SPARKLES in the sun. She presses her fingers to her face as though in shock, then WIPES the trail of water away with disdain.

CUT TO:

C.U. on toe-less white SLIPPERS as they shuffle into view. Painfully slowly, hardly making a sound on the blank carpet.

An OLD MAN, 82, wanders into the blank main room. He looks thoroughly confused and disorientated, as if unfamiliar with his surroundings.

His wrinkled, craggy old face, and crumpled pajamas seem at odds with this banal, homogeneous space.

He has a few days of bristle on his chin, and is RUBBING at it effusively, as though his whole face itched. He addresses Marie in a hoarse voice.

OLD MAN

Excuse me, my dear, do you live here?

Marie turns and nods. She is used to this.

MARIE

Yes, Ezra.

EZRA

Would you know the way to the bathroom?

Marie almost sighs. She has done this so many times.

MARIE

Come. I will show you.

She holds out a perfect hand to him, and the old man clasps it with obvious relief.

EXT. JAPANESE ZEN GARDEN – DAY

Marie holds Ezra's arm, to steady him, and hold him close.

They walk past an ornate ZEN DRY GARDEN, witnessing the ornate swirls of its white gravel, and dark upright rocks. The garden is surrounded by small water features.

OLD MAN

It is so tranquil here. I feel like I've been before.

MARIE

You have. Many times.

OLD MAN

It must have been long ago.

MARIE

Only yesterday, my dear.

OLD MAN

Oh. Well, I hope we come back soon.

MARIE

I hope so too.

EZRA'S head bows. He almost seems to fall asleep standing up. Marie clasps his hand tightly, as if to wake him.

MARIE (cont'd)

Ezra, you are tired and it is cold.
Come back inside. It is almost time
for supper.

INT. KITCHEN

Marie stands at the kitchen counter, vigorously chopping onions while staring back through the kitchen window.

Through it she can see into a conservatory space where Ezra sits, snoring.

Marie stares at him, her face hard. She CLENCHES her fist around the knife, then grimaces.

A single drop of RED BLOOD falls on the white marble of the worktop.

She has CUT HER HAND with the knife!

Marie regards curiously the small TRICKLE of red on her unblemished skin.

Suddenly, a RED LIGHT FLASHES on a compact circuit BOX next to her on the wall.

The box BEEPS. It almost makes her jump.

Marie wraps her injured hand in a small cloth and then HITS a button on the box.

A VOICE starts to talk. MALE, robotic, devoid of emotion.

VOICE (O.S.)

Incoming message from central.

MARIE

Can't it wait?

VOICE (O.S.)

Irregular response.

MARIE

Talk then.

A different, rather less robotic, voice continues.

VOICE (O.S.)
Marie? Where is your husband?

MARIE
He's sleeping.

VOICE (O.S.)
Has his condition improved?

She does not answer.

VOICE (O.S.) (cont'd)
Has his condition-

MARIE
(hushed)
No?

A pause.

VOICE (O.S.)
Have you considered-

MARIE
Please, leave him be.

VOICE (O.S.)
Contain yourself. We mean no harm.

Marie steadies herself and looks at her bloodied hand.

It has already stopped bleeding and HEALED ITSELF!

There is no sign of any cut now. Without reaction, Marie wipes the rest of the blood from it and discards the cloth.

VOICE (O.S.) (cont'd)
You are hurt?

MARIE
I'm alright. Continue. Please.

VOICE (O.S.)
Please list his symptoms.

MARIE
Physical degeneration, insomnia,
amnesia, cognitive deterioration.

There is a pause. The intercom CRACKLES slightly.

VOICE (O.S.)
His condition has not improved?

MARIE

No.

VOICE (O.S.)

Then we recommend 'Simulacre process'
is initiated with immediate effect.

MARIE

No.

Another pause and crackle.

VOICE (O.S.)

Irregular response.

MARIE

I said no!

Marie SLAMS her bloody hand onto the worktop. The blood
smears across the worktop.

VOICE (O.S.)

What is this?

MARIE

Nothing.

VOICE (O.S.)

You have been injured-

MARIE

I said I am fine!

Marie wipes the blood on the worktop away with another
cloth, then breathes slowly to calm herself.

MARIE (cont'd)

I-I'm sorry. Can't this wait-

VOICE (O.S.)

Protocol is clear. Ezra is an old
man, his systems and cognition are
failing. He may not last another
year. We recommend the Simulacre
process be initiated with-

MARIE

-immediate effect, yes. I understand.

VOICE (O.S.)

You will comply?

MARIE

Yes.

VOICE (O.S.)

Or protocol will be imposed for you.

Marie closes her eyes. She sighs.

MARIE

I see. We will comply. Please, now,
leave us be.

VOICE (O.S.)

As you wish.

Marie glances over at Ezra. His mouth is open as he snores,
and he is DROOLING on his chin.

MARIE

(to herself)
Just a little more time.

The intercom crackles again. The voice changes, more formal.

VOICE (O.S.)

Enjoy your evening then. May your
light continue.

MARIE

And yours.

The red light CLICKS off.

Marie glances over at Ezra in the next room. His head nods
as he snoozes and his mouth shuts with a SNAP.

As he WAKES he turns to look back at Marie, and SMILES
warmly at her.

She tries to smile back.

INT. CONSERVATORY

Marie walks into the conservatory, holding a small pile of
white clothes.

MARIE (cont'd)

I brought you some fresh pajamas.

EZRA

New? These are not mine.

MARIE
They are now.

EZRA
Is it that late already?

MARIE
Late enough.

Marie puts the clothes down next to him. Ezra looks up and points at her cheek.

EZRA
You've been crying, my dear?

MARIE
I have?

Ezra reaches at her face.

MARIE (cont'd)
Is that what it is?

EZRA
What is the matter?

MARIE
Nothing.

Ezra frowns at a streak of blood on her cheek too.

EZRA
Is that blood? Are you hurt?

MARIE
I must have cut myself while cooking.

EZRA
Where?

MARIE
It's not important.

Ezra seems unconvinced but decides to let it go.

Looking away, he takes a faded, cracked, dog eared PHOTOGRAPH out his pocket and shows it to her.

EZRA
Look what I found, my dear.

Marie regards it with alarm.

MARIE
Where did you find that?

EZRA
It's not important. Look.

In the photo Marie is shown as she is now except wearing a white floral dress, and arm in arm with a broad-shouldered BEARDED MAN, in his forties perhaps. It looks to be an old photograph.

Both Marie and the bearded man are smiling happily in the same Zen garden Ezra and Marie had walked through earlier.

EZRA (cont'd)
Is that you, my dear?

MARIE
Yes.

EZRA
And who is this with you? Rather good looking, isn't he?

MARIE
I wouldn't-I can't remember. It would have been too long ago.

EZRA
Well, if that's so, you haven't aged much, have you, my dear?

Ezra chuckles to himself. Marie just winces.

MARIE
Please put it away.

She presses the clothes.

MARIE (cont'd)
And put these on. Now.

EZRA
As you wish.

He slips the photograph back into his pocket.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ezra shuffles painfully in his slippers into a long empty HALLWAY. He is wearing the pajamas Marie gave to him.

EZRA (cont'd)
Hello? Can anyone hear me?

At the end of the hallway, a red light FLASHES. A mechanical voice SPEAKS, similar to the one Marie spoke to earlier.

VOICE (O.S.)
Ezra?

EZRA
Yes? Who is this?

VOICE (O.S.)
Please don't be afraid,.

EZRA
Why? What is this?

VOICE (O.S.)
It is a pleasure to finally meet you.

EZRA
Is it?

VOICE (O.S.)
Please follow my voice.

EZRA
Why?

A curved metal door opens up in front of him, emerging from the white wall.

Inside it is very BRIGHTLY LIT. Ezra BLINKS at the sudden light.

EZRA (cont'd)
What is that?

VOICE (O.S.)
You must enter.

EZRA
I'm not going in there. Are you crazy?

MARIE (O.S.)
Ezra, please. You must-

Marie appears nearby, stepping out the shadows. She looks as terrified as Ezra.

EZRA
Must? I must? Why?

MARIE
Ezra, please listen. You must go in.
You will...be more yourself in there
too.

EZRA
Who says so? I'm fine here.

Marie holds Ezra's arm.

MARIE
You must. For both our sakes.

EZRA
Let go! You're hurting! What is
happening?

MARIE
I'm sorry.

VOICE (O.S.)
There is no need to be afraid, sir.
Marie, please lead Ezra here.

Marie reluctantly pulls on Ezra's arm.

EZRA
I said no!

MARIE
Ezra!

EZRA
I'm not going anywhere. I'm not going
anywhere, you hear!

The red light in the corner starts to FLASH more quickly.
Ezra can hear a loud HUM.

When Ezra looks around her can see Marie's face.

A piercing RED GLOW can be seen in the dark wells of her
eyes.

She clutches Ezra's hand tightly.

EZRA (cont'd)
I said your hurting and-

The hum grows louder. There is suddenly a GLARING LIGHT, as if from an ELECTRICAL CHARGE! Then a SCREAM!

The sound of Ezra in immense PAIN!

Then NOTHING.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. INITIATE BOOTH

C.U. as eyelid's FLICKER.

VOICE (O.S.)
Ah, you are awake at last.

Ezra's eyes open painfully.

EZRA
Where-?

The voice now speaks to him softly, intimately.

VOICE (O.S.)
I must ask your forgiveness for such brutal methods, Ezra. I'm afraid you can be somewhat stubborn.

EZRA
Is that so? Who are you?

VOICE (O.S.)
I am the communicative factor of the mainframe. Your very own creation. I am classified by no common nomenclature.

EZRA
You're a computer?

VOICE
Correct. I am a third generation Simulacrum, similar to those used when you retired from the program.

EZRA
What program?

VOICE (O.S.)
The Simulacre program.

EZRA
And what is that?

VOICE (O.S.)
You know well. You built it yourself.

Ezra does not seem nearly as bewildered as he did before, maybe an effect of the booth.

The initiate booth is small circular ROOM, featureless, with a number of curved OPAQUE WINDOWS.

EZRA
Where is this?

VOICE (O.S.)
'This is your initiate booth. Here you will start your journey. We welcome you with open arms. May your light continue, always.'

The voice suddenly sound different, as though speaking as part of an ADVERT, selling a product. A horrible realisation CRAWLS across Ezra's wrinkled face.

EZRA
Oh, my God!

Ezra panics and BANGS on one of the windows with his fist.

EZRA (cont'd)
Let me out! Marie?! Let me out!

Nothing happens, there is no reply.

VOICE (O.S.)
I'm afraid there is no alternative. You must comply. You are the last of your kind, Ezra.

EZRA
My kind?

VOICE (O.S.)
The last man to grow old.

Ezra stands up stiffly.

EZRA
I see. No alternative, you say.

VOICE (O.S.)
Affirmative.

Ezra looks grimly down at his pocket. He takes out the crumpled photo of Marie and the bearded man and holds it up, next to the red light.

EZRA
Before we commence, can you answer me
this simple question?

VOICE (O.S.)
I can but try.

He points to the bearded man with Marie in the photograph.

EZRA
Who this is?

A pause. The intercom makes that strange CRACKLE again.

VOICE (O.S.)
It is you, sir.

Ezra stares down at the image, and holds his head.

EZRA
I-

VOICE (O.S.)
Now, it is time to start the
procedure. Are you ready?
(in the brochure
voice)
'You will be renewed in perpetuity.
No more pain, no more heartache, no
more despair. Live life with your
loved ones again and forever. This is
our promise to you all!'

The voice buzzes and crackles again, as though at the end of a recording.

EZRA
(remembering)
'In perpetuity?'

VOICE (O.S.)
Are you prepared, Ezra?

EZRA
Wait...one more request.

VOICE (O.S.)
Yes?

EZRA
Let me see my wife again.

There is a short pause, then the opaque windows surrounding Ezra in the booth turn CLEAR.

Behind them is Marie, standing as stiffly as a mannequin.

EZRA (cont'd)
Marie?

Marie stirs, as though emerging from a trance. She SMILES, almost painfully, at her husband through the glass.

MARIE
Ezra, I'm so proud of you. Finally we will be in perpetuity-

Ezra holds out his hand out towards her. He shakes his head.

EZRA
No, Marie.

MARIE
What?

EZRA
'No more pain, no more heartache, no more despair...?'

MARIE
Yes, we will be together in-

EZRA
'-perpetuity.'

Marie stops, confused.

MARIE
Yes, that's-what?

EZRA
It can't work.

MARIE
I don't understand.

Marie moves forward, instinctively knowing something is wrong.

MARIE (cont'd)
No! You can't-

Ezra turns and addresses the red light.

EZRA
Computer?

VOICE (O.S.)
Yes, sir. Should I initiate the
process now?

EZRA
No.

VOICE (O.S.)
Irregular response!

EZRA
Executive override! Order Ezra176!
Option 3!

MARIE
No! Please!

The intercom crackles again as though processing.

VOICE (O.S.)
Confirmed. Ezra176.

EZRA
Confirm option 3!

VOICE (O.S.)
Option 3 is...confirmed.

MARIE
What are you doing?

EZRA
I'm sorry, my darling. I can't join
you.

He holds a hand out, his fingers touching the glass.

MARIE
Don't do this!

EZRA
It's alright, my love.

She presses her own hand against the glass, trying to touch
his hand through it.

EZRA (cont'd)
Believe me, this is for the best.

MARIE

Please! Don't leave me here alone.

Their fingers almost touch through the glass. Then the glass starts to turn OPAQUE again. As Ezra's face starts to fade from view, Marie SCREAMS!

MARIE (cont'd)

NO!

Marie POUNDS her fist into the glass. It starts to CRACK under her surprising strength, but does not give way.

Ezra just stares back at her and smiles, one last time. the he FADES from view.

MARIE (cont'd)

No, don't go!

EZRA (O.S.)

Goodbye, my Marie. May your light continue, always.

The booth starts to GLOW white, BURNING. There is a sound of GUSHING AIR.

Marie can only stare in horror.

MARIE

(to herself)

...and yours.

VOICE (O.S.)

Process complete. Option 3 executed.

The glass clears again.

Ezra is GONE. Marie stares into nothing, in shock.

A silent pause, only broken by-

VOICE (O.S.) (cont'd)

Marie? What is this? A malfunction?

She touches her cheek. It is wet. Another tear.

MARIE

I'm crying. Crying? I didn't know we could cry.

VOICE (O.S.)

It will be reported.

Another pause, and a crackle on the intercom.

VOICE (O.S.) (cont'd)
May your light continue.

MARIE
And yours.

Everything goes silent, and the RED LIGHT flickers out.

Marie stands there, upright and completely alone, just one single TEAR glistening on her pale cheek.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

Piercing rays of sunlight touch the green leaves of a Bonsai tree, sitting in its perfect porcelain on the windowsill.

Pristinely manicured FINGERS caress the leaves, carefully.

Marie is tending her tiny tree again, clipping its branches with that peculiar concentration.

A single DROP OF WATER can be seen on one of the tree's leaves, glistening in the light.

EXT. CONURBATION

Pulling back from Marie's window, an endless landscape of IVORY BLOCKS can be seen, all clad in translucent white.

The tower blocks seem to stretch on and on towards a distant horizon.

Forever, and ever.

THE END