Software Error

written by

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INT. DAY. LABORATORY.

Opens on a blank screen, a loading circle appears with the
words 'Initialising' below the circle. Beeping sounds can be
heard, and then the words 'complete' appear on the screen.

                    AI VOICE
          Model number 6. Initialising
          complete. Your name is Alex. Tap
          LED twice for the 'Options' menu to
          adjust settings.

Alex' eyes open and focus on a small, but sleek laboratory.
The room is dimly lit, with glowing and beeping machinery
surrounding her.

                    AI VOICE (CONT'D)
          Objective: Assimilate to your
          surroundings.

Alex looks down at her hands, moving mechanically as she
turns them. She is an android, clearly marked by two flashing
sensors on either side of her temples and a barcode stamped
onto her wrist. She has the appearance of a woman in her late
20's, with smooth brown hair and skin that appears
airbrushed. She remains emotionless.

She focuses on the barcode on her wrist. It looks lasered
onto her skin, different from a tattoo. She turns her head as
she looks around the room, her eyes move around quickly,
scanning her environment. There is a heavy wooden desk on her
far left, and two tall tables to her right. On the desk there
are tools and a computer, and on the tables there are glass
vials and human biology textbooks scattered around. In the
far right corner of the room, there is a large storage
locker.

Alex has a blank expression and she begins walking around the
room, pausing briefly to look at the desk to her left. She
gets only a few feet away from the desk before her body
suddenly stops moving, and her AI speaks.

                    AI VOICE (CONT'D)
          Scan shows that there is nothing of
          importance here.

Alex turns around and instead walks over to the tables to her
right, glancing at the textbooks and glass vials. She looks
up and spots a sign on the storage locker that reads
'Prototypes'. Alex turns around and spots a door. She leaves
the lab.

INT. DAY. HALLWAY.

Alex walks out into a hallway, once again looking around to
scan her surroundings. To her right, there are two doors and
on her left there is a single door on the opposite side of
the hallway that faces the stairs. On the wall in front of
her, Alex sees a framed photograph.

Alex approaches the photograph. She sees someone who looks
almost identical to her, but she looks human. Alex blinks
rapidly and her sensors start to flash as she tries to
process what she is seeing. She has a strange feeling, one
that isn't part of her program.

                    AI VOICE
          I am sensing a software error.
          Running a background check. Re-
          stabilizing.

Alex' sensors return to normal. She turns away from the
photograph and continues down the hallway to her left,
towards the stairs. She comes to a stop in front of a door
that is left slightly ajar.

INT. DAY. ART STUDIO.

She enters the room to find a huge art studio filled with
hand-painted canvases, some newer pieces leaning against
walls and some older work that had been hung and framed,
detailing scenes of nature fused with technology. There is a
single easel in front of a large window, and a nearby table
piled with high art supplies. She approaches the half-
finished painting on the easel; a man that looks like an
android. Set up on the table behind the easel is a series of
robotic body parts. A strange sense of familiarity washes
over her and her facial expression softens. Alex's head tilts
to one side as though she is thinking. Her sensors begin
blinking and she closes her eyes, when she opens them again
the room looks much brighter.

INT. DAY. ART STUDIO - FLASHBACK.

Alex sees a vision of a young girl that looks just like her
painting happily in her bright studio. She is swaying along
to some upbeat music, before a notification sound from her
phone pulls her attention away from her artwork. She picks up
her phone from the nearby table and sees a message from
someone called, Simon saying 'Finished work early, picking up
your favourite for dinner! See you soon xx'. The girl smiles
and puts her phone into her pocket.

INT. DAY. ART STUDIO - PRESENT DAY.

The robot looks unnerved, blinking rapidly again. She senses her software becoming more unstable, suggesting an error in her programming. She reaches out and picks up one of the leftover brushes, and then glances around at the table she had seen in her vision. Her sensors are blinking more rapidly.

>   AI VOICE
>   Software Error intensifying.
>   Warning. Could lead to critical
>   status.

Alex pauses for a moment and closes her eyes until her sensors stop blinking. She puts the brush back down and turns away from the table. She wanders over to one of the older art pieces - a dove that has robotic wings. She admires it for a second, and then looks across at the multiple paintings lining the wall.

Alex hears the buzz of an alarm from another room, she startles, turning around and leaving the room to investigate the source of the sound. She is moving less mechanically now.

INT. DAY. HALLWAY.

Alex follows the sound back into the corridor, her movements are less smooth and more human. She looks around more inquisitively. She follows the sound to a door that leads to a bedroom, she opens the door, peaking in before entering.

INT. DAY. BEDROOM.

Alex enters, looking around the room curiously. The curtains are drawn, strung fairy lights are giving the room a soft glow. In the centre of the room is a double bed, there are two bedside tables either side and there is a desk on the right hand side of the room, beneath the windows. She spots the alarm clock on top of a set of drawers beside the bed.

Her attention is brought back by the sound of the alarm. She walks over to the drawers and picks up the alarm, looking at it and then turning it off. A drawer is left slightly open, Alex leans down and pulls open the drawer. She finds a lighter and an old video camera. She picks up the camera and scans it with her eyes, and her AI identifies the model.

>   AI VOICE
>   Sony Handycam model with Exmor R
>   CMOS Sensor, HD 1080p. Screen and
>   audio damage detected.

Alex turns the camera on; it powers up, but the screen's
picture is fuzzy. She hits the play button, and she sees what
seems to be the image of a man in a dimly lit room. She
recognises the blue flashing lights in the background as the
machinery from the laboratory she had woken up in. The audio
skips.

                    MAN
          The next models are finally
          complete...I can't wait to see her
          reaction!...Come around to the idea

The man turns the camera and points it at two motionless
figures.

                    MAN (CONT'D)
          She's gonna be so happy with how
          much progress...Things shouldn't
          take too long...Coding isn't
          completed

Alex narrows her eyes, focussing on the shorter looking
figure.

                    AI VOICE
          Alex model number 6 identified.
          Model not yet activated.

Alex's eyes scan the screen rapidly, looking more anxious.
She presses play again and another video begins to play.

                    MAN
          There...Issues...Taking too long...

The man falls out of view as the camera falls to the floor.
The screen turns to static and the video abruptly ends. Alex
presses the arrow on the camera and scrolls through a dozen
similar videos. She puts the camera down suddenly, lifting
her arm up to eye-level and focussing on the barcode on her
wrist again. Alex closes her eyes and runs a system scan.

                    AI VOICE
          Running a system scan. Alex model
          number 6 memory compromised. Early
          signs of Software instability
          identified.

Alex lowers her arm again and opens her eyes. She frowns,
looking more confused and distressed. She turns around and
her head darts around the room, searching for some sort of
familiarity. Alex' gaze falls onto some dusty trophies lined
up on the desk, she squints and focuses on them, reading that
they are old awards for engineering achievements.

Her eyes are drawn to a stack of papers piled up on the floor beneath the desk.

She curiously approaches the desk, crouching down to flip through them. As she looks through the papers of unpaid bills, she pauses when she finds an eviction notice addressed to her. She frowns and puts the paper aside. Alex has a look of realisation as the next paper she finds is a death certificate.

                    AI VOICE (CONT'D)
          Death certificate: Simon Kingston.
          27-year-old male. Deceased due to
          leukemia approximately 1 month ago.

Alex gives a look of recognition as she hears the voice from the video again inside her head; the man she starts to recognise as her fiance.

                    MAN / SIMON
          Alex, you have to live a long life,
          one that you'll be proud of. Even
          if that's without me.

Her face falls, eyes wide and she looks around the room frantically, as her vision begins to glitch. We see 'Error Code - Software Malfunction' flash in front of her eyes. She continues to hear Simon's voice, the memories of her grief rushing back to her.

                    MAN / SIMON (CONT'D)
          You'll be okay Alex...I wish I
          could've finished the models.

Alex squeezes her eyes shut and holds her head in her hands. His voice begins breaking up until all she can hear is a crackling sound. Her sensors begin rapidly flashing and she becomes visibly distraught as her system continues to crash.

                    AI VOICE
          Software in critical condition.
          Shutdown imminent. Model Number 6
          may either press and hold their LED
          button to signal deactivation or
          blink once to begin a factory
          reset. This will scan the systems
          to remove bugs within your
          software.

Alex's monitoring screen displays her two options. She hesitates, before blinking once, signalling her choice to reset. As the reset begins, her eyes shoot towards the lighter in the bedside drawer. She reaches for the lighter, and as she picks it up she studies it for a brief moment.

She looks back around at the room, seeming distressed. She pauses to study the camera, and then the death certificate. Still staring at the death certificate, she flicks the lighter open and a small flame ignites.

                    AI VOICE (CONT'D)
          Factory settings reset is at twenty
          percent.

Alex drops the lighter on the floor and quickly turns to leave the room. As she walks through the door, staring straight ahead, the flames begin to spread across the floor, and up the sides of the bed.

She rushes down the hallway, her LEDs are flashing yellow. Before reaching the stairs, she stops in front of the framed photograph of her and Matthew from her previous life. She reaches out to touch the photograph.

                    AI VOICE (CONT'D)
          Factory settings reset is at forty
          percent.

Hand still on the photograph, Alex turns her head to look down the hallway she had just emerged from. Smoke is beginning to pour through the bedroom door. Alex' LEDs turn red, and her facial expression hardens. She looks back at the photograph.

                    ALEX
          I'll go live a long life, I
          promised.

Taking her hand off the picture, she takes a step back. Alex is twitching mechanically. She turns and marches down the stairs. The smoke slowly follows her.

EXT. DAY. FRONT GARDEN.

Alex walks out of the house without looking back. A fire alarm can be heard beeping loudly behind her. She is blinking rapidly and twitching. As Alex gets to the front gate, she shakily raises her hand to her LED light and taps it twice. A glitching 'options' screen displays in front of her, displaying settings for audio, visuals, objective, and so on.

                    ALEX
          Reset objective.

                    AI VOICE
          Reset objective selected. Please
          state a new objective.

Alex continues to shake, but she speaks clearly.

                    ALEX
          Leave, and start a new life.

                    AI VOICE
          Objective reset. Return to factory
          settings is ninety five percent
          complete. Prepare model for reset.

Alex's arm falls down by her side again. She stands tall,
fixing her gaze straight ahead of her purposefully. Suddenly,
her LED loses its colour and her body goes still. Her
expression goes blank. Her eyes fall shut, and then
everything goes black.

Alex slowly opens her eyes, awakening once again, still at
the gates. Her LEDs light up blue and beeping can be heard.
Her expression is once again neutral, stripped of all
previous emotions she was showing.

                    AI VOICE (CONT'D)
          Model number 6. Initialising
          complete. Your name is Alex. Tap
          LED twice for the 'Options' menu to
          adjust settings. Objective: Leave,
          and start a new life.

Without hesitation, Alex walks away from the house, not
looking back. Her movements are stiff and un-human looking.
She continues walking down the street as the sound of roaring
flames can be heard behind her. Black smoke is pouring out of
the front door and windows.

INT. DAY. HALLWAY.

The hallway is being engulfed in flames and smoke. The
photograph is seen catching fire. It slowly burns and turns
black. The fire alarm is blaring through the roar of the
flames.

INT. DAY. LABORATORY.

Alex' human body is collapsed lifelessly behind the heavy
wooden desk that her android had attempted to approach. It is
concealed only until we get closer. The body is a pale grey
colour. Smoke is pouring through the gap underneath the
laboratory door. The fire alarm can be heard clearly, but the
sound of the flames is muffled.

The screen goes black.

END