

ROOM 8102  
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**O1 AND O2 ROB A BANK AND LEAVE IN A HACKED CAR WITH A BLACK DUFFLE BAG.**

**WITH 6 HOLES IN THE ROOF FROM ANGER, TANLA CONTINUES TO LAUGH.**

**O1 AND O2 DRIVE FOR AN HOUR. THEY PULL OVER AT CAFÉ NOWHERE WHERE O2 HEADS TO THE BATHROOM WHILE O1 SELECTS A BOOTH.**

**O2 ENTERS THE BATHROOM AND STANDS IN FRONT OF AN ETCHED MIRROR WHERE SHE SUSPECTS HERSELF. SHE LEANS FORWARD AND EXHALES, MAKING HER REFLECTION DISAPPEAR.**

**O2 REACHES FOR HER LEFT EYE AND LOOSENS IT WITH A TURNING MOTION UNTIL IT POPS. SHE PLACES IT ON THE LEAST DUSTY CORNER OF THE ENAMEL SINK AND REACHES INTO THE ROUND HOLE WHERE SHE LOCATES TWO STRINGS.**

**SHE UNKNOTS THEM, THEN RELEASES.**

**HER LEFT ARM DROPS TO THE GROUND WITH A SOFT THUMP, THE TWO STRINGS FLOWING BEFORE THEY HANG DOWN HER TORSO.**

**O2 BENDS DOWN TO COLLECT HER ARM. SHE TURNS AROUND AND WALKS TO THE SECOND BATHROOM STALL, GETS ON TOP OF THE TOILET SEAT FROM WHICH SHE STUFFS THE ARM DOWN A NARROW SPACE BETWEEN THE STALLS.**

**THE BATHROOM DOOR WHOOSHES.**

**O2 TURNS HER HEAD AND CATCHES A GLIMPSE OF A WOMAN IN A LONG COAT ENTERING THE BATHROOM AND THEN THE SIXTH STALL.**

**OFF THE TOILET SEAT, O2 SHAKES IMAGINED DUST OFF HER PAW AND WALKS BACK TO THE SINK WHERE SHE COLLECTS HER EYE AND PUTS IT BACK INTO THE HOLE.**

**WITH HER REMAINING ARM, SHE PUSHES THE BATHROOM DOOR OPEN.**

**O1 TURNS HIS GREY-BLUE HEAD AS O2 RE-ENTERS THE CAFÉ WHERE LOW FREQUENCY METAL POP IS PLAYING, AND SAYS SOMETHING LIKE:**

**– WHERE’S YOUR ARM?**

O2 SQUEEZES DOWN ONTO THE NARROW BOOTH BENCH, BUNTS O1'S SNOUT, AND POURS A CUP OF *ALMOSTCOFFEE*®, HER EYES GLIDING LEFT TO MAKE SURE SHE DOESN'T SPILL ON THE TABLE COVER.

IT'S PALE PINK AND POLYMER-COATED.

60 SECONDS PASS.

O1 REACHES INTO THE BULKY DUFFLE BAG FULL OF DOLLARS AND TAKES ONE, HOLDING IT IN FRONT OF THEM BETWEEN TWO CLAWS:

– I PERSONALLY COLLECT HELL OBJECTS.

O1 AND O2 LOOK AT THE MUTED TV WHILE THEY EMPTY TWO STEAMY BOWLS.

O1 PLACES THE 20-DOLLAR BILL ON THE TABLE.

THEY STEP OUT ONTO THE CHECKERED FLOOR.

THEY LEAVE.

OUTSIDE, FROST GLEAMS. THE CAR DOOR HANDLE THUDS AND DUMPS SNOW ON O2'S PAW. SHE LICKS IT OFF. THE BLUE HOUR ENDS.

IN THE CAR, O1 AND O2 FALL ASLEEP.

TWO HOURS LATER, THEY PULL UP TO A GREY

**BUILDING THAT SAYS *MOTEL*. O1 WAKES UP TO THE EXTENDED BEEP OF ARRIVAL.**

**O1 CLOSES THE CAR DOOR GENTLY NOT TO WAKE O2.**

**A TEXTED PLATE IS BOLTED TO THE CEMENT WALL NEXT TO THE CONCIERGE WINDOW. THE MOTEL IS TO BE CONVERTED INTO A STORAGE FACILITY AFTER THE PASSING OF THE 01-066 COMMEMORATIVE LOVE ACT, THE REGULATION OF PERSONAL RELATIONS. THE MANAGER IS WATCHING A GAME SHOW, BOTHERED BY THE SUDDEN VISITOR.**

**O2 RUNS AFTER O1, AND CATCHES UP TO HIM AS HE PAYS AND RECEIVES THE KEY.**

**– XL, ROOM 8102, THE MANAGER SAYS, BEFORE HE SHUTS THE GLASS HATCH AND RETURNS TO THE GAME SHOW.**

**O1 AND O2 MAKE TWO TURNS, GO UP TWO FLIGHTS OF STAIRS, THEN ALONG AN EXTERIOR CORRIDOR. THE MOON PLAYS ON THEIR DUSTY-BLUE FURS.**

**O1 TURNS THE KEY TO THE ROOM. ATTACHED TO THE KEY DANGLES AN OBLONG METAL PLATE ENGRAVED *THE OCTAGON*.**

**THE SPACE IS MOSTLY EMPTY. O1 AND O2 ARE**

VERY LARGE. THEY BEND DOWN AND ENTER THE ROOM WHERE A CEILING FAN IS ROTATING THOUGH THE TEMPERATURE IS BELOW ZERO.

O1 BRUSHES OVER THE TOUCH SENSOR FROM OLD HABIT BUT THERE ARE NO LAMPS IN XERO-TOWN.

THEY LET THEIR GARMENTS DROP TO THE FLOOR BEFORE THEY FALL ONTO THE BED. THEY CHANGE OPACITY WITH THE FUZZY GLOW OF AN LED BANNER ACROSS THE MOTEL, SCROLLING AND FADING, REPEATING THE SAME MESSAGE.

– ARE YOU DEHYDRATED TOO? O2 GETS UP, OPENS A SMALL FREEZER AND SWALLOWS A *PUREH2O*® TABLET.

O1 SHAKES HIS HEAD. A COCKROACH EMERGES FROM THE DARK AND LANDS ON THE TIP OF HIS EAR, CAUSING IT TO TWITCH. TUMBLING BACKWARDS, IT FALLS THROUGH THE AIR ON WHICH IT CONTINUES TO A NARROW CRACK IN THE LARGE WINDOW AND CONTINUES OUTSIDE.

WIND CATCHES THE COCKROACH'S WINGS. IT ENTERS ANOTHER NARROW CRACK TWO LEVELS BELOW, LEADING TO THE CONCIERGE'S GLASS BOX. THE GAME SHOW HAS BEEN REPLACED BY *BDSM HOUR* BUT IS INTERRUPTED BY A DETERGENT COMMERCIAL. THE COCKROACH BUZZES ONTO THE COUNTER WHERE IT

**SPENDS THE NEXT TWO DAYS.**

**O2 ENTERS THE BATHROOM. SOUNDS FROM THE UNDERGROUND ARE MAKING THE BLANK SURFACES ROAR. A DIFFERENT COCKROACH THAN THE ONE THAT LANDED ON O1'S EAR IS DETACHING HER OOTHECA IN A RECESSED MEDICINE CABINET.**

**A SOFT VOICE ENTERS THE ROOM:**

**– YOU HAVE A NEW MEMORY.**

**– R-B-T-M-X, O2 SPELLS, AND TURNS A GROOVED CHROME BUTTON IN HER NECK UNTIL IT SNAPS. SHE LOWERS HER ARM AND LOOKS AT THE DETACHED BUTTON IN HER PAW. SHE STEPS INTO THE BOX TO PEE.**

**O1 APPEARS IN THE DOOR WITH A BED SHEET DRAPED OVER HIS SHOULDERS.**

**O2 TURNS HER HEAD. SHE POINTS IN THE DIRECTION OF THE EXTERIOR CORRIDOR WITH HER INDEX CLAW.**

**O1'S EARS PULL BACK AS STEPS APPROACH. SOMEONE KNOCKS AT THE DOOR.**

**O1 DRAPES THE BED SHEET AROUND HIS WAIST, WALKS ACROSS THE CEMENT FLOOR, UNLOCKS AND OPENS THE DOOR.**

**A WOMAN WITH LONG, CENTER-PARTED HAIR STANDS OUTSIDE.**

**– YES? O1 SAYS.**

**– NOUK, THE WOMAN SAYS, AND STRETCHES HER HAND TOWARD O1.**

**O1 WRINGS HIS RIGHT PAW FREE FROM THE BED SHEET AND SHAKES THE WOMAN'S HAND. SHE SMILES INCONCLUSIVELY AND MAKES A HAND GESTURE AS IF TO WAIT A SECOND.**

**WITH HER OTHER HAND, SHE FETCHES A PAMPHLET FROM A LARGE POCKET IN HER COAT AND HANDS IT TO O1.**

**O1 GRABS THE PAMPHLET. *ROOM 8102*, IT READS IN A DEBOSSSED FONT ACROSS A NEGATIVE COVER.**

**O1 MUMBLES A THANK YOU AND SHUTS THE DOOR. HE DROPS THE PAMPHLET ON THE FLOOR BEFORE HE GETS BACK INTO THE BED WHERE O2 HAS RETURNED.**

**O1 PUTS HIS PAW ON O2'S HIP, ROLLING HER ONTO HER SIDE. HE STROKES THE TWO STRINGS FROM O2'S ARMHOLE IN SLOW, STEADY MOVEMENTS, LICKS HER SHOULDER AND LOCATES AN INDENT. AN ELONGATED CREASE OPENS BETWEEN O2'S SHOULDER BLADES, REVEALING**

**DRY INTERIORS. O1 RUBS IT OPEN.**

**INSIDE IS DARK-BLUE AND DUSTY. O2 TURNS AROUND, ROLLS O1 ON HIS OTHER SIDE AND LOCATES A SIMILAR CREVICE BETWEEN HIS SHOULDER BLADES. THEY SEPARATE AND CLOSE IN THIS WAY UNTIL THEY SLEEP.**

**IT'S LOW UNDERNEATH THE LARGE BED. BREATHING FORCEDLY SLOW, THE WOMAN FROM BEFORE DRAGS HER BODY SOUNDLESSLY ACROSS THE COOL FLOOR UNTIL SHE REACHES THE OPEN SPACE.**

**GETTING UP ON HER TWO LEGS, SHE WALKS ACROSS THE ROOM, STEPPING OVER THE PAMPHLET AND DARK POOLS OF GARMENTS. SHE COLLECTS THE CAR KEYS FROM A PORCELAIN BOWL NEXT TO THE FREEZER AND A POPULATED GREY ROTARY PHONE. FROM THE DOOR, SHE TURNS AROUND, LOOKING AT O1 AND O2'S SLEEPING BODIES, RISING AND FALLING RHYTHMICALLY BUT NOT IN THE SAME TEMPO.**

**A MOTEL TARANTULA WATCHES THEM FROM THE OUTSIDE WHILE PUFFING ON A VAPOR. IT NAMES THE MOMENT MU.**



