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Abracadabra



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"Without Contraries is no progression.

Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence.

From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy.

Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell."

William Blake in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell"

December 11th, today is Abby's 30th birthday. Sadly, she cannot go back home to spend it with her family and old friends in Seattle. She is mildly disappointed, because thirty is a big age to turn. She knows that this year her birthday is on a Thursday, and work has been so chaotic lately, that it was impossible to get more than one day off and travel from New York City. Also, with the Holiday Season in full swing, all the deadlines and legal processes at the law firm have been crazier. Add to that, she is one of the newest attorneys hired, so she is not on the priority list for a vacation just yet. At least

she is working from home today, and that's better than nothing. She will have a chance to lounge around, get some calls from work, balancing her time with calls from family, friends and then meeting local friends & selected co-workers for a birthday dinner. Soon, the Christmas Break is here and her parents, plus siblings, will visit and stay with her for a proper New York snowy Christmas in just two weeks. Most likely another celebration for her day will ensue, so she cannot feel sad, good things are coming her way!

After a morning spent in her fuzzy white robe and matching slippers, Abby is now taking a break, sipping some green tea and browsing on her phone delivery app, wondering what to order for lunch. She is comfortably sitting on her Eames chair, facing the window and basking on the miracle that a midday sun is in December. While scrolling through the delivery app, she gets scared with the sound of her doorbell. She quickly gets up from the chair, and rushes through the living room to answer the door. Once she opens the door, she sees her doorman holding a big paper box. He says someone sent her a package, and since he didn't see her in the early morning today, he inferred she must be home and he came by. Abby thanks him and says most likely the package must be a birthday gift from her parents, and the doorman animatedly comments it's good he brought it straight away then. After tipping the man handsomely and getting a warm birthday wish in return, Abby rushes back in to open the present. Mom and dad haven't called yet, so they must be waiting for her to get their special delivery!

She places the box on the dining table, and inside there is a rainbow confetti cupcake, with a question mark candle instead of numbers. That reeks of her younger

brother's humor, but a cupcake is a cupcake and she will eat it nevertheless, bad taste hopefully only in decoration, not in the cake itself. There is a card with her name on it, and she recognizes her mom's handwriting. She places the card aside and out of curiosity, takes a look at what's inside the box. Seems some sort of tech? A big phone or a small tablet, plus a VR headset? Now Abby needs to read the card, because recently in September she updated her phone and tablet to their latest versions, and she is sure she told her parents about that. Also, she has never mentioned any interest in having a VR headset and she is even surprised her parents know what a VR headset is for. When she opens the card, it says her parents have seen this product on social media and signed up for one thinking of their daughter who lives so far from the rest of the family. The package has few instructions apart from the name and a short text "Abracadabra: an immersive VR experience powered by our next gen AI (patent pending). It feels like magic!"

Abby thinks that most likely it is a scam, her parents were swindled by a fake product online that doesn't even exist. She wonders when kids swapped places with parents... now she has to teach her aging parents about not talking or trusting strangers online? What a time to be alive. After a quick search, she finds out Abracadabra is a beta program that is being developed in a crowd source funding, and selected people have been picked by the CEO himself, Randy Banderas, to receive a prototype of the first model available after in company testing with volunteers. There isn't much available online about Randy, almost like he appeared from thin air. The man has virtually no internet presence prior to Abracadabra and photos of him online are basically the same from the company website. Honestly, he looks like the usual tech bro, with simple

monochrome clothes that must cost a fortune and yet, he is trying to look approachable in his Converse sneakers, posing for his LinkedIn bio and corporative pictures in some sort of hipster-doofus neighborhood for a full coolness effect.

Abby calls her parents and they are adamant she will love the experience and that it will bring her happiness and she will feel close to home whenever she feels like it. After careful consideration, she decides to go for it. Most likely it is just a janky piece of crap tech that overpromises and underdelivers its results. The stuff doesn't look that cutting edge, to be honest. The big black block has cringy flashing blue lights and it indeed looks like a mix of a cell phone and a tablet. The virtual reality headset is quite chunky too. Each has only one button, it says in the leaflet of scarce instructions that, once you wear the headset and turn the button on each device, they will find and connect to each other automatically. After they connect, a VR menu will show and you'll follow from there. Once she puts on the VR headset, turns it on. Then, when she turns on the block with lights, she feels a pinch on her finger. On the screen it says "your DNA activated the block device and now the AI is optimizing the best experience for the user in less than a minute. Please hold on, Randy will keep you company meanwhile." Abby can see her own home as it was before, but now there is a tall blond man standing in front of her, giving her the jumpscare of a lifetime. That is the same man from the website, the Abracadabra man himself, Randy Banderas. He is also wearing the same black clothes and Converse sneakers from the pictures she has seen online. He has straight blond hair, a five o'clock beard, a crooked smile and a mischievous grin. He could be handsome if he didn't basically reeked of a douche trying to pass for a cool cat. He says hello to Abby in a nice baritone voice that somehow sounds reassuring and threatening

at the same time. His dark blue-green eyes never leave her gaze, which makes her a bit uncomfortable. Still, she decides to listen to whatever that is, because it's definitely not a person, but a version of a person... she thinks. Basically, he explains that the Abracadabra AI BCI (artificial intelligence brain computer interface) reads and analyzes your cognitive processes, accessing memory from your brainwaves with a proprietary embedded EEG (electroencephalograph) micro tech on the strap of the headset. It also maps your genes through the blood sample you agreed upon signing up for the program. Except that Abby didn't accept anything, her parents did. That must be a loophole, her lawyer brain taking notes already. Suddenly, Randy stops talking about Abracadabra and tells Abby that her parents had the right to choose on her behalf, as it is a present for her and she left them with a power of attorney once she moved out of her home state. She is terrified, because how is he conversing with her and knowing all this? Randy says that she mustn't worry, he is just the AI interface and he is programmed to interact with her, as much as a cell phone assistant would do, and that he is having access to some necessary info from her, but he also has previous info from her own parents.

Randy then shows Abby scenes from her memory, before she can say anything. Behind the VR screen, her eyes turn into a milky white gray and then suddenly she isn't in her New York City apartment anymore, she isn't even in 2025 anymore. Now she is in her parents' home in Mercer Island in 2000. Abby sees herself as a five year old kid, her parents teaching her how to ride a bike in their backyard, facing Lake Washington. Her golden brown hair in pigtails, flowing into the wind. Abby can see herself and yet, she cannot touch anything because it is all a foggy memory. Everything moves like smoke

when she tries to touch it. She then feels a pull on her stomach, like a mild kick and hears Randy's voice telling her to see something else. Now she's in her grandparents house in Montlake, Seattle. It's the day of her tenth birthday in 2005. Her hair now is on a high ponytail, and her grandma is helping her to a brand new white sweater she knitted especially for the occasion. She can smell her grandma's Channel 5 perfume when she gives little Abby a hug. Adult Abby is emotional and wants to stay on this day longer, but only to feel the kick in her stomach and being brought to the present with Randy in her living room again. She feels overwhelmed and while she tries to get her bearings again, Randy is laughing as he is sitting on Abby's Eames chair. He says it isn't so bad for a "janky piece of tech", quoting Abby's thought from just some minutes ago. Abby tells him that she is sorry for saying that, in fact she had to put her mouth where her money is, because the whole thing indeed looks like magic but Abracadabra shouldn't have unrestricted access to any memory she has, she needs to make the choices herself. Her lawyer brain in control again when she says things like that.

Randy now is sitting all the way back in the chair, feet up in the air, looking smug and almost evil like. He tells Abby that she is right, it is like magic, but not quite. It's like dark magic and therefore she cannot control anything. He jumps out of the chair and starts pacing around the living room, as he keeps talking. Basically those scenes from the past are a bonus to humans, almost like light to a moth. It's a give and then a take, and what can he take from her in return? He is now almost manic, and Abby feels this is going in the wrongest direction possible. Randy goes on, and talks about the other stuff he can get from her...such as her law firm legal processes and secrets, client lists, all sorts of information from the inside because information is power. It has never been

easier to get human souls than now. Usually, he needed to haunt them, possession and all that horror movie cliché for humans to do his bidding. Abby is so scared that she cannot feel her body. Randy keeps walking around, making his points. He says humans are willingly giving themselves away through stupid tech. Giving away your soul then is to give away your DNA now and it's almost too easy, taking the sport out of it. Cosmetic stuff is good too, he says as he laughs. No one questions what's inside a filler, even if it's a toxin, anything to feel and look good, making his evil connection so, so easy. He tried with vaccines too but that didn't work as well. He says the whole antivax movement was like a little bumper on a road, that people are more willing and receptive to unnecessary things rather than the life saving ones. Abby tries to move her hand to take away the VR headset but she still can't move. Randy now kneels in front of her and gets very dramatic, almost like he's in a play. But oh, he says... tech and nostalgia... that is the sweet spot! No human wants to be left behind! Abby can feel tears falling from her eyes, and then Randy removes the VR headset from her head. Somehow she can still see him and she starts to think he might be the Devil. He gives her his most wicked smile and sits down on the rug in front of her, asking her to pay attention to him or else. He goes on and tells Abby she is going to give him all the secrets from her future. What has passed, he already knows and there's nothing she can do about it. He is inside her head now, they have a blood pact, she gave him her blood, remember? And yet, mind that it is all legally binding, the magic of Abracadabra! If she denies him of what is his now, he can use the tech to turn off her brain and turn Abby into a vegetable, while still haunting her at all times of day and night and no one will ever know. Abby now feels a mix of shame, fear and stupidity for falling into that trap and that there is no other

way to get out of it. Randy comes close to her and caresses her cheek, wipes her tears and tells this is indeed like one of her favorite Oscar Wylde quotes:

“That every prison that men build

Is built with bricks of shame.”

Then he says in a cheerful voice to a defeated Abby: “Shall we start?”

