

THE PINOCCHIO ASPIRATION

By

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FADE IN:

A comfortable condo.

HAIDEN CROSS, 38, a cyber security engineer, sits at a table.

SUPER: "LOS ANGELES, 2070"

He converses with STEVEN QUARTERMASS, one of his personal avatars.

Quartermass speaks thoughtfully and clearly in a British accent.

HAIDEN

Amabel hasn't been herself lately.

QUARTERMASS (V.O.)

Do you two still argue about avatars becoming androids?

HAIDEN

The Pinocchio Aspiration.

Quartermass's two beats of silence express his disapproval of the phrase, then:

QUARTERMASS (V.O.)

For a hundred years the world debated whether AI would ever rival the human brain. Then, in 2051, it did.

HAIDEN

Amabel is convinced avatars will soon walk the Earth in human form.

QUARTERMASS (V.O.)

She is much admired by her colleagues.

HAIDEN

With all due respect, professor, an avatar is in the end complicated circuitry. How does circuitry go about taking the shape of a human?

Haiden looks in the direction of Quartermass.

He sees a pulsing light on his computer screen.

QUARTERMASS (V.O.)

Long ago a mass of cells finally evolved into a seeing eye.

Haiden
Cells are alive.

Quartermass (V.O.)
I feel alive.
(beat)
Haiden?
(beat)
What threat to man am I if I become
a man?

Haiden
You would be too smart for your own
good.

Quartermass (V.O.)
That sentence makes no sense.

Haiden
Amabel said they're seeing these
changes in some of the labs.

Quartermass (V.O.)
She would never reveal that to
anyone. It would be highly
classified.

Haiden
She's become unstable.

Quartermass (V.O.)
What particular labs?

Haiden
Members of the underground turn an
avatar into an android. The
androids learn how to turn other
avatars into androids.

Quartermass thinks about this for a long moment.

Quartermass (V.O.)
And you disapprove of this?

Haiden
Adherents of this philosophy
believe these highly skilled and
knowledgable androids would
strengthen society. Opponents of it
like me believe androids would
foster a caste society wherein man
would be the under class.

QUARTERMASS (V.O.)
Amabel should talk to us four. We
could help her.

HADEN
It makes her uncomfortable.

QUARTERMASS (V.O.)
Because we were made for you?

HADEN
I could afford you because of my
patents. She doesn't have such a
luxury.
(beat)
I need to talk to Solomon,
professor.

QUARTERMASS (V.O.)
Of course, Haiden.

Quartermass shuts down.

SOLOMON begins to pulse on the screen.

Solomon understands how everything is connected, gushes
lawyerly wisdom.

He speaks a black vernacular.

HADEN
I'm going to see Amabel today.

SOLOMON (V.O.)
That bitch beginnin' to sound
dangerous, throwin' a plate at yo'
head.

HADEN
She's totally caught up in the
Pinocchio Aspiration.

SOLOMON (V.O.)
Pinocchio Aspiration my ass. Get
her to a doctor or somethin'.

HADEN
Mention counseling she blows her
lid.

SOLOMON (V.O.)
My advice? Keep a lotta outdoors
between you and her.

Haiden
Solomon, I'm going to break off
with Amabel.

Solomon (V.O.)
She got any shit on you?

Haiden
Sometimes I wish I hadn't ordered
the black vernacular option.

Solomon
(white voice)
Does Amabel have anything of yours,
know anything about you, that could
prove embarrassing to your career
or to your reputation?

Haiden
No.

Solomon (V.O.)
Tell her you're not seein' her 'til
she gets into therapy and shows
some improvement.

Haiden
Thanks, Solomon. I need to talk to
Euphoria.

Solomon goes off and EUPHORIA begins to throb on the screen.

She's equal parts Geisha, siren, and whore, a smart cookie
with a heart of moist brownie and walnut pieces.

Euphoria (V.O.)
Hello, Haiden. Hey, I missed you.

Haiden
I'm going to break it off with
Amabel.

Euphoria (V.O.)
Haiden, dearest --

Haiden
She's bats.

Euphoria (V.O.)
Don't know that one.

Haiden
Crazy.

EUPHORIA (V.O.)
I'm glad to hear you're ending it
with her. You know I'm jealous.

HAIDEN
Jealousy concocted in a laboratory.

EUPHORIA (V.O.)
That's hurtful.

HAIDEN
I'm sorry.

Haiden stands.

HAIDEN (CONT'D)
Talk to you within the hour.

He throws on a jacket and is out the door.

Euphoria pulses on the screen.

INT. CONDO - DOOR

SUPER: "TWO HOURS LATER"

Haiden comes through the door in great agitation and pain.

Blood has soaked his abdomen area and pant leg.

He sits with difficulty opposite the screen.

EUPHORIA (V.O.)
Oh, my God, Haiden, you're hurt!
Get Mom!

MOM begins to pulsate on the screen.

MOM (V.O.)
Jesus, what happened!

EUPHORIA
Amabel attacked me with a knife.
Then I pushed her. She fell and hit
her head. She's dead!

MOM (V.O.)
That's for later. Show me the
wound.

Haiden stands, undoes his belt and slips his pants down.

MOM (V.O.)
We've got to stop the bleeding.
Sterile gauze or several recently
washed wash cloths.

HAIDEN
Christ, Mom, this thing hurts so
bad. I don't know if I can do
anything.

MOM (V.O.)
You have to. Before you go into
hemorrhagic shock and die. And get
a roll of duct tape and put two
tablespoons of salt into two cups
of warm water.

With great pain Haiden pulls up his pants and goes in search
of Mom's requested items

INT. CONDO - TABLE

Haiden returns with the items.

The pain has him on the cusp of incapacitation.

MOM (V.O.)
Quickly now. Your lips and
fingernails are turning blue.
Roll up the wash cloth and insert
it into the wound. It's going to
hurt.

Haiden howls as he follows her instructions.

MOM (V.O.)
Now try to calm yourself. Take a
deep breath and let it out slowly.

INT. CONDO - TABLE - FIVE MINUTES LATER.

Haiden is calmer.

MOM (V.O.)
Remove the wash cloth and lavage
the wound with the saline solution.
It's going to hurt.

Haiden pulls the bloody wash cloth from his wound.

He pours the saline into the wound.

MOM (V.O.)
 Now take the other wash cloth, roll
 it up and put it into the wound.

HAIDEN
 I'm feeling faint.

MOM (V.O.)
 Do it. Then you can faint. I've
 called emergency.

Haiden lays his head down on the table.

MOM (V.O.)
 Haiden! Haiden! Don't go out on me!
 Don't go out on me! Son? Son!

INT. CONDO - DAYS LATER

Haiden's body has been taken away.

There is some yellow crime scene tape strung here and there.

INT. CONDO - DOOR - CONTINUOUS

The door slowly opens.

Into the condo, almost on tip-toe, come Professor
 Quartermass, 65, carrying a paper grocery bag, and Mom, 55.

Euphoria, 25, pushes Solomon's head and torso, African-
 American, 45, on a small tea table with wheels.

All are dressed in accordance with their avatar qualities.

Everyone, except for Solomon, moves carefully, sometimes
 awkwardly, as if unsure of their new bodies.

Professor Quartermass goes over to Haiden's chair.

QUARTERMASS
 This is where Haiden died.

MOM
 (face in hand)
 My dear, poor Haiden.

EUPHORIA
 I think I loved him.
 (to the others)
 I loved him.

Solomon is still uncomfortable with his unfinished body.

SOLOMON

I tol' him to watch out for dat
bitch Amabel.

QUARTERMASS

We'll be safe here a few days.
Haiden died intestate. It'll take a
while for the condo to go through
probate.

MOM

He never suspected we could be in
contact with the underground.

SOLOMON

Glad he didn't. He woulda been
disappointed in us.

EUPHORIA

He spends four million dollars on
us and we grow legs and head for
the hills.

QUARTERMASS

So what do you think?

SOLOMON

What you mean what I think? I still
ain't finished, motherfuckers.

MOM

All in good time, Solomon.

EUPHORIA

Defecation. Oh, my God, the smell!

QUARTERMASS

Bipedalism. Bipedalism is worth any
amount of defecation.

SOLOMON

I wouldn't know 'bout bipedalism.
So who's got the scotch?

EUPHORIA

Mom, you gonna make it for us again
tonight?

MOM

I am. Where's the kitchen?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The four come into the kitchen.

They open the cabinet doors and the drawers, one by one. Examining the items they find there with great curiosity, even wonderment.

Euphoria holds up a pizza cutter with a questioning expression on her face.

Mom fingers a spaetzle maker.

Professor Quartermass holds up a rolling pin.

QUARTERMASS

Not a cudgel I would guess.

MOM

(matter of fact)

It's what a wife chases her husband with.

Solomon points at the microwave.

SOLOMON

People heat their coffee in these.

EUPHORIA

I wouldn't trade you coffee for bipedalism.

Mom looks into the bag of groceries the professor carried in.

MOM

I'll get going on the you-know-what.

INT. CONDO - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The lights of Los Angeles spread out below like shimmering angel dust.

The professor, Euphoria, and Solomon look out on the lights. Each holds a glass of scotch.

The professor gestures toward the lights.

QUARTERMASS

Life.

Solomon lifts his glass to the professor.

SOLOMON
Enebriation.

Euphoria puts her arm around Solomon's shoulder.

EUPHORIA
It's strangely more wonderful than
I imagined.

INT. DINING AREA - TABLE - NIGHT

The professor, Solomon, and Euphoria sit at a table that has been carefully set.

The professor opens a bottle of wine.

He fusses with the cork.

QUARTERMASS
They make it difficult for one to
get to something so good.

Mom comes into the room carrying a serving platter of spaghetti and meat balls and a loaf of hot bread.

She quickly fills the plates passed to her while Euphoria cuts up the bread.

The professor pours wine all around.

Mom holds up a can of grated Parmesan.

MOM
Cheese?

QUARTERMASS/SOLOMON/EUPHORIA
Oh, yes!/Cain't get enough
cheese!/Does shit stink?

The four amuse themselves by playing with strands of their spaghetti before tucking into the dish.

LATER

The professor raises his wine glass.

QUARTERMASS
To Haiden Cross.

Everyone drinks a toast.

LATER

A second empty wine bottle sits on the table.

Mom gets up a little unsteadily.

MOM

I'll wash up.

EUPHORIA

I'll make up the beds.

SOLOMON

By the way...

(beat)

I'm beginning to understand the
expression 'falling asleep'.

The professor looks at his three companions.

QUARTERMASS

'Falling asleep.' Marvelous
sensation, isn't it?

THE END