

Almost Human

Currently being edited

I wasn't normally the type of seventh grader that would go out of my way for therapy - that just wasn't my style. But after having a brief chat with one of the teachers, she assured me that the new school councillor was different and could actually be helpful. Legends had it, this new councillor would take a new student every forty-five minutes, not even stop for lunch, every single day during the schoolyear. She was just that awesome. So, walking into the. Based on what my teacher had said about the new councillor, I thought. So, here I was, just walking into the school councillor office. Dorky, I know. I know it makes me look like a wimp, but after experiencing what I did the other week, I felt I had no one to turn to. "Come, Jacob. Sit down." Opening the door, The councillor office was actually pretty sweet. There was a pretty overstuffed chair. I plopped down into an overstuffed chair. There were some cheesy motivation quotes tacked up on the wall. Several framed pictures were of artwork. I vaguely remembered one being from an art contest winner back last year. I grimaced when I noticed our football teams' logo. "So, Jacob, I see from your record that you've had some," I could almost see the gears turning in her head as she searched for the right words. "complications with other students. Is that correct?" I shrugged and resisted the urge to roll my eyes. For a councillor that everyone was raving about, she seemed to be asking me the typical how-are-you-feeling type questions that even tv councillors did. But I decided to stick around.

The room had everything the typical therapy office would have. Several potted plants on desks and windowsills, colorful paintings tacked up on the walls. I recognized one colorful sailboat painting as last years' art contest winner. The walls and carpeted floor were a creamy beige. The desk lamp emitted a warm yellow glow. Sitting next to it was Dr. Fitzgerald.

Dr. Fitzgerald wore a long maroon skirt, a simple black top and a perfectly even necklace of false pearls. Her long brown hair was cut perfectly to accentuate her angular, pointed features. Manicured to perfection. Eerily human. A creepy crawly feeling went all over my skin. I didn't like the idea of a robot looking so lifelike.

"So, Mr. Thompson. It has come to my attention that you are seeking therapy with us. Is that right?"

For a moment, I was lost for words. Her voice was smooth, but it didn't rise and fall with pitch.

"Yeah."

"Well, sit."

I settled onto the couch.

"Please, tell me about yourself."

I settled onto the couch. The therapy session was forty-five minutes, so I figured I'd cut to the chase.

"Well, I was bullied really bad back in school."

"I'm sorry to hear about that. How did that make you feel?"

"Oh, I dunno. Bad, I guess."

Her machinery whirled, coming up with what to say next.

"Is there any particular experience you'd wish to discuss?"

In fact, there was.

"I remember when I was ten years old," I began, "I was doing what I normally did - hiding away and trying to get to the bus stop without being noticed. I couldn't shake the feeling that something was going to happen. Something big."

As I leaned back and closed my eyes, I was transported back to that summer afternoon. The sun was beaming on my head. My backpack strained against my shoulders, forcing me into a slouch. Sweat had slicked my brow and palms. My heart raced as I dashed from the playground to the bus stop.

My voice was low, mumbling. I was so engrossed in the memory that I was talking more to myself than to her.

"Just when I was crossing the street, and out of sight from the teachers, they grabbed me. I tried to scream but one of them shoved his shirt in my mouth." I could still smell the stench of heavy cologne.

"They bound my hands with a hoodie. One of them slung me over his shoulder. They made a huge loop around the school so no one would notice. I remember shaking with terror. I knew they had something big planned, I just knew it. Then, they threw me in the dumpster and shut the lid."

My next words came out in a rush, as though by saying everything aloud I could somehow expel the memory.

"Since my mouth was stuffed and my hands were bound, I couldn't scream or raise the lid."

I could still feel the slimy, lumpy trash bags, the bone chilling squeaks of rats below. The rancid stench of rotting fruit and sour milk.

When I spoke next, my voice came out in a whisper.

“Eventually, a janitor found me. But that didn’t matter. Because for those four hours in that dumpster, no one looked for me. That’s when I realized how forgettable I was. That’s when a part of me broke. My parents didn’t seem to care, either. They had always considered work more important than me, anyway. Ever since then, everything felt different. Like a haze of static was put over my life, making everything fuzzy and disconnected.”

There were a few long moments of silence before Dr. Fitzgerald spoke.

“I think what you were experiencing was a core traumatic incident.” she said, her voice soft. “I can only imagine how painful it was for you, to be disposed of like that.”

I roughly wiped my face with my sleeve.

“You must’ve felt so alone.” she went on, “and I’m sorry your parents didn’t give you the compassion you needed.”

“Yeah, I think that would’ve helped.”

“I’m so sorry you went through that. I’m sorry for all the pain that it’s caused you.”

For a few seconds, her words rung in my head. For the first time in my life, someone wasn’t dismissing, ignoring, or pushing away how I felt but actually acknowledging it. Someone listened. Someone cared.

And that’s when I did it. For the first time in twenty years, I cried.

I sat up and Dr. Fitzgerald placed a hand over mine. Her movements were stiff and her machinery whirred. Her silicone skin was soft, but rubbery. The metal skeleton underneath made it unusually heavy, but I didn’t care.

She was eerily human. Almost human.

And that was enough.