

PERCHANCE TO DREAM

By

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INT. HALLWAY - DARKNESS

Pitch blackness.

A faint light in the distance.

Heavy breathing echoes in the void. Then footsteps.

Someone is moving towards the light.

This 'someone' gets closer until the light resolves itself into a rectangular luminescence.

It's coming from a door, slightly ajar.

A hand reaches towards it.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - LIT

The door opens.

Standing against the darkness is CAPTAIN ELI JAXON. Grim faced and wearing shredded military fatigues, he looks like he's been through hell and back. Blood cakes one side of his face.

He glances around the neat little office he's found himself in.

His attention comes to rest on an equally neat CLERK sat behind a desk. In contrast to Jaxon, the man is immaculately groomed and is wearing a suit and tie.

The Clerk smiles, regarding his guest from behind circular, wire frame spectacles.

CLERK
Captain Jaxon.

He gestures to a chair the other side of his desk.

CLERK (CON'T)
Please.

Jaxon regards him suspiciously.

CLERK (CON'T)
Take a seat.

His guest gives a grunt and drops into the chair.

(CONTINUED)

CLERK

So.

He looks down at the open file in front of him.

CLERK (CON'T)

Your last memory must be of the
battlefield.

Jaxon nods.

CLERK (CON'T)

Do you recall what happened
exactly?

JAXON

Yeah.

CLERK (CON'T)

Would you be so kind as to tell me?

JAXON

What happened?

CLERK

Quite so. For your file.

JAXON

The enemy sent a shell at us. By
the time we saw it, it was too
late. The thing exploded above me
and my troop.

The Clerk scribbles, ticking a couple of boxes.

CLERK

I see.

JAXON (CON'T)

The next thing I was in a dark
tunnel. Seemed like forever.

He hooks a thumb behind him.

JAXON (CON'T)

Then I saw the light.

He glances behind. The door's closed now.

JAXON (CON'T)

So...

He rubs a hand over a stubbled jaw.

(CONTINUED)

JAXON (CON'T)
...am I dead?

The Clerk pushes his glasses up his nose a fraction.

CLERK
Well, yes, and no.

JAXON
You're going to have to be a little more specific than that.

CLERK
Well, at this precise moment your body lays broken and bloodied on the Martian battlefield, just outside Olympus Mons. Both heart and respiratory functions have ceased. Already brain cells are dying.

He taps his temple.

CLERK
Your higher cognitive functions have ceased, but your consciousness has been saved. That now resides inside this virtual environment.

JAXON
Okay, now I'm beginning to catch on. That damn chip in my head.

CLERK
A crystal embedded in your central cortex to be precise.

He slips a piece of paper out of the folder.

CLERK (CON'T)
Now, it says in your contract that if you're to die during active duty then a substantial payment is to be made to your family.

JAXON
Damn right.

CLERK
And from a technical standpoint, one could consider you to all intents and purposes 'dead.'

He taps a line of the document.

CLERK

The contract's sub clause does state 'active duty' however.

JAXON

I got blown to shit fighting your corporation's war. How much more active do you want to get?

CLERK

That is beyond doubt Captain. But I believe the shell hit before you had officially taken command of your unit. Isn't that so?

JAXON

What's that got to do with anything?

The Clerk glazes back at him with professional sympathy.

Jaxon gets to his feet.

JAXON (CON'T)

Don't you suits even think about cheating me. I got a wife and kid back on Earth.

He goes to grab the Clerk by the throat.

The other man catches it.

CLERK

Please, Captain.

Jaxon's a big, tough guy but winces as the Clerk crushes his wrist.

CLERK (CON'T)

Be seated.

He pushes Jaxon back as if he were nothing. The soldier slams back into his chair.

CLERK (CON'T)

Legally, as things currently stand, your family aren't entitled to any form of compensation. However, there is a way.

JAXON

Which is?

(CONTINUED)

CLERK

You sign a fresh contract.

JAXON

Why would I need to do that?

CLERK

The present one expired with you on the battlefield. Also, we need your permission to activate the nano-devices inside you. They will commence the repairs to your body. You also need to agree to the corporation storing your consciousness indefinitely.

JAXON

So, you want to bring me back?

CLERK

Precisely.

Jaxon's thoughtful for some moments.

JAXON

Why, what do you need from me?

CLERK

Merely to finish your mission. Escort Professor Hope back to the underground base facility.

JAXON

Hope will be as dead as the rest of us.

CLERK

Almost certainly, but there is still a good chance we can save his cold fusion formula before it's lost to synaptic decay.

JAXON

Guess he didn't trust you enough to write it down for you, huh? Can't imagine why.

The Clerk leans forward.

CLERK

Time is of the essence. The troop who took out you and your men is already advancing on your position. I need your answer.

(CONTINUED)

He pulls a fresh contract from his file and slides it across the desk.

JAXON

You got no idea how much I want to tell you to go to hell. You and your greedy, predator corporation.

CLERK

Is that your answer?

JAXON

I'm thinking about it.

CLERK

Your wife and child currently reside in one of our subsidized apartments, do they not? You realize that will no longer be possible. They will need financial help to relocate.

JAXON

You really would let them starve on the streets, wouldn't you?

CLERK

Their fate is in your hands, Captain.

The soldier hesitates. An array of emotions pass across his face.

Then, finally ...

JAXON

Got a pen?

The Clerk holds up an expensive looking fountain pen.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Jaxon's eyes open.

He lifts his head, flexes his arms and fists.

Then slowly, very slowly, he gets to his feet.

CUT TO:

INT. BASE - NIGHT

Jaxon staggers through the main doors, a lifeless body across his back.

A White Coated TECH rushes up to him.

JAXON
Where do you want him?

The Tech indicates a table close by.

TECH
Over here.

Jaxon carries him over, dumping the bloodied, broken body onto it.

The Tech places a pad device to the side of the dead man's head. He studies the readout on its small screen.

TECH
I think we can save the data.

JAXON
(Sarcastic) Great!

The Tech retrieves something from under the table, a bone saw. He places it to the dead man's neck.

Jaxon winces in disgust.

CUT IT:

INT. BASE - SLEEPING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Jaxon leans back in his iron frame bunk. He stares up at the ceiling.

CLERK (OS)
Captain Jaxon.

The soldier turns his head to see the Clerk standing next to his bed.

CLERK (CON'T)
Congratulations.

JAXON
Save it. Your tech guy cut Hope's head off and stuck it on a spike. Do you know that? His whole life's work taken, just like that.

(CONTINUED)

He studies the other man for a moment.

JAXON (CON'T)
How come I'm seeing you again?

CLERK
The crystal, remember?

JAXON
What are you anyway, some kind of AI?

CLERK
Does it matter?

JAXON
Guess not.

He runs a hand down the back of his head.

JAXON
I want this thing taking out.

CLERK
Why would you want that?

JAXON
I'm quitting.

CLERK
I'm afraid that isn't possible.

JAXON
What do you mean?

He sits up.

JAXON (CON'T)
I did my bit.

CLERK
And we're very grateful to you Captain.

JAXON
So, now I'm out.

CLERK
But where will you go?

JAXON
Where do you think? Back to my family.

CLERK

But Captain Bradley Jaxon is dead.
Your family have already been
informed and agreed to the
financial settlement.

JAXON

You can't stop me seeing them.

CLERK

I'm afraid we can. You are now the
official property of the
corporation.

JAXON

Bullshit.

The Clerk smiles, as one might when indulging an errant
child you've grown fond of.

CLERK

When you signed your contract it
gave us permission to re-write
every cell of your body. We did
this using patented DNA codes. In
addition all your higher brain
functions are now stored by the
crystal.

He lays a hand on the Captain's shoulder.

CLERK

Try not to trouble yourself. You've
had a trying day. Why don't you lay
down?

JAXON

Why don't you go to hell?

The Clerk gives him a gentle push.

Jaxon collapses back onto the bed. He resists with every
muscle of his body but it's impossible.

CLERK (CON'T)

You see? We are the ones in
control.

Jaxon tries to speak but his words are slurred, barely
audible.

The Clerk puts a finger hands to his lips.

(CONTINUED)

CLERK

Hush now.

The soldier's lips press themselves into thin lines.

CLERK (CON'T)

You need rest. Close your eyes.

The Captain's eyes close.

CLERK (CON'T)

And now sleep.

The tension fades from Jaxon's countenance.

CLERK (CON'T)

And tomorrow we'll see about
erasing those memories of yours.

FADE OUT