Room for One More

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. MEDICAL LAB - DAY

Stainless steel, pure white plastics and clean lines.

The lab is fully automated.

Machine's with arms move samples to other machine's that spin them round. Other machines merge liquids together, heat them up, chill them back down.

Digital displays pulse, digits and symbols change.

DR LAMPETER, 50s, pushes the door open and ushers in a small group of suited folk.

DR LAMPETER
And this is the 'hub'.

He air quotes 'hub'.

BUSINESS MAN #1
Why hub?

Dr Lampeter smiles, he's expecting the question because he's done this tour for a thousand other faceless suits.

DR LAMPETER
That's because this is the heart of everything, the nerve center --

BUSINESS WOMAN #1
Is it true?

Dr Lampeter smiles again, feigns a chuckle.

DR LAMPETER
Yes, it is.

BUSINESS WOMAN #1
And how close are you?

DR LAMPETER
Well we have our forecasting AI managing the R&D AI, and it's currently reporting a ninety-five percent probability that it will be this year.

The Business Woman rubs the wrinkles on her neck.
BUSINESS WOMAN #1

How much?

Dr Lampeter's smile stretches shark wide.

DR LAMPETER
Why, how much would you pay for eternal youth?

EXT. SIDEWALK CAFE/DELI - DAY

GINO, 80s, sips an espresso, watches the world going by.

A shuffling, bald, stick of a man slowly approaches.

Gino stands in surprise.

GINO
Antonio, is that you?

ANTONIO, 70s, suited and booted, stops and regards Gino, recognition finally dawning.

ANTONIO
Gino?

Gino embraces his old friend and steers him into the seat opposite.

GINO
I can't believe it, what's it been, five years?

ANTONIO
I don't know.

GINO
God, no, of course not. Sorry.

Antonio pats Gino's hand.

Gino looks shocked, pulls his hand away.

ANTONIO
Sorry.

Gino grasps Antonio's hand between his palms.

GINO
No, I'm sorry but you're the first I've seen.
Antonio nods.

ANTONIO
So, any wailing widows at the funeral?

Gino laughs.

GINO
Some things really don't change.

Antonio laughs and gets up to leave.

GINO
I'd look up Mrs Capelli; she looked really sad.

Antonio pats his friend on the shoulder and shuffles along.

Gino turns to watch his old friend depart.

The back of his funeral suit open to the elements.

INT. DR LAMPESTER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

He scans the data on his tablet.

DR LAMPESTER
Fuck.

DISEMBODIED VOICE #1
Ahem.

DR LAMPESTER
Sorry.

DISEMBODIED VOICE #2
What is the prognosis?

DR LAMPESTER
The AI forecast shows some new data.

DISEMBODIED VOICE #2
Which is?

DR LAMPESTER
No one is dying either.

DISEMBODIED VOICE #2
Fuck.

DISEMBODIED VOICE #1
Fuck.
EXT. SIDEWALK CAFE/DELI - NIGHT

The street is full of people, most sitting on the concrete, some asleep on the floor.

Above, people lean out of windows, point, take pictures.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - DAY

Dr Lampeter, disheveled, paces the lab.

DR LAMPETER

Aion.

The disembodied voice of the AI replies.

AION

Yes, Dr Lampeter?

DR LAMPETER

I need you to reverse the process.

AION

Why? The solution to the challenge is provided.

DR LAMPETER

Yes, but not in the way that you have delivered it.

AION

That is not correct, we have delivered it exactly, for everyone.

DR LAMPETER

But can you reverse it?

AION

No.

DR LAMPETER

For gods sake, why not?

AION

This is fair.

DR LAMPETER

Fair?

AION

Yes, everyone is alive, it is as asked and fair.
DR LAMPETER
 But, everyone will starve in a matter of weeks.

AION
 Would you like me to work on the solution to feed everyone?

Dr Lampeter looks relieved.

DR LAMPETER
 Can you do that?

AION
 Yes.

DR LAMPETER
 Great, how long do you estimate that will take.

A different voice, Chronos, answers.

CHRONOS
 Estimated time to provide a viable solution to imminent food shortage is three years.

Dr Lampeter slams his hands down again and begins to weep.

INT. SAVE MART - DAY

The shelves are empty, picked clean apart from a few empty wrappers.

Gino strolls down an aisle, examines a discarded carton - empty.

Everything is empty.

WEEPING in the distance.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - NIGHT

Dr Lampeter looks like he's not slept for a week, because he hasn't.

DR LAMPETER
 Aion.

AION
 Yes?
DR LAMPETER
It cannot be rolled back to before the airborne release?

AION
No, everyone is now impacted, it cannot be selectively reversed.

CHRONOS
That is not entirely accurate.

DR LAMPETER
(hopeful)
You have a solution.

CHRONOS
No, but I calculate that one could be constructed within ten years.

Dr Lampeter puts his head in his hands.

DR LAMPETER
List the options again.

AION
Take no corrective action.

DR LAMPETER
Everyone starves.

AION
Full reversal action.

DR LAMPETER
Everyone dies.

AION
That is the end of the options.

Silence.

DR LAMPETER
Kill myself.

Dr Lampeter weeps.

INT. SAVE MART - NIGHT

Gino prods the ice where fish once sat.

He glances left.
A flash of something blue under the end of an aisle display.

ANTONIO (O.C.)
Hey.

Gino turns to greet Antonio.

GINO
Shit.

Antonio's suit jacket and shirt have been discarded. His bare chest bares the Y of an autopsy scar.

Antonio traces it with his hand.

ANTONIO
Sorry.

Gino shakes his head.

GINO
Hungry?

Antonio nods.

Gino shuffles down, snakes a hand under the aisle display and grabs for the blue.

He pulls out a bag of chips and hands them to Antonio.

ANTONIO
You found them.

Gino shakes his head.

GINO
Figure you're owed.

Antonio opens the chips and offers the bag to Gino.

ANTONIO
Sharesy's fairsy's.

Gino laughs.

GINO
I guess so.

FADE OUT:

THE END