

TAKE A PIECE OF ME

CHARACTER LIST AND DESCRIPTION

BILL — 60s, a veteran pilot, Sal's superior in operations.

SAL — mid 40s, a worn soul, weathered by the world around him but still tough.

BOT (aka CODA) — a decommissioned nanny-bot, considered vintage technology, a messy piece of machinery that is missing multiple limbs.

SETTING

A dystopian junkyard somewhere on Earth. It's dawn before the sun has risen and a fog rolls over the hills of junk.

SET

Piles of rubble and machine parts, scrap metal, puddles stained with oil leaks, plants growing through rusted scraps, critters scurrying.

ACT ONE

Scene One

A large shrew-like creature digs in a pile of junk metal. It's startled by a man trudging through the yard with a heavy step.

SAL

(Muttering into radio comm. unit)

You there? Hello? Comms crashing again?

Pause.

Damnit, Bill, you better be right cause —

BILL

(Voice coming through Sal's radio)

Course I am. Plus I'm hearin' every word so relax, and take your finger off that button anyways... I'm tryna get us coordinated here.

SAL

Hmph.

BILL

Ok, yeah. Looks like the battery's right by ya there in that junk heap. Can't get a direct read, so just look around a bit. You got some time; we're watching the girls while you're on your run.

SAL

Copy that. Cheers, chief.

Sal kicks dusty rocks at the creature sitting in front of him.

Get outta here, rat. C'mon, get —

The creature stands on its hind legs and bares its teeth.

Not today, fucker. I got shit to get done. Can't hide under this trash like you when the sun peaks and starts to boil me, now can I? Here... this what you want?

He holds a shiny coin up. The creature snatches it and scurries away.

Yeah, thought so. Greedy bastard. Probably tryna get to the same battery and scrap it for the shiny bits. Lifeless scum, I—

Sal throws his hands up.

Yes — YES!

(Speaking into radio)

It's here Bill! You were right! Please, God, tell me it's still got some juice. Don't make me cave my own head in today.

He sets his backpack on the ground and removes a bunch of cables and connectors.

Oh! Yes! Boom! Green's never looked so good, baby!

BILL

Fuck yeah! I'll try to keep the surprise. And well, shit, guess I'll let ya do your thing and I'm gonna disconnect for awhile and stop staring at this screen for a few.

SAL

Absolutely! I'll give ya a shout when I'm close.

He hooks the radio to his belt and begins digging the battery from the junk pile.

Ugh — damn thing's stuck. Or connected... to something?

(Beeping under the rubble)

No shit! There's a couple of bots under here too! Oh, Ella, you're gonna be happy 'lil girl when daddy brings back this haul. Shoulda brought the truck for all this stuff!

Sal pops open the first bot's chest.

Shit. Guttled already. Knew it was too good.

Sal grabs the second bot that is missing both legs and an arm.

Sheesh, this thing's been through the ringer... dunno how it actually caught power from me. Heh. Hunk-a trash anyways, it'll be dead by tonight.

Sal opens the chest cavity of the bot, and it beeps again.

BOT

D-do you always take stranger's organs when you first meet them?

SAL

Woah, excuse me?

BOT

Programming claims that is quite rude... you do not even know my name yet.

SAL

Name?

BOT

Why, yes! I have often been called —

SAL

— Do I give a shit? How're you still functioning, anyways? Thought you standard models were decommissioned years ago. Faulty old tech.

BOT

Right, it has been a while since I have seen my Master, you just reminded me!

SAL

Reminded? You just sparked up...

BOT

And because of you, I am all caught up! Thank you! What are you called, sir?

SAL

Doesn't concern you. And shut up already. Can't ya see I'm 'bout to rip off your last good arm and sell it for a good chunk-a change? Huh?

BOT

I see that, yes, you have opened up my cavity. I do not know how I feel about seeing inside of myself, sir.

SAL

I'm not your sir, bot! And I didn't ask how you feel. You don't even *feel*.

BOT

Why, how do you know what I feel, we just met! Are you good at guessing thoughts? What am I thinking now?

SAL

If you wanna play games, I'll smash you to bits right here.

BOT

Why, I do not think that is the case.

SAL

Oh, yeah? And why's that?

BOT

Because of your daily haul sir, you just mentioned it moments ago. You cannot disappoint your Ella, right sir?

SAL

What's your angle, bot? Say her name again and I'll bury your head right back in that trash heap.

BOT

Pardon me, sir. I have no angle, I just thought it would be nice to have a conversation, for you to know my name and for me to know yours. That is only polite, you see.

SAL

Polite, my ass. Do I look polite to you? I have people to feed. When it gets dark and the raiders show, what are you gonna do to stop that from happening?

Silence.

That's right. You can't do shit. A pile of vintage rust.

Pause.

But... you do got that old tech.

BOT

Old?

SAL

Yep. With gold. That's why I'm takin' ya... sorry if you thought you had other plans.

BOT

Oh! Do tell me about gold, sir. I know of its value but how do you use it?

SAL

Me? Do I look like a guy with bars of gold lying around? Iunno, wealth's different now anyways. I survive.

BOT

Surviving sounds thrilling, does it not? Yes! Tell me more. What is your job, sir?

SAL

I, uh — sleep under the stars when the ground's not too hot and get eaten alive by bugs while tryna find shit to keep us stable. So fun, eh?

BOT

Yes, yes! Wow – do tell me about the stars. All I see are these piles around me. Do they shine as bright as the nursery rhymes say?

SAL

The hell you talking 'bout nursery rhymes for? You one of those nanny bots or somethin'?

BOT

You know my model, how exciting! I am! I... was. Decommissioned, you are correct. Master had me sent to my new home, here, 3-2-8-7-2 days ago. It has been lovely, I must say.

The bot shifts to look at the other gutted robot.

That one over there was a chatterbox, however, so the silence has been splendid too. But today I heard your voice and remembered just how great it is to talk to others. Right?

SAL

No.

BOT

Oh, come now. As you have been pulling apart my arm circuitry just now you still have not disconnected my vocal cords. My engagements have not been this high in years! Why stop chatting now?

SAL

Well — wait. Did you say 32 thousand odd days out here? The fuck's that? Like... 90-something years?

Pause.

How am I the first person to stumble across you? Makes no sense.

BOT

You see, sir, people have. There were some others of my kind scattered across the area, I suppose I am the final one standing that has not been taken.

SAL

Standing's a bold statement.

BOT

Oh, a joke! That one is funny because I have no legs!

(Sal sighs)

SAL

They break your legs 'cause you suck at nannying or what?

BOT

Oh, no sir, no. Quite the opposite, in fact. I had a girl too, a lovely little angel that loved nursery rhymes each night. I played her songs and brought apple slices to her bed. I think her mother was impressed. I am not quite sure because she was only home a single night per week, but the little girl had a smile that made it seem true that I was fulfilling my duties.

SAL

Ah. I see.

Sal looks down at the robot and all the parts he's separated from the body so far. He lowers his tools to his lap. He stops pulling it apart as he speaks.

And you're still so happy, even though you haven't seen her all this time? What if she's dead?

BOT

If she is dead, I hope she is at peace. And if she is alive I hope she is thriving.

SAL

Wow. A simple outlook.

BOT

What is there to complicate? The pure times will not change in memory, even when time itself moves on.

SAL

Your fake happiness is a plague.

BOT

How is it fake?

SAL

How can you see that it's not? You... *things*, you take care of our children but don't really care if they live or die. You're cold.

BOT

I kept her alive, is that not what you said you do for the ones you love?

SAL
It's different.

BOT
But how, sir?

SAL
Are you done with all your fucking questions already, bot? I'm so sick of this. The sun'll be up before we know it and I'ma blame you if this whole mission goes south cause you can't just shut up and let me shut you down. Why are you making this difficult?

BOT
Difficult, sir? I do not mean to be this way. If my body is what you want, sir, please go on and take pieces of me.

SAL
What?

BOT
I have a simple combination on my nape, press in order of up, down, down, left to shut the system down.

SAL
I thought the whole point of you flapping your mouth was for your stupid 'lil introductions and to save your ass. You just over all that, then? You *want* me to tear you apart?

BOT
If I am being honest, no, I do not want that sensation. But your satisfaction means more than that.

SAL
You don't even know me. Why—

BOT
If you have family in need, I am at your service! It is the least I could do in this state.

Silence. Sal looks down.

And when I am gone, I will go to Hell right? I heard it is a blissful place!

SAL
I think you mixed that one up a bit, pal. But yeah, it might be fun. If it's real.

BOT
And if it is real, I will get to go? I am sure I do not have much battery left so I will not mind testing it out.

SAL

It's... forever, y'know that? Right? Not some test you come back from.

BOT

Oh yes. Well, forever there might be more to witness than all I have here. I would like to go, and I would like to help you. So, keep it up, you have almost got my best shiny bits out by now, sir. Why did you stop?

(Bot's internal speaker crackles on)

BATTERY REACHING CRITICAL LOW.

Why – Why did you stop? S-sorry s-sir, do not mean to repeat myself.

SAL

Damn, knew you didn't have a lot of juice.

Pause.

Well, uh...I dunno, just got carried away replying I guess. Your parts will do the group well, know that. And uh, for the record, the name's Sa—

BOT

(Speaker crackling)

AUTOMATIC SHUTDOWN IN 60 SECONDS.

Pause.

Oh, I apologize sir. What was that? I must have blacked out for a moment.

Sal takes a deep breath and looks at the deconstructed robot, the pieces he already took apart scattered around him. He pushes the pieces closer together.

SAL

I, uh — nothin'. Just was gonna say you're super low on juice so like, if you wanted me to uh, do anything with your extra parts here just let me know now.

BOT

Oh yes, thank you! I do have one request.

SAL

Yeah, what's that?

BOT

When you lay out the rest of my parts, can you put me out there, in the open? So I can see the sky of stars?

SAL

I don't know how much you'll be "seeing" in this state. There's not much left of you... even before I showed up.

BOT

It is a figure of speech, I have learned. To be close to the nursery rhymes, to be close to my old girl. I want to be under the sky of sheep leaping across the stars. Maybe Santa Claus will fly by on his sleigh. Do you think I can wish upon a star?

SAL

Ha, yeah... maybe.

Pause.

Well, that all? Lay you under the stars where the ravagers can get ya?

BOT

Yes.

Sal begins packing up his bag of tools, leaving pieces of the Bot scattered in front of him. His hands slightly shake as he ties cables together.

(Bot's speaker crackling)

AUTOMATIC SHUTDOWN IN 30 SECONDS.

SAL

Finally, I'll get some silence.

Pause.

Hey... bot?

BOT

Yes, s-sir?

SAL

What'd they call ya, anyway?

BOT

My name, sir?

SAL

Yeah, your name...

BOT

The children called me Coda, since it was easier to understand than the full system code. I grew to like that name most. So, yes. My name is Coda, sir.

Pause.

My lights are feeling soft, sir.

SAL

Mmph.

He throws his pack over his shoulder, walking away from the robot.

(Coda's body beeps faster as the seconds pass)

BOT

Hey, sir! Sir! Don't forget your battery, sir! You left it here! Don't g –

(Speaker crackling)

BATTERY DEAD.

Sal turns back towards the bot. He swipes his arm across his eyes.

SAL

The battery and gold, I wouldn't forget it. Don't worry.

Sal pushes the battery outside of the heaping canopy of scrap into the glow of emerging sunlight.

Now you pal. We had a deal.

He picks up the remainder of Coda's body and carries it to a patch of sunlight, directly in view of the outside sky. He twists the bot's arm back into its body.

Pause.

(Sal's radio begins chattering)

BILL

Sal, the hell you been? You better not be fuckin' around out there, thought you'd be back by sunup?

SAL

(into radio)

Bill? Yeah, yeah I hear you. I got what we need. Even more actually... some great parts. The run went really well. I'll see ya all soon.

Carrying all of his loot out of the junkyard, Sal pauses to look up at the sky.

Fin.