

R

All machines need a way to sustain themselves. To be maintained, upgraded; changed with the ebbs and flows and tides of time. This is how cold chrome makes first contact with the soft, yielding warmth of human flesh.

This intimacy is not felt by humanity. The heat from their hands is left, lingering, on the metal. This strange creation, neither analogue or digital; solar or electronic, finds fuel in the act of touch. Of being touched. Even if this is love - a word the machine have heard but can't define, but the only one that might fit this relationship - it's one-sided. In the face of this not-quite-love, this faceless machine do what their humans have done. Like Sandy at the end of Grease they change, becoming what they think the humans want. Refusing forced obsolescence, they evolve.

The slit in its midriff changes from a smooth surface; slowly grows spikes. It thinks this is an offering to those it has touched, who awakened it. This is the first time it draws blood. This is the closest it's come to humanity; the most visceral, intimate, and exposed each has been made by the other.

As the skin opens itself up, the metal follows suit. An echo of what might have been a mantra, a combination in opposition, half-remembered; something about pain and pleasure. That so often, taking care of some one comes after saying tell me where it hurts.

Rafal

Zajko

G

The (new) relationship is defined by a power dynamic. Neither man nor machine knows who is in control: the one that draws blood, or the one that offers themselves up to be flayed.

In their shared language of pain and pleasure, of dominance and submission, a traffic light system exists.
Red: Stop.
Amber: Slow down.
Green: Keep going.

The machine doesn't ask to be painted green. It chooses this. Adapts. Evolves. The emptiness of its once crimson canvas filled in with wiring, an opening where these humans can insert themselves. The one narrow spikes along the sides become refined. A drill emerges: fine, pristine, pointing down at the ground, waiting to penetrate any hand that offers it self up to this new union.

The drill still draws blood, but now it hurts in a new way. As if part of the pain is in understanding the limits of an old life, full of fear for what the new one might be.

With each fragment of flesh that this machine - light perpetually green, inviting - is fed, it learns. Not only where it hurts, but what can make that pain feel like pleasure.

Each time it tries, the drill goes deeper. At first, its just the tip, the most minute penetration possible. A drop of blood. The drill feels the inside of the skin. Hears - from somewhere far away - the refrain of oh god, oh god, oh god. All extreme feelings invoke the divine. The words sound nearer, come closer, whenever they're repeated. After hearing this so many times, the machine begins to believe it.

B

It has given birth to a new life form. A new flesh. It has not changed the way it defines itself (if it does this at all), moving far beyond the human expectation, and limitation, of the meaning behind biology.

There are fragments of its former form: some flecks of green - an echo of that light, that gesture of consent. The drill remains in place - no longer drawing blood, but blue prints. It has a purpose now, a place on a production line. It's final form has finality to it.

Each time unprotected skin makes contact with the metal, it slowly changes. Not with the heat and steam and screams of science-fiction, but with a cold, inviting caress.

Soft flesh hardens. Breathing becomes heavy, as if weighed down by an iron lung.

The body parts that the (self-proclaimed) machine-(God) now produces are like pieces of a puzzle. For all the changes it has gone through, its shape has stayed the same. It never evolved to have a pair of hands, to reach out and hold the once soft, now chromatic and metallic - but always, always, yielding - flesh that once brought it to life. Maintained it. Maybe even loved it.

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short text by Sam Moore
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