

OFF TO AVALON

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. SHIPPING FACILITY - DAY

A massive glass cylinder towers over hundreds of rows of leather armchairs. Between each row, pneumatic tubes funnel plastic cases into the cylinder, where they are arranged and sorted by mechanical arms.

Strapped into one of these chairs is ROBIN, a middle-aged woman with an ice cold stare. A series of wires is connected to her temples. Above her head is a blank screen and an empty plastic shipping cylinder.

Standing at her side, a uniformed employee with a plastic smile and a name tag that reads: EXTRACTOR.

EXTRACTOR

Okay, Robin. I see that you're shipping to three buyers in Avalon?

Robin nods.

EXTRACTOR (CONT'D)

Great. Let's see what we're working with today.

The Extractor begins flipping through data on a tablet.

EXTRACTOR (CONT'D)

PhD level knowledge in biology.
Culinary skills and recipes. Yummy!
And... what's this last one?

ROBIN

My sense of style.

EXTRACTOR

Ooo, for quite a good price! I guess money *can* buy taste.

Robin says nothing.

EXTRACTOR (CONT'D)

Now, in your file, I came across quite a few lovely memories of you raising a little girl. You know, we have lots of expecting mothers in Avalon looking for resources--

ROBIN

Those are mine.

The Extractor cracks an emotionless smile.

EXTRACTOR

I see. Well Robin, now we get to the not-so-fun part. You realize that once these memories are shipped there's no getting them back, correct?

Robin nods. The Extractor types on the tablet.

EXTRACTOR (CONT'D)

Perfect. This should only take a moment.

Robin winces as a buzzing sound jolts the wires to life. A rapid-fire video montage of Robin's life flashes on the screen above her. Thesis presentations. Lab work. Art galleries. Clothes fittings. A glazed ham in an oven.

As Robin opens her mouth to scream, the plastic cylinder above her head fills with milky pink liquid. Then it's over. The Extractor applies a label to the cylinder and it is sucked through the pneumatic tube to be sorted and shipped.

EXTRACTOR (CONT'D)

And there we go! Off to Avalon. Looks like you're still a little short for a ticket yourself, though. Let alone two.

Robin looks at a digital watch on her wrist. The numbers onscreen tick up from "1500 credits" to "2500 credits".

EXT. STREET - DAY

Robin exits the facility to a crowded city sidewalk and a blood-red sky. A dusty orange fog rolls with the wind and most of the passersby are wearing gas masks. In the distance, the silhouette of a rocket pierces through the haze.

ELLA (O.S.)

Mommy! Mommy! It happened!

Robin turns to see ELLA, a little girl wearing a flowered dress and a gas mask, kicking up dust as she runs toward her. She leaps into Robin's arms and gives her a big hug.

ROBIN

What happened, baby?

Ella hops down, lowers her head, and shakes it. A single tooth clatters against the inside of the gas mask's visor.

ELLA

I pushed it out with my tongue! Do you think the Tooth Fairy will visit us in Avalon? Or... do I have to get rid of her too?

Robin crouches down to Ella's level.

ROBIN

Remember Ella, we're not getting rid of anything. We're just sending some memories away for a while.

Ella still looks disappointed.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Think of it this way. We're just making Avalon a better place before we get there. The new world needs its Tooth Fairies and Santa Clauses and Easter Bunnies. People want to buy all your imagination and happy thoughts. And you've got plenty up there to spare.

Robin taps Ella's head.

ELLA

And then we'll have enough money for tickets on the shuttle?

ROBIN

You bet. And you know what the best part is?

ELLA

What?

ROBIN

Once we're up there, we get to make new memories. Even better ones. Just think of all the happy days to come.

Ella looks up and raises a finger to the mouthpiece of her gas mask, tracing the shape of a smile. Robin does the same, then removes her watch and fastens it to Ella's wrist.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Remember what you need to do?

Ella removes an envelope from her dress pocket.

ELLA

Give them my forms, sit back, and think happy thoughts.

ROBIN

You got it, girl.

Ella turns to go, but hesitates.

ELLA

What should I do with my tooth?

ROBIN

Keep it for now. Some things are worth holding on to.

Robin winks at her daughter. As Ella runs off into the shipping facility, Robin presses her fingers against her temples, leans against the wall, and slumps to the ground.

INT. SHIPPING FACILITY - DAY

Ella is strapped into an armchair, the same one in which her mother sat moments ago. Her front tooth is missing. The envelope sits in her lap and the EXTRACTOR examines data on a tablet while attaching wires to Ella's head.

EXTRACTOR

The imagination of a child. How wonderful. This will make Avalon a much happier place, Ella. No wonder your mother got such a good price.

ELLA

Just be careful. Especially with my imaginary friends.

EXTRACTOR

I'll be *extra* careful with them. Do you have your forms?

Ella nods toward her lap. The Extractor takes the envelope and opens it, scanning the paper inside and glancing at Ella with a curious look. The paper falls to the floor, revealing the handwritten message: TAKE WHATEVER YOU NEED. JUST GIVE HER ENOUGH FOR THE SHUTTLE. PLEASE.

EXTRACTOR (CONT'D)

Okay. Time to be brave, Ella. This will only take a moment.

Ella closes her eyes and smiles as the wires activate and the cylinder fills with milky pink liquid.

Footage of her mother plays on the screen above her. Christmas mornings. Bedtime stories. Sunny picnics. Silly faces. Art projects. Sick days. Care. Compassion. Love.

EXT. STREET

Robin stares vacantly, a tear streaking down her face.

ELLA (O.S.)
Excuse me, miss? Can you help me?

She turns to see Ella, fidgeting with the strap of her gas mask. Ella doesn't seem to recognize her. Robin forces a smile and bends down to fasten the gas mask straps.

ELLA (CONT'D)
I'm getting a ticket to the shuttle today. I'm going to Avalon!

ROBIN
What a lucky girl.

Ella looks up as a teardrop falls on her visor.

ELLA
Why are you crying?

Robin finishes with the strap and wipes her face.

ROBIN
Just a happy memory. That's all.

Robin points down the street.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
The shuttle's that way.

With a thankful wave, Ella begins running down the sidewalk. Robin watches her go. Ella stops and turns.

ELLA
Hey, miss? You know what I do when I'm feeling sad?

Robin shakes her head. Ella stands tall, a masked silhouette with the red sky and broken world at her back.

ELLA (CONT'D)
I just think of all the happy days to come!

FADE OUT.