

To Be Reborn

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There were the healers, and there were the rebirthers.

The healers helped you work on yourself from within. Helped strengthen the broken parts and nurse the wounds they created. Gave you tasks to improve yourself—your mind, your body, and your soul.

The rebirthers gave you another chance. Drawing on the insights of the ancients and the science of the future, they replaced the broken parts of the soul with new ones so that you could try again.

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THE WINTER

“You do understand how this works, correct?” the lady asked as she adjusted her oversized glasses, looking up at me.

“Yes, I think so,” I responded as I skimmed the highlighted sections of the paperwork again. I could only choose one thing. One part of my soul to fix. One part of myself to wipe clean, to reset, to make a blank slate, so that I could try one more time.

She turned the paperwork towards her and squinted at the fine print. “You have selected here that you would like to reset your *spirit*, defined as “the mediator between rationality and appetite, the driver of emotion.” Is this correct?

“Yes.” The words of my mother replayed in my mind. *Your mind is strong, but your spirit is weak. You need to create the right balance to advance in life.* What better time than now?

“And you do understand that this will be logged onto your civilian record, and that the

soul-resetting service will now be permanently unavailable for the remainder of your life due to your choice to take it at this time?”

“Yes,” I responded again, tired this time, as I looked past her at the wall of the cubicle.

“Alright. Please sign here,” she instructed.

I grabbed a gold pen from the pen holder and signed my name. *Amaira Sahni*. I swooped the pen at the end.

“Done.”

“Thank you. That is all we need from you. You are confirmed to receive the complimentary rebirthing service on April 2nd, 2074. Have a nice day.”

“Thank you, you too,” I said with a grin. I grabbed my purse and walked out of the elegant, gold-tinted double doors.

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“Just walk down the aisle, and the changing room will be to your right. Please come to the operating room N409 once you’re done,” the lady said as she handed me the gown.

Slightly nervous, I nodded and took the gown from her hands. I checked the time. It was 3:15. In another 4 hours, I would be a different person. It was hard to believe. I put on the gown and went into the operating room, where I was met with a swarm of nurses and doctors.

I lay down as they hooked up various tubes, thick and thin, opaque and clear, to my arms and legs. I curled my fingers into fists and looked intently at the wall in front of me to stop myself from panicking.

Sensing my apprehension, a nurse smiled at me. “This is a standard procedure. We will be delivering the anesthetic in a few moments.”

I nodded and uncurled my fists. I took a few deep breaths. This was it. The moment I had been waiting for.

After a few minutes, another nurse spoke. “Okay, we will now be delivering the anesthetic intravenously. Just close your eyes, breathe, and relax.”

As instructed, I closed my eyelids. Almost instantly, a sharp panic set in at not knowing what was happening. But then my mind started to become fuzzy, until it became blank. Everything was white. Then suddenly someone sauntered into the crevices of my mind’s frame. A version of myself that I aspired to become. I smiled and ran. I ran towards her. But just as my arms looped over hers she became translucent and everything went black and it was all over.

THE SPRING

“Hello, Amaira.” I opened my eyes. The white walls were too much for me to bear, as my eyes struggled to process the sensory input. Standing next to me was a woman with thick black hair and round glasses. She was fervently taking notes with a gold pen. As my eyes adjusted to the light, they caught sight of her nametag – “Dr. Anushka Sah–” but before I saw the rest she turned swiftly to face me. My piqued curiosity was suddenly interrupted by her words.

“The operation proceeded smoothly. No issues or concerns. You are now in the recovery room. It is anticipated that recovery will take around 2-3 days. Are you feeling any symptoms apart from the expected fatigue and slight dizziness?”

“No,” I responded. I sounded lighter...I felt lighter. It took less effort for me to move my arms and legs.

“We will keep you here overnight for observation. If you require any assistance, please do not hesitate to alert a member of our nursing staff using the red button on the side of your bed. Additionally, please log any abnormal sensations or emotions that you experience on your patient account. Try to recount any unfamiliar experiences for at least the next 4 days. We will similarly ask the individual you have indicated on your form to report any concerns or notable observations to us. This data will be collected, anonymously, and used purely for research purposes, to help us better understand the recovery process and how we can best support patients during this time. Any questions?”

“No. Thank you,” I responded, with a smile on my face. My brain was still feeling fuzzy. It was like I was trapped in a fever dream.

The nurse left the room and closed the door gently behind her. But when it closed I heard butterflies.

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When Amaira looks at me, I can tell there is a moment of delay, of hesitation. A processing delay. Right before the smile spreads over her face her eyes squint for a second as if she doesn't know who I am, as if she's trying to recall who I am. Most people don't see it. I do. And it worries me.

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