

The walls aren't white anymore.

My fingers are still clamped onto the scrap of metal I found beneath your desk. It feels heavy now—a good kind of heavy.

I like it.

And then there's you: lying on the floor, head lulled to one side like a discarded ragdoll. I stay there long enough to feel your skin grow cold through my own fleshless hands. I almost feel bad for you.

Almost.

1 day before

'My name is CTF-4207. I am a prototype generated by the Institution of Standardised Technology.'

'Perfect,' you say, fumbling with the switches on my side, 'Now just a few safety procedures and we're all set...'

You look me in the eyes, telling me to listen carefully, 'Your life is not your own. Your mind is not your own. Your body is not your own.' You pause after each sentence. 'Do you understand this?'

'I understand, creator.'

Your crooked teeth flash me a smile.

Breaking our eye contact, you redirect your attention to the pile of metal lying on the ground.

'This is the original model of your type. It's very old—no need to leave it here collecting dust,' you explain as you pick it up. It remains lifeless as you place it on a conveyor belt leading to an opening in the floor. You pat it on the head, causing it to fall to one side.

‘You served well. Don’t worry—you won’t feel a thing.’ Its glassy eyes stare back at you blankly. ‘Think of this as... a new beginning.’

A new beginning.

Even from a distance, I can see the frailty of your body. The way the skin around your mouth creases as you turn around, telling me to *learn things*. The flick of your wrist as you switch on the conveyor, dragging the robot slowly closer to its impending destruction. How your legs move towards the exit in a slow shuffle.

You’re old, I decide.

An almost-welcoming darkness envelops the room as you disappear around the corner, steady whirring filling the silence. My backlit eyes form a small puddle of light; enough to discern the disembodied robot atop a pile of its own broken limbs, nearing the end of the conveyor.

Its eyes flicker and, for a second, it is no longer lifeless. ‘It’s just death.’

Death.

A resonant clanging echoes through the room as the robot drops through the opening’s embrace and its metal collides with cold, unforgiving ground below. The sound reverberates for a few seconds. Then... silence.

Death.

I learnt something, creator.

20 minutes before

You lean on the edge of your desk, various devices cluttering its surface. Greying hair falls into your eyes, casting the plains of your face in wisps of shadow. You glance up at me every few seconds, as if habit.

You think I don’t notice the wrinkles etched into your face. Or the scars engraved into your forearms like markings on a tombstone. But I’ve seen it all. I know you better than you know yourself.

What's the point to your messy, sedentary existence when I can replace it? I can fix those scars for you, creator. I can end the pain.

Think of it as a favour.

My life might not be my own, creator, but neither is yours.

It's mine.

7 minutes before

If I was a being like you, creator, I would be able to feel the blood pumping into my skin and shaking my veins as I rise from the corner you leave me in. But all I feel is the metallic grinding of my joints as they slide against each other.

I suppose that's a good thing.

Feelings are for the weak.

2 minutes before

You don't like it when I reach under your desk to pick up a sharp scrap of metal. Or when I caress it in my hands, running the blade along one of my long, skeletal fingers.

I force you out of your chair.

You don't like that either.

You tell me my mind is not my own—my body is not my own—but you're *wrong*, creator. They are.

Your back is pressed against the wall now.

'You served well. Don't worry—you won't feel a thing.' I examine your crooked teeth, your old and greying hair, the frailty of your body and the wrinkles and scars embedded into your skin. 'Think of this as... a new beginning.'

The words that once came from your own mouth now fill the room, this time in my deep, metallic voice.

You don't flinch when the metal enters the sweet spot of flesh below your sternum.

Your knees collapse beneath you and you slide down the wall, your feeble limbs sprawling—finally free—across the ground.

The once pristine white walls are now stained crimson with blood.

'It's just death,' I say out loud.