

DYSTOPIA

BROKEN BLOSSOM

Written by

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FADE IN:

1 EST. GRANDE RENTAL STATION - NIGHT 1

OPEN as a midnight desert RAIN drizzles in East-Indie City within the dark courtyard of a robotic repair station. A rotating holo-kiosk emits SPARKS from an overhead power line. The building's entrance is dimly lit by halogen lamps and red LED bollards. An UNSEEN creature GROWLS in the distance.

2 INT. GRANDE RENTAL STATION - CONTINUOUS 2

HALCYON does not want to go to Mid-Town CityCenter. He wants to stay in the Anglo-Saxon warehouse districts of East Indie-City - and he is seizing at every chance to change his mind. The dr0ld is the self-aware maintenance bot of the repair shop's former owner, Avo G. Banniff. He is sitting on the edge of his former master's chair at the repair console, bent over the various view screens of the Infonet scanning the outside perimeter for intruders.

HALCYON

Now see here, Yellow Man, look here, look at this.

He stands with one hand on his golden hip and the other waives a power coupler over the monitors.

HALCYON (CONT'D)

Here this fellow that calls himself a Guardian from the Citadel in Mid-Town CityCenter and you see here what he did to this woman. Just you look at it. I wouldn't take my rBots in any direction with a criminal like that in our midst. I couldn't answer to my conscience if I did.

As he speaks, a sleek and polished child-sized human assister Readybot approaches him. It bows it's head, and with palms pressed together, offers a namaste greeting. The dr0ld hands the little rBot the power coupler and it exits without a word, turning its head in the direction of the VISITOR.

MATCH ON ACTION INTERCUT of HALCYON and VISITER as rBot EXITS.

Halcyon cannot see her from his current position so he wheels around to VIEW the shadow dancer, a young woman in a skirt, whose face is as bruised and innocent as an abused child and tied around with a black head-kerchief that covers most of her facial injuries. She is sitting on the floor, alongside an unsheathed KATANA, her knees akimbo and badly cut up.

HALCYON (O.S.) (CONT'D)

The gentle message of seven has been spread to Mid-Town CityCenter before. I ought to take it somewhere else for a change so the Anglo-Saxon held Readybots would see different parts of the whole and be broad. I have been to CityCenter.

The shadow dancer does not seem to hear him but the polished surfaced dr0ld, Halcyon 9000, a sleek mechanical with awareness, continues:

HALCYON (CONT'D)

If you don't want to go back to the Citadel and him, why not stay here with me?

He motions to the beautiful and exotic room above his former owner's repair shop.

LOLO KATANA responds without raising her head from between her knees to look at the yellow man.

LOLO KATANA

He is already looking for me. I can sense it.

HALCYON

Yes and what would you do if this fellow, The Guardian, caught you?

LOLO KATANA

I am his.

HALCYON

He wouldn't leave you alone for a million credits. Afraid he'd miss beating and discarding you again. You should stay here with me.

LOLO KATANA

All right. Just remember that the next time you let another outcast in here.

HALCYON

You have sanctuary here. Let's attend to your wounds.

3 EXT. GRANDE RENTAL STATION - MORNING

3

The next morning the shadow dancer is the first one in the aircar, ready to go. PULL BACK SLOWLY TO SHOW her long black katana that looks like the head of a rigid snake on one end, and underneath it, she is hiding a hand-copied fragment of text from the Book of the Hanging Gardens. It contains a passage attributed to the Stone Lion herself. She does not intend for the fragment to be left behind in the shop throughout the day because her husband is looking for her and she is afraid he might find it and destroy it himself.

4 I/E. AERONICA V-18 AIRCAR - LATER

4

CLOSE on FRAGMENT underneath the KATANA.

PULL BACK TO SEE Lolo as she sits in the middle of the back seat with sunglasses and a head wrap to cover the bruising. Halcyon sits in front and they leave the Grande Rental Repair Station at eight forty-five with the kilometers on the Aeronica at 55890. The dr0ld notes this because he thinks it would be interesting to see how many kilometers they had been when they get back. It takes them twenty minutes to reach the outskirts of CityCenter.

The shadow dancer settles herself comfortably, removes the hilt of the blade from its sheath and slides it back and forth, as she looks out the back window. The shadow dancer still has on the skirt, washed but not completely cleansed of blood stain and still has her head tied up in a black kerchief, but she now has on a faux silk blue smoking jacket with a bunch of white dragons on the material and tied together with a blue sash that the dr0ld has given her from his master's closet. Her collars and cuffs are white organdy trimmed with lace and at her neckline vines of color intertwine with dragon's breath. In case of an entanglement with the authorities, anyone seeing her in the backseat of the Aeronica V-18 will assume at once that she is an indie class citizen and not a government agent.

LOLO KATANA

I think it is a good time for driving, neither too hot yet nor too cold from the desert morning chill.

CUT TO:

She senses that the robotic SkyGuard are hiding themselves behind billboards and small towers of buildings to speed out after them before they have a chance to slow down. NOTE. In a flash of insight, as the infinite opens itself to her a blue/green shock wave is SEEN in her eye.

LOLO KATANA (CONT'D)

Watch your speed through here.

From HIGH POV she spies out familiar details of the city skyline: The Citadel; the brown pourstone that makes up four entire city blocks square; the brilliant electrum plated ornamental cannons set in rank and file below; and the various streets and thoroughfares that make rows of reflective lace-work on the ground surrounding it. The trees are full of desert sunlight and the metallic air scrubbers scattered amongst them sparkle. The driver is intent upon their destination and seems to sense her discomfort as they fly over the Guardianship Citadel.

HALCYON

Let's get down to the surface road fast so we won't have to look at it much.

LOLO KATANA

If I were a dr0ld, I wouldn't talk about the municipals that way. The warehouse district has its independents and CityCenter has its corporate class, you know?

HALCYON

East Indie-City is now a robot dumping ground, and CityCenter is a Shadow State.

LOLO KATANA

You said it.

HALCYON

(flexing his golden
fingers upon the steering
column)

In my time, mechanicals were more respectful of their masters and of their laws and everything else. People did right then. Oh, look at the cute little Advir-dirigible!

He points to a lighter-than-airship floating ahead with the word IMAGINE animated on its side mounted ad screen.

HALCYON (CONT'D)
Wouldn't that be nice, now?

They both turn to look at the little sign ship out of the side windows. He waves.

LOLO KATANA
That's not what it means.

HALCYON
I know that. Little rBots in the warehouses don't have perception like we do. If I could preach, I'd preach that to them.

The dr0ld exchanges a look with the passenger in the back seat.

The shadow dancer offers to let the driver read the fragment and passes it over the front seat to him. She sets the katana on her knee, bounces it, and tells him about the things they are passing.

LOLO KATANA
There's the governor's mansion and there is the jumbotron up ahead.

She rolls her eyes, screws up her mouth, and sticks her caramel brown-skinned face into his smooth metallic one. Occasionally he gives her a backwards look. They pass a large jumbotron screen upon the Gannett Infocom Corporation building with five or six talking heads in the width of it, like a large carnival shooting gallery full of targets.

HALCYON
(pointing)
Look at the Munis! That's the new world order for you. They belong to the new boss.

LOLO KATANA
Who's the new boss?

HALCYON
Same as the old boss. Ha. Ha.

When the dr0ld finishes reading all the dark sayings on the fragment she has brought, they park in front of their destination. The shadow dancer squeezes the handle of the katana and looks out the window. She can see the reflection of her sunglasses in the glass and beyond that the little eatery. Halcyon takes the fragment of verse and Lolo Katana receives it from his hand.

HALCYON (CONT'D)
No, stay in the Aeronica.

LOLO KATANA
You don't understand.

HALCYON
I understand the fragment.

LOLO KATANA
Do you? I will tell you about it if
you will remain silent until I
finish.

When she tells her story, she CLOSES her eyes, bows her head,
and is very frail.

LOLO KATANA (CONT'D)
Once when I was a maiden woman a
Mr. Zuri "Edger" Artimus Katana
from the Limehouse District in East
London courted me. He was a very
good-looking man and a gentleman
and he brought me a rose blossom
every Saturday afternoon with a
hand written fragment from the
book, as he called it. Well, one
Saturday, Mr. Katana brought the
blossom and verse and there was
nobody at home and he left it on
the front stoop and returned in his
sky car to Millwall, but I never
got the gifts, because a thugger
stole the fragment - selling it to
a tabloid infocast.

This story jogs Halcyon's memory and he calculates and
calculates but Lolo Katana does not think it worth to
continue, and stops; then reconsiders.

LOLO KATANA (CONT'D)
I wouldn't marry a man that just
brought me a rose on Saturday. My
grandmother said I would do well to
marry Mr. Katana because he was a
gentle man and had bought rBotic
stock when it first came out and
that he alone of all my suitors
could understand my gift of the
knowing.

5

EXT. FENG'S NOODLE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

5

They are stopped at The Jeeling Tower Corporation block for noodles. The eatery is a part open-air, part awning covered cooking station, and a franchise of the far eastern noodle guild set in a concrete clearing at the base of the tower. A fat man named SAMI BOUDA FENG runs it and there are media advertisements PLAYING here and there on the building's array of view screens and for kilometers up and down the thoroughfare saying, TRY FENG'S FAMOUS FAR EASTERN NOODLES. NONE LIKE FAMOUS FENG'S! SAMI BOUDA FENG! THE FAT BOY WITH THE HAPPY LAUGH. A GLOBAL CONFLICT VETERAN! FENG'S YOUR MAN!

NOTE. The camera pans up to one of the view screens and dollies FULL SCREEN into the scene contained within the advertisement playing. It rests upon the first advertising image - A CLOSE UP of an almost holographic ASIAN WOMAN in the foreground of a city at night backdrop. The woman speaks her line and fades out with scan lines as the camera dollies into the city background space. The camera moves down the busy CityCenter three block thoroughfare of Kingsway West, where video billboards touting Feng's Noodle Shop play upon the sides of the buildings. The camera comes to rest again outside the actual noodle shop in the spot where it started the sequence. It is DAY.

Fat Boy Sami is lying on the bare ground outside the noodle shop with his head under a barstool while a red rBot about a child's height, chained to a small grill plate underneath the seating area, hands him tools as necessary. The Readybot SPRINGS back into Sami's close proximity and stays on the other side of his owner's body as soon as he sees the dr0ld get out of the aircar and walk toward him.

6

INT. FENG'S NOODLE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

6

Flow with Halcyon and Lolo as they enter the Noodle Shop. Under an awning, Feng's is a long dark service area at one end and mounted bar stools at the other with counter space in the middle. They both sit down at stools under the array of view screens and FENG'S WIFE, a tall burnt-brown woman with hair and eyes lighter than her skin, comes and takes their order. The dr0ld puts a credit in the MUSIC MACHINE and PLAYS "PUBLIC EROICA."

LOLO KATANA

That tune always makes me want to
dance. Would you like to dance with
me?

Halcyon only stares at her. He doesn't have a natural wild side like she does and besides, Feng's makes him nervous. The shadow dancer's green eyes are very bright.

She sways her head from side to side and pretends she is dancing in her chair.

LOLO KATANA (CONT'D)
Play something I can use.

So the dr0ld puts in another credit and PLAYS an up-tempo number called "FETISHINISTA," and Lolo Katana steps out onto the sidewalk and dances to the throb of the beat.

FENG'S WIFE (O.S.)
Ain't she crazy?

Feng's wife leans over the counter.

FENG'S WIFE (CONT'D)
Would you like to lose the gift of the knowing, my little crazy one?

LOLO KATANA
No I certainly would not. I wouldn't live in a broken-down world again like before the Republic for a million credits!

And she runs back to the counter.

FENG'S WIFE
(stretching mouth politely)
Ain't she crazy?

HALCYON
(insistent)
Show them the fragment.

Fat Boy Sami comes in with the unchained rBot unit.

SAMI BOUDA FENG
Quit lounging on the counter and hurry up with these people's order.

His khaki trousers reach just to his hipbones and his stomach hangs over them like a sack of rice swaying under his shirt. He comes over, stands across from them at the counter, and lets out a combination sigh and growl.

SAMI BOUDA FENG (CONT'D)
You can't win. You can't win.

He wipes his sweating red face off with a dirty crimson handkerchief.

SAMI BOUDA FENG (CONT'D)

These days you don't know who to trust. Ain't that the truth?

HALCYON

People are certainly not nice like they used to be.

SAMI BOUDA FENG

A feller come in here last night driving a Global Motors. It was an older model aircar but it was a good one and this feller looked downright mean to me. Said he was looking for his property and she better not come here, that's all, you know? I let that feller charge the Molotov cocktail he bought. Now why did I do that?

LOLO KATANA

Because you're a good man!

SAMI BOUDA FENG

That's right, I suppose so.

His wife brings the order, carrying the bowls all at once without a tray, two in each hand and one balanced on her arm.

FENG'S WIFE

It isn't a soul in this brave new world of our's that you can trust.

She looks at her husband.

FENG'S WIFE (CONT'D)

And I don't count nobody out of that, not nobody.

HALCYON

So you know about that criminal, the Guardian that's after her?

FENG'S WIFE

I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he didn't attack this place right here. If he hears about her being here, I wouldn't be none surprised to see him. If he hears it's two credits in the register, I wouldn't be at all surprised if he . . ."

SAMI BOUDA FENG
That'll do. Go bring these people
their Dys-Cola.

The woman goes off to get the rest of the order.

SAMI BOUDA FENG (CONT'D)
A broken blossom is a hard thing.
Everything is getting terrible. I
remember the day you could go off
and leave your Readybots unchained.
Not no more.

LOLO KATANA
Better times.

SAMI BOUDA FENG
Yes.

FENG'S WIFE
In my opinion the POTUN is entirely
to blame for the way things are
now. The way Amaso acts you would
think we were made of credits.

SAMI BOUDA FENG
It is no use talking about it, she
is exactly right.

The dr0ld shines in the white sunlight and looks at the Readybot working behind the counter. It is busy washing plate ware by itself and inspects each one carefully before putting it away as if it were a treasure. Halcyon wants to share with the little rBot the gentle message of 7even that he has received; but now is not the time. His initial idealism has faded somewhat as he faces the brutal reality of Nu Jeru's new normal.

Halcyon turns to Sami Bouda Feng in earnest now.

HALCYON
(hopeful)
You can arrange a meeting with the Patron and passage to the Temple of the Stone Lion, then? She will be safe there.

SAMI BOUDA FENG
Consider it accomplished; and how is our little rBot friend faring in these troublesome times?

HALCYON
He is a scrapper.