

Q

Rose.

Rain.

A light tapping on the window. I must be awake.

The bed is comfy. A blanket protects me from the cold outside.

Wait, this isn't my bed.

Eyes.

It's dark. A dim light from a billboard outside. I can't see what it's selling, but it flashes yellow and blue.

Eyes closed.

The light hurts. My head hurts.

The static beat of the heart monitor. I remember where I am.

A deep breath. Air fills my lungs.

Not my lungs. My lungs are in a vat somewhere.

I hear the heart monitor better now. It gives rhythm to the rain.

Beep. Patter Patter. Beep. Patter Patter.

I can't help but move to the beat. All I can muster is a light tap of the finger.

1. 2. 3. 1. 2. 3. 1. 2. 3. 1. Wait...

...

Something's wrong.

...

One heartbeat.

There's only one heartbeat in the room.

I just woke up, and no one is here.

...

Then again, who did I think would come?

Not Rose.

...

...

It's bright.

My eyes are closed. But the light bleeds through.

Someone is moving.

Eyes.

A nurse. She checks my monitors.

She sees that I'm awake.

She says hello.

I say hello back.

Wait, I don't?

I tried to. My mouth doesn't move. She doesn't hear me.

She asks if I can speak. I say yes.

I don't.

She says it's okay. My speech will return.

I had a lung transplant. Why can't I speak?

Can these lungs not push enough air through my throat?

Why is she checking my head?

...

Rose.

...

I forgot what I was thinking about.

...

...

The respirator came off today.

Still no visitors.

Still no words.

The doctors told me more about my procedure. The farmed lungs took.

Wait.

A farm?

I'm not from a farm.

I'm not supposed to be grown.

Yet my breaths come from a farm now.

So, was I grown?

Am I only part born?

What kind of person is only part born?

Rose is.

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They continue. I'll be in the hospital for a few more days to recover.

They check my head. Why the head again?

I ask.

They don't hear. Or I don't say. I still can't tell.

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I speak.

Simple words, but that's enough.

Enough to talk to the nurses. No one else. No one else has come.

Did Rose get my letter? I think she did.

Did she read it? I think she did.

If she did, would she come? I think she would.

No. I hope.

I hope she would.

I think she's somewhere wishing I would die in surgery.

Maybe I wish it too.

No, that's not fair.

Fair?

I get to live forty years longer than my grandfather. Is that fair?

My grandfather got to die forty years before I will. Is that fair?

...

Who's the lucky one?

...

...

The doctors told me the truth today.

They lied for so long.

I had two tumors. One in my lungs.

One in my head.

That's why the head.

I asked why they didn't tell me.

They said some people refuse the surgery. It's best to just do it.

I would have refused.

Replacing my lungs was enough to send me spiraling. Replacing my brain?

Is it still mine? Am I the same man that went into the operating room?

How many parts of me can be broken and replaced before I'm not me anymore?

Maybe Rose got her wish.

Maybe I'm dead.

The person in this bed is a stranger.

My body is a puppet to cells grown in a lab.

But I still feel. I still think. My heart still breaks for her. Was I anything more than that?

If not, maybe I am still me.

If I'm still me, maybe there's still a chance.

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I was released from the hospital today.

I went home to an empty apartment.

Maybe it's karma.

Maybe my crisis is fitting.

I did it to Rose.

She was born without a foot. I bought her a new one.

She couldn't breathe through her nose. I bought her a new one.

She told me she was fine. She was beautiful the way she was. She was more scared of a botched surgery than her disabilities. But I pulled her apart and put her back together.

Without her permission.

Again and again.

I wanted to save her. I never asked if she would still be her when I was done.

Now I ask it about myself.

...

I guess it doesn't matter.

...

...

I wrote her a letter today.

I apologized.

For everything.

I hope she reads it.