

HEPP CO

Written by

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EXT. IUVO - NIGHT

Tall, skeletal buildings reach upwards into a polluted sky. Iuvo is a city in the near-distant future, filled with technological wonder and horror. Large, glowing advertisements project themselves on nearby sidewalks and the sides of buildings. Cameras are planted everywhere. In the center of it all, a panopticon tower - the city's center.

A MAN is cornered by advertisements on the sidewalk. There are a few pedestrians nearby, but they're all minding their own business. A single camera attached to the end of a twisting, tentacle-like extension clicks and whirs as it looks at him.

He is crying.

VOICE

This is all your life will ever amount to.

MAN

(Echoing)

This is all my life will ever amount to...

VOICE

You aren't worth the resources.

MAN

I'm not worth the resources...

VOICE

Your absence will heal the city.

MAN

My absence will heal...

Nearby, a metal, phone-booth shaped chamber swings open. The door opening releases a puff of smoke. We can't see inside of it. The man turns to face the BOOTH, and begins to trudge toward it. He chants the same mantra over and over, leaning on the doorway for support as he crosses the threshold.

The door swings shut after him, and there's a loud hissing noise. A single light atop the booth changes color from RED to GREEN. It clicks, beeping softly to signal it's finished.

The camera he had been talking to whirrs slightly. Its lens narrows, almost as if smiling.

BOOTH

Thank you for choosing HEPP.CO As your service provider. Please die safely, you are in good hands.

EXT. IUVO - BACK ALLEYS - NIGHT

A TEENAGER runs down a damp alley. His footsteps hit the dirty puddles heavily, splashing muck upward with each step. He turns a corner, sharply, making his backpack swing dramatically and knocking the hood off his head. His temple is bleeding, and he has a black-eye. Unruly hair is knotted in clumps. He briefly looks over his shoulder, then unzips his backpack, pulling out some kind of FUTURISTIC GUN.

A security camera zooms in on his face. The screen lights up with red notifications, pulling up a profile of the teenager. A cleaner, more groomed, school-picture-day photo of him is accompanied by a short bio, which reads "EMER HANSEN, AGE: 17, STATUS: EXPECTED DONOR."

EMER shoots the gun at the camera, and the screen turns to static.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTER PANOPTICON - NIGHT

A focused shot of the city center. Bright neon lettering labels it as "HEPP CO." Smog swirls around the top of the building. From here, the company executives can monitor any point of the Iuvo. It's a research hub, a place of business, and the world's largest living security system.

INT. CENTER PANOPTICON - BOARD ROOM

Several business men sit around an ovular table. They look slick; hair greased back and wearing form-fitting suits. A floating screen illuminates a series of trend graphs. A projection arrow shoots upward - the year underneath it is 2187.

REESE watches the meeting quietly.

R.E.E.S. (Robotic Expiration Exploitation System), is the primary enforcer and monitor of the city. She is judge, jury, and executioner. HEPP CO (Human Expiration for Population Pullback) is the company that founded her. She's connected to every camera in Iuvo, and uses them to keep tabs on the populace.

BUSINESS MAN 1

The advertisements have been successful?

BUSINESS MAN 2

More than successful. New donors are flying in every *hour*. We're up by 5.3 percent this week alone.

BUSINESS MAN 1

Excellent.

BUSINESS MAN 3

What does the system think of all of this?

BUSINESS MAN 2

Reese! Get out here.

A camera slinks out to the board, lens whirring.

REESE

How may I assist you?

BUSINESS MAN 3

What's your experience in the field with these new tactics? The ads, that is to say, how do you like them? What do people think of them?

REESE

The population of Iuvo is diminishing very practically and efficiently. In particular, they seem to be affected most by advertisement number twenty-five.

BUSINESS MAN 2

Which one is that?

REESE

Playing advertisement number twenty-five...

The screen in the boardroom clicks, and an infographic pops up. There's a diagram of a person's lungs, and they expand and contract. A chipper, cheery voice rings through the room.

ADVERTISEMENT

Did you know that human's on average consume *two-thousand* gallons of oxygen a *day*? Are you really worth *two-thousand* gallons?

(MORE)

ADVERTISEMENT (CONT'D)
 Stop by your local HEPP CO Donation
 booth to talk about your payment
 plans!

The projection clicks off.

REESE

End of advertisement. The presence
 of this advertisement at habitual
 donor hot-spots, coupled with
 supplemental subliminal messaging
 has shown an improved success rate
 of thirty-three percent.

BUSINESS MAN 1

And these hotspots are?

REESE

Company sponsored bars - those with
 outstanding debt from patrons -
 university study halls, strip clubs
 or areas with higher rates of
 prostitution, hospitals with
 unsettled bills -

BUSINESS MAN 2

Yes, yes, we get the point.
 Excellent work.

BUSINESS MAN 3

Pull up the live footage, let's see
 some of the new measures in action.

REESE

Loading security content...

Reese clicks her projector back on.

CUT TO:

VARIOUS SHOTS OF SECURITY CAM FOOTAGE.

EXT. BUILDING ROOFTOP

A WOMAN stands at the top of a building. She steps to the
 edge, and leans forward. As soon as she begins to fall the
 camera cuts.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR

A halfway full subway car, covered in grease and grime. Passengers keep to themselves. An old man and his wife sit together, holding hands. A young mother nurses her baby. A jobless man in a wrinkled, dirty suit leans against the pole as he clutches a bottle of alcohol. A construction worker reads a magazine. A young child in a school uniform eats from their lunchbox.

SUBWAY PA SYSTEM (V.O.)

Attention, passengers! Someone aboard has refused to pay for passage. Unfortunately, we cannot stop until payment is paid in full. Payment has been raised to ONE DONATION. Thank you for your time!

The subway screeches. All of the passengers turn to look at each other with contempt.

CUT TO:

INT. CROWDED BAR

A robotic bar tender pours drinks to a few customers. Television screens float overhead, advertising that patrons can settle unpaid tabs by donating. A man looks at his phone, briefly, and sucks in a sharp breath. He slams the rest of his drink and stands up suddenly. He stumbles over to the back corner of the bar, passing around a corner.

A sign comes into focus. It says "DONATION BOOTHS, THIS WAY."

A scream rings through the bar. No one bats an eye. Another man stands up.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK ALLEY

Instead of a view of the back alleys, the camera shows nothing but error messages and static.

REESE (V.O.)

That's interesting...

BUSINESS MAN 2

What's wrong with the footage?

REESE

Unsure. It appears the camera may have been damaged.

BUSINESS MAN 3

Well, fix it. We don't have time for this.

The camera beeps and whirrs briefly as Reese attempts to fix the view.

REESE (O.S.)

Refocusing. Refocusing. Refocusing.

The camera stays static. Reese hums.

REESE (CONT'D)

Switching to camera 247C.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUTH OF ALLEY - SEVERAL HOURS LATER

A new camera focuses on the alleyways opening. The camera Reese tried accessing smokes in the distance, lens shattered. The shot tightens in on the camera, briefly.

REESE

Interesting. Rewinding to time of incident.

The camera begins flicking backward through the days events. Emer comes up on screen, and then falls back into the alley. There's a blast of white light, then nothing.

REESE (CONT'D)

Zooming in. Playing footage.

As the camera zooms, Emer comes into clearer view. He's partially cut off by the wall of the alley, but Reese can see him draw the gun and shoot the camera before running off.

REESE (CONT'D)

Tsk, tsk, tsk.

She pauses the footage, and enlarges a still image of Emer's face. She analyzes it, and the same profile from earlier is pulled up. The words "EXPECTED DONOR" flash.

REESE (CONT'D)

Tracking...

EXT. ABANDONED HIGHWAY - AMBULANCE

Several vehicles are piled disorderly, long-since abandoned in favor of sleeker, easier public transportation. Scarcity of gasoline makes driving personal automobiles something only the richest can afford. Tires rot in corners of the highway, and fallen, worn caution tape snakes around the road and cars like spiderweb.

A crashed ambulance leans against the side of a condemned road. Its front is completely crumpled, and the tires are flat, but the inside remains intact, providing a brief shelter.

Reese's camera ogles the ambulance from the very edge of the highway - zooming slowly in on the scene. She looks around - a taxi is crumpled against another car. Both cars are crushed, unusable, but that's not what she's after.

She spots a tattered ROBOT CHAUFFEUR that sticks partially out the taxi window. There's a faint whirring noise, and tentacle-like coils sneak around the cars and plug into the robot's body. It's eyes spark to life, flashing briefly.

INT. AMBULANCE

Emer's backpack sits squat in the corner, contents spilling slightly onto the floor, save for the gun that's pressed to his side. He's collapsed and panting on a stretcher with more tears in it than reasonably countable. Emer is soaked with sweat, and holds a pair of pliers in his hand.

A knock at the door startles him. He raises the gun, defensively.

REESE (O.S.)
(Distorted)
May I come in?

EMER
Who are you?! What do you want?!

REESE (O.S.)
I'm here to help.

EMER
(Quietly)
Shit.

He panics, beginning to pile his stuff back into his backpack hastily. There's a pounding on the door.

REESE (O.S.)

I only want to help with your situation. Do not be afraid.

EMER

That's exactly *why* I'm afraid.

The metal of the door caves once, twice, three times before Reese successfully breaks it down. She steps inside the ambulance, eyes bright yellow and whirring quietly. The CHAUFFEUR BOT has been repaired significantly, metal sleeker and screen no longer cracked. Her arms and legs have been enhanced, bendable tubes of reinforced titanium curling around mechanical muscle. She takes another step closer to Emer.

REESE

You are aware that escaping a designated donation without prior approval is a federal crime? Correct?

EMER

It's *also* a crime to nominate minors as Donors!

Reese clicks.

REESE

According to the citizen database, minors with identifiable DONOR POTENTIAL can be nominated at any point.

She clicks again.

REESE (CONT'D)

Citizen E-HANSEN, designation 2870N, son of B-HANSEN, 2843L and J-HANSEN, 2839L. Your performance in school and inability to fit a single job selection deems you a POTENTIAL DONOR. Yearly performance review score - 79.9 percent.

EMER

That's nearly a passing grade!

REESE

A 79 is not high enough to refute the donor status, 2870N.

(MORE)

REESE (CONT'D)

You may not like it at first, but
you will serve the most important
role to Iuvo.

EMER

I don't want to *die!*

REESE

That is a very reasonable fear.
But, if you'll allow me -

Emer shoots the gun at Reese. We see now that it's actually a NAIL GUN. The nails fire rapidly at Reese, imbedding inside the robotic body. She falls backward, her head hanging loose. For a second, her eyes go dark, and the body slumps. Her right arm has been blasted off.

A beat.

The eyes re-illuminate, her body clicking back into place. Her shoulders spin and set themselves straight. She grabs her right arm from the floor, and wires stretch out and fuse with the limb, reattaching it to her shoulder.

REESE (CONT'D)

That was unnecessary.

EMER

Leave me alone!

Reese approaches, her body moving unevenly. She shakes slightly as she steps.

REESE

Every citizen of Iuvo will donate
at some point of their life. That
is your duty.

EMER

But why *me?*

REESE

You - as well as any other citizen
your age - would have been well
informed at school. There is no
sense in my repeating this
information.

EMER

Try me.

Reese lets out something adjacent to a sigh.

REESE

You have no notable or beneficial skills. You are not able to justify your use of resources. You provide no additional tools or services to the market.

With each sentence, Emer looks increasingly distraught.

REESE (CONT'D)

You, Emer Hansen, are not worth the effort.

With a shake, and a hard swallow, Emer lowers the nail gun.

REESE (CONT'D)

Thank you for your cooperation. I would appreciate you returning to the city accompanied by me.

EMER

What happens when we get back?

REESE

That is up to my superiors. In the past, runaway donors have their allotted slots moved up significantly.

EMER

So, as soon as we get back -

REESE

After your performance is reviewed -

EMER

I'm dead. That's it?

REESE

It's a very easy process.

Emer laughs shakily, running a hand through his hair.

EMER

Easy! Really?

REESE

I take immense pride in my ability to perform and execute donations as efficiently and painless as possible.

Emer begins pacing, holding onto the nail gun tightly. He waves it around as he speaks, accenting his points.

EMER

Those "donations" aren't easy or painless. Have you even *seen* what goes on inside those Booths? The Booths *you* operate?

He gestures outwards.

REESE

...No civilian should have access to HEPP Booth footage.

EMER

But *why*? Why is it so bad if someone sees how they work?

Reese pauses. The robot clicks and whirrs.

EMER (CONT'D)

Because they're fucked up! Pull it up. Look at what they do, then tell me it's as easy as you think it is.

REESE

I... do not have access to that footage.

Emer laughs. It's not a pleasant sound.

EMER

Of course you don't.

He turns, grabbing his backpack and rooting through the contents. As he digs, he discards pieces of scrap and crumpled papers. We can just barely tell they're blueprints. After a moment, he removes a THUMB DRIVE.

The thumb drive is home-built, and wrapped in wires. Parts are sticking out, and it's bulky compared to the paper thin uploading drives of the modern day.

EMER (CONT'D)

But I do.

He grabs one of Reese's hands, spinning the arm around until he finds a small port on the back shoulder.

REESE

What are you doing?

Emer grabs a pair of tweezers from his pocket, pulling open the port.

EMER
Shut up and look.

He slams the drive into her port, the eyes of the robot flashing as she processes the new data.

CUT TO:

REESE'S PERSPECTIVE: A SECURITY CAMERA FILTER IS PLACED OVER THE SETTING. EMER STARES AT HER, DETERMINED. A STATUS BAR ON THE SIDE OF HER VISION RELAYS HIS HEART BEAT AND TEMPERATURE. A NOTIFICATION FOR A NEW FILE POPS UP. IT'S ACCEPTED, AND A VIDEO FILLS UP THE SCREEN:

INT. DONATION BOOTH

The sides of the Booth are slick and seamless. From an overhead shot, we look down as a WOMAN steps inside. The entrance seals up behind her with a 'swish.' For a moment, the Booth is pitch black. Lights flicker back on, and the woman looks up.

THE WOMAN is tired, heavy bags sit under her eyes, and thick stress lines cut through her face, adding years to her appearance. Her hair is tangled and ratty - grey streaks sprawling out from her roots. Her clothes are tattered, and she appears homeless.

A robotic, artificially cheery, voice rings out.

BOOTH (V.O.)
Hello! HEPP.CO would like to formally thank you for your donation today, [WANDA PETERS]. Please state reason for donation, so any assets or unsettled balances may be settled accordingly.

The woman sniffles, then begins sobbing.

BOOTH (V.O.)
Please state reason for donation, or your affairs may not be settled.

The woman continues sobbing.

BOOTH
Failure to communicate. Proceeding with donation process.

WOMAN
 (Sobbing)
 Wait...!

The Booth lights up, and an ear-piercing ring fills the chamber. A white light illuminates from the floor, and the woman freezes.

A beat.

Her nose begins bleeding. Soon after, so do her eyes.

All at once, her entire body unravels. Her skin is rapidly peeled back, revealing layer and layer of muscle and flesh. Sinew snaps and rolls back, each piece of her body disintegrating in a manner of seconds. She folds in on herself, bits breaking away into fine, maroon dust.

A wheezing, suctioning noise is heard. The Booth sucks all the air from the chamber, swirling the dust away and disposing the remains of the woman. With a satisfactory beep, a smaller light travels the walls of the chamber, sanitizing the surface.

BOOTH (V.O.)
 Thank you for choosing HEPP.CO As
 your service provider. Please die
 safely, you are in good hands.

The video begins to loop, and the woman re-enters the booth. The picture suddenly goes static.

CUT TO:

REGULAR PERSPECTIVE

INT. AMBULANCE

Emer ejects the drive from Reese.

EMER
 It's no fucking wonder why they
 don't want people seeing this.

REESE
 ...The procedure is supposed to be
 painless. It's possible W. PETERS
 didn't feel a thing.

EMER
 And if she did?

REESE

Nonsensical. I have been reassured -

EMER

By *who*? The people that make those booths? Who profit from them? What if they're lying to you? What's *stopping* them from lying to you?

REESE

...I do not know.

Emer pinches the flashdrive, holding it in front of Reese.

EMER

I need people to see this. Maybe then they'll understand why all this donation stuff is a load of bullshit.

Reese clicks for a minute.

REESE

Emer, just because this system has disappointed you, does not mean it's ineffective.

EMER

That's exactly why it's ineffective! Why don't you understand that? If I was able to have my whole life uprooted by one test, what about everyone else?

REESE

There are other steps in place to prevent this. Your grade could've been considered passing had you qualified for a supplemental role.

EMER

What, like garbage pick-up? Everything's automated, they just need someone to hit a button. I wanna do *more* than sit around on my ass all day.

REESE

Such as hacking my security cameras?

Emer laughs, tiredly.

EMER

It's hardly "hacking." Make them less easy to access, and maybe I'll stop.

REESE

They are fully encrypted.

EMER

Fully encrypted with shit security.

Emer sits at the seat of the ambulance, slouching. He smiles slightly. Reese takes a slow, cautionary, step forward.

REESE

You clearly have... skills.

Emer laughs again. This time it's a bit more genuine.

EMER

Thanks. I guess.

REESE

It was not a compliment.

EMER

I'm gonna take it as one anyways.

Reese continues to approach Emer, her left foot sagging from the fraying wires and decomposing pieces. Slowly, she lowers herself to the ground, leaving a good two feet of space between them. She swings a leg up, resting her head on her sturdier knee and mimicking Emer's posture.

REESE

For someone with such an interest in technology, you hardly apply yourself.

EMER

(Scoffing)

You don't know anything about me.

REESE

I know quite literally, everything about you. Your birthdate, your frequent purchases, your age, your habits, your home address -

EMER

(Dismissive)

I get the point.

There's an awkward pause. The lenses on Reese's face click and spin as they focus on Emer. He picks at stray fabrics on his pants, leg bouncing.

REESE

I feel like I should be clear; I'm not trying to pick a fight with you.

Emer's leg bounces a bit faster. He does not meet her gaze.

EMER

Sure.

Another, awkward beat.

REESE

I would, however, appreciate an answer.

EMER

To what? Why I'm failing school, running away, and taking out security cameras? You're a super-computer, draw your own conclusions.

REESE

Super-computer is a gross oversimplification.

Emer snorts.

EMER

I like that *that's* what stuck out to you.

REESE

(Cheekily)
Of course.

Emer readjusts his position, pulling his legs up to his chest.

EMER

...I'm not failing on purpose.

REESE

I'd hope not.

EMER

I did try. I just - the day I took the test was the same day I saw that video. I was distracted.

REESE

Why did you go looking for that security footage to begin with?

EMER

I don't know - morbid curiosity? I was honestly just fucking around. I wanted to know if I could, and then - there it was.

A beat.

REESE

I'm sorry.

Emer looks taken aback.

EMER

...Thanks

She holds out a hand.

REESE

Come with me. My supervisors will make an exception to the test.

EMER

Would they do that?

A beat. Reese's eyes narrow.

REESE

(Determined)
I will make them.

END.