

A
dystopian
thriller



Heart
2046

Zoé
Henriques

PART ONE

1

14 February 2046

At the risk of repeating what I constantly think and write, I continue to wonder if it's possible to get the chance to live our lives all over again with what we now know.

Would we ever make the same choices?

Sometimes I'm assaulted by these self-reflective thoughts about the past. ~~Is~~ I question if I made the right decisions, and what I would have done differently, if I could choose.

Unfortunately, we all know the answer to that question: Being me, you, or anyone else, no one can really live all over again with the knowledge we have about that same life. We all know our life is a one-way street ~~thin~~.

But if that's the case, why do we get lost so many times? Why don't we just have a normal straight walk through it?

I don't think we ever really do just have a straightforward walk through life.

Furthermore, why do I sit here every night at this old typewriter 'talking' to these pages as if I'm looking for answers? As if I were searching for a part of me, a someone who can help me?

Yet, this search for someone or for something is a need.

How is that possible? A need in The System.

We should have 'everything' we ever needed provided to us in this world, so why do I feel I've lost something inside of me?

It's in that exact place I feel I have lost something, on that place inside of us, where we are all still just fragile beings and where I spend most of my time looking.

That place where we are still the same obsolete model that hasn't had an update for thousands of years.

A place where there's so much more we could do to advance and discover about ourselves than on the outside of us.

And on that outside of us, our lives are now so filled with technology that we are constantly tripping over it.

It's like we have a technology hoarding disorder we don't realise we have. A disorder that is creating an enormous amount of waste and problems for ourselves. As if the 'evolution' on the outside of us created a de-evolution on the inside.

Now, I find this life we invented very hard to be living in ~~and I~~ just, a life that isn't working very well for me... and maybe that's why I sometimes feel confused, in my own mind.

I don't personally spend too much time thinking or wishing about grand technological advances or spectacular things, I usually wonder about smaller things.

I question more things like where did all the homeless go after The Big Change?

When we all came to live by ourselves, did we also give the homeless a place to live or did we ditch them as if they were animals? If we did that, we are the real animals.

I also wonder about how we don't need to fight over food, sex or land anymore, how The System is supposed to provide us with everything. If that were really possible.

Is it really possible?

To suppress all our animal instincts like that and just give us Life Points to play with? Is having a score to increase enough for

us?

I feel that this way of spending time is a false utopian dream, an imprisoned freedom.

These Life Points are just some useless occupation as if we were kids inside their rooms playing the same old video game, over and over again.

But in this case, in this video game, we are locked inside these apartment boxes playing a game that takes all our choices away.

In fact, we are just playing the game to kill time.

We're waiting for time to consume itself and our bodies to fade away, and I don't like it.

I don't even remember ever deciding to start playing this Life Points game by choice.

I would rather be outside this madness, in the real natural world, in the Outside World. But none of us can stop playing and escape The System's game now.

We have to keep living and 'playing' inside these apartment boxes if we want to keep 'living'. Or to put it another way: We need to be inside these apartment boxes playing this game if we want to survive, or we would just probably die from illness in the Outside World.

This means I'm short on options other than living in this world that has taken all our choices away.

I don't know how I can escape it.

Maybe all we needed to sort this world out was to have a few more options.

It would be good, for example, to be able to choose a different video game or to select a different character to play it with.

Maybe I just need a temporary break from The System, or maybe I need my own personal big change from it all.

Simon Confucius

2

...

But who are you?

"I'm you."

Me, Simon?

"No, me, Torn."

No you're not.

"Yes, I am."

So what do you want, Torn?

"I want my life back."

And where do you need to take it back from?

"From you."

At that moment, after seeing himself type these replies with no control over it, Simon took his fingers off his typewriter and opened his eyes.

He felt unsettled as he lay there on the sofa with how real that dream had been. He was breathing heavily and his heart was pounding with the idea of someone replying back to him while he typed.

He was feeling lost and didn't know where he was. He was

unsure what was a dream and what was real. He looked around.

He had fallen asleep. He was in the dark of his lonely and small concrete apartment. The hours on the screen wall marked the time as having just passed midnight and he was relieved that his 'big day' was over.

Maybe the unsettling and weird dreams came from the day he had. Maybe they didn't.

He wanted to find out about the person typing back to him and looked at the stairs, his heart still pounding.

There was some mild anxiety inside him at the idea of sitting at the typewriter and finding out. But then he thought: Even if it did reply back, some letters on a page couldn't do him that much harm.

He went upstairs to the attic and looked at his typewriter.

He was used to 'talking' to the pages, but today he was nervous. He needed to talk to it, about itself.

15 February 2046

After having typed the date, he waited a moment to see if someone would type back.

No one did and he returned the carriage to begin a new line. He skipped a few lines and waited a few more moments for something to happen.

Nothing happened and no one replied, so he decided to type as he always did:

~~To~~ *It's my forty-fifth birthday, or it was, up until a few minutes ago. It wasn't a great day for a birthday, nor was it a bad day to have one either.*

But the fact is, birthdays nowadays aren't really great.

We just have these very awkward parties with representations of people. They really are just fake people looking very real, invented

by *The System*.

They gather around to cheer us up, to help us avoid thinking too much about getting older. It's more pitiful than cheerful.

In all honesty, all of the fakeness makes me ill, and I mean physically ill.

"I'm sorry to bother you man..."

What?

"I have one correction to make."

So you do exist... Okay then, what would that correction be?

"It was not your birthday, it was OUR birthday."

I'm not sure I'm... So, you do exist?

"Why would you even ask that?"

But who are you, really?

"I'm you, you dumbass."

Is your name Simon?

"No it's not man! This is so annoying, you just keep forgetting things."

Are you called Torn?

"There you go! Well done. That's exactly it!"

Maybe I am going insane.

Simon took his fingers off his typewriter, the same as he did in his dream.

He stopped writing and scratched his beard for a moment as he stared at the end of the page he had just written.

He felt he had to leave the typewriter. He quickly took the page out to add it onto the pile of written pages next to his desk.

He inserted a new page in the typewriter and stared at its emptiness, puzzled by what has just happened. He didn't know if it was best to stay there and face these pages or go down and face that apartment box.

He didn't want to try the pages again so he turned off the old lamp, leaving the attic he was in completely dark.

He embraced the darkness. He felt safe being in there like that. It made him feel he was in one of the lost places of his mind and for a moment, he could feel like that was home.

After his emotions had settled down, he stood up and blindly walked towards the stairs.

He loved knowing he could navigate his way around all the scattered boxes to reach the top step. When he eventually reached the steps, he had to almost force himself to continue, not because it was harder for him at that point but because whenever he had to go downstairs to his apartment box, he felt he was heading to some sort of doom, his doom.

When he got downstairs, he looked closely at his apartment box as he always did. Always with the hope it would have changed. That it wasn't real.

But it was. The concrete cube, very dimly lit, was always there; it had a self-projecting wall screen on one side and the kitchen on the other.

There was a sofa placed in the middle of it, with everything made of the same grey polished concrete: the kitchen, its cabinets, the tables and all the smaller furniture, everything but the cushions on the sofa and the elevator door. That was the 'front door' of his apartment box, made of polished stainless steel. As Simon looked around, there was no indication that a birthday had happened there earlier.

"Tomo?" Simon called, looking up to the ceiling.

"Yes, Mr. Confucius. How can I help you sir?" said Tomodashi's voice with its matching subtitle on the wall screen.

Simon was reading the subtitles, still visible, when he replied, "Would you just call me Simon?"

"Apologies for that sir. Would you like me to pick something for you to watch? I have options based on your taste and current mood."

"No, no. I think I just want the bed."

"Of course Simon, apologies for not seeing that coming."

"Not a problem," he said as he watched his sofa turn into a bed and his kitchen into a bedroom.

By the end of the transformation, he had his concrete bedside tables near him and he sat close to one so he could look at the photographs.

They were in the exact same place as he had left them the night before. He picked up Stella's and thought about how shy she could be, even in photographs.

When he placed his daughter's photograph back in its place next to Lizzy's, he peeked at the other side of his bed.

And there she was. Lizzy was asleep underneath his own duvets with only a bit of her hair sticking out. To Simon's basic senses, she was really there; he could hear her soft breathing, the smell of her fragrance and see the lights of his apartment bending on her forehead. He knew she wasn't really there but he couldn't stop thinking about how perfect her representation was, how impressive the clone of his wife was that was presented to him.

"Thanks Tomo," he finally said.

"My pleasure. Would you also like to share your sleep with your wife? She left a note saying that due to it being your birthday, and I'll quote, 'You could get lucky', end of quote, sir."

"Yes, I can see that, but no thanks. I would just like to sleep by myself tonight."

"Would you like me to hide her then, sir?"

"Yes Tomo, I think I would like you to hide her. Thanks."

"You're more than welcome. Would you like me to send a note back to her?"

"No, not really."

"Have a good night then, Mr. Simon."

"Good night."

He took off his round glasses and switched off the light

before turning back to the other side of his bed.

Lizzy was fading away and he watched her go. After she was completely gone, he thought that Tomodashi was actually the closest thing he had to a real wife, a real relationship. Both Lizzy and Stella were too busy living in Lizzy's apartment box to give that much attention to Simon. Children usually lived with their mothers until they were adults and that made him feel lonely.

He thought maybe that was the reason why he was typing as someone else, and having nightmares about it.

Thinking about Torn typing back to him kept him from falling asleep. He continued to think about it and why it was happening. He was unsure if he needed someone to talk to, if he needed help.

He thought about talking with Tomodashi about it, but he knew he wasn't the help he needed. Nonetheless, he needed to do something about it and he would do it the next day.

And that thought helped him to fall asleep.