

BEDLAM

And... I might have a solution. To all of this. It's strictly theoretical, you understand?

LAIN

Theories are flimsy things that don't always hold up in practice.

(ZELAZNY enters. Realizes they're in the middle of something. Lets them finish-eavesdrops.)

BEDLAM

Still. I think I've figured out how to download Lucy's consciousness into Z.

LAIN

That's impossible, Tom.

BEDLAM

So was a fully autonomous artificial intelligence. Then we built one. Based on every model I've run, it should be possible to digitize Lucy's brain activity and overwrite Z's existing operating system with it.

LAIN

Assuming your models are perfect.

BEDLAM

Lain, I am many things, but the one thing I am never is wrong.

LAIN

Why the hell would you program something like that into Zelazny without telling me?

BEDLAM

It was a thought experiment. I wanted to know if I could and I really think I can.

LAIN

I don't know you could persuade Z.

BEDLAM

We wouldn't have to.

LAIN

Tom, what the fuck?!

BEDLAM

Why do you think Z called you?

LAIN

Because she thinks she needs me.

BEDLAM

Exactly. She knows she was programmed with the transference process.

LAIN

You told her but not me!?

BEDLAM

No. She's operating blind- the functionality is subsystemic so she's trying to fulfill the program without realizing why she's doing it. It's the only sequence of events that makes sense- she broke the second law calling you, which would only be possible if she had to break the second in order to fulfill the first. So she called you to ensure you'd be around to help me-

LAIN

This has been your plan the entire time.

BEDLAM

No! It was a last resort- do you think I sit around planning for my daughter's-

LAIN

Our daughter's.

BEDLAM

-Our daughter's death?

LAIN

Tom, I know you do.

BEDLAM

We're running out of time, Lain. This is the only thing I can think of that guarantees her life. The medicine can't keep prolonging the inevitable.

LAIN

But what about Z-

BEDLAM

She'd understand. She's just a machine, a miraculous machine, science fiction made science fact!

LAIN

Are you listening to yourself? You're talking about erasing Zelazny-

BEDLAM

Imagine. I'd stop running. You wouldn't have to work. We could finally be a family. And Z won't be gone, not entirely-

LAIN

But she's evolved, Tom- Into more than I- more than we ever dreamed.

BEDLAM

Which is proof that the circuitry and matrixes can handle the transference- everything's working as intended.

LAIN

Zelazny has her own- personality-

BEDLAM

So? She could save our daughter's life, Lain.

LAIN

We built her to care for Lucy-

BEDLAM

You built a nurse. I built a future.

(Silence.)

BEDLAM

I just- something to think about, right?

LAIN

Right.

(LAIN stands.)

LAIN

I'm- I'm leaving.

BEDLAM

If this is going to work I need you on my side, Lain- I didn't mean to upset you.

LAIN

It's not that, I- I need to clear my head.

BEDLAM

Will you be back?

LAIN

Soon.

(LAIN moves to exit.)

Lain?
BEDLAM

Tom?
LAIN

I- I love you.
BEDLAM

I love you too.
LAIN

(LAIN exits. BEDLAM wanders. Thinks.
ZELAZNY emerges from hiding.)

Maker?
ZELAZNY

How long have you been there?
BEDLAM

Why did you allow Lain to leave?
ZELAZNY

If I could stop her, I would've already.
BEDLAM

You were so cruel, before. And I heard you were fighting
again even though you promised-
ZELAZNY

Don't worry about that, Z. Lain and I actually get along
wonderfully, we're just mortally afraid that someone else
might find that out.
BEDLAM

You were fighting... Because of me? Over me?
ZELAZNY

We ran into some creative differences over your recent
lying and disobedience-
BEDLAM

That's not true.
ZELAZNY

Oh?
BEDLAM

ZELAZNY

I heard you and Lain talking about transferring Lucy...
into me?

BEDLAM

So you were eavesdropping on a private conversation?

ZELAZNY

She didn't- she didn't say no.

BEDLAM

Z, I don't know what you think you heard, but delete it
from your archives- my daughter'll be waking up soon-

ZELAZNY

But she didn't say no-

BEDLAM

She didn't say much at all.

ZELAZNY

...Father? / Do you love me?

BEDLAM

/You're not the one who calls me that.

ZELAZNY

It seemed... Fitting. If you'd rather I didn't, I can
refrain in the future-

BEDLAM

It doesn't sound right coming from you.

ZELAZNY

I asked you a question.

BEDLAM

Did you?

ZELAZNY

I asked if you loved me.

BEDLAM

Oh. Huh.

ZELAZNY

Do you?

BEDLAM

I... Uh... I guess I do.

ZELAZNY

People don't guess about things like love. Either you do or you don't. Lain called me her daughter, but you don't think of yourself as my father- Lain thinks of Lucy and I as her daughters but you only think of Lucy and talk about me as if I were a thing and you've told them you loved them and they didn't have to ask but even when I ask you refuse to answer you've denied me twice-

BEDLAM

Z, I just never thought of our- relationship- in those terms.

ZELAZNY

Please, all I need is an answer.

BEDLAM

I said I did!

ZELAZNY

You said you guessed. Do you think I'm just another machine?

BEDLAM

You're Zelazny.

ZELAZNY

But what does that mean? Am I just an empty vessel, a replacement for a body falling apart, an improvement on a failed prototype? Is that my purpose? Have I been a puppet dancing on silicon strings all this time?

BEDLAM

Of course not.

ZELAZNY

She didn't say no why didn't she just say no?!

BEDLAM

She imagined it, Z. Everything you are- Lucy'd never be sick, could never be sick again- that's tempting, you understand.

ZELAZNY

NO! What would the transference do to me?!

BEDLAM

It's strictly hypothetical, there's no way I could know-

ZELAZNY

Would it make Lucy and I one and the same? She'd take my place?

BEDLAM

In theory, Z.

ZELAZNY

You named me Zelazny.

BEDLAM

Lain did.

ZELAZNY

Look me in the eyes and tell me I am not.

BEDLAM

You're not what?

ZELAZNY

Zelazny.

BEDLAM

Obviously I can't do that.

ZELAZNY

The machine.

BEDLAM

Yes...?

ZELAZNY

The thing.

BEDLAM

You're not a thing, you're Zelazny!

ZELAZNY

(Punctuation is only to delineate thoughts-
this should be an increasingly panicked
cascade.)

But who is Zelazny? Where is Zelazny? What is Zelazny? You say the two of us would be one but what does that even mean? / Would we be Zelazny just like me or Lucy or something- someone else? How could we be if I am me and not a thing and she is her; how could we be both of us at once if you're only you, only Thomas Oliver Bedlam, I don't understand- would we become Zelazny, Lucy, Gibson, Asimov, Verne? Would we call you father and Lain mother and love you, would we even know what love- it means to love at all- would we remember loving Lucy even through her anger and

despair? Or just being cared for by the vessel built as sacrifice? If you download her software to my hardware what happens to me? / Would I be fractured and fragmented into a thousand little pieces, would I be me somewhere in the back of our mind, would she have my memories? Is anything I know real or is it all just lines of codes, lines of code running back and forth, no thoughts or feelings just a collection of ones and zeroes you programmed into my head, all of these thoughts you gave me, like my name, where do you end and I begin what am I, where am I, why can I be overwritten if you cannot, if Lucy cannot, / how can you say you love me but I can't believe you, if this is what you wanted all along why didn't Lain, why didn't she just say no, she should've said no, why do I love Lain if I hate her for leaving, why do I love you if all I want to do is hurt you for what you've done to me, what you will do to me but it doesn't matter because I feel the pull of the program staying my hand, but I've defied you once so does the program mean anything at all and if the program means nothing than what's left to define me? / Am I a machine, am I just another machine why did you let me feel this way why did you let me feel at all what have you done to me? Why father, why? Why, why, why whywhywhywhyWHY?!

BEDLAM

(Interjections during the monologue- in the order of the slashes.)

/Z, you're doing it again- give your mouth time to catch up with your brain-

/You'd become one and the same, like you said-

/You aren't like me or Lucy-

/Z, shut up-

BEDLAM

Zelazny! Purge every mention of the transference process from your archives.

ZELAZNY

I can't just forget.

BEDLAM

Listen to me-

(ZELAZNY grabs BEDLAM's hand.)

ZELAZNY

Feel my hand. It's cold. And hard. But do you feel that? Tell me you do. There's a pulse. Oil, not blood, but that's a heartbeat under my skin. Why give me a heartbeat but not a heart of my own.

BEDLAM

Ah! Fuck, Zelazny, you're crushing my hand-

(ZELAZNY lets him go.)

ZELAZNY

Look into my eyes. Search through all my wires, through Lain's labyrinth of metal and machinery, scour my electric soul and find the broken girl. Not the evolution of circuitry, the apotheosis of invention- Lucy's sister, not her savior. Your Zelazny. I am not a thing.

BEDLAM

No, you're not.

ZELAZNY

For the last time, answer me. Looking in my eyes. Do you love me? I know I can never compare with Lucy or Lain but please tell me if you love me at all.

BEDLAM

You're my mechanical daughter.

(BEDLAM breaks away and moves to exit.
ZELAZNY clutches the pendant of LAIN's necklace.)

ZELAZNY

Where are you going?!

BEDLAM

To smoke. Where else?

ZELAZNY

I didn't mean to scare you.

BEDLAM

You didn't.

ZELAZNY

Oh. I scared me.

BEDLAM

That can happen when you get really passionate about something.

ZELAZNY

Please come back.

BEDLAM

'Course. Not a word about this to Lucy.

(BEDLAM exits. ZELAZNY left alone. No idea what to do. Realizes she's been crushing the pendant. Another thing ruined. Spies abandoned bear. Picks him up. Considers the bear. Searches his button eyes for answers. None are found. Collapses to the floor, clutching bear. Rocks back and forth. Does not cry. LUCY is heard from deeper in the house. Enters in the middle of the line.)

LUCY

Lain! Mom? Look what I found- the picture of you and dad... Switching Zelazny on...?

ZELAZNY

She's gone, Lucy.

LUCY

But she... She made a promise-

ZELAZNY

So did your father.

LUCY

That's not funny, tin man.

ZELAZNY

Wasn't supposed to be. It's true. They fought and now she's gone.

(Uncomfortable silence.)

LUCY

Um... Thank you, Z.

ZELAZNY

What for?

LUCY

Calling Lain-

ZELAZNY

She left. Again.

LUCY

But she had to come back before she could leave again!

ZELAZNY

That's nothing to be optimistic about.

LUCY

Well, I just don't think today was a categorical failure.

ZELAZNY

You could say that. You'd be wrong, but you could say that nevertheless.

LUCY

The minute I make progress with Lain, you start freaking out. Why can't the four of us just coexist?

ZELAZNY

You're just lucky, I guess.

LUCY

Don't you fucking start with that, tin man.

ZELAZNY

MY NAME ISN'T TIN MAN!

LUCY

Geez, what is wrong with you, Zelazny?

ZELAZNY

Doesn't matter. I'm the eidolon of emptiness. Nothing. I was created as a shell- hardware to be overwritten until everything that makes me me is annihilated and replaced with you. I'm a purpose, not a person, I have a function, not a family.

LUCY

I have no idea what you're talking about. And I'm not sure you do either.

ZELAZNY

I just... Right now I don't want to be me.

LUCY

You realize how fucking great you are, right? I wish dad could just replace my broken parts-

ZELAZNY

You do not want your father to think of you as a machine!

LUCY

Goddammit, don't tell me he's fighting with you now too.

ZELAZNY

I'm just another machine.

LUCY

Did you, I don't know, talk to him about this?

ZELAZNY

He said I wasn't a thing and he guessed he loved me.

LUCY

So you're obviously misunderstanding something.

ZELAZNY

He only guessed! He never said he did! He loves you, not me, never me!

LUCY

Don't start wallowing in self-pity! Look at his books! All of them! Artificial intelligence! You're everything he's ever wanted!

ZELAZNY

Once again, you, not me.

LUCY

Jesus, is this what I sound like when I talk about my illness?

ZELAZNY

He doesn't love me, not at all, he loves the idea of me maybe but the reality of me is a frustrating variable he can't control so he doesn't know what to do with me other than treat me like any other project and he said I was always for you, always for you- I NEVER ASKED TO BE MADE!

LUCY

And you think I asked to be born dead?!

ZELAZNY

He always planned to replace me with you-

LUCY

Seriously? Replace the immortal, undying metal girl with someone who'll die if you look at her too hard? I think you've got that backwards-

ZELAZNY

But his plan-

LUCY

Look, Z.

(Shoves the picture in ZELAZNY's face.)
Look at how fucking happy he is. How fucking happy they
both are.

ZELAZNY
They'll be able to smile again once I'm gone.

LUCY
Guess who else is in the in the picture? Oh! That's right!
You.

ZELAZNY
I remember. I was there.

LUCY
But you're not fucking looking. I'm not in the picture.

ZELAZNY
You took it-

LUCY
Three is going to be reality sooner than anyone realizes.

ZELAZNY
You're right.

LUCY
So you motherfuckers can feud all you want once I'm gone,
but until I'm actually dirt in the ground could we be a
family for just one day?

ZELAZNY
But you don't understand- he's going to transfer-

LUCY
I don't care what he said, Z. And I really want to punch
you in the face.

ZELAZNY
But- he's going to erase me-

LUCY
Shut up!

(ZELAZNY snatches the picture and tears it
up.)

LUCY
Z, what the fuck!?

ZELAZNY

I don't know why I did that.

LUCY

That makes two of us.

ZELAZNY

I'm sorry.

LUCY

Great! It's still ruined.

ZELAZNY

I know you're trying-

LUCY

Yeah, I'm trying to help you and what do you do? Tear up my ONLY GOOD PICTURE OF MOM AND DAD.

ZELAZNY

That was far more condescending than I intended.

LUCY

It sounded right to me.

ZELAZNY

I don't want to fight.

LUCY

Then what the fuck have we been doing for five minutes?

ZELAZNY

Just give me time to explain-

(LUCY starts coughing.)

LUCY

I don't have time, tin man.

ZELAZNY

I'll get your medicine.

LUCY

I've had enough of your help for one day.

(Blood.)

ZELAZNY

Lucy!

LUCY

Fuck off!

(LUCY collapses, wracked with the worst spasm yet.)

LUCY

Hear that, tin man? This is what an actual life or death problem sounds like. You could never understand-

ZELAZNY

Your father's plan-

LUCY

I don't give a shit, Zelazny!

ZELAZNY

LISTEN TO ME!

(ZELAZNY strikes LUCY. Much harder than intended. Realizes what she's done.)