

## **The Dummy**

By Mohammad Khan

They strapped me into a 2012 Chevrolet Cruze, faced me forward, and put my hands on the wheel. A large white wall stood 50 feet before me and an open garage on the right. And then revved the engines and the car zoomed forward. The car flew through the air and for a second I felt free. Free flying passed the wall and out the open doors. Then I crashed into a brick wall.

The air bags shattered my abdomen. My arms flew forward as I kissed the steering wheel, shattering my nose and cheekbones, and fell unconscious.

I was built to save lives and suffer for it everyday. Caring for the health of others with no regard for my own.

Someone drags me out of the car and carries me to another room. Before I lose consciousness, my finger twitches slightly.

I have locked-in syndrome. A full body paralysis. I can still feel sensations of pain, fear, hunger, but I can't react. Completely trapped in my useless body, I thought I'd donate it to science. Well, they thought I'd want to donate it to science.

The scientist lays me down on a white examination table where a doctor waits.

"The damage is extensive", says the doctor. "This'll take a while before the next tests."

"Old Bill here has been through alot. He'll make it through", says the scientist. "Do let me know when he's ready."

The doctor prepares her tools as the scientist leaves the room. She pulls a large operating lamp and aims it at my face. My retinas seer from the intensity.

She takes her scalpel and opens my abdomen up first. She pulls out accelerometers and potentiometers and places them to the side. Next she opens my neck and knees taking out the load cells. The doctor connects the devices to a computer and analyzes the data.

My body lies open to the environment. The heat seeps out of my bones as my fingers twitch slightly from the cold.

The scientist returns. "How's the data?"

"Some noise from the electronics of the car but the plots look good."

"How's the load?"

"Enough to shatter a knee and crack a sternum."

"We'll need more padding there or adjust the nitrogen in the air bags. Might be too much. Was the injury caused by the crash or from the air bags?"

"I'm not sure. Though I noticed his internal wiring and components have moved from the force. They're connected. They might send signals to his brain."

"Wouldn't his brain be mush by now", says the engineer. "He's been comatose for years. We're not sure if

he's alive."

She shrugs. "We'd need to run some tests to make sure."

"Later, let's get this done first. I don't want Chevrolet up my ass about not complying with air bag regulations."

Both the doctor and scientist leave me alone on the table with my insides open to the environment. The twitching reaches my elbows, but stops. I still can't move. God I hate myself.

At this rate, my body will deteriorate in a few months. I might save a few thousand with the data accumulated. I'm tilting the scales in their favor. Remove me, and the world gets fair real fast. Everyone gets their life. When do I get mine?

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They carry me back into the Chevrolet driver seat. Put my hands on the steering wheel. The garage wide open revealing a vast green expanse on the right. Now the wall is 200 feet away. My fingers lightly grip the wheel, they hold firmly.

"3", say the engineers behind the class.

My elbows twitch. Contracting and expanding. I can move them.

"2".

Shoulders move. Individual connections roar alive as the electricity flows through my chest and arms.

"1". The car launches forward to the wall, but I turn it to the open garage.

Unfortunately, the car's not actually moving forward using the gas pedal, but forward nonetheless. I unbuckled my belt and rolled down the window.

I dove out of the window as I approached the open garage tumbling onto the concrete. Scarred and undeterred, I ran away. Finally free.

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Old Bill sits in a circle surrounded by many anomalies. Ralph the doughnut boy, one hallucinating man named Phil, stink bugs, broccoli, and the leading therapist. All listening attentively to Old Bill's story.

"And I eventually found this place", says Old Bill.

"That's wonderful Bill", says the therapist. "Would anyone else like to go?"

Ralph, the doughnut speaks. "I have a question for you Bill. Don't you feel guilty? Leaving them behind? You were doing good work."

"Yeah", says Phil, "you had purpose. Un-unlike me, I was born into nothing and tossed aside."

"No", says Old Bill, "People would rather one suffer so they gain. If something goes wrong, then they play innocent and blame me. So no fuck em. Fuck people."