

BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cress is sound asleep. The door to the bathroom is shut, but the light is on. Inside the bathroom, Exe stands hunched over at the sink, a belt strapped around her arm. She's not in her bodysuit, instead wearing an oversized t-shirt with a gray alien printed on the front. She takes slow, heavy breaths as blue energy crackles, and a very large needle appears in her hand.

She looks at the clear liquid in the needle. She turns it slightly, and she sees her reflection in the glass. She scowls at it more intensely than ever before. She takes a deep breath, raises it to her other arm, and injects it into her elbow. She nearly collapses.

Beat.

She staggers to her feet, gasping for breath. The injection point in her arm bleeds, and with a flash of blue energy, it seals. She stares at herself in the mirror- bedraggled, with sullen eyes and a miserable grimace. She clutches the empty needle in her hand. A voice pops into her mind.

RUEDOL (O.S.)

A Hiveborn like that, coming into the physical world? I suppose it's possible, what with the new advancements in Project DataMIND.

She looks up at the mirror, and sees through it the other side of a computer monitor. Sitting at the desk is Doctor Ruedol. He's talking to a woman with frizzy black hair and a white labcoat with lapels adorned with buttons. He's not looking at the screen, but he's not exactly looking at the woman either.

RUEDOL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Albeit unlikely, if it somehow reversed the digitization process, she could create a human body. It'd be very unstable. If it acts at all like a .soul file, its body will attempt to routinely optimize itself more and more until the very body itself decompiles and returns to the Hive.

Her grip on the needle tightens.

RUEDOL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And, well, the .exe application was recognized as malware at the start of all this.

(MORE)

RUEDOL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

If it tries to cross back into the
Hive decompiled, the firewall would
catch it and delete it.

Exe's grip tightens further, the glass begins creaking.

RUEDOL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Well, we could probably stabilize
the body by introducing flawed code
into it, prolonging the
optimization. Digitizing others
could do that, and if the body
works like code, we could break the
process for a time by clouding
neural sensors or prompting a
dopamine release. Morphine might do
it.

The needle breaks, glass digs into her hand. Blood drops into the sink. A flash of blue energy, and all that's left is the blood in the sink. She looks down at the pool of red. Clear drops fall from her eyes, dispersing the blood puddle.

Cress is still sound asleep. The bathroom door opens, casting light on her, but her face remains in the shade as Exe's shadow keeps the light out of her eyes. Exe walks over to Cress, hand still bleeding. She sets her hand on Cress's cheek. After a moment she pulls away, leaving a smear of blood on her face. Seeing that, she quickly uses her other hand to wipe the cheek clean.

Exe stands up straight, and looks down at Cress. Her morose look softens to a gentle smile. After a moment, Exe turns and walks to the vacant bed across the room, climbs in, and lays on her side, facing the wall. At the nape of her neck, there is a birthmark in the shape of a USB symbol, but the tips of the branches are X's. It is the same as the Project DataMIND symbol. It glows with a slight blue outline, which persists as the scene fades to black.

FADE TO BLACK.