**His Turn to Remember**

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*Next up, flash fiction in a classic-style, treating one of the perennial tropes (or perhaps that should be “treasures”) of the genre. True, there is no glass jar here, but there have been other notable containers for our remains across the years of science fiction*...

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During his daily walk through the vast and empty halls of the Masters’ mausoleum, Watchman Seven stopped to remember. The front panel of his pure white metallic body—about heart level in a human frame—popped open. He extracted a small handheld device, still as shiny and new as he first remembered it. The panel closed with a sharp snapping sound and his body resealed itself..

He keyed in his password.

Seven stood completely motionless, transfixed by the images displayed on the gift the Masters had provided long ago. He clutched it tightly as memories flashed across the tiny monitor. This was the only place they had existed since the day of his rebirth, when his brain was transferred to this cold metallic android body. His mind had been unceremoniously cleansed of everything.

Conscious of the exact time, Seven knew he had seconds enough before he was required at his watch station.

A very long time ago, Seven and the other eleven android watchmen were commissioned to guard and protect the sleeping Masters, who by design would not be awakened for many centuries. Their bodies were built from the strongest materials and each was installed with enough weaponry to quash an army of warriors or an assault of marauding beasts.

They were the guardians of the Masters.

Before the Masters went to sleep, they gave him this memento, a tiny morsel extracted from his memories, fifteen minutes of a video album that he could view whenever he wanted or needed to remember. He used to remember every day. Now only on occasion.

Today he wanted to remember.

He watched…

A beautiful wife. Whose wife? His? Yes.

Two small children. Were they his children? Of course.

Laughter. They were all happy. He remembered happiness and laughter.

Singing. Not the most beautiful harmonies, certainly, but beautiful to him. Wasn't beauty a personal thing?

Was that him playing with the children? Was that what he had looked like in his previous life? He always wondered.

And then, before it was over, one small kiss on the cheek from his wife. Sometimes he imagined how it must have felt. Warm, soft, moist. What other feelings? He struggled with what he must have experienced. Back then, so long ago.

Of course, there was much missing. These were only fragments, a tiny sliver of his past. He wondered about the events—the missing pieces—that led up to his new life within this cold, hard skin. His new life, without feeling, without even one small kiss. Maybe his Masters did not want him to remember those events. Those would certainly be too painful to watch over and over again.

Did the Masters have compassion?

The time was near to begin his watch. He proceeded toward his station. Watchman Nine was standing in position, looking much like Seven, facing outward toward the gray, dead world beyond their strong walls, where any enemy might be lurking, planning an imminent attack.

Nine turned to him as he approached, and stepped aside so Seven could take his position.

As Nine passed him on his way back to his recharging station, Seven handed him the device.

It was his turn to remember.

The End