Orphan Sunset

A slow drop sunset backlit the twisted metal man as Maddie came down the path toward him. Not all metal, but mostly metal. His human body had been mechanically replaced (legs, left arm, left eye) or enhanced (hearing, right arm, processing chip wired into his brain) to give what was left of this man his “full potential.”

He was a somebody. Rich. Comfortable. Probably a boss somewhere.

Maddie was a nobody. Poor. Struggling. Dropped out of high school to help her dad keep food on the table.

This was the 14th day in a row she had come out to Pete. Pete. He told her his name on the first day through the questions that became crying that became begging.. He said he had been hiking the path when his power went down.

He wanted to leave, but there was no where for him to go.

He wanted to eat. To drink. To live.

She wanted, well, she wanted those things for him as well.

Muscles augmented are muscles atrophied.

“everyone’s power went down.”

She explained all the power, all at once . . . just ceased. Drones fell out of the sky. Cars stopped. Planes crashed. Phones went black. Doors wouldn’t open. And the MECHs, every MECH, just dropped in place, the weight of their augmentations too much for their frail human body to move. They were helpless, scared. Vulnerable.

“they were like babies. like you.”

I need shelter.

“you’re too heavy for me to move, allt hat metal and all.”

Can you bring some of your friends to move me?

She laughed as one would laugh at a child’s ignorance, “you would not want me to bring anyone to you.”

He had told her he wished he had been in the city when the power went out.

“no, you don’t.” and his eye grew wide with that.

Check the Net when the power might come back.

“no Net, everything is down.”

Can you tell the police or FireRescue I am out here.

“Firerescue all had enhanced lungs, they all suffocated as soon as the power dropped. And Police, they, uh, they are all dead. “

What? The power goes out and they kill the cops right away?

“Mr. Pete, it wasn’t right away.”

She let that hang in the air, waiting to see if she needed to say the next sentence. The MECHs had constant access to all the info on the Net. But Mr Pete still didn’t’ seme to know how the world works. Look of confusion. She worried this might trip out her gift to him. At least, Maddie’s world. That second sentence was tucked behind her tongue. Bouncing back and forth to find a way outa s she had to decide.

“ They took their time.”

The first few days he was fast talking, rambling asking questions

The next few dayswere less questions, more talking about what he deserved.

These last few days, he would slow talk, mumble, eye half open.

The pet scorpion stung her and she smashed it.

She covered him with branches and leaves. Mr. Pete would thank her for the shelter from the sun. Oh yeah,t he sun, she would think. But it also kept him hidden. Others would see him. And she wanted, well . . .

The weight of his augmentations kept him

When the electricity had stopped it stopped for everything that was.

The cyborgs now had no power or money or power.

lay trapped in their extravagantly decadent, dead tech.

Each evening, Maddie would feed him. Disinfect the animal bites. Brush off bugs. Nurse the sunburns. Keep him alive another day.

She took out the knife, a combat knife. A cop’s knife. And sliced the apple into bite size pieces. She fed him one at a time. Sideways, skin first. If he bit down right away pieces of the apple would fall away. He had to jerk his head an duse his tongue to get the apple in all the way. Maddie thought he look funny doing it.

Her brother broke the window.

He called the police and an example was made.

He always either thanked her for the present or apologized for the past.

She wanted him to herself.

Today she’d spill the water just before giving it.

So sorry. Terribly sorry. Tomorrow I will bring more water.

Her slow drip torture: hope.