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Memoirs of a Machine

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Memoirs of a Machine

Joshua Liu

I cut where I am told, my arms moving with a mechanical precision that follows imaginary lines strewn throughout the body,
I follow instructions with an obedient ease, every sentence analyzed for meaning and then analyzed once more.
The book identifies each anatomical component and I agree automatically, storing each valuable tidbit into some corner of my mind;
I am a machine, one that has endured two years of apprenticeship,
I know not of complaint, nor of exhaustion - I simply exist.
Two years past I constructed myself from well-oiled parts, thinking I would be ready for the torrential storm to come,
Fueled by motivation, guided by some unseen hand, I assembled myself to become a healer.
Today, my parts are rusty;
The bright sheen of my exterior has become muddled with cracks, wear, and dirt.
I often wonder what is my purpose? Have I misunderstood my calling?
Deluged under the weight of books that carry unknown, fervent meaning,
I memorize and regurgitate those words without pause, without hesitation - that is what I am conditioned to do.
Every month I endure grueling performance check-ups - I am grilled for recall, turned over for examination and finally assigned a number based on my overall skill.
This number determines my total potential,
I fail when it is low, succeed when it is high - I see the world through numbers.
Looking around me I notice others, machines to the one,
Each appears different, but we all serve the same purpose,
Led by authorities in long, white coats, we strive to be just like them,
Mimicking our robotic movements to their human fluidity.
Ultimately we fail at this petty imitation because some component is missing,
They say it comes from the inside and cannot be constructed,
Compassion and empathy.
Foreign concepts to our analytical minds, but familiar scenes to our once-human eyes,
I begin to remember why I was created - to help the sick, to give expertise, to heal the injured,
I realize I have strayed from my path - the machine is not suitable for this purpose,
I must become more - I must relearn how to be human.
Joy, sorrow, gratitude, guilt, pleasure, anger - the emotions ripple in like a whirlwind,
But I embrace them, for it's been too long,
We reconnect like long-lost lovers.
I see a change coming to the others, the spark has been lit,
We are becoming human again.
I try to see the end of the tunnel where we fulfill our purpose,
Not as perfect machines, but as imperfect humans,
As physicians who aren't afraid to fail, who will not stray from their natural calling;
The metamorphosis has begun.