

Metamorphosis

Written by

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INT. CAR - NIGHT

A dark road unwinds before a windshield. Blue, serious eyes track every turn.

Behind the wheel: ALEX BAYLOR (30s), handsome in his uniform. What branch isn't clear. Though the "Med Pass" clipped to his chest provides a hint.

On the dash, a mounted cell phone rings. The caller ID displays: Rachel. Alex taps a button on the wheel, answers.

Rachel's plaintive voice BOOMS through speakers.

RACHEL

Honey, what happened? We were supposed to do dinner tonight. For once!

ALEX

And?

RACHEL

It's almost 12 AM. Look at your cell. Or a clock! Wherever you are.

ALEX

I'm driving. Sweetie, I'm sorry. But something came up at the lab.

RACHEL

That Moreau Monstrosity project? I thought Colonel Turner had it shelved!

Alex winces. That last interjection was... loud. He stabs a second button on the wheel, lowers the volume to half.

ALEX

Rachel, please. Don't call it that. The gene splicing research we're doing has the potential to cure ALS. And cancer. You know, the disease that eight-sixed your dad?

RACHEL

Low blow, Alex. Don't your "specimens" deserve to live, too?

ALEX

Dear...

RACHEL

Don't "Dear" me. I saw those pictures of what you did to those poor rats!

Alex face palms. Wobbles a bit as he steers.

ALEX

Pictures you had no clearance to see. But you peeked. Just forget what you saw and focus on what lies ahead. You know, like I'm doing with the road?

RACHEL

How can I forget the photo of that lizard? You spliced it with a mealworm, for Christ sakes!

ALEX

Darling, I know animal rights is your hobby. Activism's cute and all-

RACHEL

Hobby?!? I should've turned whistleblower and reported your team to the Humane Society. But then I'd be the wife of a felon. And you promised it was going to end. But since that turned out to be a lie, I can't help but wonder - what else are you lying about in our lives?

Alex rips the phone off its mount, yells into it.

ALEX

Honey, we'll talk this over tonight. You have every right to an opinion about US. But when it comes to my career? Back the fuck off!

In the road ahead, headlights FLARE. Tires squeal.

ALEX

Holy cra-

Alex attempts to course correct. But holding his phone, he fails. Epically.

From the unseen impact, the cell tumbles from his hand - slams against the door. From speakers, Rachel screams:

RACHEL

Alex - are you there?!?

BLACKOUT. CRUNCH. From the sound of it, there won't be much left for rescuers to find. Not the car. Or Alex, either...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY - ALEX'S POV

Alex's eyes flutter. Somewhere nearby, monitors BEEP. Rachel's voice breaks the silence. Eerie, familiar:

RACHEL
Alex, are you there?

For Alex, the world comes into focus. He lies prone in a bed. Tubes snake over hospital guardrails. Presumably terminating in his arms... though that, he can't confirm.

RACHEL (30s) hovers over him; a beautiful woman marred by a weary smile. She cradles a makeup COMPACT in her hand; she's been doing her best to hide the tears.

ALEX
(groans)
Rachel?

Rachel's face lights up.

RACHEL
You're awake? And you're... you?

Alex tries to sit up. Soon finds that's not possible.

ALEX
I can't move my head? Why?

RACHEL
Honey, it's just a little traction brace. The doctors say you cracked a vertebrae. It's best you lie still!

She reaches out to touch him. Shudders. Stops.

ALEX
I did WHAT now? Oh yeah. The car crash. Oops.

RACHEL
The police say you probably could have avoided it.
(Looks down, forlorn)
If you hadn't been fighting with me at the time.

Alex closes his eyes. Hears the sound of his own labored breathing. Monotone monitor BEEPS. He opens his eyes again - resolves to free Rachel of her guilt.

ALEX

Baby, it was all my fault. I'm the one who grabbed the phone, took my hand off the wheel. We should just both be grateful I'm alive.

Rachel stares at him. Doesn't respond.

ALEX

You ARE grateful... right?

Rachel wrings her hands, hovers more.

RACHEL

Well, the good news is when the crash happened, your team was alerted instantly. How they pulled that off, I've no idea.

ALEX

(laughs)

Security clearance hath its perks.

RACHEL

That truck hit you straight on. The... damage was so serious, everything else thought you were sure to die. Which kind of gave Colonel Turner the leverage he needed to convince the doctors to try.

ALEX

Try what?

COLONEL TURNER (50s) walks into Alex's vision. A grizzled grunt of a man, he plasters a fake smile on his face, waves:

COLONEL TURNER

Hi. How's it hanging, Alex my boy?

(coughs)

Metaphorically, that is.

ALEX

Colonel Turner, you're here?

COLONEL TURNER

Why in tarnation wouldn't I be? My Einstein of the Test Tubes gets into a fender bender on my behalf - you can guarantee your last pair of clean underwear ole Turner'll hop to the rescue in a jiff!

Turner wags a stubby finger in Alex's face.

COLONEL TURNER

I gotta give you credit, you slick rascal. What a creative way to avoid the late night shift!

Alex's eyes flick back and forth between his wife and the Colonel. His heart rate quickens.

ALEX

Rachel tells me you took... drastic measures with my care.

COLONEL TURNER

Correction: "needed steps". Given the mortal emergency we were facin', you should thank the team for having your back!

ALEX

What did you do? I've known you ten years, Colonel. Cut the crap!

Rachel cringes - seems to shrink into herself.

RACHEL

They spliced your DNA with - a test subject.

COLONEL TURNER

To great success - you're here talkin' to us, right?

RACHEL

I wouldn't call it a... success.

ALEX

Which test subject? Please don't say the Macaque Monkeys. I've seen them eat their own poop!

Turner rolls his eyes at the implication.

COLONEL TURNER

Using primates? Tsk. My much loved minister's musings aside, you already ARE one a' those, son. What good would that do to save your life?

ALEX

Holy fuck. You used the rats, didn't you? Is that why my face feels so... weird?

COLONEL TURNER

No, but look on the bright side. Not only did our little experiment grant you a renewed lease, but it seems to have handed you unexpected super powers, too. Like you can go without oxygen for at least thirty minutes. Think about that, my boy; now you can scuba dive without a tank!

ALEX

No oxygen? How would you know THAT?

RACHEL

(squirms)

There... was a malfunction with the tube a week ago.

ALEX

How long have I been unconscious?

COLONEL TURNER

Eight months. If you wuz a woman, you coulda almost popped one out!

RACHEL

The tube was bent. A tiny bit. They didn't realize until the sitcom the nurse on call was watching ended.

(her face brightens)

Yet - here you are!

Turner counts blessings; puffs out his chest - proud.

COLONEL TURNER

Based on what we've thus far observed, you can flatten your body in interesting ways.

ALEX

And you figured that one out... how?

COLONEL TURNER

You toss and turn in your sleep, boy. No idea how Rachel's handled it, all these years. You also generate certain anti-biotic molecules in your brain, and can withstand temperatures as low as 32 degrees! When we finally free you from that contraption, there's even reason to suspect you'll be able to run mighty quick. Faster than any human in history!

ALEX

Enough with the hints. I don't have all day.

RACHEL

Honey, you really do. You won't want to leave here awhile -

Alex tries to lunge forward. Can't, because of the traction. The bed shakes.

ALEX

Tell me what the fuck you did to me!

Turner sighs, holds out a hand. Rachel slides the compact mirror into his palm. Turner opens it, extends it to Alex.

COLONEL TURNER

Son, please understand: we used the DNA we had to, to preserve your life. But none of us expected it to propagate... quite so much.

Alex gawks. HIS INSECTOID FACE reflects back!

ALEX

You turned me into a cockroach?!?

COLONEL TURNER

Look at the bright side. Now you can survive a nuclear blast.

Black out. An unseen Alex screams in horror.

ALEX (O.S.)

Nooooooooooooo!

FINAL FADE OUT: