A Mother’s Love

“She’s a very special girl, ma’am,” the maid told the inspector. “I know you’ll find her highly distinguishable.”

“That is for the government to decide,” responded the inspector monotonously, her focus still laying ahead on the long, gray corridor she was speedily marching through.

“Yes… Yes, of course,” replied the maid, a naive smile crossing her face as she hastily tried to keep up with the inspector. “But she has displayed her intellectual capability through the many challenges leading up to this very day, and the results of her genetics tests have been spectacula—”

The inspector stopped suddenly and looked at the maid, her deep green eyes piercing the confidence of the hopeful woman. “A society is built on standards,” the inspector began. “If any member falls short of said standards, the society can no longer function. It will slowly disintegrate into nothing more than a pile of dust and a memory of a once-promising nation. We cannot support any… weak links, so to speak.”

“Of course not, ma’am,” chimed in the maid, “but—”

“These are but simple tests to see if female #34175 is fit for the world. Like all others, she was examined throughout early stages of life, and educated to the greatest extent of possibility. Like all others, she was granted base freedoms and has been encouraged to flourish in her preferred area. Like all others, she was given equal opportunity, and has thus far proven herself valuable to society. However, only a select few are distinguishable.”

“‘Those whose talents have the greatest likelihood of benefitting all humankind,’” quoted the maid, having heard the definition many times before on news specials when the population examination laws were first being passed.

“Then you can clearly see the value of untampered evaluations,” explained the inspector, her red lips forming a fabricated grin. “It keeps the population in check while ensuring societal prosperity.”

“I… I wasn’t trying to say, that it wasn’t important,” the maid stuttered, “it’s very important, I just… I mean…”

The inspector laid her hand on the maid’s shoulder, her cold, bony fingers pressing down through the maid’s sleeve, making her uncomfortable. “Of course you only meant well,” the inspector told her, a sense of unexpected sympathy in her voice, which instantly disappeared. “But your attachment to the female being tested is evidence of emotional manipulation, which would cause her to fail the examination automatically. And we wouldn’t want that, now would we?”

“No,” said the maid, shaking her head violently.

“Then we have an understanding,” concluded the inspector. She lifted her hand from the maid’s shoulder, brushed her pencil skirt down, and began, once again, on her path through the hallway, the maid hurrying after her.

Upon reaching the end of the hallway, the inspector came upon a simple, windowless door with a metal doorknob. The inspector signalled for the maid to step ahead and open it, and, going through the many various keys on the ring kept in her uniform pocket, the maid identified the one labelled “screening room”, inserted it into the lock, and turned the handle. The door swung open to reveal a room painted completely in white, containing only a single metal chair, upon which a youthful girl was seated. She sat straight with perfect posture, her dark, wavy hair falling to her waist. Her hands were crossed on her lap, and her deep brown eyes stared blankly ahead. She wore in a modest black dress and black flats, which sat perfectly still on her body, only shifting with her breathing.

The inspector placed the briefcase she had been carrying on the ground, approached the girl and asked, “Do you identify yourself as female #34175?”

“Yes,” replied the girl, without taking her eye focus away from the door.

The inspector circled around the girl, reviewing her physicality, the sound of her shoes tapping against the floor shattering the deafening silence. The girl’s calm breathing remained constant, but the maid, standing mutely in the corner of the room, began to sweat with worry.

“What is the square root of four thousand, four hundred, and eighty seven?” questioned the inspector.

“Sixty seven,” answered the girl instinctively.

“What event took place on July 17th, 2027?”

“The signing of the peace treaty between Europe and North America after the Nuclear War, the results of which allowed for the formation of the nation in which we now live, recognized today as Kirtyna,” replied the girl.

“How many millennia does it take for the earth to complete a general procession?”

The girl remained silent for a moment, before turning her head to the inspector. “Were I completing an intellect evaluation, this information may be relevant. However, I do believe we are both aware that is not the case,” she stated.

A look new to the inspector – one of distinct respect – crossed her face for a brief moment before she continued. “Alright, then,” she said, “Answer this: what is to happen if you pass this test?”

“I will be deemed a ‘distinguishable member of society’, free to live and thrive,” the girl explained, knowing the answer, but unable to identify the real meaning of the question through inspector’s tone.

“And if you fail?”

The girl waited a moment before responding, trying to read the inspector’s face, but to no avail - the condescending, enigmatic expression on the inspector’s face gave her no information as to what the desired answer was. “Then I am scheduled to die by injection this afternoon,” she said slowly, watching the malicious grin upon the inspector’s face grow with each word.

A whimper heard from behind her caused the inspector to turn suddenly. The maid was covering her mouth with her hand, trying to hide the tears that were falling down her cheeks, but she could no longer control them. “My baby…” she cried, “Please don’t kill my baby.”

“Mother. It is for the better of all society,” the girl told her.

“No, no!” exclaimed the maid, rushing towards the chair upon which her daughter was seated. She stood protectively before her, pointing at the inspector, her arm shaking as she screamed, “She is going to kill you! I can see it in her eyes, Wren. I see the evil that lives inside her – she wants murder. She wants the blood on her hands, and I won’t let her have yours!”

The inspector did not react brashly – rather, she merely shook her head disappointedly and stepped slowly towards the briefcase she had placed near the door. “You should not have used the girl’s name,” she told the maid. Turning to the frightened woman and her petrified daughter, the inspector asked, “Why, Wren,” saying the name as though it were covered in dirt, “Do you think that was a bad idea?”

Taking a deep breath, the girl replied, “Names give one power.”

“Good!” exclaimed the inspector, her malevolent grin growing as she opened her briefcase. “And?”

“Power is the key to rebellion,” Wren told her, her heart racing.

“Brilliant answer, really,” the inspector replied with utmost honesty. “But,” she began, pulling an object out of her briefcase, “I’m afraid you have failed.”

She closed her briefcase, and threw it to the side of the room, the crashing sound it made causing Wren and her mother to jump. As she walked towards the pair of women, she revealed that she held in her left hand a handgun.

The maid swallowed nervously and shook her head frantically. “No, no…” she muttered, standing to protect her daughter. The inspector aimed the gun at her head, and she threw her arms up in defense, but the inspector did not fire.

“Now, due to a severe emotional influence, “she explained to Wren, still pointing the gun at her mother, “This evaluation has been rendered inconclusive, which automatically results in failure for the subject.”

The inspector turned to face the maid. “Additionally, your emotional bias being the basis for her failure, you will be charged and convicted of murder in a court of law, for which the sentence is death.”

The maid bit her lip, trying not to cry. “You’re a monster,” she spat out.

“I am merely doing my job,” the inspector replied.

“You were never loved as a child, were you?” said the maid, laughing in her state of madness. “That’s why you love to watch it torn from other people, isn’t it?”

“No,” the inspector admitted, “it is because I was loved that I enjoy watching it destroyed.”

She took several steps towards Wren, and with each, hr mother grew more and more worried. “You see,” the inspector continued, “Emotion is what makes one soft; it makes one weak.”

“It’s what makes one human,” blurted the maid furiously.

“I see we’re on the same page about this, then,” said the inspector, now standing immediately behind Wren. “How else could people be taken so easily advantage of? Throughout all of history, leaders have preyed on the public’s emotion to lead them into war; into hatred; into suffering. Fear and anger rule the human mind, limiting possibility. Love and reliance cause one to lose common sense. Our world could be on the brink of perfection were we not limited to the blind irrationality of human emotion.

“But that is beside the point,” she concluded. The inspector turned to Wren and smiled. “I want to offer you a deal: I will allow you to pass, as I believe you should have, were your test completed, on the condition you complete one final task.”

“What is it?” Wren inquired hesitantly, repressing the answer she knew in hope of something – anything – else.

The inspector placed the gun into Wren’s hands, wrapped the girl’s finger around the trigger, and kept it pointed at the maid. “All you have to do,” she told Wren, “is shoot the woman who tried to kill you, and prove you have no emotional ties to a lesser being.”

The inspector let go, and Wren could not hold up the weight of the gun in her state of shock. She blinked quickly, and shakily let out a breath, but found herself speechless, staring ahead at her crying mother. Gathering herself, Wren stood and aimed the gun at the inspector instead, and pulled the trigger. Nothing. She tried again, but the gun did not fire.

“Good try, but that won’t work,” the inspector explained, holding up and pointing to her wrist. “The corresponding microchip for the gun that has been injected under my skin ensures that it cannot be fired on its owner.” She stepped towards the shaking Wren, and pushed down on her shoulders, causing her to fall back into her seat.

“Now,” the inspector asserted, “You are going to do as I say. Keep in mind, if you don’t, the both of you will die, regardless. This way, you are saving the skin on your own back.”

Wren looked down to the gun, then back up to the image of her mother – a woman so desperately in love with her daughter, she drove herself to madness to protect her. Wren tried to lift it and aim, but seeing the innocent, sobbing woman who raised her as the victim made doing such impossible. She broke down in tears, dropping the gun in her lap.

“It’s okay, baby,” the maid told her daughter. “I’ll be okay.”

“You have ten seconds to kill her, or I will,” the inspector whispered into Wren’s ear.

Wren picked up the gun, and straightened her arm, aiming at her mother.

“Ten, nine, eight…”

She looked at her mother’s desperate, smiling face. “I’m sorry,” Wren sobbed.

“Seven, six…”

“It’s okay,” the maid told her, nodding her head up and down.

“Five, four…”

Wren tried to aim the gun, but with each attempt, it grew more difficult to pull the trigger. “I can’t, mom,” she whimpered.

“Three…”

“I love you,” murmured the maid.

“Two…”

She ran towards her daughter, pulling the gun out of her weak, trembling hands, and pointed the barrel at her own skull, shutting her eyes tightly.

“One.”

She pulled the trigger.

Wren stared with wide eyes as her mother’s corpse dropped to the floor, and the rich red colour of blood brought horror to the blank room. She dropped to her knees, caressing her mother, screaming for her to return to her once again. But the pale, limp body was inanimate – the life once present was gone, never to return.

The inspector knelt next to Wren, wrapping her arm around the girl’s shoulders. “It’ll be difficult for a while, but eventually, you’ll learn to suppress the hurt and the emotion,” she explained. “And you will be all the stronger for it.”

Wren wiped her tears, clenched her jaw, but dared not say a word.

“What do you feel now?” asked the inspector.

“Nothing,” replied Wren. “I feel nothing at all.”

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