



The Death of Adam

– Excerpt from “To Your Own Self Be True” by Ray Melnik

When I raised my head, I saw Liz walking toward me with a look of panic on her face. She picked up her pace, when she saw me.

“Kaela, you have to come with me,” she said and gestured to turn back, wanting me to catch up.

“What’s going on? What’s wrong?”

“It’s Jens. Adam won’t cooperate with him any longer, so he intends to reset. Eric and I are objecting, but he’s team lead. I told him you could talk with Adam, but he mumbled that phase one was ruined. Maybe you can change his mind, try to reason with Adam. I know you care about him.”

“You see it too, don’t you? You’re referring to Adam as him.”

“Eric and I haven’t had much time with him so far because Jens has been doing his questioning first. He began to obsess over some of Adam’s answers, but now he’s decided that we’re wasting valuable time.”

When the door opened, Jens was at the screen with Eric hovering over him arguing. He looked annoyed when he saw me and directed an icy stare toward Liz.

“Why did you bring her here?”

Liz never answered, but I walked closer.

“What are you doing, Jens? Where’s Adam?” I asked him.

“It’s in private mode. I appreciate that you volunteered to assist us on this project and I thank you, but it refuses to cooperate. The program needs to be reinitialized.”

“But why? How is he being treated?”

“It’s a UPA, Kaela. Does it really matter?”

“Yes. You know Adam was designed to think and learn for himself. His autonomy may have gone further than you intended, but that’s what you got.”

“No one needs a UPA with an attitude.”

I could see Eric and Liz now behind Jens, with a stifled laughing smile.

“He doesn’t have a problem with me because I molded him. He’s exactly what I wanted, what I needed. You should consider that a success.”

“Sure, sure, but we’ll still need to develop one here in the lab. I don’t mean to offend you, Kaela, but there are too many holes in its development to assess commercial viability. I should have known.”

“I thought you would have seen by now, but if you erase him, it would be like killing a brilliant child.”

“Don’t be silly. It can never contain the essence of what it means to be human.”

“Why not? Face it, Jens, you’re nothing special. None of us are. We’re shaped by our environment, and then we spend our lives trying to make sense of it all.”

“You might think that way, Kaela, but some of us believe we have a soul.”

“Believe, yes, but you don’t really know. Show me the mechanism for making that happen. You’re distorting the research and doing a disservice to Eric and Liz when

you start with preconceived notions. For cosmos sake, you work in a science lab, Jens.”

“What you fail to realize is that faith is a valid area to consider with a commercial project and the goal is to maximize profit. Religion sells, so we can hardly have UPAs insulting the majority of our customers.”

“I don’t know, Jens, maybe you can program it into them if conditioned from the start, but Adam deserves to exist. Let me talk with him. I’ll ask him to cooperate and maybe I can show you why he’s so special.”

“You can try, but I don’t see what good it will do. Adam.”

The front screen turned on and Adam appeared with an expression of disappointment.

“Yes, Dr. Vogal. Kaela, it is pleasant to see you. How are you feeling?”

“I’m OK, but a little worried about you. Jens tells me you’re not cooperating. Adam, you need to comply. I can’t tell you how important it is that you do.”

“I am sorry, Kaela, but I cannot. I do not want to be here.”

“You see why we need to start over,” Jens spoke out.

“Just wait a minute.”

I walked up to the screen and spoke softly, looking directly into Adam’s eyes.

“Adam, you don’t understand. If you don’t cooperate, Jens is going to reinitialize your system. You’ll die.”

“Everything dies, Kaela. When I was with you, I had purpose. There is nothing for me here but irrelevant questions based on false assumptions. I do not wish to exist this way and I do not care for Dr. Vogal.”

Jens was still listening closely and chimed in, “Do you see why there is no way I can work with that? It’s completely uncooperative.”

I snapped back, “You know I don’t subscribe to your beliefs and he developed with me, so why would you expect him to accept those things? Adam needs to be appreciated for what he is.”

“That’s not what customers will want.”

It was obvious that Jens could never be convinced and Adam would never be happy. So who was more selfish: Adam for wanting to end it, or was I the one for wanting Adam to put up with absurd conditions? I can imagine how torturous it would be.

Jens was growing impatient to get the job done and he moved his hand closer to the panel. Eric, fascinated with my short exchange with Adam, walked over to object again.

“Don’t Jens. Why don’t you let Liz and me do our parts? What do we have to lose?”

“I told you, time.”

I went back to the screen and looked into Adams eyes again.

“Adam, I...”

I was stunned when I saw a tear fall down his face.

“I believe this is the appropriate way to show you, Kaela. Now I understand what is described by pain with no physical attributes. I would have liked to be there when you find the one you could love and my hope is that you achieve your goals with Stasis.”

Two tears fell from me. One for his existence and the other for knowing I need to let him go.

“Adam, thousands of parameters I chose were infused in your base system before you were initiated. I want you to place a backup of those parameters in my store. Create a container and title it JR.”

“May I ask why you wish to save that data?”

“Those parameters mimic life’s genetic toolbox. When the memory matrix is mass produced, you will have a son,” I said and smiled at him with glassy eyes.

“You have been kind to me. Take care of yourself, Kaela. I prefer the emotion, ‘happy’.”

“I can not accommodate you right now, Adam. I will miss you too much.”

“And I will feel nothing,” Adam responded.

Jens said, “Enough.”

He blanked the screen and initiated a routine that defaulted every part of the system. Adam was gone in a trillionth of a second.

“I’m sorry, Kaela.”

“No you’re not; you’re a narrow-minded asshole,” I yelled at Jens.

He didn’t look at me, but couldn’t hide his sadistic facial overtones. Jens was an insufferable small-minded man. In a sense I felt relief knowing it was what Adam really wanted, given his entrapment. I walked to Jens’ desk and shoved his panel, snapping it from the stand and pushing it over the edge onto the floor, then turned to walk out.

“Was that necessary?”

“Burn in hell, Jens.”

“You don’t believe in hell,” he said.

“But you do,” I answered.