

Simplicity

by
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1 INT. SOMERSET LEVELS - SUNRISE

1

A minimalist, futuristic private residence with a glass WALL. ANGIE BEREKKA (30s, fit, bright) stands inside, nursing a big glass of wine, tears in her eyes, looking out. Across the hazy ancient meadows a distant church BELL tolls.

As the last BONG! fades, Angie waves her hand and the room is filled with soaring 16thC polyphonic choral music (Thomas Tallis). Behind her, we can see a hyper-modern TV SCREEN; on it, we can perhaps just make out the shadowy head and shoulders of a man we will come to know as THE COMMANDER.

EIRIK (apparently Angie's partner) and TWO YOUNG CHILDREN appear in the room, smiling with an excessive intensity, their skins glowing with health and vitality, as if they have just come in from romping in the garden.

Angie turns and forces a wan smile. She knocks back her wine and recklessly tosses the glass aside, then opens her arms to hug the kids.

ANGIE

Whatever happens, I've never been happier than here.

EIRIK

Angie... What's wrong?

Angie smiles again, sadly. The kids are worried.

ANGIE

All this. It can't last. I'm being pulled away.

EIRIK

You're not being very clear.

ANGIE

I've got to go.

Angie winces and clutches her chest. The children, panicked, step back; Eirik steps forward.

ANGIE (cont'd)

I don't want to leave you.

She scrunches up her face, deep in pain. She drops to her knees. Eirik stands there, stunned, bemused.

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1

ANGIE (cont'd)
Please! I want to stay!

Angie keels over. The world twists and reels and FADES TO BLACK, the sound of her wailing children roaring in our ears.

2 INT. JUMP HOLD OF LANDING SHUTTLE - DAY

2

Angie wakes.

CLOSE on her eyes as they flicker open. There's a continuous, thundering NOISE of rough engines. The room shakes. Angie's eyes droop. WHAP! A big hand slaps her face.

She snaps awake, growls. A military MEDIC stands in front of her, looking into her eyes.

She's in a small, harshly-lit metal room, sitting in an ACCELERATION CHAIR and dressed in armoured COMBAT GEAR. Three hard-bitten SOLDIERS, similarly dressed, sit in their own chairs. All hold dark-visored, breathing-tubed HELMETS in their laps. In front of each chair is bolted a robust BRIEFING SCREEN and a closed HATCH.

MEDIC
You're OK, crim. Get with it.

The Medic jabs Angie's neck with a SYRINGE, and leaves the room. Her next door neighbour, ONE-EYE, a vicious looking trooper with an eye patch, nudges her and leers lasciviously.

ONE-EYE
Sweet dream, babe?

ANGIE
What?

ONE-EYE
Me, I had me one great one! Tops!

Angie leans back and closes her eyes.

ANGIE
Leave me alone, you pervert.

The screen in front of each soldier flickers into life. FLASH! graphic of a strange solar system appears. FLASH! a large orange planet. FLASH! a battle analysis map, crisscrossed with fast moving lines and circles.

A window pops open on Angie's screen. In it is THE COMMANDER (50s, grizzled, shaved white hair).

(CONTINUED)

THE COMMANDER

Jump zone is swirling, but resistance light. We go in one minute.

ANGIE

No!

One-Eye leans over and taps Angie on the forehead.

ONE-EYE

Wassa'matter, babe? Get soft on leave?

THE COMMANDER

Full atomics. Helmets on.

One-Eye and the other soldiers snap their helmets on as one, unthinkingly, unblinkingly. But not Angie.

THE COMMANDER (cont'd)

It's St Crispin's day. We're on the beaches and the landing grounds!

ANGIE

Christ! No!

THE COMMANDER

Play up, and play the game, me laddies!

ANGIE

This isn't right!

Her companions swivel their helmets as one, gazing at her like insects, their faces hidden behind their tinted visors.

THE COMMANDER

Dammit! You will succumb!

ANGIE

No!

She slams a big RED BUTTON on her chair arm. The hatch in front of her flashes OPEN, revealing she's hanging above an orange ocean twenty feet below. She DIVES out of her chair, DOWN and OUT through the hatch.

THE COMMANDER (OFF)

Come back! Come back!

Angie PLUNGES into the sea and immediately goes under. Struggling, thrashing about, she sinks deeper into watery darkness, drowning, drowning, and all goes BLACK.

4 INT. LIVING ROOM, SUBURBAN SEMI - NIGHT

4

Angie wakes.

She sits up suddenly, scattering a cascade of FAMILY PHOTOS, individually and in ALBUMS, onto the carpeted floor.

She looks around, as if she has woken from a nightmare. In the soft light of a TABLE LAMP she sees she's woken on a normal SOFA in a normal mid-20thC house. The FURNITURE and Angie's DRESSING GOWN and SLIPPERS are all clearly late 50's, mid 60's vintage.

An old-fashioned TV hisses, a white dot in the middle of the screen. Angie looks around as if for a remote control, but of course there isn't one. She gets up and turns the TV off manually, with a loud click. She smiles.

Coughing and drawing her hand wearily through her hair, she shuffles out of the room...

5 INT. KITCHEN, SUBURBAN SEMI - NIGHT

5

... and into the kitchen, switching on a harsh overhead bulb. She pours a glass of water from a leaky tap, drinks some of it and suddenly splashes the rest over her face.

ANGIE

Hoo!

She looks around. Furnishings, cutlery, plastic kitchen table covering - all 50s, mid-60s. A CLOCK shows it is 5 to 12. A child's painting and a photo of a Mercury-Atlas launch from Cape Canaveral is pinned to a message board.

She shakes her head again as if to clear it.

6 INT. LIVING ROOM, SUBURBAN SEMI - NIGHT

6

Angie shuffles back into the living room and scoops up the photos and albums from the floor. She puts them on a DINING TABLE, sits down and spreads them out.

They show a variety of people and events, mostly personal: a couple getting married in the 1920s; a man in WW2 RAF uniform; a schoolgirl in black and white; Victorian children posing in a Victorian garden; school portraits; colour photos of kids on the beach; teenagers playing on a PC. They're all jumbled up, some anachronistic photos from different ages: a courtier from Elizabethan times; an Apollo moonlanding site as if taken by a tourist with a cheap camera and the strap in front of the lens.

(CONTINUED)

CLOSE on a photo of Angie in the Shuttle Jump Hold in her combat gear, smiling, thumbs up.

WIDE on Angie as she frowns, blinks, looks up. And STARTS in shock. There's dark silhouette of a MAN in front of her.

ANGIE'S POV - we recognise The Commander, as hard-bitten and close-shaved as before, but incongruously dressed in flowery PAJAMAS.

ANGIE

Who the hell are you? -

THE COMMANDER

Doctor Berekka, I am disappointed.

ANGIE

Doctor?... Doctor.

She sits back, sighing. The Commander disdainfully indicates the photographs.

THE COMMANDER

You're barking up the wrong tree. Now come out. You've got work to do.

He waves his arm. There's a FLASH of light and all the photos SMOULDER and BURST INTO FLAME. Angie jumps up from her seat and tries to rescue a few pictures, but she can't.

ANGIE

Why'd you do that!?-

She looks up. But The Commander has gone.

ANGIE'S POV - the tabletop of photos and albums curls and burns and the bright light FLARES the screen.

Angie wakes.

But it is hard to tell - her eyes are covered with PADS. CLOSE on her face, smeared with clear JELLY, as they are removed. She peers out through tight eyelids.

She's lying on an elaborate, hi-tech SURGICAL TABLE. DOCTORS, RESEARCHERS, NURSES and TECHNICIANS surround her, LIGHTS shine down on her. There's a CROWN of machined steel on her head, TUBES and CABLES leading from her body to banks of instrumentation and video screens, EEGs and data recorders. A WHEELCHAIR is waiting.

WIDE, LOW ANGLE shows the busy activity; and we see, watching impassively from a viewing gallery high above, the shadowy shapes of THREE MILITARY OFFICERS in austere UNIFORMS.

One of them is The Commander.

A TECHNICIAN wipes the jelly off Angie's face. Standing behind him, Professor Davison, Research Lab Director, looks intently at her and then at a screen showing rows of numbers.

Angie opens and closes her eyes and smiles up at Davison.

DAVISON

Take it easy. How do you feel?

ANGIE

Odd.

The Technician removes the crown of steel gently.

DAVISON

(anxiously)

Good run?

Angie rotates her head and flexes her neck, as if to remove stiffness after a long journey.

ANGIE

Very vivid. The dreams were so concrete.
Real people. Real places.

DAVISON

Good, good.

ANGIE

But it broke up towards the end. I kept
crashing into new sims. Bang Bang Bang!

DAVISON

Yes, well...

ANGIE

And internally inconsistent imagery. Like
the real world broke in.

(pause)

There's something else. I was being
followed!

DAVISON

I think I know... ummm.

Angie sits up, suspicious.

ANGIE

What do you mean?

TECHNICIAN

Just a second, Dr Berekka.

The Tech pushes Angie gently onto her back to disconnect a couple more sensors. And as she lies back, she can see The Commander and his fellow officers gazing down at her. She's shocked. She sits up again, violently, pointing.

ANGIE

What the hell's he doing here!

Davison looks very uncomfortable.

DAVISON

Well, you know that Training Command have an interest in this technology -

Angie swings her legs over the side of the bed, roughly pulling out the wires connecting the rest of her sensors.

TECHNICIAN

Hey!

Angie ignores him, and prods Davison.

ANGIE

He was in there with me! How the hell did that happen?

DAVISON

(miserably)

He sent in an avatar.

She jumps off the bed, furious. All the technicians and researchers stand back, embarrassed, unsure what to do.

ANGIE

You let him into my head?

DAVISON

I'm sorry, Angie.

ANGIE

Sorry! It's like - like being raped!!

DAVISON

Angie -

ANGIE

And it completely wrecks my programme!

THE COMMANDER

Your programme?

Angie twists and looks up towards the viewing gallery, shielding her eyes against the light. The Commander stares down at her.

ANGIE

I'm not talking to you.

THE COMMANDER

It's time to learn some political realities, Doctor. You've wasted enough time.

ANGIE

What!

DAVISON

It's true, Angie -

ANGIE

What are you talking about?

DAVISON

Training Command. They own us, lock, stock and barrel.

Angie is open-mouthed.

DAVISON (cont'd)

Battle-sim. Agent training. Genocide conditioning. The works.

THE COMMANDER

When our guys kill for the first time, they'll have done it before. A hundred times.

ANGIE

You sick bastards.

(to Davison)

I need a long bath. Suddenly I feel dirty as all hell.

She makes as if to walk out, but she is wobbly after her dreamtrip. Davison holds her, guides her to the WHEELCHAIR. She sits, and Davison wheels her out of the room.

THE COMMANDER

And they won't run away!

Davison trundles the wheelchair down the brightly-lit corridor, towards big SOLID DOORS marked RECEPTION.

Angie closes her eyes, her hand in front of her face.

ANGIE

They've always run us?

DAVISON

Yes... From day one.

(pause)

Oh-oh.

Angie looks up. And is stunned. Ahead in the corridor stands The Commander and his two officers, blocking the route. How did they get there so fast?

THE COMMANDER

Not staying to fight your corner, Doctor?

ANGIE

(wearily)

I just want to go home.

THE COMMANDER

(teasingly)

But all your hopes and plans, Doctor... A sham! Just a cover!

ANGIE

Don't push me!

THE COMMANDER

The psycho-research, the dream holiday therapies - crap. It'll never happen.

Suddenly something snaps in Angie. She leaps out of her wheelchair and LAUNCHES herself at The Commander.

And discovers a martial ability she never knew she had - she throws a HIGH KICK at The Commander's head, which he parries, laughing. She SPINS on one leg and KICKS again, closer, more violently. The other officers stand passively by, watching. Davison steps back.

Angie JABS and KICKS, but to no avail.

THE COMMANDER (cont'd)

Excellent! We'll make a soldier of you yet!

Suddenly Angie gets it.

ANGIE

No!

She picks up the wheelchair and THROWS it at The Commander. It catches him off balance and he falls to the ground. But he doesn't seem to mind, he's laughing.

She RUNS past him and the others, to the doors of Reception. She throws open the doors -

But instead of a Reception area, the doors open onto a flat, red DESERT WASTELAND under a BLACK SKY. And in the sky shine two bright SUNS.

Angie is utterly bewildered. She turns to face the others. Only The Commander is left in the corridor.

THE COMMANDER

And we were making such progress!

With a PUNCH to her neck he KNOCKS HER OUT. It all goes black.

Angie wakes.

She's dressed in heavy, primitive FURS - yak, perhaps - against the swirling snow. She's leaning back against a megalith. Her face is stung by ice particles whipped up by a vicious wind; she pulls her hood closer. She looks up to the sky but there is nothing to see through the snowstorm.

The dark shapes of other MEN and WOMEN lean against other stones, or lie on the ground. One man attempts to keep alight a feeble wood FIRE.

Another - just one - stands tall and proud. We might just be able to guess that it is The Commander, but Angie never looks at him.

An unearthly HOWL rends the darkness.

One of the tribesmen comes over to Angie.

TRIBESMAN

The helldogs of Telaar snap at our heels.
We must move on.

Angie wearily removes her CRYSTAL TWIN-BLADE from within her cloak. She hefts it, feeling its weight.

ANGIE

Yes. No. Maybe.
