

the nursery

## SUMMARY

A couple, somewhat offish with one another and in a pedestrian relationship, is having trouble bearing children. A company offers them the opportunity to have an avatar child in a computer program, using their own DNA. Each day they enter the virtual reality where the baby grows and take care of it as if it were a real one. This reality is only a small white nursery. The couple is so happy they are having much difficulty separating from the baby. The program has them entering the virtual reality for a daily maximum of six hours as its basic rule. Soon enough they find themselves breaking the rule and staying more hours with the baby. They only exit the virtual reality to put feeding tubes on.

Their condition deteriorates with each passing day. They lose their jobs. They are experiencing a mental collapse. Neither wants to leave the baby behind to exit the virtual reality and apply the feeding tubes. They completely lose their grip on reality and come to be effectively trapped inside the white nursery. They become slowly and harrowingly debilitated.

Characters: Dimitri, Nadia

Scenery: living room (reality), nursery (virtual reality)

## Scene 1

*Sometime in the near future, Dimitri is working in front of a semi-transparent computer screen sat in a minimally decorated living room full of vases. He wears black plastic gloves and black glasses rest upon his nose. The computer is book-sized. Nadia enters. She looks at Dimitri, lays her things and sits in the living room to use her mobile phone. Dimitri takes off his glasses, pulls two small plugs out of his ears, stands up and sees Nadia.*

Dimitri: Oh, you 're here!

Nadia: I didn't want to interrupt you.

Dimitri: I lost track of time, it's been quite hectic at work.

Nadia: I picked up your shirts from the laundry.

Dimitri: Did you have a good look at them? Is the stain gone?

Nadia: No, I didn't. Please check them out yourself.

Dimitri: They don't do a good job all of the time, if you 're not careful they can return it uncleaned.

Nadia: Hmm.

Dimitri: Are you working?

Nadia: No, I'm looking at something.

Dimitri: What's absorbed you so much?

Nadia: The results are out.

Dimitri: Oh, and?

Nadia: They 're not good.

*Dimitri approaches her and sits on the couch beside her.*

Dimitri: More specifically?

Nadia: We have a high percentage of incompatibility.

Dimitri: How high?

Nadia: 99.9%.

Dimitri: Impossible. That's way too much.

Nadia: Certainly. There was no point in trying all this time.

Dimitri: Inconceivable.

Nadia: It is the highest they have ever seen at the lab.

Dimitri: A very high percentage indeed.

Nadia: Our organs are completely incompatible.

Dimitri: So?

Nadia: Any effort will be fruitless.

Dimitri: Are you sure?

Nadia: Yes.

Dimitri: Could it be there was a mistake?

Nadia: No, they have examined it thoroughly.

Dimitri: Is the lab reliable?

Nadia: Very much so, there is no chance of error. They are established professionals.

Dimitri: Just saying.

Nadia: No, we have to accept it and move on.

Dimitri: May I see?

*Nadia hands Dimitri her phone and he reads the results.*

Dimitri: Yeah, there 's no use in trying any more.

Nadia: We have to decide another way.

Dimitri: I can't believe it.

Nadia: Adoption perhaps?

Dimitri: I don't know. I can't go through the same discussion again.

Nadia: Sooner or later, though, we have to make a decision.

Dimitri: I don't want an unrelated child.

Nadia: How can you be sure?

Dimitri: I want a child with our genes, to look like us, both in character and appearance.

Nadia: Me too.

*Dimitri stares at the computer screen.*

Dimitri: Maybe there is something we could try.

Nadia: What's that?

Dimitri: The colleagues at GB are working on a new program. They take an interested couple's DNA and create a baby.

Nadia: Like a test-tube baby?

Dimitri: No.

Nadia: What then?

Dimitri: The baby grows in a virtual environment.

Nadia: You 're surely joking.

Dimitri: No, it sounds weird but it's not.

Nadia: We have a serious problem. You can't be handling it like this.

Dimitri: I saw it, it looks like a real one.

Nadia: What did you see?

Dimitri: A baby. In its cradle. It was beautiful.

Nadia: It wasn't real.

Dimitri: It was so alive. The sensors are so powerful you can barely tell the difference.

Nadia: Look here, I don't want to buy a game, I want a child.

Dimitri: It's not a game, it's meant for parenting education.

Nadia: Leave it there.

Dimitri: What I'm saying is let's see what it's like to have a baby and then we decide what to do.

Nadia: Why not having a doll as a baby?

Dimitri: It isn't like you to be ironic.

Nadia: Like those we feed and put clothes on -

Dimitri: Stop it.

Nadia: Why? What's the difference with what you 're saying?

Dimitri: OK, we'd better end the discussion.

Nadia: We have to have a serious discussion at some point.

Dimitri: Have you eaten?

*Dimitri moves towards the kitchen.*

Nadia: I'm not hungry.

Dimitri: Carrot soup?

Nadia: I'm going to lie down.

Dimitri: Very well.

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