

Femme Fatale

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Billy pulled his car into the driveway of the Hong Kong Sheraton Hotel to meet his blind date, arranged by none other than his best friend. His heart leapt with joy as he saw an attractive, svelte blonde woman approach his car. But his joy was short-lived. As he got out of the car to greet her, he found himself staring point-blank at a mean-looking gun. Fortunately for Billy, he had years of training as an army Commando. He instinctively ducked as the bullet whizzed past his ear.

"Next time, aim lower," Billy said, snatching the gun out of the blonde's hand.

Strangely enough, a warm feeling went through Billy's body as the woman's face rang a bell with him. But he just couldn't think of where they had met before. This temporary memory loss had been happening more and more frequently. Billy gave up thinking and stayed alert, pointing the gun at its former owner.

The blonde woman didn't panic at all. She looked right into Billy's eyes in an extraordinarily calm manner, as if the gun was only a toy. Her gesture was so familiar, and Billy couldn't help wondering, searching his memories...

"I know you'll never pull the trigger, because you have something to ask me." Her words brought Billy to reality, as he had never met anyone in real life who had such a monotonous and mechanical voice. "I'm here on behalf of my boss to invite you to my project, if you're kind enough to offer help, in return, we can reunite you and your wife." She spoke again, emotionlessly.

These words brought a wry smile onto Billy's face. If his wife were still alive, he would never had such a ridiculous blind date with his life being threatened and having to point a gun at such a beauty. If only he still had his wife!

His wife... Right! His wife! It's his wife that had the exactly same eyes as this blonde! Billy looked up, and saw a seductive smile bloomed upon her face, "It seems that you've got the point." In contrast to the woman's beautiful eyes, her unnatural voice made Billy feel uncomfortable to the extreme: she's like a machine, an emotionless, unloving stooge.

"So what do you think of the invitation? You haven't given me your answer yet."

Billy knew he didn't really have a choice. With hesitation, he lowered the gun.

After what seemed like an interminable drive, they finally pulled up at a lordly mansion. Stepping inside, Billy beheld an elaborately decorated room with future-like panels and buttons on one side of it.

"Welcome!" a male voice suddenly broke the silence when a 3D image showed up at the center of the room. "How do you like this working place? And what do you think of my assistant? So gorgeous

and familiar to you, right? And the best part is her loyalty! Thanks to all those fancy chemicals!" The enthusiastic voice made Billy feel a bit nauseated.

"If you are the boss, I think we'd better get down to business right now." Billy stared into the image impatiently.

"Aha! I like your straightforwardness! The business! It's simple – you help me correct my technical mistakes using your skills as an experienced veteran, and I help you see the woman you loved again."

After these words, the blonde turned on the lights in the corner of the room, which was previously shrouded in darkness and mystery.

Astonishment and fear grabbed Billy's heart and made him speechless. It was unlike anything he had ever seen.

"All of these are my products, and I ensure you to find one just like your beloved wife. But the price is that you get rid of those defectives."

In the corner there were several fish tank like containers with female human bodies inside. Behind those containers was a thick glass wall separating Billy from the other side, where about twenty men were yelling, chasing and scratching, wanting nothing but hurting each other.

That scene was simply hideous.

Walking closer, Billy realized that those men had an identical face, and those women all have something similar to his wife, either mouth, nose, eyes, or hair... Just like the blonde.

"Is this... human cloning?"

"Of course not! Don't you know how long it takes for a human embryo to mature and then grow into an adult? I am a man of little patience, so I developed this technic – changing a human being's DNA just by a little bit radiation and chemicals! But, there're also problems, as you can see, the Y-chromosome is extremely unstable and caused these chaos, and some of them somehow managed to get out of my lab. So, what I want you to do is to get them back alive. My faithful assistant will give you more details. Enjoy your day!" Then, in a flash, the image disappeared.

Billy's head were hurting, as some pieces of blurred memories of the past time were whirling around . He tried to put bits and dots together, but some of the memories seemed distant and veiled, as if they were not his OWN experience.

Seven years ago, he was assigned to a small island to rescue a group of scientists that were abducted and threatened to develop a biochemical weapon, which is a supposedly a kind of disease which can exert mind control and illusion on the victim when infected. It was during the task when Billy was enthralled by his charming and enchanting scientist wife, Asha. Everything seemed just

perfect. After two years of blissfully happy marriage, however, Asha suddenly disappeared, leaving a will to Billy saying that they will meet again after seven years.

After seven years, Billy felt confused now.

“Do you enjoy this role play game?” Billy heard a vague voice, but that wasn’t like a question to him.

“Good job! This mind control thing will be a pivotal weapon. Seven years is long enough. Good job, Asha.”

“So what do we do now? He already knew what this project is about. ”

“It’s up to you. He was your husband after all.”

“My only love is science.” The woman, also named Asha, stepped out of the shadow. Her voice changed rigidly into a more natural sound.

“Are you...” Billy looked up, doubting his senses. When was just about to ask, he found himself staring point-blank at a mean-looking gun again.

“Sorry, dear, end of illusion. Seven years isn’t a short time, isn’t it?”

Bill fell prey to an orchestrated scheme. Now he remembered that: he was not a commando at all. He was a poor subject of that mind control experiment.

“What a date...” he murmured his last words.