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Severed Head

by Mia Sundby

I moved through the days like a severed head that finishes a sentence; thanks to the internal canisters hooked into my half-cybernetic form, I never truly went hungry but I felt disconnected from my body. I floated endlessly through the hours, the rotations, through the ship's beeping alerts that told us our progress across the intergalactic system.

I met a guy like that once --a severed head. Kraig was his name, I think. Bit of a grim situation; he'd been blown up in a factory-related accident and all but destroyed in the process, but his brother-in-law was part of some big swanky cybernetics conglomerate and had taken matters into his own hands. In fairness, Kraig had admitted to having written cybernetic post-mortem enhancements into his will, but I think he would have liked his *own* hands involved in the matter.

I wonder how Kraig's doing now... I wonder about him a lot more than is healthy, maybe, but Doc has told me that it's normal to obsess over other people's woes, particularly when they so similarly align with your own.

There's only so much obsessing one person can take, though --however un-human they may now be. So I instead turned my attention to the course of the ship, to the glowing maps surrounding the steering deck, to the blinking machinery which imitated the universe around us.

I watched from belled-out windows as we swam through stars and swirling stretches of meteorites.

I wondered, idly, what it was like to collapse in the way that stars do.

This question entertained me for all of four seconds before my cybernetic systems --still set to automatic until I figured out how to change the damn settings-- launched into a dry description of how the process worked, then peeled away into a directory of philosophers, stargazers, alchemists, doctors, professors and cosmonauts who all had an opinion on the subject, as well as several increasingly more dry-sounding books written on it.

Medo found me slamming a palm into the side of my head, eye unfocused as I scrambled frustratedly with the system's instructions.

After she'd rescued me, we sat for a while in the games room and played cards.

I liked Medo.

She tried to convince me that what we were doing was exciting. *"Think of the adventure, Ixah! We're walking the brink of life and death, seeing things unseen before."

Easy for her to say; she's still seeing them with eyes that are her own, with a beating heart and pumping lungs. With gasps and adrenaline and... I don't know, *life*.

I am merely in a state of 'alive'. I didn't bother to explain the difference. Instead, I smiled and let my metal hands deal the deck.

We can only die in the future, I thought; right now we are always alive.

