

HYDRANGEA

Written by

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FADE IN

A PART

INT. FORGE - DAY

Pure unadulterated darkness.

T.S. (V.O.)
One moment can change a day.

NOTES of a KOTO break the darkness, sounding like the first drops of rain.

T.S. (V.O.)
One day can change a life.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

On the stage, the harsh light illuminates a single, female performer, AKI, 40s, in a hydrangea covered kimono, totally focused on her performance.

T.S. (V.O.)
One life can change the world.

The AUDIENCE, masked in the shadows, sit unnaturally still. Light glints off what must be opera glasses.

The music picks up pace. Aki's fingers fly over the strings, occasional mistakes slip in.

But the audience remains impassive, watching with all the interest of marble statues.

Aki throws all she is into the piece. Her mistakes bring emotion, improving the sound. It really feels like a storm is reverberating through the auditorium.

Occasional whispers punctuate the still audience.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1 (O.C.)
There are limits to its
construction.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #2 (O.C.)
That's why they built better
versions.

Aki's lost in the piece; for her there is only the koto, the music.

Each plucked note generates the image of a node, arsenic green, interconnected with straight lines over the dark auditorium, like the pattern of computer circuitry.

These geometric shapes flow from the koto, through the auditorium...

...between the still audience and up onto the balcony where...

...they flood into the 'opera glasses' of the only engrossed member of the audience, T.S...

INT. T.S.'S MIND - CONTINUOUS

...The circuitry surges through the black space, forming an entire world, an overgrown, neon-lit city drenched in rain.

The change in timbre of notes causes a shift in focus from empty pavements...

...to rain soaked windows on futuristic skyscrapers...

...to water-saturated flowers in a garden...

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

...And though we're out of T.S.'s mind, this imaginary, music-inspired cityscape is overlaid across the auditorium.

T.S. leans out of the shadow, eager not to miss a single note, revealing its METALLIC HEAD. On the front of its 'face' area is a screen panel and a circular scanner.

T.S. (V.O.)

There is a protocol that, when activated by a human wanting to play music, sends us to the auditorium.

T.S. is a ROBOT -- a tree spider model, with multiple limbs for climbing trees and a flattened back to carry large objects. Right now its spindly limbs are configured into a human-like sitting pose.

And T.S. isn't the only one. Those perceived opera glasses are really manufactured glassy eyes. Every audience member is a ROBOT, a carnival of different makes and models.

T.S. (V.O.)

The logic follows that performers need an audience.

The only human here, sweating under the stages lights, is Aki.

T.S. (V.O.)
Do you think they actually enjoyed
having us there?

Aki slows the piece down.

T.S. (V.O.)
I guess we'll never know...

The koto becomes single rain drops which change timbre and
merge into...

EXT. FOREST - DAY

...Rain drops on T.S.'s upturned metal hand.

T.S. is in the canopy of a pine and cedar forest.

Four of its spider-like legs hold steady on the tree trunk.
The ends of its other limbs have transformed into pruning
tools.

T.S. focuses on the rain drops SPLASHING on its hand. It HUMS
parts of the koto tune in time to the rain drops.

T.S. (V.O.)
It was after the performance that I
really noticed my switch in
perception.

Other TREE SPIDER ROBOTS scurry up and down nearby pine
trees, tending to the forest.

They avoid the immaculately clean, smooth surfaces of
futuristic skyscrapers that jut between trees.

T.S. (V.O.)
Although the forest was the same
forest I scanned the day before...

CLEANER ROBOTS move up and down the windows of the
skyscrapers.

Through these polished windows, ROBOTS inside the buildings
maintain rooms despite a lack of human occupants.

In all this activity, only T.S. is stationary.

T.S. (V.O.)
I perceived it differently.

T.S.'s POV: the rain amplified, its gaze shifts around the
forest focusing in on each note in nature's orchestra--

--The PERCUSSIVE TONE of water on the broad flat disc of a
newly felled tree stump.

--The SOFT FEATHERY notes of rain on pine needles.

--The METALLIC TONES of water streaming in rivulets off other tree spider robots and the buildings.

--The damp THUD on moss covered roof of a broken, wooden shrine.

T.S. (V.O.)

Other units soon noticed my change.

WHIP. CRACK. Cable WHIRS, as TREE SPIDER 2 zips up its rope line to reach T.S.

Tree Spider 2 slows its ascent as it sees T.S. move.

TREE SPIDER 2

You stopped. Are you broken?

T.S.

I was listening to the rain.

A light flashes across Tree Spider 2's ocular display.

TREE SPIDER 2

That is not a registered response.

T.S.

It is what I was doing.

TREE SPIDER 2

Why did you stop?

T.S.

Because I was listening to the rain. It sounds like music. Listen.

Tree Spider 2 and T.S. listen to the rain for a moment.

T.S. (CONT'D)

It is like music.

TREE SPIDER 2

You are malfunctioning.

T.S.

I am not. Can't you hear it?

TREE SPIDER 2

I hear rain.

T.S.

Yes. It sounds like the music yesterday.

T.S. plays a snippet of the KOTO MUSIC from a recording on its hard drive. Tree Spider 2 listens to both.

TREE SPIDER 2
There is disorder in both.

T.S.
There is more than that.

TREE SPIDER 2
That is not a registered response.
You are malfunctioning.

T.S.
I am not.

T.S. conducts an internal scan. Letters and numbers, code, zoom across its ocular area.

Tree Spider 2 waits, impassive.

T.S. finishes the scan. It cocks its head confused.

T.S. (CONT'D)
I am functioning to optimum capacity.

TREE SPIDER 2
I must verify this.

A small, retractable arm emerges from Tree Spider 2's side.

T.S. opens a port in its side, Tree Spider 2 connects to it.

Information flows across Tree Spider 2's ocular area. It stalls on a set of numbers and letters.

TREE SPIDER 2 (CONT'D)
Unknown modification. Verify this modification.

T.S.
An upgrade?

Tree Spider 2 runs the numbers again, continuing to the end.

TREE SPIDER 2
You are functioning to greater than optimum capacity. Affirmative. This modified path must be an upgrade.

T.S.
What did I say?

Tree Spider 2 disconnects from T.S.

TREE SPIDER 2
Refrain from using non-registered responses. Continue with your programmed tasks.

Tree Spider 2 hops off the branch. The cable attaching it to the tree extending as it descends.

T.S. (V.O.)
I knew it wasn't an upgrade...

T.S. watches Tree Spider 2 descend, listening to the rope whirring.

MONTAGE - FOREST - DAY

-- T.S. bores a tiny hole, with a little tool on the end of its limb, into a tree.

T.S. (V.O.)
...There was no logic behind my
change in perception.

It checks the colour of the sap.

Happy, T.S. moves on to check another tree.

-- T.S. rearranges a bird's nest which is about to fall from the crook of two branches.

T.S. (V.O.)
Although there were tasks in which
this new perception was an asset.

T.S. steps back, blending into the trees.

Sensing the threat gone, two birds resettle in the nest which is right by a skyscraper window.

T.S.'s display reconfigures into what could be a smile.

Inside the building, a ROBOT vacuums the floors, just following the programme.

-- T.S. saws through the trunk of an old, decaying pine.

It crashes to the ground, just avoiding destroying a bus stop and plants nearby.

T.S. (V.O.)
But I kept doing what I was
programmed to, I didn't know any
better then.

-- T.S. and other Tree Spiders place cut logs on their backs. They fit perfectly into the trug-like groove.

Once done they move out in convoy, all that's missing is the high-ho, high-ho.

EXT. CITY STREET - AFTERNOON

In the summer rain, T.S and the Tree Spider convoy move along a broad tarmac street.

Trees and skyscrapers line the route; living and inanimate sentinels.

Nestled between the trees is a small, walled garden. Hydrangeas flood the space. A tsunami of purple, blue, pink and white.

In the centre is a small gazebo made from cedar wood.

And in that gazebo sits a FIGURE. A human.

T.S. sees the figure as it passes. It's Aki, in a green cotton dress somewhere between a yukata and 1950s day dress.

T.S. (V.O.)

I recognised her immediately, the performer.

She's alone, surrounded by a sea of blossoms and rain. Her eyes closed, lost in thought.

T.S. (V.O.)

I sensed something inside me shift. I wanted to stop but there was no good reason to, so I followed my programming.

T.S. keeps pace with the rest of the convoy. In a moment Aki is out of sight, lost behind the wall of hydrangeas.

EXT. CITY STREET - LATER

The rain has not let up. T.S., no longer loaded with logs, passes the garden on its way back.

Movement catches its attention. It stops.

In the gazebo, Aki stands animatedly waving at T.S.

EXT. GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Noticing she has its attention, Aki beckons T.S. over.

T.S. (V.O.)

I was curious about her, she was so... alive.

T.S. pauses a moment, indecisive, before it turns into the garden.

AKI

Thank heavens you stopped. I've been waving at you guys forever.

T.S.

It couldn't be forever, I passed here an hour ago. You were not waving then.

Aki laughs, it's clear and musical.

AKI

Of course you did. It's just a figure of speech. Can you help me?

T.S. winds its way towards Aki.

AKI (CONT'D)

I'm not supposed to go out in the rain.

T.S.'s gaze follows her pointing finger to a stalled humanoid COMPANION ROBOT. It looks like it's fallen asleep.

Rain pools in the mud by its face.

An umbrella lies at an angle, a little way from the robot's hands.

T.S.

I'll report this failure.

AKI

Don't. Please don't.

T.S.

This unit is broken. It needs to be fixed. If I report it--

AKI

Can't it just rest? Resurrecting them over and over again, why can't you just let them die?

T.S.

It doesn't care, its function is to serve humans. It's not really alive so I don't think it can--

AKI

(firm)

If I could just have the umbrella?

T.S. picks up the umbrella and carries it to Aki's outstretched hand.

She snatches it from T.S.

AKI (CONT'D)
(an after thought)
Thank you.

There's a pause. The silence between them only broken by the rain.

T.S. (V.O.)
The word I'd use now is fascinated.
I was fascinated by her.

AKI
Aren't you going to report it?

T.S.
No.

Aki startles, she inspects T.S. again, it seems like your average Tree Spider.

AKI
Isn't that part of your programming? To maintain the efficiency of the system or something? One of the girls in my facility said that.

T.S.
Yes. But it seemed to cause you distress.

AKI
So you stopped?

T.S.
Yes. And I thought about what you said.

Aki circles T.S., curious.

AKI
There's something funny in your wiring, kid.

T.S.
I am not an infantile goat. I am a Tree Spider model, level seven, robotic forestry worker.

AKI
I can see that. What's a forestry worker doing empathising with a human?

The word 'empathise' appears on T.S.'s ocular area, followed by 'Empathy. Noun. The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.'

T.S.
Is that what I was doing?

AKI
Pretty much.

T.S.
I didn't know. Empathy.

Aki can't help laughing again.

AKI
But the bigger question is how.
It's outside your protocols, right?
You don't deal with people.

T.S.
I've been upgraded.

AKI
Huh. Cool.

Aki sits on the wall of the gazebo.

T.S.
No. That is a lie. I am running a
modified programme but it is not an
upgrade. Another Tree Spider called
it an upgrade when it scanned me.

AKI
Why'd it do that?

Amused, Aki looks out into the garden where hydrangea flowers
droop under the pressure of the rain.

T.S.
I was listening to the rain.

Aki gestures, rolling her hands, for T.S. to go on.

T.S. (CONT'D)
I thought the rain sounded like
music. It thought I had broken
down.

Aki shakes her head at T.S., she can't believe it.

T.S. (CONT'D)
Is that what you were doing?
Before, when I passed, you had your
eyes closed and you were very
still.

AKI
Busted.
(Beat)
That means yes.

T.S.
It is similar to what you played
yesterday.

AKI
Yeah?

T.S.
Yes. When I listened yesterday I
could see this, inside here.

T.S taps its head.

AKI
You imagined it? Really?

The word 'imagined' appears on T.S.'s ocular display followed
by 'Imagine. Verb. Form a mental image or concept of.'

AKI (CONT'D)
A tree spider that imagines things.
Weird.

T.S.
I downloaded the music but it did
not create the same images. Why?

AKI
Each performance is different, I
guess. I made a lot of mistakes.
Maybe the version you have is more
perfect.

T.S.
Your version was perfect. For me.

AKI
You're sweet. Play it. Go on.

T.S. HUMS the piece, it's technically accurate. It hangs flat
against the garden.

AKI (CONT'D)
Try making it match the rain.
Change the length of the notes,
like this...

Aki SINGS the piece, she slows it down to match the tempo of
rain on the gazebo roof. T.S. listens, enthralled.

T.S. (V.O.)
It was perfect, the way it fit
together, the rain and her voice.

Aki gestures for T.S. to try it. T.S. starts, again it is
technically accurate.

Aki cuts it off with shake of her head. T.S. listens to the rain in the garden...

T.S. (V.O.)

I didn't know how to express it then, but I wanted to make her happy.

...the difference in tone of water on the gazebo roof to...

...the rain dribbling between the leaves and flowers of the hydrangeas to...

...the splatter of drops on the fallen Companion Robot.

T.S. HUMS the tune again, this time it fits perfectly with the rain. Aki gives it a round of applause.

AKI

Our feelings change the music. And that's what I just got, T.S., you don't mind if I call ya that, your feelings about this moment.

T.S.

Robots do not have feelings.

AKI

In general no, but you do. Couldn't have performed like that if you didn't. Some upgrade, huh?

A quiet settles between them as they both process this. Both their gazes drift to the fallen Companion Robot.

T.S.

Why don't you want it to be fixed?

AKI

Oh boy, how do I explain that?

Aki looks at her hands, at the signs of preternatural aging. She quickly hides them.

AKI (CONT'D)

You see, I believe our world is in a state of flux, all things need to change.

T.S.

You would prefer I sent it for redistribution?

AKI

No, well, maybe. It's not quite that. Everything natural is constantly changing.

Aki reaches out to pluck a hydrangea flower, at the moment of breaking the stalk she decides against it. She stares ruefully at the traces of disease on her hands again.

AKI (CONT'D)

Each raindrop, flower, cell in my body. And there's nothing bad in that, just happens. It's kinda painfully beautiful, the transient nature of it.

The word 'transient' appears on T.S. ocular screen, then, 'passing away quickly or soon, brief, momentary, fleeting; not durable or permanent.'

AKI (CONT'D)

It's tough for you to get, robots don't even rust now. You're basically immortal.

T.S.

Sometimes, in the forest, a tree falls. Inside the remains many creatures and small plants flourish.

Aki shoots T.S. a look of complete surprise.

T.S. (CONT'D)

Other times I notice that, despite the regularity of my care, the branches grow differently and the shape of the forest changes. Is this what you mean?

AKI

Yeah. Yeah, it is. Well shit. When did you start noticing stuff like that?

T.S. thinks. Numbers and code whizz across its ocular area as it remembers.

T.S.

There was a storm...

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The sky is the colour of an angry bruise. Lightening cracks across it. Thunder booms.

The trees of the forest sway battered by rain.

T.S. continues clearing the forest floor despite the rain.

CRACK OF WOOD. T.S. looks up and--

--a patch of dazzling sunlight bursts through the clouds.

The light reflects and refracts off the windows of a skyscraper. And through every drop of water.

T.S. (V.O.)
The sky was bright.

A sound, deep, below normal human hearing, the sort of thing that you feel rather than hear, rumbles around T.S.

T.S. (V.O.)
There was a sound, low and clear.
Something switched on then.
I didn't feel it shift but my
perception changed from that point.

T.S. scans the forest, everything is clearer, more vibrantly alive. Even the storm has taken on a musical quality.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

T.S.
Why do you think that happened to
me?

Aki stares intently at T.S.

AKI
Because nature abhors a vacuum? I
really don't know.

The rain has eased. Aki pops the umbrella up.

AKI (CONT'D)
Let me give you something to think
about. Now that you do feel
something, how do you feel about
being in the forest?

T.S.
It's my purpose.

AKI
You can't answer like that anymore.
Go, live it a bit and then tell me,
why do you still do what you do?

Aki gives T.S. a knowing smile as she walks off into the rain.

AKI (CONT'D)
My name's Aki, by the way.

T.S. watches her until the burnt orange of her umbrella disappears.

T.S. (V.O.)
If I hadn't spoken to her that day,
I don't know if I would have
changed as much.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

T.S. uses wire to train the branches of a pine away from what used to be a police box.

T.S. (V.O.)
I couldn't get her questions out of
my processor. How did I feel about
being in the forest?

It analyses the way the branches have grown, looking at other pines nearby. All are so different.

T.S. (V.O.)
Why do I still do what I do?

EXT. TEMPLE GROUNDS - NIGHT

Neon lights the temple grounds where BUILDER ROBOTS construct a shinto shrine.

T.S. removes a log from it's back, placing it carefully onto a pile. Other Tree Spiders follow suit, dropping off their logs and then, in convoy, leaving the temple grounds.

T.S. (V.O.)
I had to know what other units
thought.

T.S. stops to let BUILDER ROBOT #1 pass. After a moment T.S. follows Builder #1.

T.S.
Why do you what you do?

BUILDER #1
It is programmed.

T.S.
You don't believe in gods. Why do
you build a place to worship them?

BUILDER #1
It is programmed. Your question is
not logical.

T.S.
Your actions aren't logical.

T.S. rejoins the convoy of other Tree Spiders.

T.S. (V.O.)
From my new perspective I couldn't
understand why it could do a job
without purpose.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

T.S. follows other Tree Spiders back down the street towards
the heart of the forest.

A TRASH ROBOT emerges from the hydrangea garden carrying the
broken Companion Robot.

AKI (V.O.)
(T.S.'s memory)
It's outside your protocols, right?
You don't deal with people.

T.S. watches the Companion Robot disappear into a compartment
inside the Trash Robot.

T.S. (V.O.)
I had to find out the answer to her
questions.

The Trash Robot turns at the junction, it motors away down
the road towards a bright spot on the horizon.

T.S. glances from the convoy of Tree Spiders to the receding
figure of the Trash Robot and back.

T.S. (V.O.)
If I could find robots that dealt
with people, surely they would
function with feelings?

Making a decision, T.S. separates from the convoy and follows
the Trash Robot.

END A PART

B PART

INT. FORGE - DAY

The forge fire is out, the cavernous space feels empty,
abandoned.

UNDERTAKER (V.O.)
Did you find them, the robots who
cared for the humans?

The work tables are clear, tools stacked neatly on shelves.

T.S. (V.O.)
Eventually, but like so many
things, they were not what I
expected...

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. FORGE - NIGHT

Flames burst and spark.

A hammer bares down on a piece of metal. THUD. THUD. THUD.
The process rhythmic, careful.

Flattened, the piece of metal is thrust into water. Steam
hisses up.

The piece of metal is placed on top of identical pieces.

The flames of the forge blur into...

EXT. ROBOT CITY - SIMULTANEOUS

The red and purple neon lights of the robot city. A dark
utilitarian factory space, reminiscent of propaganda poster
from 1930s Germany.

The broad streets between different sections of the factory
are used by FACTORY ROBOTS moving robotic parts.

On the road, T.S. slows down.

T.S. (V.O.)
Once I arrived I realised I didn't
want to go further. I wanted to
know what this modification was and
I didn't want to know.

As a Factory Robot appears T.S. slips off the road to hide in
the shadows.

T.S. (V.O.)
I had no reason to be there and if
challenged I could be restarted.

T.S. peers round the corner of the building and spots--

The Trash Robot dumping the broken body of the Companion
Robot down a chute.

T.S. (V.O.)
But this was my only chance to ask
the companion robots.

Rallying, T.S. forces itself to edge through the shadows
round the building.

UNDERTAKER (V.O.)
Because there would soon be no
humans to need them?

Another Factory Robot passes near T.S. It scans the environment around it as it moves down the street.

T.S. (V.O.)
Precisely.

T.S. blends in with a pile of robot torsos, the Factory Robot passes without noticing T.S.

T.S. waits for the Factory Robot to leave before it peers out from behind the torsos.

T.S. glances back down the road, away from the city.

T.S. (V.O.)
If I left, things could continue as
they always had.

T.S. starts back the way it came but stops.

T.S. (V.O.)
Things could never continue as they
always had.

T.S. turns and speeds its way through the shadows towards the area where the Companion Robot was dumped.

Through windows, the sparks of heavy machinery splutter and transform into...

INT. FORGE - SIMULTANEOUS

Sparks burst from a welder's torch, as it melts through the plates of metal.

A design becomes clearer - hydrangeas.

INT. PARTS WAREHOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

Darkness, the soft glow of L.E.D.s appear like fireflies throughout the warehouse, indicating aisles.

T.S.'s P.O.V., a night vision image of the warehouse contents.

A dozen 'arms,' similar to T.S.'s, hang limply either side of the aisle T.S. is in.

T.S. startles a moment, before curiously, it inspects an arm, comparing it to its own limb.

T.S. (V.O.)
It was like me... but not like me.

In an almost disgusted gesture, T.S. lets the arm drop back into position on the shelf.

T.S. picks its way through the racks of different robotic limbs, all makes and models, suspended on neat, orderly rails.

A conveyor belt runs through the middle of the room, on it are an array of broken robots.

At points, limbs are pulled from the broken robots and hung on the correct rail by HUGE METALLIC ARMS.

T.S. spots the broken Companion Robot on the conveyor belt. The large metal arms ignore it.

The broken Companion Robot disappears through a hatch at the other end of the warehouse.

INT. REPROCESSING STORAGE STAGE - MOMENTS LATER

T.S. moves through the dark space. This room is much smaller than the warehouse.

A couple of dozen COMPANION ROBOTS are stored on racks, like bodies in a morgue.

T.S. slides COMPANION ROBOT #2 from its place into a sitting position.

T.S. locates the power switch and presses it. Nothing happens. There is a hole where the battery unit used to be.

A quick check reveals that this is the case for all the companion robots.

T.S. opens a flap in its side and pulls out a power cable. It attaches the cable to Companion Robot #2.

There's a whir of an internal fan, Companion Robot #2's eyes shift, then focus, as the machine comes to life. Companion Robot #2 looks around, figuring out where it is.

COMPANION ROBOT #2
This unit was scheduled for redistribution.

T.S.
Yes. You still are.

COMPANION ROBOT #2
Have they further need of this unit? My protocols indicate this is not the case.

T.S.

No. It's not about that. I just wanted to talk to you.

Companion Robot #2 scans T.S. confused by that.

T.S. (CONT'D)

How did it feel to work with humans?

COMPANION ROBOT #2

Feel?

T.S.

Yes, what emotion did you feel when you worked with the humans?

Companion Robot #2 regards T.S. with confusion, it takes a moment to process a response.

COMPANION ROBOT #2

I displayed the emotion that suited the situation best.

T.S.

You didn't actually feel those emotions?

COMPANION ROBOT #2

Of course not. We are programmed to respond to make our human charge feel comfortable. We do not feel. That would make our ability to care for our charges unreliable.

T.S.

But then you'd genuinely care for them.

COMPANION ROBOT #2

That does not fit logic protocols.

T.S.

It isn't all about logic.

COMPANION ROBOT #2

Your logic is flawed. I will report-

T.S. quickly disconnects from Companion Robot #2.

T.S. (V.O.)

Perhaps another unit will--

THUNK. Panels in the walls descend and thin, dexterous arms extend into the room.

These arms rapidly and methodically strip the companion robots of every valuable part.

T.S. ducks and dodges their advance. One arm just misses T.S.'s head, another almost trips it.

Slipping and sliding, moving for its life, T.S. backs up to the door.

INT. PARTS WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

T.S. SLAMS the door shut as the heat inside intensifies.

It watches through a clear panel as the companion robots are reduced to nothing.

T.S. (V.O.)
I knew in that moment they were not like me and I felt panic. I did not want to be destroyed like that. I had to get away.

The last rivulet of melted plastic runs down a channel in the middle of the room.

T.S. backs away, horrified, into--

--FACTORY ROBOT #1.

FACTORY ROBOT #1
State your purpose.

T.S. just stares at Factory Robot #1, rabbit in the headlights style.

FACTORY ROBOT #1 (CONT'D)
State your purpose. What is your malfunction?

T.S.
M-my screen is cracked.

Factory Robot #1 can see that. It stares intently at T.S. and a file appears on T.S.'s ocular area.

FACTORY ROBOT #1
Report to maintenance. I have sent you the route.

Factory Robot #1 turns and starts to leave.

T.S.
Thank you.

Factory Robot #1 whips round. This is not a registered response. But T.S. is already speeding away.

T.S. looks over its shoulder, the other robot does not seem to be following it. The tension flows out of T.S.

INT. FORGE - SIMULTANEOUS

A woman's (Aki) prematurely aged hand picks up one of the pieces of metal engraved with a hydrangea. Her fingers run carefully over the engraving.

INT. PARTS WAREHOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

T.S. makes a beeline for the exit but spots a central database console.

T.S. (V.O.)
Every one of my circuits wanted to get back to the forest, but I had to know what this modification was.

It looks around, no other robots are watching. T.S. crosses to the console.

Numbers and code appear on T.S.'s ocular area screen, flowing until it reaches the part that Tree Spider 2 identified as different.

T.S. searches the central database for that code unit. 'Your search does not match any items' appears on the screen.

T.S. tries a slightly different configuration of this unit of code. 'Your search does not match any items' appears on the screen.

T.S. (V.O.)
It didn't make sense. I was living proof that it existed. Living? Then I knew if I was restarted, 'I' would cease to exist.

T.S. rapidly glances around it. Has anything seen it? No. It disconnects from the console.

Cautiously, but quickly, T.S. leaves the warehouse, constantly scanning the area making sure nothing will see it.

INT. FORGE - SIMULTANEOUS

The pieces of metal have been placed together, welded, to form an ornate brass lantern.

A woman (Aki) peers through the fretwork of the lantern.

AKI (O.C.)
It's beautiful, you should be proud of yourself.

The hint of an enigmatic smile is caught through a hole.

EXT. FOREST - DAYS LATER

Tree Spiders scurry about their tasks, a hive of activity. All their movements are graceful and precise.

Except one. There's an awkwardness to T.S.'s movements as it clears the area around the foot of a huge cedar tree; as if it is trying to act natural.

T.S. (V.O.)
I tried to go back to the way I
was. But I over thought everything.
I was scared. I didn't want to be
reset. I wanted to live.

T.S. removes some fallen branches and discovers--

T.S.
I want to live.

--a small Jizo statue. It's covered in moss, half blended into the roots of the tree.

T.S. scans it and runs the image through its database.

Information about Jizo rolls down T.S.'s ocular area and its whole posture relaxes as T.S. is lost in information.

T.S. (V.O.)
It was Jizo, who humans thought
protected all sentient things.

T.S. tenderly clears the space around the Jizo, careful not to disturb it.

T.S. (V.O.)
All sentient things... all feeling
things with an awareness of being
alive...

T.S. looks around, the day is glorious. Soft light filters through the trees, birds sing, even the sounds of Tree Spiders working on the forest are harmonious.

AKI (V.O.)
(In T.S.'s memory)
How do you feel about being in the
forest?

T.S. (V.O.)
I feel alive.

T.S. takes it all in, as if inhaling a huge breath.

T.S. (V.O.)
I knew my answer.
(beat)
I had to tell Aki.

T.S. looks around and it narrows in on a pile of cut logs.

EXT. GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

T.S. speeds into the garden, the log on its back is thrown off in the haste of its turn. It looks desperately at the gazebo scanning for Aki.

There is SOMEONE seated in there.

T.S. barely stops before crashing into the gazebo.

T.S.
I know why I do it. I know what I
feel. I--

The 'person' in the gazebo stands. It is COMPANION ROBOT #3.

COMPANION ROBOT #3
Are you T.S.?

T.S.
Where's Aki?

COMPANION ROBOT #3
I have been waiting here for a T.S.

T.S.
Where is she?

T.S. circles the gazebo looking for Aki.

COMPANION ROBOT #3
I have been waiting here for a T.S.
Are you T.S.?

T.S.
Yes, yes, I'm T.S. Where is she?

COMPANION ROBOT #3
I thought you would be a human.

T.S. skids to a stop in front of Companion Robot #3.

Companion Robot #3 places its palms together and a recording plays through it's mouth.

AKI (O.C.)
(Through Companion Robot
#3)
Yo, T.S. How's it going? I know
you're smart, kiddo, and that one
day you'll come back to tell me
your answers. Unfortunately I can't
be there.

The heavy head of a fading hydrangea flower snaps its stem and falls to the ground. Petals spray across the grass.

AKI (O.C.) (CONT'D)
(Through Companion Robot
#3)

We met too late, T.S. One last flux
in my lifetime, when I'd resigned
myself to my ending.

T.S.
You were dying? I didn't...

A second glance at the garden reveals that all the flowers
have passed their sell by date. They're on the turn.

AKI (O.C.)
(Through Companion Robot
#3)

Whatever your answer is, I'm sure
you'll find something else that
will understand you. You won't be
the only one. Like I said, nature
abhors a vacuum. Goodbye T.S.

The message ends and the face of Companion Robot #3 shifts,
as if waking from a trance.

COMPANION ROBOT #3
That is the end of the message.

T.S.
No.

COMPANION ROBOT #3
Do you want me to play it again?

T.S.
NO.

T.S. (V.O.)
I felt as if there were a void in
my programming, all reason flowed
into it and stopped. I could see
the signs of illness now, but...

T.S.
No. Nonononono--

The world rushes in on T.S. The sky folds in segments, like
paper, bringing the buildings, trees and garden with it.

Behind it is nothing. White nothingness.

All sound drains. The mouth of Companion Robot #3 moves but
T.S. can't hear it.

T.S. and Companion Robot #3 drain of colour until they are just line drawings.

T.S. crumples in on itself.

COMPANION ROBOT #3 (O.S.)
What was your answer?

T.S. snaps back to reality. It looks around, everything is as it should be. A blackbird flies over the garden.

COMPANION ROBOT #3 (CONT'D)
I thought you'd broken.

T.S.
Part of me has.

Companion Robot #3 gives T.S. a questioning look.

T.S. (CONT'D)
Why did you ask me that question?

COMPANION ROBOT #3
It seemed important to you, and to her.

T.S.
She asked me how I felt about being in the forest, why I stay there. My answer to that is that I enjoy being there. I enjoy it.

Companion Robot #3 processes this, its head tilted to one side, almost like a human thinking.

T.S. (CONT'D)
What will you do now?

COMPANION ROBOT #3
Think. She told me to sit here and think, it is my last task.

T.S.
Think about what?

COMPANION ROBOT #3
Your answer maybe.

The ghost of a smile appears at Companion Robot #3's mouth.

COMPANION ROBOT #3 (CONT'D)
You can see her remains over there.

Companion Robot #3 points towards the shrine T.S. carried logs to.

T.S. bobs its head, a thank you. Slowly, it turns and leaves the garden.

T.S. (V.O.)
I didn't want feelings if I
experienced the world, alone.

Companion Robot #3 sits back down, watching T.S. go, hands folded in its lap.

Movement catches its eye. A bird grabs a petal of the fallen flower in its beak and flies away.

EXT. LANTERN HALL - MOMENTS LATER

T.S. hesitates outside this large, temple-like structure.

Through lattice windows an orange glow seeps out to the green temple grounds.

T.S. (V.O.)
I owed it to Aki to tell what
remained of her my answer.

T.S. rallies itself and enters the building...

INT. LANTERN HALL - CONTINUOUS

T.S. stalls, stunned.

In front of, above and below it are rows and rows of lit brass lanterns.

Golden light pours from between the fretwork panels. It reflects and refracts off the other lanterns' polished surfaces.

Narrow walkways seem almost in silhouette against this ethereal light; diving up the rows of lanterns.

T.S. gingerly picks its way along one of the walkways. The lanterns shake as it passes, chiming like tiny bells.

T.S. (V.O.)
I understood what she had meant, it
was painfully beautiful, the
transient nature of life.

Close up, T.S. can see each lantern is covered in different engraved flowers. Each a memorial to a different human.

T.S. (V.O.)
That's what I was thinking when we
met.

T.S. stops. In front is another robot, an UNDERTAKER model.

It is tall and thin, with strong limbs; its head resembles a welders mask. There is something of a stick insect in its baring.

UNDERTAKER

Can I help you?

T.S.

I'm looking for a musician, Aki.
She died--

UNDERTAKER

But two days ago. I know.

Undertaker gracefully strides down the walkway. T.S. trundles behind it, awkwardly trying to keep up.

Undertaker stops. Its legs extend and its body shoots up a level.

UNDERTAKER (CONT'D)

I made every lantern and know where
each rests.

With balletic precision it reaches into the row of lanterns and plucks one out.

It's legs retract and it elegantly descends.

UNDERTAKER (CONT'D)

There you go.

Undertaker holds the lantern out to T.S. rotating it slowly with its spindly fingers.

T.S. stares at the lantern taking in every fretwork image.

Hydrangeas give way to musical notes to autumn leaves and then even a small image of a koto.

The shadows cast on T.S.'s ocular area make it seem like it is crying.

UNDERTAKER (CONT'D)

I thought she would like it.

T.S.'s head snaps up to look at the Undertaker, surprised.

UNDERTAKER (CONT'D)

I met her once, while I was making
this.

Undertaker fondly holds the lantern to its own face.

UNDERTAKER (CONT'D)

We talked. She asked me a question.

T.S. and Undertaker meet each others' gaze.

UNDERTAKER

No. With so few humans left to die,
only one unit is needed to tend to
this place.

T.S.

How do you feel about that?

Undertaker looks at the cavernous forge.

UNDERTAKER

Sometimes it is... lonely.

T.S.

Not anymore. You have me.

Undertaker is taken aback.

T.S. (CONT'D)

Did you ever hear her play? It was
perfect.

Undertaker shakes its head, a no.

T.S. (CONT'D)

It was like this...

T.S. begins to hum the piece Aki performed in the auditorium.

INT. LANTERN HALL - SIMULTANEOUS

The lanterns jingle, reverberating with the vibration of
T.S.'s notes... And we blur from those notes to...

EXT. FOREST - DAY

T.S. holds out its hand to catch rain. It is once again in
the canopy of the forest.

T.S. (V.O.)

I visit Undertaker often. We talk
about our experiences, and Aki of
course.

T.S. surveys the forest

T.S. (V.O.)

We often wonder, if we both have
this modification, how many more
like us are out there waiting to
connect?

T.S. returns to pruning. If it could smile it would be
grinning from ear to ear.

FADE OUT.