

THE FACTS OF LIFE  
(THE LIGHT OF DEAD STARS)

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**TITLE: CHAPTER ONE: THE FACTS OF LIFE**

INT. POLICE STATION (PSYCHOLOGICAL FORENSICS UNIT) - NIGHT

Jed stands facing camera with a second man, waiting for an elevator. His hair is short. He is handcuffed to detective GABRIEL LINK, an older man with a worn face and weary expression. Behind them a man mops the floor. SOUND of swishing. Link burps, looks pained and touches his stomach. Jed eyes him. Link gets out some digestive tablets. The elevator doors open. Inside the elevator a grotesque-looking woman with a hunchback, wearing a whorish dress, is blowing her nose with a paper napkin. The hunchback lunges at them, dropping the napkin. Link steps back, pulling Jed with him, and automatically reaches for his gun. The hunchback keeps moving and Link realizes that he is not under attack: it is her disability that causes the lunging motion. The hunchback glares at Link as she passes, Link mumbles an apology.

Jed watches in fascination as the hunchback lunges past the man mopping the floor. Link pulls him into the elevator. As he enters he kicks the paper napkin on the floor, and it flies into the corner of the elevator. Jed notices the napkin as he enters.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

The elevator has mirrors on the walls. Jed stares at an infinity of images of himself. Link pushes a button for going down, pops a tablet in his mouth. He takes out his cell phone and dials. Jed looks down at the paper napkin. It is soiled and full of mucus. His attention is captured by the sight, so that he becomes oblivious to everything else.

The elevator stops and the doors open. Link pulls on the cuffs and Jed becomes aware once more of his surroundings.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

They enter a reception area that seems mostly abandoned. Jed takes in the sights and sounds as if he is overwhelmed by all the sensory data.

On a counter is a half-eaten baloney sandwich with a toothpick stuck through it, resting on the same kind of paper napkin as the hunchback threw away. The SOUND of a typewriter clacking away. Someone shouting on a telephone. A soda machine hums loudly.

On a chair in a corner near the soda machine, a thin man with white face and receding black hair sits staring out at nothing. He has an empty candy wrapper which he is rustling between his fingers. Jed's attention is drawn to the sound. The man does not seem to see them.

Link leads Jed down a corridor. They pass several open doors, Jed glances in as they pass: guy typing, table full of discarded meal items. A young, muscular cop with a crewcut passes them, wearing a shoulder holster. Jed eyes him as he passes. He notices discrepancies about the cop's appearance, such as his back pocket turned inside out, left trouser leg inside his sock.

They reach a large room with an alcove that looks onto an interrogation room, visible from outside via a one-way glass. A woman in her forties sits in the viewing area. EVELYN PALMER, forensic psychologist. She is on a cell phone with a water bottle in her free hand. On the wall behind her a diagram of the human body. Underneath is a Halloween trinket, a skeleton in a top hat, its head on a spring, wobbling.

Palmer acknowledges Link with a nod and then looks at Jed. Jed is studying the skeleton.

PALMER  
(into phone)  
Listen - can I call you back? OK.  
Bye.

Palmer takes a swig of her water and looks at Link and Jed.

INT. POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

In the center of the room is a plain metal table, a metal chair on one side and a desk (swivel) chair on the other. Next to it is a digital camera mounted on a tripod. Link gestures to the metal chair. Jed looks at it then back at Link.

LINK  
Have a seat.

Jed sits down very deliberately and begins to look around the room. There is another table, on wheels, at one of the walls. On it are various items: a pack of cards, a telephone directory, well-worn, an unopened lollipop, some sort of dental clamp(?), an open can of soda and an unopened one, a pack of cigarettes and a lighter. In the opposite corner there is a metal trash can. On the floor beside it are two crunched paper napkins.

Link takes off his jacket and rolls up his shirt sleeves. He is wearing a gun in a holster strapped to his shoulder. He sits down, looks at Jed. Jed stares back without visible emotion. Above their heads a light bulb buzzes electrically. Around it a fly buzzes, organically. Link farts. Jed looks at him curiously. He notices a mustard stain on Link's shirt.

LINK (CONT'D)  
'Scuse me.

JED  
(sniffs the air)  
You eat a lot of meat. And you  
aren't sleeping.

LINK  
If you can tell all that from  
sniffing my farts, you must be a  
wiz at parties.  
(They stare at each other  
for a moment.)  
How about I take a shit in your  
mouth and you tell me my star-sign?

JED  
(smiles)  
That won't be necessary. You are an  
open book.

LINK  
(leans in)  
What I am is your worst nightmare,  
starboy: a lion with a scorpion up  
his ass.

JED  
(unfazed)  
That would explain why you find  
yourself staring at blood after you  
wipe your hemorrhoids.

LINK  
(momentarily thrown)  
How about you get your head out of  
my asshole and tell me what you did  
to those women?!

JED  
I didn't do anything to them.

LINK  
(calming down)  
So why are they are all dead?

JED  
We are all dead. Some people don't  
know it yet.

LINK  
(grim smile, sits back,  
mutters)  
Why do I always get the weird ones?

JED  
 (helpfully)  
 Maybe if you start asking the right  
 questions...

LINK  
 (narrows eyes)  
 Enlighten me.

JED  
 What am I?

LINK  
 What?

JED  
 The question. If you knew what you  
 are, you would know what I am.  
 Everything follows from that.

LINK  
 (leans forward)  
 Quit talking in circles!!

He belches and touches his stomach.

JED  
 You shouldn't get excited.  
 (Link sighs)  
 Uncertainty makes you nervous?

LINK  
 Listen Frost. A lot of women are  
 dead because of you. Do you deny  
 it?

JED  
 (thinks)  
 Because of what I am. And because  
 of what they were not.

LINK  
 Whatever. What you are now is in  
 deep shit. You need to quit talking  
 in riddles, or you're going to end  
 up in a galaxy far away.

JED  
 You are missing my point.

LINK  
 And you're avoiding mine.

JED  
What are the odds that we are here  
now?

LINK  
Come again?

JED  
If you were to do a random search  
for a single, eighty-year period on  
an infinite data base, what are the  
chances you would find it?

Link is silent for several moments. He picks his teeth  
unconsciously and rubs his fingers together. Jed watches his  
movements closely.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Outside the interrogation room, looking through the one-way  
glass, Palmer watches the scene.

CUT MOMENTARILY TO AN ODD COMPUTER-FILTERED IMAGE OF THE  
SCENE, FILLED WITH DATA, AS IF BEING MONITORED BY SATELLITE.

JED  
The odds are zero. It is not  
possible.

LINK  
And yet here we are.

JED  
Are we though? You want to know  
what happened to those women. I am  
telling you that nothing happened,  
because those women were not women.

LINK  
(sardonic)  
What were they - replicants?

JED  
If you like.

LINK  
This is going nowhere.

JED  
There's nowhere for it to go.

INT. POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Link mutters something to himself. He gets to his feet and paces the room, rubbing his neck and rolls his shoulders.

JED  
Back problems?

LINK  
Yeah.

JED  
You want to know what happened?  
Reality happened.

LINK  
(wearily)  
What reality?

JED  
The Universe is empty. It has  
always been empty. How can you fill  
infinity? What are you going to  
fill it with?

LINK  
Is that going to be your defense?

JED  
I keep an open garden.

LINK  
What?  
(sits down)

JED  
(smiles)  
With no need of de-fencing.

LINK  
(angry)  
Why did those women die?!

JED  
They were indicated.

LINK  
What?

JED  
They were indicated.

LINK  
Indicated?

JED  
Indicated. Yes. Their doors were  
marked.

LINK  
(Expletive)  
What doors?

JED  
The doors to their prison-houses. I  
set them free.

LINK  
Free from what?

JED  
From the delusion of existing.

LINK  
How many people have you "freed"?

JED  
So far? Eight.

LINK  
They all died?

JED  
(thinks)  
You would say that they died.

LINK  
And what would you say?

JED  
That they were never alive.

There is a long pause while the two men sit in silence. Link  
takes out a packet of cigarettes.

LINK  
(drily)  
I don't suppose you mind if I  
smoke?

JED  
It's your life.

Link takes out a cigarette and lights it. He blows out smoke  
and looks at Jed, who is still staring unblinkingly at him.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Outside the interrogation room, Palmer watches through the  
glass.



JED  
Do you have a wife?

LINK  
We're not here to talk about me.

JED  
You do. Kids?  
(Link moves his eyes  
away.)  
How many?  
(Link stares at him. Jed  
shows surprise)  
It makes you uncomfortable to hear  
me talk about them?

Jed is genuinely curious now, searching to understand Link's hostility towards him.

LINK  
Yes.

JED  
Do you know why?

LINK  
Because you're scum?  
(he regrets saying it)

JED  
(thinks about it)  
A filmy layer of extraneous matter  
on the surface of your world?  
That's not an accurate description.  
I am more like a virus. I threaten  
to disrupt the order of your  
system. Isn't that it?

LINK  
Not as long as you're in here you  
don't.

INT. POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

JED  
It's not that simple.  
(sincerely)  
*Is it?*

LINK  
It's *exactly* that simple.

JED  
 (thinks about it)  
 Do you think that if you do your  
 job and lock me away, you will keep  
 your world intact for your  
 children?

LINK  
 Every little bit helps.  
 (they stare at each other)

JED  
 Do you know why it's not working?

LINK  
 Because there are too many people  
 like you.

JED  
 There are no people like me.  
 (he thinks about it)  
 Are there?

Once again, Jed appears to mean the question sincerely. There is an edge of hope in his voice. Link lowers his eyes, confused.

JED (CONT'D)  
 I think you must be confused.

LINK  
 Somebody sure is.

JED  
 The reason it's not working is  
 that... you can't protect your  
 system from chaos without shutting  
 it down completely. Death is what  
 you're afraid of, but death is what  
 keeps everything in order.

Jed looks around the room then back at Link.

LINK  
 That's where you come in, is it?  
 Maintaining order?

JED  
 You are on the wrong side of the de-  
 fence. Nothing you can do is going  
 to change the facts.

LINK  
 Let's talk about the facts, Jed.

JED

The facts are that you are going to die. Your wife is going to die. Your children are going to die. Your grandchildren, if you have them, are going to die. Those are the facts of life.

LINK

(grimly)  
God works in mysterious ways.

JED

Faith doesn't influence fact.

LINK

Faith moves mountains.

JED

Have you seen it happen?

He seems genuinely curious, and when he sees Link's empty expression, his face shows mild disappointment.

JED (CONT'D)

So it's a matter of faith, then?

(Link is silent)

The fact remains that everyone you care about will die, and, whatever your faith says about it, they will disappear without a trace.

LINK

(coldly)  
I heard the soul is eternal.

JED

(as if to himself)  
You hope your belief will protect you from God.

(to Link)  
You're a detective?

LINK

Yep.

JED

So you have to work with the facts?

LINK

(forces a smile)  
This particular question is outside my jurisdiction.

JED

How many dead bodies have you seen?

LINK

Enough.

JED

And how many eternal souls?

Thirty seconds of silence go by. Link notices his cigarette has burned down almost to his finger. He stubs out the cigarette. The smoke drifts up aimlessly to the ceiling. He runs his fingers absentmindedly through his hair, then looks down at the cluster of hairs in his hand.

He looks up, Jed is staring at him with intense curiosity.