

**Neural Disconnect**

written by

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In an alternative universe to ours smartphones are neural chips implanted in the brain.

FADE IN:

INT. THE WHITE ROOM - DAY

ALENA, a woman in her 30s, wakes up in a stark, white room, disoriented. She's in a hospital gown. She sits up, trying to gain clarity.

She taps her temple twice, as if she is expecting something to happen but nothing happens. She taps again, then all of a sudden a robotic voice says:

"Neural chip malfunction detected. Rebooting in progress. Please remain calm."

Alena immediately looks up at a speaker in the corner where the wall meets the ceiling. She then looks around the room. Realising she doesn't know where she is. The room has no windows, only a door and a small table with a single object on it.

She taps her temple again. The robotic voice repeats:

"Neural chip malfunction detected. Rebooting in progress. Please remain calm."

ALENA

What?!

She taps her temple rapidly and harder this time.

Robotic voice: "Neural chip malfunction detected. Rebooting in progress. Please remain calm."

Realising the voice is responding to her tapping her temple, Alena starts panicking.

ALENA (CONT'D)

Rebooting? No, no rebooting.

She curls up in a ball in a corner of the room, helpless and alone.

After a beat, she calms down a little bit.

ALENA (CONT'D)

What is this place? How did I get here?

We can see her searching her mind.

FLASHBACK: -- A little girl -- the girl playing in a park --  
Alena and the girl walking in the street --

JUMP BACK TO

Alena in the room still confused.

She stands up slowly and walks to the table. There's a small outdated smartphone on it. She picks it up and examines it, unfamiliar with how it works. The phone is dead.

ALENA (CONT'D)  
These still exist?

The robotic voice interrupts:

"Reboot failed. Attempting system recovery."

SUDDENLY

Alena looks straight ahead and her eyes glaze over.

ALENA'S POV - THE "HEADS-UP DISPLAY"

Alena sees the HUD in her mind: multiple images scrolling from right to left like the picture gallery of a smartphone. There's a bin and share icon at the bottom of the HUD.

Images of: -- a little girl -- a man with the little girl -- the girl at the park -- Alena with her friends --

The subsequent images are more distorted and scroll faster and faster until...

JUMP BACK TO

Alena in the room grabbing her throbbing head, breathing heavily. Her frustration growing, she stands up and does a 360 degree look around the room, spots the door and rushes to it.

She tries to open it but it's locked, she starts banging at it.

ALENA (CONT'D)  
Let me out! I wanna get out! Help,  
please.

No one answers.

The robotic voice grows more ominous:

"Warning: Neural chip corruption detected. Memory-wipe imminent."

ALENA (CONT'D)

No! That's my life. Please.

She grabs the phone and tries to pry the door open by forcing it in the space between the door and the frame, but the phone is too thick.

In frustration she smashes the phone against the table, the phone powers on. A distorted hologram of the little girl appears.

She looks at her for a second, with a sense of familiarity.

FLASHBACK:

Alena's memories come flooding back.

INT. ALENA'S HOME - EVENING

Alena and the little girl walk into the apartment. Alena throws her bag on the couch and heads to the kitchen, the lounge and the kitchen are open-plan.

She switches the kettle on, then she taps her temple twice and stands there with her eyes glazed over.

The little girl, Alena's daughter, NATALIA, 7, pulls on her skirt.

NATALIA

(pleadingly)

Mom, can you read me a story later?

Alena looking straight ahead with no glance at Natalia.

ALENA

Maybe later, my baby.

HOURS LATER

Alena is sitting on the couch with the same spaced out look as before. There are two coffee cups on the table.

Natalia, now wearing pajamas, carrying a book walks up to Alena.

NATALIA

Mommy can you read me a story?

ALENA

(dismissively)

Not today, Nat. Mommy is busy.

The disappointment on Nat's face is clear.

CUT TO:

EXT. DE WAAL PARK - AFTERNOON

Nat is at the park chasing ducks, laughing.

NATALIA

Come mommy, see the ducks.

Alena, not having heard a word, is seating on a bench spaced out.

On the another bench adjacent to her a man in his 40s is seating and spaced out same as Alena. A couple seating under a tree on a blanket with food and drinks spread out next to them, have the same spaced out look.

CUT TO:

EXT. LONG STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

Alena and Natalia are walking on the sidewalk. They pass a number of shops and restaurants with almost everyone using their neural phones.

In one restaurant a waiter approaches a spaced out patron, a middle-aged man.

WAITER

Excuse me, Sir. Here's your bill.

The man is jolted back to reality.

MALE PATRON

Oh, yes yes.

As Alena and Natalia walking, a man in a suit handing out flyers, shoves one in Alena's face.

MAN IN SUIT 1

Get a free chip upgrade mam.  
Volunteer for an exclusive chip  
upgrade and get paid.

Alena takes the flyer and looks at it with excitement.

ALENA

An upgrade? What does this new chip  
do?

MAN IN SUIT 1

It has a lot of new features including faster browsing.

ALENA

Why can't I upgrade online, like usual.

MAN IN SUIT 1

Actually mam, this is not an upgrade on the software but an upgrade on the chip. This is new technology. It's going to put you ahead of everyone else. It's very exclusive, not everyone will get it.

ALENA

Wow.

Natalia pulls on her mum's skirt.

ALENA (CONT'D)

Hold on Nat.

ALENA (CONT'D)

Did you say get paid as well?

MAN IN SUIT 1

Yes mam. You could pay for your daughter's school.

(beat)

Should I add your name to the list, so you can be considered, mam?

ALENA

(excited)

Yeah, sure.

The man writes down Alena's details.

FADE TO:

INT. THE WHITE ROOM - DAY

Alena's expression is blank.

The robotic voice announces: "Memory wipe complete. Rebooting neural chip."

She sits down calmly, her memories and personality erased. The door finally opens, two men wearing the same suit walk in. One of them is the man Alena met in the street.

He squats in front of Alena and looks directly into her empty eyes.

MAN IN SUIT 1  
Welcome to your new life.

The two men pick her up.

MAN IN SUIT 2  
How many faulty procedures have we  
had now?

MAN IN SUIT 1  
She's number 327.

They walk out of the room and disappear in the dark.

FADE TO BLACK.