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## Item 0719 -- Slated for Deletion

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**Item 0719 – Slated for Deletion**

WILLIAM ELLIOTT

**ALWAYS REMEMBER TO LOOK BEHIND YOU.** Administrator SVHJ

smiled as he gazed at the one personal decoration in his office at Crius Research: a humorous image of a cat sneaking up behind someone. It was the only thing he really remembered from — An unexpected clatter jerked Administrator SVHJ back to reality. Groaning, he picked the first item from his pile of work. This one was a bit different from the usual:

As per required protocol, this message has been delivered to you, Facility Administrator SVHJ, for review. After examination, you will determine the next course of action regarding the document, ITEM 0719.

Deletion is recommended.

The Document:

Start of audio journal.

Escape. Run while you can.

Its appearance is deceiving.

It is a lie. It is all a lie.

**IF ANY FELLOW GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR  
FINDS THIS RECORDING, THIS IS WHAT  
HAPPENS WHEN YOU ENTER THE BUILDING,  
WHICH THEY CLAIM IS JUST ANOTHER  
RESEARCH CENTER.**

I say this to anyone considering entering this abominable place—don't. Things are going on in here—horrible things. Human beings are disassembled, piece by piece. I am not sure what they are doing with these pieces, but I intend to find out.

I've just dispatched one of the drones that wander the halls. I hit it on the back of the neck, and it fell to the floor, dead. When I used a pyro cutter to remove its mouth guard, I found dozens of wires. This thing was partially human, but its mind was replaced, its memories deleted.

Yet, not all of the people here are like this. Some seem perfectly human. I avoid all of these people, regardless. I must escape this place. I must.

If any fellow government inspector finds this recording, this is what happens when you enter the building, which they claim is just another research center. First, their cold fingers close on any weapons or communications devices you may have. Then, they lead you into a chamber with a representative, who draws on about how great the place is. White walls smeared with grease. Rooms that haven't been cleaned, possibly not even occupied by a human. With unnatural jerks of his arms, the representative babbles nonsense. The one I met had a strange marking on his forehead. His eyes seemed glazed the entire time.

One thing you must know. The representative leaves the room to “get a drink.” When he does, kill him by any means necessary before the door can close. As soon as he leaves the room, you are gassed.

I awoke early from the gas, while they were hauling me off—I am fortunate enough to possess an unnaturally quick metabolism. Those heinous things, humans—or so I thought—in silvery suits and thick, metal mouth guards hauled me off as if I were a piece of machinery. I surprised them and escaped down a nearby hallway.

That was where I saw the “Disassembly Room.” Hundreds of people are torn apart by those strange machines, which send various parts down chutes. I shudder to think what this place does with those parts.

I soon came across a square protrusion in the wall. Like everything else here, it was once perfectly box-shaped, but was now chipped and peeling. A label was slapped above it that read, “Do not press.”

I peeled off the layer to find something more chilling written underneath. It was written by a wild hand, and in a mixture of oil and blood. “HELP.”

I forced the protrusion into the wall, and a door opened in front of me. An icy blast shot out and nearly froze me. This new room was filled with what appeared to be maintenance equipment, but equipment that was advanced beyond our current hardware. Strangely, the entire room was covered in ice. All of the equipment brittle with cold.

I soon found out why.

A man lay curled up in the corner of the room, frozen to death. I recognized him as Government Inspector Mills.

Apparently, the people who run this place found out he was hiding here, so they shut him in and killed him.

I soon found the culprit lying on the ground. After examining it, I realized it was a type of grenade that delivered a chilling blast to its surroundings. The thick door was shut so tight

that little cold could escape the room. This was how Mills had frozen to death.

When I exited the room, I jumped back. A cable ran along the ceiling, and a security camera rode along it, armed with some sort of weapon. The thing buzzed serenely as it passed by the room.

It was then that I made a foolish decision.

I jumped at it from behind. With a shout, I tore it from the cable and smashed it against a wall. The cable vibrated, sending electric pulses along its length. I heard the angry hum of dozens of security devices coming from nearby zones, zooming toward me like a swarm of angry hornets.



**DOLLS** TABITHA BOLSTAD

Before they could reach me, I ducked back inside the room I had found. There was a series of clicks as all of the devices halted. They whirred, scanning the surrounding area for an intruder. When they were gone, I sprinted down the hallway, hunting for an exit.



Since my last entry, I have found a pyro cutter and a bulletproof helmet. It was when I hid in a particularly large room just a few minutes ago that I made a grotesque discovery.

I had emerged in a steaming, rusty factory. Those drone things took various human organs and placed them in suits of armor. These organs were connected with various cables, and I watched with horror as these robots began to move. Powered by human cells, these things could do all the work of a normal human, except with a few improvements. I had encountered enough of them to know that they were juggernauts.

I escaped that room, only to bump into someone else in the hallway. She was completely human, just like the representative I had talked to at the beginning. However, this person was not an ordinary person.

It seemed like the only thing she could talk about was how great this “facility” was. There was a scar on her forehead, shaped in a jagged symbol like the one on the representative. When I asked her about it, she said that they had gone in and done something with her brain, speaking as if it were completely normal. An eerie pleasantness cloaked her words.

I left then, while she told me to have a “great time” in the “glorious facility.” I was determined to find whatever was at the bottom of all this, and to discover all of the secrets of this place.

Yet, I feared that I was destined for failure.



After numerous escapes from security guards and devices, I met a fellow I knew called Mark. He was another governmental inspector, the one who had been sent to examine this place just before me.

He didn't talk much. His left eyebrow sagged over his eye. I didn't notice this facial feature on him back when I had seen him outside of this facility. But I discounted this as a mere injury. Other than that, he looked perfectly normal, if a little haggard.

With a squadron of drones following us, we ducked into a strange room and hid behind a pile of crates. Their optical sensors glowed red as they slid by. I relaxed as soon as they were gone, and, turning to my fellow renegade, I swapped stories with him.

After I had recounted the things that had happened to me here, he said, “I was terrified as well, but I found the perfect place to hide. It was the room of one of those



**CREEPY DOLL** TABITHA BOLSTAD

brainwashed people who walk around. I knocked out the person who lived there and grabbed as many supplies as I could. When the drones came, I left the room. I've been wandering around looking for an exit, or at least another room where I can get more supplies, but I haven't had any success yet. My supplies are also running low."

As he spoke, his eyebrows raised every second or so, as if he were feigning emotion. His voice lacked vigor; it had almost a mechanical monotone. Above all, his eyes remained focused on me, boring holes in my brain.

We sat in silence for a few moments before I spoke. Deciding to change the conversation to something more pleasant, I said, "How was your family doing before you came here?"

"They were doing well, my wife and three children."

"You have two children."

His forehead wrinkled, and he seemed perplexed. "I was sure I had four." He shook his head and rolled his eyes strangely. "I mean three."

"No, you definitely have two. Surely you remember."

He shook his head and grinned. He intended to make me relax, but he only sent a dark chill through my bones.

"Does it matter? Let's look around this room."

He trudged in without a word.

There was a large device attached to the wall. A person was inside a chamber, and mechanical arms were folded up against the chamber's side. A pile of corpses lay in a large bin nearby.

"What is this place?" I said, "What are they doing here?"

The other inspector did not speak.

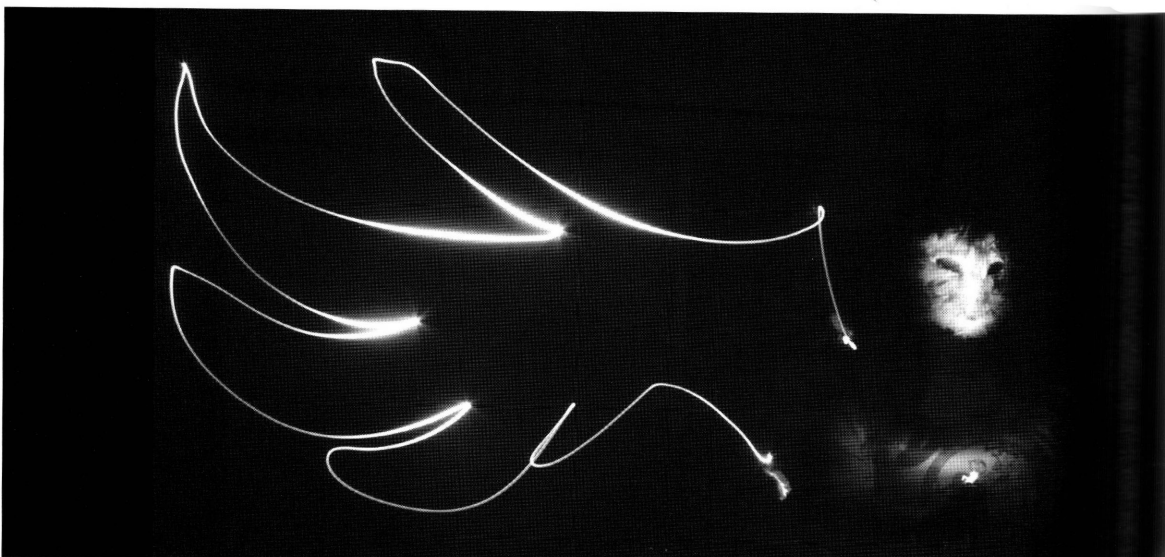


IMAGE 0946 STEFANI COLMENARES

I walked over to a control panel on the side of the device. The various panels seemed to measure life signals on the subject. One display showed a map of the brain, and another displayed the words “Motor Cortex Examination—Successful.”

Still confused, I forced open the chamber. A hiss followed a sizzling of greenish liquid on the walls of the room. I examined the body, which hung limp. I also noticed that its left eyebrow sagged. Determined to figure out why this common injury appeared on so many, I lifted its eyebrow. There was a mark underneath, right above the eye, as if something had cut through there, and had added synthetic flesh to seal the hole.

Then, it came alive.

With a roar, it tore free from the cables attached to it. The thing lunged toward me. Giving in to my fighting instincts, I landed an uppercut. The thing staggered back, and then it collapsed to the ground.

With a grin, I turned toward the other inspector, and I said, “That was—”

He had grabbed me by the throat. I realized how foolish I was. The sagging eyebrow, the damaged memory—he had also been reanimated by the device. Now, he planned to do the same to me!

He squeezed with ferocity, foaming at the mouth. I steeled myself against the man who was once my friend and kicked at his knees. The man’s grip loosened. Telling myself that he was no longer truly alive, I delivered another blow to his chest.

He tottered around, left eyebrow flapping up and down. He gave a primal roar and charged. Instinctively, I dodged and tripped him. His head crashed down on the control panel. Smoke and sparks erupted from the device as a cacophony of alarms and explosions blared through the room. My legs felt frozen for a moment—so many things going on I didn’t know what to do next.

Drones blasted open the door and fired at me. I tore a panel off of the device and used it as cover. While blocking fire, I searched the inspector and found a small grenade. I lobbed it at the drones.

The grenade exploded into a blast of flames. It scorched the drones and melted a large hole in the wall.

Without wasting any time, I sprinted out the opening, and into the next threat.



I could never hope to escape. I was starving, since I had run out of supplies I had taken from the other inspector. How much time had passed? Hours? Days? Weeks? Now, I was desperate to do anything that would either help me, or harm this terrible place.

I wandered into a room that buzzed with artificial life. A huge machine was surrounded by cables and panels, a deep, deafening humming reverberating throughout the room. Various drones scuttled about, intent on eliminating any intruders. When they saw me, they fired round after round of bullets.

I ducked behind an outcropping. Though the move was risky, I peered out and realized that these drones were armed with grenades, like the ones I had seen earlier. I pulled my head down as bullets flew by.

Without any kind of weapon, I was trapped. I could hear the drones closing in, their sharp footsteps growing louder. I took a deep breath, and a plan formed in my mind.

My only chance for survival was a wild one. I said with the same flat pitch that the reanimated inspector used before, "Stop, you are firing on a subject of the motor cortex experiments."

Instantly, they stopped firing. I emerged from behind, careful to cover my eyebrows. What should I do? What could I do?

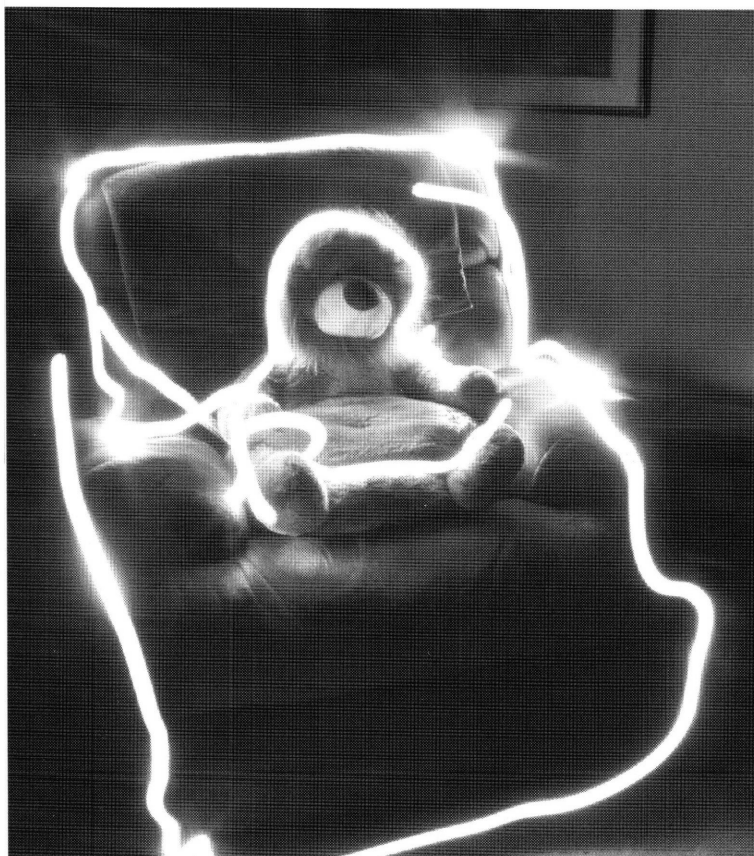
I treaded over to one of the units and took a freeze grenade. They did not know what I would do next. I licked my lips with delight—my ticket to revenge. With a casual flick of the wrist, I tossed the

device toward the still-running generator. As I sprinted out into the corridor, I heard nothing, felt nothing. Perhaps the drones still did not know what was going on, or maybe I am already dead.

I do not know how much damage I had caused, nor whether it will really make any difference. As I lie dying, I feel grim hopelessness in the face of the endless facility. I hope that someone will chance upon this journal and discover the threat that lurks within this place.



End of audio journal.



**LIGHT LION** MAYA RUTLEDGE