

FALTERED

Written by

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(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

INT. BRIAN EDWARDS' HOME - NIGHT

IVY; a humanoid robot designed to look like an average height, tall, deep-skin Black woman; piercing bright blue eyes; beautiful facial structure with high cheek bones.

Ivy sits in her living room on the couch. The walls are lined with certificates, awards, degrees for a plethora of scientific fields. The room was simple: one couch, a coffee table and a TV.

Ivy flips through channels with a remote as her right arm rests one of the armrests facing up. Protruding from her skin was a long cord that was plugged into the nearest wall. She is charging.

Her eyes are expressionless, her eyes glazed over with her lips resting at a small smile.

BRIAN EDWARDS (40s); a Black man with stubble on his jaw; tall; has a growing gut but still has a strong build.

Brain walks in wearing a coat and has his car keys in one hand. He rests the other on Ivy's shoulder gently.

BRIAN

Come on, love. Let's go for a drive.

He walks off. Ivy looks at him and unplugs herself to follow.

EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT

A car pulls up to the edge of the woods and Brian gets out. He opens the door for Ivy who is still smiling. He gently guides her deeper into the trees and suddenly stops. It's dark and quiet. No one in sight.

He leans over and puts a hand on her cheek. He says nothing. His expression says nothing. Suddenly he straightens.

BRIAN

Reset.

Ivy suddenly slumps. Brian then walks away without looking back. He climbs into the car and drives away, leaving Ivy behind.

EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING

Birds chirp early the next morning. Ivy glitches, sparks flying from the back of her neck, and snaps awake. She's confused by her surroundings.

She whips her head in every direction, but she is indeed alone. She stands and walks off.

EXT. A CITY STREET - DAY

Ivy wanders the city streets. She observes the people she passes. She passes a cafe where she sees a woman working on her computer, a man reading a book, and a couple on a date.

The couple hold each others hands across the table while talking. They trace circles with each others thumbs and laugh.

After watching them for a moment, Ivy smiles and then continues on.

EXT. BRIAN EDWARDS' HOUSE - NIGHT

After some time, Ivy arrives in front of the home she once shared with Brian. She approaches the door but just before her hand reaches the knob she freezes.

THE WOMAN (30s); very attractive Black woman, slender; very well dressed but modest.

She hears voices. Brian's of course, but there is another. A woman giggling.

Ivy moves across the porch in order to look through the front window. She sees Brian smiling down at a young woman who has her arms draped around his neck. They kiss.

Rose petals litter the floor. The room is lit warmly with candles; it's romantic. Brian gets on one knee and pulls out a ring from his back pocket.

Ivy can't hear exactly what he says, but the woman's response is a squeal followed by continuous nods.

THE WOMAN

I love you! Yes!

She points her left hand downward showing off her ring. It catches Ivy's attention.

Her eye twitches. Hints of anger flash across her face, but she is confused by her sudden emotions.

Ivy takes a couple of steps back. She looks at the door and back at Brian and the woman. She runs off the porch.

INT. A CITY LIBRARY - DAY

Ivy walks into a library and heads straight for a computer. She plugs herself up once she finds one and begins to Google words such as "love." She scans articles that talk about love, couples, and marriage.

In Google Photos she sees many pictures of weddings and specifically women with rings on their fingers, just like the one that Brian put on the woman.

Ivy sits back in chair. Her eyes dart for a moment before she leans forward to type, "Brian Edwards," in the search bar.

Many articles pop up about Brian's many achievements in the world of science. She pulls up an article of him speaking at a conference about human DNA and biological structures that can be replicated.

She exits and keeps searching. She cocks a brow when she sees an article with a mugshot of Brian. It's titled, "DOCTOR ARRESTED FOR TABOO PRACTICES." She clicks it.

Her eyes quickly scan. As she reads, certain phrases stick out to her:

"Arrested for stealing a woman's DNA without consent."

"progressed for nearly ten years..."

"His motive is unknown..." "Stolen DNA whereabouts unknown..."

Overwhelmed, she shuts off the computer. She's breathing heavily. She quickly unplugs herself and leaves.

EXT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ivy stands outside of Brian's house again. There's classical music playing loudly. Ivy spots the woman's ring.

She points out her left hand just as the woman did, as if to show off her own ring. She notices them dancing.

Ivy has never seen such a thing before. She can't help but mimic the woman's hand placements and movements. As the couple dances inside. Ivy dances alone.

She moves away from the window, still dancing, but Brian catches movement in the corner of his eye. He snaps his head towards the window, but sees nothing. Feeling a bit of unease, he continues dancing with his fiance.

INT. A COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Ivy sits at a table in a coffee shop. She has nothing with her. She just observes the people around her with a small smile on her face.

WOMAN (20s): an attractive young Black woman; has a kind face; very polished and poised.

She notices a woman sitting at the table next to her reading an article titled, "IS AI THE END OF MANKIND? HOW TECHNOLOGY IMPACTS CLIMATE CHANGE."

She leans over.

IVY

Excuse me.

The woman looks up. She smiles sweetly.

WOMAN

Yes?

Ivy returns a smile.

IVY

I'm curious about what you're reading.

The woman is surprised at the question but happily answers. She shrugs as if it's obvious.

WOMAN

Oh it's about how technology is destroying the earth. It's unnatural.

Ivy ponders.

The woman thinks for a moment and then shakes her head.

WOMAN (cont'd)

It's more about the people who make it. How can something that is flawed create something that is without?

IVY

But people are good.

The woman laughs.

WOMAN

Only God is good.

Ivy sits back and says nothing, turning away from the woman who seems satisfied with her answer.

WOMAN (cont'd)

You have beautiful eyes.

Ivy touches right under eye.

IVY

Thank you.

Ivy smiles and the woman returns one and returns her attention to her computer.

Ivy glitches. Her neck bending sideways before going back to normal.

EXT. BRIAN EDWARDS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Ivy approaches the house once again and is startled.

Something is wrong.

The sound of raised voices fills her ears. Things are being thrown. She hears the impact of things smashing and breaking on the walls. She rushes on the porch to the window, but crouches to remain hidden.

The couple are yelling at one another. The woman is furious at Brian who is trying to ease her but is growing more and more frustrated.

BRIAN

It's just a couple of modifications
if you would just let explain- You
didn't even notice when I took a
sample-

The woman lets out a shriek and begins to stomp towards the door. There is one sentence that Ivy hears clearly.

THE WOMAN

You're sick. Fuck you and fuck your
screwed up science experiments.

Ivy expects her to come storming through the door but she doesn't.

Brian follows her and they are now out of sight. Ivy hears the woman's voice gargle in her throat.

Brian walks back into view dragging the woman by her neck. His hands are big enough to strangle her from behind. Something changed in him. His eyes are filled with rage. He's blinded by it.

She kicks and flails. She tries to scream but with every attempt, Brian presses harder on her wind pipe.

Ivy's eyes widen for the first time. They begin to water.

Brian forces the woman to the ground and keeps his grip on her neck until she stops fighting. Her bloodshot eyes roll backward and her body goes limp.

Brian gets off her and scurries to the other side of the room. He shakes his head and then let's out a sigh. He puts his palm to his forehead and closes his eyes.

BRIAN

You could've been perfect, my love.

A tear slips from Ivy's eye. She immediately wipes it and looks down at her hand. This has never happened to her before.

EXT. BRIAN EDWARDS' FRONT PORCH - LATER

Ivy is still on the porch hours later. She sits with her back against the house in a daze. She doesn't understand why Brian would do that.

The sound of a car engine snaps her out of it. She sees a car pull out from the drive way. It's Brian. He's so focused that he doesn't even notice his creation on his front porch. He drives off. Ivy gets up and follows on foot.

EXT. THE WOODS - LATER

By the time Ivy catches up with him, Brian is already in the midst of finishing the burial of his former fiance. He finishes and dusts off his hands before collecting his supplies, quickly leaving.

As the car pulls off, Ivy approaches where the woman lies. She looks at where Brian pulled off from and back at the pile of dirt.

Suddenly she reaches her hand in. After moving it around quite a bit she pulls out the woman's engagement ring.

The moonlight makes it sparkle. She is in awe.

She slips the ring on her ring finger and holds out her hand. She cocks her head to the side. She doesn't feel any different, but maybe Brian will.

She holds her arms up and begins to slow dance in the moonlight with a smile.

She closes her eyes. She feels herself within the music. The world around her goes dark as she dances.

EXT. BRIAN EDWARDS' FRONT PORCH - DAY

Ivy approaches Brian's front door and pauses. She points her left hand out downward to show off her new ring, recently cleaned. She practices once more with a smile.

When she steps forward she notices that the door is already opened by a crack. She pushes and it swings open. The idea of entering her old home stunts her momentarily. She then takes a step inside.

INT. BRIAN EDWARDS' HOME - CONTINUOUS

Ivy walks around the living room. She walks over to the couch and touches it. She goes over to wall and touches the awards, certificates and degrees that cover it. She traces her hand along Brian's name on each one.

She then makes her way upstairs.

She finds Brian, who is a complete mess. He is in a robe and clothes that he hasn't changed in days. His back is to the door. Ivy stands in the doorway silently.

He looks down at his lap. He holds a voice recorder. A few more are sat next to him. He traces the buttons and decides to press play.

BRIAN (O.S.)

This is Brian Edwards. It is October 20th, 2016. I'm making great progress with my android lover. I've decided to name her Ivy. Hopefully I can give her a funky personality to go along with that name.

On the recording, he laughs.

Brian stops the recording, picks up the next recorder and presses play.

BRIAN (O.S.) (cont'd)
It is April 7th, 2018 and I think Ivy is almost complete despite my setbacks... I just can't seem to get my formulas right. Fuck!

In the recording he hits something; presumably a table or desk in front of him. He then lets out a breath to collect himself.

BRIAN
...But overall there have been great improvements. She knows the entirety of the English language and how to respond in conversation. Ivy, come say hello.

IVY (O.S.)
Hello there.

Ivy's eyes grow large. They begin to dart. She didn't know these existed.

BRIAN (O.S.)
I still have to work on some of her physical features but I'm starting to love her already. For context, this experiment started because I wanted to find unconditional love, but that does not exist among us naturally. Ivy is aware of this, right love?

Ivy opens her mouth to respond but nothing comes out. Instead she is heard on the recording.

IVY (O.S.)
Yes.

BRIAN (O.S.)
Thank you for your participation. I think this will benefit many people like myself in the future. Ivy is the future of mankind.

He stops the recording. And goes to the next one. He hits play.

BRIAN (O.S.) (cont'd)
It is July 3rd, 2022. I have completed Ivy. She is stunning.
(MORE)

BRIAN (O.S.) (cont'd)
Beautiful dark skin, a face so sharp
it could cut you. She is perfect.

He voice drops.

BRIAN (O.S.) (cont'd)
Except for one thing: her eyes. It's
the one thing I can't get right...
And I can't stand to look at them.

Ivy takes a step back. He had just said she was perfect. She plays with the ring on her finger.

BRIAN (O.S.) (cont'd)
I want to keep her around to see how
she evolves. But with this one flaw,
I can't help but see all the others.
An infinite being, yet an oddity....

It clicks off.

Ivy glitches once more. Her neck snaps backward for a moment, then she snaps back.

A change occurs in Ivy. Her eyes are blazing. Her teeth grind. She balls her hands into fists. Anger. She's familiar with it now.

Before she can stop herself she storms into the room. Screams of terror and pain release from Brian as Ivy's own screams rival his.

Blood splatters on the walls just as his protests abruptly cease.

Silence.

Ivy is covered in blood, now emotionless. She leaves Brian and notices a pair of scissors on a nearby dresser. She walks over, picks them up, and raises her arm.

She cuts her charging cord.

She begins to leave the room, but before she exits, she takes off the ring, now dirtied by blood, and places it on the nightstand. She walks out.

CUT TO BLACK.

The end.

