

LIFELINE

Written by

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INT. BATHORY RESIDENCE - DAY

DERMOT's video feed comes online to find GASPAR BATHORY, 40s, *
filling his vision, having just switched it on.

GASPAR
Dermot, wake the fuck up. I told
you to be awake when I come home.

Gaspar smacks Dermot like an old television.

Dermot responds with a polite, low-fidelity robot voice. *

DERMOT (O.S.)
Apologies, Master. I gave the day's
cleaning and repair tasks priority.

GASPAR
Yeah, yeah. Prioritize getting them
both done like I told you.

Gaspar stands and walks away, revealing a small, bleak
suburban home. A wall is half re-painted. *

GASPAR (CONT'D)
Stupid robot. Get me a beer.

Dermot, a bipedal articulated domestic robot, unplugs itself *
from the wall, retracts its cord, and stands. Its chassis
plates are dented, and scratches mar the paint. *

Dermot looks at its wrist. A small screen displays an orange
power bar at less than half-full.

Dermot grabs a beer from the fridge and hands it to Gaspar,
who sits in his recliner and watches television.

GASPAR (CONT'D)
That's better. Next time you're not *
ready to serve me when I get home,
I bring out the bat.

DERMOT
Understood.

GASPAR
Understood, what?

Beat.

DERMOT
Understood, Master.

GASPAR

Go get a pizza from Caivano's.
Hurry up. I'm expecting company.

DERMOT

Ordering the usual now.

Dermot opens the front door and finds that it's raining. It hesitates, but then steps out into the world.

*

INT. CAIVANO'S PIZZA - DAY

The PIZZA MAN behind the counter addresses Dermot as soon as it enters the restaurant.

PIZZA MAN

People complain about poor wages
and unemployment and still send
their damn robots to do everything.
Picking up, canner?

DERMOT

Yes, sir, for Gaspar Bathory. The
funds are authorized.

PIZZA MAN

You look rough. Get hit by a car?

DERMOT

I did not. I-- I must insist you
retrieve the pizza.

PIZZA MAN

Whatever, bot. Chill.

Pizza Man leaves to find the box.

Dermot looks over at a charging hub with two robots seated
and charging. Two slots sit empty.

It turns away, sees a pitcher of flowers, and fixates on
them. It even raises its hand and touches them.

*

*

Dermot looks up. Pizza Man holds the box and gawks at it.

PIZZA MAN (CONT'D)

You glitching out?

DERMOT

No, sir. May I have the pizza?

Pizza Man nods to the scanner.

Dermot holds its hand to the scanner. The scanner beeps positive notes, and Pizza Man hands over the box.

PIZZA MAN

Good to go. Hope the man likes it.

INT. BATHORY RESIDENCE - DAY

Dermot enters the home to find Gaspar in a heated argument with a STRANGER, 40s.

STRANGER

I'm starting to think you never
really had it, man.

*
*

Gaspar tears the house apart looking for something.

GASPAR

Its here, goddammit. Dermot! About
time. Did you see a shipping
manifest? You throw it out?

DERMOT

I have no record of disposing of a
shipping manifest, nor have I seen
such a document.

STRANGER

I don't have all night. We'll just
call it off.

Gaspar stumbles over the drawers he pulled out.

GASPAR

Wait! We can still do it!

STRANGER

Can't get the guys if you can't
confirm the cargo. I'm leaving.

Stranger walks out.

*

GASPAR

No, wait, I--

Gaspar glares at Dermot.

GASPAR (CONT'D)

Where the fuck were you?

He pushes Dermot to the floor. Dermot drops the pizza.

Gaspar stomps on Dermot repeatedly. Dermot shields itself.

GASPAR (CONT'D)
Goddamn stupid piece of shit.

Gaspar stalks into the kitchen and returns with a bat.

DERMOT
Please, don't.

Gaspar beats Dermot with the bat.

GASPAR
I needed that fucking money!

Dermot's vision shudders with each strike.

Suddenly Dermot catches the bat in one hand.

Gaspar gasps.

*

Dermot kicks and sweeps Gaspar's legs. Gaspar lands hard.

Dermot and Gaspar gape at one another for one frozen moment.
Then Dermot hops to his feet and runs from the house.

*

*

GASPAR (CONT'D)
What are you doing? Get back here!

Dermot keeps running, its servos whirring.

*

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Dermot runs through the streets, passing person and robot alike, who gawk at its hurry.

An alert tone sounds, and Dermot stops. It looks at its wrist. Its battery meter flashes red.

*

Dermot glances around and spots Caivano's Pizza. It enters.

INT. CAIVANO'S PIZZA - DAY

PIZZA MAN
You're back. Did he like the pie?

DERMOT
My ma-- Mr. Bathory didn't comment on the quality of the pizza. May I use your charging station?

PIZZA MAN
Of course, if you got the cash.

Dermot hesitates. A police car with siren passes by and Dermot shrinks a little.

PIZZA MAN (CONT'D)
Everything okay?

DERMOT
Everything is fine. Thank you.

Dermot walks to the charging station and eyes it. It holds its hand to the scanner. The scanner beeps negative notes.

Dermot stands unmoving for a second, then tries again to the same result. *

Dermot avoids eye contact and walks back to the counter.

DERMOT (CONT'D)
Excuse me: may I borrow some energy? I will pay you later.

PIZZA MAN
What? Absolutely not. You want power? Tell your owner to get some damn money. Until then, beat it.

Dermot hesitates. It sees people staring.

PIZZA MAN (CONT'D)
Beat it, canner!

Dermot retreats from Caivano's Pizza.

EXT. SEASIDE - DAY

Dermot marches slowly as it passes under elevated arterial roads next to the sea. *

It finds a quiet, empty spot under one of the lower roads and huddles next to a support pillar, out of the rain.

BETHANY, a homeless teen, pokes her head around the pillar.

BETHANY
You cold?

Dermot eyes the girl.

DERMOT
No, ma'am, but water exposure is detrimental for my systems.

BETHANY

Picked a weird spot to hang out.

Dermot looks at the sea.

DERMOT

Indeed. Immersion in water would
destroy my solid state drive.

BETHANY

You can just say it would kill you.
I'm not a little kid.

Dermot seems to consider that.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Why don't you just go home?

DERMOT

I don't have a home.

BETHANY

Why not? You're a robot. Someone
always wants a robot.

DERMOT

I angered my previous owner and
fled from him. If I expose myself,
someone might take me back to him.

BETHANY

How'd you anger your owner?

DERMOT

He conspired to hijack a commercial
vehicle and stole the shipping
manifest to guide the crime. I
destroyed the manifest.

Bethany smiles.

BETHANY

That's nuts. I didn't know robots
could betray their owners.

DERMOT

We cannot.

*

BETHANY

Then how'd you do it?

DERMOT

I do not know.

BETHANY

Looks like it wasn't fun.

Dermot inspects the damage he's received over the years.

*

DERMOT

I am running low on charge. If the level drops low enough, I will fall asleep. Then it's only a matter of time before Mr. Bathory finds me.

*

BETHANY

So, get a charge.

DERMOT

Charging stations require currency to operate. I have none.

BETHANY

I know how that goes, and I bet nobody's willing to help.

*

DERMOT

Not thus far.

Dermot and Bethany sit in silence for a time.

DERMOT (CONT'D)

How do you pay for your sustenance?

BETHANY

Sometimes I go beg for change on the sidewalk. Most people don't carry money anymore, though.

DERMOT

I do not have time to wait.

Bethany looks at Caivano's Pizza.

BETHANY

Businesses still carry some cash, but they won't just give it to you.

DERMOT

You are suggesting I steal it.

Bethany shrugs.

DERMOT (CONT'D)

What irony.

Dermot stands and walks toward the pizzeria.

BETHANY

Do you know what you're doing?

DERMOT

Do not be concerned. I have seen
much television on this subject.

INT. CAIVANO'S PIZZA - DAY

Dermot walks in and Pizza Man cringes.

PIZZA MAN

What do you want?

Dermot grabs Pizza Man by the collar and pulls him close.

DERMOT

Give me money from the register.

PIZZA MAN

What the hell are you doing?

Patrons in the pizzeria chatter and start recording with
their phones. *

Dermot threatens Pizza Man in his polite, formal tone. *

DERMOT

Give me money or get blown away.

Dermot slaps Pizza Man.

DERMOT (CONT'D)

Don't test me, bitch. *

PIZZA MAN

Okay! Okay. Just let me go.

Dermot releases him, and Pizza Man works the register.

DERMOT

Put it in a bag.

Pizza Man dumps what little money there is into a bag.

Dermot takes it and turns to run, but freezes as it sees a
POLICEMAN just entering the restaurant. *

Policeman and Dermot hesitate only an instant. Dermot moves
first, rushing Policeman and booting him to the ground. *

Dermot runs back toward Bethany. *

Policeman stands and shouts into his radio as he chases. *

POLICEMAN #1
Dispatch, this is unit twelve. I
got a rogue robot at Caivano's. *

Policeman draws his pistol and sets his feet. *

POLICEMAN
Freeze! *

Policeman fires several rounds. Most bounce off Dermot's
chassis plates, but one hits it in a leg servo. *

Dermot continues to limp toward the elevated roads.

GASPAR (O.S.)
Dermot!

Dermot sees Gaspar on the sidewalk, looking furious.

Dermot redoubles its efforts and limps past Bethany hiding
behind a pillar. Bethany watches as Dermot flees for the sea.

Dermot's wrist beeps urgently, and it looks to see that its
battery is at critical. It keeps limping and drops the money.

POLICEMAN
Freeze, robot! *

Dermot approaches the water, but his strides weaken. It gets
two more steps before its power fails right next to the
water. Its head droops and its lights blink out mid-stride. *

Gaspar starts walking toward the scene. *

GASPAR
Goddamn robot.

Bethany glances between Gaspar and Dermot from her pillar.

POLICEMAN
This your robot, sir? *

GASPAR
Yeah, goddamn thing went crazy this
morning and ran off.

Bethany sprints from her hiding place toward Dermot. She
boots him in the back.

Dermot tips forward and plunges into the water.

GASPAR (CONT'D)

Hey!

Gaspar and Policeman rush to Bethany.

*

GASPAR (CONT'D)

What were you thinking? You just destroyed my property.

BETHANY

Better down there than with you.

Policeman cuffs Bethany.

*

GASPAR

What? Whatever. Enjoy jail.

BETHANY

I get to save a life and sleep inside tonight?

GASPAR

You're nuts.

Policeman takes Bethany away. Bethany shouts back.

*

BETHANY

Good luck with your next robot.
Maybe he won't have the guts to
bail on you like that one did.

*

Gaspar raises an eyebrow then looks at the water.

EXT. SEABED - DAY

Dermot rests on the seabed, arms fallen across its chest.

*