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Bargain

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Shifting through the bargain table, there were the usual. Birthdays, job promotions, eating good food. Sighing heavily, there was nothing of substance. That was the problem with the world, it just was mediocre, like pudding, or bland soup. Looking up at the starry skies the air and light pollution wasn't so bad tonight. This wasn't Earth but it wasn't so bad either. There were worse places to live. He had left Earth when he was twelve with his parents, they both died a couple years ago. A friend once told him that the stars were family and friends who had left this world and were watching over those they loved. A few stars poked through the haze and shone through. Licking his lips, his fingers gently shifted through the table of lost memories that were considered insignificant. Run of the mill. Frowning as his fingers landed on 'Baby's First Steps', nope wasn't interested in that either. Shoulders sinking, this was probably a bad idea. He needed to stop with this addiction. His callous fingertips caressed the memories.

"I got some fresh ones in over at the other counter," the vendor grinned at him, knowing all too well that he would indeed get a sale at some point. It was candy to a child. Looking up at the second table and then seeing the memories of strangers sitting waiting for the right junkie to come along. The small voice in the back of his head told him to turn around and walk away. Walk away, it was such a simple action. One that his feet couldn't perform for him. Pressing his lips together he stretched his neck just slightly to look at the new memories waiting for the greedy and wanting. Heaving a large sigh, he moved in the direction of the second table.

“I’ll give you two for the price of one today, Mic, just because I like you,” the vendor chuckled.

“Xi you old dog, you always treat me so well.”

“It’s because I like you.”

“It’s because I’m a regular and you have me hooked on this shit.”

“Maybe, maybe not,” Xi laughed.

His dry crusted fingers caressed the cool damp memories. He was right they were fresher. He could smell them; they were saturated in the aromas of fresh lilacs and hope. Grazing his fingertips over these ones, he couldn’t decide. There was so much to choose from. Sex, lust, dancing, performing, skydiving, wow so many to choose from. He finally decided on sex and skydiving. Nodding to Xi as he handed him his credits. Xi bagged them up and handed them over to him.

“As always Mic nice doing business with you.”

“Sure, see you next week.”

Xi laughed, “you think you can stay away that long?”

“I’m going to give it a try.”

“Good luck with that Mic. See you tomorrow.”

It was his turn to laugh as he walked away. There was no way he was coming back tomorrow. Heading back home, he felt a spring in his step that was a remnant of excitement. Something he hasn’t experienced in a while. Stopping at the noodle vender he grabbed dinner and two blocks later he was home, letting himself into his apartment. Locking the door behind him, he kicked his shoes off and headed to the living room. Taking his shirt off and dropping it on the floor, it puddled in a pile with a couple others. He sat in his favorite seat and started eating

his noodles as he eyeballed the bag of memories. He could almost hear the bag hum with excitement. Tonight was going to be a good night. He couldn't decide what he wanted to start off with first. Probably the sky diving one. He wasn't sure what that was and it sounded exciting. The hot spicy noodles slid down the back of his throat and hit his stomach just right. This was the life. This is what he worked for. There was nothing more satisfying than a fresh bowl of noodles and memories for dessert. Sucking down the last noodle with satisfaction, he closed his eyes savouring the flavour and the sensation of that warm spicy noodle. Leaning back, he basked in the warm glow of having eaten. Noises outside, reminded him where he was. Down in the pits of sinful sinkhole, it was the area that never sleeps. Speeders racing, horns honking, people fighting, guns going off every night. It was home. He should leave but where would he go? This section of town was the only city he knew. He grew up here. It was as they say home sweet home. Opening his eyes, he sat up and his eyes went directly to his recent purchase. Skydiving, that should be fun, right? Right? Sounded like fun. He pulled the bag closer and peeked inside.

“Hello there my beauties. Skydiving first then sex.” Grinning he got his memory gun out and slipped the skydiving cartilage in the empty slot. Holding it up to his head, he paused. Setting the memory gun down on the sofa, he got up and went to make sure he locked his apartment door, then stopped and grabbed a bottle of beer on the way back in. Sitting down in his favourite spot again, he opened the beer and drank half the bottle. Gently resting half of bottle of beer on the coffee table, he swallowed hard and wiped his sweaty hands on his pants. Picking up the memory gun again, he closed his eyes and held it up to his head. Taking a couple deep breaths and opening his eyes, staring at the wall in front of him. The paint was peeling. It looked dull and boring. Clenching his teeth, he closed his eyes and pulled the trigger.

White hot pain shot through his brain. Then he felt the cold wind whipping against his body as his body was fighting with gravity. He involuntarily screamed until he couldn't anymore. His eyes bulging out of their sockets. He was falling from the sky, clouds were beside him, surrounding him and then they weren't, and he could see the ground. It was rushing up to meet him. His body was racing towards it, so cold, so scary, what the hell? He didn't think he was going to die like this! Who would do this to themselves? Why? He wished briefly he had done things differently, been kinder to his family, cleaned up his act, maybe even be a bit nicer to people. He wished he had more time. He didn't want to die, not like this, experiencing someone else's memory. This was the shittiest way to go out.

Then his body jolted out of its skin and to his astonishment he was no longer racing to the ground, looking up at it was a large umbrella attached to strings which was attached to the harness that he was wearing. Gliding and floating in the air, he drank in the city below him as he slowly floated down. He had no idea what to make of it. One minute he was falling, his life flashed before his eyes, and now here he was floating slowly down to the city below him. This was fun now; it was exciting and exhilarating. He had never experienced anything like this. Why would people want to do this? One minute he thought he was going to die but now he was flying like a bird. He managed to scream out in pure joy! This was one of the best memory moments he had ever experienced. Minutes later the ground greeted his weak legs, and he stumbled and fell over. Rolling over on his back he laughed as he stared up at the sky, the sky that he was falling from only minutes before. So beautiful, so exhilarating, and so exciting. Blinking he was staring at his wall again. What a ride. He would have to replay that one, one more time. Stretching, he yawned. Kicking his feet up on the sofa, he stared at ceiling, his eye lids felt heavy, as they slid closed and images of him falling in the sky flashed through his memories.

Last night's memories from the skydiving experience were still fresh in his mind. He could still feel the cold air against his warm skin. He made breakfast, consisting of stale coffee and toast. Eyeing the bag with the last memory of sex. This could be good. He sat down on the sofa and took the memory cartilage out and slipped it into the memory gun. Taking a couple deep breaths, he pressed it up against his head and pulled the trigger. White hot pain zipped through his brain, there was a faint glow of candles, a warm room he wasn't wearing any clothes and there was a very sexy brunette that was pressing her face up against his. Her satin lips wet and warm, brushing ever so softly against him.

"Okay sorry you thought this was going to be sex. Yeah, I love sex too." The woman was gone. He was sitting in a lonely room with a couple of chairs. He had his clothes on and there was a guy sitting across from him. He wasn't sure what just happened, said nothing and waited for the man to explain himself.

"These memories you are reliving are eating parts of your brain. It's not bad if you do this ten times, but if you are a regular at this." The man shook his head sadly.

Well, he'd been doing it more than ten times, sometimes a couple times a week, for the last three years when he discovered them.

"If that wasn't bad enough, they are brainwashing you. You might think you are on Elous or Xist, but you are in a lab on Earth. Everything you think you know to be true is a lie. You're living a lie. Fight back! Get off your dumb ass and fight back! Fight like your life needs it!" The man was standing up and yelling at him.

This was not what he was expecting.

"I labelled this 'SEX' because I thought more of you would pick it up. I'm trying to help you, don't you see?"

First yelling at him, now the man was pleading with him. Searching for the off switch, it wasn't in the usual spot.

“I also labelled it ‘SEX’ because you’re getting fucked over by the system, snap out of it! Get off your ass and fight back!”

Blinking hard he was staring at his white wall. Okay that was weird and very misleading. He wasn't sure what to make of it. He lived on Elous, there were a couple other settlements, but Elous was the big one. Would make sense if you wanted to cast shade on these outposts to go after the big one.

Frowning after work he would stop by Xi and tell him wanted his money back or exchange it for another one. Occasionally, you'd get a dud. Gently placing it back in the bag, he got up, stretched and finished his coffee. Might as well head in to work. Then he could stop pass Xi afterwards.