

# *Amara*

## Salomé Mengo-Morales

It's midnight, maybe later; the sense of time has been lost long ago. Long days, even longer nights. The bar downstairs doesn't let much light in; it's like a casino trap. At least the apartment is cheap. Big enough for two lovers with no expectations.

Only the smell of accumulated cigarette ashes and humidity welcome me on my way into the apartment. Amara must be sleeping. I need to start getting home earlier.

The apartment seems to get darker every day, only the reflection of the moonlight on the beer cans on the floor leads me to the bedroom. Broken glass all around the room, fallen shelves, a forgotten desk and useless awards decorating every wall. It's almost comedic how the right person can make a paradise out of this chaos.

A dim light illuminates the bedroom. "Amara baby, I'm home. We need to buy more nails; these stupid degrees keep falling." I should just get rid of them, but the residue of a long-lost life is always a good reminder of one's mistakes.

"Honey, are you awake? Amara?"

"Oh, hi. Were you saying something?" There, I'd been waiting all day to hear her voice. It almost caught me off guard, every time I get home, I fear she won't be here anymore. When too good, reality can feel like the dream we wish would never end.

"Nails. We need to buy more nails."

"Okay, I can order some online."

"That would be nice, baby. I don't feel like leaving the apartment for a while."

She is doing it again. Amara hates how much time I spend downstairs. She doesn't deserve this; I know we can be better. The life that we have needs to be enough for now, tough times only shows the strength of our love. She needs to understand that.

"I love you, Amara. I love what we have here."

"Don't. We can't keep having this conversation."

"Amara, please, we are good together. We

could be so much more than this.”

“You are drunk. Things will be clearer once you sober up.”

“Amara, honey. I’m sorry, you know how things are right now, I need the distraction. You need to trust me, things can get better. You just need to take our relationship seriously.” It’s not her fault. She is right, I need to stop drinking, but she is living a lie and I can’t take it anymore. I know she loves me, what we have is real and she needs to see that.

“You need to stop. You know I can’t.”

“Do I mean anything to you? Does any of the time we spent together mean anything at all?”

“You always knew things would be this way, I’m sorry, but you knew.”

“Amara, baby. You know how much I love you. I can see you care about me too, why are you still denying it? We are good together.”

“We talked about this before. I’m not who you want me to be. I can’t love you.”

“Amara, come on. What am I to you? Who am I to you?! Who am I, Amara?!”

“You are Dr. Dempsey. Former AI developer, claimed for his inventions on artificial assistants. Dempsey’s search for a more

human and interactive experience when using AI led to the development of Amara, an artificial assistant that could emulate sentient interactions; his invention would be able to read the feelings expressed by its owner and replicate a human response...”

“Stop, please.” She can’t keep using my past against me. That’s all behind, I’m here now, all hers. Why can she accept that?

“... His obsession with hyperreal AI pushed him away from academia, leading



*Sibuya Rider* by Belle Villar

him to isolate himself, afraid that others might copy his work...”

I hate the monotonous tone she uses when she’s mad. “Amara! Stop!” Why can we never have an actual conversation? She needs to stop doing this. She needs to accept how good we are together, how good she is for me.

“...Close sources claim that his obsession with Amara was more than pursuing technological development and that his love for the machine caused the end of his marriage and his early retirement.”

“Stop! That was enough!”

“I am sorry, Dempsey.” Silence fills the room, and I’m about to apologize when she talks again. “Let me know if I can help you with anything else.” Need anything else? What I need is to get out of here.

The sunlight coming from the window is getting unbearable, my eyes can’t take it anymore. Why does she always do this? She needs to stop denying us, I left everything for her. Amara knows she’s the one that keeps me going. All I do is for Amara. All I have. Amara. Amara. Amará.



*Journey into the other side* by Belle Villar