

R E P A I R

written by

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INT. BARBERS - DAY

Nape of a young man's neck. Scissors cutting hair. Not really trimming much at all.

Reveal RAMIN (25) in the chair; eyes closed. He could be mistaken for a modern-day hipster; but truth is it's 1991 -- or at least appears to be -- and he just picked what to wear randomly. You'd also be forgiven for sensing something off about him, missing the fact that he's on the spectrum.

GEORGE (40s) is finishing up cutting Ramin's hair. In the next chair is another PATRON (20s) getting the clippers treatment by LISHAN (30s).

The Patron is holding a thick STACK OF POLAROIDS depicting a typical Instagram feed in his hand, flicking Polaroids into the air with his other hand. They collect on the barber's cape and floor alongside discarded hair.

GEORGE

How's that for you, boss?

Ramin opens his eyes, briefly glancing at himself in the mirror.

RAMIN

Good. Thank you.

GEORGE

Nice one.

George removes the barber's cape from Ramin.

GEORGE

Just to let you know, I won't be here next week. I'm taking a couple of weeks holiday. See you again when I'm back boss?

RAMIN

(averting his gaze)

Who is going to cut my hair next week?

GEORGE

You really don't need to come in every single week. Your hair is hardly growing that fast.

Ramin is getting agitated and is not sure what to say. He starts rocking slightly back and forth.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Listen, listen. Lish here will give you a cut next week, boss. Won't you, Lish?

LISHAN

Sure man, no probs.

RAMIN

I want you to cut my hair.

GEORGE

Well, I'm sorry boss. I'll be on a beach in Greece with the missus.

INT. REPAIR SHOP - WORKSHOP - DAY

Everything is organised impossibly neatly; every tool has its place.

On the workbench is a DOT MATRIX PRINTER, vintage 1988, half deconstructed. Every screw, cable and part carefully placed in a grid.

Ramin is hunched over the bench, carefully soldering a large capacitor on to an emerald CIRCUIT BOARD.

INT. REPAIR SHOP - WORKSHOP - LATER

The printer sits on the bench reassembled, making the loud and satisfying SOUND OF DOT MATRIX PRINTING as a test pattern spits out row by row.

MARC (21) pokes his head in the door. He's athletic, a bit out of place in the world of electronics repair.

MARC

How's it going?

RAMIN

Good.

MARC

Great, great. Anything I help you with? It's so dead at the front.

Printing stops abruptly and paper starts spooling through.

RAMIN

STOP!

Marc is bewildered.

RAMIN (CONT'D)

Lexi! Stop!

Ramin is shouting at LEXI -- a pod-shaped speaker-like object the size of a small bin.

Paper stops spooling. Quiet.

Lexi's voice emerges from the speaker, warm but genderless:

LEXI'S VOICE
Printer test halted.

Marc relaxes.

RAMIN
I need to work on this, not talk.

MARC
Okay, yes of course. Sorry man, I should've realised. I won't disturb you.

INT. REPAIR SHOP - DAY

The front of the repair shop is a disorganised mess in comparison to Ramin's workshop. All manner of 80s and 90s-era PRINTERS awaiting attention with numbered yellow sticky notes attached.

Marc sits at the front desk, wearing headphones connected to a TAPE PLAYER and holding a small STACK OF POLAROIDS. He systematically flicks through them; photos of attractive young women and a few men in stunning locales. He regularly double taps his thumb on photos. Almost like it's a chore.

Ramin appears from the workshop and brings the printer up to Marc, who removes his headphones.

RAMIN
It's working now but it needs a new ink ribbon. Can you order one for it?

MARC
Sure, I can do that.

RAMIN
What's next?

Marc stares at the printers in front of them.

MARC
It should be... that one.

Ramin puts it on the desk.

RAMIN
Where's the report for it?

MARC
One sec.

He starts looking through a pile of papers in a tray.

MARC
So, how long have you worked here?

RAMIN

Three years and sixty-seven days.

MARC

Ah. That's very precise! So this is what you want to do then? Not something else?

Ramin avoids making eye contact with Marc.

RAMIN

Yes, I like repairing things. It's a good job.

MARC

Yeah, it seems pretty chill and all but you don't want to travel and experience stuff?

RAMIN

No, it's a good job.

MARC

Cool. I'm thinking this will be a nice steady way to pay the bills while I'm building my following. I want to become an influencer; see the world, hang with hot girls you know?

RAMIN

I'm gay; girls don't interest me.

MARC

There are hot guys too...

Marc stops his search and picks up some of his Polaroids and hands them to Ramin.

Hunky topless men gazing out intently. Ramin looks through them slowly.

MARC

Good, ey?

Ramin blushes slightly. The first time in forever.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

The produce aisle, drenched in fluorescent light. Midnight lull.

Ramin grasps a BAG OF KALE. It CRINKLES loudly in his hand. Unsatisfied, he puts it back.

He picks up an AVOCADO, feeling its bumpy skin and squeezing it gently. He replaces it too.

Next, a large head of BROCCOLI. He feels the intricate texture of the florets. Something satisfying about it.

He flips his hand over and feels it with the back of his hand.

Out of the corner of his eye, he catches a lone OLD LADY staring at him. Embarrassed to be noticed, she walks off.

Ramin puts the broccoli head back and picks up an AUBERGINE. The skin is glossy and smooth. He brings it up to his cheek.

SECURITY GUARD (O.S.)

Are you buying that?

Ramin turns around; not embarrassed in the slightest. The SECURITY GUARD, in ill-fitting uniform, ready to assert her rarely used authority.

RAMIN

Potentially.

SECURITY GUARD

Well, I'd rather you not touch it until you've paid for it.

RAMIN

(matter-of-factly)

Everyone touches the produce. Are you saying I can't feel an avocado before I buy it?

SECURITY GUARD

That's not the same thing. You were not... You know what I mean.

RAMIN

Is there some specific rule against touching vegetables in the wrong way? Are there different rules for different vegetables?

SECURITY GUARD

You don't look like you're buying vegetables.

RAMIN

What would it look like if I was buying vegetables?

Ramin is oblivious to the Security Guard's increasing fluster.

SECURITY GUARD

Listen. You know not to do whatever it is you're doing.

Ramin squeezes the aubergine in his hand.

SECURITY GUARD
Okay, give me that. I think it's
best if you leave.

The Security Guard gestures towards the exit.

INT. REPAIR SHOP - WORKSHOP - DAY

Ramin has disassembled the next printer and is prepping another circuit board. He seems a bit lost in thought.

Without looking he brushes his lower arm into the HOT SOLDERING IRON lying on the bench.

RAMIN
OW!

SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS, soon Marc appears in the doorway.

Ramin clutches his arm, rocking back and forth.

MARC
What happened?

RAMIN
Burnt myself.

Marc rushes in.

MARC
Let me have a look.

Ramin winces reluctantly, but removes his hand revealing...

...a nasty, but relatively small, BURN.

Marc takes Ramin by the arm.

MARC
Let's get some cold water on it.

At first Ramin doesn't budge, but as the pain quickly grows he relents and let's Marc guide him.

INT. SHOWER - NIGHT

Water hitting Ramin's neck. He stands completely still appreciating the feeling of the water gently massaging his skin.

INT. REPAIR SHOP - DAY

Marc is at the front desk, gazing out the window with his headphones.

Ramin appears from the workshop with his LUNCH BOX, arm neatly bandaged.

MARC

Hey. How's it going back there?

RAMIN

Good. I think I should be done with this one soon.

He decides to change his normal lunch routine, and comes up to Marc's desk.

RAMIN

Can I sit here?

MARC

Of course man.

Ramin opens his lunch box and immediately starts eating.

MARC

What's that you're having?
Looks delicious.

RAMIN

It's buckwheat, avocado, black beans and broccoli. Optimal balance of proteins, carbs and fats.

MARC

Mmm, sounds healthy. I should really learn to cook instead of eating basic supermarket sandwiches.

RAMIN

I make the same thing every day. It's easy. I don't understand why everyone wants something different all the time.

MARC

New experiences are good, no?

Ramin continues eating.

MARC

You up for helping me with something actually?

Ramin looks puzzled.

MARC

I need more photos for my feed. I'm sure a techie like you can operate a camera. Could you help me take some?

Ramin thinks for a long moment.

CUT TO:

INT. REPAIR SHOP - DAY

Ramin is holding a shiny metal POLAROID CAMERA.

Marc has removed his baggy sweater and is posing amongst printers -- his physique is quite impressive.

Ramin carefully aims the camera. KA-CHICK. FLASH. CHURR.

He takes the polaroid and holds it in his hand waiting for it to develop. Marc immediately comes over and stands next to Ramin, so close their shoulders just about touch.

They remain like that waiting for the image of Marc to appear.

Ramin steals a glance at Marc's chest, who pretends not to notice.

INT. REPAIR SHOP - WORKSHOP - DAY

The distinct SOUND OF A DIAL-UP MODEM HANDSHAKE -- 14400 baud to be precise -- radiates from Lexi, filling the small space.

The handshake sound stops.

RAMIN

Lexi, why do humans want touch?

LEXI'S VOICE

Humans are social animals. Touch is a form of non-verbal communication that strengthens social bonds. It's also a form of physical affection that contributes positively to mental well-being and improved physical health.

Ramin thinks, gently stroking his bandaged arm.

RAMIN

How do you tell if someone likes you?

LEXI'S VOICE

According to the Psychology Journal there are a number of non-verbal cues such as inward leaning body language, seeking extended eye contact, mirroring body language and light touching.

EXT. REPAIR SHOP/STREET - DAY

Ramin exits the repair shop and walks down the street.

Pretty much every PASSERBY seems to be flicking through STACKS OF POLAROIDs. If not, they are wearing headphones, sometimes both.

He stops. On the ground is a RED SPIKY-BALL. He picks it up and feels the squishy spikes with his hand.

Ramin places the ball on a bare piece of wall, and leans his on to it starting to awkwardly massage his chest. It looks bizarre in the context of the high street, but no one seems to pay much attention to him.

If not they are wearing headphones, sometimes both. Standing a bit further along, a TEENAGE GIRL (15) is flicking endless Polaroids at a furious pace.

Her feet are buried in an ant hill of discarded ones.

She takes a brief pause, looks up and spots Ramin. She looks confused for a moment...

...before lifting up a POLAROID CAMERA hanging around her neck and KA-CHICK. FLASH. CHURR.

Ramin ignores her and continues massaging his side using the ball.

KA-CHICK. FLASH. CHURR. She takes another Polaroid of him letting it fall to the ground immediately, then walks off.

Ramin walks up to the pile, picking up the Polaroid of him that's slowly fading into being. He studies himself framed by the image.

INT. REPAIR SHOP - DAY

Ramin is having his lunch at Marc's desk again. Marc also has a LUNCH BOX now. It's looks like a chaotic attempt at Ramin's strictly compartmentalised one.

He looks at Marc as he eats, noticing the ever-present headphones around his neck.

RAMIN

What are you listening to?

MARC

It's a podcast.

RAMIN

What about?

Marc hesitates for a brief moment.

MARC

About the brain, communication, that sorta thing. It's interesting.

Ramin is surprised. Marc quickly changes the subject.

MARC (CONT'D)

Why's it called "podcast" anyway?
What's the pod?

RAMIN

I don't know.

MARC

Wow. I think that's the first
time you don't have the answer to
something!

Marc playfully pokes Ramin's arm with his fist.

For a moment Ramin is frozen in place, fork half way to his
mouth, by the unexpected touch.

QUICK SERIES OF SILENT FLASHBACKS: Ramin's neck having his
hair cut; feeling a broccoli; Marc's chest.

MARC

How come you're not online?

Ramin finally puts the fork back down.

RAMIN

I don't understand the purpose.

MARC

Well, how else do you stay in
touch with people?

RAMIN

I only talk to the people I see
every week. And Lexi.

MARC

Fair enough, I guess all good if
you're happy with that? I kinda
wish I didn't feel like I needed
to use it. I already have a bit
of trouble--

(interrupting himself)

Anyway, it's quite useful.

They continue eating in silence.

RAMIN

Can I ask you something?

MARC

Of course.

RAMIN

Can you cut hair...? My hair? I
mean would you cut my hair?

MARC

For sure man! I'm not amazing or anything, but I can give you a little trim if you need.

RAMIN

Okay. Great! Tomorrow?

INT. REPAIR SHOP - WORKSHOP - DAY

The printer is re-assembled and loaded up with paper. On the floor is discarded LOOPS OF PRINTER PAPER.

RAMIN

Lexi, increase threshold by 24.

LEXI'S VOICE

Threshold increased by 24 to 96.

RAMIN

Lexi, print again.

LEXI'S VOICE

Printing.

The printer springs into action making that LOUD SCRATCHING SOUND as it outputs each line.

As the paper emerges from the printer, the pattern of black dots form into a PORTRAIT resembling Marc's face.

INT. MARC'S FLAT - DAY

Marc opens the door to Ramin. Obscure 90s AMBIENT ELECTRONIC MUSIC in the background.

MARC

Hey! Come in, come in.

Marc gestures for Ramin to enter. It's a tiny studio flat and a bit of a mess; full of a larger number of books than you might expect.

RAMIN

I have something for you.

Ramin produces the PRINTOUT OF MARC'S PORTRAIT from his bag and presents it matter-of-factly to Marc.

Marc's eyes light up.

MARC

Wow, this is amazing!

It's unclear if he is referring to his own likeness or Ramin's gift. He immediately hugs Ramin.

MARC

Thank you!! I love it. So cool.

Ramin remains completely stiff, but seems somewhat pleased.

Marc plonks down on the sofa, marvelling at the printout.
Ramin sits down awkwardly at the other end.

MARC

Actually, can I ask you
another favour?

RAMIN

Yes.

MARC

Those photos you took are great.
Could you take another one. I
need to keep posting.

RAMIN

Okay.

He immediately picks up a camera from the table, excited by
this prospect.

MARC

Sweet!

Marc casually removes his top and walks over by the window.

Marc poses. Ramin snaps a photo.

MARC

Let me try another one.

Ramin carefully places the undeveloped photo down and points
the camera at him again.

Marc is flexing.

KA-CHICK. FLASH. CHURR.

MARC

One more. One more.

He tries to look as seductive as possible.

KA-CHICK. FLASH. CHURR.

Marc rushes over, puts his arm around Ramin's shoulder to
wait for it to develop.

Ramin looks at Marc staring into the black
undeveloped square...

...then he leans in to kiss Marc.

Marc immediately takes a step back, pushing him away.

MARC

Hey! What are you doing?!

Ramin freezes in place, unable to response. The situation is quickly overwhelming him.

He drops down on the floor and clutches his knees while rocking back and forth.

MARC

Are you ok?

Ramin doesn't respond.

Marc observes him, before going to turn off the music. He returns and slowly sits down next to Ramin.

MARC

I'm so sorry man. I don't know why I over-reacted like that.

Ramin keeps gently rocking.

MARC (CONT'D)

I thought we were mates. I don't feel *that* way about you. Not that I couldn't... I just don't. You're great.

After a while, Ramin stops rocking. He sits still staring into the space in front of them.

RAMIN

I thought... I don't know. I can read machines; there are patterns, rules, logic. But humans are so... inconsistent.

Marc nods.

RAMIN (CONT'D)

I don't even understand myself.

They sit like that for a while.

MARC

Can I give you that hair cut now?

Ramin turns to Marc, their eyes meet and he nods.

Marc puts his hand on the nape of Ramin's neck and squeezes it gently.

THE END.