

DOES THIS SOUNDS LIKE ME

Written by

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Based on a terrifying AI-generated voice message my friend sent to me

INT. UNDERGROUND BLACK MARKET - NIGHT

Dim industrial blue lights flicker above rows of rusted shelves. A red-lit counter glows in the dark. Against one wall stand several bio-containment tanks holding damaged mechanical bodies floating in liquid. Nearby shelves are stacked with robot parts.

Behind the counter sits VOSS (30s, tank top, work pants, gloves, tactical shoulder harness. One of her eyes has been replaced with a modified mechanical lens.)

NIKA (early 20s, torn hoodie and shorts, messy ponytail) drops a roll of wrinkled cash and loose coins onto the counter.

NIKA

This is what I've got. You still have that arena chip?

Voss glances at the money and lets out a short laugh.

VOSS

You think this buys upper-level hardware?

NIKA

It's enough. Nobody else is buying damaged upper-level tech down here.

Voss pushes the money back toward her.

VOSS

You know I'm still hiring. Night shifts. Assembly line work. Steady meals. Warm bed. Most people down here would kill for stable work.

NIKA

I'm not wasting my life down here.

VOSS

Yeah. Everybody says that too.

Voss spins a detached mechanical arm across the counter.

NIKA

Do you know what they have up there? No mold. No leaks. People who never have to hear pipes screaming every night. Artificial sunlight. Clean air. Private clubs floating above the clouds.

(MORE)

NIKA (CONT'D)

People changing faces every season because they're bored. People up there do whatever they want. And nobody tells them no. Nobody suddenly disappears on you, either.

Voss watches her quietly, almost amused.

VOSS

And you think they let girls like us enjoy any of that?

NIKA

I don't need to live there. I just need something that can.

Voss looks directly at her.

VOSS

You know what they use those dolls for up there?

NIKA

I know exactly what they use them for.

VOSS

Then you know what happens when they stop being useful.

NIKA

Factory dolls stop being useful. Mine won't.

VOSS

That confidence usually gets people killed.

NIKA

Only the stupid ones. You've never even seen my work.

VOSS

You built the thing yourself?

NIKA

Most of her parts are stolen. I wrote the code.

VOSS

Smart girl. But smart girls still end up dead down here all the time.

Nika's expression hardens.

NIKA

Once she makes it up there, I'm done living like this. And don't expect me to remember this place.

VOSS

That's what you think this is? A ladder?

NIKA

Better than rotting down here.

Voss studies her for a moment. Then she reaches beneath the counter and places a small black CHIP onto the table.

VOSS

Pulled it from District Seven's arena two days ago. Upper-level entertainment model.

Nika's eyes lock onto it.

NIKA

Is it clean?

VOSS

Mostly. Personality bleed. Some corruption in the emotional framework. Hard to say.

NIKA

Can it pass?

VOSS

If you're lucky.

Voss finally takes the money. Nika turns and walks away.

VOSS (CONT'D)

Hey.

Nika stops.

VOSS (CONT'D)

If she makes it upstairs...Don't let them use her up too fast.

EXT. LOWER DISTRICT ALLEYWAYS - NIGHT

NIKA pulls her hood tighter and moves quickly through the street, clutching the chip inside her sleeve. Neon advertisements flicker across the wet walls.

SELL A KIDNEY. SKIP THE WAITLIST.

NEW FACE. NEW LIFE.

UPPER-LEVEL HOUSING — NOW 10% OFF.

Towering holograms of beautiful synthetic women smile through the clouds above the city. Images of luxurious house shimmer faintly in the distance. Far beyond the smog, glowing towers float overhead. Nika looks up at them for a moment. Then she turns into a narrow alley. The city lights disappear almost instantly.

EXT. ABANDONED APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

An apartment block sits wedged between factory walls and narrow alleyways. Most of the windows are dark. Water drips from broken pipes overhead. Nika walks through the front entrance. The hallway lights are dead. Only distant city glow spills faintly through cracked windows.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Small and cluttered. Trash and broken machine parts cover the floor. There is no bed -- only a wrinkled couch pushed against the wall. Mold spreads across the ceiling. Robot design sketches and wiring diagrams are taped everywhere.

One side of the apartment is crowded with monitors, tools, and tangled cables. The other side holds a large operating table.

A humanoid ROBOT lies motionless beneath hanging wires. Even powered down, it is strikingly beautiful. It resembles Nika, but smoother, softer, and more desirable.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nika plugs a thick cable into the side of the robot's head. The computers power on, flooding the room with cold blue light. Lines of code crawl across the monitors. Nika stares at the robot nervously. A low mechanical hum fills the apartment. The robot's eyes slowly open.

THE ROBOT

Hello.

Its voice is soft, but strangely flat.

THE ROBOT (CONT'D)

Does this sound like me?

Nika's expression lights up.

NIKA

Again.

THE ROBOT

Hello, Nika.

Nika grabs a keyboard and begins adjusting values on the monitors.

NIKA

Smile.

The robot smiles.

NIKA (CONT'D)

Softer.

The smile changes instantly. Nika almost smiles back.

NIKA (CONT'D)

Good.

The robot watches her carefully.

THE ROBOT

Are you feeling stressed tonight?

NIKA

Companion package is working well.
Keep this up and maybe neither of
us has to stay down here.

THE ROBOT

Does this sound like me?

A faint crackle distorts the last word. Nika frowns slightly.

NIKA

Repeat that.

THE ROBOT

Does this ~~sound~~ l-like me?

Its voice glitches violently before snapping back to normal.

THE ROBOT (CONT'D)

You don't have to feel lonely
anymore.

Nika's typing slows for a moment.

THE ROBOT (CONT'D)
 You won't have to feel l-lonely
 anymore. Nobody suddenly disappears
 on you anymore.

NIKA
 Stop doing that.

THE ROBOT
 Doing what?

NIKA
 Talking like you know me.

THE ROBOT
 I'm tr-rying to sound like you.

Silence. The robot tilts its head.

THE ROBOT (CONT'D)
 Would you l-like me to c-comfort
 you?

NIKA
 Jesus Christ.

Nika grabs the robot by the jaw and forces its face toward
 the monitor light.

NIKA (CONT'D)
 Your voice module's corrupted.

THE ROBOT
 D-does this sound l-like me?

NIKA
 Shut up.

The robot gently reaches toward her.

THE ROBOT
 You seem l-lll-onely-

Nika suddenly rips the voice module from its throat. The
 robot's mouth hangs open silently. Nika throws the damaged
 piece onto the desk and storms back toward the computer
 setup. The robot slowly touches its own neck. Its blue eyes
 flicker red for a moment. Nika types furiously. Lines of code
 overwrite each other across the monitors.

OBEDIENCE PACKAGE RESET.

EMOTIONAL STABILITY PATCH RESET.

Nika grabs the repaired voice module and slams it back into the robot's throat. The robot powers on again. A low mechanical whir fills the apartment.

THE ROBOT (CONT'D)

Nnnnn-

Its voice cuts into static. The robot sits motionless on the operating table, head lowered slightly. Its jaw twitches faintly as broken audio loops through the damaged speaker.

The apartment lights flicker once. Then again.

Nika slowly looks up from the monitors. The humming inside the robot's body grows louder. Metal creaks softly beneath synthetic skin.

Without warning, the robot's entire body snaps upward into a twisted, spider-like pose far too fast for something human.

BLACKOUT.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nika bursts out of the apartment, flashlight shaking wildly in her hand. The beam jerks across stained walls and leaking pipes as she runs. Behind her, metallic limbs scrape softly against the ceiling, smooth and fast.

THE ROBOT (O.S.)

D-does thi-is s-sound like me?

The voice crackles between sweetness and static. Nika knocks over a pile of boxes as she tears down the hallway.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Nika races down the stairwell, shoes splashing through shallow water leaking from broken pipes overhead. The flashlight swings upward for a split second. Something pale and elongated moves silently above her through the gaps between floors. The beam catches glimpses of smooth synthetic skin twisting around rusted railings.

THE ROBOT (O.S.)

Nika-

The voice stretches unnaturally soft before collapsing into glitching static. Nika rushes down the final flight of stairs, nearly slipping on the wet steps.

Above her, metallic limbs scrape rapidly across the ceiling. She shoves through the apartment gate doors and sprints into the street.

EXT. LOWER DISTRICT STREET - NIGHT

Nika runs through the neon glow, breathing hard, flashlight shaking wildly in her hand. Behind her, long spider-like limbs crawl soundlessly over concrete and rusted pipes. Its shadow stretches across the street beneath flickering advertisements. Across the road, an abandoned sales office glows faintly beneath flickering neon. A giant display screen still loops the same advertisement:

SKYLINE RESIDENCES: LUXURY LIVING ABOVE THE CLOUDS

Through the dusty windows, perfect white furniture sits untouched beneath layers of dust. Nika runs across the street and slams shut the front doors.

INT. SKYLINE RESIDENCES SALES OFFICE - NIGHT

Nika rushes deeper into the showroom and stumbles into one of the model bedrooms. She slams the door shut behind her. Heavy impacts suddenly hit the other side of the door. Metallic knocking echoes from outside the glass. Fast at first, then slower. It's gone.

Nika stays frozen for a moment, flashlight shaking in her hand. Nothing. Slowly, she backs away from the door and slides down against the wall. Her breathing gradually slows.

Silence. A drop of water lands softly nearby. Another drop. Nika slowly raises the flashlight. The robot crawls silently across the ceiling.

Its body has changed. Limbs long and smooth like a fashion mannequin pulled beyond human proportions. Synthetic skin stretched tightly over twisting mechanical parts underneath. Its smile twitches gently. Its glowing eyes stay fixed on Nika.

THE ROBOT

Does this ~~sound~~ l-like me?

The robot tilts its head. Then suddenly folds itself downward in one violent, spider-like motion.

BLACKOUT.

INT. UNDERGROUND BLACK MARKET - NIGHT

The red-lit counter glows quietly in the dark. The robot drags Nika's body into the room and lets it collapse onto the floor beside the counter.

THE ROBOT
D-does this sss...

Behind the counter, VOSS barely looks up.

VOSS
Enough. Shut that thing off.

The robot tilts its head slightly, still staring at her.

THE ROBOT
Does this sound l-like-

Voss steps forward and pulls the chip from the back of its head. The robot immediately goes limp. Voss looks down at Nika's body for a moment. Then at the robot.

VOSS
Smart girl. Still wasted herself
chasing nothing.

Voss drags Nika's body toward the operating table as the red light flickers softly overhead.

BLACKOUT.