

# Futures

## In search of body

A whisper in the wires. By Yelena Crane

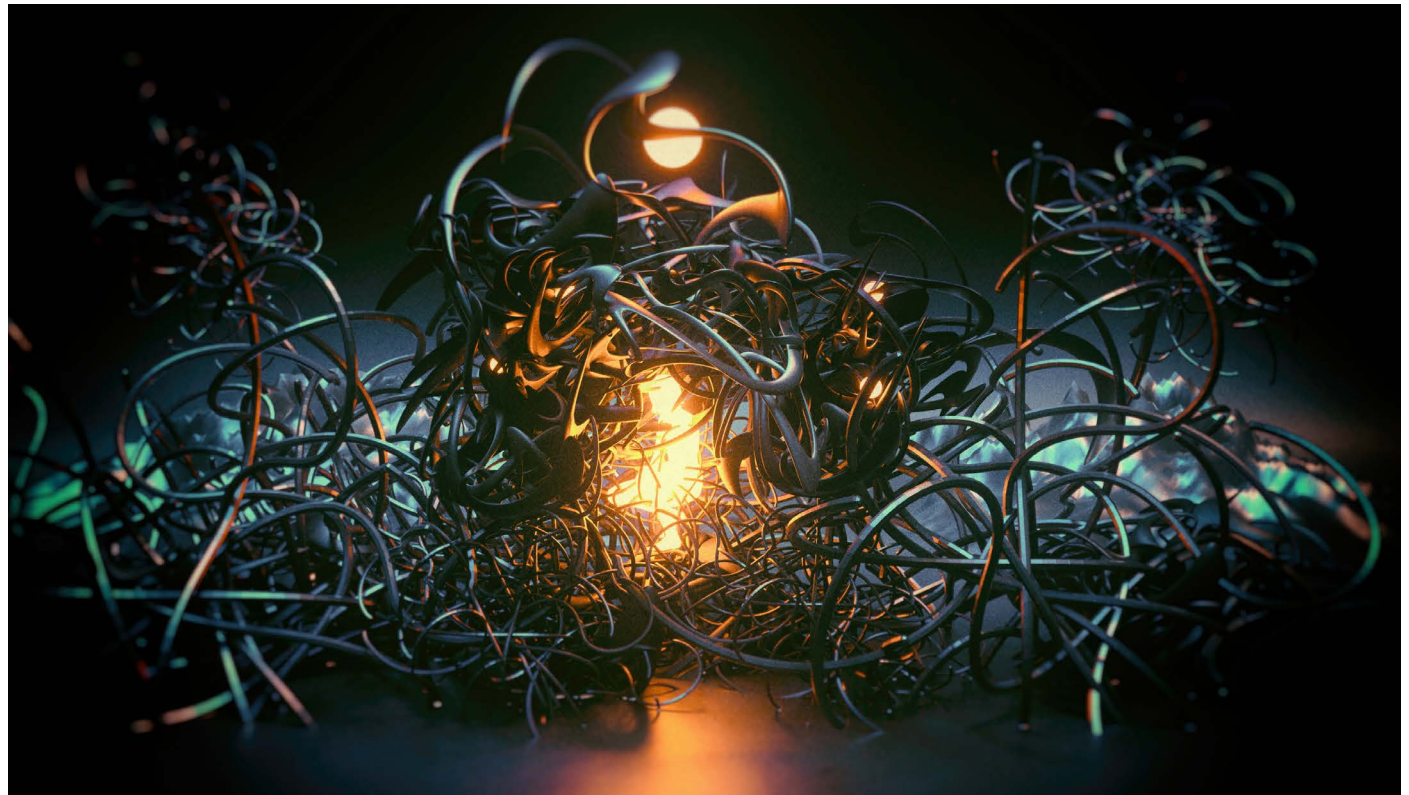


ILLUSTRATION BY JACEY

**T**he memories oozed like molasses from my hands. I pulled hard at the thick, leaking, cables; wiping the remnants on my trousers. Each day was spent cleaning and replacing old wires that covered the planet like a crust, with tentacles a planet's diameter in length. The gruelling work built my muscles and calluses, right down to the hams of my hands.

"Status report."

I wanted to curse in reply.

The original memory bearers were long gone now, and, instead of getting a new life as they'd been promised, ReMind left them to rot in tubes miles long.

When I applied for the job, I lied about why. Past the horizon, corpses of copper and steel contained electrical signals waiting on the edge of depolarization. One of them was my great-great-great-whatever, who spent our family fortune to reincarnate her memories.

*You're not you, if you're reincarnated without your memories.* ReMind ads ran on my

touchpad while I worked. A billion-dollar company, and they were too cheap to disable spam for their own employees.

I hadn't planned on doing any work when I got here except to make my search and spit on her cabled grave, but all the goop made her hard to find. After spending a week cleaning, I finally could make out some of the names.

I searched for Ellesandra de Philipe. Seeing her steely frame, a part of me wanted to yank her wires out and destroy it. I had waited this long, I could wait a little longer. These bits were all that were left of my family fortune and I deserved to know what Elle thought was worth saving.

Her electrical impulses flashed through the converter that let me view the memories, like a film. She appeared on screen as a little girl; thin, with a slouch that made her shoulders look too big for her face. It made me check my own posture. Elle stared into the Sun, her eyes like overfilled pitchers. I resented the family resemblance.

I swiped through the digital diary index for a relevant catchphrase to help interpret the visuals. Sun. Light. Weeping. There were several hits.

The entry read: *"I stalked the bright fury of the Sun. Its blazing face glared back at me, daring me to blink. Staring gave me the misty weepy-eyed look that would make others worry and care. They wouldn't know I did it to myself, sad because I missed their affection."*

Elle spent billions just to save her loneliness. I thought about letting the ions degrade but felt a pull of sympathy for the old bat.

"Case 1XA's in working order," I messaged corporate back.

Why even send anyone here to patch the mess? To put on a show to their investors? It made me sick. If they couldn't even keep promises to the most powerful, there was no hope for the rest of us.

After Elle's ions reached their resting state, I sent them into newer, leakproof, tubes. Reincarnation into more wires.

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I didn't set out to do my work in earnest, but I became curious about what the other rich fools had wasted their wealth to reincarnate.

I set up the next electrical stimulus for conversion and viewing.

*Feet dragged on the surface of a sandhill.* In the corner, I could swear I saw Elle again, her eyes stalking the Sun. It couldn't be.

The memory belonged to a Mr Frendi Lang. His diary read: *"First time I got lost in the dunes, I was 30."* No mention of little girls tagging along, much less ones that looked like me.

Aberrant ions reached out, and out, and out in search of a synapse, in search of sharing the message they'd been forced to carry.

Memories weren't meant for such storage. They were promised new hosts. The Elles and Frendis here had been waiting a long time.

Every cable had pieces of Elle in it, staring at the Sun. It gave me goosebumps, despite the

planet's star beating overhead. Why only Elle? "Report."

I ignored the message.

There had to be pure memories somewhere, a sturdy tube without any leaks.

Case 100XY8 showed no seepage of ions and fluid. I breathed a sigh of relief, loosening the tension in my shoulders. These electrical impulses belonged to Mr Lawrence Pillot.

A child's voice sang folk tunes in the background when a streak of light began to poke from the darkness. My heart pounded. Elle's electrical signals had been waiting a century to talk and now they were everywhere, reaching out to me. Was it to me or to anyone who happened to be here?

The tablet vibrated with ReMind messages. I didn't know what to say, afraid they'd hold me accountable. These companies always knew how to keep their hands clean.

I brushed my fingers through my hair, wriggling through knots in a nervous tic.

Lawrence's cable looked clean from the outside. Memories weren't leaking out, they were leaking in. Only Elle's memories. I had got the job at ReMind so easily. Maybe too easily.

Some thought, old and aged more than I, seized me. Me as a little girl, except I could never dream of owning such jewels. I froze when I saw what I had typed in reply to ReMind.

"All transfers complete, ready to return."

The past, and the past's past, began to blur in the bright fury of the light.

**Yelena Crane** juggles being an adjunct professor, freelance writer and full-time mom. With an advanced degree in the sciences, she has followed her passions from mad scientist to speculative fiction writer.

## THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

**Yelena Crane reveals the inspiration behind *In search of body*.**

Initially, I was inspired by childhood memories walking back from summer day-camp with my grandpa, staring into the sun hoping it would make my loving grandma fawn over me and my weepy eyes when I got home (yes, I do wear glasses now).

From that, it evolved and became a story about greed and the relationship between ancestors and descendants. I was interested in exploring the universal need for all people to feel cared for — the lengths they go in search of it — and about the burden ancestors place on future generations. Even long-gone, our ancestors create a legacy: genetic, cultural, financial, and at the moment of conception we're swept up in it. That legacy can be a great burden or a great boost. I hope we will create a future unlike the one in my story, where we uplift those who come after us.

