

Katharine Glasheen

Cheetah Print Mini Dress

Bonnie. A Charming Indigo.

Bonnie has the depth of blended indigo and a voice more familiar than the sun's rise. She spends her time connecting dots with lines and watching motion. Her favorite motion to watch is the swirl of the Super Scrambler roller coaster at the amusement park by her home. She also enjoys walking to the local café to watch people hand over shiny gold tokens and receive cups of hot liquid in return.

Her BFF Helen. A Chartreuse Dream.

She aspires to abstraction but lives in the moment. Helen's wingspan stretched to Ursula Major in the summer of 2017, but she admits that her sky-dreams only led her underground. She buried them softly and walked away.

Bonnie's mother Maude is a no-nonsense puddle jumper, and has a heart that sifts into your eyes as she dishes you up a plate of her crumbliest apple-buttons. Maude has a frumpy looseness that made you want to be

enveloped between her untethered breasts. If her matronly hips ever aroused sensuality in men, it was purely of the hormonal, vanilla kind of sensuality that sets in when one is ready to make love and bear children. Maude had never felt the need to Intellectualize; she much preferred the company of her fellow androids to ideas. So, she made friends easily and lived under the Quantifying Structures well.

Maude had spent her youth eating food in the afternoons, being on time, and enjoying Media. It was a harmlessly golden time that she remembers fondly with no cringes and no regrets. She did youth Correctly, for she had been well trained. Her Youth was quantified at the 84th percentile for Function. Maude had never had as many Events as some of the other girls in her class- Events were for the flighty girls. These girls certainly robotized around, but that would show in a lower Function score later, and... they might even have *regrets*. Maude shuddered to think what it would be like to live that way... tainted by unpleasant memories. Especially now, in the modern age of post-human perfection, there was simply no need for unpleasantness. After all, unpleasantness was merely a symptom of using too many of one's senses. She and Bonnie's father Morris were part of the first generation to be converted to post-humans when the Structures were put in place.

Bonnie's father Morris is a real Man's Man. He likes to think of himself as an interactive business card in today's modern age. Every day at nine, Morris goes to a standard work-station and takes a Thinking Pill. Then he places his body in a holding station and thinks until 5:00pm. The work-station gathers his Intellectual Output, and analyzes it, mining for useful Work. The money deposits from the work-station gave Morris enough to provide adequate life-supplies for Bonnie and Maude, and let Morris have disposable time. In Morris' free time he does Hobbies. He also enjoys eating food and spending his disposable income on Items.

Maude and Morris hoped that their daughter Bonnie could live the life they had always desired... senseless, perfect, function. Oh to have a daughter score in somewhere in the 90th percentiles for Function.

To help her on this track, Maude established Bonnie in a Companionship Unit as early as she could in life, hoping that Helen would achieve more Social Value than she had enjoyed in her youth. Bonnie and Helen were matched as a BFF (a Beneficially Functional Faction) after having their Quantifiable Attributes measured.

They matched well.

Neurological learning capacity: 77th (Bonnie) and 58th (Helen) percentiles.

Pre-determined social role: primarily reproductive; potential for light, pre-marital labor.

Potential for Systemic Functionality: low potential, but trainable. 25th (Bonnie) and 34th (Helen) percentiles.

Their matching was nearly perfect, because they were matched by the Structure, using the latest algorithmic program. Only *nearly* perfect though, because they got older together Helen began to notice more and more glitches in Bonnie's habits. It began very young.

Bonnie and Helen kneeled in the family room on the sofa. Helen's knobbly knees made a deep indentation on the sagging floral sofa, a midcentury relic of the beginnings of her parent's domestic life before the Structures. The sagginess was making it even harder to peer over the cushioned back to watch her mother slice tomatoes in the kitchen. The plump scarlet fruits were fresh from Maude's backyard vegetable garden, mandated by the state during a nutrition shortage. During the nutrition shortage was the only time the girls had seen real plants- all their other

food was provided by the local kiosk, in daily allotments for each family. Food came in several different brands, but each tasted the same and was wrapped in the same silver polymer shell.

Some mornings Helen would be tempted to crawl through the brambles and pluck one right off the plant, to taste the strange sweetness that lay trapped in under its taut orb of skin, and let the juice would trickle down her chin in the dark. But she knew that it was frivolous, and she would restrain herself, content to look at images of tomatoes on her iEye instead.

But Bonnie... there was a crazy shade of blue if you ever knew one. Bonnie would plunge for the fruits with no restraint, grappling through the brambles as the branches tried to claw at her exposed knees and elbows. They were the most sensual experience her lips had ever felt at the fresh age of 7, new to life's pleasure, and she would slurp down the juices in front of Helen, who watched in tacit terror.

Time and flowed, and each year the girls became different girls. Their bodies got larger, their faces found their angles, mining out bone structure from the amorphous baby-pudge of childhood. They learned to be ashamed of their previous selves, and to take pride in each new bit of knowledge and maturity, knowing that they were Eliminating Imperfections with every minute longer they lived.

Helen defined her angles over time into 90 degree perfection, and found her place in the geometry. She settled like Tetris into the worlds of School and Family, completing her daily lists of tasks with unwavering accuracy. She successfully abstracted into clean functionality. Bonnie tried to keep step, but the Left Right Left Right overwhelmed her sometimes, and her Glitches became more and more frequent.

One afternoon she walked home with Helen feeling even more restless than usual. She excused herself and walked home to just be alone. An electronic music-composition pounded from the neighbor's paved backyard. She slammed the door and went to her closet to put on her favorite clothes, the ones she was never allowed to wear to the strict private girl's school that she attended with Helen.

The cheetah print mini-dress was her favorite treasure. She had discovered it in a waste-textile facility, waiting to be recycled. She was drawn to it by the animal print- it reminded her that humans used to use their hands and dig into the thick texture of the earth and make use of whatever they could-as a relic of the pre-pastoral years when to kill an animal and wear its skin was a badge of honor. Its historic sensuality seemed overwhelmingly ironic next to the tailored white polymer of the school-uniform that she now shed from her skin.

She examined her reflection in the mirror and longed for the days she'd never seen, where bodies under the sun would cut the earth and furrow the scars, until it gave wheat and fruit. She longed equally for abstraction and purity, for a cold environment and clean skin. Instead of either, she sat in anger and solitude as opposite irrational thoughts congealed in the space between the earthiness she viscerally craved, and the appealing sterility of post-human elegance. If only she could Photoshop all this sweaty inelegant body-substance into a white squiggle of a line, a vertical, minimalist composition. So much less to deal with. She knew humans were beyond earthy imperfection; it was time to grow up.

But instead, her glitches worsened. She was simply inclined downward, groundward. Her craving for humanness articulated itself most strongly in her dreams. One night as the stars carved their usual path through the darkness, Bonnie's mind fluttered freely, unfettered by waking consciousness.

She saw the flesh & bones of everyone whose memories spiraled closest to her orbit, whose faces she kept in her deepest heart. Helen, Maude, her own parents Olive and Henry, the handsome waiter from the café down the street. But everyone had multiple faces. Each personality was like a multifaceted gemstone, whose faces correspond to other gems. Each face corresponded to those with similar personality traits, and the faces looked unblinkingly to their matches. Thin peachy strands of vibrant flesh tied them together. The connections made a web of interlocking personalities and flesh that moved like a sprawling, grotesquely beautiful arachnid. Everyone was everyone else. Each of them had equal stake in their communal body. Bonnie belonged to this strange, all-encompassing fleshy monster.

The other was a feverish dream she had on the porch of the café, on a too-hot summer day. Sun-bleached like desert bones, the concrete winked with death in its seams. The subtle breezes licked her eyes shut and carried her nerve endings out into their ebb & flow. Each table was surrounded by banquet chairs, each chair inscribed with an embroidered portrait and name of one of her relatives. She sat surrounded by the images of everyone she knew and loved, but felt statuesque, isolated, unable to touch them.

Suddenly, Bonnie woke, and experienced her termination- her final, Absolutely Last Glitch. She fractured. She corrupted, corroded, eroded, decoded.

Her body ceased, so she exploded outward, vibrating into whatever materials could hold her sheer force.

There's a place where being is untainted by the necessity of a body. Pure, blank, whiteness. Like when Neo finds himself in the blank matrix, or when you look out the window of the airplane and instead of seeing the entire world below, you find yourself in a milky sea of clouds. We think of white as empty because we can't grasp all the colors it holds. But if you can *feel* all the colors in the spectrum at once, white is a symphony. There's no need to

name colors like "amber" or "cerulean" to separate them into shades.

Bonnie had always defined herself by her blueness, ever since birth- she reverberated with the same dark blue of the crevices on a clam shell. But suddenly her blueness melted away and she felt a purity like never before. She fell into the deepest most umblingly, humblingly dark darkness of the earth, and simultaneously stretched upward until her eyelashes fluttered at the same altitude as passing satellites.