

IMMORTAL DIFFUSION

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

DESUS Male, middle-aged.

TELIUM Female, in her twenties.

The characters can be of any race, and ideally not of the same.

SETTING

A modest home or condo living room at some point in the far future.

SCENE

(Lights up on the living room of a small house or condominium. Desus, wearing something simple yet suggestive of the future, is seated at a table. He is staring at a tablet, but not really reading. In disgust he drops it, stands, and begins pacing.)

DESUS

Music. Jazz.

(Soft jazz begins to play.)

No. Something else.

(The music changes.)

No. Something else.

(The music changes again.)

Forget it.

(The music stops. He is about to sit down at the table when a door chime rings.)

Come.

(Telium enters, "she" is dressed in something sexy and post-modern. Desus considers her.)

Who?

TELIUM

Tsk tsk tsk. What kind of welcome is that? Mother would be very disappointed.

DESUS

That was quick.

TELIUM

Do you like it?

DESUS

I thought you had your eye on something... taller this time.

TELIUM

I did. Ordered it special, in fact, but when I got there, the receptionist was... well...

(She motions to herself as if displaying her outfit.)

DESUS

She let you trade?

TELIUM

She wasn't thrilled, but I talked her into it. What's the point of an Italian villa if it can't buy you what you want?

(Desus shrugs and sits down at the table.)

What's the matter with you, hmm?

(Desus just gives her a bored stare.)

You should get one.

DESUS

I'm fine.

TELIUM

You're not fine. How old is that one? Forty?

DESUS

Forty-three.

TELIUM

What? What's the matter with you? If you're looking to take risks, go sky-diving or something. Are you trying to rot me out of my big brother?

(Desus just stares at him.)

You are, aren't you? You're going to stay in that—

DESUS

Go home, Telium.

TELIUM

Go home? Go home, Telium? What the hell's that supposed to me—

DESUS

There's nothing to talk abo—

TELIUM

There's *everything* to talk about!

DESUS

Just because I—

TELIUM

Don't bullshit me, Desus. What the hell's going on?

DESUS

You want to know what's going on?! Fine. I'm done. I'm worn out. Just... empty.

TELIUM

Empty? Empty!?! So fill yourself, you stupid prick! You don't just fade off and leave your little brother to—

DESUS

You're eight hundred and something, Telium. You stopped being anyone's *little* anything a long time ago.

TELIUM

You selfish son of a bitch.

(Desus shrugs.)

What?

DESUS

Maybe I am being selfish, or maybe I just don't even know what "self" means anymore.

TELIUM

You don't know what... What kind of sophomore philosophy class crap is that?

DESUS

Let me ask you something. You really think that makes you a woman?

TELIUM

Yeah, pretty damn sure. Every time I sit down to take a piss.

DESUS

I think you're wrong. I think you're just pretending—

TELIUM

What the fuck has gotten into you?

DESUS

It's all just a load of crap. It's the same shit, over and over.

TELIUM

Like you haven't worn a female before—

DESUS

Worn! That's just it—

TELIUM

You spent twelve weeks as a fucking horse once! And I had to babysit you so you didn't run off and do something stupid. Don't give me crap because I—

DESUS

I'm not giving you crap, Teel. I'm just saying...

TELIUM

What? What? You're just saying what?

DESUS

I'm tired. I've done it all. I mean, how many musical instruments do you have to master before the next one is just more of the same.

TELIUM

I hate to tell you this, but you have *never* mastered—

DESUS

I remember when I was a kid, and I got my first trumpet. It was exciting. Like discovering a new country. Then later, the trombone. Then the French horn. And after a while it was just one more tube of metal to blow in.

TELIUM

So pick up a violin. Don't just give up on—

DESUS

Don't you get it? I've played the violin. And the viola, and the cello, and the bass. And every other goddamn instrument out there. I'm closing in on fourteen hundred, Teel. I've played them all.

TELIUM

Then learn something else. Log in to the library and—

DESUS

Damn it, Telium! You're not listening. I've *read* them all. Played them, read them, met them... *been* them. And even if I haven't, I've read or played or met or been something so much like it that it might as well be the same.

TELIUM

So you're just going to quit.

DESUS

Tell me something. When you close your eyes at night, who are you?

TELIUM

I don't...

DESUS

I'm no one. Nothing. Just some consciousness floating along... year after year... century after century. My identity is so worn, I don't even know what I am anymore.

TELIUM

You want to know what you are? You're an ungrateful prick.

DESUS

Maybe I am.

TELIUM

Don't side step this. How many tens of thousands of years did people quest for immortality? Fight for it. Suffer for it. *Die* for it. And now we have it, and it's still not enough for you. You still surround yourself in this drab shithole, wearing drab clothes and eating chicken wings. We're *gods*, Desus. Gods. And all yo—

DESUS

That's just it, Teel. We're *not* gods. We may not be mortal, but we're not gods. And that's the problem.

TELIUM

You've really cracked this time, Dei.

DESUS

I'm serious. Let me ask you something. What gets you up each morning?

TELIUM

The smell of breakf—

DESUS

Stop fucking around, you little prick. I'm serious.

TELIUM

Fine. I get up, big brother, because it's a wide world out there. A big sandbox filled with toys.

DESUS

And when you've played with every toy there is? In every possible way? What then? When every new face is just a recasting of faces you've already met? Every conversation's just a rehash of something you've talk about for a hundred years? What then?

TELIUM

I don't know. Maybe then I'm omniscient, and I really am a god.

DESUS

No. You're not. You see, because gods are less than us. Gods are tied to a purpose, and live to that purpose. Thor never gets bored with making thunder. Ra never gets tired of making the sun shine. Because that's what they are. Gods are principles, archetypes. They don't die because archetypes endure. They're supposed to be immortal. Inherently immortal. But humans... we don't have a preset purpose. We change, evolve. And at some point you've grown as much as there is to grow. Without a *purpose*—

TELIUM

Growing sounds like a pretty damn good purpose to me.

DESUS

No. It's not. Growing's a what, not a why. At least, it's not a why when there's nothing to overcome.

(Telium shakes her head in disappointment.)

You don't get it. Life is supposed to be about choices. What makes those choices special... valuable... is when we have to give up something else to make them.

TELIUM

Can't have it all, huh? Well, Desus... you're wrong. We have it all. Every choice, every outcome. You want to be tall? Be tall. You want to know how the other half lives? Go be the other half. There's nothing wrong with that.

DESUS

Sure. Right.

TELIUM

Don't treat me like I'm some idiot who—

DESUS

Then why can't you see it!? When you can have everything, what's the point to having anything? Can you honestly tell me that you appreciate this sexy new body?

TELIUM

Yeah. I can.

DESUS

I think you can't. That body doesn't mean the same thing to you as to that receptionist. She *made* that body. Earned it. You were never an awkward adolescent girl, getting her first period. You never coped with the insecurities of wondering when she'd ever fill out a bra. Hell, even now. You don't grip a bottle of pepper spray with whitened knuckles when you walk home at night, do you? You think because you've suddenly got tits that you know what it means to be a woman, but all you know is a charade. A costume.

TELIUM

Fine. So next time I'll get a six-year-old body and see what that's like!

DESUS

And are you going to get a lobotomy and have a six-year-old mind to match it? You're missing the point. You *can't*. We're not designed to live forever. Mentally. With all this time available, we just... diffuse.

TELIUM

I'm not diffusing, Desus. I'm living the hell out of life.

DESUS

You'll see. We've stolen time, time we're not supposed to have—

TELIUM

Supposed to have? I decide what I'm supp—

DESUS

No! We're not supposed to have this much time. And at some point you're gonna realize that we've actually paid a very high price for it.

(Telium just shakes her head.)

We've lost the ability to appreciate what we have. And when you reach the end and look back, the whole thing is just one big... blank... nothing.

TELIUM

You're wrong, Desus. I appreciate. I appreciate everything I have. I enjoy the hell out of it.

DESUS

I think you—

TELIUM

No. Enough of this crap. I'm going. You sit here and wallow or do whatever you do with that ancient meat sack you call a body. And maybe give me a call later... when you get your head out of your ass.

(Telium storms out. After she's gone, Desus finishes his thought.)

DESUS

I *think*... you don't know the difference between enjoyment and value, little brother.

(Lights out.)