

Refurbished

By

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PHOTO MONTAGE - TALENT SCOUT COMMERCIAL

Open on a photo of a blue sky with white clouds. Cue cheesy, uplifting music.

TITLE: Have you ever had a dream?

As the following lines are spoken, photos depicting each activity come up.

CUSTOMER #1
My dream was to dance.

CUSTOMER #2
...to draw.

CUSTOMER #3
...to write a novel.

CUSTOMER #4
...to play piano.

CUSTOMER #5
...to run a marathon.

Cut to a photo of a person's neck, to which is attached a small, clear electronic device. Key words and phrases from the following monologue appear over top of the photo.

AD NARRATOR

Introducing the A5X, the first in a new line of Talent Scout Ability Enhancers. The A5X is designed to empower your brain and strengthen your neural circuits while appearing virtually invisible against your skin, allowing you to develop your skill set in an accelerated, natural manner. With only a one percent malfunction rate, the A5X is twice as reliable and effective as the Scouts in the Z series. Do your dreams a favor and upgrade to the A5X today! Remember that only licensed physicians may perform Scout maintenance procedures.

As the ad finishes, the camera zooms out to show it playing on a TV in a bar.

INT. BAR - EVENING

A relatively-near future bar with a bit of a cyberpunk atmosphere. Low, warm lighting, hints of advanced technology--though nothing much else seems to have changed from present day.

A seemingly bored bartender wipes glasses behind the counter, watching the TV where the commercial has just ended. The bar is relatively empty, with just a few individuals scattered around and one or two larger groups occupying tables.

JACE CAMPBELL, handsome, in his early 30s, sits at a table near the stage, sipping a drink and watching the singer. Quiet and a bit introverted, he makes no effort to converse with anyone around him, content to be left alone.

The singer, FIRENZE D'ARDENTE, is performing a sultry blues-rock song, accompanied by a guitarist. Around the same age as Jace, Firenze has long dark hair and a seductive smile.

As her song ends, most of the audience applauds--including, noticeably, Jace.

FIRENZE

We're going to take a quick break,
but then we'll have a couple new
songs for you. I hope you're all
having a good time tonight! I'm
Firenze D'Ardente, and we'll be
back in just a few minutes.

Firenze steps off the stage and heads over to the bar.

FIRENZE

Slow night for tips, isn't it?

BARTENDER

(shrugging)

Not too bad for a Tuesday. You in
for something?

FIRENZE

Just water. Alcohol hasn't been too
great on my voice lately.

The bartender fills a glass with tapwater and ice, then hands it to her. She turns around to watch the stage, leaning her elbows back on the counter as she takes a drink. She notices Jace watching her.

(CONTINUED)

FIRENZE

He's kind of cute. What do you think?

BARTENDER

Seems like a loner type. Came in about an hour ago, ordered a scotch, hasn't said a word to anyone since he sat down.

FIRENZE

(mischievously)

Maybe I'll go say hi, see if I can change his mind.

She pushes away from the bar and begins to saunter over to Jace's table.

BARTENDER

(calling after her)

Can't you at least keep it in your pants until the set's over?

Firenze reaches the table and takes a seat opposite Jace.

FIRENZE

Enjoying the show so far?

JACE

I guess you could say that.

FIRENZE

I *am* saying that. It might even be the highlight of my night, knowing Jace Campbell can't take his eyes off me.

JACE

(genuinely surprised)

You know me?

FIRENZE

Pterodactyls in Space. Watch it every time it comes on TV.

JACE

Not one of my shining moments.

FIRENZE

Oh, don't be so modest. At least it's entertaining. I love the bit where you're standing in the rain as the spaceship explodes overhead

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

FIRENZE (cont'd)
while the dramatic music
crescendos.

JACE
I'm hoping that won't be the one
moment of my career that I'm
remembered for.

So, Firenze D'Ardente. Stage name?

FIRENZE
Picked it when I got my Scout.

She pushes her hair back to reveal evidence of the device protruding from her neck, slightly below her ear. Rusty and slightly bent out of shape, it makes sense why she keeps it hidden.

JACE
That's one of the older models,
right? The TSX1890?

FIRENZE
Yeah, got it secondhand a little
while ago. Little rusty, glitches
out sometimes, but it works well
enough for now.

JACE
I got mine upgraded before the film
I just finished.

He turns his head towards Firenze. His Scout is much nicer than hers, modern and shiny, all smooth curves and sleek trimming--obviously very expensive. Firenze lets out a sigh of envy.

FIRENZE
Damn, a Z9000.

JACE
Yeah, hopefully it's worth the
cash. Might finally help me land a
major hit.

Firenze reaches out to touch the Scout, her fingers lingering for a moment on his neck. Jace doesn't protest.

FIRENZE
It's so small. Mine makes me look
like Frankenstein's monster.

JACE

That's a bit of an exaggeration.

FIRENZE

Easy for you to say. I'd kill for a Scout that no one noticed.

JACE

No offense, but I hardly think you could do as much damage as the real Scout Killer.

FIRENZE

Oh, so you heard about that?

JACE

I don't think there was a single person who didn't hear about it. It was the hot ticket news item when I first got up here.

FIRENZE

Well, it was a big deal for a small city. You could almost hear the sigh of relief when they caught the guy.

JACE

I heard rumors that he might be innocent.

FIRENZE

Can't believe everything you hear.

JACE

And I know that better than most people, but you can't deny there's some evidence for it. The cops never did find all those Scouts he stashed.

FIRENZE

But the murders stopped after he went away. Or maybe I'm just trying to convince myself so I feel safer at night.

JACE

I won't argue with that.

The guitarist catches Firenze's eye and gestures towards the stage. Firenze downs the rest of her water and stands.

(CONTINUED)

FIRENZE

That's my cue. Will I see you when
the show's done?

JACE

I'm not going anywhere.

FIRENZE

You could even walk me home, if you
want. Just in case the Scout
Killer's still out there.

JACE

I'd love to.

FIRENZE

Perfect.

EXT. FIRENZE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

A multiple story brick building in the heart of the city.
Cars bustle by as the sun rises. Zoom in on a slightly-open
window on the third story, where white curtains blow gently.

INT. FIRENZE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Starting at the window, pan around the bedroom, which is
simple and clean. Stacks of technical books and several
computers with odd-looking attachments decorate a desk.

Firenze stands at a mirror, applying lipstick and humming to
herself, the song she was performing the night before. As
she finishes, she brushes her hair back and runs her fingers
over her Scout, looking displeased as it glitches and her
humming becomes discordant.

Her expression changes to one of satisfaction as her eyes
drift from her face to something in the mirror behind her.
Rack focus to a shelf in the background, where Jace
Campbell's fancy Z9000 sits, neatly labeled, traces of blood
still visible. The camera zooms in, then travels down the
length of the shelf, which is lined with at least ten other
Scouts, all similarly labeled.

Fade as Firenze's humming continues.