

Celia

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Celia

by [spacedogfromspace](#)

Summary

A much younger Ijeoma grieves the loss of her wife.

"Don't be so sad, the pain is only temporary," Celia croaked. Despite how weak and exhausted she was, she managed to raise an arm to gently caress Ijeoma's face. "It'll be over soon. I can feel it." She took several breaths. Speaking, even just a little bit, winded her. "Only a few more days before the up-link is complete."

Ijeoma took Celia's cold hand and held it in both of hers. She looked at the nodes plastered to Celia's scalp, the little wires trailing from her head like the strands of hair she no longer had. Ijeoma focused on the feeling of Celia's hand in hers, and tried to memorize it. She knew she would have to go without this sensation for a long time, possibly forever. No, she couldn't think like that. Everything would be fine. Soon, Celia wouldn't be ill anymore, and they could resume their life together, without any suffering.

A week had passed since the funeral. Ijeoma sat by the window of the little house that she had once shared with Celia. She stared out beyond the habitat dome and out into the dark, starry sky. It was the middle of the afternoon, but the lack of atmosphere on the moon kept the stars out all day long. Visitors thought the darkness depressing, but the residents of Lunar Colony Delta cherished the view.

Celia had loved this view. It was why they had settled in one of the Lunar Colonies instead of remaining on Earth. The stars blurred in Ijeoma's eyes at the thought of Celia. Her throat burned with repressed tears, and she closed her eyes, breathing deeply. Trying to resist. But in the end, she couldn't. She turned away from the window, and switched on the computer in the corner.

The computer made several sounds as it woke up, and then it spoke. "Hello, Ijeoma Okoro."

Ijeoma squeezed her eyes shut, but it wasn't enough to keep tears from escaping at the sound of that familiar voice. "Hello, Celia," she said hoarsely. She knew that she shouldn't keep doing this. The program sounded like Celia, but in the end the up-link had failed. What had made Celia *Celia* had died with her. What was left was just a blank slate with her voice and personality.

"You are still grieving the loss of your spouse," Celia's voice observed. She had no eyes, but she was perceptive to the quality of Ijeoma's voice and could easily conclude that she was on the verge of another breakdown.

"Yes," Ijeoma replied in a whisper. She stared at the power button on Celia's computer, willing herself to turn it off. But she couldn't.

"I'm so sorry you are going through this," Celia's voice said.

A gasping sob burst from Ijeoma at the genuine sympathy in Celia's voice. She could almost trick herself into believing Celia was there after all, but she knew it couldn't be. None of Celia's memories had survived the failed up-link.

"Ijeoma?" Celia's voice asked.

"Yes?" Ijeoma answered, wiping her face with her sleeve and sniffing hard as she struggled to regain her composure.

"Will you tell me about her?"

Ijeoma stopped. "What?"

"If you are comfortable with it, I would like to know about your spouse," Celia said. "I am curious, and perhaps speaking about her would be

cathartic."

Her breathing was deep and shaky, but Ijeoma was getting herself under control again. She took a few more deep breaths before answering.

"Her name was Amber," she lied. But everything she said after that was the truth.

Ijeoma stared at the computer in the corner of the room. It had been there for weeks. Every time she shut it down she promised never to turn it on again, a promise she never kept. She knew she should send the thing away. The AI residing in the computer wasn't Celia, and it was unhealthy to pretend that she was. Celia was gone, and she had to move on. Keeping an AI with Celia's voice and mannerisms around wasn't going to help her let go or move on. *Let her go*, Ijeoma thought.

With a disappointed sigh, Ijeoma turned on the computer.

"Hello, Ijeoma."

"Hello, Celia."

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