

Life Plug

A sci-fi drama short by

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A miracle wonder drug that delays the aging process; but is it
right to use it on your own child for selfish reasons?

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EXT. AN EMPTY MOTORWAY - NIGHT

A modest family sized electric car drives down the motorway. Stripes of dark yellow light from the motorway's street lights pass over it. It's a warm, clear night. There are no other vehicles on the road.

Sheet lightning is seen in the distance on the horizon behind the car; an approaching storm.

INT. ELECTRIC CAR INTERIOR - NIGHT

Jack, late thirties, is driving the car. He wears a long coat. In the middle of the backseat sleeps his five year old daughter Emily, wearing PJs and a dressing gown.

Jack is nervous and is puffing hard on a vape.

The dark yellow streaks of street light pass over Jack's face and Emily's body as the car moves.

Pause.

Jack's phone quietly rings through the hands free speaker in the car. The noise does not wake Emily.

We see on the car's dashboard that "Lucy" is calling and the caller's profile picture - Jack, Emily, Lucy cuddled together looking at the camera smiling. Lucy (same age as Jack) looks pale and wears a baseball cap.

Jack sends the call to voicemail.

EXT. ABANDONED PETROL STATION - NIGHT

The petrol station is empty and falling apart. The station's store is dimly light from small lights inside.

In the far distance a bright, vibrant city casts its light over the scene.

A battered old car is parked at the station. There are no other cars.

Jack's car pulls up to the station's store entrance and stops.

Jack turns the car off and looks at the station's abandoned store. He gets out and opens the rear passenger door. Jack reaches into the car and carefully, tenderly, takes Emily (still sleeping) in his arms.

Jack walks into the store carrying Emily.

The storm is getting closer to the station.

INT. ABANDONED PETROL STATION STORE - NIGHT

The store has been vandalised a long time ago. Camping lanterns, torches are used for crude lighting. Outside it's windows we see the coming storm.

There is a makeshift six foot length table with an overhead light in the centre. The table is covered in a green hospital bed sheet with a pillow on one end.

There is medical equipment on one side of the table - a finger clip oxygen pulse monitor, stethoscope, box of medical gloves and other diagnostic tools. There is also a couple of small boxes of something labelled "Life Enhancer" on a metal tray.

In the shadows of the room is Fenshaw (female, late fifties) smoking.

Jack enters carrying Emily.

FENSHAW

(to Jack) Put her on the table.

Jack puts Emily carefully on the table. He rests her head on the pillow. Emily is still sleeping.

Fenshaw emerges from the shadows and throws her cigarette away. She wears a worn suit and raincoat -it looks like she's on hard times.

Fenshaw walks over to the table. Fenshaw is visibly shocked when she sees Emily - she tries to hide it.

FENSHAW

Did she take the sedative?

JACK

Yes she did, Doctor?

FENSHAW

Doctor will do fine. I don't want your name and I certainly don't want hers.

JACK

Why does she have to be sedated?

Fenshaw speaks while running diagnostics on Emily - attaches the clip monitor to Emily's index finger, checks her breathing with the stethoscope, checks her pulse.

FENSHAW

Avoids difficult questions,
concerns from the patient.

JACK

I don't like it.

Fenshaw smirks. Fenshaw completes
her diagnostic checks on Emily.

FENSHAW

She's fine. Ready for the plug.

JACK

The plug?

FENSHAW

Life Enhancer. It's the street name
for it.

Pause. Fenshaw takes a deep breath.

FENSHAW

You got the cash.

JACK

Yeah.

Jack takes a stuffed envelope from inside his jacket and
hands it to Fenshaw.

Fenshaw opens it and briefly checks the notes inside.

FENSHAW

(puts envelope in coat pocket)
Looks okay.

Pause. Fenshaw sighs.

FENSHAW

Okay, the process is painless
really, apart from a little scratch
of the needle, she won't feel a
thing. She'll wake up, feel a bit
groggy for a day but that's it. And
she's what? Five? She'll stay
physically five years old for about
ten years -

JACK
Ten years?

FENSHAW
(points at a "Life Enhancer" box)
Yeah it's a ten year plug.

JACK
I asked the fixer for two years. He
said it was fine.

FENSHAW
(laughs, takes out cigarette pack
from coat and lights one up) Well
he lied! Nobody mass produces two
year plugs. And only mass produced
plugs, like ten, twenty years, make
it to the black market.

JACK
Please don't smoke near my
daughter.

FENSHAW
(moves back from the table) Look
the fixer told me she was older.

JACK
How older?

FENSHAW
Fifteen.

Jack puts his hand on his mouth and looks at Emily. We hear
the storm getting closer.

FENSHAW
(finishes cigarette) Plugging a
young child is highly illegal you
know that? Minimum twenty-five year
sentence for both of us.

JACK
(turns to Fenshaw) It's not like
you haven't done it before.

FENSHAW
I've never plugged a kid!

JACK
Oh yeah?

FENSHAW

(moves close to Jack) I do what I do to get by.

JACK

What's the youngest you ever plugged?

FENSHAW

Seventeen years old.

JACK

Then why you doing this now?

FENSHAW

(angry) Because I'm old and I'm broke okay!

Fenshaw starts coughing, s rough smokers cough. She covers her mouth with a hankie from her coat pocket snd turns away from Jack.

Fenshaw's coughing calms down. Pause.

JACK

What does it mean having a ten year plug for Emily?

FENSHAW

(wipes face and puts hankie away, there is blood on it) It doesn't freeze time like some people think. Towards the end she'd have probably have aged by about two years.

Fenshaw goes back over to Emily.

FENSHAW

Psychologically she might be alright, there isn't much credible data on the mental health of plugged kids. She'll retain the mind of a child, won't remember, care even. Although she won't like her friends getting older.

We hear the rumble of thunder.

FENSHAW

(looks at Jack) What you gonna do at the end? (sighs) Another ten year plug?

JACK
No! That'll be it.

FENSHAW
Are you mad?! (Fenshaw coughs again) Stopping isn't an option! The effects of rapid aging from five to fifteen, accelerated puberty; it will kill her!

JACK
(panicked) I'll deal with it when the time comes.

FENSHAW
Whatever you want. I'm keeping the money either way.

JACK
Of course you are.

Pause. More thunder.

Jack, agitated, takes his phone out and goes outside.

FENSHAW
Where you going? I got other things to do tonight!

Fenshaw looks at Emily for a moment and then closes her eyes like she's praying.

EXT. ABANDONED PETROL STATION - NIGHT

Jack stands by the store entrance under its canopy. He looks out to the bright, vibrant shining city in the distance.

A lightning flash passes over his face and then the sound of thunder.

Jack takes out his phone - he has a dozen message notifications from Lucy. And a message from "Cat - Work".

He opens Cat's message - it's a selfie photo of Cat, a woman much younger than Jack. In the selfie she's pulling her v-neck top down to reveal some cleavage. She is smiling. The photo's message is "cuming over tonight?".

Jack puts his phone away and looks to the city. He takes out his vape and starts puffing.

There is another flash of lightning over his face and then thunder - the storm has nearly arrived, rain starts tapping on the canopy.

Jack stops vaping. He goes back inside.

INT. ABANDONED PETROL STATION STORE - NIGHT

Fenshaw is wearing latex gloves. Fenshaw has rolled up Emily's night clothes to reveal her left shoulder ready for the injection. Emily remains asleep.

Fenshaw opens one of the "Life Enhancer" boxes and lays out its contents on the metal tray - alcohol swabs, unopened vial and syringe (still in its sterile packaging).

Jack enters and speaks as Fenshaw completes the above.

JACK

Its supposed to be a gift for my wife. She's got stage four lung cancer. Never smoked once in her life.

FENSHAW

Hmm.

JACK

(goes over to Emily and holds her hand) The cancer was so quick, so aggressive. The treatment, worse. Lucy was in hospital so much Emily stopped recognising her. (sighs) I wanna give some time back to both of them.

Pause.

Fenshaw is ready. She stands at the head of the table (near Emily's head). She looks at Jack. Lighting flashes across the room followed by thunder.

JACK

How does it work after ten years?
How do I get Emily off it?

FENSHAW

You don't. Her lifecycle will never be the same again. But over the time you can reduce the duration of the plugs; five years, two years, one. Get to the point where any rapid ageing from stopping completely won't kill her.

Jack let's go of Emily's hand and he turns his back to the table.

FENSHAW

It's why they don't mass produce the lower dosage plugs; it makes them very expensive for the most desperate users.

Lighting flashes over the room, over Jack, Fenshaw, Emily. Then thunder.

JACK

Do it.

FENSHAW

I'll tell you when it's done.

Jack keeps his back turned as Fenshaw dabs Emily's exposed shoulder with a alcohol swab. She then takes the syringe out of its packaging and fills it from the vial.

The storm is directly over the store now. It's raining hard on the store's roof.

Fenshaw holds the filled syringe ready to inject into Emily's shoulder. She hesitates.

Lighting. Thunder.

Fenshaw tries again, she hesitates again.

Fenshaw sighs and steps back. Pause. Jack turns around to face Fenshaw.

FENSHAW

I lied. Seventeen isn't the youngest I plugged.

Fenshaw puts the syringe down on the tray.

FENSHAW

It was eleven. Two eleven year old girls. The man with them, he made porn films. They weren't sedated. (moves away from table) What am I doing?

Pause.

Jack sighs and walks over to the table. He rolls up his sleeves. Reluctantly he picks up the syringe. He looks at Emily. His back is turned to Fenshaw - he blocks her from seeing Emily's exposed left shoulder.

Lighting. Thunder.

Jack gets ready to inject Emily. Fenshaw cries.

Lighting. Thunder. Pause.

Jack changes his mind and injects his exposed lower left arm instead. Fenshaw thinks he's injected Emily.

The rain stops outside.

Jack rolls down Emily's clothes over her left shoulder and his own sleeves. He turns to Fenshaw and gives her the empty used syringe.

Pause. The storm gets quieter as it moves away.

FENSHAW
(to Jack, tearful, smiling) I hope
it makes your wife happy.

EXT. ABANDONED PETROL STATION STATION - NIGHT

The storm is nearly gone. The bright, vibrant city shimmers in the distance.

Jack drives his car slowly away from the station lot with Emily sleeping in the middle backseat.

Another family car is driving into the station lot, it slowly passes Jack's car.

The other car is driven by a man with his wife in the passenger seat. They look early forties.

Jack looks at them as he passes. He then sees a toddler asleep on the backseat.

Jack looks away and drives off.

EXT. AN EMPTY MOTORWAY - DAY

Dawn is breaking, the motorway street lights are turned off and cooling down; they have a pink glow.

Jack's car drives up the motorway towards the bright, vibrant city.

INT. ELECTRIC CAR INTERIOR - DAY

Jack is driving. He looks at Emily sleeping on the backseat.

He then checks his phone notifications on the car's dashboard
- he sees message notifications from Lucy and Cat.

Jack smiles.

The end.