

The Euphoria Test

by

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INT./EXT. PRIVATE TAXI, LONDON STREETS - NIGHT

VIN, 30s, battle weary and roguish is driving through beating rain.

VIN V/O

Every government in the world has a department that doesn't exist. The one where they experiment with new technologies, new drugs, new methods. Where bodies can be buried and mistakes can be hushed up. But if it doesn't exist, how do you get anyone to apply?

As the car stops, what looks like a BODY flies onto Vin's windscreen with a loud THUD.

VIN

No, no way no. No.

Vin looks closer. It's a dressed MANNEQUIN.

Sound of KIDS' JEERING as a hand reaches to grab Mannequin.

Vin pulls the handbrake, climbs out the car, as TEENAGER 1 in a green bomber jacket and TEENAGER 2 runs off into the distance, dragging Mannequin behind.

Vin's phone rings. "The Witch" flashes up and he answers.

VIN (cont'd)

Ma'am

WITCH

I've been thinking. Would you prefer to call me Christy?

VIN

Ma'am?

WITCH

All civilians call me that. And as of tomorrow morning at 8am, you'll have that pleasure too. I'm shutting you down Officer. Two years of failure is long enough don't you think? Too long in fact.

VIN

No Ma'am you really cannot do that, not at this stage. You know I am so close.

WITCH

Good for you. See you at 8.

VIN

Ma'am!

The line's dead. Vin kicks the car in frustration, then notices a torn piece of butterfly-patterned cloth left on his bonnet.

He frowns, and looks at the teenagers disappearing from view in the distance. He turns and enters the car.

Vin switches the sat nav to available, presses a couple of keys. He drives off.

INT. LONDON STREET - NIGHT

Vin is parked up curbside as the wind and rain beat down.

LUCINDA, late 20s, a skittish yet intense woman climbs in the back with a large holdall. She wears a skirt with exactly the same butterfly-motif. Vin doesn't see.

She shakes her umbrella, slams the door, and removes a leaf she finds in her hair. Vin catches sight of her and something unnerves him. He tries to hide his face.

LUCINDA

Restaurant Chevale. NW5. I'm late for work so make it snappy would you...

Vin nods and drives off, silent.

LUCINDA (cont'd)

You not going to make any horse jokes, why the long face yada yada. Every other prick does.

Vin shrugs. She looks up.

LUCINDA (cont'd)

Maybe you don't speak French

VIN

I just like to drive

Lucinda leans forward and reads the console

LUCINDA

Yeah well I like to chat and you've got... twelve minutes twenty four to redeem yourself.

Lucinda looks for the first time at Vin properly.

LUCINDA (cont'd)

Wait, wait. I know you from somewhere.

Vin tenses. Lucinda has a moment - she knows something.

She puts her bag at her feet, out of sight from Vin.

She rummages around through chef whites and canvas package full of kitchen knives. She stashes a KNIFE up her sleeve.

EXT. LOCKUP - SOMEWHERE IN LONDON - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Vin stands in front a rickety and derelict looking lock-up under a harsh fluorescent light.

He knocks. Nothing. And again. Nothing. Vin stands, shivering, looking into the shadows.

Out of the darkness steps DINO, 40s, a dwarf with a cocksure manner. He tugs on Vin's jeans. Vin JUMPS.

VIN

You scared the life out of me man.

Vin sees Dino, who puts his finger on his lips. Dino turns and unlocks a ground-level padlock to the lockup.

INT. LOCKUP - SOMEWHERE IN LONDON - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A strip-light casts shadows across the lock up, empty except for a table-tennis table and unlit tea candles placed around a mandala cloth.

Vin and Dino are playing table tennis, with Dino's end supported by a large plinth. Dino checks his watch.

DINO

Twelve minutes twenty-four we've been going, you're quite slow. Now repeat the rules, let's make sure we understand each other.

Dino serves and controls the game, Vin runs from side to side, breathless. Reasonable rally.

VIN

OK, so only sell Euphoria to old people. You want a photo of every customer, sent via encrypted VPN channels. Payment via bitcoin. Pickups from the Nook on Fridays 2:30. And don't get high on my own supply. Are we done?

Vin serves and Dino misses. Dino looks furious and pulls a ball from his pocket and SMASH serves.

DINO

You sell them on me.

Vin misses, panting. Dino jumps off the stage, and picks up some papers

DINO (cont'd)

Sell them on me, the idealised me.  
Put it... right here.

Dino taps his head and hands Vin a glitzy sales brochure featuring a chiselled, white-toothed American. Vin looks at the face - then Dino - then back at the face. Shrugs.

EXT. LOCKUP - SOMEWHERE IN LONDON - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Dino locks the door behind him as Vin stands sweating.

VIN

So when will I see you again?

DINO

Why would I want to do that?

Dino then taps Vin on the legs.

DINO (cont'd)

Hey Vin, I've got a little piece of advice for you before we go.

Vin nods, relaxed.

DINO (cont'd)

Don't look me up OK? Forget about me. What I do. How I do it. It's all... a diversion. Concentrate on sales, OK?

Dino makes a fist pounding movement.

VIN  
Else you'll come and find me and kill  
me right?

Dino laughs, and then so does Vin

DINO  
Can you imagine! Me, running after  
you, be like a jockey trying to catch  
a horse. No that's not going to  
happen.

Dino's face goes cold and he stares at Vin

DINO (cont'd)  
I outsource all my work.

Dino spreads his fingers as if sprinkling magic dust.

INT./EXT. PRIVATE TAXI, LONDON STREETS - NIGHT

Vin drives while Lucinda rummages through her bag and  
produces a brown vial, still hiding the knife.

Vin is aghast, but hides it.

LUCINDA  
What are the chances eh? Me and you.  
Together.

Lucinda cracks open the vial and taunts a silent Vin.

LUCINDA (cont'd)  
Not for the under 70s you told her,  
else very bad things would happen.  
Bit late for that.

Lucinda downs it in one.

LUCINDA (cont'd)  
I've been taking it since mum  
committed suicide.

Lucinda sits back in her chair, letting the rush take over  
her.

A wave hits Lucinda, her eyes close in ecstasy, her face  
softens.

The wave ends, she smiles.

LUCINDA (cont'd)  
Got a fucking problem with that?

INT./EXT. MONTAGE VARIOUS HOUSES, LONDON - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Vin stands outside, facing ETHEL, 80s, a kindly-looking lady in the doorway. Vin steps back with his phone on camera.

As Vin talks we cut him in three different outfits outside three different houses and in between Ethel and an EAST-END GENT, 80s.

VIN  
If you'd just hold it there.  
Lovely.  
Perfect.

VIN (cont'd)  
We like to connect  
Form links with our customers  
Keep them for our files

Vin takes out seven vials of brown liquid and hands them over to East-End Gent. In the background, Teenager 1 hovers in his distinctive green bomber jacket. Gent points at him.

EAST END GENT  
And what would happen if he took some  
of this loopy juice? Can't hurt can  
it?

VIN  
No  
Never  
It's just a terrible idea Bill.

Teenager 1 nods to East End Gent as he picks up his keys and heads out the door.

VIN (cont'd)  
Actually if you have any questions,  
speak to the guy who runs this.  
He's something else, really.  
He would melt your heart and charm  
your soul I promise you.

Vin hands over the glitzy brochure and Ethel laughs

ETHEL  
Oh stop! You're killing me!

Ethel winks, mischievously. In the background, Lucinda runs down the stairs, and swings past.

She sees Ethel talking and pokes her head out the door, smiles and darts back inside.

Vin's attention is drawn to her, as Ethel leafs through the brochure.

INT. PRIVATE TAXI, LONDON STREETS - NIGHT

Vin drives. Another wave hits Lucinda. She arches her back, this time in a semi-orgasm, biting her lip, shaking slightly. She pants and the wave's gone.

Vin remains silent, gripping the steering wheel even tighter.

Lucinda throws herself back on the chair and moans as another wave hits her, still hiding the knife.

She lies back exhausted, her hair a mess. She fingers the point of the knife, eyes closed.

Vin sees her matching dress for the first time, then looks at the ripped cloth on the passenger seat.

INT. OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Vin stands in front of a leather-lined desk in a oak-paneled office. Chief Officer Zamori, 60s, waspish, aka The Witch sits opposite, looking unimpressed.

On Zamori's desk is a series of wilted and decaying mushrooms. She picks at them, throwing the bits in a bin.

VIN

It's more than drugs Ma'am. It's a heist, so to speak.

Vin places an electronic tablet in front of her and swipes it. Zamori looks up disinterested.

VIN (cont'd)

Claire Bethany, 76. Died of an overdose.

CHIEF OFFICER ZAMORI

So what?

VIN  
... except right before, she  
transfers her life savings to a  
cryptobank. Here.

Vin swipes again. Bank account details. Swipes again.

VIN (cont'd)  
Terry Gent. 83, found in his garage  
with a hosepipe and the motor  
running. But the week before he  
invests everything a tinpot company  
using untraceable bitcoins.

CHIEF OFFICER ZAMORI  
There any more?

Vin swipes four more times as he talks.

VIN  
Six so far, transfers, purchases,  
sales all untraceable, all dead.  
Could be dozens, even hundreds more.

Zamori now pays attention, looks concerned

CHIEF OFFICER ZAMORI  
Jesus, you realise we're now  
complicit in all this. His network  
must be huge, who've you got so far?

VIN  
That's where it gets strange. There  
are a few emails to an untraceable  
address, with the same pattern.  
Always initiated by the victim.

CHIEF OFFICER ZAMORI  
So he gets to them before obviously.

VIN  
OK but how? There's no calls, no  
visits, no contact. Nothing.

CHIEF OFFICER ZAMORI  
It could be magic or you could be  
incompetent. And I don't believe in  
magic.

Zamori wipes her soily fingers on a paper towel and throws  
it. Vin gathers his tablet, his jacket, looks at the  
mushrooms.

VIN  
They don't look so good.

CHIEF OFFICER ZAMORI  
When one dies they all die. Talk  
through the soil apparently. It only  
takes one bad apple... so to speak.

Vin nods, thinking and leaves.

INT./EXT. PRIVATE TAXI, LONDON STREETS - NIGHT

Vin drives in total silence as Lucinda sits quietly, knife  
still hidden, crazed look in her eyes.

Vin pulls up to a traffic light, when BANG - a squeegee  
seemingly out of nowhere hits the windscreen. A down at heel  
WINDSCREEN WASHER, 20s, grins through the glass as the soap  
suds trickle down.

Lucinda pulls the knife discreetly from her sleeve, sits  
forward, ready to pounce.

Vin shakes his head at the Washer. His face drops. Vin  
switches the windscreen wipers. The washer walks away,  
crestfallen.

Lucinda sees her opportunity, reaches forward and brings the  
knife to Vin's throat, tight.

LUCINDA  
You stole everything. From her, from  
me. From us.

Vin's head presses back against the head rest, resisting the  
blade as it cuts in.

LUCINDA (cont'd)  
I'm going to FUCK YOU UP!

INT. CAR, HILLSIDE CAR PARK, LONDON - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Vin is parked up, car facing a forest. He rotates a vial in  
his fingers, holding it up in the moonlight.

He uncorks it. Smells it. Sips it. Then downs it.

He waits for a beat, and the whoosh, pushes back in his  
chair as if pushed by g-force.

His eyes close as the waves take over.

And then - his mounted phone beeps. A text message from unknown number. It reads "Some mistakes are unforgivable".

Vin panics and looks around the car park. It's derelict, no-one in sight.

INT. PRIVATE TAXI, LONDON STREETS - NIGHT

Vin suddenly sees Bill outside now berating Windscreen Washer. He thinks for a moment as Lucinda arm moves to draw the blade across Vin's throat.

VIN

You think it was chance you got this cab? Impossible. Impossible.

Lucinda appears to lose control over her hand. The blade moves away, as if she's fighting an invisible opposing pressure she has no control over.

VIN (cont'd)

When you took the drug, you joined his network. We all did.

Lucinda's arm starts to shake.

VIN (cont'd)

Lucinda, it's him. He's using you. He's using you right now.

Lucinda's eyes boggle as her hand moves away to the front passenger seat and she drops the blade. She whips her arm back and SCREAMS.

LUCINDA

Let go of me!

Lucinda reaches in her bag for another blade. Windscreen washer looks into the car and is terrified, backing away.

Lucinda's arm violently jerks in and out of the bag, then one arm pins against the back armrest with invisible force.

VIN

The man who put this idea in your head, he's the man who killed your mother. Do you want to find him?

LUCINDA

What the FUCK are you?! Get off me!

Lucinda's other arm is pinned against the other armrest, she cannot move. Vin stares straight ahead. The Windscreen washer averts his gaze

VIN  
DO YOU WANT TO FIND HIM?

LUCINDA  
Let go of me!  
(shrieks)

Vin says nothing, her arms shaking

LUCINDA (cont'd)  
Yes! YES, OK YES!

And suddenly, she regains control of her arms. She wraps them tight into her body, then into a fetal position.

Vin turns around.

VIN  
Look at me.

Lucinda hugs herself. Scared. Emotional.

They hold each other's gaze for a beat, and then Lucinda starts to cry.

Gentle sobs at first, then big howling gasping cries.

LUCINDA  
I miss her so much.

Her hair is wet with tears. Vin nods.

VIN  
I'm going to get him.

LUCINDA  
How?

VIN  
Because anyone who's works for him,  
can work for me.

EXT. PRIVATE TAXI, LONDON STREETS - NIGHT

Outside the car, the window cleaner is now being berated by East End Gent. Vin steps out. Lucinda drops her window listening.

VIN

Bill!

East End Gent turns. Moves away from the window cleaner and storms up to Vin

EAST END GENT

Don't you Bill me. Don't you dare.  
That stuff...

Gent taps his head with his finger.

EAST END GENT (cont'd)

Messed with her. It seems strange doesn't it. One minute she's enjoying walks in the park, the next she's topped herself. Is that a coincidence? What do you think?

VIN

I'm so sorry to hear that.

EAST END GENT

Oh are you now. She never got to see winter, it was her favourite season. Instead last weekend I scattered her ashes in the garden.

VIN

It sounds like... she was under a lot of pressure.

EAST END GENT

Glass houses Vin. Glass houses.

Gent gets up close to Vin

EAST END GENT (cont'd)

I can't prove nothing, but get out my way. Get right out my way.

Vin turns and climbs back in the car.

Vin taps his fingers on the steering wheel then turns to his phone. Lucinda is confused.

VIN

We'll find him in a garden, a winter garden. Possibly a park, and likely a glass construction.

LUCINDA

How do you know?

Vin taps in "Winter gardens" in his phone. Several turn up.  
The penny drops for Lucinda. She points to the sat-nav

LUCINDA (cont'd)  
It's the 3rd one. Avery Hill.

Vin looks at her surety and then sets off driving.

INT. CAR, STREETS OF LONDON - NIGHT

Vin drives into a road and sees the street sign. Butterfly Lane, which adjoins a park. He looks at Lucinda's dress and the ripped cloth on the seat. Nods at Lucinda.

Vin parks up and pulls a gun out the glove-box. Lucinda moves to get out too.

VIN  
No chance

LUCINDA  
And leave me here suddenly empty and  
powerless? I fucking dare you.

Lucinda walks straight out the car, and Vin shakes his head and follows.

EXT. WINTER GARDEN, AVERY HILL, LONDON - NIGHT

Lucinda and Vin approach the decaying Victorian conservatory, lit by moonlight, dirty windows. Vin keeps his gun low.

Vin finds a doorway ajar, and quietly tests it. It opens. He motions to Lucinda. She quietly joins him.

INT. WINTER GARDEN CONSERVATORY, AVERY HILL - NIGHT

Vin and Lucinda step through decaying corridors, tip toeing, gun forward.

Long shadows, and creaks as they treat gingerly through the building.

The open up into the main conservatory courtyard.

On a cloth among the plants, with his back to them is Dino, sat cross-legged. He is lit up by the moon.

Vin raises his gun.

DINO  
What did I tell you?

LUCINDA  
(shrieking)  
Kill him. Fucking kill him.

Dino slowly stands and turns around and sees Lucinda and gives a wide smile.

Lucinda starts to shake. Suddenly she lunges at Vin, and grabs for the gun. They tussle, and the gun goes flying towards Dino who picks it up and points it at Vin

DINO  
Very fickle lady

Lucinda stares at her hands, suddenly horrified. She looks apologetically to Vin.

Dino clicks the gun off the safety.

Vin doesn't bat an eyelid. Lucinda looks on, terrified.

VIN  
Dino Spareldi, I am arresting you for extortion, murder, soliciting and distribution of a Class A substance.

Dino looks angry, and cocks the gun at Vin.

DINO  
I'm not messing. You've got three seconds.

Three...  
Two...  
One...

VIN  
You do not have to say anything, but it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court.

Dino fires the gun, but it clicks. Empty.

Vin walks up to Dino and waves bullets in his face.

VIN (cont'd)  
She told me she was going to do that.

Lucinda looks confused. Vin smiles and pulls out handcuffs and Dino offers his hands reluctantly.

Suddenly a large stage light switches on, glaring all three of them. Dino grins.

From behind the light walks Chief Officer Zamori, slowly clapping her hands as she comes into view.

CHIEF OFFICER ZAMORI  
Congratulations Officer, just in time.

LUCINDA  
Who's she? What's she doing here?

VIN  
I have... no idea.

CHIEF OFFICER ZAMORI  
Get her out of here.

INT. CORRIDORS, SECRET SERVICE UNIT - DAY

Vin and Zamori walk as she talks

CHIEF OFFICER ZAMORI  
The Euphoria Test is the most intensive, expensive and dangerous recruitment process in the world. We needed to know how capable you were.

VIN  
So this was all a set up? Including the deaths?

CHIEF OFFICER ZAMORI  
The drug was mutated form of one we're dealing with. But the people, all real. And the deaths. An unfortunate cost of recruitment.

VIN  
No way. No way you have crossed way over the line, you cannot...

CHIEF OFFICER ZAMORI  
(interrupting)  
You have no idea how bad it's got.

They arrive outside a door. A clock shows 8am exactly.

VIN  
Bad enough to kill innocent people?

Zamori fixes a stare.

CHIEF OFFICER ZAMORI  
We lost control of the drug. Now it's  
everywhere. In the food supply, the  
water, the air we breathe. Since 2018  
we've been fighting with this.

Vin shakes his head.

VIN  
Who's in charge of this operation?

CHIEF OFFICER ZAMORI  
An old friend of yours.

INT./EXT. OFFICE - DAY

Zamori opens the door and sat at a leather-bound desk on  
several booster cushions is Dino. He opens his arms out wide  
and winks.

DINO  
Welcome to the Watch, Officer.

On a desk lies a series of passports, security passes and a  
bottle of whisky. Vin picks it up, and Dino nods at him.

VIN V/O  
And that... that was how I joined the  
most covert operational force in the  
world.