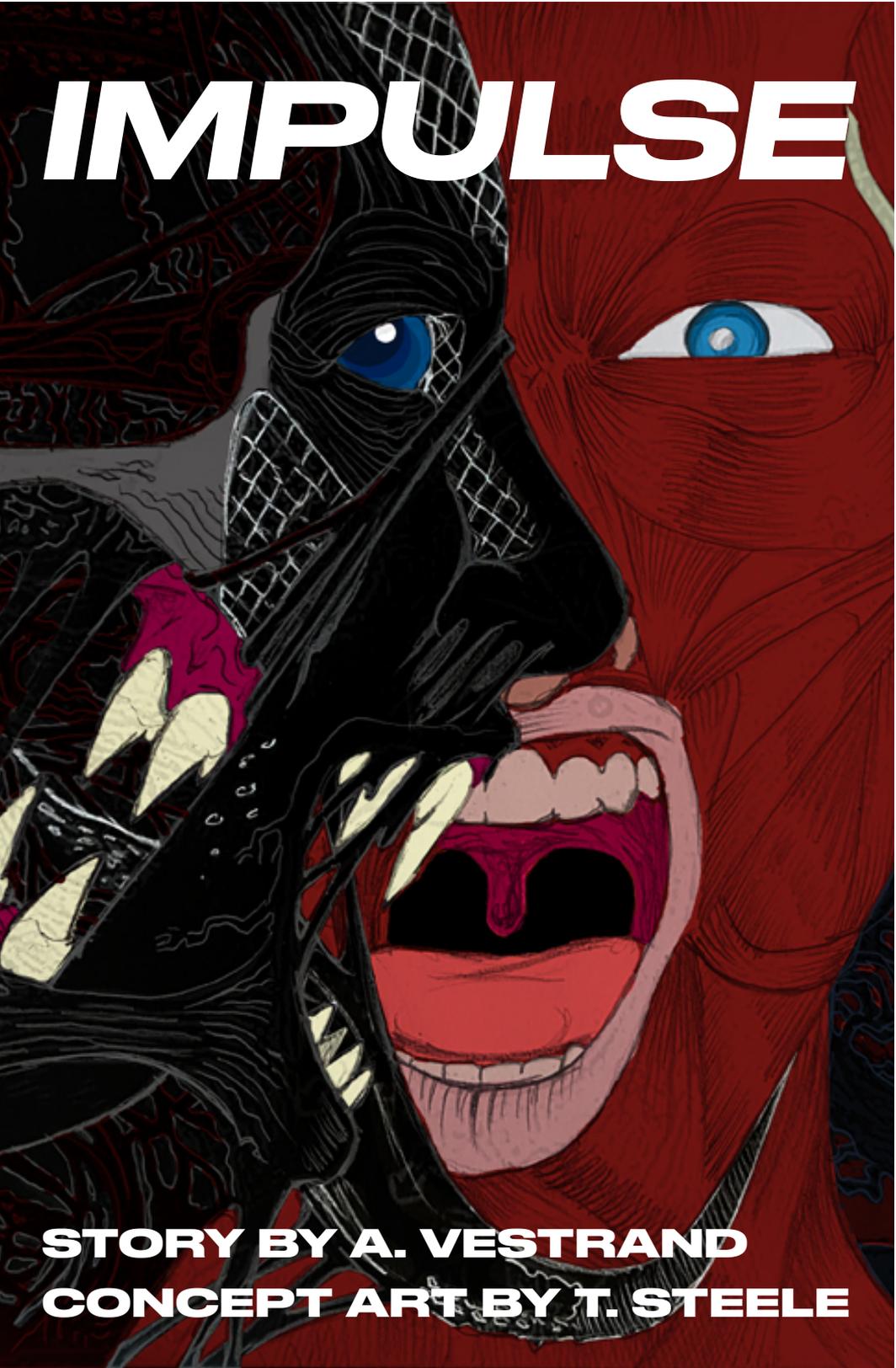


IMPULSE



STORY BY A. VESTRAND

CONCEPT ART BY T. STEELE

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“Impulse”, a short story written by Andrea Vestrand explores the underlying and uncontrollable desire of the unconscious parts of the ego. Psychology calls these entities the ID, the EGO and the SUPEREGO.

Without the normal bridge (Ego) between the higher self (Superego) and the lower impulsive self (ID) any thought or impulse is acted out with the conscious self knowing. This story explores when that happens to an extreme and how much control we really have between our unconscious and conscious self.

As a matter of life and death, our main character, John Pasco, loses control and destroys all that he loves.

I believe this is a story we all can relate to as it reaches into the very thing that makes us human and explores what control, if any, we really have over who we are.

Not only is this tale psychologically intense, but it also has the visual backbone to affect our audience on multiple levels and would be a fanatic feature length story for the masses.

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IMPULSE ~ THE STORY

White light seeps through tiny slits. I think I'm blinking but there's no vision coming. A blur of voices encircle me. One soft whisper filters through the chaos and I recognize her voice.

"Mary," I call out, "is that you, Pumpkin?"

She responds but from too far away. I call to her again. "Mary."

The whispers become less frantic and much closer. I can feel Mary's soft sunshine hair on my face. How? This must be a dream. She kisses my cheek softly. I reach out for her but she disappears before my hands extend. My hands... something's different about my hands.



"Puppy... what are you doing?" Mary's voice is clearer now.

I can feel the wind on my face; my hand's flying through the airstreams out the car window. She loves calling me puppy. I think my head's current position might have something to do with it.

"Flying, Pumpkin."

She laughs and back inside the car I go.

Her chin's cupped in my hand. I lean in to kiss her face and for the first time, I see my uniform and tremble.

Reality snaps itself back into my mind. The wind I feel on my face is not from Mary's driving but rather the whoosh of the gurney I'm

currently being transported upon. To where, I have yet to learn. I can only assume by the sterile smell that I am in a hospital.

The flying feeling stops and my eyes can barely make out the surgical light overhead. I try to speak. The sound of a bone saw echoes through the room.

As they bring it closer to me, I scream. “Wait, stop!”

They’re cutting into me. And they can’t hear me. Chunks of flesh plummet into a bucket balancing on my chest. The slit in my eyes leaves enough of a view to see my extremities tossed like rag dolls into the metal bin and despite all my efforts to thrash about. In an instant it’s over as the comfort of coma sets in, or is this death?



“Doctor, you need to come see this.” The nurse is so close I can smell warm vanilla on her breath.

“Almost good enough to eat,” was the last thought I had before the realization of blood in my mouth.

Suddenly she’s screaming hysterically and four large men in white coats are strapping me down while a fifth holds open my eyes, shining a light into my very core.

“Mr. Doe has returned to the living? How very peculiar.” Was all I heard him say before a warming sensation surged through my body and again, I sleep.



I've been up for what feels like an eternity and from what I can gather at this limited position is that I am vertically strapped to a gurney and my jaw is encaged like Hannibal Lector. The room is pure white and there are various machines attached to me that continuously beep. I rip the only one I can reach. Suddenly the room is filled with a long loud warning siren and a surplus of doctor types.

One enters my field of vision much closer than I expected. Again with his fucking light. I could spit on him.

He's wiping a long string of goo off his face. "Nice to meet you as well, Mr. Doe. I must say I am surprised but strangely interested in your current state of being."

I move my mouth and this time he hears me.

"The name is Pasco, John Pasco. Get this thing off my face. Can't stand the feeling of metal on my skin."

The Doctor's right eyebrow lifts in a peculiar way and he flags over the others. A few turns of the drill and my jaw's free. I go to rub it but my hands are locked, as well as the rest of my head.

"And the rest of the restraints, Doctor."

He smirks and waves the man with the drill away. "We'll just leave those on a bit longer. There is much to discuss first."

He observes me, scribbling in a pocket-sized notepad. What little patience I have fades as he circles me.

"Well, Doctor..."

He crams a thermometer under my tongue. There's a beep to indicate the temperature has registered yet he continues to hold it there for a full minute longer.

Reading the numbers and writing something much longer than my temperature, he finally speaks again.

“It seems Mr. Pasco, we have a bit of a conflict of interest.”



Months have gone by and my beard is fully-grown. Although the physical therapy is on course for my departure in another three weeks, I have yet to master the razor. It's a physiological glitch, I know this and having these robotic limbs has forced me to deal with the phobia but I still can't bring myself to shave. Metal on skin.

Mary had my funeral. I haven't decided whether I will tell her I'm alive. Well, awake, more accurately.

I was technically alive when she buried the empty casket, signing my body over to science, but seemingly in a vegetative state -- alive, but brain dead. Or so they thought. My waking put a serious damper in the advance experimentations of this program. Mary has remarried and is living large off the payment for my body. I have nowhere to go so I might as stay put.

Besides, they offered me an incomprehensible amount of money to continue with the experiment. My only demand was to allow me to return to the farmhouse of my youth, left abandoned by Mary after the death of my mother.

It seems the core purpose of all this is to create artificial limbs that are controlled by the patient's own nervous system. All of this is known and reported to the public, however, the exact mode of experimentation is not. This is where I come in.

A quadruple amputee with no conscious brain activity but a fully functioning central nervous system is a rare find and exactly what was needed for their next phase of development – a test subject. However, they weren't expecting me to wake up and want to go on living my life, but I think we've reached an agreement. I was warned to not contact Mary. She is the only link to my life before this and my daughter.



It's been a month in the lake house. The day-to-day activities come easier each time – chopping wood, mowing the lawn, cooking and now even shaving, with an electric razor of course.

Stan, the male nurse they've assigned to me, is now on a once per week visiting schedule.

I'm itching to leave the property. I've gotten the old pick up truck in working order and it's only a 30-mile drive into town. I've been on my best behavior and despite my desire for human interaction of the female kind, I've made due with Stan's mind-numbingly boring techno-mumble jumble.

God bless the Internet and its sea of pornography.

It took several attempts to work out the mechanics of masturbation with these heavy metal limbs, but it's one of the few ways I can

sleep at night without immediately finding myself back in the desert, hunting the enemy.

Lucky for me, there are a plethora of life-like latex vaginas to choose from, so I have yet to be bored -- amazing, the variety available in the human form.



Now that I've mastered fishing in the lake and the vegetables are coming up in the garden, I no longer need Stan to bring me groceries. His visits have reduced to only once per month and the entire farmhouse has been rigged with observation cameras, all hidden, since they want me to "act naturally".

Been busy re-learning how to drive. The old truck I have is a stick shift and my limbs act automatically without much conscious effort on my part. Since things are going well, I'm allowed outside privileges. They're coming tomorrow to test my driving and if I pass, they will disable the invisible electric fence but not the attachments on my arms.



The driving test didn't go so well. The administrator of the test was a little snot 20 year-old, probably still wet behind the ears. His snide remarks coupled with the snicker about my speed being

slower than his grandma's Cadillac made my blood boil. I've never been much of a reactor, the military pounded it right out of me, but when I heard his girly high-pitched giggle, I lost it. I forget sometimes that these appendages aren't real and the full force of my punch sent him flying through the windshield. He's been unconscious for a week but I hear he's finally waking up. Good thing. Don't know if I'd ever get out of here if he didn't survive.



It's been a month since then and I've finally convinced them to let me take the driving test again. This time, they sent a safety vehicle and a woman. Tanya is in

her mid-20s and gorgeous, although she is far too intelligent to notice. She's wearing glasses and her little clipboard is pressed up against her so that only a tiny thin line of her cleavage is visible.

She coughs and I realize I was masturbating again. "Shall we begin, Mr. Pasco?"

"Yes, right... the driving." I'm so focused on the road that I don't check a single mirror the entire time. Tanya notes this in her report but does not penalize me. I've passed. They equip my truck with a GPS tracking device and a camera or two but allow me the freedom to roam within a 150-mile radius. Of course, they've also equipped the truck with a gadget that is supposed to stall the vehicle outside of that radius. I'll wait until the right time to disengage it -- want to gain their trust back first.



Months have gone by without incident. I've all but forgotten about the metal limbs and the experiment. It wasn't until Tanya showed up again that I remembered why I was here. She explained there was an issue with the surgery and the doctor's think my wires got crossed or something so they want further observations.

I admit I wasn't listening. It's summer and the cut of her dress was enough for me to force myself on her.

She didn't seem to mind and we spent rest of the afternoon fucking. Now she calls when she needs to tell me something and shows up when she wants to fuck. It was on a different level with Mary. But like the feel of something new.



The dreams are getting intense. They feel so real. One minute I am drifting to sleep and the next minute I'm back in the war. It's not normal to have to shoot a man and his whole family. But when it's a matter of your life or theirs, you pull the trigger and ask the questions later.

There's this one dream that is replayed each night. All I see is the fear in those child's big eyes. The eyes are alone in my vision; the only thing I can make out. But I swear, I don't think this particular incident happened the way I play it in my mind. For one thing that's strange is those eyes are blue, not Iraqi brown.



Tanya wants more. They always want more. I'm not interested in a relationship. Especially with the weirdness that surrounds my nightmares. But it's not often that a man with four robotic limbs finds a woman that hot, so I've agreed to

consider it. She, of course, wanted a sign of this and so she's here now, sleeping in my bed.

I can't sleep. I shouldn't sleep. I've been pacing the house trying to find a way to ward it off. My dreams are too real... with someone lying next to me...

I think I'll go for a drive.



Fuck. There's blood everywhere. Tanya's still fast asleep. I've got to get out of these clothes. Stupid drunk motherfucker cutting me off. He just had to get out of the car. Couldn't just sit there and deal with my verbal lashing, no, he had to be a tough guy. What the hell am I going to do with these clothes? Shit... Tanya's awake.

I threw those clothes out the nearest window and went in to the master bathroom, flipping Tanya over the sink. Damn. Fucked the living daylights out of her – nothing like a cock-in-the-ass to distract a broad from the blood on your arms.

Now she's back to dreamland and I can finish taking care of the clothes. What the fuck was he thinking, coming at me with a knife? Yeah, I smashed his window but look at me! I'm half made of metal.



Tanya's been worried about me. Says the point of advancing our relationship to the next level and having her stay the night meant she wanted to sleep next to me, not in my bed without me. It's been months.

Something's changed inside. I've been prowling at night, looking to relive the adrenaline rush of that incident. The hookers were good the first couple times but

then the novelty wore off.



Mary sent me a letter. Our daughter, Bella, is in 2nd grade now. She's picking up on the fact that there aren't any pictures of her and her "Papa" before she was two. Kids... they're fucking smart little things. Mary's been trying to come up with a lie about them being destroyed or something but when the Military sent some psychologist over for their five-year post traumatic stress check up, Bella opened the door. Mary lost it and the truth came out gushing out between tears.

That was last summer and her shrink has come to the conclusion that us having a relationship would be beneficial to Bella. Mary wants to bring her by and sent me a picture, which finally explained the dream.... those blue eyes are Bella's but why would I put her in to the midst of the war? Tanya suggested I see my own shrink

but there's not a chance of that happening in this lifetime and although hesitant at first, she does agree with the meeting.



I've started breaking into ATMs. It seems that the more control over these limbs I have the more powerful they get. I can rip open an ATM in less time than it takes the fucking camera to focus on my fist coming towards it. It's a rush that is also beginning to fade.

I haven't slept in weeks. Tanya now refuses to go home and since she works for the company, they're decided having her here more often is of a benefit to the experiment. She keeps an office in town, which gives me about 3-5 hours of personal time a day. I should really be sleeping right now.



Fucking flashlight guy came for a visit. I would assume the incident last night with

Tanya had something to do with it. I was asleep when she came home. She had forgotten her purse at the house and was only gone for a half hour before realizing the key card to her office was in it. She told the cops she tried to reach me by phone but when I didn't answer, she just drove back to the house to get it. Seeing me asleep was an opportunity to act on an urge she couldn't resist, despite my constant warnings. I knew she wasn't taking me seriously. Fucking women and their desire to spoon.

She lied down. Feeling her behind me, I whipped around so fast she hit her head on the wooden post of the bed. Had she not gone

limp right after that, I probably would have continued to choke her until the life really left her body. Her neck is a mess and it looks like she'll survive but will be up in the hospital for several months.

I've tried to phone her but the bastards there won't let me speak to her. I can only go as far as the dock now that the electric perimeter is back on. Not that I want to leave -- seems to just get me in more trouble.

The doctors confirm what Tanya tried to tell me in the beginning -- my wires are sorta crossed. Not crossed really, but that's the best way I could come up with to wrap my brain around the concept. Somehow while attaching my limbs to the motor strip section of my brain some of the wires were accidentally absorbed within the region that controls impulse.

Basically, my arms and legs are no longer responding to the conscious thought section of my brain but rather to pure uncontrollable desires. Unfortunately, he said, this absorption is irreversible and therefore the experiment must be terminated.

That was the last thing I remember.



Looking around the carnage of the house I can mostly piece together what

happened. The camera caught it all, so I can only assume the police are on their way here.

The electric fence only keeps me from leaving.

This fact meant the previously scheduled visit with my daughter proceeded as planned and unfortunately coincided with the Doctor's pop in.

When Mary saw the lifeless heap of scientist and the gunmetal robotic arms splattered with blood, she freaked and ran. This caused me to chase. It wasn't until later when the calm set in that I fully understood what has already happened and what is now about to happen.

I can hear the sobs coming from the bedroom. As quiet as she tries to be, Bella is here and I know where she hides.

Between the slats of the closet door, I see my daughter for the first time in five years. Her blues eyes are enormous and exactly as I had imagined them in my dreams. It was not the past I was re-living but rather the future that had not yet become reality.

"Hi Pumpkin", I squeeze out as softly as I could.

"Mommy... calls me... pumpkin". She can barely speak between the sobs. "Where's Mommy?"

"Mommy had to go away but your Daddy will be here soon." I'm trying as best as I can to soothe her.

"Mommy said you were my Daddy."

"No dear, your Daddy died in the war a long time ago." I can't remember what she calls that douche-bag living with my wife.

"Pumpkin, there's a man that lives with you now... what do you call him?" Her reply is barely audible. "Papa."

“Your Papa is your Daddy now. I am nobody for you to remember.” I reach to open the closet door and she vanishes to the back corner, between the legs of my old uniform.

“Pumpkin...” “Yes, Mister?”

“I want you to stay here and wait for your Papa. I’m going to reach up over you, grab this box from the shelf and then I will leave.”

She’s crying softly and steadily now, as if she knows the seriousness of what’s about to happen. She wiping her nose on my uniform leg when I shut the door, taking my army issued pistol out of its box.

The police sirens grow nearer while I walk out the back door to the lake. Standing on the dock, I load the pistol and pull the trigger, ending the reality that has become my nightmare.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrea Vestrand has an overactive imagination. She has been creating worlds and characters for her entire life. Growing up mostly in the woods of western New York, she spent her childhood exploring all that nature has to offer. Being a nomadic child allowed her an expansive world view and an understanding of just how much information one can gather from visual imagery.

As a professional Production Manager in film and television, she's spent her adulthood helping others find their creative voices but now it's time to return to her roots. As an award winning filmmaker, her first love has always been artistic storytelling of the human condition and the visual realm of feature films is her canvas of choice.