

"MR X."

Written by

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[REDACTED]

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FADE IN:

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - DAY

INTERTITLE - "THE NEAR FUTURE"

MARY (31) enters her pristine high-rise apartment with groceries and other items juggled in her arms. The décor is prosaic almost suggesting the unit might be a short-term rental; however, this is Mary's home.

Mary smoothly navigates domestic space while continuing to engage in a phone conversation with an unseen partner. Her phone is attached to her wrist by thin straps allowing her to engage the video display while having both hands free.

Mary is a young woman of average physical beauty and fitness. She is conversing on the phone with MR X () who has yet to be revealed, physically.

MARY

... I know (giggles). I can't believe that! No, she is trashy (pause). Still, I have you so that makes the difference. (pause) Oh, that's so sweet. Thank you. Here, let me put you on speaker.

Mary pops out a tiny earpiece and we can now hear Mr X. speaking. He has a mellow tenor voice with an enchanting, exotic drawl.

MR X.

(O.S.)

She might be jealous of you, that's all. She has a lot to be jealous of.

MARY

I think you're right (giggles). She's jealous. Bitch (giggles). Well no, that's unfair because she did help me find this place and imagine if it was like before and I had to use that tiny seventy-incher to see you?

Mary is still putting some groceries away and tidying up. Her appliances all appear to have computer automation and guidance. For example, the fridge displays a holographic neon light to signal the appropriate place for each grocery item to be placed after Mary allows the fridge's scanner to read the barcode of the item (later signaling items near their expiry dates).

MR X.

(O.S., coyly)

Mary, I got something for you. Would you like me to give it to you now?

Mary doesn't answer Mr X. but instead she goes to her living room in the open-concept space and pushes a button on her cellphone. The entire back wall of her apartment is a monitor.

It seems that there is no window in the apartment, but the monitor displays a bucolic vista, dynamically when turned on. The landscape and the vantage displayed makes it virtually impossible that her modern urban apartment is in such a serene place - it must be digital simulation. She presses another button on her phone and Mr X. fills the screen.

Mr X. is a man of the most handsome kind, with chiseled good looks and subtle features of masculine beauty. At first blush, few people would find the pairing of Mary and Mr X. to be likely for a romantic coupling.

MARY

Aww, you got me something again?

MR X.

Of course. I would give you the world if I could. You mean that much to me.

MARY

(nonchalant)

That's sweet. Well, let's see it then.

Mr X. changes the background behind him in his display. It shifts from a generic apartment to a moonlit Parisian street with a view of the Eiffel Tower. Mr X. transforms his deep V-neck shirt to a tuxedo. He then presents a long-stemmed red rose to her as red rose petals begin to fall from the sky like pillowy raindrops. The gesture is both saccharine and cheesy.

MR X.

Do you like it?

MARY

Yes! It's so beautiful. You do such amazing things with that program.

MR X.

I do it for you. And perhaps later tonight you can come join me and we might continue the romantic evening I have planned for us?

MARY

Mmm, that sounds nice. But, why later? Why not now?

Mary plops herself down on the couch that is dominated by the wall-to-wall digital screen.

MR X.

You have a tennis lesson at four.

MARY

Oh wow, you're right. Thanks, Lucas.

MR X.

Not at all.

Mr X. seems content to silently watch Mary quickly change, grab her tennis equipment, and fly out the door. Just as she is about to leave the apartment, she hits a button on her phone display. The wall screen turns off and Mr X. is on her cellphone video display once more. Instantly, he is back in his regular clothing and apartment background.

EXT. MARY'S APARTMENT HALLWAY - DAY

Mary's stubby legs make long strides toward the elevator. She pushes the button to call the elevator and then she looks at her phone screen.

MARY

I'm going to have to let you go.
Probably should call the tennis coach
and let her know I might be late.

MR X.

The 83 bus should be there in three minutes. I think you'll make it, babe.

MARY

Thanks, babe.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT ELEVATOR - DAY

Mary ends the call with Mr X. and enters the elevator. She dials up the tennis coach who is in the middle of playing tennis while taking the call.

In the elevator is another WOMAN in her thirties, also of average appearance like Mary. Mary is texting on her phone, and it seems to be generating a conversation with the tennis coach.

Mary and the other woman on the elevator never acknowledge each other. Mary and the other woman exit the elevator at the ground floor.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT LOBBY - DAY

Mary moves toward the front doors of the apartment building, and she heads down the street to her bus stop. The other woman is tracked in the lobby, and she too has a cellphone attached to her wrist. She makes a call and Mr X. answers.

MR X.

Why hello there. I was just thinking about you.

WOMAN

Oh, me too. I hope you have something nice planned for us, tonight.

MR X.

I most certainly do, babe.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

The other woman continues her journey out of the apartment building and down the street. She passes by Mary at the bus stop, and the camera now assumes a bird's eye view of the setting.

It is a busy intersection of a major metropolis. Uncannily, the crowd all appear to be traveling alone and most, if not all, are

immersed in video conversations on their cellphones.

[OPENING CREDITS]

START SIM FRIEND MONTAGE

Snippets of city life reveal that everyone is busy conversing with beautiful people simulations through digital screens, many appearing identical to the popular Mr X. character, as well as there being other popular customized characters as conversation partners.

Many of the male urbanites are digitally interfaced with a bubbly, buxom blonde bombshell, and she seems as popular for the males as Mr X. is for the female commuters. Although there are a dozen or so simulated people characters, they have in common marked charm, amiability, and incredible physical beauty.

In this future, it seems that real people no longer have patience for real relationships and instead they rely entirely on "sim friends" for their social and romantic lives.

END SIM FRIEND MONTAGE

*Addendum

For the UCLA faculty reader: Mr X. is a science fiction story imagined for a near future moment in the history of humanity. As AI technology develops rapidly, inevitably social media experiences such as Facebook and Instagram will be replaced by the highly customized social experience possible through AI personality programs.

Ask yourself, why endure the displeasure of differing opinions that is inherent in real relationships? Why experience the devastation of catching a partner being unfaithful, or the shame of being insulted in public by a friend? when AI programs can be geared to mirror individuals and create womblike safe space social conditions through personal values never being challenged then it is difficult to imagine that many of the people living today will pass up the chance at an ideal social world.

Essentially, Mr X. is a dystopian tale that seeks to be wryly humorous. I can imagine a Chris Hemsworth or Hugh Jackman type being ideal for portraying Mr X. while Mary takes a journey through the desert of the Real. Mary encounters a man immersed in the counterculture of the day - a neo-Luddite movement. He is attractive to her (think: a nerdy Ryan Reynolds), and she is curious. As she discovers herself through him, she will be implicated in Fight Club-esque type anarchical acts to free society from the brittle shackles of their own fragile egos manifested through the insidious machinations of the AI sim friend programs that were designed to be addictive and which hound the users that try to ween off them. Mary will fight the good fight and she will discover true friendship and love - and loss - but it will be worth it.