



BODY & SOUL

by Gareth Barsby

A SMITH SCRIPT

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## Body and Soul

A radio script by Gareth Barsby based on his short story of the same name

### CHARACTERS WITH SPEAKING ROLES

LUCY – The main narrator, a robot henchwoman who gets her mind transferred into a human body, early 30's.

ROBOT LUCY – Lucy in her former state, with a more tinny, mechanical voice than she does in her human body.

DR. WESTENRA – Lucy's "father", an archetypical mad scientist supervillain, early 50's.

ARTHUR – Former robot henchman in human body who wishes to help others of his kind, early 30's.

### SYNOPSIS

Lucy introduces herself to the listeners and promises to tell them the story of how she got a soul she doesn't feel she deserves. She explains about her many adventures with her supervillain father, Dr.

Westenra, and how they were constantly causing crimes and battling superheroes. Lucy explains that she wondered if there was more to life than just this, and she constantly pondered her robotic state, especially after she had a story – implied to be Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* – downloaded into her brain, which made her wonder if she doesn't have a soul.

While she and her father hide out from superheroes, both are abducted by what looks like a spaceship. This ship is piloted by Arthur, former robot henchman of mad scientist Professor Holmwood. He explains that he transferred his mind into a human body and can do the same for Lucy, allowing her to feel and experience things she couldn't as a robot. Lucy, wishing for a normal life and believing this process could give her a soul, agrees, and her mind is transferred into the body of a human woman.

To celebrate the success of the experiment, Lucy and Arthur go out for dinner, where Lucy relishes in the new experiences and feelings her human body gives her. When Lucy and Arthur return to the latter's laboratory, Arthur reveals how he managed to give himself and Lucy their bodies – he used a formula to erase almost all of Professor Holmwood's mind before transferring his own mind into Holmwood's body, and did the same to another supervillain before transferring Lucy's mind into her body.

Arthur then implores Lucy to inject the formula into Dr. Westenra using one of many syringes so Westenra's body can be used by another robot. Unable to kill her father, Lucy impulsively injects Arthur with the syringe, erasing his mind. Lucy, racked with guilt and self-doubt over the murder, then tells the listeners she plans to use another one of the syringes on herself.

LUCY (*narrating*) I have a soul. Even though I don't deserve it, I've been given a soul. (*sighs*) Let me start at the beginning. I assume you've heard of my father Dr. Westenra. You've seen him on the news, robbing banks, terrorising the city, all with his robot henchwoman by his side.

Well, I was that robot henchwoman. LUCY, he called me. (*contemptuously*) "Loathsome Unrelenting Creation of Yuckiness" it stands for...(*pauses, before speaking with a sadder tone*)...well, I was his creation. He built me, like he built so many other weapons and ray guns and things to make him rich and battle superheroes.

He had even built the money machine. The machine that was supposed to teleport money from one place to another – his own lab, of course. I helped build the machine, I brought him the necessary tools, I gave him the co-ordinates of all the banks in the country. It worked, but then there came one of the many superheroes we did battle with. Then came the Night Shade.

I didn't pick up his presence. I didn't sense his heartbeat. Despite how his fedora and his duster coat made him easy to pick out in a crowd, he managed to invade our laboratory unnoticed until he threw his special knives at the money machine, causing it to malfunction.

FX: MACHINE MALFUNCTIONING, FOLLOWED BY ELECTRIC SPARKS AND ALARMS

LUCY (*narrating*) My father was furious.

DR. WESTENRA Why couldn't you detect him, you rancid robot? I gave you those sensors for a reason!

LUCY (*narrating*) Everything he gave me for a reason. Even my fingers, all of them laser guns except the thumbs. I used these guns to shoot at the Night Shade, but he disappeared into the shadows that seemed to suddenly appear. The Doctor thought this lab would be too well-lit for the Shade to disappear, but the man always finds a way.

So once again the laboratory was blowing up all around us – chemicals had been toppled over, the dials were spinning, his favourite computer had crashed in more ways than one – and the Doctor took me inside his escape pod. He didn't take Terry the mechanical turtle, or even the laser he had grown so attached to. He took me. Me and no-one else.

FX: ESCAPE POD LAUNCHING INTO THE AIR AS THE SOUND OF ALARMS AND MALFUNCTIONING MACHINES FADE AWAY, FOLLOWED BY A HARD, SQUELCHY LANDING AND THE OPENING OF THE ESCAPE POD DOOR

ROBOT LUCY I'm sorry, Doctor.

DR. WESTENRA Shut up.

LUCY (*narrating*) We had landed in a rubbish tip. I couldn't feel the rancid garbage under my feet, yet I felt regret. Odd how being a robot is. The Doctor suggested we make camp here; according to him, our pursuers were too proud to be seen

dead in a place like this. Almost instantly, I began work on constructing a make-shift hovel for us to sleep in until he could find a new laboratory – he always did. He always seemed to find solutions and fix things. Whenever my body was damaged, he built me a new one and put the little chip that was my brain into it.

He hadn't found a way to rule the world though. Sometimes I wanted to suggest that we retire from it altogether...but I just couldn't. I could shoot lasers from my fingers, but I couldn't speak to the Doctor unless he spoke to me.

So there we were among the rubbish. I had no trouble with the smell due to my lack of a nose, but the Doctor was constantly complaining. Despite the stench, he slept in the little house I had made for him, and since I couldn't sleep, I wandered about for a bit, attempting to make sure I couldn't be spotted. I wanted to believe I would be a chameleon among all this rot, but I knew better.

I was a robot. I was a being made of metal whose head looked like a swing bin, whose eyes looked like headlights and whose feet looked like large slabs of metal. I couldn't walk on a street or relax in a park or enjoy myself at a pub or a restaurant. What did they have for me anyway, I thought. I couldn't drink or eat without a stomach. I couldn't feel the wind against my skin if I didn't have any.

I had no skin. I had no organs. I had no soul.

When I stood among the rubbish, I remembered a book I had downloaded into my brain where a character said that only human beings had eternal souls. Creatures that had longer lives than humans – like myself – had no souls, and all that welcomed us after death was an abyss. I wasn't supposed to be thinking or feeling, that was what I had always been told by those who faced me. The Doctor, I thought, always fixed me up when I was broken, but he couldn't do that forever. What if one day I broke or got blown up and there was no-one there to fix me, I thought, then what would await me?

When that thought entered my mind, my robotic body froze, so I spent an hour standing in the dump.

Then I was seen.

For as long as I've worked for my father, I had a feeling in my gut – or what substitutes for one – that we would be caught. No matter how many escape pods we built, or how many abandoned factories we converted into hideouts, someone would catch us. It wasn't one of the many superheroes we battled though...instead, we were found and captured by what looked like a spaceship. It looked like a big metal hawk.