

Chapter 6

Andy Haldane, Chief Counsel, was announced by the door to Harris's office. Average height, broad of shoulders and waist, with a granite jaw, he marched in. 'What the *fuck*, Mark?', he exploded immediately, 'I'm aghast at *your report*, what the *fuck* is going on, what the *fuck* are *you* doing, I mean, *what the fuck?*' Harris smiled wanly and pointed to a chair by the window and met Haldane there. 'You've read my summary, then', Harris retorted.

'You're *fuck on right*, three times, and then *once again* to confirm what I was reading wasn't *the fucking psychotic breakdown of our CEO!*' Haldane continued to bluster. Harris held up his hand and then filled in the details around his summary. 'What's our exposure, how can we protect ourselves, and how far can we go with Femi?', he ended. Haldane, looking paler than when he arrived, took a slow breath. 'I and the team need some time, we've already looked at the NDA and paperwork you have from culpabilité, they're watertight, they clearly have great counsel. We can square this off as a 'special project', dumping Mr Ade tied up like a hog, no issues there. But your involvement scares the *fucking shit out of me.*'

'Understood, but I am very concerned about the corporation's risk and exposure. We need to understand the opportunity and vulnerability of this technology, and clearly, I'm in a good position to evaluate that,' Harris stated. 'Yes, yes, all well and great. But at least bring an internal team around you, and at best, get out of this right now. Oh, and how do you know Mr Ade and you, Mark, are the *only two fucks* in the corporation involved?' Haldane countered. The question hung in the air long after he had departed.

The meeting with Femi was perfunctory, to schedule, and devastating to him. He was escorted by two DumbVocs, stripped of all access, materials and remuneration the moment he stepped into the office to see Harris, Namura and the departure team. He seemed remarkably resolute, but tight lipped on questioning. Harris seemed to be more inwardly upset than his friend, which seemed irrational. The culpabilité lab removed any angst he felt. Clear of meetings still, he could speak further with Haldane, Namura, Human Capital, and Schrek, CTO, about culpabilité, and their 'Guilt Machine', as Schrek termed it. His CTO proposed their own scanning of Harris, just to keep on top of culpabilité. Harris took time out to process it all. They could pursue this path, perhaps, to their own benefit.

What he was not prepared for was the news of Femi's death at 15:30 EST that afternoon. Details were currently limited. Harris sent a personal all employee communication. Another session with the Guilt Machine, and he could concentrate on the internal fallout. It was Schrek who raised the point of Femi having a neuro-filament. How did they know this was not involved in his death? Harris refused to believe it, just too cheap crime thriller. Companies did not kill people intentionally, that was bad for business. Namura remarked that, 'perhaps, but for a start-up, bad news can kill, too!' Harris asked Schrek and his team to evaluate this filament tech before he left the office, and to work out how to screen key employees, just in case. In the fly-limo, he tapped his chair armrest pensively, as his face remained inscrutable.