

Chapter 8

Ironically, in a quiet room in their offices, Schrek had accosted Harris. ‘How many times have used *their* guilt machine, Mark?’, a simple question, but Harris found himself hesitating and having to pause and mull over the question, and the lingering implications. ‘Perhaps, a few times a day, for research and evaluation, why?’, was his measured response, his furrow knitted and looking down on the shorter man.

‘Our own scans suggest that you have an increasing unconscious susceptibility to it, it’s subtle, but it’s there,’ Schrek stated quietly. ‘And, on the autopsy of what was left of Mr Ade, there was no evidence of a neuro filament in his brain. Mind you being run over by a faulty construction robot doesn’t leave much to be examined.’ Harris pondered his CTO’s words, and a pall hung in the air between them, infecting the room. ‘Worse, we can find no evidence of an association between him and culpabilité, nothing, which is even more suspicious!’, Schrek added to the thickness of the pall. ‘I think you need to cease both, use of their tech, as well any contact, *effective immediately*,’ leaning into Harris to reinforce his point. Harris didn’t even ask how Schrek had come across this information, the corporation had plenty of Pay-Cops in its pocket, but he was unnerved and perturbed by his instruction. ‘Sure, Paul, I’ll take that under advisement, obviously,’ was his reaction. To which Shrek reinforced his stern expression, ‘that’s not advice, Mark, it’s from the Exec Team, and if you like I could also go to the Board, I’m sure they will react even more forcefully.’

‘I don’t *like* threats, Paul, it’s beneath you, we both have the best interests of the corporation in mind, and each other’s well-being, I’m sure,’ and he leaned into Schreck as well. ‘I want to get to the bottom of this, as well as understand if this tech is a threat or an opportunity for us,’ he outlined in carefully selected, nuance words. ‘You leave the Board to me, they’re being kept informed, don’t you worry!’, Harris added, shocked himself that this was an out and out lie. What was he playing at, he knew Schrek was right, and worse, the Board were patently unaware of developments, other than Femi’s sudden death, by accident.

Harris moved quickly past Schrek into the corridor, ‘Just you make sure there are no other colleagues with wired brains, Paul!’ And with that retort, he had sped down and away from his CTO. It was perhaps seconds later that Schrek was speaking with Haldane in worried, hushed tones. This was all getting out of hand, and was totally unlike the CEO they knew, and both men were getting even more agitated. Meanwhile, Harris was in the culpabilité lab, placing the shiny helmet on his head. Again.

Jamestown’s fly-limo had touched down in remote outskirts of the city, the surroundings shifting from run down suburbia to sand and ruin. He stepped out and down while uncrumpling his suit with a quick, deliberate sweep of his hands. A DumbBot was waiting to escort him to a land cruiser, the rear passenger door awaiting Jamestown. As he sat down, a woman rotated her front passenger seat to face him with a thin smile. It also did not meet her pulsing blue eyes.