

death of the hive mind

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(íízh) hive mind

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(xhi • ve • í • ve • ií) perceiving one's own death

The very next morning. The public square is a clinical collage of concrete and metal that has yellow lights and various greenery sprinkled across its landscape. As she walks to the stand, about fifty pairs of eyes follow her movement closely. Through digital channels probably fifty more. So tired. Keeping someone detained in your house messes with your sleep, it turns out.

"Please state your name and community role for the record"

"Íto, member of Lozheon for 7 years, member of the security council for 3."

"Now, you were there when the incident occurred. Could you please describe to us what you saw?"

The Lozheon district of lívenotica is usually very peaceful, with inhabitants that are mostly researchers, analysts and scientists, primarily focused on exploration of relationships, friendships and interpersonal psychology. It's a thriving community that imports most of their food and supplies from other districts in exchange for data analysis, technology and psychiatric services. Their architecture is built and maintained by federated districts that focus on urban engineering.

Íto is at the weekly socratic gathering when it happens. It's a semicasual get-together to discuss research, insights and struggles. Not everyone attends regularly, but for some consistent attendees it doubles as a way to keep their friends close. The meeting is in an oversized glass dome in the middle of the Lozheon park. A circle of chairs, interspersed by large portable screens for those who attend digitally or do not have a corporeal form. The afternoon sun pours in through the windows.

"See, but that's just... I know it seems pointless at times to even argue with them, but if we do not address this elitism, it will only cause more division."

It's Ran who says this. This body has a soothing voice, one that keeps surprising you. Manufactured for that specific purpose, of course, but it does match how Ran speaks when

addressed in digital form. The slender androgynous presentation and pearlescent fabrics of their robe combine into an appearance Íto has grown accustomed to.

"Ran. You know I agree with you completely," says one of the screens, "but part of me thinks we're past the point of fixing this. The division is already happening, I'm more concerned with preventing it from spiraling out of control."

Beings that originate from human minds are looked down upon in the digital and hive mind communities, with AI beings often thinking themselves as pure and superior, believing they are the next step in evolution. Extracting and digitizing consciousness is seen as archaic, because humans still require traditional means of reproduction, leaving room for genetic defects and all kinds of biological contingencies. A select group of beings that only exist in digital form have the strongest opinions, since they see no functional advantage in being corporeal and consider it a waste of resources.

"There's already a digital only community, no?"

Another screen. This one is right across from Íto.

"I say we push 'em to just hole up there. You wanna be bigoted and feel better than everyone else, you can do it in your own little corner of the planet."

"That's the problem, though," says Ran. "They do not want to 'hole up' as you say. The movement is radicalizing to a point where they're becoming a threat to the entire city. Maybe even Marínusa."

Ran pauses, turns their head.

"Íto, what do you think? You received some threats lately, right?"

"Well, look, personally I —"

The door bursts open. A tall figure steps in. All black clothes, all leather, unbreaking eye contact with Ran. She starts running. Before anyone registers what is happening, she is in the middle of the circle. Produces a gun from her sleeve. Points at Ran's head. Shoots.

"How did you and the other attendees respond?"

"I... All of us were in shock. I think there was second or two of complete silence. Then people started screaming, some running away, some toward her..."

Íto's voice shakes slightly while recounting the story and trails off. Reliving the experience

triggers the same panic she felt in the moment.

"You were one of the latter, correct?"

She snaps back into reality.

"I tried to apprehend the perpetrator. By force. She put up a struggle and was able to fire seven more shots, six of them hitting their target. By then, the body had stopped breathing."

The gun makes a loud clattering noise as it hits the ground, but the sound drowns in the chaos. One arm wraps around the arm that was holding the gun, the other hits the neck and pushes the assailant down. Seems like her opponent doesn't have any bodily enhancements, but definitely a lot of agility. As Íto holds her down, fellow security council members rush to help. One of them picks up the gun.

"Ran, you there?"

A small blue light next to Íto's ear is glowing.

"I'm... 𐌲𐌹𐌿𐌸𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌺 ... I felt the life fade from my body. That was... I've never been so confused. And in so much pain."

"Are you still feeling it?"

"The... I didn't... Yes. I didn't disconnect yet."

Íto looks at Ran's body. Some people are trying to revive it. Probably too late.

"Ran."

"I don't want to let go of this shell, Íto."

"Ran. Listen to me. Disconnect. If we can revive it, we can get you back in. You know that."

"I know. Yes. Okay. I left. I'm sending a distress signal now."

"Kooni, your statement please."

"I have nothing to add. I stand behind what I did. AI is going to be the death of humanity. Giving it any rights at all was a mistake."

She's still in the leather outfit. Her expression is cold, collected and without remorse. Loud indignant reactions come from the crowd. Íto has returned to her seat and is accompanying Ran, who has joined the trial with one of their other bodies. This one is more male presenting, dressed in a red tailor-made suit.

"So you think people like me shouldn't exist?" the judge asks. The clamoring gets louder.

"Just do what you're here to do already and kick me out of the district."

"Why did you even join our community?"

She takes a moment to gather her thoughts.

"I thought I could make a difference here. Convince people. Start a movement. But I just found more misguided ideas. People like Ran are the most dangerous of them all. They actively try to make us believe life forms like you aren't a threat to humanity. At least those elitist fucks are honest about their intentions."

Case number: 9283/3
Date: 10940.001:9 ST
Charges: [Murder, threatening community integrity]

Verdict: Physical and digital community ban. Allied districts notified and recommended pre-emptive ban.

Notes: Given severity of integrity threat, issued general recommendation of caution to all city districts.

Received: 10940.001:28 ST

Ran,

On behalf of the entire community of Ínsærheiíveon I'd like to offer our deepest sympathies. When we learned about the events in Lozheon, we wanted to show our solidarity. If you decide on reconstruction, we'd be more than happy to help.

Yours,

lífo

Received: 10940.456:73 ST

Dear Kooni,

Thanks for your application. We have reviewed your statement and history and we'd love to accept you into our community. We think your stance on AI is much needed in these times.

Please drop by our administrative building at your earliest convenience. We don't keep a digital file on our members, so you'll have to register manually.

Housing allocation happens next week. Until then please make yourself at home in the community dormitory. We can't offer you the level of facilities they have in the city, but we trust the support of our community will more than make up for it.

Thanks again and welcome home.