

On a planet with no waste. In a city with no trash. In a community with no hate. In a home with no haste, lives a man searching for breaks.

Harold Greene, works at a brown maple wood desk. A mist of cigar smoke hovers in the air. The window behind him is slightly cracked ventilating the smoke. Dusty frames of awards and certifications cover the office. Papers surround a laptop. An old picture frame stands on his desk: a happy husband and wife with their daughter. Newspaper clippings of World peace achieved and world better than 100 years ago cover the walls with big red slashes through them. Closer to his desk are automobile reports and a newspaper that looks more recent. "Rotus engineer dies in mysterious crash involving Rotus Energy. CEO Larry Burgess, denying any malicious intent or malfunction."

"Nothing?". He furiously types on the computer, opening internet pages after pages. *Global Climate deal reaches between Bhutan and the U.S: Rotus leads the charge* says on article. *On the eradication of global pathogens: Rotus* run across the front of paper by a university history professor. "I don't believe it." He sits back in his chair and puffs another cloud of smoke. He opens an email. "2030 U.S Official caught in web of corruption in disseminating trade secrets to ZetaBeats & suppressing public knowledge about Rotus and ZetaBeats." He leans back and looks at the ring of smoke above him. A gray holograph appears on his forearm between two rings. A text from Cole.

Suddenly, his daughter, Cathy, enters the room with an white envelope in her hand. Her hair dangling with a red ribbon tied in a bow. She smacked the letter onto his desk. "I can't believe you hid this from me", she yells.

"I don't know what you're talking about", he said without looking at her as he reads the message and replies.

Cathy stares at her father. The cigarette fumes fuel her rage. Though only a few feet from her father, she feels he's miles away from her. Distant memories flash through her minds. Her father ignoring her and avoiding her. She raised herself essentially. He still looks at the ring of smoke above him. Not again, Cathy thinks to herself. She barges out of the room and slams the door shut. The picture frame falls face down.

Without looking Harold smothers his cigarette on the white envelope leaving ashy mark. He grabs his jacket and leaves his office.

He stands in the doorway with the keys in arms reach. Cathy slams shut her bedroom door. He looks towards her room.

He grabs the keys and leaves the room.

The light snow falls gently. People are walking outside enjoying the first snow fall. The world's more technologically advanced yet it seems familiar and less modern. There are no flying cars or levitating platforms. Technology has become so integrated in human life and humans, that it has become nearly invisible to see.

Harold sits with Cole scrunched together at an outdoor cafe table. He watches people walk with their family and friends. A couple walks by their table holding their young son in their hands. They swing him gently as they walk. The young boy's feet bounces from concrete block to concrete block. Memories flash through Harold's mind, ignoring his friends, of Cathy's youth. How he and his Vanessa, cared for their Cathy.

A reporter on a nearby tv speaks. "Today is the 40th anniversary for the eradication of tuberculosis. A time where we set aside our differences worked towards a common goal. Humanity has never crumbled under the weight of our problems. The world has never been a safer, healthier, and more equal world then ever before. The world's problems have been solved."

Harry”, says Cole snapping his fingers. “The world needs us to solve its problems again.”

Harold snaps out of it. “What do you have?”

“Guards change every half hour”, says Cole. He’s staring at a large corporate building across the park. “Once we get through, we have card scanners. Uniforms will take us the rest of the way.”

“No special security on the higher floors?”

“No. And if Larry’s the same one from college, we can reach the info easily.”, says Cole. He pulls out a ID cards and a blueprint of the building. Harold grabs their IDs and holds it to the ring on the forearm.

Cole looks at the reporter on tv as he drinks from his coffee. “World’s problems will never be done. They’ll always need people like us. Especially with people like Larry running it.”

Harold leans back in his chair and watches the family down the sidewalk with their kid.

“Getting cold feet Harry?”, asks Cole.

“No—I— if— we’re wrong, then we’ve destroyed our lives for nothing.”

“We’re not wrong”, says Cole. “He stole our company. Our ideas! Rotus is when they dig in and convince everyone they’re saviors, hiding behind philanthropy. Peace creates passivity. Exposing Larry will stop other people from needlessly dying losing a loved one.”

Harold turns back to the family on the sidewalk and watches a as they slowly disappear from view. He nods. “Ok.”

Inside Rotus, Harold and Cole are walking in the wide clean hallways towards a data storage room. Cole and Maurice are dressed as security guards escorting Harold who’s dressed as a scientist. They stick close together as they approach the card swipe into the data storage room. They pass other employees and security guards talking in the hallway. Harold stops at the door as Cole stands near him.

Harold holds the ring on his forearm to the scanner. Error. The machine beeps loudly. A few of the employees glance towards the Harold but pay no attention. He feels the scrutinizing gaze of the other security guards.

“Harold?”, whispers someone.

“Excuse me ma’m”, say Cole. “But you can’t be here.”

He quickly turns around and finds a woman with red ribbon tied in a bow in her hair standing near him. She holds folders and binders in her arms and twiddles a pen in her fingers. “What-are- how are you? It’s been a long time.”

“Alicia”, says Harold calmly. He gestures Cole to stand down. “I-I didn’t know you work here.”

“Yeah. I-I-uh got a job from Larry. Helped me back on my feet when I was going through some stuff.”

“Larry did?”, says Harold nodding in disbelief.

“I—I heard about Vanessa. I’m so sorry.”

Harold looks away and tries swiping again. Error. He hears the security guards walk towards him.

“How’s Cathy doing?”

He nods not making eye contact with her. He swipes one more time. The card accepts.

“Sorry, super busy.” Harold & Cole enter the room and slams the door shut, leaving Alicia outside. Servers line the walls of the storage room. Blue lights muffled beeping fills the room.

“You got the drive”, asks Cole. Harold hands him the drive. “Let’s see if this gets his attention.” The computer shows a worm being uploaded into the mainframe. No red flags are being set off.

“Strange”, says Harold. He moves Cole aside and opens a search algorithm in the drive. He types ‘energy’. Nothing comes up. ‘Rotus energy’. nothing. ‘Vanessa, Rotus’. Nothing. Suddenly his monitor goes dark.

“Hey Hair. Cole”, speaks a friendly voice from the computer. “Long time no see.”

“You don’t call anymore”, says Cole. “Thought we’d reach out to you directly.”

Larry laughs. “Well you got my attention. Let’s meet up.” The door swings opens revealing two guards. Larry continues. “These fine gentlemen will escort you.”

Larry’s office is a large glass dome with a panoramic view of the city skyline. Cole and Harold are forced to sit into sofa chairs facing a large desk filled with a monitor, papers, box for pens, a small vase, and a stapler. Larry stands staring out the window dressed in a navy blue Westwood suit.

Larry turns around and opens his arm wide. “Harry! Cole!”, he shouts. “How the hell are ya?” He walks to shake Harold’s hand. Larry leans close. “So sorry about Vanessa. She was a good friend.” Harold pushes Larry off him. “Whoa take it easy buddy. You’ll crease the suit.”

Larry walks to Cole sizing him up. They shake hands. “Cole. Good to see you. Hoped it’d be under less pleasant circumstances.”

Larry gestures for them to sit as he leans against the front part of his large desk a few feet away from them, the large blue sky behind him and his arms crossed.

“Now I don’t know where or who implanted these crazy conspiracies in your head about me or Rotus, they’re not true.”

“Don’t patronize us Larry. A Rotus employee was caught releasing trade secrets about—”

“Trade secrets about building a Rotus app”, says Larry laughing at the ridiculousness of the argument. “Just an app. Nothing special.”

“We’ll let the worm decide”, snipes back Harold.

“About that” says Larry. He grabs his monitor and turns it to them. “Knowing how good of programmer you are Cole, we took the liberty of removing the worm from our mainframe.”

Cole and Harold remain quiet. The door opens and a secretary walks in and hands Larry some papers.

“Have you met Alicia”, says Larry. “Started recently & already a star player at Rotus.”

Alicia glances at Harold as she waits for Larry to sign a few papers. Harold doesn't look at her. Larry hands her the papers. She leaves the room.

"You two should be thanking me. If the authorities found out that you illegally broke in and tried to upload a worm into our system, that would be extremely bad." Larry looks towards Harold. "Especially for Harold here. How old's Cathy? 15? It'd be a shame for her to live without both parents." Harold's hands vice grip the seat and tries to restrain himself from attacking Larry.

Larry continues. "If we hadn't found that worm, then you would've likely destabilized a global economy. I mean you think sustainability on this scale is easy to maintain?"

Larry's eyes bounce between Cole & Harold. "God the things we could've done together", he says with heavy regret under his breath.

"We will find something" affirms Cole. "It's just a matter of time."

Larry shakes his head in disbelief. "Look at us. Nobel laureates of a bygone age. The world doesn't need people like us anymore. It's time to adapt. Change. The world has no large problems to throw at you anymore. I'm sorry."

"Well not yet", says Cole with a smirk.

Larry looks at him curiously. "What are you talking about?"

"Larry, you haven't changed much since college. You still keep it close to the chest."

Larry looks at his wrist. It says worm 100% uploaded.

Cole continues. "That worm automatically sends any and all suppressed info regarding Vanessa to the press. And some more stuff to me. Can't prepare for something that hasn't existed yet." He stands and faces Larry. "How's that for adapting?"

"You won't get far", says Larry. He presses a panic button. "Security's on their way."

"Well they'll have to go through you first." Cole quickly snatches Larry in an arm lock and uses him as human shield.

Harold stands in fright "What the hell?"

"Improvising", replies Cole. "Let's get out of here."

"Harold", says Larry straining to speak under Cole's vice grip. "If you help me stop him, I'll let you go without punishment. I promise."

"Don't listen to him Harry. Think about Vanessa. Think about what he did to her."

"Yes", says Larry. "Think about Vanessa. And Cathy. And how you decided to have your only child live with both of their parents." Larry struggles under the grip.

The door opens. 2 security guards and Alicia stand at the doorway.

Cole stands behind Larry and Harold puts his hands up.

"Not another step", shouts Cole. He pulls out a gun from his holster. Harold looks at him, bewildered.

Larry looks surprised. “How’d?—”

“You used my system. My code. My ideas”, snarls Cole. “Karma’s a-bitch ain’t it?” He points at the security guards. “Get Back!”

Harold cowers behind the chairs as Cole slowly inches forward. He’s standing beside Harold. “C’mon Harry! Let’s go. Get behind me. We’ll make it out of here.”

“Harold”, strains Larry. Cole tightness his grip on Larry’s throat.

“Let him go” shouts a security guard. They point their weapons towards him. Cole moves back towards the desk. He aims his gun at the security guards. Alicia stands by the door with her phone talking with the police. The two guards stand in the doorway and slowly walk towards Cole. Alicia moves behind the guards for cover.

Cole stands tense. His grip slowly tightens around Larry’s neck. Out of the corner of his eye, Cole sees another guard trying to flank him. He aims and shoots the guard in the shoulder. His grip on Larry’s neck loosens a bit. Larry gets free and dives towards Harold hiding behind a chair.

Cole ducks behind the other chair as the guards open fire. Larry tries to run but Cole shoots him in the knee crippling him. Larry screams in pain and the blood slowly seeps from the wound runs towards Harold. He uses his belt as a tourniquet to stop the bleeding. Harold peers around the corner and sees Alicia crouching behind the door. Larry nods slightly , thanking Harold for the help.

BANG. BANG. Both of security guards fall, immobile.

Cole grabs Larry again with an armlock and drags him out of the office. “C’mon Harold!”

As they approach the entrance of Larry’s office, Harold sees Alicia on his right cowering behind her desk

“STOP RIGHT THERE”, shout guards running towards them from the left.

Cole faces them. “Back off or he dies. Just let us pass.”

Larry struggles to stand, but manages to shout “Forget me, just shoot ‘em!”

The guards aim their weapons and open fire.

Cole and Harold dive out of the way back into the office. Their bodies almost past the doorway. After the fire dies out, Harold looks back and sees a pool of blood.

“are you hit”, asks Cole. Harold stands unharmed. Cole grabs Larry who suffered minor grazing but nothing to create a pool of blood.

Harold peers around the corner and sees the back of a head with a red ribbon tied in a bow lying atop the pool of blood.

Alicia. Harold doesn’t move. Cole shouts at Harold to help carry Larry. But Harold doesn’t hear him.

“Harry”, shouts Cole again. “We gotta move.” Harold stands and turns to Cole. Cole holds Larry in a

headlock who's standing on one leg.

Larry looks at Harold, begging with him. "Harold, please. Think about her."

Cole knocks Larry over the head with his gun. Larry falls to the ground hard, his face turned towards Harold. "I've waited years to do this."

Harold looks at Alicia lying in her blood and Larry's last plea. Cole steadies his weapon at Larry, ready to fire.

BANG. Cole shot towards Larry, but Harold diverted the shot away causing him to miss. The bullet landed by Larry's head.

Cole shoves Harold to the ground pointing the gun at him.

"What're you doing", Cole shouts. BANG. The shot rang throughout the hallway and room. A security guard shot Cole in the shoulder.

Cole's gun slide towards Harold, but he didn't move. The 5 guards swarmed the room. Two of them held Larry to his feet.

A guard pins Harold to the ground and slaps metal cuffs on him. The guard's knee presses against Harold's back, nearly bursting his lungs.

"Not him", says Larry pointing at Harold. "Let him go."

The guard eases pressure off of Harold and helps him up.

Harold enters an empty home. He turns on the tv. Breaking news in bold red letters zoom across the screen. A news anchor talks rapidly, receiving information as fast as she talks.

"This just in. Rotus's proprietary information has been leaked online and its stock dropped 300%. A lone gunman, Cole Hollstein, attacked Rotus employees, CEO Larry Burgess, and leaked the data online. Officials believe Cole to be working alone and apart of conspiracy group searching to expose false philanthropists. Larry Burgess is in George Washington for his wounds. We'll bring more updates as we get them."

Harold shuts off the tv. The house remains deadly silent. Cathy is nowhere to be found. He enters his office. Everything's where he left it. The white envelope still has the ashy remains of the cigarette as if he only left for a few minutes. Harold walks to his desk and picks up the face down picture frame.

It's a photo of Harold, Vanessa, and Cathy embracing each other in a family hug. The picture is old and worn out. He gently picks up the photo and reads the inscription on the back.

"No matter how much technology changes our world. You will always be my world." - Vanessa.

The front door closes. Cathy shuffles by Harold's office without a glance.

Harold picks up the envelope and dusts of the ashy remnants of the cigarette and walks to Cathy's room.

Cathy's door is ajar as Harold knocks on it.

"Cathy", says Harold gently. "Can I come in?"

"Why", she says bluntly.

"I want to talk."

"Ok."

Harold pushes the door open revealing a tidy room and Cathy sitting on her bed, brushing her hair. Her red ribbon lies on the bed beside her.

“Shouldn’t you be outside saving the world?”, says Cathy not making eye contact.

“You are my world.” Harold shows the envelope. “Where’d you find it”, asks Harold.

“Your room. With mom’s stuff.”

Harold smiles. Fighting back tears as memories of Vanessa flash through his mind. He slowly rips open the envelope and unfolds the paper.

They’re adoption papers. He stares at the adoption papers as he begins.

“Your mother and I were going to tell you until you were older. What do you want to know?”

Cathy debates in her mind quietly. “What was she like? My birth mother?”

“A strong and fierce woman”, says Harold. “And a good friend.”

“What was her name?”

“Alicia.”

Cathy leans closer to her father as he continues talking about their family.