This is a story about a man named Richard.

Richard lived in a small town in a rather large house with his beautiful wife, making a rather wealthy living as a teacher for the local elementary school.

Every day, Richard would wake up, kiss his wife good morning, and go off to a career that he loved.

He would walk out onto the vibrant green grass and look up towards the clear blue sky, appreciating all that he had. After that, he would continue on his way.

But then one day, something peculiar happened.

**Chapter One**

“Good morning, Miss Smith!” Richard called out to a fellow teacher passing by.

Miss Smith, a rather young and fetching coworker, turned to Richard and replied, “Oh hello, Richard! Looking rather well today, I see!”

Richard was wearing his best suit, pleated pants, recently shined shoes and his cornflower blue tie. His shiny black hair was combed back and his face was covered with just the perfect amount of five o’clock shadow to make him look like quite the charmer.

“Why, thank you, Miss Smith! You do as well!” Richard said back as he continued on by.

Walking into his classroom right on time, Richard could already see all the children seated quietly like angels.

“Hello class! How are you today?” Richard asked enthusiastically.

“Wonderful, Mister Stevens!” the class all replied in unison.

“That’s great, kids!” Richard exclaimed as he turned to the black board and began to write the day’s curriculum. “Today, we will be learning how to do division!”

“Hooray!” the class shouted, all together. “We love math!”

Richard chuckled at the kid’s enthusiasm and announced, “Well alright, let’s get started then!”

Richard taught the class for almost hour before the bell rang, announcing that it was lunch.

All the kids filed out into perfectly straight lines as they walked themselves quietly to the cafeteria. Richard then had the allotted three hours of time to grade a small stack of papers, and relax.

“Oh, how I love being a teacher,” Richard sighed fondly, as he reached for the stack, which he began to grade.

After about ten minutes of grading papers and finishing the stack, Richard looked to the clock to see that he still had well over two hours of break time left.

“Oh, my!” Richard exclaimed. “I have so much time before the children return, I might as well go say hello to my wife!”

As Richard got up and walked towards the school’s exit, all his coworkers passed him by with their welcoming, ‘hellos’ and ‘good days’. Richard returned the gestures happily as he exited and made the short walk of about a block and a half back to his house.

“Sweetie, I’m home!” Richard announced into the large white house, as he walked through the white bordered glass doors.

“Oh, Richard!” his wife cried out happily as she ran up to him and into his arms. “I’ve missed you so much!”

Richard chuckled, “Oh, but darling, I’ve only been gone but an hour!”

Richard’s wife, Cleo, looked to him with her beautiful hazel eyes as her long flowing brunette hair flowed over her shoulders. Her delicately, thin body was held in his strong arms, as she sighed, “Oh I know, but I just get so bored without you here! In fact, in the hour you were gone, I had nothing else to do but clean the entire house!”

Richard looked behind Cleo to see that, in fact, the entire house was completely spotless.

“Oh, Cleo, how I love you!” Richard announced sweetly as he kissed his gorgeous wife.

“Oh darling,” Cleo replied passionately, “you’ve worked so hard today, let us make love before you leave!”

After spending the remaining two hours making love with Cleo, Richard got dressed once again and exited the house to go back to the school.

On his way there, he saw many people going about their daily activities such as playing with their kids or walking the dog, all happily smiling at him and waving as he passed by.

“Hello, Mister Stevens!” one beautiful woman greeted as she passed by.

“Hello to you!” He turned, replying to the rather stunning young lady that he had never met before.

When Richard turned back around to continue on his way, he spotted someone very peculiar.

In the middle of the walkway, standing perfectly still, was a young teenage girl with blaring orange hair, smiling wildly, with intense and piercing eyes.

This was something that threw Richard off for a moment, as all the people he had ever seen in his life always looked complacent and peaceful. Nevertheless, Richard quickly shook off his shock to give the young girl a pleasant smile and a nod, as he continued to walk forward.

Though the girl did not move.

Richard stopped, just yards away from the girl, and he too stood still, not comprehending the situation at hand.

The girl still did not move.

Richard thought, *should I ask her to move out of the way so I can continue on?*

Just as Richard was about to open his mouth to speak, the girl suddenly spoke instead. “Do you really think everything is so perfect?”

Her voice sent chills down his spine, never having heard such a rasp and hoarse voice in his entire life.

“Do you really think the grass is this green? Do you really think the sky is this blue?”

Richard began to feel uncomfortable, as he looked around to see that nobody even seemed to notice the girl.

“Do you really think that you are so famous for doing absolutely nothing, that even complete strangers know your name? Do you really think that everyone is always so happy?”

Never encountering a situation like this before, Richard began to sweat. All the past scenarios he ever had with anyone flashed rapidly through his head as he tried to find just one that was even the slightest bit uncomfortable, so he could figure out how to respond.

“Do you really think that children behave so stunningly, that they are even enthusiastic to learn math? Do you really think that teachers are paid such high and luxurious salaries?”

Richard began to tremble, realizing that never once in his life had he ever even felt even the slightest bit uncomfortable compared to the moment at hand.

Just as Richard was about to turn around and walk straight back home, the girl opened her mouth one last time and spoke, “And really, Richard Stevens, do you really think that police officers can just come out of nowhere and attack people?”

Just as her last breath finished, out of nowhere, four police officers tackled her to the ground and began to bind her up. With her demonic smile still blaring, and her piercing eyes still staring into his…

That’s when it all happened.

All in a few seconds, the girl slipped out of the bindings and smashed her fist into the leading officer’s face. Swiftly, she turned around and kicked another officer into the dirt, before she hastily disarmed the remaining two, and then, just like that, she riddled all their faces with bullets.

The officers fell to the ground, unmoving and disfigured as they gurgled through their mutilated faces.

Completely terrified, Richard looked up to the young girl, who was looking down at the slain men, still with the same possessed smile. She then turned to look at Richard, and croaked, “Not so perfect anymore, is it?”

Richard stood, paralyzed in fear, not knowing what to do or say, more horrified than he had ever been in his entire life.

The girl just smiled and sneered, “Break’s over.”

Suddenly, five more groups of four police officers ran out of nowhere and began to tackle her to the ground and bind her up once again.

Just as before, she immediately exploded, and faster than he could even see, she threw them all off of her and darted towards him at the speed of light. Grabbing his wrist with superhuman force, she thrust him forward. Richard’s body immediately lifted up off the ground from the sheer speed, and he went soaring through the air like a kite.

The cops chased fast behind them, shouting all in the same voice, “Release Richard Stevens!”

The girl turned with her demonic smile and raised her hand, yelling, “Ha!” and suddenly, all of the cops collapsed lifelessly to the ground in contorted positions.

“Oh my god,” Richard choked, as the wind beat and battered his face, not comprehending anything of what had just happened or what was happening at the moment. Within no more than just a few seconds, the two were already on the outskirts of town.

The girl slowed to a stop as gravity pulled Richard to the ground, which he hit with a heavy thud.

“They won’t be following us anymore,” the girl announced.

“What are you doing with me!?” Richard screamed. “What the hell have you done!?”

The girl just smiled with her crazed eyes flaring, and she replied, “Hurry up, we gotta go before they notice we are gone.”

With that, she darted off further away from the town.

“I’m not following you! You’re insane!” Richard shouted as he got back to his feet and brushed off his clothes.

“Oh, yeah?” she replied as he looked up to see her holding one of the guns, just a few yards away.

Sweat dropped down Richard’s neck and he stuttered, “Y-you’re a kid! You shouldn’t have a gun! You shouldn’t be killing people! You’re going to throw your entire life away in prison for killing those officers!”

The girl just laughed, her voice raspy and deranged. “You are the most ignorant human I have ever seen. Move.” With that, she reached out her hand and bent her finger inward, and Richard’s entire body went flying towards her, crashing into the ground at her feet.

“W-wha-” he stuttered, as he turned his head and looked up at the demonic girl. “Who… who are you?”

She just smiled, her grin reaching from ear to ear, as she replied, “I’m Virus.”

All of a sudden, Richard’s legs started to move, lifting his body up and running against his will, as he watched Virus speed ahead of him, taking the lead as the two darted off further into the outskirts.

Faster and faster they ran, off into the grassy flatlands, when suddenly, Virus came to an abrupt halt. Richard, on the other hand, did not even know how he was moving, much less how to stop. Without slowing in the slightest, he continued on to slam face first into something incredibly hard, before collapsing to the ground.

Richard held his face and screamed in pain, rubbing and pressing his hands onto his smashed face. Between his fingers, he looked up to see that he ran into nothing at all.

“A collider,” Virus sneered, as she raised her hand up in front of the invisible object and twisted her wrist in a snap.

Suddenly, all in front of them, like a fence running from end to end of their vision, zeroes and ones appeared in a long feed, then slowly disappeared into the air.

“Wha-… What the Hell was that!?” Richard yelped, still holding his bruised face.

Virus just grinned, grabbing his wrist as she began to run again, pulling him into grounds that he had never gone to or ever imagined going to.

“Put me down!” Richard screamed. “Please, just put me down!”

Virus just continued to smile as she ran at lightning fast speed, until she, once again, abruptly stopped. Due to the sudden halt of motion, Richard shut his eyes tight as he slammed face first into the dirt.

Pulling himself up, he quickly wiped the soil from his face and opened his eyes to see something absolutely horrifying.

Right in front of the grassy, green earth that he was lying on, was nothing. Absolutely nothing but a dark abyss.

It was not a cliff that led to a drop, nor was it just so dark that he just could not see the bottom.

It was just nothing.

*It’s the edge of the earth!*Richard thought to himself as he suddenly reconsidered all that he had ever learned in school about the world being round. *It’s impossible!*

Richard stared out into the unknown, then looked back up to see the great, blue sky, just plastered there like a dome, abruptly ending against the darkness in a solid line.

Speechless, he looked back down and grasped the edge of the earth with his hand and felt that it didn’t even have depth, but that it was just as thin as a piece of paper.

“What the-” Richard uttered, completely terrified, when suddenly, he felt Virus grab the back of his neck, and with one sharp tug, she tossed him into the air like a rag doll.

As if in slow motion, he watched Virus demonically smile as she leaped off the edge with him, grabbing his wrist in midair and pulling him forward.

Richard screamed a long “no!” which aided him in no way, as he went soaring down into the nothingness with the psychotic girl.

Richard screamed and screamed, with his eyes shut tight, just waiting to hit the bottom; but then something strange happened.

He didn’t.

Slowly his screams dissipated, as he carefully opened his eyes to see Virus with a series of tiny, glowing numbers in front of her, as if they were all on a small invisible screen.

“Bingo,” Virus growls with a sinister smile.

Suddenly, Virus sped over to Richard and started tapping at the air in front of his bewildered eyes, as more glowing numbers appeared with every touch of her fingertips. “The data that comprises of your consciousness has been rewritten to adapt and accommodate you to this world. I am hacking into the file with your original memories to reprogram you back to your natural state.”

Richard just stared, not catching any of what Virus had said, when she suddenly, she grabbed his head and pressed her thumb against his forehead.

“When you receive the incoming data, input the entry code to release us into the outside world.”

“But, wha-!?” Richard yelped, as Virus cut him off by saying, “You’ll know it when you see it.”

And then suddenly, the whole world went black.

**Chapter Two**

Floating in empty space, Richard’s consciousness lingered.

*What is this place?* Richard’s bodiless form thought to himself.

Just then, a surge of information flooded over him. Letters, numbers, words, images, sights, smells, tastes, and sounds, all rushed back.

He remembered people he had never met, he saw places that he never went to before, and he saw code.

And code.

And more code.

And as if divine intervention, he saw: 89625lostworldoverride.

And then it all went white.

In the blinding space, he heard Virus’s voice snarl, “I’m uploading you to your new man suit. Sit tight.”

Richard floated in the white abyss, when suddenly, he felt water splashed over his face, and he gasped for air as he felt needles ripped from his soft head. Covered completely in slimy residue, his body came flooding out of the oily water and overtop of broken glass.

When he opened his eyes, there before him, in a room of white, stood Virus.

With long, bright red hair and a demonic smile, baring sharp, jagged teeth, she stood far taller than before, wearing a strange police-like outfit. “Hello Richard,” she spoke, her voice still harsh as ever.

Richard stared at her, speechless, as he turned and looks all around him at the surrounding area, seeing test tubes, vials, beakers, and white, white wards.

“Wha-” Richard tried to speak, but instead, he began to choke up fluid that he spat and spewed onto the ground, resulting in a light, sea green puddle, melding with the rest of the liquid he was already sitting in.

Hunched over, he opened his eyes to see his lower torso, only to realize that not only was he naked, but that he did not look anything like he usually did.

“Richie, we gotta get movin’,” Virus announced. “If we don’t hurry, those men in the pretty pearl suits will storm right in here to put you back from where you came. We gotta go now!” And within an instant, Richard was lifted off the wet ground by Virus and held cradle-like in her arms, and it was only then that Richard realized that she must have been at least seven feet tall.

‘Wh-where are we go-” Richard tried to choke out, but Virus cut him off by saying, “Out of this Godless place.”

Virus swiftly moved into the next room which was filled with white lab coats, white shirts, white pants and white paper cover ups. Quickly, Virus snatched a shirt and a pair of pants as she plopped poor, naked Richard on the ground like a wet fish. Throwing the clothes on top of him, she explained, “Your new body has been pumped with steroids for years, you can move and function just as any naturally born human. After you are done choking on your own nutrient serum, you’ll be able to speak too, but for now, put these on and hurry.”

Richard, who was freezing cold and terrified, obeyed Virus’s command and dressed himself as fast and efficiently as he possibly could.

With his new body feeling very foreign, moving and maneuvering proved difficult. Richard wormed his way through the shirt as if he were a toddler just learning how to dress themselves for the first time.

“God damn it, Richard,” Virus sneered. She grabbed the arm hole that he had managed his head through, pulled him out, and then rearranged it in the proper wearing fashion.

Virus stood back up and stared down at poor Richard, who was looking up at her like a confused and beaten puppy.

“Pathetic,” she muttered.

Quickly, she pulled Richard to his feet and said, “You are going to walk behind me and not say a word. Don’t cough or gurgle either. If you don’t want to go back to where you were imprisoned all these years, then listen to me.”

After hearing her words, Richard nodded obediently, but then thought to himself on how much more he preferred where he previously came from.

Before another thought could cross his mind, Virus had already turned around and walked away. Just before Virus exited the door, Richard quickly chased behind and watched as all the color drained from her hair, turning it to a pale white.

Wanting to ask why, but following orders not to speak, he stared as she punched a code into the keypad, and watched as the pristine, white door slid open. “Let’s go,” she ordered.

Exiting the room and following her down the ward, Richard watched as he passed door after door, all looking the same. Men in white lab coats quickly passed them by, none even taking notice of the two, and Richard wondered why nobody found a seven-foot-tall amazon woman even the slightest bit strange.

Finally, Virus stopped at the very last door in the hall and punched yet another code into the keypad beside it. Within only a moment, the door slid open and in poured bright, white light.

Richard covered his vision against the blaring flash and stood stunned as he tried to open his eyes. Slowly, he adjusted, and by the time that he could just barely open his eyes, Virus was already twenty feet ahead of him, snapping, “Come on meat sack, hurry up.”

As fast as he possibly could, Richard opened his eyes to see the outside world.

There, in front of him, were concrete paths surrounded by lush greenery, all covered by an overpass. Richard stared in astonishment of how real everything appeared.

Suddenly, a breeze passed by and hit his face, and in that single gust, he felt more than he had ever felt before.

Wanting to speak, and just about to speak despite Virus’s orders, Virus grasped his wrist and pulled him forward, letting him go only once he began to move his legs on his own.

Silently, the two walked down the sidewalk, as they passed more and more men in lab coats, who took absolutely no notice to them.

“They’ll notice what I did soon,” Virus whispers. “We need to hurry, so don’t stop to smell the roses, Richard.”

The two walked very quickly until they finally reached a giant concrete wall, where Virus tapped in one more code. The doors opened and Virus swiftly walked away, not even taking notice of Richard anymore.

Taking in so many sights, so many scents, so many things that he never could have possibly imagined, Richard followed close behind Virus, who was now quickly pacing through an industrial parking lot.

Memories, thoughts and ideas rushed through Richard’s head, ones that he never possessed before Virus came into his life. He remembered a job, not as a teacher, but as a programmer. He remembered coworkers that he had never met previously and a life that did not correlate with the one that he had been living. The only memory that stayed the same, was the one of his wife, Cleo.

Remembering her just the same as he always had, kind, loving, caring, and affectionate, he compared his pre-Virus memories and his post-Virus memories and found no difference in her.

*What does that mean?* Richard questioned to himself, when suddenly, he noticed that Virus had stopped at a very luxurious, black car.

Obediently still not speaking, Richard just looked to Virus for more instructions, when he noticed her kneeling down and pressing her palm to the front key hole. Curiously, Richard gazed over her shoulder to see what was happening, when suddenly, the doors all unlocked in a rather loud shift.

Virus smiled a cheeky and proud grin as she slowly removed her palm from the key hole, and in that transitory moment, Richard saw something incomprehensible that did not match either sets of his memories.

There was a port. A small electronic port in the center of her palm.

As Richard tried to understand what he was witnessing, the port sucked back into her palm and her skin molded over it. He turned back to look at the car, which had the female end of the port instead of where the key hole should have been, and before he could think another thought, Virus opened the door and jumped inside.

Reaching over to a giant button with the universal sign for power on it, Virus punched it in and the car started up. Smiling bright and fierce, Virus turned to him and victoriously sang, “Sweet cakes.”

Richard stood and stared in a confused daze, trying to make sense of it all, when Virus sternly commanded, “Get in.”

Quickly, Richard followed orders and went around the side of the car, then opened the door and sat down in the passenger seat. Before he could even buckle or shut the door, Virus floored the gas and went racing off.

In a panic, Richard slammed the door shut and fumbled for the seatbelt, which was nowhere in sight.

“These cars no longer have the seatbelts of your time,” Virus calmly stated. “Just by the very action of you sitting in that seat, has you protected by a nano-technology force field. If we were to crash, you would be safe, but don’t worry, we won’t. I have complete and perfect precision.”

As she spoke, the car took a sharp turn and swerved around a corner with a piercing screech.

Terrified, and no longer heeding Virus’s orders, Richard peeped, “Where are we going?”

Smiling intensely, Virus did not answer, but instead, she just stared ahead. Richard kept his eyes locked onto her with a terrified gaze, when suddenly, the car slammed to a stop.

Richard jolted forward, but was immediately held in place by an invisible force, just as Virus had said.

He quickly shot his head back up to see what caused the sudden stop, when there before him, he saw a gate. It stood about one hundred yards away, covered in barbed wire, and was surrounded by security guards.

“To enter or exit this building, you must have authorization,” Virus spoke, quickly. “Without this, things can get a bit complicated.”

Richard stared at Virus and her wild smile, watching as her lips curled up in a twisted smirk. “If you’re going to do something bad, then you might as well do it with complete insanity, because humans take longer to react to things that they are not prepared for. This, my good sir, will buy you more time.”  
And with that, the car took off, from zero to eighty, racing at full speed towards the gate as Richard screamed like a child.

All in one slam, the car breached through the gate and the two fugitives sped off down the road, with gunfire quickly following them.

“Wha-!?” Richard began, before being interrupted by a bullet shattering one of the windows.

“You can’t ask nicely to break out of prison, can you? It’s always got to be the hard way!” Virus laughed insanely as she floored the car, driving further than the bullets could reach.

**Chapter Three**

After driving for some time, Virus eventually reached a large downtown city center, finally coming to a slow and parallel parking between two other cars.

“When one wants to hide, it is never a good idea just to ditch a car in the woods or off on the side of the road. It’s far too suspicious. There is no better place to hide a tree than in a forest, you know, Richie,” Virus spoke as she disembarked from the car.

Richard attempted to follow, but when reaching for the door handle, he found that there was none, and instead, there was only a tiny blue button in its place. Before he could even have time to press it, Virus was already standing right there and opening the door for him. “You really are inept, aren’t you, Richard?”

Richard just looked up to her, and for the first time, he felt anger for the way that she was treating him, especially since it was not even his fault for his ignorance.

“What year is this?” Richard demanded. “Why is everything so different, what’s going on!?”

Richard stared intensely at Virus, sure in his mind that the last year that he remembered living in was 2075.

Virus sighed and leaned against the door, baring her sharp teeth in reply, “It’s 2086, now get out. I’ll explain more as we walk.”

*2086?* Richard thought to himself as he obeyed Virus and exited the car.

Before he was even barely out, Virus slammed the door shut, just missing his skin by an inch and causing Richard to jump and let out a small yelp.

Virus turned and began to abruptly walk away, startling Richard into following her like a lost puppy, despite his upset disposition at her kidnapping and holding him hostage.

Richard caught up with Virus, passing the many crowds of people, hustling and bustling their way through the city.

Suddenly, Virus made a sharp turn down an alleyway, just barely large enough for them to fit into, and without notice, her hair changed back to the original red, starting from the roots all the way through the ends.

“How did you-?” Richard started, only to be cut off by Virus. “Nano-technology,” she stated, followed by her stretched demonic smile, as she quickly exited the alleyway.

Richard, so over whelmed by this all happening so fast, grabbed his head and quickly trailed after Virus, shouting, “Okay, that is not going to work for me. I want a real explanation. Now.”

Suddenly, Virus came to a halt and swiftly turned to Richard, speaking with incredible speed. “The reason you are here traces back to the beginnings where your so-called friends and colleagues gorged you of specific top secret knowledge and transported the scraps of your memory absent of this information, as well as other key details of you life, to an artificial cyber world created to mimic a perfect reality that you never had in order to keep you content so you would not question anything. They then proceeded to use this knowledge to finish creating the world’s most dangerous artificial intelligence that, with ease, could destroy any city on the planet by hacking into the main frame of the world’s best and most accountable super computers to overload interior power plants and nuclear plants, causing meltdowns and explosions that would appear accidental and could not be traced back to this government. This secret warfare is now being used in the east to decimate and level entire cities full of civilians for the government’s selfish war games by programming the AI to attack where ever it sees fit. Everywhere except for this beautiful country of course,” Virus sneered as she turned back around and continued on her way before Richard’s interruption.

Richard stood dumbfounded, hardly understanding anything of what Virus had just said, except that something very bad had happened. Quickly as he could, he shook away his shock and tried to wrap his head around Virus’s words while keeping up with her fast pace.

“Hey,” Richard stammered as he caught up to Virus, “wait, I don’t understand. So there is a war going on?”

Virus crackled with a Cheshire grin, “Was that all you got from that?”

“Well you talk so fast you know, and-”

“My job is not to slow down for your incompetence, Richard. Keep up the pace,” Virus interrupted as she began to walk even faster.

Richard, thrown off by Virus’s insults once again, lost his train of thought and began to panic from the idea of losing her in such a foreign city.

Doing his best to walk as fast as Virus’s wide and long strides, Richard quickly found that his shorter legs were not capable of stepping as far as Virus’s, as he kept falling behind.

In an attempt to keep up, Richard began to jog, making his way back up to Virus’s side.

As soon as he reached her, Virus just kept her vision ahead, not even taking a moment to look at Richard, and she jeered, “Ah, good to have you back with us, Richie.”

Unconfident and clearly intimidated, Richard began to form his next unsure sentence. “So why-” but before he could finish, Virus interrupted him once again.

“I am here to eliminate the creators of the AI and to halt any further developments as well as gain the shutdown code from their memory banks in order to put an end to the hazardous weapon.”

Richard was about to open his mouth again, with another question that he had, but before he could, Virus interjected, “I’m guessing your next question will be something along the lines of asking who I am, so let me just tell you now before you waste anymore breath that you need to save for panting in order to keep up with me.”

Virus smiled, baring her sharp teeth and said, “I am Virus, a robot created specifically to right the wrongs of the selfish programmers who created the AI which has ended so many innocent lives just for pointless war games. While I am at it, I may as well tell you who you are as well, since your memories will most likely not come back into full, chronological order, for a few more days. Your name is Richard, so at least you know that much already. You were the birth father of this idea: A super, high-functioning artificial intelligence named IFAIA, short for, independently functioning artificially intelligent agent. This was the AI that was used for all the destruction in the east. Originally, it was merely meant to link all the world’s computers together in unison to monitor other countries work in order to prevent spying and progression of war devices. Your idea was that, if IFAIA detected any form of weaponry being developed, it would locate the files pertaining to that specific project and shut down all means to continue. This would eliminate massively destructive wars. Your goal was world peace.”

Richard stared at Virus, wide-eyed and in shock, when she continued, “That *was* the plan, until your colleagues stole your ideas and imprisoned you in an artificial world to keep you quiet.”

Shocked and disturbed by this information, a burst of angered anxiety filled Richard.

“Where are these people now?” Richard grumbled, doing his best to suppress his fury.

Virus looked to him with eyes that saw beyond the surface. As if peering into his soul, she spoke, “I sense someone is a little angry. Well here, this might cheer you up. The reason why I have broken you out of this hell to begin with, is so you can seek revenge. Well, and of course to finish my mission and destroy the creators, but your revenge fits into that as well.”

Richard blinked, processing what she had just said, and he asked, “Wait. We are going to… Kill them?”

“Correct,” Virus stated, as she looked back up, continuing on her way.

A horrible pang of doom surged through Richard, feeling as though his new life was already spiraling down a very wrong path.

The only thing Richard could manage in response was, “Isn’t that illegal?”

Virus snickered, “Well I have already kidnapped you and committed grand theft auto, so killing someone was bound to happen eventually. I’m just headed on a road of destruction, Richie, you should get used to it.”

For a moment, Richard wondered if this was even a conversation that they should be having out in the open. He looked all around himself at the busy city-goers, but was surprised to see that they were all talking to their headsets, caught up in their own little world.

“Don’t worry, Richie, they don’t care. They are all swallowed up in their own lives, they don’t care about ours,” Virus assured.

Richard turned his attention back to Virus and asked, “How do you always know what I’m-”

But again, before he could finish, Virus finished for him. “What you’re thinking of? Oh, Richie, it’s simple. You humans are just predictable. Just by merely looking at your expressions, where your eyes are staring, the tone of your voice, the delay in your words, all of that and many other micro-emotions, just give yourself away.”

Richard took a moment to step back and examine himself, wondering what else he had been giving away, when it dawned on him and he replied, “Hey, but wait, you’ve hardly looked at me this entire walk. You haven’t even been watching my ‘micro-emotions’, yet I’ve been barely able to finish a single sentence!”

“Who said that I can only see through my eyes?” Virus responded coldly.

Chills ran down Richard’s spine at hearing this, solidifying his thoughts that Virus was not one to be messed with.

Virus chuckled sickly as she finished by saying, “You should never underestimate anyone, as more times than not, you will be surprised to find that others are not what they seem.”

With that, Virus turned a sharp corner, with the path leading directly to a busy intersection.

The closer the two walked to the busy road, the more uneasy Richard became, as Virus made no indication that she was going to stop any time soon.

“Uh, Virus?” Richard peeped.

“Yes, Richard?” Virus spoke without hesitation, keeping her eyes on the street before her.

“Um, we aren’t going to walk into traffic, are we?” Richard wearily asked.

“Yes, Richard, we are.” Virus responded factually.

As the road neared closer and closer, just yards away, Richard began to panic. “Hey, I don’t think that’s a good idea, I’m still not fully coordinated yet and I-“

“Just hush, Richard,” Virus shushed him. “You’ll be fine.”

Right as Virus took her first step onto the road, she threw her left hand up, and all in a wave, the traffic lights turned red. Cars skidded and screeched, doing their best to adhere to the stoplights.

Crashes thundered from the streets as Richard watched Virus casually avoiding all of the accidents, strolling across the way as if none of the chaos was even happening around her.

Once Virus made it safely to the other end, with smashed and totaled cars all around her, she turned around and called out, “Richard, my boy, what are you waiting for? I made the streets un-busy for you! Show some gratitude now, you hear?”

Richard stared in horrified shock at all the mayhem around him, before he shook away his astonishment to catch up to Virus.

Once reaching her side, Richard whisper-yelled, “*What* was *that!?”*

“What?” Virus replied, looking away as if completely interested in anything other than him and his question.

“What do you mean ‘What’? You just caused a massive traffic accident just because you didn’t want to wait for the crosswalk to turn green!”

“No,” Virus replied, “I just caused a massive traffic accident because you did not want to walk into busy traffic. I would have been just fine walking through without making the cars stop, but you are a wee little princess, so I was being nice and accommodated to your needs.”

Not even fazed by Virus’s insults any longer, Richard questioned, “And how were you able to do that!? You said you were a robot, not a god. How did you make those lights change with just the wave of your hand?”

Virus laughed. “If I told you, then I would have to kill you.”

There was a long pause between the two, as Richard did not press to find out if that statement was actually true, when suddenly, Virus crackled, “Oh, Richie, I would never do that! I need you after all, you hear? You are my partner now.”

Upon hearing the first nice thing that Virus had said to him so far, Richard repeated, “Your ‘partner’?”

Virus snickered, “Well, if you consider being a hostage a partner, then yes.”

Richard’s eyes went wide as he muttered, “Wait, hostage? So, you mean, I don’t have a choice but to be with you?”

“Nope,” Virus replied, “sorry.”

A sick feeling came over Richard, as if he was just scammed very badly by a conman, when Virus continued, “Well, I hope you would want to stick with me by choice anyways, since I was the one who rescued you from your pathetic false existence.”

Suddenly, the question that he felt that he should have been asking from the very start popped into his head, and he spoke, “Yeah, wait. Why did you break me out of there in the first place, anyways? What good am I to you besides a hostage?”

“You’re not,” Virus responds, “You’re just a very special hostage, that’s all. You see, since you were the lead creator of IFAIA, your existence is considered valuable to the rest of the cooperation who you were imprisoned by. Nobody will kill you, which keeps me safe.”

“Oh,” Richard murmured in disappointment as he stared at the pavement that his bare feet were treading on.

“Any other questions?” Virus asked, as she led the way to an unknown destination.

Richard looked up at the technologically advanced culture in front of him. Holograms and hovering devices floated on every corner, while people bustled around wearing strange clothes and headsets, as the buildings, which were far more architecturally advanced than the ones of his time, towered over him.

Richard had many questions. Many, many questions; but the only one that he could manage to ask was, “So where are we going?”

Virus’s smile stretched far and wide, and for the first time in a while, she actually made eye contact with him and replied, “We are going to go visit your dear, old friend, Juan.”

“Juan?” Richard repeated, but by time the name exited his lips, he could already remember who Juan was.

His Coworker.

His fat, angry, stiff, coworker.

The third in line in the project to develop IFAIA.

Coming to his memories, he remembered that he never liked Juan. Short, stocky, and in his mid-forties and with a bad temper, Juan spent countless hours on the computer. He was always either programming or looking at porn, but either way, he never had much human interaction with the rest of the team. One thing was for sure though: he was a damn good programmer.

“Where is he?” Richard asked as he dug his nails into the soft inside of his palm.

“Mexico City,” Virus stated. “So we will have to be doing a little traveling.”

“Mexico?” Richard mumbled to himself before he turned to Virus and asked, “Wait, where are we now?”

“Phoenix, Arizona,” Virus responded, emphasizing every syllable with a cocky smile.

“Arizona!?” Richard snapped, “That’s almost a thirty hour drive to Mexico City!”

“Who said we’re driving?” Virus growled with a smile.

Suddenly, Richard fell silent; his mind taking the time to process the words Virus had just spoken. “Are we going to fly?” Richard uttered with his best attempt at a guess.

Virus burst out into insane, booming laughter, as she roared, “After that break out that we pulled off, don’t you think that every officer in America will be watching for us? Silly Richard, of course we won’t be flying. Flying is obsolete now anyways. Planes are only used for sky cruises nowadays. Our mode for transportation will be teleportation.”

Richard stared up at Virus in disbelief, “They have those out now? Last I heard was that they reported that teleportation would not be possible for anything other than inanimate objects.”

“Correct,” Virus replied.

Virus’s quick response threw Richard off, as he gathered his thoughts to respond, “But… but we are not inanimate objects.”

“Incorrect, meat sack. You are not an inanimate object, but I am.”

Looking up at Virus’s soft pale skin, flowing, long red hair and prominent bone structure, Richard had forgotten that this very humanistic creature, was indeed, not human at all.

“Oh, well,” Richard mumbled to himself before the thought hit him, “Wait, what about me, though? I’m human! What does that mean for me?”

“It means we will have some complications, but no matter. It isn’t anything that I can’t fix. These idiot humans have their algorithms all wrong on how to transport matter. As it stands now, if anything organic were to go in the machine, it would come out on the other side all inside-out. Though do not worry, my young Richard, I am a perfectly precise being and I will make sure that no harm will come to you whatsoever.”

Not quite trusting Virus’s words with his life, Richard cringed as he spoke, “And how do you plan to do that?”

“That is for me to already know the answer to and for you to worry about, as it is clear that you do not trust me, anyways,” Virus sneers with a stretched smile. “Just carry on with existing for right now, Richard, as it is pretty much the best talent you have. Keep doing it, you have been rather good at it so far.”

No longer fazed by Virus’s rude comments, Richard continued on, following behind Virus through the huge city.

As they made their way through the metropolis, Richard kept his head down towards the concrete, thinking of all that happened, thinking of his life, his coworkers.

Thinking of Cleo.

It wasn’t until Virus stopped short, without warning, that Richard ran into her from behind. He looked up at to where her eyes were directed, to see a giant company name on a tall building that rang rather fond to him.

SCO INTERNATIONAL.

Before Richard even could come to any words, Virus spoke in a sharp, shrilling tone, saying, “Bingo.”