Windilius Flaberjackle (a shortened excerpt from a novel)

by Jonah Spector

“Windilius… Flaberjackle? Who?” Habib asks Elliot, shocked at the contacts he seems to know. The two of them leave their dinky tan car and walk to a small building, itself surrounded by monstrous abominations to the landscape. They enter—one gleefully—into a crumbling Kernelese restaurant to find a few snot-nosed patrons drunk on green algae beer.

“He’s the best! He’ll make anything you can think of, too. ‘Made me some bespoke doowee once,” Elliot says ecstatically. He is fascinated with the man, something Habib wouldn’t understand.

Beyond the drunkards is the bartender. He stands, with his arms on the counter, barely awake. His mustache curls beyond reason, and his bald head glistens, a portion in the back replaced with chrome. Elliot walks up to him and puts his arm on the counter. After looking back at Habib with a smile, he looks at the bartender with a flourish and says, “We’re here for Flaberjackle.”

The bartender awakens and motions towards a door at the back of the restaurant. Elliot confidently leads the way through the door, passing Habib.

Through the door is a messy kitchen, with metal fermentation barrels taking up most of the space. Elliot quickly passes through to the hall at the end of the kitchen. Habib follows. Past the restrooms in the skinny hall is a door marked “hydroponics,” which opens to a staircase. Elliot walks down the creaking stairs. Habib follows.

The fantastic man works a bit beyond the overwhelmingly misty hydroponics basement. Habib hunches down to account for the short ceiling, which Elliot has no trouble with. Excessive ventilation stirs the standing mist, blaring at an uncomfortable volume. The leafy plants fill the room.

“Windilius, my good man! I brought Habib with me today!” Elliot nearly shouts over the ventilation. Bubbling beakers and swishering mixers cover the cluttered tabletops of the elaborate chemical lab. Windilius stands slightly shorter than Elliot, wearing an unfathomable contraption on his head. It has lenses, arms with tools, gadgets, and everything else attached, all seemingly moving on their own. He has a long beard with messy, knotted, accessorized hair.

Elliot continues, “He forgot a meeting he was in which must’ve had crucial information, and we can’t get anything digital to work. We think the memory’s been tampered with—by contamination of his senses in the real world, of course—to prevent access, so we’ll need your guys’ memory hallucinogens.”

“Certainly! Memories are a finicky thing, and the digital realm will never surpass the conscious mind. We can, though, just seat him there.” Windilius points to a chair with his partially gloved, stumpy hand. Habib walks up to the chair and sits, hesitantly, with Elliot’s coercion.

“Now, we’ll need to run some tests first to make a proper mix. Just some spinal fluid is all we need,” Darwinius says, pulling out a monstrous syringe. He moves the syringe into position on the right side of Habib’s neck. “Now, don’t move, or else I might hit something.”

Darwinius’ hands shake, but he shows no signs of worry. Elliot smiles as the man plunges the syringe into Habib’s neck. The fluid is collected as Habib winches. The fluid is given to a machine, which begins to vibrate. It reveals a list of chemicals, and, after a few minutes, Windilus produces a small spherical yellow pill.

“Take this,” he says, staring into Habib’s soul with his magnified eyes all the while, “it shouldn’t take more than a few seconds to kick into action. Just think about the things you *do* remember from the event so it knows what the target is.”

Habib accepts the pill and closes his eyes to remember what he can about the event. He posed as a Mammon head researcher, with his digital-likeness, to listen in on meetings. The meeting chamber was filled with olfactory amnesiac gas one time for some unknown reason. After that incident, Habib blew his cover and fled.

Previous meetings in the room can be reconciled, but none had much to offer. He visualizes the office space of the chemicals giant. It was a glass walled, bland room in a modest skyscraper. With it visualized, he takes the pill—with water; he is not a madman—and closes his eyes.

In an instant the room evaporates and he finds himself entering the glass room. The edges of his perception are out of reach, but the foundation is still intact, buried in his subconscious. He sees himself sign a waiver, knowingly agreeing to the gas as he has no other option. Nine other people sit in the room, each distraught. The gas is imperceptible, but pangs in his mind during the hallucination nonetheless.

The conversation comes back to him. It concerned the elimination of some two thousand witnesses to a chemical spill, which itself killed thirty thousand. Done by autonomous drone, only the people in the meeting were involved in the decision. To maintain deniability for their actions, none of them were to leave the meeting with their memories intact.

Habib awakens to tell Elliot the information. He recounts it plainly, and Elliot says, with an unphased tone, “Our employers will be pleased to reveal this information. A story like this will be enough for them to totally discredit Mammon, so I bet we’ll get paid some more.”

Elliot daydreams and Habib reflects. Half-a-million liter equivalent was the original bid, now surely more.