

Jedem das Seine¹

"I know how important it is for me to get good grades, mom. You don't have to keep telling me that."

...

"I'm going to cheat..."

...

"I'm not like those other students, mom. You know how clever I am, I've even outsmarted my brother once. I'm building a device that..."

...

"Bye, mom, I'll make you proud."

John hung up the phone and returned to building his device for tomorrow's exam.

Before attending this university, John heard rumors about how harsh the school was towards delinquents. He heard the rumor about Adam, who supposedly plagiarized one sentence from a website and was sent to THE ROOM for 4 days. No one knows what happened in THE ROOM but it was said that when Adam was released, he looked and sounded mechanical, almost robotic. "Of course this was only a rumor," John thought, "it's ridiculous to imagine a person with robotic limbs."

The university John chose to attend was considered great by most people; a private university that produced honest, fair, and highly respected men and women. What most didn't know though, was what happened behind the high walls that surrounded the university. Whose great iron gate's loud creaking rusty hinges were only heard twice a year, once when freshman arrived and once when graduates left.

Filing into the classroom, John immediately felt the ferocious gaze of Mr. Murdax fixated upon him. He felt Mr. Murdax's skeletal hands harshly poking and prodding him as they crawled up his body. His device was concealed well enough on his body such that John knew Mr. Murdax wouldn't find it during the mandatory pat down.

Opposite his desk, just above the chalkboard, a poster with an enormous face wearing a military-styled hat gazed out from the wall. It was another one of those posters placed all throughout the campus with a picture of the chancellor and the caption I AM WATCHING YOU beneath.

Head bent low, his hands flying across the page, John feverishly answered as many questions as he could before daring to activate his device. A lurking doubt surfaced in his mind as he eyed his surroundings, observing not only the rotating camera, as it swept over the classroom, but also Mr. Murdax and his TAs, prowling around, scrutinizing each student. He began to remember the rumor of Adam, but quickly forgot it, as what was most important to him was getting better grades. When he felt safe, he activated his device.

¹English translation: "to each his own" or more colloquially "you get what you deserve."

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Last night, while John was speaking to his mom, a student overheard him talking. Being the responsible student, he immediately notified the academic integrity office. The AIO, having complete control over the entire phone network on campus, activated their monitors and listened in onto the conversation. Since that night, they began tracking John, using the vast array of cameras and microphones strategically placed throughout the campus. They knew he was planning something, so they sat, watched, listened and waited.

Every camera, from the ones concealed within the lighting fixtures to the ones placed within each student's desk, was trained upon John. So subtle was the change in the folds of John's clothes that, although four pairs of eyes were looking at him, no one in the AIO noticed the change until the computer registered the difference. Like a hawk, diving in, just about to catch its prey, the cameras zoomed in on John's head and body, examining every detail of his face, eyes, and body language.

John moved his head down slightly and quickly glanced at his note sheet. Suddenly, he felt the boney hands of Mr. Murdax on his shoulder. He knew that he had been caught. Fear and alarm enveloped his face as John silently stood up. "How could this have happened," he thought, "I was so careful." A sense of utter helplessness descended upon him as the two slithered out of the classroom together, headed towards THE ROOM.

"I just got a call from the chancellor that you were caught cheating last week."

"I was mother. After one week of special sessions with the chancellor though, I learned the error of my ways."

"Honey, you sound a little strange, has something happened?"

"Mom I – everything is fine mother. I have become an honor student."

The year after John graduated, a reporter came to interview the chancellor. Upon the chancellor's desk, the reporter noticed a small plaque inscribed with gold and silver letters. It read:

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Best examples of the school's motto:

...

Adam

...

John

"Imagine," began the chancellor dreamily, "a university without cheating..."

