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Oppie's late I have to wait around until he shows I sit down in an orange chair it's one chair unit in a long line the supports are made of metal but the chairs are bright orange I find out they're made of metal when I sit on one it's painted to look like cushions ouch my butt hurts I get my large handheld from my bag naturally as soon as I startup an old guy collapses into the chair next to me and stares like he's never seen a handheld before I try sitting so he can't see but he leans and blinks at me he’s about a million years old with a scraggly white beard and weird red lips like he’s wearing lipstick some small electronic device is sticking out of his left ear he coughs like he's dying it's gross he says he's seen one like mine before he keeps leaning closer to look he probably hangs out here all day looking for somebody to talk at I try not to answer his questions but he keeps after me I answer a few he thinks QuadroDyne makes machine tools I have to correct him I tell him I'm here to work on a big project he acts all amazed and asks more dumb questions and he can't hear anything I say I have to repeat everything louder and louder somehow he has it in his mind I'm building a robot he starts a long story about a robot movie he saw back when he was a kid I've seen it he has the plot wrong this is like torture but worse because another old geek drops into the chair on my right this one has two ear devices and a power pack or something in his shirt pocket that connects to one of them and what a surprise they know each other haha they probably live here but I've worked in worse environments I tune them out and code until they get into arguing whether I'm here to create robots or clones I have to push them away they were both leaning over me and the newest loony is waving his power pack at my handheld like he's gonna smash it I tell them to be quiet I need to work because I'm on a top-secret project to create a download for a person oops I'm not supposed to talk about that but no worries the power pack guy thinks I said downtoad he's sure that's a clone that restarts the argument I work some more until the right one tucks his power pack into my bag he starts to get up and carry it off but Oppie finally shows he pats the second geezer on the head I grab my bag and we walk away Oppie's babbling too his rap is all about why he's late coming to get me and how when he got here all the airlines had changed the gates he begins telling me the politics of how that works here he knows a lot about it he wants me to know every detail I have an ugly feeling that's gonna happen a lot at Quad I tune him out and think about the code I'm working on it's something I'm finishing up for my ex-boss I only come out of it when he suddenly stops talking he's looking at his handheld he's got some scanner running and he's mumbling about all the extra EM activity out here he whispers something I can't hear but I think he said spies and it's like I get hit by a lightning bolt oh no those two old guys were corpo spies they probably weren't old either and I already gave away the whole project and if Quad finds out they'll have me killed I knew I shouldn't have left my last job it was greed what do I need the money for I go through a million iterations of what I'm getting into but what I'm getting into is Oppie's evehicle which looks like an ejeep that ate an evan I know that sounds crazy it has 6 wheels with double tires I have to walk up two steps to get into a passenger seat and Oppie is the worst driver ever and yeah he drives himself which I know is illegal here and half the time he's talking to me instead of watching where he's going when he is looking at the road he still manages to almost crash into every vehicle we come near and there's some weird train that runs through the airport we almost go head on with it too and then he tries to drive out onto one of the runways oh my god I tell him that's not the way out he cuts the wheel hard left into a U-turn we tilt so much the vehicle almost rolls over the whole time he's blabbing away about how beautiful the city is there's mountains to the east and beaches to the west somehow we get out of the airport alive and onto a huge highway 8 lanes in each direction Oppie manages to get us into the fast lane but only after we come this close to hitting an etruck a big yellow ebus and a police cruiser the cop gives us a dirty look but then he waves when he sees Oppie is driving he doesn't notice he's busy telling me how many people live here and how many parks there are and that people ride bicycles everywhere wow how can anybody that rides a bike survive in a city where he drives and all the time we're winding up some kind of huge hill it must be one of the mountains he was yakking about we reach the top and start down into a valley I see skyscrapers down there some of the tops are higher than we are Oppie is still talking I look at my handheld and quit listening I just nod when he looks at me and say uh-huh it's all good until I feel extreme pain in my left ankle I scream and yank my foot up Oppie swerves and hits the divider we bounce and then skid and then almost do a 180 but Oppie steers into the skid we sway back and forth across 4 lanes until he gets it under control I look at my leg blood is flowing from 3 cuts just above my anklebone a little gray head peeks up between my legs it has a mouthful of sharp teeth Oppie makes a meow sound and the cat hops up to my knee and leaps into Oppie's lap where it lays down and begins to purr Oppie says he's sorry the cat's name is Fluffy he's schizo around strangers the cat opens one eye and glares at me and I'm real glad I'm not a mouse Oppie is pointing at something it's a building straight ahead of us it looks like it stretches right across the freeway it's Quad 3A and Oppie goes into babble mode it's the largest building on this continent you can see it from space etc I notice a big exit sign on the left side of the freeway it says 3A I stupidly point to it and Oppie cuts across all 8 lanes of the freeway without looking most of the other vehicles are on to us they're keeping away but some kind of EV with flashing red and blue lights is in the way in the second lane from the exit ramp its driver hits the brakes about a tenth of a second before we smash into it we pass in front and skid onto the ramp Oppie stomps on the go pedal and says it was the paramedics they're such bad drivers what a disconnect he's still looking at me instead of the road but somehow we screech to a stop at a red light on the access road just in time about a thousand giant freighter etrucks are using that road they zoom past us just a few meters apart all autonomous all heading for 3A and at this point I'm not even phased when Oppie suddenly pulls out between two of the trucks the one behind gives us a blast on his horn that almost ruptures my eardrums Oppie turns all the way around in his seat to look at the etruck and then he waves and smiles and tells me it's his friend Phillup that works in shipping I look back and see that the guy riding in the truck is waving back at Oppie with a big grin on his face he's got the biggest cigar I've ever seen clenched between his teeth I turn back and see that the front of our car is like 5 cms from the huge metal rear bumper of the truck in front of us I watch with my mouth hanging open as we go under the bumper at least one meter I close my eyes and when I open them again I’m still alive Oppie is turning left the etruck behind us blasts its horn again and we get to security that's intense but after my ride here I feel like kissing their feet I'm pre-cleared that doesn't matter we still have to go through 3 inspection stations they check my IDs at each one do they think I changed them since the last one hello it was just 50 meters and 90 seconds ago but we do it anyway all of the guards have these weird red plastic guns half a meter long with a handle at one end and then there's the underpants all the guards wear yellow underpants over their regular uniform pants I mean they look like underpants except they're made out of plastic I don't ask Oppie what the deal is because he'll tell me and I'm not sure I can stand to know we drive into an underground garage at high speed I can't see anything we drove through some kind of infrared scan that Oppie forgot to tell me about the scanner is screwed up and shoots a super-bright pulse of red light into my eyes Oppie apologizes they're still debugging the scanner he's gotten used to closing his eyes when he drives in great now he's driving with his eyes closed I blink and try to get my eyesight back the garage is brighter than outside and the light comes from everywhere with no visible source there are no shadows how do they do that it's creepy Oppie gives his cat instructions on how to guard the vehicle while he's gone it always amazes me the way people talk to their pets like they're human we get on an elevator and then off and then on a pedway for a couple of klicks and then down on another elevator and then a train yeah a real train it's like a subway this is a big building we ride for a long time then get off and go down in an elevator my handheld has no idea where I am wonderful I love my new job and Oppie talks the whole time when we get off the third elevator he's almost finished with the French revolution we go through a wooden double door and through more yellow underpants security into a big room that has a high ceiling and poles stuck in the floor with square wood lanterns on top Oppie is yapping about prairies I look them up on my handheld they're like vacant fields we go past all the poles to a building yeah a whole other building is in this corner of the room I look behind me we've come a long way I can't even see the doors where we came in Oppie's building looks old and even more than that it looks beat up which is major weird Oppie explains that he had the carpenters beat on the wood with hammers he sure did but why we go inside two more securities are waiting these two are bigger than the others one of them has two of the red guns and I want to ask her if she's wearing two pairs of the yellow underpants but she looks pretty mean so I decide to live they scan us again I get yet another badge to wear this is the third one it has today's date on it in a big red font Oppie's whispering to me not to ever piss off security they can do whatever they like on Quad property we get to his office it's big 8 or 9 meters square with a huge window that looks out on the freeway and downtown and a bunch of blue-colored mountains but the image is a little fuzzy it’s media not a real window next door to his office is another one same size for me with a wooden desk that has displays and keyboards there's also a sofa a conference table with chairs a private bathroom and a kitchen.