

Die Techie Scum

written by

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EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A TEAR GAS CANISTER lands near a crowd of chanting protesters. The human wall ripples open as people cover their eyes and mouths.

A man in black breaks out from the crowd, a jacket wrapped around his hand. He snatches the canister--chucks it back. Then staggers back to his comrades, hands around his eyes.

This is CARL DIEDENBOCKER, 29--skinny-fat and painfully unaware of it. He fancies himself Lenin in the streets, but he's Urkel in the spreadsheets.

He expects some praise for his daring action, but they are SHOWERED with more tear gas. The protesters break and run.

A wall of police shields advances towards them as the protesters melt into the side streets.

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

Carl ducks behind a dumpster with three other young ACTIVISTS, including SIERRA, J.T., and the leader TARA. They pant as fleeing people stream by.

J.T.

Are we still gonna do it?

SIERRA

Julio left. He said he was gonna stay with us.

TARA

It doesn't matter. We said we were going to jail tonight. We gotta stick to it.

SIERRA

Fuck yeah.

CARL

Jail?

The others stare at him.

CARL (CONT'D)

Who said--we're getting arrested?

TARA

You attended the committee meeting, Carl! Didn't you see my message on Signal?

CARL

I thought there was still a motion
to discuss it!

SIERRA

There are supposed to be 10 of us
getting arrested! We spend the
night in jail and make a statement
in the morning to the paper.

TARA

We gotta stick to our guns.
Stronger together, right?

J.T.

Together. Yeah. I'm in.

Sierra nods.

They stare at Carl. He looks torn.

CARL

I would but I got this really big
presentation tomorrow. At work.

TARA

What happened to "fuck my job?"

CARL

That doesn't mean I can just lose
it! Do you know what the market is
like right now? And let's not get
into trying to pee in a jail cell--

SIERRA

Solidarity, Carl! You are with us
or you're with the cops.

CARL

That is very black-and-white
thinking--

A POLICE SIREN blares. Cops swarm from the end of the street.

In the confusion, Carl slips away.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Carl, exhausted from the previous night, sits in a massive
conference room with his laptop open. His eyes are still
cherry-red from the tear gas.

A large TV projects a meeting on Zoom. Just one coworker sits in the room with him: GABY BEJARANO, 33, a psychotically upbeat program manager wearing an elephant-themed T-shirt.

CARL

So, as you can see on this graph, average latency is reduced by, uh, quite a lot. 30 ms on average.

Silence.

CARL (CONT'D)

Are there any questions about the figures?

Still nothing. Gaby smiles at him: "good boy!"

CARL (CONT'D)

Must be doing a good job then.

He fake-chuckles and then moves on his next slide.

On her laptop, Gaby buys elephant lingerie on Etsy.

CARL (CONT'D)

So, in conclusion, we've reduced the time needed for the preprocessing steps, but more work needs to be done to bring the entire pipeline below spec.

GABY

Thank you, Carl. I appreciate you.

Someone mumbles on Zoom.

ZOOM VOICE (V.O.)

Really good. Good work.

GABY

Now, what issue on the Kanban board would you say tracks this? Any items I can close?

CARL

I mean...the issue refers to the overall pipeline latency. So I wouldn't close the ticket yet.

GABY

Can I get an estimate on when the overall issue will be completed?

CARL
Well, it's hard to say.

GABY
I just need a date. Any date.

CARL
I still need to characterize the
late-stage delay variability--

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

ARTHUR CHIN, 39, interrupts. He's an extremely blunt senior engineer who's built like a celery stalk.

ARTHUR
The variability is not the issue.
The mean latency is too high.

He lounges alone with his laptop in a beige room, half his screen filled with an e-sports gaming video.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Another voice argues over the Zoom video.

ZOOM VOICE 2 (V.O.)
We should measure the standard
deviation...

Carl zones out, his mouth gaping open, mind wandering.

He slips into his favorite fantasy, images playing across his face: a statuesque Nude Woman waving a red flag astride a barrier. Triumphant music plays as she leads the masses, even as he hears mind-numbing talk of latency in the background.

The voice of KUMAIL MITTAL, 37, a slick manager, cuts in.

KUMAIL (V.O.)
Sorry to break up this great
discussion, but we are at time. Any
last thoughts before we drop off?

ARTHUR (V.O.)
I think we need to have a serious
discussion about these metrics.

KUMAIL (V.O.)
Let's discuss that more offline.

People start dropping off the call rapidly.

KUMAIL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Kudos, Carl. Nice presentation.

GABY
And when you're ready, shoot me an
estimate of the completion date.

Carl stares at his laptop, dead inside.

Walking out, Carl sees Arthur leaving a meeting room next
door to Carl's conference room. Carl nods; Arthur doesn't.

INT. OPEN OFFICE - DAY

Carl sits at his desk in an open-concept tech office. His
credit card is out as he browses a bail fund.

He hits a bright red DONATE button. Then moves to another
website--a social justice organization. He hungrily types in
his credit card information, then hits DONATE again.

As he clicks on another online cause, a voice makes him JUMP.

SYDNEY (O.S.)
Carl?

His coworker SYDNEY EAGLETON, 25, peers over his shoulder.
She takes showers and does her hair, so among engineers she's
basically Helen of Troy.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)
What are you shopping for?

CARL
(sarcastic)
Model train kits.

SYDNEY
Oh. Well, that makes sense.

CARL
No, I'm not! I'm not that
interested in trains.

SYDNEY
I was just wondering if you wanted
to join us for lunch today?

Carl glances at a book on his desk.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)
Even if you normally read. Could be
good to break the routine.