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about 16,000 words

## Artificial Intelligence Scapegoat or Murder

by Wayne A. English

### **Day One - June 9, 2056 : 8:30:25.123 am - Loading Dock C Truck To Train Corporation Grand Way, Pennsylvania**

Mike Glave was on a catwalk above the loading dock, changing out a bad sensor when the screaming started. Looking down, he watched a loader bot kill a man. His first thought was it's some kind of joke. Then the bot killed again. And the screams became a cacophony of horror as people ran for their lives.

Mike calls the Bot Director.

"It's Mike. Loading dock C. Bot's killing people..." he shouts.

"Sure, Mike." The line goes dead. He didn't believe me, Mike thinks.

He calls back. Same thing.

He calls the cops.

“This is Mike. Truck To Train, Loading Dock C. A bot’s killing people.” He gave the cops the direct dial to the Bot Director.

“You’re the tenth call,” he heard before the call ended.

As Mike leans over the railing, he watched the eight ton bot attack again, moving fast on its rubber tracks and changing direction faster than it was designed to. The screaming and panic in full throat.

He scrambles down to the deck. In the distance, he hears sirens. Running to the first casualty, he finds Karen dead. She’s a new hire. He wanted to get to know her better. Ask her to dinner. A man’s scream breaks his reverie.

Mike runs to a man in company overalls. Makes a tourniquet out of his necktie to stop him from bleeding out. Tightens it with his big screwdriver, shouting, “Hold this. Keep it tight. I got to help.”

Nodding, “Go,” he says between clenched teeth.

It takes guts to send your rescuer away when your arm’s half gone, mike thinks.

The sirens were louder now, but Mike only heard cries for help. Looking to his left, there was a young woman lying in a pool of blood crushed by the bot. She’s alive, but wouldn’t be for long. He runs toward her....

At 8:30:35.098 am, someone shut down the bot.

**Day One - 8:30:35.099 am Data Center Running the Artificial Intelligence Controlling the Loader Bots**

*Communications with Loader Bot 981A-G6 are lost. Attempts to regain control fail. Command-and-control codes nominal. All other Loader Bots, the network, communication equipment, and all devices under AI control are operating nominally. Updated system log.*

**Day One: 9:12 pm**

Mike was in the Emergency Room. The young woman, so terribly injured, went straight into surgery. He was sitting with one of the ambulance crew as their driver got a psychiatric nurse because they would not leave him alone, but time was tight, they had to get back and transport more injured.

Pretty quick, a tiny woman named Red arrived with the ambulance driver in tow. She took one look at Mike and said. "Well, hello, you must be Mike."

Mike just nodded.

"Hear you had a rough time? Come with me and we'll get you out of this waiting room to where it's quiet and we can talk."

Mike just stood there like he was in a trance.

"You guys can get back to work. Mike and I will take it from here," Red said to the

ambulance crew. “Hey,” she said as they were walking off.

They stopped. Turned.

“Good job getting me out here,” Red said with a terse nod.

They smiled and walked away.

“C’m on, Mike. You like coffee?” Red asked.

No sooner than Mike had a coffee, two police officers walked in.

Red jumped up, fixed them with an intense look, and walked right at them.

“What?” she demanded.

“We hear you’ve got a survivor. Uninjured. We need to talk to him.”

“You can talk to him, but if you upset him and I’ll throw the two out of here. Won’t open the door before I throw you through it. Got that?” The tiny Red said to the cops who towered over her.

They were impressed, here’s a woman who protects her patients, they thought.

“So,” Red continued. “No games. No good cop, bad cop. Keep your voices low. He’s been through hell. Saved two lives. Saw a lot of gore. Got it?”

“Yes, mam,” they said.

“C’mon.” She said.

Mike, these men would like a brief chat. “Is that okay with you?” Red asked.

Looking up, he recognized they were cops. “Yeah, sure. What can I tell you?”

“We understand it was a bot?” Cop one asked.

“Yeah, a loader. Actually hunted people. Did terrible things. There was a woman in its manipulator. Got shut down just in time, or it would have killed her. One thing... odd.”

“What was odd?” Cop Two asked.

“Fast, the bot moved like lightning. Loaders don’t do that. Never saw one move like that. Odd...”

“Did you see anyone controlling it?” Cop One asked.

“No one can control it. The Bot Director can stop it, but not control it. The AI runs loader bots. You know? Up in the data center.”

“You’re sure?” Cop one asked.

“Yeah, only the AI,” Mike said. Looking into the distance. Red knew he was reliving it.

“I tried, I tried,” he said, with tears running down his face. “Called the Bot Director. Laughed at me. Hung up. I called back. Got a busy signal. Then I called the cops. They told me I was the tenth caller. Climbed off the catwalk. Ran to a man. Most of his arm was gone. Used his tie and my screw driver. To stop the bleeding. The bot had a woman in its manipulator. I ran to

help.”

Cop One. “How could you help?”

“Was going to open it up. Disconnect the brain case,” Mike said.

“How?” Cop Two this time.

“With my screwdriver.”

The cops looked at each other. Mike had left it with the tourniquet.

“That’s it, gentlemen,” Red said to the cops. “Interview’s over.”

Cop One looked like he was going to argue the point. Red shot him a look that could curdle milk. His comment died in his throat. “Yes, mam,” he said, as Cop One and Cop Two walked away.

Red watched them go. “Mike, I want to keep you overnight. Maybe two days.”

“You can’t keep me, Red. Rent me maybe,” he said, with tears running down his cheeks.

Glad to hear the joke, she helped Mike to his feet, put her arm around him. She would see him to his room, give him a sedative, and wait till he fell asleep. He needed a break from reliving the horror.

The cops wrote up their report. It included everything Mike told them.

**Day One 3:30 pm**

Gayle Masterson is the Chief Operating Officer of Truck to Train. She has just concluded a meeting with the company legal council and agrees that they need to get ahead of this disaster before issuing a press release.

She has Max Anderson, the Data Center Manager on the phone.

“Max, how are our people?” she asks.

“Just got back from the hospital. Three are dead. Two in critical condition. Mike Glave is in the psych ward,” Max answers.

“Who was killed?”

Max pauses.

“Karen Black, been here ten years. Jay Tanner, 45, ten years. Ace Johnson, been here forty years.”

He pauses.

“Two seriously injured. Jack Redstone. Likely going to lose his arm. And a new hire, Andrea Stone. Crushed. Not expected to live. Mike’s not hurt physically. He saved their lives.”

Gayle took a few moments to let this sink in.

“All right. First, we cover all medical expenses for everyone. For the dead.... We’ll cover funeral expenses for those killed and support their families. Forever, Max. Same for the survivors. They collect their pay, always have a job here, and their families get their paycheck.”

“Thank you, Gayle. I’m relieved to hear you say that.”

Gayle closes her eyes. Tears were running down her face.

“Gayle?” Max says.

She clears her throat. “I’m here. Let’s move on. I talked to the lawyers. We need to get ahead of this right away.”

“You know the AI industry. Who’s the best person to hire to investigate this?”

Max doesn’t need to wonder. “You want Dr. Jonathan Young. Sharp. Smart guy. Number one in the field.”

“Max, this is important. Will he give us a fair shake?”

“Yeah, I’d say so. He’s a millionaire several times over. Put the billionaire. Owns Mechanical Mam. No outside funding. He’ll give us a fair shake, but he won’t sugarcoat it if the AI is at fault. And he knows the best in the business. Let him bring in his own team. Believe me, you’ll get the best of the best.”

“Should you call him or should I?”

“Let me, I’ve met him. Briefly. If I need your management muscle, I’ll get back to you. What can I say we’re paying?”

Gayle thought about that. “How’s ten thousand per day for the experts with a seven-day minimum? After that, the ten per day remains in effect. Offer Dr. Young 15 thousand per day. Everyone gets a full ride, transportation, meals, lodging. Whatever else they need. Does that

sound doable?”

“Yes, it does. Gayle, don’t ask me who to call next if he refuses. I got no clue, but I will if need be.”

“Okay, Max. Make the call and let me know what transpires.”

“Will do.” Max breaks the connection.

### **Day One 3:48 pm**

The phone rang, and the display showed Pennsylvania. On the phone herself, the secretary got Nikki’s attention and held up three fingers while mouthing - important.

“Mechanical Man, this is Nikki Brown,” she answers. Picking up line three. She’s new here, being hired just six months ago. Her Ph.D. and experience got her the job. She was 30 years old, brilliant, about six feet tall, 170 pounds, with brown hair, brown eyes, and a turned-up nose. She wore long skirts, baggy blouses, and magnificent Cartier™ jewelry.

“Nikki, this is Max Anderson calling from Truck to Train in Pennsylvania. We’re the ones with the rogue bot. I need to speak with Dr. Jonathan Young. We need to hire him - today.”

“I’ll get him for you directly, Mr Anderson. What’s your call back if we get disconnected?”

“Max told her. She wrote it down, put the call on hold, and ran into Jonathan’s office.”

“Jonathan, Pennsylvania on the phone. It’s the people with the rogue bot. Asking for you.

Line three.”

“This is Dr. Young.”

“Dr. Young, Max Anderson. Truck To Train in Pennsylvania. You’ve heard the news? One of our bots killed three people?”

“Yes Mr. Anderson, I have.”

“Call me, Max. Please. We want to hire you and whoever you feel the need to include to investigate this terrible incident. I’m authorized to offer you fifteen thousand per day, plus transportation, hotel, meals. Ten thousand per day plus the same deal for whoever you bring. Interested?”

“Yes, Max, I am. I’ll be bringing three people. A hardware, operating system, and software expert with me.”

“When can you get here? Scranton is the nearest airport. From there, we’ll helicopter you to us.”

“Hold on a minute. Nikki, see when the plane can get me to Scranton, Pennsylvania. We’re checking now, Max. In the meantime, what can you tell me?”

“Well? Not a lot more than what’s on the news, unfortunately. Three killed. Two critically injured. One in the psych ward. My CEO wants a swift and unbiased investigator and I recommenced you right off....”

Nikki ran back in.

“Hold on Max. What you got, Nikki?”

She told him.

“Max, I’ll be in Scranton about 11pm tonight. My people will arrive tomorrow.”

“Excellent. We’ll have a helicopter bring you to us. Good. See you tonight, sir. And thank you.”

“You’re most welcome. Is this a good number to reach you?”

“It is, sir. Yes,”

“Good, see you tonight. Bye.”

“Bye, Dr, Young.”

Jonathan placed a call from memory. It was answered on the first ring.

“Jonathan, long time no see.”

“Need your help,” Jonathan said, without preamble.

“After what you did for me? Whatever you need. This about the bot that killed those people?”

“Yeah. Ten grand a day, one week minimum, transportation, hotel, meals. Everything. If it’s longer the ten per day stays in effect.”

“Don’t care about the money. “Wasn’t for you I’d be dead, in prison, or hacking for some.... Well, whatever you need. I’m yours.”

“Thanks, Janice. I appreciate it,” he said. “Still at the same address?”

“Yup, me and Kitty.”

“How is she?”

“Fantastic. Sitting with me now, purring up a storm.”

“I’ll have someone get back to you with the particulars. You, Iggy, and Harry will be flown to Pennsylvania tomorrow. I’m going down tonight. We’ll pick you up at the airstrip near you. Our jet’s been there before as you know.”

“Yes, I do,” she said, with a smile in her voice. “Back when I was Snorb and... uh not quite legit.”

“Yeah, when you were all brains and no smarts,” he says laughing.

“Oh, you should talk, I remember back in the day when....”

“Okay, okay you made your point. To be serious, I appreciate you working with me. There’s damn few people I trust to bring in on this.”

“That means a lot coming from you.”

“Things could get ugly,” he said.

“I’ve faced worse, as you well know.”

Jonathan nodded hearing strength and resolve in her voice. Not a kid anymore, he thought.

“Be good to see you again. Bye, Janice.”

“Bye, Jonathan.”

Then he walked out to his secretary.

“Please call Harry and Iggy and tell them that I need them on this. Ten grand a day, a week minimum. If longer, the ten per day stays in effect. They leave tomorrow. The particulars I leave with you,” Jonathan said, handing her a page of notes.

“Consider it done,” she says, picking up the phone.

### **Day One 4:03 pm**

The secretary’s voice called, “Jonathan, you got five calls waiting. Carol, your ex? Is on Line one.”

Then, “Jonathan, it’s the Whitehouse.”

He’s out of his chair and standing next to her. “The Whitehouse?”

“Yeah, you know? Where The President lives,” she said.

“In my office. I’ll talk to Carol later.”

“Good idea,” he hears her say.

“Dr. Young,” he says, answering the call.

“Dr. Young, this is Rose Appleton at the Whitehouse. Are you aware of the situation in Pennsylvania? And that the AI is American made?”

“Yes, Rose, to both questions. In fact, I’ve just accepted a contract to investigate the situation. I’ll be onsite tonight and will have an operating system, hardware, and software experts there tomorrow. The bot is safe and under guard. I don’t know more at this time,” Jonathan said in his professional voice intentionally sounding like a talking head.”

“We’re getting pressure to have this cleared up as soon as possible,” she says. “I don’t have to tell you that people the world over are concerned about rogue AIs.”

“I understand that, Rose,” Jonathan says. “I’m concerned, too.”

“Already have it. When do you expect to have this situation resolved?”

“I can’t say until I investigate.”

“We need it resolved, doctor?” Rose said. “I’m afraid you don’t have all the time in the world to get this done. The AI maker and bot are putting pressure on us.”

“As to the time my investigation takes. It will take as long as it takes. If you want me replaced, that’s fine with me. Just say the word.” Jonathan said, calling her bluff.

“I’ll keep that in mind, Dr. Young, but I think my comment was premature. Did you release this to the press?” Rose asked.

“No, I did not. I do not know how they got,” Jonathan said. “I suggest you call the CEO at Truck To Train.”

“Thank you for your time, doctor. Please keep us apprised of any developments.”

“Of course,” Jonathan said, breaking the connection and taking the call from his ex-wife.

“Carol, kind of busy here,” Jonathan says.

“You’re always busy. What about the kids?”

“Have you seen the news?” he asks. “There’s worldwide interest in this....”

“Yeah, yeah,” she interrupts. “The kids? They’re looking forward to seeing you.”

“Didn’t you hear what I just said? I can’t walk away from this. It’s got international ramifications. Even on Luna....”

“Jonathan, are you ever going to take responsibility? They are your children.”

He’s heard all this before. The twins are a boy and a girl. His son hates AI. The daughter loves it. And Carol? She hates anything Jonathan loves. Except the children, of course. Them, she uses to bludgeon him.

“Carol, they’re ours. You look lovely,” he says to the image on his video phone. Red hair, green eyes. Five foot six, a hundred-twenty pounds. She dressed for the phone call. No accident,

he knows.

“Just showing you what you’re missing.”

“Carol, I know what I’m missing. Ah, you have a weekend planned with Tad. Sorry, I’m busy. Turn on the news and you’ll see why. The kids will understand. You and Tad can make other plans. Bye, bye,” Jonathan says, hearing his secretary saying more calls are waiting. Jonathan forwards Red’s calls to voice mail and takes the next call.

Carol knew he’d hang up on her, that he’d forward her phone to voice mail as she inserted another SIM card. He couldn’t block a number that he didn’t know.

“Talk to you soon,” she said, smiling to herself.

### **Day One : 5:15 pm**

“I told you not to call this number.”

“You said no one would get hurt. Three people are dead. It’s all over the net,” screamed the other conspirator. “Don’t tell me you used gamer technology.”

“Okay, I won’t.”

“You fool. Everybody knows you’re a gamer,” the voice said.

“It’s handled.”

“Handled! We’re facing the gas chamber!” The voice screamed.

“Don’t call me again,” the saboteur said.

### **Day One : 5:30 pm**

Kelly Bloom walked back to her office, safe under five meters of radiation shielding regolith. She’s thinking about next year’s budget when a video pops up and the feed cuts to a bot killing people in Pennsylvania. It’s 80 Seconds Around The World and something’s wrong. She increases the volume and hears that an AI killed three people using a loader bot. Her pulse races as she watches what could spell the death of everyone on Luna. This is bad, she thinks.

“Oh dear God,” she says.

Her staff runs in everyone talking at once.

“Quiet,” she says. They go silent. “Watch.” And they do. Their faces a mask of horror. Eyes wide, they look at each other. Could this be? Is the unspoken question on everyone’s lips. And the answer is a resounding ‘yes.’

Luna base is in trouble. Their AI controls communications, electric power, radiation monitoring. Every aspect of life support.

Seeing their fear, Kelly responds like the leader she is. “Okay, people. I’m declaring a moon-wide emergency. Effective immediately. Peter, get the programmers looking at our AI’s code. Randy, see to our emergency environment suits should we need to bug out. I want them fully charged. Make sure they’re all in working order. No exceptions.

“Jason, schedule an emergency evacuation drill. Everyone takes part or goes into the brig. Get going. Wait! One more thing. No ships leave or arrive. Turn back any that have enough fuel to return to Earth. Every vehicle capable of taking people off Luna is to be made ready for takeoff. Bring me any problems immediately. And Jason? Call security. Make sure you have backup. A show of force never hurts. I need all of you on your best game. Get going, people.”

After they leave, Kelly closes the door and puts a call through to Jonathan. Kelly is five foot nine. She grew an inch in the one-sixth gravity. Her hair is short, so it's not a messy, tangled cloud floating around her. She works out a couple hours a day to keep her bond density from slipping, but she wonders if she will be able to walk when she gets back to Earth. If she returns to Earth. She's nice looking, 37 years old, and had a fling with Jonathan years ago. Things had not ended well. The question of him taking her call is a serious. While the thought of talking to him repulses her, he's the best in the business and can tell her if Luna's AI can be trusted.

“What the hell?” she says. A ‘Connection Refused’ flashes. “Refused?” Then she sees, “No channels available.”

“This isn't good,” she says to no one.

### **One: 6:15 pm - Grand Way, Pennsylvania Vandals**

“Did I or did I not tell you not to call?”

“You said it was handled. Nothing's changed,” the voice said.

“Think, you idiot. What's the data center run on?”

“Electricity? So what?” the voice said.

“Exactly,” the line goes dead.

**Day One: 6:30 pm**

“So, Ed. When does our wonder boy arrive?” Vondo asks.

Ed ignored the sarcasm. “Not sure. Be in Scranton around 11. So, gets here around 11:30. He wants to speak with us. Conference room in the Numerator.”

“We don’t need him, or anybody else, to investigate this. We can do it in-house.”

“Not up to me. Three people are dead, Vondo. And you want the world to see us investigate this? You crazy, or just plain stupid?”

Vondo is taken aback. “Say, Ed, did you kill the power to the data center?” He asks, changing the subject.

“No, Max did. Opened the main switch. The utility side is still energized. Why don’t you know this?”

“Don’t know,” Vondo said. While thinking, plenty of time to get it done.

Ed never saw him smile.

**Day One: 7:03 pm**

He could hit a dime at three hundred yards. Tonight he'd be closer.

Vondo drove down the dirt road next to the electric substation.

He stopped the car.

He opened the window.

He inserted a five round magazine into the rifle.

He chambered a round, listening to the rifle's clack - clack.

He clicked off the safety.

He took a breath. Let it out.

He sighted an insulator.

Pulled the trigger. The insulator blew apart.

Fired again. Another insulator destroyed.

Fires again. And again. And again.

Smiling, he's thinking, how hard was that? As he drove away, he forgot to pickup the empty brass casings that the gun ejected.

**Day One: 8:30 pm**

Ed got a call that there was an outage on the high voltage feed to the data center. So, he sent a crew to check it out. His radio crackled. The substation has been vandalized. Looks like someone shot it up, his crew tells him.

Ed was there in minutes.

He called in the stockroom supervisor to find out if they had spares. Then called in more people to get started taking apart the damaged equipment. It would be days before the data center had power.

He called Jonathan this was vandalism and had to be related to the bot killings.

“Yes, Ed.” Jonathan said, still on the plane.

“Dr. Young,” Ed said. “We’ve got vandalism here. It’s definite and willful. Somebody shot out insulators. You won’t have power for a couple days.”

There was a pause.

“You’re saying this is intentional?”

“Yes, sir. No doubt. Looks like a rifle. Nearest place for cover is over a hundred yards away. Easy shot... with a rifle. Before you ask, we called the cops.”

Then Ed paused. He was talking to someone.

“Cops just got here. Got to go, doc.”

“Go ahead, Ed.” Jonathan said. “We’re landing now. I see the helicopter. Don’t worry about me. I’ll see you later.”

Thinking furiously, only one or two things were possible. One: this was a coincidence, and the power got vandalized by someone who hated AI. Or, two, the person or persons who caused the bot to freak out.

He called Nikki.

“Jonathan, what’s up?” She said.

“A break,” Jonathan said. “The power to the data center just got vandalized. Maybe the bot freaking out was deliberate. Maybe not, but I don’t believe in coincidences. I’ll have Janice look at the bot control code.”

“Can Janice find the corrupt code?”

“Yes, she can,” he said. Thinking that’s what she does best.

**Day one: 10pm**The plane leveled off at forty thousand feet. Jonathan’s phone didn’t stop ringing. Ignoring them, he called Max.

“Tell me you’re on the way,” Max said.

“I’m in the air now,” Jonathan said.

“I shut down the data center,” Max said. “Brought the entire facility to a halt. My CEO’s one tough cookie. She’s not buckling under the pressure. Everyone’s raising hell. What can I tell

them?”

“The truth,” Jonathan shot back. “That a bot killed three people. I heard from the Whitehouse. This has repercussions across the world... and on Luna. We can’t hide anything, sugar coat anything,” Jonathan says. This isn’t the first time he’s dealt with the media.

“Agreed,” Max says. “What do you want me to send you, and who do you want to meet with when you arrive? You got a blank check.”

“Full specs on the AI. Who made it? Leased or owned? How long its been at your facility? What hardware and software does it run? Any power quality problems? The network, bot controllers, how many bots the AI runs and their disposition and if the bots used multi-connectivity or multi-hop. I mean all the bots, Max, including fixed facilities. And the programmers who had access to the AI.”

“I’ll meet with you, the AI manager, and the head of electric power.”

“I got...” Max said.

“There’s more,” Jonathan said, talking over him. “Full specs on the killer bot, repair and maintenance history, upgrades, who made and approved them. Send everything to Nikki.”

“Anything else?”

Jonathan paused. “Tell your communications specialist that I want to know about the network equipment between the AI and the bots. Have the network people isolate the AI from the network and troubleshoot it. I need to know if the network corrupted the data sent to the bot.

“Tell the power guy I want to know if there were any low voltage complaints. Power

quality issues. And no one, and I mean no one, sees the bot. Got that?”

“Yes, sir. I’ll get my people going. Before I forget, do you want remote access to the AI?”

“No! It stays offline,” Jonathan said, wondering about his competence. .

“Sorry, Dr. Young. Sorry, not thinking,” Max says.

“I’ve got hardware, OS, and software experts coming in tomorrow. I’ll test the AI myself. You good with email addresses?”

“Yeah, all set. Anything else?” Max said.

“That’ll do it.”

Then his phone buzzed. The display showing, ‘Kelly from Luna.’

“I’ve got a call I have to take, Max. See you soon.” And ended the call.

The five star bitch herself, he thinks.

“Kelly,” he says. “We don’t know anything yet.”

“Jonathan, is it true? Three killed by an AI controlled bot?” She said, getting right to the point.

“Yes, it’s true. I’m flying down there as we speak. The AI’s off line. Bot’s been made safe, and it’s under guard. No power to the data center.”

“But....”

“No, but, Kelly. You’re going to have to wait,” Jonathan said.

“Was it the AI? The bot? What?” She shrieks. “Our AI controls everything up here. My people are at their breaking point. Should we evacuate? Stay? What Jonathan?”

“There’s no reason to expect your AI will become unstable,” Jonathan says, trying to reassure her.

“And no reason to expect it won’t. Are you intentionally being clueless? You never know anything. If our AI is bad, I need to know. Today. Right this minute. Good God, man, it runs our life support. Have you forgotten where we are?”

“No, I haven’t forgotten. Kelly, I - don’t - know - anything - yet. No one does. The answers you’re demanding do not exist right now. It’s only been a few hours. I’m not a miracle worker.”

Kelly sneers. “You’re incompetent. I’m calling Nikki and demanding she put someone in charge who knows what he’s doing.”

“Kelly, she works for me,” Jonathan says, but Kelly’s gone. Jonathan notices his heart is pounding. He forwards his phone to Nikki t Mechanical Man. Now he will only receive calls from the kids, Max and Nikki. He’ll add others later.

As his heart returns to normal, he boots his laptop and verifies its satellite connection. Then, begins downloading diagnostic programs he may need when he tests the AI. While he waits, he puts through a call to Nikki. She answers on the first ring.

“Hello, Nikki. Guess who I just talked to?” he says.

“Oh dear, let me think? Kelly from Luna Station? Just talked to her. She demanded I replace you. I told her I work for you. Not the other way around. Jonathan, you concentrate on the problem. I’ll handle Kelly,” Nikki said with finality and strength in her voice.

“Got to go Jonathan.”

“Bye, Nikki.”

The flight attendant was standing next to him. “Something to eat before we arrive?”

“God, no. My stomach is in knots,” he says to her smiling face.

“Grilled cheese, tomato, slice of ham,” she said. “Fresh mug of coffee while you wait?”

“Marry me.”

“Ha,” she laughs.

Jonathan reviews his notes. The grilled cheese and coffee were just what he needed.

His phone rings. It’s his son. “Billy,” he answers. “Is everything okay?” the twins are fifteen, have red hair, average height, and know everything about everything. Kids, he thinks, loving them. Billy has Jonathan’s blue eyes, while his sister’s are green. They don’t like their red hair. Jonathan once told Mia that it was better than having no hair. She said she’d prefer to be bald. Jonathan never mentioned it again, fearing she’d shave her head.

The twins could use more motivation. Billy likes football and gaming, while Mia likes

anything other than school. They are a classic case of children raised by over achieving parents. In their world, everything they want just shows up.

“Dad, are you helping that AI kill people?” His son asks, his voice filled with invective.

“No, of course not. What ever gave you that idea?”

“Mom said you were going to whitewash it. I told you AI’s are no damned good,” Billy says.

“Language, son. Language. Is your sister there? Let me speak to her.”

Jonathan hears her say, I told you he’d want to talk to me. Give me the phone.

“No,” his son says.

“Give me that phone or I’ll break your face,” Mia retorts.

“Dad?” she says.

“I’m here.”

“Don’t listen to him, or mom either. How’s it going?” Jonathan asks.

“Nothing to it,” she says. “I feel like a lion tamer. They’re all opinion and no facts. Got to go, dad. Love you.”

“Love you, too. See you in a week or so. Bye.”

**Day One: 11:03 pm**

The moon was a sliver in the sky as Jonathan got out of the helicopter. Seeing an elegant, well-dressed woman wave at him. My ride, he thinks, but that's not Max.

“Dr. Young? Gayle Masterson, CEO of Truck To Train. I'm your ride,” she says, with a smile as they shake hands.

The car door closes and they leave for the data center. Its diesel engine was almost silent, the automatic seat belts enclosing them in a gentle embrace. As the car does not have a steering wheel, they can concentrate on their conversation.

“Thank you for picking me up,” Jonathan says. “I didn't expect the CEO.”

“My pleasure,” she says. “Let me get to the point, Dr. Young. We want this wrapped up as soon as possible. Do you have any initial thoughts?”

“I'm not surprised you asked, but no. And I'm aware we need to get this resolved soonest. How are the injured?”

“Two in critical condition, another in the psych ward. A man had most of his arm torn off. A woman.... She's only been here for a few weeks. Young, lovely girl. Her whole life ahead of her.”

She can't go on. Takes a deep breath and gets herself under control. “I got a call from 80 Seconds Around The World. Those people... are no one's friend. They asked me if we did this intentionally.”

Jonathan can see she's livid. He needs to get her thinking about something else. Anything else. He asks, "How are the injured doing?"

Gayle closes her eyes. Takes a breath. Calms her self. "Thank you, doctor. We're covering their medical bills one hundred percent... forever. Their families will collect their paycheck. Despite the lawsuits coming our way. I hope to God that they survive. We're all praying for them."

At that, Jonathan's eyebrows shoot up. "That's good of you," he says, knowing that many corporations wouldn't be so generous. "For the financial support... and the prayers."

"Dr. Young," she says. "If the AI is a killer, I will have it destroyed."

Jonathan looks at her. She's not lying. "You can afford that? The AI must have cost you a couple hundred million."

"We're the largest owner in the consortium," she says. "Not everyone wants to take the financial loss, but over sixty percent of the owners are. The manufacturer of the hardware and software agree with me. The others, the ones who only care for money, will just have to live with it. So, yes doctor, if the AI is guilty of murder, it receives capital punishment. I will not have a killer working with my people. I'll have the entire memory and chips destroyed. Ground to dust."

"Look, Gayle, I'll level with you. It looks bad for the AI. It was in control of the bot when it freaked out. Why it did, I don't know yet. In the meantime, please don't do anything precipitous. Let my investigation play itself out."

Gayle nods. "Thank you, doctor. Before I forget. You will have a car waiting at the data center. When do your people arrive?"

“Tomorrow morning, I’ll pick them up.”

As they Jonathan looked out the window, they turned into the driveway. The data center is a single story building the size of a city block. On its eastern side, he sees the electric substation, which feeds the AI as it uses as much power as a small city. He’s surprised to see several trucks and a crew working there.

Next, he sees the air conditioning equipment that cools the thousand computers, each composed of 32 processors, each processor having a terabyte of Random Access Memory (RAM). In the room called ‘the closet’ are a hundred thousand state-of-the-art memory modules, and the network equipment that provides near instantaneous internet speed.

“We’re here,” Gayle said, as the car came to a stop. The door opens. Getting out of the car, Gayle and Jonathan walk into the foyer to be greeted by an armed guard.

“I’m Gayle Masterson, CEO of Truck To Train. This man is Dr. Jonathan Young. He’s here to investigate the killings,” she says. “Dr. Young and his people are to be given unrestricted access to this building and everything in and around it. Including the bot and the warehouse where it’s stored. Is that clear?”

“Yes, mam,” the guard says while reaching for her UA badge and one for Jonathan.

He hands Gayle hers and then hands Jonathan his. The letters UA prominently displayed

“Please wear it when you’re in this facility and show it to anyone who asks to see it,” the guard says. “Do not take it with you when you leave. I’ll see that security allows you access to the bot.”

“Thank you,” Gayle said. “Are the others in the conference room?”

“Yes, mam,” he answers, nodding. “Max, Ed, and Vondo as you requested.”

“Thank you, this way, Dr. Young.”

As they walk to the conference room, Gayle says, “Any trouble with security call me and I’ll fix it right-quick. Badges for you and your staff will get you access anywhere on the property, including the mechanical equipment room, the electrical substation, air conditioning room, networking, bot control.”

Jonathan nods as they walk into the conference room. Gayle apologies, saying she has things to attend to other things and leaves, but first introduces Jonathan.

Jonathan finds Max a picture of worry. He is 60 years old, grey hair, balding, pot belly. With him are Ed Bliss, the Electrical Superintendent, and Vondo Kappalari, Networking Specialist. Max and Ed look ready to get to work. Vondo kept tapping on his phone.

Vondo says, “We don’t need this guy. Vondo says, “We’re the ones who run this place.”

Everyone ignores him. They’re glad to have help, and someone to take the blame, if they can’t find out how this fiasco happened.

Jonathan hears this. He ignores the comment, but will remember ho said it as he walks up to the first man. “Jonathan Young,” he says, shaking hands.

“Ed Bliss,” the older man said. “Electrical superintendent. We got vandalism here. Some SOB shot out five insulators. Won’t be repaired for a couple days. We got lucky that the transformer wasn’t damaged. That would have had us down for months. So, while it’s bad, its more of a setback. My people will work around the clock. Have you back in business in 48 hours. From now on, we’ll guard the data center around the clock. Even after we’re done working.”

“Other than that,” Ed continued. “There’s been no problems with voltage, power quality, or supply. And no outages,” he emphasized. “All equipment nominal.” He stopped, took a breath, and continued.

“That means perfectly,” he said to Jonathan’s quizzical look. “Last week we checked voltage at the data center’s main switch. Then we checked voltage at the farthest computer from the main switch. That’s at the other end of the building. All perfect. Plenty of power and the quality is superb. Sixty Hertz. Ah, that’s cycles per second, right on the nose under full load. The data center is instrumented, so we have real time information for several years. Here’s print outs for voltage, amps, and power factor for the last six months. As you can see, the system’s operating perfectly. Amperage fluctuated a bit when we changed out a some computers, but that was ten weeks ago. When the bot freaked out the system was flawless.”

He said this while looking Jonathan straight in the eye without notes. Ed wasn’t lying or trying to cover anything up. He knew the system cold and would not hide problems. He wasn’t that kind of a guy.

“Thanks, Ed.” Jonathan said, impressed.

“You’re most welcome, Dr. Young.”

Next Jonathan looked at Vondo, who was tapping his phone. Jonathan waited for him to speak. Max and Ed looked embarrassed.

“We don’t need you here. We’re more than capable of investigating this,” Vondo said.

“Your CEO disagrees,” Jonathan said. “Your report... please.”

“Vondo Kappalari, Network Specialist,” he said with as much recalcitrance as he could

muster, and reluctantly put his phone down. He did not offer to shake hands. “When we get power, we’ll check the network routers - as you instructed.”

“Do you use multi-hop?” Jonathan asks.

Vondo’s eyebrows went up. This guy knows his stuff. “No, sir. Each bot is controlled directly by the AI. No signals go through other bots. Any bot experiencing a data connectivity problem stops dead in its tracks. Oh, forgive me, sir. I didn’t mean....”

“No worries,” Jonathan said.

Vondo continued. “As to testing my routers. We can do that. They’re on a separate feed from the AI and were not taken offline.” Then under his breath so no one overheard, he said, “when I get to it.”

“Excellent,” Jonathan said. “Let me know what you find. Max, has the bot been made safe and moved to a secure location?”

“Yes, to both questions,” Max said. “Its physical capabilities are locked out. You can safely test it anytime you’re ready. I’ve got it under guard.”

“The world is watching us, gentlemen,” Jonathan said. “This wants to fly. No delays. No screw-ups. I’ve got hardware, operating system, and software experts coming tomorrow morning. I look forward to your full cooperation.”

They nodded. Vondo didn’t.

Jonathan continued. “I know I don’t need to tell you this, notify me of anything you find out of the ordinary. No matter how small or insignificant. Let’s get each others phone numbers.”

Jonathan held out his phone and each of them touched it with theirs and Near Field Communication did the rest.

“Thank you, gentlemen. Max, please stay behind.”

Jonathan learned to thank people as it's the only way to keep good relations. Should one of these men choose to hide critical data, he would never get to the bottom of this.

Ed and Vondo left.

“Nice work, Max,” Jonathan said, reevaluating his previous opinion. “Can you find me an office? I've got to get up to speed on that bot and I've got calls to make.”

Max smiled. “Already done, sir. Secure phone, net capability, and a secretary. A human one,” he hastened to add. “Name's Mable. She knows everybody. Can get you whatever you need. She's already got you a car and a hotel room.”

“Thank you,” Jonathan said absentmindedly. Then, “Max, I want to see the bodies.”

“I suspected that. I'll drive you to the hospital. They know you'll be coming. We got 24 hour access to the morgue... they're not pretty.”

Jonathan nodded. It had to be done. Should this be some elaborate hoax....

Along the way, Max told him about Mike and the two lives he saved. They were the only survivors. Mike was the only one not sedated. He was under the care of a psychiatrist who protected her patients like a mother bear and would not allow anyone to speak with him. She did allow Mike to give a police report. A copy will be sent when it's available.

They entered the hospital through the main door and took an elevator down to the morgue.

“Dr. Kerry, meet Dr. Jonathan Young,” Max said, making introductions. “He wants to see the bodies. I’ll wait here. Seen ‘em already.”

“Pleased to meet you this way,” Dr. Kerry said.

“Thank you. What’s your determination for the cause of death?” Jonathan asked.

Dr. Kerry looked at him like he had two heads, saying only, “This way.”

She opened a locker and slid out the tray and the body lying on it. Pulled back the sheet.

Jonathan’s eyes went wide. Involuntarily took a step back. The person was hardly recognizable as a human.

“Max said it was bad... I never expected... this.... My god, the look on his face.”

Dr. Kerry slid the remains back and closed the door.

Opened the next one. It was worse.

“There’s one more,” she said. “Want to continue?”

“Yes.”

As she opened the door, Dr. Kerry said, “She was the last one killed. What it did to her....”

Jonathan looked at the remains of a woman. It was worse than he imagined. She had been torn apart.

“I’ve seen enough.”

She closed the door.

“When I asked about the cause of death? No need to answer that,” he said as they walked back.

Dr. Kerry said, “You know, Dr. Young, I’ve seen thousands of bodies : done autopsies. Never saw bodies like.... You’ll have my postmortems by noon tomorrow.”

She stopped, put her hand on his arm, looked him full in the face. “You must stop this. Whatever it takes. No matter the cost.... This must never happen again. Ever again, doctor.”

“I agree,” Jonathan said. “Please believe that. I’m here to find out what happened, not rubber stamp it. I give you my word.”

She looked at him. Evaluated him. Gave a terse nod.

In the car, Jonathan said. “Max, I need to get on the phone. Can’t do anything more tonight.”

“I’ll take you to your car.”

Jonathan tells the car to take him to his hotel. In his room are his bags, then tells the media wall to wake him at 7 am, and the television to display news reports on the AI disaster dated within the last 90 minutes. Walking into the closet, he finds a wall safe, which he has no

need for. He hangs up shirts and pants. Then puts his toiletries in the bathroom.

Before showering, he sits on the bed, relaxing for a few minutes, and watches the news. The video of the bot, though many hours old, is still running. He sighs, shaking his head, shuts off the TV.

He strips off his clothes, walks into the bathroom, takes out his electric shaver, and looks at himself in the mirror. He looks at himself, wondering how he got involved in this mess and wishes he were camping with the kids. Then he nods at himself. Steels himself. And shaves. A little late to change your mind now, Jonny boy, he thinks. And is glad he has superb experts coming in to work with him.

Taking a deep breath, he tells the shower for 140 degree, high pressure, pulsating water for six minutes. Then 60 degree water for two minutes. The soap is lilac scented. Jonathan dries off, puts a glass of water on the nightstand, and goes to bed. He's asleep in seconds.

### **Day Two: 5:30 am**

Jonathan It was 5:30 am and he was reading. Learning about the bot and it's connection to the AI. The bot's manual was 800 pages of text, computer code, photographs, graphics, and diagrams. He had everything he needed except coffee. He called room service and soon there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," he called, then remembered the door was locked. He got up and quick stepped to the door. "Just a minute," as he opened the door.

"Sorry about that," he said, letting in the coffee and the man delivering it.

“Not a problems, sir. Happens all the time,” he said with a smile as he wheeled in the trolley containing coffee, donuts, and fresh fruit.

“I didn’t order all this.”

“Compliments of the house, sir. We’re instructed to see to your needs.”

“Thank you,” Jonathan said, reaching for a tip.

“Not necessary, sir. All taken care of,” the man said. “If there’s anything else, just let us know.”

“Thank you,” Jonathan said.

“Thank you, sir,” as he closed the door behind him.

“Well, Max said it was all inclusive. Guess he was right.”

Then his phone rang. It was his personal number. Not the kids. Not Carol. Not the office. Who could be calling this early. He looked. The display showed, Private. Having no idea who it could be....

“Hello, this is Jonathan.”

“Dr. Young?” A male voice said.

“Who is this? How did you get this number?”

“Thank you for asking, I got it from a mutual friend. I work for 80 Seconds Around The

World. I'll pay for photos of the bodies and the bot."

"No comment," Jonathan snapped. Broke the connection. Carol did this, he thought, seething with anger. She sold that bastard my private number. Calming down, he blocked the number knowing that all they had to do was use another phone. He couldn't have this. Opening the phone he removed his personal number SIM card.

Still angry, he poured a cup of fresh coffee. Drank it black. It was excellent. Best of all, it calmed him and he was able to get back to reading the bot's manual. It had fallen open to a section on its operational speed being four miles per hour. Operates on rubber tracks and steers like a bulldozer by varying the speed of the tracks.

Thinking about that, he realized that being designed to move containers that weighed tons it would, of course, move slow. That makes sense, he thought.

### **Day Two: 8:00 am**

The secretary assigned to Jonathan was a treasure. She had two pots of coffee waiting and a direct line to the cafeteria. She could get complete meals delivered anytime day or night. Her name was Mable White. A good looking, slim, black woman who must have been a beauty. She had been with the company for forty years and knew how to get things done. Every secretary in the company envied her list of contacts.

When Jonathan walked in, she introduced herself. "Mable White," she said, shaking hands with a firm grip.

"Whatever you need, I'll make it happen. All you got to do is ask. Leave the rest to me. Coffee's hot. And the pot's never empty. Your office is through there," she nodded toward an

open door.

“I set it up myself,” she said. “Secure phone, Internet, email, computer. Ah, you got a laptop. No worries. Here’s your network logon and password. Account’s all set up. You hungry?”

“No, thanks. Just had breakfast,” Jonathan said, going into his office to read the bot’s operating manual. He would start there as the AI had no power and he could not interview the survivors.

“Oh, Mable, do we have any log files from the AI?”

She shook her head. “No, when we shut it down, we took steps to ensure nothing got out. I talked to Ed earlier. He’ll have power to the data center in a couple hours unless something unforeseen crops up. Ed’s smart, knowledgeable and knows the system....”

“But... I hear a ‘but coming.’”

“She nodded, “Vondo, is out for Vondo. Gamer, to the exclusion of all else. This would not be the first time he missed something because he was playing on that phone of his. Did you see it?”

“Yeah, he had it out when we met.”

“I mean, did you see its capability?”

“No. He put it away when we met,” Jonathan said.

“It’s the most powerful cell phone you can get. Cost him thousands. Spends all his money

on hardware and software. It's all he talks about. That and his virtual girlfriend. She's power hungry, don't a know?"

I nodded. "Why hasn't he been let go?"

Her eyebrows went up. "Good question. Rumor has it he's connected to the VP of marketing."

"Ah," I said.

"Ah," she said. "Keep an eye on him and you may want his work double checked."

"I will," Jonathan said, realizing what a bind this put the investigation in. How do I do that? Ah, I know.

"Mable, would you be kind enough to get Vondo on the phone, please?"

She nodded, smiling. "You're a quick study," she said, walking to her desk.

Then, after a few minutes. "Dr. Young, Vondo on line two."

"Thanks, Mable," Jonathan said.

"Vondo." No one answered, but the sound of clicking was obvious.

"Vondo," Jonathan said louder.

"Yes, I'm here," Vondo replied.

“Vondo, this is Dr. Young. I want all of your testing procedures, results, and equipment validated. Have your second in command submit a duplicate report. Both must be in 100% agreement or I’ll bring in an outside contractor. Not a threat, just a friendly reminder of the importance of what we’re doing here. The world is watching. We gotta get this right the first time.”

“That is just not unnecessary. I know my job.”

“If you didn’t, you wouldn’t be doing it. Lives may depend on your tests and we don’t have time for peer review. Get it done.”

“Yes, sir,” he sneered.

Mable snickered.

Jonathan had been reading the documentation on the bot. The manual was six hundred pages of text, graphs, tables, and pictures. His eyes were about to fall out, so he took a break by calling Nikki.

“Hello, Nikki.”

“Well, if it isn’t my long-lost boss. How goes the investigation?”

“Slow, the survivors are incommunicado. One guy, Mike a technician is under the care of a bad-ass shrink. She won’t let anyone talk to him until she says it’s okay. And we don’t know when that will be.”

“What about the AI? The network?” she asked.

“AI is off line. No power. The network has power and is being tested as we speak.”

“So, you have nothing to report?”

“Nothing but my smile. What’s new on your end?”

“Calls from everywhere, including Luna. Speaking of which, do all of your old girlfriends want to see you hung, shot, drawn and quartered?”

“Let’s change the subject.”

“If you insist, but it was just getting interesting. I’ve got a dozen people answering calls, texts, and email telling everyone you’re on the job and they can’t call you. That they will be the first to know what you find. Like that. Good idea to have us field your calls.”

“Nice talking to you, Nikki. Bye.”

“Call anytime.”

Jonathan was going in circles getting nowhere. He went for coffee.

“Well, well,” Mable said. “You are alive. Haven’t heard a peep from you. How’s it going?”

Pouring a cup. “The bot’s documentation is no help. Even New York, I mean Nikki, can’t find anything useful. Very odd. The damned bot just did what the AI directed it to do. I’m going round and round on this.”

**Day Two: 8:15 am**

The shooter sabotaged the data center's power for nothing. He bought a day or two, but now the world knew, or asked, if the deaths were intentional. Caused by people. Listening to his voice mail, he heard Jonathan's message. Then he got a crew together telling them he would see them in a couple of hours. For the first time, he considered running to the airport, getting far away. Then, like a bolt out of the blue, he remembered the missing shell casings. Where were they?

Running to the car, he ripped the door open, looks everywhere. Sweating and shaking with fear. "Where are they?" he screams.

Did they have his fingerprints on them? He could not remember.

"Did I wear gloves? No, I didn't," he mumbles in panic. "If those casings are found, I'm screwed. They must be where I fired the gun. Dear God, he thought, how can I search there without being seen?" The panic was almost too much to bear. What can I do? What can I do?

"Think," he said to himself.

It was then that he realized he had to play his part and oversee the bot's network testing. He'd go to the shop to pick up some equipment, anything would do, to give him time to think about how he would recover the casings.

God. He thought, all I wanted to do was show the world that using AI is not the way to go. Now, three people are dead, my activists have scattered, and I may go to prison. How did things go so wrong?

Checking his voice mail, he heard Jonathan demanding that he get his work done. So what? he thought, my people are on the job. I'll got to search for that damned casings, but how?

My guys and the electrical people will be onsite for days.

Arriving at the shop, he went in and found equipment his people didn't need, picked it up, and returned to the car. Becoming more and more desperate.

At the data center, he was surprised to see that the electrical crew was gone, but their equipment was still there. What he did not know was that one man had been injured because they did not have the proper equipment and did not tell Ed, but tried to get the work done. Ed stopped the job and sent everyone home while he located the additional gear. The injured man went by ambulance to the emergency room. There would be hell to pay for the safety lapse and for extending the outage to the data center. The result was that for some hours there would be no work being done.

Vondo used the opportunity. He parked on the dirt road and searched and searched. To no avail, not knowing that the police had found them and were testing them for fingerprints and DNA. Their work was easier because Vondo stupidly used match grade ammunition that is far easier to trace than regular ammo.

I've don't have to leave the country, he thought, lying to himself even as his extremist group fled, leaving him to answer for the killings.

### **Day Two: 8:40 am**

"Told you, I'd handle it," Vondo said.

"You call that handling it? Now we've got the cops and the feds on our ass. Used your target gun, didn't you? Tell me you picked up the empty casings?" The voice said.

“What will they do to us if they catch us?” Vondo asked. Changing the subject.

“We’ve committed murder. That’s a capital crime. That’s the death penalty.”

“But surely....” Vondo squeaked.

“Vondo, we killed three people.”

“But we didn’t mean to,” Vondo whined. “All we wanted to do was discredit AI.”

“Put it to music and sing it on the way to the gallows,” the voice said.

“So, what do we do now?”

“Search their rooms?”

“How?”

“We got a guy in the hotel kitchen. He’ll get you a pass card.”

“Me? The keycard system will record my entry.”

“We’re looking at the death penalty and you’re worried about the keycard system?”

### **Day Two: 8:45 am**

Jonathan is on the tenth call? Or is it the twelfth? This one is with the Whitehouse.

“Yes, mam,” he’s saying. “The vandalism may be related.”

“Dr. Young,” Rose Appleton says, “What’s your best guess?”

“I’d say it’s related.”

“Why?” Rose asks.

“Couple reasons. One, someone’s trying to cover his tracks. Two, there are no anti-AI groups operating around here. Not that folks know of.”

“Dr. Young,” Rose said. “This investigation - your investigation - has wide implications.”

“I’m aware of that. I’ve gotten calls from the world over. Including Luna. Their AI is in charge of their life support. Can you think of something more important than the lives of everyone on the moon?”

“No, Dr. Young, I can’t. All I’m saying is this has got to be done properly and in a timely manner.”

“Madam,” Jonathan said. “What I find is what I find.”

“Dr. Young. I’ll tell the President that your investigation is beginning to bear fruit.”

“Yes, you can also tell him I’ve got three of the best experts coming in today to look at the AI’s software, operating system, and hardware.”

“I’ll do that. Thank you, Dr. Young. Good bye.”

“Good bye.”

“Mable?” Jonathan called.

“Yes, doctor.”

“Can you put a call through to Luna? I want to speak to Kelly Bloom.”

“Sure, it’ll take 10 or 15 minutes.”

Ten minutes later

“Dr. Young? Kelly on line four. She’s looking forward to your call.”

“Kelly,” Jonathan said. “I’ve got some news.”

“That’s good,” she said. “Well? What have you got?”

“We’ve had vandalism here. Somebody shot up the electric feed to the AI. I’d say it’s related and I don’t believe that the AI was at fault. So, I’d say, your AI is not going to harm you. Hope that helps. Bye.”

“Jonathan, wait,” Kelly said. “Jonathan... thank you. Ah, um, I mean. The way we left things?”

“Ancient history, Kelly. I’d never leave you in the lurch. I hope you know that.”

“I do... now. Thank you Jonny. It’ll mean a lot to everybody up here. Bye, bye.”

**Day Two: 10 am**

When his alarm went off, Jonathan didn't recognize the tone. Already, he thought. Could it be 10 am? Yes it is, he saw. His team is landing at eleven. So, he showered, shaved and got going.

In the car, he told it to take him to the airport private charter lot. On the way he called the Whitehouse, identified himself, and asked for Rose. She picked up in less than a minute.

"Dr. Young," she said, all business. "What have you got to report?"

"We had vandalism here. The AI won't have power until tomorrow. My three experts are flying in. In fact, I'm on my way to pick them up."

"We knew that, sir. What else have you got?"

"The best man to take the bot apart is in the hospital. Under the care of a psychiatrist. Hopefully, he'll be out soon."

"There's no one else?" Rose asked.

"No one I trust," Jonathan shot back.

"What's that mean?"

"It means, madame, that there are people here that I will work with and people that I won't work with. You and the world will have to wait," Jonathan said to the incredulous Rose, who was unaccustomed to such a tone.

“Need I remind you who I work for?” Rose said.

“I know you work for The President. Please understand is that people have been killed here, and I will not jeopardize this investigation for the sake of a day or two. The examination of the robot waits until I have a trusted, technically capable person to strip the bot. And for that, there’s only one man I trust.”

“I look forward to your next call, doctor. Good bye.” Rose Appleton, assistant to the President of the United States, smiled saying to herself, “You’re the right man for the job, Dr. Jonathan Young. Yes, you are.”

“Good bye,” Jonathan said. As the car turned into the private charter lot.

Sitting in the airport lounge, Jonathan is looking through the floor to ceiling windows watching a private jet land and taxi his way. Soon his team deplanes. First off is Oliver Ignatius Swindle (Iggy), Jonathan’s operating system expert. He’s written code for dozens of Artificial Intelligence projects and knows them intimately. Oliver has been with Mechanical Man for five years after Jonathan stole him from a competitor. His passion is downhill skiing and owns a ski house that he frequents every chance he gets. Iggy is single, skinny, white as a ghost, and not what you would call social. He’s well dressed, his shoes are polished to a shine, and carries a canvas bag that doubles as a backpack. Iggy will verify that the AI is able to access the hardware it runs on and that the software and its vast knowledge base in the closet are intact.

Next is Harry Green, Jonathan’s best hardware man and is he’s dragging a case of test equipment. He’s been with Jonathan since the beginning. He’s married, three kids, loves computers and playing bridge. He’s wearing a backpack, that makes Jonathan smile, because he knows it contains a couple pair of jeans and wrinkled shirts, socks, and assorted unmentionables. Harry will verify the Brain Computer Interface (BCI), and that all the AI’s computers are working and a lot more.

Last off is Janice, who looked like a professional, in a navy blue suit, white blouse, and high heels. Her makeup and hair are perfect. Luggage is Gucci™. The three friends chat amicably as they cross the tarmac. They haven't seen each other in some years.

Jonathan welcomes them. Tells Janice, long time no see. She smiles.

"Hey," Jonathan said. "The data center won't have power until tomorrow. Someone vandalized it yesterday. So, we'll get your bags and I'll take you to the hotel where you can read technical manuals."

Nodding approval, Janice said, "That's a blessing in disguise. Whoever did it just gave us time to get up to speed."

"Correct," Jonathan said.

"So, boss, what are you going to do until we get power?" Ollie quips.

"Ha, ha. Who me? Oh, I don't know. Go to the hospital and see how my tech guy is doing. Stop at the data center to see how repairs are coming. Read the bot's technical manual. Get some sleep. Wise guy," Jonathan says, good-naturedly.

"Sorry I asked. Does this hotel have a pool?"

Jonathan smiles, shakes his head. He drops them at the hotel and leaves for the hospital.

Vondo watches Jonathan drive away and followed long enough to be sure he was heading to the hospital. Having placed a tracker in his car, he would know Jonathan's location.

At the hospital, Jonathan asked for Mike's room and is told his doctor would come to

speak with him. He took a seat.

Shortly, a tiny woman wearing a lab coat walked up to him. She was in her mid-fifties, greying hair, black eyes, overweight, and wore a determined look on her face.

“Doctor Young? I’m Dr. Malbry,” she said. “Mike is my patient. Who are you, and why do you want to see him?”

“Thank you for seeing me, doctor. I’m investigating the killings. Is it possible that I speak with Mike?”

She shook her head. “No, out of the question. I’m releasing him tomorrow. Until then, he needs rest. And to be left alone.” She added with emphasis.

“I understand,” Jonathan said. “I’ll contact him tomorrow. Thank you, doctor.” He could see why Ed said she protected her patients like a mother bear.

She nodded, turned and walked away, leaving Jonathan standing there thinking, that woman’s one tough cookie.

### **Day Two: 3 pm**

Keycard in hand, Vondo rides the elevator to the ninth floor. Jonathan and each member of his crew have a suite here. The maid, having completed her work, is long gone.

Vondo lets himself into Jonathan’s room. It’s spotless. In the sitting area, he finds a laptop and a notebook. He boots the laptop and begins downloading it as he looks through the notebook. Initially, he finds Jonathan’s list of diagnostic programs.

Turning more pages, Vondo finds phone numbers for people across the globe and on Luna. These he photographs. Then he finds a section on International Law with marked passages pertaining to AI. He reads:

- Any person or persons who uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) and/or a robot (bot) with malice and forethought to kill or physically injure a human shall be guilty of committing a capital crime punishable by death in a manner proscribed in Section 47.F(iii).
- This law shall be in effect anywhere on Earth, Luna, any planet, asteroid, space vehicle, space station, or any space-based facility in existence, in the planning stage, construction stage, or in existence at any time in the future.
- Any person or persons arrested for this offence are to remain incarcerated until found innocent. Bail shall not be offered.
- The Artificial Intelligence or robot (bot) used in this crime shall be dealt with under section 1002.W(ii).
- The guilty party or parties shall bear the full financial cost of the crime.

Reading this, the full weight of the situation fell on him. What started as a prank to embarrass Artificial Intelligence across the world had become a capital crime. For the first time, he considered killing Jonathan and his people.

The memory device beeped. It had copied the laptop. He ripped out the cable, turned off the computer, and fled, forgetting to search the other three rooms.

**Day Two: 8 pm**

“What did you find?” the voice asked.

“Nothing. Downloaded his laptop. Nothing we can use,” Vondo said.

“The other rooms? Anything there?”

“Nothing,” Vondo lied. “How about I call 80 Seconds feed them some crap, maybe get Young removed?”

“Like that’s going to work,” the voice said, getting more and more disgusted.

“Okay, so I’ll say he’s brandishing a shotgun,” Vondo snapped.

“Good idea. A Ph.D. from New York here to investigate a crazy AI waves around a shotgun? Are you crazy?”

Vondo broke the connection.

“He’s losing his nerve. Time to get out of the country,” the voice said to himself.

**Day Three: 9 am**

Jonathan slept until the wake up call and was glad he left it else he would have slept forever. He got up, showered, dressed, and went to breakfast.

The lady running the place has sparkling eyes. She asks, “Good morning, dear, what can I

get you?” Her name tag says ‘Honey.’

“Coffee, bacon and egg sandwich. Home fries.”

“You from up north?” Honey asks.

“How do you know?”

“Your accent’s a clue. Sandwich will be right up, hon,” she said, pouring coffee.

Jonathan read the police report to pass the time finding Mike’s comment. The bot moved like lightning, but did not pay it any attention.

Breakfast was excellent. Jonathan was paying the tab and leaving a tip when he got a text from Nikki. She wants to discuss the testing and when the AI will be online.

“Honey, can I get another coffee? Okay if I make a phone call? I’ll take it outside if you get busy.”

“You take all the time you want,” she said, pouring coffee.

Jonathan nodded his thanks as the phone connected.

“Good morning, Jonathan.”

“Nikki, how’s things in the big city?”

“Fantastic,” she says, laughing. “What do we know? Any idea when the AI will be online?”

“The electric supply is clean. The guy running it knows his stuff. No issues with voltage, power quality, supply. It’s all good. Haven’t heard back from the network guy yet. Left him messages, his name’s Vondo. He should have his testing complete today. No idea when the AI returns to service.

“As to testing the AI.... I’ll be testing parallelism, adaptability, graceful degradation, automatic pattern completion, spontaneous generalization, robustness and crash tolerance, ability to address content, and its optimization and constraint.”

“That covers it,” Nikki said. “How about the bot that.... The one that freaked out?”

“It’s under guard. No tests yet. If it wasn’t for the electrical sabotage, I’d say the AI hallucinated, but it’s looking like somebody compromised it. Nikki, I saw the bodies. What it did to those people.... Let’s change the subject, shall we?” He needed to get the images out of his head.

“Of course. When will you get power and how long after that can you test?” She asked.

“Not sure. Haven’t called Ed yet. He’s the electrical superintendent. I’ll call you when I find out.”

“Don’t call, text me. This phone won’t stop,” Nikki said.

“Good. I’ll get back.”

Jonathan ordered another cup of coffee and called Ed.

“Ed, any update on power?”

“Meant to call you. Worked all night. Had a setback. A man injured. We’re back at it. You’ll have power by 10:30 today.”

“Do we know what was used to shoot the place up?”

Ed nodded. “We do. Found five shell casing on the dirt road next to the data center,” he said. “Cops are analyzing them now. Should be easy to trace. Whoever did the shoot was dumb enough to use match grade ammo.”

“What’s that?” Jonathan asked.

“That, my friend,” Ed said. “Is ammunition used in competition. It’s made to more exacting standards than regular ammo. It’s more expensive, there’s a lot less of it is around. Had the shooter used run-of-the-mill ammo, we’d never find him. The cops are looking for fingerprints and DNA as well. With all the clues they’ll find him. That son-of-a bitch is a good as caught.”

Jonathan smiled, nodding. “That’s good news. See you later.”

### **Three: 10:30 am - Team Testing OS, Hardware, Software**

It was sunny and warm and birds were singing as Jonathan’s people left the warm day behind and walked into the data center, turned left, went through double doors, and entered the carpeted numerator.

Opposite the numerator was the AI’s hardware in a room 150 feet long, 75 wide, and 25 high, containing the thousand computers that the AI ran on. In there were miles of networking cable, air conditioning ducts, and electric cable that powered everything.

Entering the numerator, they found a dozen workstations, a conference room, and a kitchen with a coffee maker. Turning on the lights, they flickered for a few seconds before settling down to the shadow-less white light florescent's are famous for.

The first order of business was coffee. On this, the men and Janice collaborated successfully. The pot was perking when they booted their work stations and began looking for trouble in the hardware, operating system, and programs. Or, of course, anything there that shouldn't be or anything that should be and wasn't. There will be no smell of fresh coffee brewing in the super clean air-conditioned space.

They began by verifying that all one thousand computers were online and the AI was not working. It wasn't and they were. The team got coffee and sat down at their powerful work stations that contained a dozen web browsers, numerous code editors, and many programming languages.

"Okay people," Jonathan said, being first to speak. "We take it from the top, but first Harry you will put the network online and verify it. Then we take down the connection to the net. Local network only. We do not expose the AI to the net until it's been tested. Got that?"

The team would use only formal language. There would be no familiarity, no jokes, nothing but solid communication.

"I understand, sir. May I have permission to verify the network at this time? I understand that the connection to the Internet is to be taken down before the AI is tested."

"Good man," Jonathan said. "Bring the network online and verify it's veracity. I know the network guys passed it, but we check anyway."

"Network, online," Harry said. "Everyone please open a browser and check five

websites.”

Everyone reports back that the network is nominal.

Harry speaks. “Sir, the network connection to the net is nominal.”

“I concur,” Jonathan says. “The network is nominal. Take down the connection to the net and leave the local network working.”

Seconds later. “Network is isolated from the net. Verified,” Harry says. “Local network nominal.”

“Okay, we begin,” Jonathan says. “Harry are all 1,000 machines reporting in and connected to the local network? They should be up and running as they’re designed to auto-start when power is restored.”

“Yes, sir. All 1,000 machines up and running,” Harry said.

“Iggy? Are all operating systems reporting?”

“Jonathan, all 1,000 machines are fully booted and nominal. Each machine has 32 processors. All processors on all machines are nominal as are the terabyte of Random Access Memory each processor. That’s 32,000 terabytes of RAM. All nominal. They’re ready to get to work.”

“Understood. Janice, is the software between the operating systems and the AI nominal?”

“Yes, sir,” she says. “As is the connection to local network. All nominal on all 1,000 machines.”

“All right, people,” Jonathan says with a note of caution in his voice. “Any last minute problems?”

“Software nominal,” Janice reports.

“Hardware nominal,” Harry reports.

“OS nominal,” Iggy says.

“I’m declaring that all hardware, software and network are nominal. And that the network is isolated from the internet and that the local network is working and nominal,” Jonathan says.

He pauses.

“Everyone stay sharp, sing out if anything looks wrong,” Jonathan said, to his sweaty team. What they would be doing over the next hours was not for the faint of heart. There was a reason he brought only the best of the best. And this was it.

“Iggy,” Jonathan said. “Search the user logs to determine who had logged into the system before the AI freaked out. I know there will be hundreds maybe thousands. Write them to a file.”

“Yes, sir,” Iggy says.

“Harry, scan the thousand computers for devices that could provide a pathway into the system from the internet. Later, we’ll do this for the memory in the closet and the vast resources that the AI draws on.”

“Sir,” Harry said as he gets busy.

“Janice, take a look at the bot control code and every other thing under the control of the AI. Look for any programs that were installed in the last six months. We need to look at them.”

“Understood,” she says. As she begins constructing her search code. While she has access to canned search programs, she will write her own in the unlikely event that the canned code has been compromised.

Jonathan looks at his team. Iggy knows operating systems inside out having coded and designed them. Harry is a hardware guru par excellence. And Janice? When known to the hacker world as Snorb she was feared and respected. Even by Jonathan. And the Russian who called himself, Dimitri? He left her alone, too. No one messed with her. A guy tried once. She emptied his bank account, destroyed his credit, filled his computer with kiddie porn, and turned him into the cops.

### **Day Three: 6 pm**

Jonathan, says to his people, “Okay, everyone, if you see anything wrong sing out and we take this thing down. I know I don’t have to say this, but if you need to communicate with it, keyboard only. No verbal communications. And no Brain computer Interface. Clear?” He could have used the acronym BCI and they would have understood, but this was not the time for acronyms.

They all acknowledge - keyboards only.

“Okay, everyone. I’m starting my tests.”

Jonathan opens his notebook and verifies what he’s he’s got to do:

- Electric power / voltage complaints / power quality
- Verify network and communications with bots and all devices connected to the AI
- The AI's network routers / radio transceivers
- Have Harry check that all 1,000 computers are responsive
- Harry and Iggy verify the Brain To Computer interface is safe to use and it's human protection circuits are engaged and tested      Have Harry verify that the knowledge base is intact
- Have Iggy verify the AI's connection to the knowledge base
- AI Parallalism
- Adaptability
- Graceful degradation
- Automatic completion of patterns
- Spontaneous generalization
- Robustness / fault tolerance i.e. did it ever crash?
- Content address ability
- Optimization and constraint
- Estimated time for all tests is 18 hours not including Iggy and Harry

Jonathan starts his test with the AI's parallelism test where the AI creates data, acquires knowledge, and refines its system to deal with it all. While the AI is lining up the data he will

need, Jonathan opens several monitoring programs that watch the AI's memory and how hard the individual computers are working. He takes a deep breath, slowly lets it out, and mops his sweaty face. Everything looks good. It's about noon when the test completes and passes with flying colors.

He makes eye contact with his team and nods his head. So far, so good. They nod back, then continue to watch their monitors for the first hint of trouble.

Jonathan moves on to the adaptability test. This will determine how the AI adjusts to new conditions, situations, environments. This test is important. The AI should do this effectively and efficiently. It needs to learn quickly from different experiences and apply that learning to new circumstances while maintaining flexibility. Adaptability requires the AI to be open to change.

He is especially interested to determine the AI's response as it could be the reason it sent the bot into chaotic behavior. He works the AI hard trying to confuse it, stymie it, sending it conflicting data, even lying to it. The AI handles it all. Without a problem.

It's well past dinner time and Jonathan is hungry, but does not know it so engrossed is he in the work when his stomach grumbles. He looks at his watch. It's 7 pm. He calls Max, is told that the network has been tested and verified. Same for the killer bot. Jonathan hears this, it's looking more and more that the AI is at fault. Someone brings lunch for four. Then it's back to work.

The AI passes every test. There's not even a ghost of a problem as Jonathan runs antiviral code. The scan finds nothing. As a last resort he creates two Generative Adversarial Networks (GAN) and instructs them to make a single composite photo from two images. The GANs put a dog's head on a dinosaur as he watches them pass the image back and forth until it can no longer be improved. The AI performs flawlessly.

Jonathan sits back, runs his hand through his damp hair. The results are unmistakable. It was not the AI that killed those people. There is no way. Not the smallest possibility. It's 7 am. He and his people have been here all night. He brings the AI to full consciousness.

"Okay, people. AI is online... now." And he brings the AI to full capability.

The AI becomes aware. Its chronometers tell it that its been off line since 06-12-2156 at 15:39:45.173 hours.

"I need some sleep," Jonathan says to himself, louder than he intended. "Been here for hours."

The team concurs. He looks up and there they are. Bleary eyed, tired, sleepy, hungry. He'd forgotten they were there.

Janice walks to his workstation, looks down at a haggard Jonathan. "The AI asked me why we're testing it. We need to level with it, Jonathan. We should tell it the bot killed people."

Jonathan thinks. Takes a deep breath. "Okay, tell it, but it's not going online until we figure this out."

Janice smiles, "Thanks." Walks back to her workstation and begins typing.

It's Day Four at 7 am and while the AI is now exonerated, they are no closer to finding why the bot freaked out.

**Day Four: Noon**

Jonathan was glad for the wake up call or he would have slept all day. He wondered: was he in Pennsylvania for three days, or four? He got up, showered, got dressed, and told the car to take him to the diner.

He ordered three scrambled eggs, corned beef hash, patty sausage, four slices of toast, and black coffee. Then he dug out his phone and brought up the police report. He reads. And what does he see?

Interview with Mike Blax at in the People's Hospital Psychiatric Ward. The bot moved....

"That can't be right," Jonathan mumbles. His mouth filled with eggs. "Where did I see that before? The bot's manual? Had to be?" He says, making no sense and attracting looks from other customers.

He opens the bot's operating manual. Searches it and there it is: The Robot's speed is controlled by its carbon nano tube chip. Limited to 4 miles per hour (6 feet per second) ....

Jonathan looks out the window, but does not see what's out there. His mind is buzzing. He shouts, "that means... good God. The bot. Not the AI? It was the bot."

He orders more coffee. "I was right," he says to no one. "The AI's not to blame. I've got to examine that bot." He calls Mable.

"Dr. Young's office."

"Mable, I got a question. It's important."

She knew this was serious and held back the quip that was on the tip of her tongue. "What do you need, doctor? And I have an important message. You go first."

“Who can tear a bot apart and know what they’re looking at?”

“Mike Blax. He’s the best tech we got. Just out of the hospital,” she said.

“What’s his cell?”

“Wait one,” she said. Then told him.

“Thanks. What’s your message?”

“The network has been tested and found in perfect condition. You can activate with software, I imagine you know how to do that.”

“I certainly do, thanks Mable.”

Seconds later, Mike’s phone rang.

“This is Mike.”

“Mike, Dr. Young here. I’ve got a question for you. It’s important.”

“What do you need, doc?”

“Could the bot have been hacked? It wasn’t the AI.”

“You’re sure? How’d you find out?” Mike asks.

“Long story. Tell you later, could it have been hacked?” Jonathan asks.

“Very unlikely. Virtually impossible, I’d say. The bots use state-of-the-art encryption and a rotating frequency. So, you’ve have to break the encryption and then crack the frequency of the command signal.”

“Mable tells me you’re the man to take that bot apart. You up for it?” Jonathan asked.

“Yes, sir, you bet,” he says, eager to help.

“I’ll pick you up. What’s your address?”

Mike told him.

Jonathan jumps in the car, gives it Mike’s address, and twenty minutes later Mike and his tools are with him on the way to the bot.

“Mike, tell me about the bot,” Jonathan said.

“What do you want to know, doc?”

“What powers it? How much can it lift? History. You now? Like that.”

“That’s easy. It’s powered by a 200 horsepower diesel engine,” Mike says.

“Not electric?” Jonathan says, surprised.

“Noooo,” Mike says. “Tried that. Worked great until winter, then they went to shit. The batteries died fast in the cold,” Then he laughs. “One of them died with a six ton load. Not pretty. Care to guess who had to change the battery? I gave my supervisor an ear full. We sold ‘em to an outfit in Florida, I think. They work great where it’s hot. Ain’t hot here in winter. I was the only

guy who would work on the dead bot. Everyone else was scared shit that it would drop the container on ‘em. I knew better. Bots have valves that close when the power dies. Diesel’s do, too. There was no danger, but I was the only guy who knew that. With the charged battery installed, we were in fat city.”

Jonathan smiled at the reference to ‘fat city.’

The same two guards were on duty. They turned on the warehouse lights as Jonathan and Mike walked in.

“Good morning, Dr. Young. Hey, Mike.”

“Good morning,” Jonathan says. “We want to see the bot.”

“No problem,” the guard said.

“How you doing, Mike?”

“I’m good, thanks,” Mike said.

“Mike,” the guard said. “Before you go in... I mean. I hear you had a bad time.”

“Yeah, I’m okay.” Mike said.

“No worries. Go right in, gentlemen. If you need extra muscle, give us a shout.”

“Will do.”

Mike and Jonathan walked into the warehouse. Mike walks to the bot, puts his tools

down, and walked around it.

“I want to get a look at its electronics. How do we do that?” Jonathan asks.

“We remove the brain case. It’s an aluminum box. Contains what you want,” Mike said.

Mike opened his toolbox and removed an electric screwdriver. Shortly, he had all the screws out and removed the panel.

“It’s that aluminum case. The one with the five cables,” Mike said.

Next, he unscrewed the cable connectors, removed the cables, and pulled out the brain case.

Jonathan saying, “Thanks for doing this, Mike. I know what you went through. You okay?”

“Yeah, doc, I’m fine. It’s good to be involved. Assisting you? It’s a good thing.”

Jonathan smiled.

“Let’s get this open,” Mike said. “See what we got.” As he removed the access panel.

His eyes went wide when he saw the mother board. “No wonder this thing freaked out.”

“What?” Jonathan says.

“It’s not the right one. How the hell could this happen?”

“What?” Jonathan asks again.

“It fits,” Mike says, as he unlatches the chip’s zero insertion force lever, and begins to remove it.

“Stop, it may have prints,” Jonathan says.

Looking into the distance, Mike whispers, “It was intentional, they were murdered.”

Jonathan stays calm, knowing Mike just spent two days under the care of a psychiatrist.

“Please, Mike, what is it?”

“This bot’s made by AIBMC. Sorry, doc. Artificial Intelligence Bot Manufacturing Company. They make the best bots on the market. No way did they do this. And besides, we’ve had this bot for a couple years. It would have shown up before this.”

“Mike? What would have shown up?”

“Doc, the chip? It’s the wrong chip. I mean, it’s not supposed to be here. It’s wrong. It’s supposed to be, I mean, the bot uses a carbon nano tube chip. This one’s silicon based. It works. I mean, it fits into the bot’s motherboard, but it’s the wrong chip.

He pauses.

“Look it’s a RSL. Sorry, Robotic Soccer League chip. Model Goalie. No wonder the bot moved so fast. The Goalie chip? It’s designed to drive the bot in any direction as fast as the bot can go. No speed restriction. Don’t you see? The bot’s speed? Is controlled by the chip. Don’t you see, Doc? The bot does not have a hardware dependent speed control. That’s taken care of by the

chip.”

Mike paused. “And its old style. The chip, I mean. Carbon chips operate at the atomic level. Silicon chips don’t. This is what scrambled the AI’s instructions. It’s what killed those people. And almost killed me....”

To bring him back from reliving the horror, Jonathan asks, “Who would know how to do this?”

“You’d need to be a gamer with serious hardware knowledge of gaming chips and this particular bot.”

“You’re not a gamer. How do you know? You recognized it immediately,” Jonathan said.

“God, Doc. Was this deliberate?” Then realizing he’d been asked a question, “It was Vondo. He told me. Said the only other chip that would fit this bot’s 997 pin configuration is the RSS Goalie. And that’s just what this is. See for yourself.” Mike pointed to the chip’s name and model.

He paused then thinking. “And it would need, I mean the attack behavior, would need some kind of signal. Got to be something in the AI’s bot control software.”

Then Mike whispered. “Doc, this was no accident.”

“You okay, Mike?” Jonathan asks, his voice filled with concern.

“Yeah, I’m good. Let’s get the bastard. We gotta call Max.”

“No,” Jonathan says. “We don’t know who we can trust. We call the cops. Wait, no we

don't use the phone. We go in-person. C'mon. Then I'm calling Janice."

"Janice? Why her?" Mike asks.

"Because, my friend, she's the best software shooter I've ever seen. And, I've seen the best."

They jumped in the car, told it to take them to the police station.

#### **Day Four: 4 pm**

They were talking to a detective, telling them about the chip that had been changed. Mike gave them a nontechnical, but detailed, explanation of how it altered the behavior of the bot and that Vondo had told him.

"Vondo?" the detective asked. "You mean the networking supervisor?"

Mike nodded. "Yeah, that's exactly who I mean," he said in a voice filled with venom.

The detective got up. "You guys have a coffee. Make yourselves comfortable. I'll be right back."

"We being held for this?" Jonathan asks.

"God, no. Absolutely not," the detective shot back. "I'm putting out a BOLO for Vondo. He won't be hanging around, but if he is, we'll pick him up."

"What's a BOLO?"

“Be On Look Out,” the detective said. “Please gentlemen, stay here until we’ve got him. I don’t want you where he can harm you.”

Jonathan and Mike nodded. He was looking out for their safety. Jonathan asked. “Okay if I make some calls? Lots of people want to know about this. And I need to speak to the woman searching for the altered code.”

The detective thought for a minute. “Sure, doc, go ahead.”

Jonathan picked up his phone. “Janice, we found something. The bot had its chip changed to silicon. That’s why it freaked out. Get back to the data center and look for any code directed at a silicon chip in the bot control software.”

“I’m still there. Wait one.” She slips on her BCI, and asks for help.

The AI responds:

*What do you need?*

Janice responds: Can you find code that would direct a silicon based processor on a bot?

The AI responds 0.034 seconds later.

*Code found.*

Janice asks: When was it uploaded and what user uploaded it?

The AI responds:

*Uploaded three hours before bot attacked. New user uploaded code.*

Then: “Who created the new user and when?”

The AI responds.

*New user created by Vondo Kappalari 45 seconds before code was uploaded.*

Janice: How do you know?

The AI responds:

*By recovering the deleted log file.*

“Jonathan, I got it,” she says.

“Already?”

“Jonathan, I’m working with one of the most advanced AI’s on the planet. It was Vondo. The AI recovered the log file. And, um, I contacted an old friend of ours. Told me there’s a gamer group that hates AI because it allows new players to kick their ass. They play on phones all day, even at work. I’ll have the AI sequester the data and make it safe for the forensic team. Need anything else?”

“Hold on....,” Jonathan says.

Then to the detective. “Looks like this was all done by Vondo. We got proof that he

uploaded the code that made the bot freak out. Data is being forensically preserved as we speak. And we never touched the silicon chip. You may find his prints on it.”

Jonathan then called Nikki, gave her the news, and asked her to notify the media. Then called Kelly at Luna Station. Then, Max telling him he could put the AI back into service and that Mike should be promoted to Network Supervisor.

Last, he called 80 Seconds Around The World and was not surprised when they weren’t in a big hurry to tell the world that the AI was not to blame.

Janice called Jonathan back. “When the cops get here, the hardware guy will assist them in removing the server so its evidence can be preserved. It’s pertinent to a murder investigation. So, take good notes, as we’ll be called to testify.”

“Good idea,” Jonathan said. “Talk to you later.”

“Bye, bye,” she said and broke the connection.

Jonathan filled in the police and asked them to get a computer forensic team to the data center. An hour later, they got word that Vondo had been detained as he was leaving the San Jose airport in Costa Rica. He was singing like a bird telling the names of his group of malcontents. Of course, he did nothing wrong, and he was in Costa Rica on vacation. The names of his group were on the net to every police department on Earth. They won’t be in the wind long, their detective friend said.

While the police coffee was fine, Jonathan and Mike were happy to leave. With the thanks of the police, they were back in the car. They told it to head for Mike’s shop. Then it took Jonathan to his office, where Mable was waiting.

“Nice work, Doctor Young,” she said with an appreciative nod.

“Mike did most of it,” Jonathan said. Which made Mable smile all the more.

“You put it together. Don’t be shy. Well done, sir. Very well done.”

“Thanks, Mable.”

“I’ve taken the liberty of making arrangements to get you back to New York and have a jet lined up. Give me an hour to get you a helicopter and you’ll be on your way. Your people, too.”

“Mable, you’re a treasure,” Jonathan said. Giving her a kiss on the cheek. “Thank you.”

Embarrassed and turning red, she said, “Ed and Max want to speak to you before you go.”

“I’ll call them.”

Two hours later, Jonathan and his team were flying home. Nikki met him at the airport.

“Well, he’s back,” she said. “Good work down there.”

“Thanks, it’s good to be home. How’s everything?”

“We’re good. Media’s notified, 99% of all calls have been returned.”

Then she hesitated, saying, “Your ex-wife called.”

Jonathan groaned, oh good, he thought. “What? A million times?”

“No, no,” Nikki said. “Just once. She wasn’t angry. Not even miffed. Quite pleasant, actually.”

“She stepped up, Jonathan,” Nikki said, with conviction. “She didn’t have to. Took the boys camping. Changed her plans and, believe me, she had serious rearranging to do, but she did it. When you talk to her, you be nice.”

“Aren’t I always,” he said sotto voce.

#### **Day Four : 8 pm**

Jonathan will land soon in New York and take a rental car to the campground to meet the kids and relieve his wife. His son will be disgusted that he works with Artificial Intelligence and his daughter will want to know everything. Ah, such is life, he thinks.