

This city wasn't anything like his home. Even in the dark of the night there was enough light from neon signs and lighting displays to see by. The streets were twisting and close together, focused on pressing as much as could be squeezed into the limited spaces. Zeke felt like the walls pushed him even though he couldn't have touched them if he bent his shark tail straight toward them.

He emerged from the alley to a larger thoroughfare. While it wasn't what he hoped for, the resulting space was open enough that he felt like he could breathe and see other figures without bumping shoulder to shoulder. 'This is hopeless' he thought to himself, his directions had got him turned around and fed back to an area he was sure he'd already been through.

His aimlessness, coupled with an expression of frustration caught the eye of an automata, one of several that Zeke had seen. Sculpted and smooth white panels decorated the joints that moved as fluidly as nature. A shiny coating lay below the panels, looking like it would be soft to the touch, likely put in place to disguise the mechanics and make the robot fit in with the surrounding city. They were uniform in size, slightly bigger than a person so that they stood out in a crowd but otherwise mostly the same in build. Inoffensive and calm with gently lit LED screens to simulate eyes and emotions.

The robot spoke without moving any part of its jaw, though the slight motions of the head distracted from that. "Hello, do you need some assistance?" It asked, tilting its head, the eyes smiling.

"Uh- sorry? Oh, maybe... Do you give directions or can you show me a map of some sort?" Zeke replied, flustered for a moment but pushing through it.

"Certainly. Where do you need to go?"

"I'm looking for Delver Street." Zeke replied, watching as the robot retrieved a small tablet from a pouch at its back. Within seconds the area had lit up, showing where the unit was and showing a winding path toward his destination.

He furrowed his brow for a moment, the first road to take squeezed him through a narrow alley directly ahead of him which grew even thinner further down but there was a larger open road through a more spacious area to the side. It seemed the path took the long way around, avoiding it. Not only was it less cramped, it also looked like a faster direct route. Still the map had helped him figure out the way to go now.

"Thank you, Mr. Robot." He said politely, receiving a chirping tune and another happy simulation from the LEDs.

"I am glad I could assist, please travel safely." The robot said, head watching Zeke for a moment before he moved a bit beyond its immediate field of vision after which it gently moved on, starting its next task.

Zeke didn't want to disappoint the robot, even though such feelings were beyond it. When its eyes were off him he veered from the path it had directed and moved off toward that broader route.

He shuffled through one last thin alleyway and then felt like he'd popped into another world. Not only was it open, it was astoundingly eye-catching, like a little oasis in the neon grunge, the area he walked through was impeccably clean, surfaces either looking new or polished. Brighter lights were cast more artfully than the fractured neon. Matching in colours and illuminating the space as a whole instead of trying to draw the tourist's purse to their location over the others.

Zeke was nearly gaping at the sights directly around him, feeling as though he'd stepped fully into another city. His eyes wandered up the tallest building, reaching a point where it blended in with the cityscape above. The difference between the top and the bottom made him wonder what had driven the design. The building didn't stand out from its peers once it rose beyond a few stories, yet the plaza below, the area he was walking through, was its own world.

Slowly he turned his head back to the path, seeing a few others walking in his direction. Enriched by the beauty he turned a smile to them. His expression froze when he saw the stern looks on their faces, coupled with guard's uniforms.

He looked around and behind, worried for a second that he might have absentmindedly stepped on pristine plantlife. The way back was clear of any mishaps, though now two more figures were closing in, one of them drawing out a nightstick.

Their eyes were so firmly set on him that there was no room for uncertainty, they were all advancing on Zeke, himself. The shark raised his hands upwards to shoulder level, open palmed and spread in a gesture half between submitting and placating. "Is something the matter?" He asked, trying his best to keep calm.

"Keep those hands still." One of them barked, reaching for a pair of thick bracelets- cuffs.

A nervous flick of the lips gave tell of some of the panic that was crowding in on Zeke's mind. "Am I- ghh," his throat felt dry, he wet his lips trying again, losing time as they advanced on him. "Am I being arrested?"

"Too right you are." Said one of the voices behind him.

"What?! Why?" He asked.

"Multiple violations of the Citizen's Passage Act. Don't resist." The one holding the cuffs replied, she snapped one onto Zeke's left wrist. A glowing blue light on the cuff turned red in time with a click as it tightened on. He was doing his best not to resist, to show he was complying, leaving it easy for the authoritative figure to cuff his other wrist.

Are those necessary? He wanted to ask, but didn't dare lest it be misconstrued. "If you need me to leave, I'll leave right away. I promise I had no ill intentions in mind..."

"Oh no, you'll be coming with us, this isn't the time for statements, you can share your stories later." The figure said, reaching to a pouch behind her hip. The rear-approaching guard without the nightstick took the cuffs and pulled them down behind Zeke's back, pushing a short rod into a groove. The cuffs magnetised to the rod, restraining his arms together.

He winced as his shoulders were pulled a bit too tight for comfort, looking over to see what else these guards were planning.

"Face forward." The cuffing guard spoke, snapping Zeke's attention back to her. She held a sturdy looking muzzle.

"Wait- do you have to-" The shark asked, with definite concern in his eyes.

"I feel threatened by those teeth of yours, face forward." She repeated sternly. Zeke hesitated until he saw and heard the other three guards all shifting, as if they were about to be forceful.

"Please, be gentle." He begged as he pushed his face forth.

The muzzle lit up in the same way once it had been nestled over his snout and clasped behind his head. Not only was it tight enough to hold his jaw, it was airtight, turning any attempts at speech to barely understandable mumbles.

"Move!" The nightstick holder barked, poking Zeke in the small of the back and setting him forward.

A hand seized the magnetised bar, a second hand falling on his shoulder and leading him on. The stick holder seemed keen for the shark to give him any excuse to use it against him as he walked from the other side, meanwhile the cuffer walked in front, expecting him to follow along. The fourth guard stepped out of the way, returning to her position. They all silently agreed that three guards were enough for the subdued subject.

"This is guard A3, we're bringing a suspect in for processing, over." The cuffer said into a radio as the Shark was led through an alley and then turned sharply to face a series of shutters that were slowly climbing to open the way into a grey concrete room with little comforting decor.

"Roger that, processing bay seven is prepared." A voice replied. The lighting inside the room facing him was minimalist at best. Though he could see the bays they had mentioned, numbered from one to ten. Most were shut, three were open but only bay seven was lit up.

"Susphmm?" Zeke mumbled in concern. The guards didn't even acknowledge his question, pushing him toward the room. No, guards didn't seem right, he'd seen their emblem

elsewhere and only just now realised these were officers of the city's law enforcement. That would also explain their use of the word suspect. Zeke was more worried by the second.

Closing in on the bay, he was able to see what waited inside. There was a curved three-quarter tube at one wall, fitted with rods and restraints. Cases and crates lined the wall to either side of it, while across was a twin locker and a rack that contained several curved and rounded pieces of metal alloys.

There was something familiar about them, yet the guards were in the way of a clear look to really analyse why.

"Take off your clothing, surrender your belongings, then stand inside the tube." One of the guards said. Grabbing one of the locker doors and pulling it open to reveal bare shelves and empty trays.

A loud clattering to the side let Zeke know the bay door was closing, locking them all within. When it hit the floor the cuffs flashed and loosened, taken off by the officer who had put them on. Two of them busied themselves with preparation while the third stood watch.

Zeke reached to the muzzle only to be told 'Leave it!', dejected he dropped his hands to his top, pulling and revealing his skin to the world. His legwear came next, the pockets emptied into the trays, then his clothing folded loosely and put on the shelves of the locker.

"Those too." The watching officer said. The path of his eyes and the fact that all Zeke still had was his underwear showed what he meant.

"Wh-whmmh?" He groaned.

The officer simply watched him, waiting for him to slip them down, step out and then they were placed in the locker, too. "Now to the tube."

He covered his shame with a spread hand as best he could as he walked there, taken aback as one of the officers thrust something against his chest. Cold and almost clammy feeling at first, he looked and saw a shiny black garment. It looked like rubber but felt slightly different as though there were more to it.

"Whmmh hh thhh?" He asked. Using it as a better cover as he walked there.

"Your preliminary uniform. Put it on inside the tube, quickly now, unless we should add prolonged indecent exposure to your charges."

"Prllmhmnnhy?" He asked, trying to figure out how it went on. It was a full suit, with thick lining around the arms, tail and legs that nonetheless was easier than expected to slide on. It weighed down on him, squeezing when his body was inside, but it didn't catch and squeak as he dressed himself. He realised with a shock that the suit was open crotched, hiding nothing of either end.

He kept his back to the staff, tail defending most of his dignity, however the suit still hung open at the back, if there was a zipper of some kind he couldn't find it. Something whirred softly behind him. "Turn around." They ordered. He did, seeing that the whirr had been the closing of a door to the tube, obscuring him from the belly, down.

The officer reached forward, grabbing the muzzle on his snout, waiting for it to disengage and then pulling it free.

"Please. What's going on? I don't understand." Zeke pleaded to them.

"You violated the laws of our country, as such you are to be put on probationary measures until your court hearing in three days."

"Wh-what? But I didn't mean to do anything wrong, I was just walking." He replied, feeling as though he already knew ignorance was not going to earn any sympathy.

"You can plead your case at the hearing." The guard said before pushing a button on the tube's exterior.

"What now? What's going on?" Zeke asked as the machines within the tube started to move. Fresh cuffs were clipped at his ankles, wrists and neck. An additional clasp grasped his waist, and together they lifted him off the ground. More arms were moving, with something cold pressed against the open slit of the suit. He felt something shift within, then a spine-tingling feeling as he felt devices clipped over the opening. Discreet, barely touching and barely intrusive devices that implied their purpose more from their location than anything. Coupled with the fact they clicked and locked with a belt that secured itself over the tail and between the legs.

The guards didn't answer directly, instead saying. "Until your court appearance you are expected to pull your weight in community service."

His expression flickered, he could only guess what that entailed. "Why community service? If I'm not free to go, and not convicted, then what about the jails?"

"We don't use those here." The officer with the tag A3 said in a tone that made it sound like she was truly confused that Zeke didn't already know. "All suspects are given community service until their trials to combat the inefficiency of simple lock-up prisons and to give them a chance to make a better impression on the judicial hearing."

Something squeezed over Zeke's legs and arms, segmented to leave his joints free, he looked down, seeing the smoothed metal alloy plates... the familiarity of them striking him when they'd been laid across his legs and chest. He'd seen them before, on the robot that had given him directions, directions he'd ignored. It couldn't mean what he thought, could it?

The machinery sped up around him, the plates were held in place while more from behind scooped together, a flexible screw pushed through small holes and was wound shut,

tightening it down, bolting it at an angle that without the same specialised tools would be difficult even to see!

“Please, I’ll do service or whatever- Do I have to wear this? I won’t be able to get out!”

Thick boots were pressed over his feet, fitted with solid soles then covered by metal plates that clipped to shin-guards, adding to his height, evening it out so he would match the other robots.

“Will you get him hooked up so he stops blathering already?” One of the officers called out.

“H-hooked up?” He asked, turning to see one of the officers had retrieved another plate from one of the shelves, a moulded solid shape, suited to fit over his face. When it was pushed up and he saw the thick lining within, complete with a mouth-filling pocket. It was to his view, totally solid, nary a hole for his nostrils or eyes. “Wait, please! Please!”

His begging had just as little effect as before. The guard fed the face-plate to a robotic arm, just as Zeke felt another panel being pushed behind him, cradling the back of his head and skull. Before he could blink the automated frame clapped the bulk over his head, connecting to the back, magnetised at first and then tightened by those same, intricate screws. “Mmm! Mmm!” Zeke mumbled, jaw clamped firmly shut around a mass that pushed over the tongue. His breathing wasn’t blocked at least, instead sounding hollow and refracted, due to a tube that ran along the inside of the mask to his nose.

Furthermore the padding of the mask pressed against his face with the exception of the eyes, where there was a little room to spare. So close to his skull he heard each click of the metal being put together. “Mmmh...”

As pathos inducing as the poor shark’s cries were, he may as well not have been alive to how little the officers responded. The machinery took over, pulling Zeke’s limbs out to be stretched, even as he tried some last defiant tugs.

In his world of darkness his senses were all turned inward. All he could taste was the synthetic shape in his mouth, all he could smell was the lining that fed him the air. His ears were too subjected to the steady and rhythmic noises of the machinery to be of use and that left the growing few feelings as the last metal was stamped against the shining suit, clamping down and obscuring any of the shark’s features until he looked interchangeable with all other robots in the city.

He continued to mewl for mercy or clemency as best he could, feeling the adjustments being carried out. Tightness growing around his body without inhibiting the joints too much, things being attached and bolted into place down his back and a slow tracing tool that he could only assume was helping to cover any of the seams or splits that might show up.

Something brushed at his heels then began to brush higher. At first it felt like carefully constructed parts between the metal and the lining, subtle tools that could massage his muscles. Yet it was in fact the suit itself, composed of the synthetic fibres and mixed with nanites that adjusted itself until it had moulded the interior perfectly to him and to the metal around him.

The same nanites ran quick warm-up checks, rising all the way with their massage-like pulse. When the rise hit his hips his thoughts were occupied by a new push around the head, his ear-fins smoothed and kneaded flat to his scalp, then popped up into pouches that nestled a speaker in place. Additionally the mass in his mouth was given form, inflated gently as another tube pressed in to connect to his throat. He felt something squirt in, another test finding the way clear to his belly.

When confirmed, the pressure on his jaw eased, allowing him to move it, even to move his tongue. "Aaah, w-wha- what? I can talk?" He asked, hearing the distortion caused by the obstructions. The kneading feeling hit a few nerve points at once, making him shiver, then with a ping he felt rather than heard, a dim light flashed before his eyes. A visor! While he'd not seen it before there was a built in visor linked to allow him vision of what lay beyond.

He felt a moment's confusion as he turned his head the trace amount that he could while suspended by the frames. The room was deserted beyond him and the machinery. Everything else was locked and stored. "Hello? Hello?!" He called out. Hearing another voice layered over his words, that of the robot construct he'd met earlier.

Similar to when it had spoken there was just enough hint of lights flashing in time. He gulped, so the guide he'd met earlier had been a criminal? Or at least another 'suspect' like him?

In a single ear he heard a voice speak. "Calibration completed." It said, lowering him to the floor. "Seizing control..." He felt the machinery moving, the formerly massaging feeling tightened harshly and began to steer his limbs. It reached behind him, using his hand to draw out a tablet and raise it. "Your court hearing will be at 03:00 hours on July ninth. Do not miss this date." It said while showing a map of his current location and a blinking indicator showing him the court house.

"What? I won't... wait, huh?" He said responding to it then being immediately distracted upon noticing that his voice was entirely his own. In that realisation he also saw that it didn't transfer out. He gulped, the helmet was soundproofed?

"Piloting toward the post. Study this map to see your active region." His body began to lurch forward, his muscles tensed and resisted at first, so uncomfortable and uncertain with the treatment, he tried to relax them and let the machine go, as it wasn't a fight he could win. Yet it still required him to convince his subconscious to permit it.

The cameras hooked up to the visor limited his vision to straight ahead, no matter where he looked, seeing only the split road ahead looming closer and the held up pad. When it figured it had given him ample time to study it tucked the pad back into the pouch it rested in. "Hey,

machine? Computer? What do I need to do when I'm there?" He asked, receiving a quietness broken only by the steady footsteps.

The automated legs piloted him round bend after bend and he tried to understand the path he'd taken, yet with just the fixed angle, it was already a jumble in his head. His mind wandered until his body came to an abrupt and sudden stop.

He waited in uncertainty for a few moments, wondering if the AI had seen something. He looked to the left and right and to his pleasure his body replied in kind. He'd been given control again! Though, despite the effortlessness of his motions when it had been in control, it now weighed down on him, presumably guaranteeing there was a penalising element to his encased form.

The street and all things he could see around him were deserted. A flickering light in the visor caught his eye as a bundled scrap of paper was highlighted. As he turned more flickers showed other discarded refuse. He sighed, community service often meant picking up litter, it seemed to be the case even in this strange city with its terrifying customs.

Tentatively Zeke raised his arms to his head. The robotic gauntlet pressed over where his eyes were hidden, discovering the camera was raised higher than they were, explaining some of the disjointed feelings. His hands tapped and clunked around as he assessed the shape of the thing covering his head then seized hold and *tugged*. His hands could grip on but even with the full strength of his pull he didn't so much as feel pressure or any shifting in the rigid hood.

He faced similar results when his hands moved to the plate at his chest, then to the wrists and tugged hard on each part. His neck could only bend so low, limiting how much he could see, if there was any means to get the suit off piece by piece, he wasn't finding it. "Mmmh, come on, move!" He pleaded, panting and feeling warmed up by the exertion.

He stiffened for a moment as he noticed something was off. Slowly he raised his arm, looking at the plates. The holes that hid the screws and rivets were *missing*. A perfectly shaped and fitted cap of metal had been plugged over the top of them so that the metal looked all one piece.

"Grrrh!" Zeke cried, dropping to the ground, hands seizing at the leg plates. Despite the freedom his joints had they still didn't match his unencumbered form. As a result his knees stopped short of giving him ample, proper access to the metal and synthetic fabrics covering his feet to even pull on them.

Even when he tried to dig his fingers into the stretchy, smooth and shining material between the plates he couldn't do anything to it, only lightly able to feel his own touch at best. With a weary sigh he realised that he was well and truly trapped, not a whisper of air able to touch his skin and with the constant looming threat that the automated systems could seize him and puppet him around.

As crestfallen as the shark was, he was also conscious that he had spent a lot of time doing nothing toward the 'community service' he was expected to fulfil. Slowly he got back up and then his robotic-suited legs ambled several steps forward. He leant down, collecting the paper, first, then moving between the highlighted dots as his visor detected them.

As the shark worked, the sky grew gradually lighter as the whole of the night was eaten up. In that time the robotic suit had tended to his needs, even seeming to feed him something that ensured he didn't get tired too soon. A single figure had moved by him in the night, drunkenly slurring questions to find his way 'home'. The robot voice had answered, muting and soundproofing Zeke's, making him feel even more vestigial. He wasn't even allowed to show good behaviour.

As morning arrived there was a noticeable increase in traffic, the occasional person was already walking down the street. He was starting to fear he wouldn't be given the chance to sleep, seemingly expected to keep working throughout.

A short while later, the frame of his body suddenly locked up after he was done depositing the last scrap of litter that one passing feline had thrown at him almost disdainfully. He didn't know what was happening and the temporary paralysis was daunting to say the least. Terrifying until his legs began to move on their own.

Once again he was led down small cramped alleyways, his head kept rigid, his sight limited. The robot turned into an opening, stepped over and then fell still. He heard more mechanical sounds getting closer, then a dimly audible series of muffled grunts. "Mmmh! Mm-mmmmp! Shhhmhmhm thhm!!" As they reached as loud as they would go, he saw the source. Another robot, identical to him, walked past with that stiff perfect stride.

"H-hello?! Is someone else in there?!" He called to the robot.

The grunts stopped for a second before returning angrily. Interrupted by Zeke's words and then enraged, as though jealous of his relative free speech. "If someone's there, grunt twice!" Zeke offered.

"Fhhhk yhhhm!" He heard dimly as the robot vanished from his periphery and back out, while it had been a pair of grunts, Zeke got their meaning from tone alone and said nothing further.

The suit around him waited for the door to close in the robot's wake before stepping forward, turning and then reversing into where it had come from- a charging bay. The suit stepped Zeke's legs to sit in waiting sockets that magnetised for a perfect fit before cuffing on. Similarly his arms were seized in cuffs at a resting pose.

The shark found himself twisted backwards onto a bed of sorts. The camera feed was cut off, instead replaced by gentle shifting lights and patterns that were calming. His shift was over, it was time for him to rest regardless of how he felt on the matter.

Before he realised he had even fallen asleep he was pulled back out of it by motion and the visor turning on once more. With a few steps he was fully roused, panicked and struggling once more as his mind caught up with the events, turning into frustration as the controlling suit piloted him out of the door and into the late afternoon's sun. Another robot stood waiting for its turn to charge, making no sounds at all, even as he called out to it.

The hours that followed were much the same as after his initial capture. He was taken back to the streets and given only the vague hints that he had to clean and maintain it.

By the time night had fallen he had started to fall into the monotony of the routine.

He was snapped out of his semi stupor by hearing odd noises. Whispers and motions. Given his predicament the shark felt it was something he should avoid, yet he found his legs moving. It wasn't the robot controlling him, it was his own curiosity.

He reached a corner as a strange feeling hit him, the robot suit swayed mid step, the visor had a sudden crackling flash, even the speakers at his ears had a moment of glitched out sounding hisses. Then those odd whispers grew louder. A cracking sound caught his attention and Zeke stepped closer, leaning his head around the corner to see.

Dark-clothed figures, their faces and features covered up, were breaking through a door! There was no other way to describe it. Zeke gulped, suddenly aware of his breathing, of his heartbeat, hoping that he was the only one hearing them.

He tried to pull back, to peel away discreetly, thinking through the devices that the robot had used, maybe he could use the tablet to mark something or alert proper authorities.

"Well, shit." He heard a voice speak behind him before he felt a sudden jolt from behind. While he himself was protected, his visor and earphones crackled once more, both shorting out. "Shit!" The voice yelled, loud enough to be heard even with the speakers not working as he bolted forward blindly, trying to get away, instincts telling him to run.

Unheard footsteps moved behind him, indistinct yells. Zeke's foot hit a step that was protruding and he fell, immediately piled on by two or three shapes.

"Why the hell didn't it work, K?!" The angry voice shouted.

"Hmm..." The one identified replied, bending down. "Oh, damn, this isn't one of the automated models."

“Oh shit, you mean?”

“Heh, yep. There’s someone in there. Am I right?”

Zeke thought it better to keep silent, he even tried to hold his breath.

“Can’t you hear me?” ‘K’ asked. There was a moment of quiet scuffling noises.

“Well it’s down at any rate, right? Let’s get back to work.” A new voice said.

“Hold up.” ‘K’ said. “Ad, you stay with me, might need a pair of hands with this one.”

“Why? There’s no one in there.” Ad, the one who had first tried to ambush Zeke shot back.

“Wanna bet?” There was a light electronic trill of something powering up before suddenly Zeke was hit with a zap.

“Aaah!” He cried out, twitching and convulsing.

“Hah! I knew it! That current wouldn’t work on the boring bots...” ‘K’ sat down beside Zeke, resting his legs on the downed robot-covered shark’s back. His hands pulled out the tablet stowed behind Zeke and he started tapping away on it. “Heh, new model, same flaws and vulnerabilities. Just an additional layer of shielding, that must be why you didn’t get totally knocked out by the first pulse wave. Glad to see it still cut your feeds though.” ‘K’ murmured to himself.

“What are you talking about, what are you going to do with me?” Zeke asked, afraid, especially now his pretence had been rumbled.

“Oh we’re gonna silence you for starters, you saw some of the crew, it might not be auto-reported but we can’t say the same for you. Can’t have that, can we?”

“W-wait I w- nng!!” The suit shifted around Zeke’s head, the mouth filling mass inflating more than it should, the jaw shifting down and tightening as the nanites received overwriting orders. He was being hacked!

“Can I go now?” Ad asked, rolling his eyes impatiently. “I don’t need to watch you having a power trip.”

‘K’ flapped his hand dismissively.

“Mmmmh, mmmh!!!” Zeke mumbled. His speakers turned back on, enough to hear as the hacker turned on the soundproofing, rendering his muffles entirely inside his own head.

“Hah, there we go, now, naturally I don’t know what you must have done to be stuck like that. But given the date of this hearing, it can’t have been too bad. Trouble is, people who didn’t

do something too bad are generally the morally superior types. I don't want you reporting this in and snitching. You wouldn't do that, would you?"

Zeke stiffened, hesitating before shaking his head.

"Good, good. Then I can let you off lightly! I'm gonna go back to my crew and help out there. You are gonna wait here like a good-..." he checked something with a few beeps. "Lad? Until we're all done."

"Mm- mmmmhh." Zeke whimpered.

"Trying to talk, are you? I can feel your chest vibrating." The hacker teased. "Since you'll be waiting, let's not let you get too bored.." He said in a sing-song voice, tapping a few more things. Zeke's body moved a few inches, unbidden, his elbows and knees bending to matching angles and then locking in place. He couldn't move! But the hacker wasn't done there. The inner lining of the suit suddenly shifted, buzzing all around him. It wasn't enough to tickle, wasn't enough to soothe, instead it was simply maddening! He couldn't even squirm around to try and relieve the feelings!

His visor sparked on, showing a taunting cartoonish visage of a raccoon in a two frame animation of it laughing and throwing up a peace sign, accompanied by the words, 'Get hacked! -Luv, Kraze xoxo'.

"Mmmh! M-mmmmmh!" He whined as the visor flickered off and on, replacing the logo with disjointed videos of random shows. Some animated, some live acted, spanning many genres. There was no audio to go along with them, instead just the sensation of the never ceasing buzzing. It was like Zeke had fallen for some manner of twisted pop-up script and had no means of cancelling or reverting it and given his encasement no way to even escape it!

From the quiet around him the hacker had gone as threatened. Leaving the shark helpless and alone, subjected to the sensory assault.

It was as though someone had put him in a full body cast lined with a moving irritant, horrifying to experience with nothing he could do about it. And to think that was what Kraze referred to as being let off lightly?!

The shark pleaded with his body to respond, with the machinery to realise the intrusion and restart, or fix it, or anything! Instead the hellish treatment carried on for long enough that his body at the very least started in some part to adjust to it. He could also close his eyes to blot out most of the flashes, which belatedly afforded some escape.

After the first half an hour it reached the point of being merely discomforting. That was at least tolerable so long as he ignored the flashing and kept his eyes shut. Another while later it all stopped, the flashing of the visor, the buzzing over his body. When it ceased it felt surreal, as though his skin was still quivering despite it all. The visor switched on, its feed latched back to the camera, seeing a crouching figure with their identity obscured behind dark clothing. They

gave the same mocking peace sign to identify themselves as the hacker. From how he moved, he was talking with his team, yet Zeke didn't hear a single word of it.

The speakers crackled after Kraze had another little bout of laughter before the words crackled in. "Up up, drone." He commanded.

Zeke shifted his arms and legs when nothing immediately happened, he'd been seemingly unlocked from the fixed pose? His legs squealed at being moved, having fallen asleep, preventing him from rising.

"What's the plan, K?" A new voice asked.

"Why, this little thing is now one-hundred percent a criminal, I figured the least we could do is help him get ahead of the law. Especially since he's generously going to carry our bags for us."

"Are you crazy?! You're going to take it to the hideout? Lead the authorities right to us?!"

"Oh relaaaaaax. I've already fixed the tracking, their mainframe thinks that this little one is still doing its rounds two blocks away. And I'm not gonna let it see a thing!" Kraze said. "Now you run on while I let him know something fun."

"Goddamn code-jockeys." The speaker said, slinging a bag of his own from their successful heist over a shoulder and moving away at speed. The rest of the gang peeled off, leaving the hacker behind.

"Still not getting up huh? Here, let me help!" Kraze said, tapping quickly at a device. Zeke let out a surprised grunt as the robotic frame around him moved to stand. The hacker was piloting him by remote, ordering him to follow. He felt heavy and slowed with the bulk of the gang's loot hidden on him and his stiff and pinched nerves were another layer of disruption. "Now, as I promised I'll fill you in, but first-." The visor went dark once more.

"Mmmmh! Mm-mmmh hhhh!" Zeke whined, still not given any leniency with his jaw or mouth.

"Mm, yes, delightful." Kraze snickered. "So, first up, let me share something, you're definitely going to be treated as guilty now. I've given your unit enough info for them to be certain you helped us with the theft, even seemingly kept watch. Not to mention all the counts of piracy and even watching a few programs that are banned here? Tut, tut! What that means is a bit of a meaner penalty when they judge you. And also a little surprise extra."

"Hmm?" Zeke asked before suddenly the buzzing from before returned, directed entirely at the soles of his feet, the vulnerable sensitive parts of his sides and with a sensual strength directly on his nipples. "Mmmmh! MMmmh-mmmmm hhhh!" He whined, squirming yet unable to avoid them.

“Aww damn, you’re not ticklish, that’s a shame. I don’t want to drive you crazy for the sake of it.” The hacker said, swapping some of them off, instead focusing only on the nipples and tracing over his body as though the suit were caressing him. It was flustering despite his circumstances. “Hehe, unfortunately, without jailbreaking it further, I can’t do shit beyond making you hot and bothered. Who knew authoritarian power-trippers were such prudes? Now what’s gonna happen next is you’ll take our loot back home, drop it all off and then walk around so much that your batteries start to fade and you’ll be lost as hell while I prepare a bit of insurance.”

“Hmmsnmmmh? P-plnnnh.”

“Oh yeah, beg for me, you’ve no idea how much I love that.” Kraze cackled. “Y’know, just in case you’re inclined to stop, beep, muted! Now I can just imagine you howling in there without a single noise coming out.”

“Whh?! WHHH MHNNNNH!!!” While Zeke cried the hacker started speaking over him.

“Just a little more till we’re at base....”

The rest of the trip played out as Kraze dictated, Zeke was deafened as soon as they reached earshot of the other gang members, his body was offloaded and then he was set out on a walk cycle as promised. For long hours, well past the duration of his prior shift, his legs were worked and then pushed by the nanintes until the suit itself shut down, locking up. At the very least that meant the vibrations stopped, leaving him panting in need for satisfaction that hadn’t even been considered as an option.

He was only aware of being lifted up as fatigue from being awake caught up with him. An automated retrieval unit carried him away back to a charging point, one far from his own. However the hacker hadn’t just affected Zeke’s controls. When the AI powered mechanisms scanned his suit all readings simply told them nothing was out of the ordinary, in his schedule, his shift, or his documentation.

The charging was completed, Zeke’s rest going uninterrupted until he woke on his own. Then the suit started moving, piloting him back toward a patrol area. The whole experience was burned into his mind enough that he had no delusion it might have been a dream. Instead he carried out his shift as before, cursing his curiosity, still incapable of using his mouth.

He hoped that was all the hacker had meant by silencing him, as beyond a few phantom feelings, it seemed the prior interference had fallen dormant. Maybe it had just been a scare to keep him in line, he gulped, wondering how he’d manage with more charges when he was already unaware of what he was first arrested for.

A short while into his shift, when there was no one around, he pulled out the tablet. He wasn’t sure what time it was, beyond that it was dark in the sky. The tablet had the time-. 0200,

he sighed, his body felt like it couldn't have been past midnight. It was a good thing he checked, the officer told him his court hearing was the ninth, three days after his capture.

Zeke stepped back to work, trudging along, pulling at the trash on the ground absently. Something was bothering him, something that hadn't fully clicked. He reached back to the tablet, arm shaking slightly in a worry he didn't understand until he looked again... the date displayed itself as the tenth!

Desperately he brought up the map, maybe he'd got confused, with it being an early morning appearance maybe there was some leeway. Already his feet were moving as fast as he could, though the robotic shell slowed him significantly, forcing him to a light jog at best. He ignored all trash, all others on the roads, pressing toward the courthouse. If he was still on track he might manage to get there by 0300.

With minutes to spare he pulled up to the building he was due in, only to find it deserted, empty of all staff. The door opened, still registering his suit as authorised to pass. Desperate to prove his suspicions wrong Zeke roamed into each room that he could, only stopping when the doors refused to budge for him.

The time passed, the very second after 0300 his body locked up, the too familiar sign of the systems taking control.

"Mmmhfh!" Zeke strained, trying to make the arms even quiver, yet he was solidly locked in place.

The visor itself flickered in front of his eyes. 'Attention, citizen, you are now twenty four hours late without reporting any reason for your tardiness. As a result, the date of your court hearing has been moved to the rear of the general queue. Please return to the courthouse in nine-hundred and thirty seven days, and six hours.'

Zeke howled, how could this message be deemed important enough to display, whilst reminders of his time were not- unless that hacker had something to do with it!

A sudden jolt shook the suit as larger, angrier text scrolled in place of the visor. "Attention, suspect. For disregarding a court order to show up, neglecting your assigned station and being found several posts over you will be penalised."

"Phhhmnh?!" Zeke whined, staring, unable to see the world behind the text for how aggressively it flashed in front of him. After repeating the message a few times the visor went still before a new message appeared.

"Beginning reinforced rehabilitation."

He raised his brows in worry before an audio and visual assault started. Bright swirls replaced the visors lights, as well as text that seemed to only appear where he wasn't directly

looking. Whether it faded out when he stared directly at it or it truly was something he could only detect when not focused was impossible to say.

While he could close his eyes for the moment, he couldn't do anything about the audio which had begun to play strange pulsing music. As with the words it sounded like someone was whispering or mumbling underneath the current, words he couldn't make out.

His legs and arms moved out of his control but beyond simply moving it seemed his whole body was being squeezed and caressed by the inner suit while it puppeted him, adding extra sensations to the coercive attack. Kraze's gift made itself known once again, too, the stimulating sensations thrummed to life, stronger than the intended rub.

His arms were tucked behind his back, crossing to clasp the hands to the elbows and then magnetised in place, effectively binding him within his own suited shell. His legs set off at that even pace, forcibly taking him back to his original patrol route.

Strange discordant twangs in the constant audio kept making him crack his eyes open, the lulling visor waited for him to show any weakness, making it harder for him to shut his eyes and stop.

The audio continued to drone, until he thought he heard his name spoken to him from behind. "Zeke". That certainly opened his eyes, he tried to turn his head but he couldn't even do that much. Besides it would have been pointless, little of the real world was visible behind the swirling that remained perilous to look at.

Try though he might, his eyes now couldn't truly shut. While his left lid closed, the right remained cracked, he strained to no avail. With his body being piloted for him it was all he could try to focus on. Soon he noticed his eye was stuck fully open, taking in each change of colour, each subtle flash of text. Faster and faster it was pulling him in for a reason he could only intuit from the implications.

"Obey. Behave. Work." Those seemed to be the words that arose the most. Yet he couldn't see anything. He even felt that his body was getting fuzzier, as if his brain was being split away, in a world of its own, the rebellious left eyelid finally giving in.

Dimly he realised that something had pushed through the mouth tube. It wasn't in time with his feeding and the nanomechanical lining of his suit was able to stroke him into swallowing it unbidden.

As Zeke strolled back to the street he had been assigned, he slowly started to drift out of consciousness. Taken in by the constant swirling and the lulling colours. Even though the sounds hadn't changed, they now seemed more pleasant, as though he'd acquired a liking for them.

He tried to resist, he knew he had to fight to retain his sense of self, yet even if the hacker hadn't left his jaw clamped shut he doubted the machinery would have turned off the

sound-proofing of his helmet. Instead he could only guess how it was piloting from how it made his back bend, moving his arms from their pose.

The motion caused another upset. His limbs ached. Surely they hadn't been locked away that long? Zeke blinked, how long ago was it? How long ago had he been in that court house? It could have been minutes, it could have been days.

His head swum, feeling muddled and light before he forgot what he was thinking about once more and smiled into the colourful display...

The next thoughts that he knew were his own came when he had the pad in his hands. The visor was clear, no more colours, his audio feed calmed, just the sounds of the night air in the city. The robotic voice rang out a response to some query from some passer by, showing a relevant article on the tablet.

Zeke realised his body was moving without the robotic frame forcing it. His body subconsciously wanted to stow the device but he held it as the citizen walked away. He seized that inch of control and flicked back to the menus, scrolling through. He found a new addition, the menu with information about his next hearing. Nine-hundred and seventeen days, with some hours.

The shark was aghast, it had been twenty days of scattered fragments for memory, of some dream-like thoughts of carrying out his new tasks.

As if the machinery detected his brief override to study the tablet the lights and sounds returned, making him tilt his head up gently. His body let it wash over him and rinse his thoughts away again.

The district Zeke had been assigned to was changed almost weekly. Adding further discomfort and confusion when he next grew conscious. The robotic suit seemed fixed on subduing him in the same unnatural and pervasive way, shining the lights to 'calm' him. As though he bobbed up for a breath of metaphorical air, only for it to pull him back under and send him into its trance.

Another day, another place, Zeke woke with a clarity that had eluded him, a sudden surge stronger than any he'd knowingly seen in the last while.

He didn't recognise his surroundings and they felt *wrong*. Graffiti covered the interior building he was in, refuse and litter on the floor, broken machinery. If one of the robots had been assigned here surely they would have worked to clean it.

“Wakey, wakey.” A voice spoke, one that spiked a feeling of worry in him, though he knew not why. Its owner walked around in front of him, tight, dark clothing and a swishing tail, the ringed tip of which was visible.

It was a raccoon, one whose identity was covered before yet from the flashes of the taunting art during the sabotage all that time ago, he recognised him too well.

“Hey it worked! Haha, damn, they really did a number on you.” Kraze said with a grin. “I had to do so much shit just to get you this lucid. So if you feel like thanking me, now’s the time before you fall asleep again.”

“Mmh-h-h-h? M-mh-h-h-h!” Zeke mumbled softly and then more indignantly when he realised he was still mute.

“Hahaha, got you! Man, I can’t believe you skipped your court case, dummy.” The raccoon said with a laugh. “Well, the good news for me is that means they didn’t get to flush your suit’s systems. I suppose they might as well be your body’s systems at this point.”

Zeke let out another muffled “Hm-mh!” Walking closer to the hacker, not sure what he’d do but feeling the need to vent his frustrations!

“Hold still.” Kraze said calmly, making Zeke’s body jerk to a stop.

“H-h-h?”

“Noticing already that the nanomachines aren’t stopping you? It’s your own muscles? Yeaah, when I saw I still had access I might have snuck a few more routines in.” The raccoon chattered, walking up to Zeke, brushing his hands to poke in at the exposed suited parts. The machinery replied to that by transferring more force than it ought to, ensuring Zeke felt it!

“Mm-nh-h-h!” Zeke huffed, muscles tensing, wanting to squirm away from the touch but unable.

“Move around again.” Kraze whispered, the release suddenly made Zeke snap away, falling onto his rump with a heavy thud. “Aww, I know you love me but you don’t need to get on the floor on my account.” The raccoon said, reaching his hand to pat the shaped muzzle over Zeke’s snout.

The shark backed away, metal grating on the stone as he rose up. He needed to get out of here, get back to his shifts before he was detected.

“Stop~.” Kraze said. “Stand up for me.”

Zeke’s body did as asked, making him increasingly more worried over how much power this hacker had over him, or how much anyone might command him.

“There’s a good little drone. So, how are the memories? Recalling anything fun over the last month? Any of the crimes we did together? Any of the surging sensations I rewarded you with? Don’t worry, we haven’t been caught yet so your records are nice and shiny... So many systems look away if a robot like you is leading the charge.” Kraze said grinning.

“Ch-chhhmh?!” Zeke asked, worried, he hoped the racoon was kidding yet got a feeling he wasn’t. He desperately tried to remember any of those events, mouth feeling dry as confusing fragments came back, of the streets, of cleaning, then of interiors, of the covered up figures of Kraze and the gang he ran with. The recollections were too clear to be outright dismissed as imaginations.

“That’s right. Time for your rewards.” The hacker said, walking away, collecting a pad and a moment later the covering around Zeke squirmed and rubbed, kneading and massaging, not enough to move or control him nor the teasing mix from before. Instead it felt soothing, sensual and pleasurable, if still not enough to even stir the dormant and neglected parts that had been touch and stimulus starved for ... however long it might have been at this point!

“Yes, that’s right, you did so well I’ll even make sure you’re conscious of the pleasure this time.” He said with a grin. Zeke couldn’t help twitching under the barrage, even though it was pleasant. His foot stepped forward as he tried to walk again for the door.

“Uh uh, can’t let you sneak out. You need to be properly rewarded. Besides, this is our secondary safe house so it’s in a blind spot. Even if you ran outside your map would be so scrambled you might run right onto a road and get hit before you were found anything that might notice you’re out of place.” The raccoon said, giving a few more mixed messages, seizing Zeke’s tail gently and brushing so that the nanites rubbed down it.

“Mmmmh!” He shivered. He couldn’t bring himself to move away.

“All my personal conditioning’s paying off, too, I see. You love that, don’t you?”

It was true and the revelation made Zeke all the more conscious about that fact, it all made worrying sense. If the hacker had hijacked the displays he could have snuck any messaging in there. With how susceptible it made him, with how he could spend weeks without a conscious thought, he could easily believe that the sadist who left him squirming for over an hour on their first meeting, who very likely was the reason he missed his date, might take advantage.

“There we go, you did so well!” Kraze said, dropping his hands away and giving Zeke another pat on the head. “However, now for the bad news. It was a big deal of a heist and we didn’t get out of there cleanly... so I’m gonna have to ask you to lay low for a while. Obviously I don’t think it’s your fault, but the boss is harder to persuade. Luckily for us all, I’ve got a spare one of the cops’ storage and recharging bays up and running! All for us to use.”

“Wh, whhh?!” Zeke murmured, turning, seeing one of the bays, looking as though it had been ripped out and rewired crudely to a power cord that went into the wall. “Nh- nhh!”

“Heh, are you just resisting that now on principle? Or did you get a memory of the last time I plugged you into one of these. Trust me, it won’t be so bad this time.”

It was worse than above, some subconscious part was certain Zeke didn’t want to get in.

He didn’t have a choice. The awkward squeezes of the suit began again as he was remotely piloted by Kraze forward, his legs turned, marching him in. His arms were still his and he tried to grasp the frame, to stop himself. His legs were strong enough to push in, to click into the docking points.

The light electric hum of the machine kicked up before the magnets engaged, the frames coming out to cuff and secure Zeke. Kraze removed his controls, letting the shark in on just how helpless he was as the machinery piloted his robot-suited arms into position. He was connected, plugged in and then locked down.

“Alright, there we go! Welcome to your new home. I’ll be back to collect you once the heat has died down, after all, the robo-drones the cops use are so useful for me to just let you gather dust for too long. And don’t worry, I’ve got this place hooked up to a terminal elsewhere so I can make sure to update your video and audio feeds with any fun new things to keep you entertained. Sweet dreams!” The raccoon said, stepping away as the charging bay Zeke was in closed down, the doors sealing, cutting the robot off from the open air. Lights dimmed around him as it went into a storage mode.

“Mmmmh! Khh, whhh! Whhh!” Zeke begged. He only understood half of what was even going on!

Kraze was already gone. The lights in the room shut down and the helpless shark was abandoned inside a case that ensured he’d stay put. “Mmmmh!?” He cried out once again. Audio crackled in his ears a few minutes later.

“Oh, silly me, I forgot to turn the programs back on! Have fun. I call this one ‘Memories’.” Kraze’s voice echoed in his ears and then fell silent. The visor blacked out the world, disabling his camera, replacing it with a fresh swirl of colours interspersed with different words. Once he was entranced, unable and unwilling to blink, snatches of video were thrown at him, external camera feeds showing the gang and a robot, -could it really have been him?- committing criminal acts, spliced with views of him trapped in the pod to show how helpless he was.

As minutes of the feed turned to an hour, the station he was in started to pump fresh sustenance for his body, laced with something that washed over Zeke, making him tired. As sleep began to take hold, he recalled every vision he had seen in the visor as though it were a true memory, blurring in his dreams to twist what was his experience and what was merely shown to him.

If his mind was already confused after a month, then what state could he possibly be in by the time his court hearing was due. And, if he missed it again... would he ever be free?

One last treacherous thought crept in. While Kraze implied this was a second safe house for the gang, he was certain his memories showed no one else here. If something happened to the hacker it was entirely possible Zeke would be forgotten. Locked inside a robotic shell that was itself locked within a charging bay.

The shark had one last thought, wishing the hacker would stay safe, before sleep stole him away. To think all this had happened, over one simple misunderstood misdeed.